Comparing the leading thinkers on leadership & management

This paper briefly explores some of the significant thinkers who have influenced our understanding of leadership and management since the early 20th century. It doesn't attempt to discuss every theorist, but focusses on those who have had an influence on our current theoretical perspectives.

Henri Fayol

Fayol[1] defined management (administration) in terms of five main tasks:

1. Forecast and plan (*prevoyance*)

2. Organise

3. Command

4. Co-ordinate

5. Control (by which he meant monitoring and feedback)

Fayol then went on to identify 14 principles which guide managers in carrying out these five tasks:

i. specialisation/division of labour

ii. authority with corresponding responsibility ("judgement demands high moral character, therefore, a good leader should possess and infuse into those around him courage to accept responsibility. The best safeguard against abuse of authority and weakness on the part of a higher manager is personal integrity and particularly high moral character of such a manager ..... this integrity, is conferred neither by election nor ownership.")

iii. discipline (to ensure standards, consistency of action, adherence to rules and values)

iv. unity of command (an employee should receive instructions from one superior only)

v. unity of direction (to complement unity of command)

vi. subordination of individual interest to the general interest (assumes a shared set of values)

vii. remuneration of staff (levels of compensation should be "fair"- reflects more recent theories of motivation)

viii. centralisation

ix. chain/line of authority

x. order (each person needs to see how their role fits into the organisation and be confident, able to predict the organisations behaviour towards them)

xi. equity

xii. stability of tenure (promotes loyalty to the organisation, its purposes and values)

xiii. initiative

xiv. esprit de corps

---

[1] Henri Fayol (1916) *Administration industrielle et générale; prévoyance, organisation, commandement, coordination, controle*, Paris, H. Dunod et E. Pinat

Most subsequent definitions have drawn on Fayol (often without acknowledgement), although there is a tendency to criticise the five tasks (which people are often more familiar with) as being too functionalist. The five tasks represent the activities which most leaders and managers undertake as core parts of their role. They are guided in their behaviour by an understanding of certain principles of good leadership and management which shape how they behave and are underpinned by a set of values that are not wholly out of line with what many modern organisations would seek from their leaders and managers ('personal integrity' and 'high moral character', equitable treatment of others, teamworking), although there is strong hint of a more authoritarian approach to the role than would be popular today.

Nevertheless, Fayol provides a good start to seeing how the K-D-B triad can be used to assess ideas and practices.

FW Taylor

Taylor's scientific management[2] has a got a generally bad name today, although very few will have read any of his writings, especially *The principles of scientific management.* It is a very slim book with a very slim idea, being principally about using what latterly became known as time and motion study. Taylor asserts that 'as a general principle ... in almost all of the mechanic arts, the science which underlies each act of each workman is so great and amounts to so much that the workman who is best suited to actually doing the work is incapable of fully understanding this science, without the guidance and help of those who are working with him or over him, either through lack of education or through insufficient mental capacity.'

This provides us with the guiding set of values that shape Taylor's thinking – that most workers are unable to decide how best to do the tasks they are set to do; from this he develops his four principles:

i.   Develop a science for each element of a man's work, which replaces the old rule-of.-thumb method.

ii. Scientifically select and then train, teach, and develop the workman, whereas in the past he chose his own work and trained himself as best he could.

iii. Heartily co-operate with the men so as to insure all of the work being done in accordance with the principles of the science which has been developed.

iv. An almost equal division of the work and the responsibility between the management and the workmen. The management take over all work for which they are better fitted than the workmen, while in the past almost all of the work and the greater part of the responsibility were thrown upon the men.

Taylor only hints at the way that managers should behave ('co-operate', 'train, teach and develop') but there is an implicit assumption of relatively tight control over workers and a very hierarchical model of organisations, in which there is not a lot of respect for the skills and potential of the people doing the work.

---

[2]   Fredrick Winslow Taylor (1911)*The Principles of Scientific Management* New York and London: Harper & Brothers

Lawrence Appley

Appley is not widely known these days but has probably had more influence over later 20th century writers on leadership and management than is usually realised, as president and then chairman of the American Management Association in the late forties and fifties. He argued[3] that leadership was a quality that all managers should possess, one of the first major theorists to see leadership and management as distinct but intertwined concepts.

He defined management as 'getting things done through other people'. Management then becomes any activity which involves *leading* any group of people towards the attainment of common objectives in any walk of life.'

