Exploring leadership and conflict management styles for a job rotation case

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Abstract: Nowadays changes are frequent, businesses have to keep continually changing in order to respond to the vicissitude and turbulence of the environment, it is a routine to say today that "change is constant" (Ogburn. W, 1922). The current business environment is hit the global changes in terms of economic, social and geopolitical developments as well as changes in customer demands and expectations, competitors' behaviour, new regulations and laws, new technologies, etc. This study adopts the Thomas (1976, 1992) and Thomas & Kilmann (2002) conflict management styles as well as the leadership styles that deem to be influencing the conflict resolution process and the stimulation process (Hersay and Blanchard, 1988; Fred Fiedler, 1967; Chemers, 1984; Tannebaum and Schmidt, 1958; Goldman, 2000; etc.) This research aims not only to provide an overview on conflict and leadership theories but also to examine the influence of conflict management styles for a job rotation case. The study examines, different alternatives of conflict management and the use of leadership styles accordingly. The main aim of this analysis is to provide logical reasoning and evaluation of conflict management alternatives for a job rotation case, as well as spotting and evaluating barriers to change and identifying effective ways to overcome them.

1. Introduction

Nowadays changes are frequent, businesses have to keep up continually changing in order to respond to the vicissitude and turbulence of the environment, it is a routine to hear today that "change is constant" (William Fielding Ogburn, 1922). The current business environment is strikingly hitting by the global changes in term of economic, social and geopolitical developments as well as changes of customer demands and expectations, competitor's behaviour, new regulations and laws, new technologies etc. Edward Lawrence and Christopher Worley (2009, p.28) argue that businesses need to be able to anticipate change and to keep reconfiguring themselves. This statement is particularly interesting as resistance to change become inherent to any change management process. Different methods might be used to prepare the ground for change, known as readiness to change (Kotter, J.P. and Shlesinger, L., 2008). Research suggests that conflict management may be influenced by leadership styles adopted by the manager (Pierce & Newstrom, 2000).

This research adopts the Thomas (1976, 1992) and Thomas & Kilmann (2002) conflict management styles as well as the leadership styles that deem to be influencing the conflict resolution process. These styles are described in contingency leadership theories framework. The situational leadership approach of Hersay and Blanchard (1988) is basically formed around the two dimension of task behaviour and supportive behaviour[1]. The contingency approach of Fred Fiedler (1967) and Chemers (1974, 1984) provides the three sets of factors[2] for an effective leader. David Snowden and Mary Boon (2007) argue that leaders have to adjust their styles to fit the context. Robert Tannebaum and Schmidt (1958) emphasize that leadership may be question of a continuum styles between boss centred leadership and subordinate centred leadership. Daniel Golman (2000) identifies the six styles which affect 'working atmosphere and financial performance' (Huczynski, A. & Buchannan, D. (2014) organizational behaviour, 8th edition, Pearson, London).

However, and this is important to our current study that newly appointed leaders that are perceived as lacking experience, still young etc. must took charge and tell to the team what to do rather than being participative and asking for opinions from the members of the team because new leaders with low status when asking for inputs from the team may be seen as lacking of confidence and competence (Sauer, 2012). From another hand behavioural approach of Michigan University and Ohio states studies highlights the importance of the relationship, structure and role of leader to goal attainment, the managerial grid of Black and Mouton (1964) is exemplary, the effective leader is passionate toward his work and try to do the best to get people to stretch themselves to achieve high results. In nowadays, organization must adapt to fit the 'constant change', and this is not that easy because people still mourn their habits and are not willing to give up to change though. Organization start seeking leaders at all levels specially due to unstable business environment, while traditional theory argues that leader is a must to effectiveness, claiming the need for a new leaders or super leaders (Sims & Lorenzi, 1992), the distributed leadership theory, by contrast, assumes that leadership functions can be shared. Organizations in a remarkable rapid pace need to be frequently generating ideas and novel insights to problem solving (Gronn, P., 2002, 2009, Bryman, 1996, Caldwell, 2005). In this vein, Transformational leadership style is necessary to perform 'beyond the contract' involving the four Is[3] (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990, 1994), somehow related to the human relation school of thought and Elton Mayo the Howthorn effect in twenty century, the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire identifies fourteen competencies (Alimo-Metcalfe, B. & Alban-Metcalfe, J., 2002, 2003), transactional leadership is articulated in terms of exchange, swaps and bargain relationships with followers in return of what leader desires, yet related to the

