A Preliminary Exploration of the Changing Paradigms of

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ABSTRACT: Globalisation and disruptive changes have made the organizations realize the need and importance of leadership in turbulent times. The frenetic pace of change, significant growth in technology, scarcity of resources and changing business models pose immense challenges to the organisations to keep competitive. One critical factor for the success of organisations in such times is the capability of the leader at the helm of affairs. This paper is based on findings from Consultancy Service industry and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) industry, which were evaluated through appropriate statistical techniques (surveys and factor analysis) to find out the critical individual capabilities one should build and inculcate to be an effective leader in turbulent times. The findings suggest that to effectively lead through turbulence a leader will need to be authentic and set directions for others in the team. The leader who can adapt, use analytical and innovative thinking during turbulent times and avoid negative approach through excellent communication will lead a more productive group of followers. This study will be of significance to practicing leaders, researchers, and development experts who are involved in exploring different dimensions of leadership in times of complexity and turbulence.

Keywords: leaders, leadership skills, turbulent times, India.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Turbulence and Change

Turbulence in corporate world means uncertainty which often results from intense changes and countless challenges in this global economy (McLester, 2004; Austin, 2002). A recent study has predicted that the exponential sample of current change is so sudden that we would be observing the counterpart of all the key milestones of the twentieth century by the year 2025 (i.e. electricity, internet, automobile, nuclear energy, space journey, human genome sequencing, WWII) in less than a week (Modis, 2003). In the midst of these progresses, will come varying issues concerning the role of business within our global society on a number of fronts comprising of globalization, demographic changes, insufficiency of natural resources, and fading social structures (Connor and Mackenzie-Smith, 2003).

This kind of turbulence places new expectations on organisational leaders all the time as it demands additional transparency, societal involvement and a justifiable corporate social

responsibility (Martin, 2007). What is common among organizations nowadays is that each faces identified and unidentified threats to its existence (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1984; Perrow 1984; Shrivastava, Mitroff, Miller, & Miglani, 1988). The more evident and predictable the threat, the possibility of its people and systems using innovative understandings, processes and perspectives to deal with it turns out to be significantly more. Critical challenges faced by many organizations include adoption of sustainable production processes, integration of cultural diversity by organizations and the different role global businesses play in the society. To remain competitive organizations attempt to integrate this societal change into business continuously.

1.2   Leadership at a Glance

Regardless of business, the location or size, the world is experiencing a fundamental change that will influence the very nature of work and leadership (Hamel, 2007; Wheatley, 2001). Within the framework of modern organizations, understanding how to best deal with and survive large scale changes has become a significant factor in their execution (Szamosi and Duxbury, 2001). Leadership in this scenario has been the source of extensive investigation than any other aspect of human behaviour but interestingly when Rost (1991) analyzed around 587 articles on leadership it was found that 366 of the papers did not offer any common definition of leadership. Stogdill in 1974, elaborated different skills a leader should possess like, ‒adaptable to situations, observant, ambitious, assertiveness, and cooperative, decisiveness, dependable, influential, energetic, self-Confident, persistent, and tolerant of stress‖.

A conspicuous change can be noticed in the nature of leadership. Leadership in today's business scenario is coming up as a continuum of service. The service-oriented leader of the 21st Century puts up a culture of community (Goldsmith, 2006), shared purpose, and service (Rao, 2006), and treats staff and other stakeholders as social group and partners (Stallard and Pankau, 2008), and with utmost dignity (Fairholm, 1996). Eventually, a leader is not judged so much by how fine one leads, but how well one serves. Every single value and contribution is attained through service. Leaders serve the society, an organization, the workforce, customers and relationships.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the nature and traits of leadership are transforming in light of ever increasing complexity and instability and what exclusive skills will be required in a leader to handle the trauma of difficult times. This paper is based on primary findings (applying the generally accepted research methods in human resource development that incorporates survey and factor analysis) from Consultancy Service Industry and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) Industry. These sectors were chosen as the area of research as their contribution to the resilience of the economy is significant, which has enabled them to survive major crisis (The Economic Times, June 2012).

The paper attempts to explore various paradigms of leadership in turbulent times and is accordingly divided into seven sections. After the introductory Section, Section 2 reviews some classical and significant works in the field of leadership, Section 3 details the question for the

research study; Section 4 describes the data and methodology; the result of the study has been depicted in Section 5, Section 6 discusses the implications and finally Section 7 concludes with the scope for future research and findings of the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: BACKGROUND FOR THE RESEARCH

In this section, we have briefly looked at some of the major theories, observed various styles of leadership and reviewed some of the traits and characteristics that leaders should have to achieve better organizational results.

2.1 Great Man Theory: At first, leaders were considered to be born and not made. It was believed that leaders were exceptional people, gifted with exclusive qualities, destined to influence and lead (Carlyle, 1907). The term "Great Man" was used because leadership in the latter twentieth century was considered largely as a male, military and western concept. Galton (1869/1870) was the first person who conducted an authentic study of this approach. Influenced by Galton's study of the hereditary background a number of early theorists of great men tried to explain leadership on the basis of inheritance. The Great man theory ultimately developed into what is known as ‒trait theory‖ of leadership.

2.2 Trait Theory: Based on the characteristics of many leaders and a finite set of personal traits, this theory helps in distinguishing effective from ineffective leaders. One of the first trait theories came about at the time of the famous Greek physician named Galen. He proposed that the personality of human beings was a reflection of four hormones (fluids). There are some other traits which have also been linked to successful leaders. Stogdill and Bass (1982) characterised leaders by task accomplishment, self-confidence, tolerance of interpersonal stress, and the ability to influence the behaviour of others. Researchers very often have disagreed over which traits are most significant for an effective leader. Leadership exist in abundance and there is no universal list of traits for successful leaders (Adair, 1990).

