

SELF-DIRECTED WORK TEAMS

CHALLENGES FOR LEADING, MANAGING,
AND PERFORMING IN SELF-DIRECTED WORK TEAMS

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Introduction

This paper explores my passions within the context of four leadership theories: emergent, personal-situational, power, and vision. In this introduction, I trace the development of my ideas through the first semester of my doctoral program. In the section that follows on leadership theories, I define the terms leadership, management, and performance as used in this paper. After briefly listing various concepts that have been used to define leadership, I elaborate on five of my core values and illustrate how they are linked to the four leadership theories. In the following section on self-directed work teams (SDWT), I discuss why I would like to understand this more than any other leadership theory. In that section, I detail some gaps in understanding self-directed learning and comments on interdisciplinary instructional teams. I conclude with some questions that remain and suggestions for further research.

Increasing student achievement in schools, fostering self-directed learning, and developing outcomes-based assessments for testing learning competencies, are my passions. These passions have grown out of my 14 years of teaching experience. In this paper, I elaborate on how educational research has informed, rather than offered customized prescriptions, for my practice. In my end-of-term paper for the doctoral Pro Seminar (available online at <http://www.innathansworld.com/PhD/SmartEducation.pdf>), I articulated my passions as three topic foci areas: conceptual understanding of physics, career development, and classroom management.

Background

Reflecting on my material contributions during the leadership seminar has helped me in articulating this passion, within a framework of leadership theories. It also provides a sequential scheme to understand how this passion gradually led me to embrace diffused leadership and self-directed work teams. The latter is discussed in the SDWT section, and in the leadership section I highlight key issues that relate to my core values, and how various leadership theories have guided me on my thinking on leadership and innovation.

My first presentation was on a topic titled LEADERSHIP IS A DYNAMIC FUNCTION OF RELATIONSHIPS THAT MAY NOT ALWAYS CORRESPOND TO FORMAL ROLES OR JOB TITLES. Leading the discussion by comparing Cashman (1998) with Carl Rogers (1980), I articulated my conviction that building relationships within organizations was vital for the growth and development of individuals within the organization.

Subsequently in another discussion RELATIONSHIPS IN LEADERSHIP ARE CRITICAL, which I led with a colleague, I espoused a key idea that relationships are a fundamental means of drawing out collegial participation. Leaders focused on nurturing relationships strive to provide individuals with appropriate resources, experiences, and information needed to perform well in their tasks. They actively solicit individuals' opinions and channel their participation for achieving mutually agreed institutional goals.

These class discussions prompted the professor for our course to elaborate on a power continuum (Devadoss & Muth, 1984) that influences organizational effectiveness. Power, according to the authors, is defined as the ability of an individual to affect the behavior of another. Moreover, the power continuum,

Coercion \longleftrightarrow Authority \longleftrightarrow Influence

typically relies on the use of force, legitimacy, and persuasion, respectively, to affect behavior. In their study, the authors found that influence was positively associated with “involvement and effectiveness” (p. 379). Effective power results in control. According to Muth (1984) “control demarcates power” (p. 28) and describes the extent to which influence has been used to solve a problem. According to Burns (1978, p. 12), power, like leadership, is a purposeful *relationship* between individuals endowed with motive and resource.

During our group’s reflections on reading *Schools That Learn* (Senge et al., 2000), I quoted the authors, who track the discipline of personal mastery to antiquity. Personal mastery is one of the five key disciplines that the authors attribute to organizational learning. Personal mastery is a process of articulating a coherent image of one’s personal vision. It calls on individuals to make choices and furthers their collective determination on the organization’s actions and goals. The authors cite historian Philip Morris while recommending a study of “the work of psychologists Carl Rogers, Jean Piaget, Abraham Maslow, and Milton Erikson” (p. 65), among others.

In a paper that outlined the personal development of my leadership plan (Part I – Personal Philosophy), I articulated my core values (bounded rationality, flexibility, assertiveness, vision, and empowerment) as five leadership traits that helped me cope with challenges in both classrooms and schools. In this paper (Part II of leadership plan – Conceptual Framework), I elaborate on these five traits within the context of various leadership theories.