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[1] The grid considers task behaviour as the amount of directions from leader to subordinates however the supportive behaviour concerns the backup the leaders provides to followers. The model identifies four styles: telling, selling, particpationg and delegating. (see Huckzynski and Buchannan, organizational behaviour, pp 669-70)

[2] The three factors are the structure of the task; the leader's power; relationships between leader and followers.

[3] Intellectual stimulation that encourage people to see what they are doing from new perspectives, Idealized influence that articulates mission and vision statement, Individualized consideration which develop the team to high productivity and finally the Inspirational motivation motivates others to prioritize the general interest of the organization.

'carrot and stick leadership' of Frederick Winslow Taylor in 1920, which involves the power of reward and punishment.

This research examines different alternatives of conflict management and the use of leadership styles in a job rotation case.

2. Literature review

We This section tackles theories and approaches involved in the conflict management and leadership styles.

2.1. Literature review on conflict and conflict episodes

The Conflicts are engendered due to disagreements and divergent interests and values between stakeholders, groups and organizations. Conflicts may be solved by management conflict through a combination of techniques of conflict resolution and conflict stimulating approaches[4]. Among views of conflict, radical framework sees conflict as inevitable and embedded in profit maximization of capitalist economy (Edward, R, 1976), managers as owner agents are trying relentlessly to control workers and downsize the costs (Ackroyd, S., Thompson, P., 1999), the workplace is turned systematically to an arena of hassle between the white collars and blue collars. Thus the conflict is dysfunctional and must be suppressed! The concept of resistance and alienation[5] (Jermier et al., 1994; Sagie et al., 2004) are essential concepts in understanding which style has to be adopted in a conflict situation and employees may use strategies to face off the conflict (Noon & Blyton, 2007), those strategies are basically oscillating around win-win, lose-lose and lose-win strategies. Walton, R. & McKersie (1995) distinguish between integrative (win-win) and distributed bargaining power (win-lose). According to conflict episodes in which latent conflict may be felt and perceived by parties before to blow up to manifest behavioural conflict episode that could alter the performance, people act to advance or advocate their position, an interval between cynicism (cold conflict) to hostility. Albeit conflict episode may end up, particles might persist in conflict aftermath stage and it is crucial to interpersonal relations development within the workplace. Nevertheless, the interactionist approach emphasize more the character pluralistic of the organization, managers and employees are likely to pertain to different social, economic and political structures and are likely coming from different social backgrounds, they are perusing different goals (known as bifurcation of interests), (see Selznick, 1949), thus the conflict is seen as functional conflict yet necessary and positive, a force to the organizations (Ellie, S. & Dick, P. (2003) introduction to organizational behaviour. McGraw Hill. UK.). The unitarist approach of the organization sees the conflict as transient phenomenon that could be alleviated if proper managerial

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[4] Conflict resolution to diminish or eradicate the conflict and conflict stimulation in order to increase the level of functional conflict.

[5] Alienation refers to the negative emotions of powerless and isolation engendered by the workplace and organisation design. Resistance restricts management to control and exercise power in a workplace.

actions have been taken. The three views have been widely discussed from the power perspective of the organisation by the scholars Burell and Morgan (1979).

