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Introduction

Douglas McGregor (1960) a thinker, leader, management and leadership theorist postulated over three decades ago that every leader has core assumptions about human nature and these assumptions influence the style of leadership practiced by the leader. McGregor's views on leadership are important because he was the first to apply behavioural science findings to the world of business and leadership. He postulated the core leadership assumptions (Theory X and Theory Y) to assist leaders question their underlying assumptions and perceptions about people.

Douglas McGregor (1960, 1967) believed that as companies become more competitive as a result of technological advancements the success of organizations would be more dependent on the dynamics of the people. McGregor was of the view that for most to be derived from people they are to be treated as individuals, each with their own set of values and motivations. McGregor pointed out that people must not be treated as machines but as living individuals who could be developed to help achieve organizational goals. He emphasized the importance of leaders caring about their attitudes of people because that potentially dictated the response they get from those they lead.

McGregor (1967) believed that paying attention to the human side of management and leadership was a fundamental requirement for the success of organizations. He was of the strong opinion that leaders could behave in ways that would result in high organizational commitment from their subordinates. McGregor advanced these views at a time when organizations involved in mass production often treated workers like interchangeable parts and got rid of workers as and when they wanted to. One reason for this callousness was because there were always people waiting to take the places of those who had been laid off.

McGregor anticipated that as the world of technology became more and more complex and complicated the importance of releasing the human potential at every level of the organization would emerge as the most appropriate working model (Heil and Stephens 2000). McGregor stressed the fundamental importance of dealing with the human side of enterprise. He pointed out that leaders should seek to treat their employees with respect and as living beings with individual goals. McGregor held the view that when workers are properly organized and encouraged to work together as a group, more could be achieved than could be imagined in terms of individual and corporate aspirations. Leaders who are bold to make such choices and saw the opportunities that come with realizing the potential of workers both as individuals and collectively would succeed more than those leaders with more traditional mindsets who treated workers as interchangeable parts.

Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y Theoretical Model

In his book the Human side of Enterprise; Douglas McGregor postulated two theories on human management and leadership: Theory X and Theory Y.

Theory X advanced the view that human beings have an inherent dislike for work and can only be made to get results at work by the application of coercive methods and by direction. Theory X emphasizes authoritarian style of leadership where results are the focus of leadership and it is more work-centered than people-centered.

Theory Y approach to management on the other hand, is more people-centred where the individual is valued and appreciated. Theory Y submits that when workers are given the right environment, they can reach their highest potential and can be of great value to their organizations.

Some authors consider Douglas McGregor's (1960) work as a basic theory of motivation, whereas others feel it is a philosophy of human nature and fits more logically into a discussion of leadership than basic motivation theories (Montana and Charnov 2000).

Douglas McGregor's (1960) ideas about leadership and managerial behavior had a profound effect on management and leadership thinking and practice. Traditional leadership had been hierarchical and very controlling where employees always looked up to leaders and depended on them. This could be highly disempowering and a waste of human talent and potential. McGregor (1960) thought that if leaders did not examine certain core assumptions they have about people; it could limit their appreciation and view of the strength of the human capacity for growth, collaboration and development.

In advancing his thoughts on a unique approach to leadership and management, McGregor's (1960) ideas were influenced by Maslow's (1954) need satisfaction model of motivation. Maslow was of the view that needs provide the driving force, and motivating behavior and suggested that worker disaffection with work was not due to something intrinsic to workers, but due to poor job design, managerial behavior and limited opportunities for job satisfaction. Maslow suggested a classification of needs related to the development of a person- lower level needs which gradually give way to higher order needs (from physiological needs, safety, security, social, affection, esteem, status and self actualization). A need satisfied at the lower level is no more a motivator of behavior according to Maslow.

McGregor (1960) argued that it is not wrong to exercise authority or give instructions but when unilateral authority becomes ineffective then an alternative of democratic involvement offers more returns than more authority which has been the traditional way of leading.