Prolonged discussions with my colleagues, while attempting to arrive at a

consensual-conceptual definition of “diffused leadership,” helped my team articulate the following definition for our group project. Diffused leadership involves sharing of leadership functions and powers among staff at multiple levels within an organization to achieve the organization’s vision. In organizations that espouse diffused leadership, high levels of staff participation occur at all levels in the organization (Lambert, 2002), open dialogue and communication exist among staff where individual’s ideas and values are shared (Sergiovanni, 1990), a focus on developing personal relationships exists (Coleman, 1994), and a process of participatory, democratic decision-making is facilitated (Coleman, 1994).

Leadership Theories

Leadership, Management, and Performance

Before I elaborate specific leadership theories, I will clarify the meaning of three terms that are widely used in educational organizations. Understanding the meaning of these terms: leadership, management, and performance – is vital for individuals at all levels within organizations, from students to organizational leadership, because all individuals in organizations need to assume these roles at various times for effective and efficient functioning of the organization. Following Bennis and Nanus (1985), Drucker (1977), and West-Burnham (1994), the terms might be defined as follows:

Leaders help outline an organizations broader purpose, mission, vision, and values. By addressing these why questions, leadership focuses on doing the right thing in organizations.

Managers facilitate effective functioning within organizations by clearly defining who will do what and when. By paying attention to specific details particularly with

regards to execution, planning, organizing and deploying, management focuses on doing things right.

Individuals performing well in organizations take personal responsibility for achieving various goals, teaching and learning standards, and learning mastery based on criterion-based assessment. By dealing with these aspects in organizations, performance focuses on individual and institutional accountability.

Being curious to see how these three terms evolved in their use within educational organizations, I carried out an Internet search in December 2002 using the Academic Search Primer, Google, and AskERIC databases with the words “leadership + schools,” “management + schools,” and “performance + schools.” Although the number of hits using the Internet might not be used as a measure of a terms’ importance, it was interesting to observe that leadership seemed less popular at this time unlike management or performance. Like the concept of “gravity” in physics, Burns (1978) widely quoted statement, “leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (p. 2), might be a reason.

In 1950, Stogdill (as cited in Bass, 1981) defined leadership as “the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement” (p. 9). Nash’s (1929) suggestion (Bass, 1981) that “leadership implies influencing change in the conduct of people” (p. 9), is as broad as Stogdill’s (Bass, 1981) definition of leadership as “an interaction between members of a group” (p. 16). Nonetheless, the goal setting, goal achievement, and interaction aspects in Stogdill’s definitions highlight how relationships in leaders are critical, as articulated in the introduction section of this paper.

Guntern's (1996) definition of "leadership as a specific process of interpersonal relationships whose participants play basically equivalent but complementary roles in such a way that they become inspired and motivated for extraordinary performances" (p. 6), also illustrates how these relationships and interactions are significant. Burns (1978, p. 4) calls such mutual stimulation and elevation, transformational leadership. Arguing that leadership is not a tangible thing, Bolman and Deal (1997) submit that leadership "exists only in relationships and in the imagination and perception of the engaged parties" (p. 294). One might argue similarly about what constitutes good teaching, but nurturing relationships and increasing student achievement are tangible extraordinary performances that teachers might facilitate within their classrooms.

Stogdill (Bass, 1981) describes how a variety of concepts such as group processes, personality traits, induction of compliance, exercise of influence, shared direction, persuasion, power, influence on goal achievement, effect of interaction, role differentiation, and initiation of structure have been used to define leadership (pp. 7-16). While different theories embrace different concepts, I will illustrate how my core values – bounded rationality, flexibility, assertiveness, vision, and empowerment – influenced my understanding of various leadership theories.