2.2.Literature review on conflict management styles

Fayol in his book General and Industrial Management 1917, described the scientific management process as planning organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling, the process still relevant to modern era of management and the failure of application of the model causes enormous issues to the management. Conflict could arise due to failure of one or more of the pillars of this process: potential goals differences, tasks interdependencies, authority overlapping, time management and pressure, scarce resources, unclear rules, policies and procedures, hierarchy and incompatible structures, communication, liaison role and integrator role are among other reasons that could cause failure and defects.

Management might intervene to decrease or eradicate the level of dysfunctional conflict if it considered as being too high and conversely management can increase the level of functional conflict if judged as too little. Kenneth Thomas (1977, 1992) distinguishes five conflict approaches to conflict intervention using the dimension of assertiveness and cooperativeness[6]. The five models are defined as follows: Competing (assertive and uncooperative): When manager is looking up to his own interests and goals on detriments of others, he shows unwillingness to cooperate and create a win-lose situation by using rivalry options. Avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative): The manager sees conflict as parlous, thus he/she tries to overlook it and uses bureaucracy and procedures to stifle the conflict. Compromising (medium assertive, medium cooperative): The manager tries to trade-off, each party in the conflict mourn something to be lost in the deal. This falls under the assumption of partly lose-lose situation, partly win-win situation. Accommodating (unassertive and cooperative): The manager looks submissive to employees, looking for compliance. This quadrant of the grid indicates low concern for self (for self-face, selfish) and high concern for others, altruist (Ting Toomey, 1988). The manager in this case looks after relationships cooperation and harmony sacrificing his/her own needs. Collaborating (assertive and cooperative): Usually successful CEO is someone who knows what he/she wants and uses available resources properly (Thomas, 1977) In corollary, managers fall under this situation when they try to solve problems while undertaking integrative solutions where all can win (Lewicki, 1985), putting primarily the goals of the organization in the collimator. Conflicts result challenging in this case. This style copes perfectly with such environment affected by the 'constant change'.

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[6] Assertiveness is the attempt to satisfy own concern and cooperativeness is the attempt to satisfy other concerns.

2.3. Literature review on leadership styles

Leadership styles are crucial in change process and conflict management. Although, it exists an unlimited range of styles, authors have employed grids to classify them. McGregor (1960) argued that manager tend to use one of two assumptions toward the workforce, either management have to be directive and authoritative toward employees as they are lazy, lacking initiative, unimaginative, irresponsible…or to be cooperative, participative and consultative if the management judge the workforce as accountable. McGregor termed these assumption as theory X and Y[7] respectively. The leadership styles were likely to be adjacent to the notion of power, leaders might be charismatic, bureaucratic or traditional (Weber, 1948). The leadership styles are dependent to task concern or people concern, the university of IOWA studies (Lewin, 1939) highlighted the three styles: Autocratic, Democratic, Laissez-faire, Ohio state university studies led by Fleishman et al., 1957, argued that manager concerned by the initiating structure is likely oriented to results, in contrast, the manager concerned by consideration is likely to involve people on basis of mutual trust, respect and sharing ideas, the manager in this case is supportive and cooperative, Therefore, from 'one best way' to 'best fit', the contingency or situational leadership bring about a new and contending view of rational management, for Fiedler (1967, 1974) no best style under all circumstances, leaders according to the Least-Preferred co-worker coefficient (LPC) is assessed as task oriented or relationship oriented. Three aspects of leadership style arise: relations, task and leader's position power, these factors are termed 'the favourability of the situation'. Path-Goal Theory suggests that leaders affect the satisfaction, motivation and performance of followers (House, 1971; Evans, 1970). The theory identifies four leadership types: Directive leadership: giving directions, guidance and instruction to team members and asking them to follow literally the rules and procedures. Participative leadership: this style implies involvement and participation of followers in the decision making process by asking employees to share ideas and solutions. Supportive leadership: the manager is focusing more in relationships rather than on task performance. Achievement-oriented leadership: this style entails challenging goals setting and the manager shows confidence and trust in followers to excel the results. (See Peter and Waterman (1982) in search of excellence).