McGregor (1960) postulated, that leaders who hold Theory X assumptions believe that people are lazy, abhor responsibility and not motivated and therefore need to be coerced before they will work and show commitment. Such leadership assumptions lead to close supervision and control of workers and siphon the ingenuity of workers and results in lack of motivation in workers. Leaders, who practice Theory Y assumptions on the other hand, involve workers engage in joint-problem solving, understand the needs of team members and integrate personal needs of achievement with organizational objectives. Although with such an approach the leader facilitates and initiates the control process, it is done with the involvement of the workers in mind and can be encouraging and motivating for them.

Douglas McGregor's (1960) theories were interpreted by some leaders as managerial and leadership strategies. He therefore wrote a subsequent book in 1967 to dispel this notion and to bring home the fact once again that the theories address the underlying beliefs of leaders. The second reason for the 1967 work was to examine in detail the implications of particular sets of assumptions about people. In

his book, McGregor (1967) spoke of cosmologies.

A cosmology is a theory of the structure of the universe including laws that govern it. Cosmology is also a belief system or world view of a society. It highlights the beliefs of human nature of cause and effect. He was of the opinion that cosmologies do not lie on a continuous scale and are qualitatively different.

The belief that man is essentially like a machine that is set in action by the application of external forces differs in more than degree from the belief that man is an organic system whose behavior is affected not only by external forces but by intrinsic ones. Theory X and Theory Y therefore are not polar opposites; they do not lie at extremes of a scale. They are simply different cosmologies (McGregor 1967, 79-80).

On the second reason for McGregor's (1967) work on the implications of sets of assumptions about people, he mentioned that workers and leaders each have a degree of influence when it comes to setting goals and making decisions relating to work. He added that any style of leadership that will be used at a given time can be as a result

of analyzing each particular situation. Furthermore, McGregor discussed another important concept which relates to the principle of integration: Identification.

An individual who identifies with a cause, person, group, or organization is in affect saying that goals and values associated with that cause have become his/her own. He/she then self-consciously directs his/her efforts toward those goals and gains intrinsic satisfaction through their achievement (McGregor 1967, 145).

McGregor's (1960, 1967) theories have received support from a number of authors. Likert (1967) indicated that the type of supervision behavior, affects employee loyalty and attitudes towards managers, which in turn affect production levels. This is in agreement with McGregor who postulated that the core assumptions held and practiced by leaders engender a corresponding level of motivation and the outcome of employee commitment. Both McGregor and Likert emphasized the importance of behavior by leaders.

The practice of authoritarian leadership could affect employee commitment and work outcome negatively while involving employees and allowing effective participation of workers in the decision-making process has a positive effect on employee commitment and work outcomes. According to Likert, the leaders' behavior influences commitment which also influences performance. McGregor advanced the same thoughts, but he placed the emphasis on the core assumptions leaders hold. McGregor and Likert's models are however very similar.

One criticism, which has been leveled against McGregor (1960), which he acknowledged, is the fact that his theories postulated in 1960 did not consider the impact and role of environmental factors. Bennis (1972) pointed this out by saying:

McGregor's theory of organization depends on a psychologically determined set of superior-subordinate relationships... There are no technological factors, norms, or groups, nor are there economic, cultural, legal or political impositions (Bennis 1972, 148).

The criticism by Bennis (1972) appears to be more relevant to McGregor's (1960) work done earlier.

McGregor however incorporated the technological factors, norms, groups and environmental factors in his 1967 work. Bennis however still maintained the position that issues to do with the environmental factors were still not taken care of in McGregor's (1967) work because the impact of forces inside and outside the organization though addressed were not lucidly explained.

Marsh (1974) criticized McGregor's (1960) work by indicating that it was incomplete unless assessed under specific environmental conditions. Morse and Lorsch 1970; Marsh 1974; Nord 1978; Carbone 1981 and Goldstein 1986 advanced that Theory Y was too general and needed to be more specific. Marsh was of the view that Theory Y should be amended to read as "work is as natural as play only to the extent that the nature of work is in accord with abilities and talents of the workers and that people will serve and be committed to the objectives of the organization if there is minimal conflict between their personal objectives and the objectives of the organization" (1974, 87).