Bounded Rationality

Bounded rationality, a term first coined by Simon (1981), might be defined as a practice of operationalization in which individuals share their perceptions and understanding by clarifying the processes and situational background that led them to this understanding. The sequential or historical approach in my introduction illustrates how

the concept of bounded rationality helped me perceive and share various ideas about leadership. Senge et al. (2000) describe this idea by using the concept of inner scaffolding. The inner scaffolding of learners includes their “individual and social experiences, the individuals’ emotions, will, aptitudes, beliefs, values, self-awareness, purpose, and more” (p. 21). The authors observe that learning is a process that should help individuals make the right connections. By being aware of individuals’ (students and adults) inner scaffolding, educators could help learners make the right connections. Lewin (1942) calls this a psychological approach and argues that “a teacher will never succeed in giving proper guidance to a child if he does not learn to understand the psychological world in which the individual child lives” (p. 213). Bounded rationality also helps us understand why the same information presented to multiple listeners will be perceived differently by the listeners.

Bounded rationality is closely linked to theories on emergent leadership. The importance of the concept of bounded rationality for effective functioning of groups or teams is evident from Anderson’s (1940, as cited in Bass, 1981) observation that “a true leader in the psychological sense is one who can make the most of individual differences, who can bring out the most differences in the group and therefore reveal to the group a sounder base for defining common purpose” (p. 12). Making a connection to a common purpose is important for an educational organization at all levels. By valuing and acknowledging the contribution of all stakeholders in achieving organizational outcomes, leaders could effect significant changes in “productivity, drive, and cohesiveness” (p. 420), according to Stogdill (Bass, 1981). Acknowledging individual and group perceptions, bounded rationality also requires leaders to follow up on information

presented, both individually and as a group. As a classroom teacher, I cannot underscore enough its importance for clarifying meaning, developing student confidence, and eventually enhancing learning outcomes.

Flexibility

The second core value that I espouse is flexibility. A leader must be quick to learn from situations and willing to listen to different points of view. This way, it might be possible for a leader to respond to requirements and demands in any given situation and time. The ability to be flexible and deploy different styles of functioning would depend on a leader's sophisticated knowledge of a range of skills and willingness to use them competently. When I taught physics, each year was a new experience, because I constantly developed and modified my lessons to suit the diverse individuals whom I instructed. Bass (1960, cited in Bass, 1981) observes "an alert teacher 'senses' from facial expressions, questions or lack thereof, restlessness, and lack of response whether he (or she) is continuing to meet the needs of the student audience" (p. 111). By being flexible, a leader (Burns, 1978, cited in Bass, 1981) is alert to individual needs and could deal "with any aspects of the group's performance" (p. 118). Being flexible also allows leaders to acknowledge ignorance occasionally and demonstrate a willingness to learn from cadres below them.

Flexibility is an important concept in personal-situational leadership theories. The personality of the leader influences both the syntality, the behavioral characteristic, and synergy, combined action and functioning, of a group. Reinforcing these two leadership functions, Cattell (1951, cited in Bass, 1981) insists that leaders must not only help a group find the means to a goal already agreed upon but also help the group decide

on goals (p. 30). This is also one of the critical functions of teachers. In the Foreword of *Rethinking Leadership* (Sergiovanni, 1999), Sizer observes that flexibility emboldens effective leaders to “take time to listen, to sense, to gather, to articulate, to discern, to think, and thus to lead” (p. vi).

Assertiveness

A flexible leader is also a leader who could be assertive, a leader who accepts and acknowledges responsibility. An assertive leader chooses to stand up not only for personal rights but also does not violate another person’s rights (Back, Back, and Bates, 1992). Back et al. (1992) observe that assertion refers to a behavior that involves “expressing your needs, wants, opinions, feelings and beliefs in direct, honest and appropriate ways” (p. 1). By unambiguously articulating personal convictions upfront, the leader could deal with most challenges. For example, in a classroom situation, students need to know what the minimum expectations are at the very beginning so that they could be made to work consistently to meet at least those minimum expectations. These minimum expectations might correspond to standards that an individual teacher arrives after incorporating the school’s expectations. This does not mean that all expectations are predetermined, but simply that teachers need to have students’ buy-in to these expectations, after listening to students’ views. Being assertive at work enables a leader act as manager, to deliver and demonstrate confidence, responsibility, and willingness to be proactive, qualities that are transformational.