Likewise, these styles were mapped too in Blanchard and Hersey grid so far, the authors added up to supportive and directive leadership two other variants, the coaching style which stands for directions and support and the delegating style which favours the learning of employees undertaking delegated tasks. Leader-member exchange theory portrayed leadership as subjective and dependent to the dyadic relationships that leader is having with employees[8], which results in favouritism and politics (Liden & Graen, 1980, Dansereau et al, 1975). Omar Aktouf 1996 believes that although leaders pretend assessing subordinates on competence criterion for promotion and

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[7] Theory X concerns for task, theory Y concerns for employees.

[8] Graen et al argue that patterns of relation fall under two groups: in-group and out-group depending on how subordinates are perceived by the leader or manager. He tends the 'right hand' to in-group subordinates and 'hired hand' to out-group subordinates.

privilege, the impression-management is likely to be more reflecting the reality. Leaders prefer people to be like them which rise up the concept of clanism and the 'yes man' mentality. (Linstead, S., Fulop, L. and Lilley, S. (2009) Management and Organization, Palgrave, United Kingdom). Still leadership is comprehensive, broad and multidisciplinary, it involves culture and gender approach, and leadership is yet dependent to pluralism (collectivism) and individualism (particularism) approaches, to the openness of leader to other cultures which fall under the umbrella of diversity versus convergence approach (see Koen, 2005; Hall, 1959; Hofsted, 1967; Trompenaars, 1993; Dorfman, 2001; House et a., 2004). The gender approach is prolific to understand the women leadership and the problematic of glass ceiling (Wolstonecraft, 1970; Davidson, 1997; Hite, 2007; Wajcman, 1998; Davidson & Cooper, 1983). Conflict may arise if management doesn't take into consideration the gender and culture approach, it is also of importance to state that management has the opportunity to benefit from the two perspectives of styles if considering the gender approach to transactional and transformational leadership. Male management is often associated with transactional leadership due to masculinity and dominance power[9] expanded by the 'great man theory' and the trait approach; conversely transformational leadership is connoted to female management based on emotional intelligence, not to mention that diversity is more accurate in nowadays context as masculinity and dominance power is not the apanage of men and emotion intelligence is not the apanage of women. Diversity, contingency, situational leadership and MOSAIC[10] model resemble to 'best fit' the current context. Heroic leadership, narcissistic leadership (Freud, S., 1954, Cristopher, L. 1979, Rhodes, C., 2008), aesthetic leadership[11] (Sjostrand, 2007) and charismatic leadership are other variants of leadership treated by the literature.

3. The case of job rotation and conflict management styles adopted

The managers look for to enhance the polyvalence of their subordinates especially in a small business context, different alternatives might be presented. Since leadership alternatives are not about mathematics but about the science (social), art and the action of change and continual improvement. The leader ought to identify the conflict management style fit to the context, weigh up the pros and cons of each alternative and finally, the level of conflict that might arise from them, alternatives involve emotional intelligence, responding to ideas, and trying to change or influence people opinions if possible.

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[9] To extreme the dictatorship

[10] MOSAIC model stands for Mission and value, Objectives, Skilled workforce, Active flexibility, Individual focus, Culture that empower.

[11] Since nineteenth century, organizations were obsessed by scientific management, managers don't give room to innovation whereas leadership is an art and craft of leading people, and hence leaders resemble to artists and have to show mastery of the art of creativity. Aesthetic leadership emphasize concern for a joy for the poetic moments, managers create events that lead to full engagement of followers.