It is worth pointing out that with all the criticisms the authors did not discount the fact that leaders have core assumptions that affect their view of human nature and workers for that matter. The critics however stressed that the role of the environmental (internal and external factors) must be firmly brought into the equation.

Having set the stage by explaining McGregor's theories, the next discussion takes us to the various leadership styles examined in the context of his Theory X and Theory Y Theoretical models.

Assessing Leadership Styles in the Context of McGregor's Theories

Authors have given varied definitions to leadership but there is a general agreement that leadership involves a group and achievements of group goals. Bandura (1997) and Cassel (1954) posited that without goals, there can be no personal motivation for the attainment of goals since they do not exist. The style of leadership that sets clear goals for workers and provide the necessary tools and encouragement would motivate workers to give off their best. Maxwell (1998) defined leadership as influence. Influence according to Maxwell has the capability to change the behaviour of people and take them to heights of achievements they would normally not reach on their own.

Leadership is the backbone of the success of every organization. Different leaders

have used and applied different leadership styles. Research has unearthed varied styles of leadership with interesting outcomes. Grossman and Parkinson (2000) pointed out that the leadership style used results in a corresponding response from workers. A style of leadership which values workers, encourages and seeks their welfare which involves and guides them to get the work done will produce a committed workforce which will benefit the organization.

According to Bales (1950), there are two distinctive approaches to leadership

- task-oriented style which is concerned with accomplishing assigned tasks by organizing task-oriented activities and

- interpersonal-oriented style defined as a concern maintaining interpersonal relationship by tending to the morale welfare of others.

Bales' observation was further developed by Hemphil and Coons (1957); they labelled task-oriented

style as initiative of structure where subordinates are encouraged to follow rules and procedures, maintaining high standards for performance and making leader and subordinates roles explicit. The inter-personal oriented style labelled consideration, focus on creating a friendly environment and seeking the welfare of subordinates. These observations by Bales (1950) and Hemphill and Coons (1957) clearly defines and reinforces the Theory X (task-oriented style); and Theory Y (interpersonal oriented style); leadership assumptions.

Lewin's Leadership Research

Lewin (1930) carried out research into leadership; under three types of leadership styles: Autocratic Leadership, Consultative Leadership and Laissez-faire Leadership.

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership imposes tasks on workers and does not involve workers in making decisions. Lewin and Lippitt (1938) added that this type of leadership style discourages people and affects their commitment. Under autocratic leadership although there could be high production in terms of quantity, workers often make mistakes with lots of faults. Workers experiencing autocratic leadership could be apathetic, dependent and take no initiative in the absence of the leader. This type of leadership does not encourage or empathize with workers but places emphasis on work and shows little interest in the people and their involvement. This is a Theory X philosophy and does not engender commitment from workers.

Consultative/Democratic Leadership

In Consultative style of leadership, the group is involved, with the leader acting as a guide to the group members. Consultative leadership, allows subordinates to take part in the decision-making process. Much information as needed, is given to the group, including responsibilities. Workers under this kind of leadership style grow and show high levels of commitment, even in the absence of the leaders, and work with pride. It encourages the participation of group members by being part of the working process creating the right environment for workers; a Theory Y philosophy.

Laissez-faire Leadership

This type of leadership permits workers to do their own thing without guidance and give no direction to workers. Taylor (1992) mentions that this type of leadership does not create the right environment for growth and there is often a lack of commitment and desire to achieve. Due to the lack of interest by leaders in workers, workers become frustrated and show aggression. Laissez-faire leadership offers no team spirit. This style of leadership is influenced by the Theory X philosophy.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership occurs when "leaders approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for anotherSuch transactions comprise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers" (Burns 1978, 4). Transactional leadership style tends to emphasize the transactions and exchanges that occur among leaders, colleagues and followers.