Assertiveness is associated with power theories of leadership. Kellerman (1984, cited by Baugher, 1986) defines a leader as “one who makes things happen that would not happen otherwise” (p. 3). By setting realistic, mutually agreed deadlines, a teacher

initiates students into a path of learning mastery. By comparing traditional distinctions between headship and leadership, Heifetz (1994) illustrates how power could be wielded within two kinds of authority: formal and informal. Formal authority relates to the office and informal authority relates to the “power to influence attitude and behavior beyond compliance” (p. 101). Heifetz uses the pressure-cooker metaphor (p. 106) to reconcile leadership and authority with the transference of responsibility to primary stakeholders in adaptive situations. Heifetz clarifies that adaptation is not restricted to mean merely coping with situations (p. 6), but demands aspiration and accomplishment (p. 4). He defines holding environment as “any relationship in which one party has the power to the attention of another party and facilitates adaptive work” (pp. 104-105). He describes how constructing and managing (turning the heat up or down) holding environments (pressure-cooker) for transforming stress (heat) into work (cooked food) is a central task of leadership (chef). By being assertive and directing attention to issues, a leader can confront work avoidance (p. 260), and help galvanize (and not just mobilize) people in organizations for adaptive work, work that “requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior” (p. 22).

Vision

A leader also needs to have a vision. My personal vision for student learning encourages teachers to link constantly their subject expertise with students’ personal experiences so that students might emulate this competence, and develop confidence, achieve success and increase their own self-esteem. Dewey (1933) argues that, when students study subjects that are removed from their own experiences they become “intellectually irresponsible” (p. 33). By loading the curriculum with inert ideas, ideas

that cannot be assimilated or applied in new situations, the intellectual development or self-development of individuals is stifled (Whitehead, 1929). In my opinion, current efforts by Colorado schools to comply with state policy and tie down a school's vision to CSAP scores might help impact student learning in a positive manner. This is because the vision is something that can now be evaluated in terms of measurable outcomes. To illustrate this through the words of Alexander et al. (1992, as cited by Weston et al., 1993) "the vision will have at its heart the school curriculum . . . and how planning, teaching, and evaluation will be undertaken in order that the aims and objectives of the curriculum are translated into pupil learning" (pp. 73-74).

According to Baugher (1986), the vision theories of leadership requires that a "leader must be able to scan for current trends, create a vision of the future, and point people toward a meaningful future" (p. 3). With a movement away from (Senge, et al., 2000) the industrial-age system of schools and assumptions about learning (pp. 27-52) into an information age where there is increasing concern for equity issues through governmental legislation such as the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (Paige, 2002), knowledge creation, survival amidst global competition, achievement of content standards, and performance-based assessments, Cleveland's fairness revolution (1985, as cited by Baugher, 1986) that "embraces lifelong learning, principled problem solving, and sociotechnical innovation" (p. 6), becomes relevant. Fullan (1999) observes that knowledge creation is the ability to generate and learn new ideas (p. 15). He quotes Nonaka and Takeuchi's study of successful Japanese companies and argues that organizations have failed in the past because they did not "convert tacit knowledge [skills and beliefs which are below the level of awareness] to explicit knowledge [words and

numbers that can be communicated and shared in the form of hard data] on an ongoing basis” (pp. 15-16).