When the leader is adopting a passive, low assertiveness and high cooperativeness position, by simply backing away through the cancellation of any type of change and giving up on goals while focusing on compliance to other parties. In short term, this alternative might result comfortable and non-challenging since employees are not dethroned from their comfort zones, in particular, the employees with large experience. Additionally, the organisation would not upset the day to day performance, which in turn save time and money. However, limitations in long term are way high, forgetting about job rotation could leapfrog the benefits that might result from the adoption of the change. Employees will miss a grand opportunity of developing new skills, explore new interests and discover potential hidden skills and readiness for potential upcoming challenges and difficulties. Not to mention, the sense of boredom, monotony and routine, which are big factors of discouragement and lack of motivation. Given the potential significance of culture, especially the Moroccan context is high context culture[12] perhaps, employees might perceive the extent of power to relatively the status, the degrees, the age and the relationships network etc. in such context, the avoidance style can jeopardize the goals achievement and concede power to employees which in turn could endanger the leader position, in particular the employees would negatively perceive the leader attitude and augment the mistrust in his actions in the future.

In the dominance/competing style, the leader is adopting a battling attitude and authoritative commanding techniques in order to win, regardless of the employees' feelings and opinions. The leader uses the win-lose strategy, usually used in low context culture, the leader concern for self-face but it could result effective sometimes depending on the context and employees personality and engagement to the organization's goals, female can be slightly more cooperative toward the change comparatively to male (Walters, A., Stuhlmatcher, A. and Meyer, L., 1998), but female can be uncooperative against the 'tit for tat' strategy[13]. In short term, this option is disruptive, electrifying the atmosphere but would bring about efficacy in the long run if smoothly applied, the leader might increase the level of conflict in order to take advantage from employees altercation, the leader might use the devil's advocate[14] technique to understand what wrong and what to be corrected! It goes without saying that the leader with such traits if highly assertive would be perceived as confident and powerful! (Sauer, 2012).

Leadership can use another alternative by applying the compromising style; the leader therefor adopts a medium assertive and medium cooperative approach while willing to trade some of his/her preferences and opinions in order to win concession from the other side. In short term this

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[12] High and low context and the role of culture differences in business has been depicted in Edward Hall book, *the silent language* 1959.

[13] Actions done intentionally to punish other people because they have done something unpleasant to you (Cambridge Dictionary). Tit for tat was introduced by Anatol Rapoport, who developed a strategy in which each participant in an iterated prisoner's dilemma follows a course of action consistent with his opponent's previous turn. For example, if provoked, a player subsequently responds with retaliation; if unprovoked, the player cooperates. www.investopedia.com

[14] If you play devil's advocate in a discussion or debate, you express an opinion which you may not agree with but which is very different to what other people have been saying, in order to make the argument more interesting. www.collinsdictionary.com

alternative is confusing, disruptive and time and money consuming but in the long run, this approach is noteworthy in practice as the benefits of job rotation can be achieved with time. Likewise, the leadership in action is demanding in term of knowledge, the manager have to know the purpose of the job rotation and be aware of the organization goals sought from the change. In contrast, two points are remarkably worthy to mention, first, the leader if not wise, his demeanour can disadvantage the lady because of the shadow side of the negotiation[15] (Kolb and Williams 2000), second, female under any circumstance could tend to undervalue themselves in the negotiation. (Cary cooper, 1992). (See also the concepts of mommy track and glass cube).

Finally, the conflict management style might use a high assertiveness and high cooperativeness approach in order to make sure that every side is satisfied with the outcome. This type of conflict style requires open discussions, smoothing and negotiations of all the involved concerns and issues in order to explore alternative solutions and reach a commitment for both parties. Hence, in a try to sort out the conflict, the manager can use a win-win method, where he/she and all subordinates can be winners. Indeed, this is one of the styles that require more effort for the achievement of an agreement. Hence, the organisation will reach a BATNA (the best alternative to a negotiated agreement). Nevertheless, this approach doesn't all the time guarantee success, again it depends to other factors such as the gender and culture factors, experience, age, attitudes, engagement, participation to decision making etc., not to mention that collaborative style of reaching a consensus is extremely hard to reach since a lot of negotiation will be needed and a lot of meetings should be set, thereby if agreements are not reached, the company might look for assistance from arbitrators or consultants.

