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TOPICS
IN HEALTH PROFESSIONS EDUCATION
A GUIDE TO PRACTICAL WISDOM

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> *"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower."*
>
> **Steve Jobs**

Introduction

The ultimate goal of health professionals is to provide the best possible curative and preventive healthcare to the public under a particular set of circumstances. To achieve this goal, healthcare system involves multidisciplinary teams and constantly reforms. Effective leadership is important to achieve the goals of ongoing reforms in the healthcare system and to involve multidisciplinary health professionals at different levels. To address this, healthcare organizations such as the Association of American Medical Colleges and General Medical Council of the United Kingdom have set out frameworks and guidelines for leadership training for medical professionals (1,2,3).

Leadership is defined as diversely in the literature. However, in general, leadership is viewed as the ability to make others succeed and it is culturally oriented flexible development process. For more than a century, leadership theories evolved from born leaders to transformational leaders and from leader-oriented to follower-oriented. Several leadership styles have been described in different theories.

Leadership Theories

Leadership theories emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. The Great Man Theory was developed in the 1840s which claimed that leaders are born with certain inherent abilities and portrayed them as heroes (4,5). By the mid twentieth century, the Trait Theory described that inbuilt physical traits and personality characteristics distinguish leaders from non-leaders. Lack of consistent correlation between leadership effectiveness and their traits led to the development of new leadership theories (4,5,6). A decade later the Style and Behaviour Theory was developed based on a person's behaviour. Unlike the Great Man Theory, this suggested that leaders are groomed rather than born. It acknowledged the fact that certain leadership skills are necessary to be a leader

and believed that individuals could become leaders by learning from observation and experience (4,6). In the 1960s, the Contingency Theory was developed which stated that there is no single leadership style that satisfies the requirements of all situations and that leadership should be circumstantial. It put forth that the choice of leadership style depended on the situation and the qualities of the followers (4,5,6).

By the 1970s Situational Leadership, Process Leadership, Transactional Leadership and Transformational Leadership theories were developed. The Situational Leadership Theory proposed that the leadership style should be in accordance with the maturity of the followers and the leadership style should be relationship and task-oriented. It proposed that different leadership styles need to be chosen according to the situation (5, 6). Process Leadership Theory linked individuals' motivation with their needs to make the change. It addressed the welfare of the followers and social responsibility as a part of the leader's role (6). The Transactional Leadership Theory was described as the transaction between leader and followers and the followers are rewarded or recognized for achieving the goals. It has three components; (i) Contingent reward leadership appreciates the good performance by reward which motivates the followers. (ii) Management by exception (active) (iii) Management by exception (passive). In the active form, leader consistently monitors while in the passive form leader waits till things go wrong. Management by exception leadership does not acknowledge the followers who achieve more than expected outcome. It has been stated that transactional leadership may retard creativity and adversely affects the job satisfaction of the followers (4,6). Transformational Leadership was based on the development of followers and their needs and preferred participation of followers. Transformational leaders show idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration. This leadership theory possesses high moral and ethical values (4,5,6,7,8). More recently, in the early twenty-first century, the concept of Evolutionary Leadership emerged which is described as a continuous learning process where leader constantly stretching the boundaries to achieve a higher vision. The evolutionary leaders tend to transform the followers and organization as a whole (9).

Leadership Styles and Competencies

Based on the situational factors, leadership styles have been described as directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented. The behavioural approach to leadership identifies two basic leadership styles namely autocratic leadership style, where the leader takes the decision and supervisees the employees carry them out, and democratic/ participative leadership style, in which leader encourages employees' participation in decision-making by working with them. In a bureaucratic leadership style, leaders strictly follow the rules and