Empowerment

Clearly, it is not enough for a leader just to have a vision for the organization but it is essential to communicate this to other stakeholders within the organization to have the vision translated into practice. The tasks and results that concern educational organizations are perpetual and ever changing. By sharing the responsibility with other stakeholders, a leader (Lambert, 2002) makes the task achievable because such a huge responsibility cannot rest on one or a few individuals (p. 37). The process of committing others to share the values and vision, which a leader (Greenfield, 1986, cited by Beare et al., 1993) believes are good for the organization (p. 143), might be called empowerment. For example, as a classroom teacher, I constantly remind students that what appears on print is not the end all of physics. By speaking of current events, Nobel prizes, narrating humorous physics anecdotes, and discussing a historical development of concepts, physics comes to life for students. They feel enthusiastic to seek and share their personal readings of interesting current events in science and technology. As a teacher, I do not promise to know everything and am always happy to leverage my time by learning from my students' efforts.

Power theorists of leadership too have embraced the concept of empowerment. Baugher (1986) observes that some power theorists suggest that “the role of a leader is to empower people to do their own work” (p. 3). Bottery (1996) remarks that “empowerment means the nurturing and encouragement of ideas and visions which come from within, and not simply the implementation of others' vision” (p. 41). By consulting

with other stakeholders to arrive at decisions by consensus, a leader could facilitate effective decision making. Numerous researchers (Drucker, 1977; Everard & Morris, 1990; Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991) have predicted similar outcomes and Belbin (1996) comments that although this consensus culture makes the referral process protracted, it eventually makes the emerging decision totally binding (p. 73). Tannenbaum and Massarik (1950, cited by Bass, 1981) observed that shared “decision making increases the likelihood that workers will accept goals desired by management, resulting in greater worker satisfaction and increased efforts to move toward selected goals” (p. 192). Hargreaves (1996) presented an extreme but useful caveat, “collaboration and contrived collegiality—cup of comfort or poisoned chalice” (p. 186), for manipulative behavior that is sometimes observed in some organizations. Instead of being manipulative, Burns (1978) remarks that teachers have traditionally treated students as joint seekers of truth and mutual actualization (p. 449). White (1988, cited by Retallick, 1990) observes that genuine leaders mandate “a reciprocal openness of actors about their true intentions and motives and an equal chance to express their attitudes, feelings and needs” (p. 7). Calling empowerment the second industrial revolution, Fisher (2000) observes that organizations see it “more than just another management fad” (p. 3).

Self-Directed Work Teams

Looking Ahead

In the previous section, I outlined how my core values blended with emergent, personal-situational, power, and vision leadership theories. A common thread that runs through the earlier two sections is my passion for increasing student achievement in

schools, fostering self-directed learning, and developing outcomes-based assessments for testing learning competencies in schools. These I believe, might be facilitated by developing a healthy relationship with other individuals, helping them make the right connections, communicating goals and expectations clearly to groups, being proactive in my interactions, constantly focusing attention on issues rather than people, reinforcing the importance of content standards for measuring student achievement and performance based assessments for demonstrating teacher competence, and being sensitive, genuine, empathic, and results-driven. Evidently, this will require demonstrating constantly leadership, management, and performance roles defined earlier. Although the three overlapping roles are equally important and more amorphous than defined, Kotter's definition (1988, cited by Bolman and Deal, 1997) reinforces this distinction. Kotter underscores the importance of planning, organizing, and controlling for managers, and visioning, networking, and building relationships for leaders (p. 295).

In light of this, I would like to understand the leadership of self-directed work teams (SDWTs), also called high-performance work systems (Fisher, 2000, p. 3). I prefer the use of the term self-directed work teams (SDWTs), a term that blends self-directed learning with work teams. In my search, I have not found much literature on this idea within educational organizations. However, self-directed learning and work teams have been widely studied in business organizations.

Challenges

Self-directed learning, according to Knowles (1975), "describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material

resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes” (p. 18). Although this definition of Knowles is comprehensive, the subsequent multiplicity of perspectives on self-directed learning offered by various contributors has shown that much work still needs to be done. Straka (1997) lists the following gaps in understanding self-directed learning: the portrayal of a fragmented picture of self-directed learning in the midst of numerous perspectives such as an individual’s disposition and activities set against an educational organization’s goals, environmental conditions (social, historical, and educational) set against methodological vistas (interpretative, empirical, and normative); lack of empirical research concerning readiness and ability for self-directed learning; lack of knowledge about the impact of learning processes on organizational innovation and flexibility; and lack of identification and subsequent evaluation of factors that might effectively facilitate these changes in organizations (pp. 2-4).

