

## NECESSITY OF A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Leaders seem to have unique opportunities because their position makes them gatekeepers for some aspects of the experience of others. But what is leadership? Like all terms in social science, the concept of leadership is obviously arbitrary and subjective. An observation by Bennis (1959) is as true today as it was many years ago: "...the concept of leadership eludes us or turns up in another form to taunt us again with its slipperiness and complexity. So, we have invented an endless proliferation of terms to deal with it ... and still the concept is not sufficiently defined". Over the last decade, important advancements have been made contributing to our understanding of effective leadership. For example, we know a great deal about the effectiveness of various leadership behaviors, based on results of meta-analysis (Judge *et al.*, 2004). However, although recent theoretical works have emphasized the context sensitivity of leadership (Conger, 2007; Hunter *et al.*, 2007), empirical research in this field is still rare. That is, the contextual conditions under which the leadership-effectiveness relationships hold true are not yet fully explored. This gap in the literature calls for research on the important area of the contextual dimensions of organizational processes such as leadership. During the last two decades, leadership on the collective level has come under greater focus. This has arisen from the necessity to transfer leadership capabilities to the strategic assets of organizations that allow them to achieve performance on a daily basis with long-term success. That means organizational leadership capabilities that are based on the leadership skills and knowledge of organizational members on the one hand, and the extent to which these skills and knowledge are embedded in the structure of an organization on the other. Therefore, the measurement of organizational leadership capability is an important issue for improving organizational performance in the long term (Kurmet *et al.*, 2010). The capability of leadership exists at both the individual and the collective level, which together in their sum, forms organizational leadership. However, examinations of leadership are mostly based on assumptions that are widely shared across a diverse range of leadership scholars, such as "trait" theory, behavioral approaches, and "content-process" approaches (Conger, 2006). The efficiency and survival of business organizations is dependent on the selection and development of future leaders. It is obvious that organizations of all sizes face major challenges in preparing leaders that can handle major organizational challenges. To be successful, business organizations must be willing to invest in building leadership capabilities at all levels of the organization. Institutionalizing an effective leadership development culture is one of the most effective strategies for attracting and retaining talent, and ensuring competitive advantage in the long run. Therefore, organizations operating in a rapidly changing and hostile environment are called to develop mechanisms and systems that will enable its people to withstand the challenges of such a demanding business environment.

Keywords: leadership behaviors, influence skills, holistic approach, leader development, leadership development, business organizations.

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