There were, he argued, four basic principles which define effective management; it is, he argued:

1. responsive to an orderly approach

2. dependent upon unique skills and tools

3. guided by a code of ethics

4. controlled by disciplines

Appley argued that leadership means purposeful, thoughtful action, with an emphasis on the future more than the past. The process of leadership he advocated was not dissimilar to Fayol's 14 principles of management; leaders should, Appley argued, determine:

i. Where we are now *(inventory)*

ii. What we want people to do *(planning)*

iii. The people we need to do it *(organise human resources)*

iv. What the people need to do it *(organise physical resources)*

v. How well they should do it *(standards of performance)*

vi. How well they do it *(progress review)*

vii. What help the people need to do better *(development and controls)*

viii. What we will pay *(rewards and incentives)*

In carrying out these tasks, leaders will have records of attainment (to develop a reflective approach to the role), a clear mission, consult widely and be intellectually mature and emotionally stable.

---

[3]   Lawrence A Appley (1974) *Formula for Success: Core Concept of Management* New York Amacom

Henry Mintzberg

Mintzberg[4] presented a different perspective on management by using an essentially anthropological approach, and observing managers at work. From his study he suggested that there were three broad groups of roles that managers performed:

1. Interpersonal (involving a symbolic or *figurehead* role; *leading* people to get work done; and *liaising* with other managers horizontally across the organisation and outside it)

2. Informational (*monitoring* what is going on, collecting both formal and informal information; *disseminating* information to others, primarily subordinates; and as *spokesperson*, representing the team or organisation to others outside it)

3. Decision-making (as *entrepreneur*, looking to improver performance; as *problem handler*, dealing with things outside the manager's direct control; as *resource allocator*, deciding who gets what; and as *negotiator*, getting to agreement with others)

Mintzberg placed the leadership role specifically within the management role and saw it as a significant component. He also saw management as being an essentially discontinuous activity rather than an organised and planned set of activities.

James McGregor Burns

Burns was first and foremost a political scientist. His theory of leadership[5] is based upon the idea that leadership is a relationship of power for a specific purpose that is consistent, or eventually consistent, with the motives, needs, and values of both the leader and the led. These three elements – *power, purpose* and *motive* – provided Burns with the basis for a general theory of moral leadership. This in turn underpinned his distinction between *transactional* and *transformational* leadership – the transformational leader is able to unite power, purpose and motive, the transactional leader is simply a power-wielder who doesn't engage with the led in a relationship based on shared purpose and motivation.

Most of the people who have taken the transactional/transformational leadership dichotomy forward have tended to avoid or ignore the underpinning ideas about moral leadership, primarily because he developed them in the context of political leadership and they raise issues that tended to be avoided in discussing management, at the time. The approach to management deriving from Fayol and most strongly demonstrated by Taylor is essentially positivist – it avoids discussing moral issues and the right of managers to manage. What Burns does, by introducing the idea of moral leadership is to suggest that effective leadership has a strong ethical dimension.

---

[4] Henry Mintzberg (1973) *The Nature of Management* New York: Harper & Row

[5] James MacGregor Burns (1978) *Leadership* New York: Harper & Row

John Kotter

Kotter provided[6] one of the definitive distinctions between the twin concepts of leadership and management. He contrasted the two roles along three major role dimensions:

What managers do	*What leaders do*
Prepare plans and budgets, setting targets or goals for the future, to manage complexity	Set a direction, develop a vision of where the organisation should be going and the strategy for change to achieve that vision
Ensure the organisation has the capacity to achieve the targets and goals by organising (deciding on structures and roles) and staffing (filling those roles with the right people)	Align people to the direction being set, communicate it to people and build commitment to it
Make sure that the plan is fulfilled by controlling what is done and solving problems	Motivate and inspire people so that they work to achieve the vision, drawing on their needs, values and emotions

This approach shows a clear tendency towards defining management in terms of Fayol's five tasks (forecast and plan, organise, command, co-ordinate and control) and Appley's eight process tasks, with the leadership role defined far more in terms of hearts and minds of the people. What Kotter also offered was a simple comparison based on the source of power being wielded. Managers, he said, used *positional power* (the authority that comes from their role) whereas leaders relied on *personal powe*r (the power they generated through their behaviour and the consequent willingness of others to respect their authority).

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus

Bennis and Nanus famously said[7] that 'managers do things right[8] and leaders are people who do the right thing'. Their thinking behind this was critical of the management mentality which, they felt, saw people as liabilities, seeking to control, create and follow the rules, focussing on how things should be done and seeking compliance, valuing secrecy and using formal authority or hierarchy.