Work Teams, Parity, Reciprocity, and Empowerment

According to Pounder (1998), work group enhancement is a relatively less utilized or studied approach for fostering teacher involvement. She highlights the efficacy of teacher teams and argues that the work groups increase members’ responsibility for the group’s performance and outcomes, creates work interdependence, and provides opportunities for self-management. Pounder observes that some middle schools have redesigned teacher teams and empowered them with decision-making responsibilities that include: “curricular emphasis and coordination, student management and behavioral interventions, student class assignment and flexible grouping strategies, student assessment, staffing decisions and assignments, curricular and co-curricular

scheduling, coordinated parent communication, or budgetary allocations” (pp. 65-66).

By organizing work around students’ learning, teachers have greater knowledge of and responsibility for accountability and performance.

Pounder observes that “Hackman and Oldham’s work on job redesign (1980) probably represents the most comprehensive conceptualization of effective work groups to date” (p. 65). The recommendations of Hackman (1990, summarized by Pounder), which calls for a focus on work content to enhance work group effectiveness include: managing and supervising the work group as a team, not as a collection of individuals; keeping a clear and appropriate balance between the authority of the team and that of management; establishing specific and appropriate group structural features, because effective group structures tend to develop healthy group processes. Structural considerations include delineating work responsibilities, appropriate group composition, and clear and explicit specification of the team’s authority and accountability; providing appropriate organizational support for the team – such as a group reward system, training, relevant work or organizational information, and necessary supplies, materials, and equipment; and finally providing appropriate managerial coaching or intervention when a group is struggling (p. 70).

Pounder remarks that an interdisciplinary instructional team (IIT) offers the greatest promise for significant and substantive educational reform. Although such teams have predominantly appeared in middle schools (Clark & Clark, 1994, cited by Pounder, p. 71), my conception of smart education detailed in my topic foci paper cited earlier is proposed for K-12 education. Pounder observes that the chief responsibilities of IIT are: developing and implementing interdisciplinary curriculum and teaching strategies, based

on the developmental stage of the child; developing coordinated interventions and management strategies to address student learning and/or behavioral problems; and providing coordinated communication with parents. She cautions that beyond middle school level, the adaptability of a team work design to other schools levels in untested (p. 83).

It is interesting to compare similar reactions between teachers in the United States and the United Kingdom (UK), following the UK Government's drive to raise standards' through the Education Reform Act of 1988. Harrison, Dobell, and Higgins (1996) observe that with increased governmental legislations, pressures on teachers to conform to national decree grew and teachers could not assert their professional autonomy. (p. 45). I believe that useful lessons could be learned from these and other international experiences with educational reform. In their study with 12 secondary schools and four other organizations in South Yorkshire in the UK, the authors (1996) found evidence to show that teachers (whom they believe should see themselves as managers): agreed, almost without exception, that they *enjoyed working on task teams*, to work out specific policy/planning issues; agreed overwhelmingly that their own school needed a more effective management system—in particular, that *more open lines of management* were required; and were unanimous in their view that teacher-managers *do not receive adequate provision for staff development and training that they require* (p. 48). The recommendations of Hackman (1990) quoted in the previous paragraphs seeks to address these challenges.