4. Conclusion

According to the contingency theory (Fred Edward, 1964), there is no perfect or optimal way to organize or lead people and organisation, instead, the optimal adopted leadership approach is contingent (dependent) upon a situation. In fact, there is no right or wrong style of leadership. The leader ought to intend to spread influence over employees throughout the process using framing speeches in order to achieve goals. Leadership, per se, doesn't exist, leadership involves influential power process, goals, followers and THE situation, thereby successful style is dependent to the angle of view. Achievements perspective is reductive vision and short-termist since in absence of people concern the goals are harmed for the long run. In our case study, the leader can use a range of styles congruent to each moment to build the team's moral, pride and spirit (see Klan, G. 2007) bearing in mind that power stake is overriding. The leader possesses in our case the position power that stem from the hierarchy, since then, the power can be misunderstood due to culture and gender

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[15] Kolb and William (2000) argue that 'any negotiation is caught in a web of influence, social value and informal codes of conduct' which influences expectations of what women should and can do. ((Linstead, S., Fulop, L. and Lilley, S. (2009) *Management and Organization*, Palgrave, *United Kingdom*)

triggers. The leader can use an admixture of power underlying the leadership style: referent, emergent, servant, expert, narcissistic, reward, even coercive and even romantic leadership[16]. Leaders have to use a range of theories contextualised to succeed to everyone by not necessary reaching the consensus, a round trip between transformational and transactional leadership is crucial to the influential process, multi-goal and multi-stakeholder approach is indeed of importance (Oghojafor et al, 2012; Rollinson, 2002). The leader has also to dispel doubt, fear and anxiety by clarifying objectives behind and beyond the job rotation. Training sessions, tests, role of mediator are of great utility to beat "stick to the knitting"[17], the resistance to change partially due to cognitive dissonance [18] (Leon Festinger, 1957). The role of mediation, storytelling and Soep Opera [19] techniques are helpful to manage the conflict situation. The leader narrate stories to clarity of how we can run things, based on past stories we frame the future, the mediator makes sense in such approach, by so, we can disclose already to people their psychology, so as they can avoid being conflictive as other personage of the story they did and lack the opportunity of learning and experience, doing so, the germinating seeds of future troubles are already suffocated, and as Pettigrew once said 'The received wisdom therefore is that change will take place through successive, limited and negotiated shifts.'

Lastly, change is not haphazard but a logical process that imply science as well as an emergent process that imply the art and the craft of decision making, Kurt-Lewin (1947, 1951) and John Kotter (1995, 1996) provided canvas and schemes to frame the change, and we may ask about the impact of change process models on conflict management?

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[16] (…The romance of leadership implies that we are inclined to attribute to leaders the credit for thrilling victories or the blame for agonizing defeats, even if they don't deserve it. We make these unconscious attributions to simplify the complex causal relationships often involved in significant organizational outcomes. As a result, we view the leader as the driving force for everything and anything that happens to an organization during the leader's tenure. Unsurprisingly, military institutions embrace the romance of leadership. By design and perhaps by necessity, they almost fetishize leadership…). Leonard Wong And Stephen Gerras (2017) Beware the romance of leadership.

[17] Although the expression is used as a theory to encourage managers to excel on what they are better on, here we used it in negative way tos ay, change could bring a fresh air to people and organization. This management concept is popularized by Tom Peter in his book, in search of excellence.

[18] (…According to cognitive dissonance theory, there is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions (i.e., beliefs, opinions). When there is an inconsistency between attitudes or behaviors (dissonance), something must change to eliminate the dissonance. In the case of a discrepancy between attitudes and behavior, it is most likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behaviour…).

[19] A Soap opera is an ongoing drama serial on television or radio, featuring the lives of many characters and their emotional relationships.

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