By contrast, leaders see people as great assets, seek their commitment, focus on outcomes, see what and why things could be done, share information and promote networks. These two divergent models reflect Kotter's distinction[9] between positional power and personal power. In other words, what we see in Bennis and Nanus is a move towards ranking management as the inferior way of working and leadership as the superior. In criticising the behaviours, they established leadership and management as alternative ways of behaving rather than as different elements of the same desired set of behaviours.

---

[6]   John Kotter (1990) *What leaders really do* Harvard Business Review May-June 1990

[7]   Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (1986) *Leaders: Their strategies for taking charge* New York and London: Harper and Row

[8]   Henry Ford is alleged to have said that *'Quality means doing it right when no one is looking'* and Peter Drucker once said that *'it is better to do the right thing badly than the wrong thing well'*

[9]   John Kotter (1979) *Power in Management* New York: AMACOM

Bennis and Nanus advocated four strategies for effective leadership:

1. *Attention through vision* - creating focus with a mental image of a possible and desirable future. 'Leaders are the most results-oriented individuals in the world, and results get attention. Their visions or intentions are compelling and pull people toward them. Intensity coupled with commitment is magnetic. And these intense personalities do not have to coerce people to pay attention; they are so intent on what they are doing that, … they draw others in.'

2. *Meaning through communication* - influencing, organising, and sharing meaning within the group. 'The actions and symbols of leadership frame and mobilise meaning. Leaders articulate and define what has previously remained implicit or unsaid; then they invent images, metaphors, and models that provide a focus for new attention. …an essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organise meaning for the members of the organisation.'

3. *Trust through positioning* - clearly, consistently, and reliably communicate and stick with your position. 'Leaders acquire and wear their visions like clothes. Accordingly, they seem to enrol themselves…in the belief of their ideals as attainable, and their behaviour exemplifies the ideas in action.'

4. *Deployment of self through*

    i. *positive self-regard* ('consists of three components: knowledge of one's strengths, the capacity to nurture and develop those strengths, and the ability to discern the fit between one's strengths and weaknesses and the organisation's needs')

    ii. *the Wallenda factor* (know your own worth; continually develop your skills, and keep trying - named after Karl Wallenda, the tight-rope walker who would not consider the possibility of failure)

Keith Grint

Grint has been concerned with the issue of change and proposed three different styles or strategies according to the problems that are faced in implementing change - which he points out, usually has a 75% failure rate in achieving its goals. These three strategy are defined by the nature of the problems, which he labelled:

1. Critical

2. Tame

3. Wicked

Grint has been particularly involved in exploring the nature of complexity (what is also described as *chaos theory*). Complexity is a state in which there are multiple variables which interact in a non-linear fashion to produce a myriad of possible outcomes, so that small changes in one of the variable can lead to dramatically different outcomes (*sensitive dependence on initial conditions*). His approach to leadership and management draws on this field of study to suggest that leadership is required to deal with complex situations where uncertainty and unpredictability are dominant. This put the emphasis on *normative* drivers (the values and principles guiding behaviour) as the outcome is uncertain but the way it is done is critical to build the engagement and support needed to do it.

Problem	Characteristics	Strategy	Behaviours
Critical	Self-evident crisis requiring immediate resolution, with little time for discussion or debate, and may require some coercion to ensure action by others	Commander	Take control and make decisions as quickly as possible, often with limited information. Demand responses from others, and show confidence. Emphasises authority and power in problem solving.
Tame	Puzzles (which may be complicated) but for which there is an answer because it has been previously solved	Manager	Requires rigorous analysis and the ability to call on detailed knowledge and experience, including the synthesis of knowledge from diverse disciplines. Emphasises rationality and logic in problem solving.
Wicked	Novel (ie not seen before) or recalcitrant (been around for a long time without resolution) problems. Complex rather than complicated (ie they don't exist in isolation but link to many other areas) and likely to have no right or wrong, but better of worse solution	Leader	Ability to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity, build consensus and gain commitment to new ways of doing things. Emphasises collaboration and commitment in problem solving.

Conclusions

This brief overview excludes many people whose contribution has also been significant, but these particular theorists (with the exception of Taylor) have all offered some contrast between leadership and management. They have seen leadership as:

* a subset of the management role (being an effective manager means also being an effective leader)

* a complement to the management role (someone can be an effective manager without being an effective leader, but leadership ability adds significantly to performance in the role)

* an alternative to the management role (because leaders are 'better' than managers).

It is my view, in drawing these models together, that leadership and management complement each other; people can be managers but not leaders, and some leaders aren't managers, but the best managers are leaders.