From their study, Harrison, Dobell, and Higgins (1996) concluded that their interviewees shared a view that old pyramid-structures of authority were inefficient. The

authors remark that in the future, “fairness of opportunity must depend on the willingness of an organization to give speedy rewards to talent and teams to achieve best performances. In this way, an organization can help release what Handy calls the ‘E-factor’ (involving effort, energy, excitement, enthusiasm and emotion) among all its individual members and teams, to achieve the crucial E-factor of *effectiveness*” (p. 59). Similar observations were made by Hackman, cited earlier, and this raises issues of parity and reciprocity (Mergondoller, 1981, cited by Crow, 1998) that leaders must understand to facilitate meaningful collaboration. Parity involves establishing equal status among participants where all parties must have some power resources at their disposal. Making connections, valuing individuals’ contributions, and following up on information, mentioned earlier while discussing bounded rationality reinforces the importance of parity. Reciprocity encourages an active exchange in which both leaders and followers believe they are receiving privileges, benefits, and rewards for the efforts they have provided (p. 138). Crow (1998, p. 138) remarks that “such an exchange is necessary for collaboration, because parties must believe they are meeting their needs and accomplishing their mutual purposes” (Burns, 1978).

Pounder (1998) remarks that researchers have studied teamwork in noneducational organizational settings much more systematically than in educational organizations – perhaps because the use of work groups has occurred more in these organizations (p. 69). Acknowledging, “no author creates something utterly original” (p. xxiii), Fisher (2000) shared several concepts and skills useful for leaders based on his experiences. Empowerment is the most important of these concepts. Defining empowerment (E) as a function of four variables: authority (A), resources (R),

information (I), and accountability (A), Fisher expresses it as a formula:

$$E = f(A, R, I, A)$$

$$E = 0 \text{ if } A \text{ or } R \text{ or } I \text{ or } A = 0$$

He reinforces that if any one of the above variables is zero, empowerment is zero.

Understanding this, I believe, is critical for effective functioning of SDWTs and in this paper I have attempted to articulate this concern. Using a modified version of a definition used by the Association for Quality and Participation, Fisher (2000) defines SDWT as follows:

A group of employees who have day-to-day responsibility for managing themselves and the work they do with minimum of direct supervision.

Members of self-directed teams typically handle job assignments, plan and schedule work, make production- and/or service-related decisions, and take actions on problems. (p. 17)

Sergiovanni (2000), recognizing the unique characteristics of schools, calls for a move to embrace moral leadership, which is an idea-based leadership. He argues that, just like followers of constructivist theories of learning are moved by the integrity of ideas and the strength of their commitment to these ideas, leadership is more cognitive than interpersonal (p. 168). Both, Burns (1978, p. 4) and Sergiovanni (2000), observe that people will be motivated and inspired to follow moral leadership grounded in individuals' wants and needs, aspirations, goals, values, and commitments, among other ideas.

Conclusion

Research has shown that consensus exists for only few concepts related to

leadership. Bolman and Deal (1997, p. 299) observe that consensus exists for the importance of vision, ability to communicate the vision with passion, and the capacity to inspire trust and build relationships. In this paper, I presented my viewpoints on why I believe leading SDWTs might help increase performance and student achievement as long a leader embraces Sergiovanni's (2000) idea of morally based leadership. I shared my convictions as a passionate teacher and coach and proposed how SDWTs could enhance independent and self-directed learning among students and teachers. Finally, I observed that through competent instruction relevant to students and nurturing relationships, students might be actively influenced to demonstrate their expertise in criterion-based assessments designed by the state.

Although it appears that SDWTs might be an interesting model for leadership, several issues need further research as outlined in the previous section. The consequences of adopting such an innovative approach also needs further empirical examination. According to Rogers (1995), "consequences are the changes that occur to an individual or to a social system as a result of adoption or rejection of an innovation" (p. 30). Rogers (1995) proposes that these innovations should focus on two objectives: "What variables are related to innovativeness?" and "What are the effects of adopting innovativeness?" (p. 409). Rogers observes that change agencies that sponsor diffusion [a "process by which innovation is communicated" (pp. 5-6)] research tacitly assume that the consequences of innovation will be positive (p. 409). To critically examine such pro-innovation biases he suggests that correlation studies must be undertaken between the independent variables and prior dependent variables as depicted in the model in Figure 1

below.