Transactional leaders believe in the use of conventional reward and punishment methods in order to

gain the compliance of their followers. This approach to gaining the commitment of workers by extrinsic motivators (rewards and punishment) brings only minimal compliance from followers. Leaders who apply the transactional style of leadership tend to be directive, dominating and action-oriented without concern for the impact on followers. Due to the conforming nature of transactional leadership, it often accepts goals, structures and cultures of the existing organization and hence is ineffective in bringing change. Transactional leadership may be necessary in certain situations and has been widely associated with the military. This style of leadership is results and work focused at all cost. Leaders who apply this style of leadership have core assumptions influenced by Theory X philosophy.

Transformational Leadership

In Transformational leadership leaders begin the leader/follower relationship with a sense of responsibility for the growth and development of followers. Transformational leaders seek to enhance the relationship by arousing and maintaining trust, confidence and desire (Einstein and Humphreys 2001). A key objective of transformational leaders is to bring and develop followers to a level where they can successfully accomplish organizational goals tasks without the direct intervention of the leader. Burns (1978) believed that Transformational leaders are motivated by what he calls 'end-values' of justice, equality and human rights. Henry posits that the source of these end-values, such as justice, equity and human rights (Burns 1978, 430) are found in God.

Evidence suggests that practising Transformational Leadership can lead to significant levels of growth and rewards for organizations (Tichy and Ulrich 1984; Deluga 1988; Bass 1990; Yammarino and Bass 1990; Yammarino, Sprangler and Bass 1995).

A further addition to the discussion is the fact that Transformational leadership has been found to have a positive impact on follower satisfaction and effort, leadership effectiveness and overall organizational performance (Bass, Avolio and Goodheim 1987; Waldman, Bass and Einstein 1987; Avolio, Waldman and Einstein 1988; Hater and Bass 1988; Seltzer and Bass 1990; Gaspar 1992; Kessler 1993; Howell and Avolio 1995; Patterson, Fuller, Kester and Stringer 1995; Nischan 1997; Wofford, Goodwin and Whittington 1998).

Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman and Fetter 1990; Bycio, Hackett and Allen 1995 added that Transformational leadership behavior and practice is associated with employee commitment, trust in leadership and positive organizational citizenship.

Transformational leadership has a core assumption about people and workers that recognises human need and the need to encourage workers by creating the right environment and conditions for their growth. Developing the confidence of workers and allowing them to develop their self-worth is an indication of a type of leadership that believes in people and with the right core assumption, a philosophy enshrined in McGregor's Theory Y assumptions.

Situational Leadership

Paul Hersey (2002), the originator of situational leadership suggested that leaders first have to diagnose the readiness, willingness (motivation) and the ability of an employee as relates to tasks to be performed before deciding on the style of leadership that a person needs. He stated that leaders use two types of behaviors to influence employees: (Direction) task behavior and Socio-economic

support (relationship behavior). Task behavior has to do with the leader explaining what each follower is to do, as well as when, where and how tasks must be accomplished. Relationship behavior is the extent to which the leader engages in communication by providing socio-economical support and understanding the needs of employees (Hersey 2002, 87). An underlying assumption for this type of leadership is the belief and confidence that employees are capable when rightly guided on what to do and when leaders create an environment where support and listening to the concerns of employees are encouraged.

Hersey (2002) advocated the use of a situational leadership model that matches leadership style with the maturity of the subordinates. He advised that a directing mode of leadership is what is needed when subordinates first join organizations. He added that as subordinates begin to learn and become familiar with their tasks, progress, increased their ability, motivation and desire for achievement and seek greater responsibilities, the leader at that stage must adopt a supporting style. Situational leadership advances a dynamic and flexible approach to leading people where the motivation, competence and experience of subordinates are constantly assessed in order to determine the most appropriate style of leadership at any particular time. Hersey argued that if the most suitable style of leadership is applied at each phase of development, subordinates would be motivated to move towards maturity.

Situational leadership teaches the combination of Theory X (directive leadership) at the initial stages of employing subordinates and then moving on to Theory Y (supporting leadership). The leadership style used has a bearing on the level of motivation that is passed on to the workers to carry out their work.