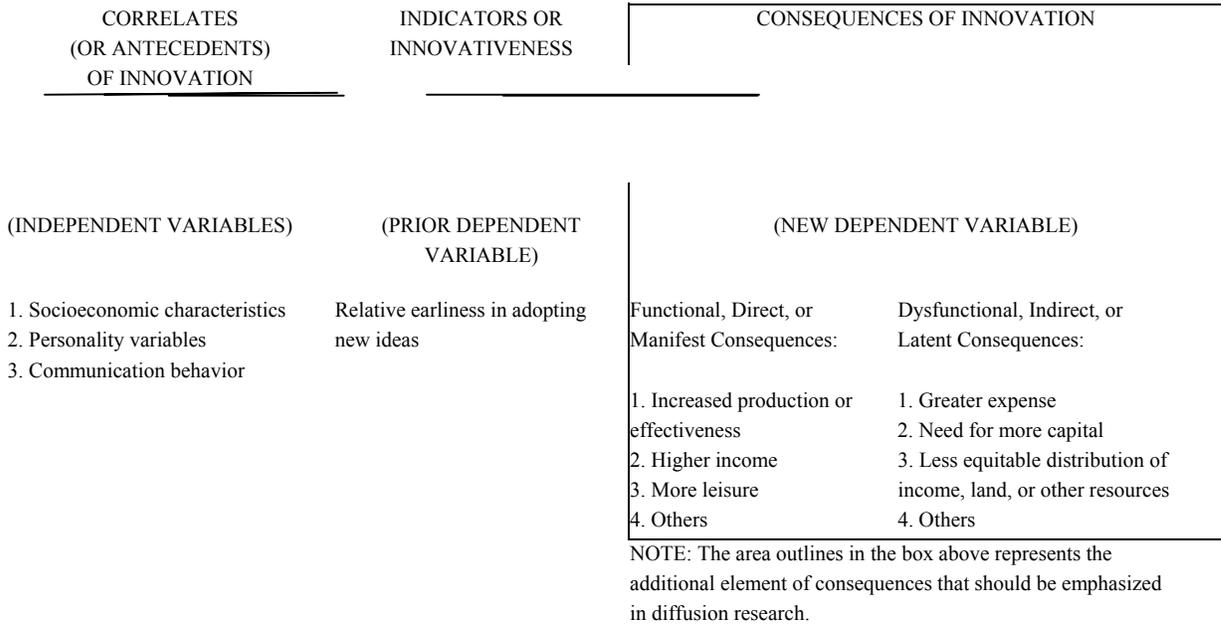


Figure 1 illustrating a model for studying the consequences of innovation, Rogers (1995, p. 410)

Two other questions remain in my mind: one, what consequences do the new dependent variables proposed by Rogers entail for organizations? and two, how do functional, direct, or manifest consequences blend with typical items that contribute positively to job satisfaction. For instance in the results of an independent survey (“Mental health tips–Job satisfaction,” 1998) on job satisfaction, ten items that employees ranked for their positive contribution were detailed: interesting work, appreciation and recognition, feeling “in on things,” job security, good wages, promotion/growth opportunities, good working conditions, personal loyalty, tactful discipline, sympathetic help with problems.

I will conclude this paper by proposing that the challenges for leading, managing, and performing in self-directed work teams calls for moral leadership that Burns (1978) and Sergiovanni (2000) advocate. I would like to study the feasibility of using SDWTs in

schools that I work, teach, and coach. Without widespread acceptance among most members in educational organizations, the seven *myths* about SDWTs in the industry that Orsburn & Moran (2000) describe:

Self-directed teams do not have to be linked to the larger organization, managers are not needed to play an integral role in the team's success, teams can flourish without strong support from management, a new team culture can be instantly created, self-directed teams are at the heart just like other kinds of teams, the growth of teams has to be carefully orchestrated, organizations will welcome self-directed teams. (pp. xix-xxiv)

will continue to be perpetuated. In my view, when more individuals in educational organizations share results from their empirical studies in their own organizations, these challenges can be met.

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