Servant Leadership

Robert Greenleaf (1977) developed the theory of servant leadership. He is of the view that persons who are natural servants and those who understand they are servants first, are more likely to meet the "highest needs" of others "than the person who is leader first and later serves out of prompting of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations" (1977, 14). This statement by Greenleaf is in agreement with Burns (1978) contrast of transformational leadership with transactional leadership. According to Burns in transformational leadership, the leader and follower act as a system to assist each other improve in all facets of life. Burns defines transactional leadership as the leader engaging in activities that may or may not be beneficial for the leader. In transactional leadership the welfare of the employee is minimized and emphasis is on outcomes acceptable to the leader without due consideration to the followers. Motivating workers and creating the right environment to motivate workers is not the primary objective for transactional leaders.

Greenleaf (1977) added that servant leaders influence by example; by acting on what the leader believes. Greenleaf (1977) and Burns (1978) focus on others in the leadership-follower process.

Servant leadership emerges from the principle, values and beliefs held by the leader (Greenleaf 1977, 1996). Leaders who practice servant leadership have core assumptions embedded in their principles, values and beliefs and these affect their relationship with followers including the perception they have about workers.

Miles (1997) posited that workers are motivated when leaders ensure that their work environment help them become more effective. Conger (1989) argued that excessive bureaucratic control and

authoritarian leadership styles and jobs design affect morale and effectiveness of workers.

Greenleaf 1977; Bennis and Nanus 1985; Gaston 1987; Nanus 1989; Akuchie 1993; Snodgrass 1993; Snyder, Dowd and Houghton 1994; Kouzes and Posner 1995; Lee and Zemke 1995; Rieser 1995; Senge 1995 advocated that leaders could engender motivation among their staff by serving them and helping them to develop their talents and abilities to their full potential. McGregor (1960) encouraged leaders to merge organizational goals with individual goals as a means of encouraging commitment and enhancing maximum employee participation in the organization. Snodgrass (1993) does not agree that the primary basis for becoming a servant leader is simply found in the leader choosing to serve. He is of the view that becoming a servant leader transcends human knowledge and choice.

Collin's Level 5 Leader

The level 5 leader's concept was a result of a detailed five-year study undertaken by Collins and his research associates (22) which began in 1996. (Collins, 2001a, 2001b). The research was on 1435 companies from the Fortune 500 list focusing on their 20-year performance span. A finding from the research noted that only 11 of the 1435 companies underwent the good –to-great transformation. Collin's research also confirmed findings of other authors Miller 1985, Greenleaf 1998, Secretan, 1999, that even for leaders of the good-to-great companies, no leader does it alone and that there was some dynamic interaction between the leader and the environment.

Colin's research also made an important finding: when asked who was to be credited for success, the level 5 leader acclaims other people or attributed achievements to external factors. Importantly, level 5 leaders never played down on the capacity of humans to achieve the unimaginable, never blamed other people but rather had the right view of people and their worth, and saw the importance of creating the right environment for people to give off their best. The level 5 leader had appreciation for the fact that the success and the good fortune of a company or organization depends on its people /workers and therefore acted consistently to that belief. They also placed emphasis on what ignites the passion of the workers and encourages creativity. This leadership approach and thinking is systematic with McGregor's Theory Y which places emphasis on the role people play and the importance of having and working in the right environment.

Conclusion

McGregor advanced that if leaders do not examine certain core assumptions they have about people; it could limit their appreciation and views of the strengths of the human capacity for growth, collaboration and development. From the assessment carried out on leadership styles, there is significant evidence that the styles of leadership employed by leaders can be interpreted along the lines of Theory X and Theory Y, confirming McGregor's position that the assumptions held by leaders, undergird their leadership styles.

Furthermore, from the assessment it comes to mind that there are generally two distinctive approaches to leadership: the task-oriented style which is concerned mainly about getting tasks accomplished (work-focused) and the interpersonal-oriented style, concerned with interpersonal relationships by tending to the morale welfare of workers whilst ensuring that the work is done (people-focused).

And these are what Douglas McGregor posited as Theory X and Theory Y respectively.

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