2.3 Behavioural Theories: Researchers believed that behaviour, unlike traits can be learned. This theory takes a different approach as they determine what effective leaders do rather than figuring out who effective leaders are. The study of leadership in this period mainly focused on leadership styles and leadership functions (Mullins, 2000). Blake and Mouton (1964) took the most path breaking step in understanding the behavioural aspects of leadership and proposed a more comprehensive theory called 'Managerial Grid'. This theory categorizes a range of management behaviours based on a variety of ways the task-oriented and employee-oriented styles can correlate with each other. The Grid provides an advanced learning package with probable applications for those who wish to study organisation development (Yukl, 2006). With this the researchers developed several other useful leadership models like transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and contingency or situational leadership.

2.4 Transformational Theory: J.V. Downton was the first author to coin the term ‒Transformational leadership‖, in his book, ‒Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma in a Revolutionary Process‖, (Pielstick, 1998). Transformational leadership displays the concept of change, and the leaders according to this theory are said to be value oriented, self-aware,

flexible, competent, and sensitive to the individual needs of a team (Burns, 1978). The ultimate purpose, as the name reflects, is transforming and moulding of followers' goals, vision, and sense of principle into an organized team. This style of leadership focuses on concern for people and their individual needs. Bass and Avolio (1993) further classified skills of transformational leaders into "Four I's" namely, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

2.5 Transactional Theory: Assuming that people are mostly motivated by conventional reward and punishment, this theory highlights the importance of the bond between leader and followers, where the leader delivers rewards or recognition for the obligation or loyalty of the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Burns (1978) stated that the difference between transformational and transactional leadership lies in what leaders and followers put forward to one another. With the passage of time a number of researchers have added to Burns original theory. Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) suggested that transactional leadership deals with different ways to handle the status quo and sustain the day-to-day operations of a business. It does not consider the future of the entire organisation, situation or employee into account while offering rewards (Crosby, 1996).

2.6 Situational or Contingency Theories: Situational theories are also known as Contingency theories, which meant 'something depended on another uncertain event'(Owens, 1995) for leadership. Among the various contingency theories that the researchers have proposed, the most famous was developed originally in 1982 by P. Hersey and K. H. Blanchard which was termed as **"**situational leadership‖ theory. Unlike Blake and Mouton's leadership grid, this leadership theory holds that the most appropriate behaviour or action of a leader depends on the situation and on the followers. In this theory, 'Leadership effectiveness' depends on internal and external factors called as 'situational variables'. This approach was originally called *"zeitgeists"* (Luthans, 1998).

2.7 Indian Approach to leadership: Indian and Western business leaders both deal with demanding worlds and convey a vision of where they want to take their enterprise. At the same time, Indian and Western executives have evolved distinct leadership styles that, in India's case, have helped motivate unexpected business growth despite challenging business conditions (Useem, 2010). Indian approaches to leadership gives importance to practical aspects of life. Ancient Indian approach to leadership is a great approach and is a highly useful tool for any aspirant who wants to become a leader and for any leader who desires to be efficient in his operations and create effectiveness in the organization (Gopalakrishnan, 2000). Indian business leaders think broadly and act rationally. They first set plans and then continually test the same through trial and error, to check what works and what does not. Indian leaders deeply emphasize on creativity and adaptability (Basu, 2012).

3.   RESEARCH QUESTION

Previous studies have revealed that the leaders need to be attuned to the real-time situation and the best way of bringing problems under control, lie with leaders who apply good business

management qualities to resolve critical issues. This paper is thus an attempt to answer the following question:

Research Question: What are the most important skills and traits required in a leader to handle the trauma of turbulent times?

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Instrument

The present study incorporates a questionnaire survey approach and the primary data for the study was collected with the help of the same. Available instruments, articles and existing body of literature on leadership theories, skills and its role in combating crisis were analyzed.

The first instrument used in the study is Emotional Intelligence Scale instrument. The instrument consists of 33 items and its purpose is to help individuals understand and develop emotional competencies and skills to reach their potential as well as to improve their performance in a critical situation. The second instrument used in the study is Benchmarks 360° feedback instrument (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2003). This tool consists of 13 items that describe the behaviours required for leadership excellence. Available questions from Emotional Intelligence Scale and Benchmarks 360° feedback instrument (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2003) were adapted and refined. Combining 46 items of both the tools, a self structured 15-item questionnaire was developed to measure leadership capability in managing turmoil in an organizational context. These items have been constructed based solely on the review of literature and considering the objective of the research study and were measured on the five-item Likert scale.

To ensure the reliability and internal consistency between the items, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. Initially the questionnaire was pre-tested on a small sample size of 30 respondents, whereby the cronbach's alpha came out to be 0.78, which is an acceptable reliability coefficient.

4.2. Sample, Procedure and Measurement

The population of the study includes personnel of the Human Resource (HR) Departments like HR Vice President, HR Manager and HR Executive from Consultancy Service Industry and ITES Industry. The companies are located in Delhi and National Capital Region, hub of industrial India. The companies were shortlisted based on the addresses obtained from the local yellow pages. There were 120 companies which had clear address and contact numbers, and were therefore included in the final sample for the study. In total 120 questionnaires were emailed to the personnel of the HR department of each company. Out of 120 questionnaires distributed, 92 questionnaires were found to be usable. This gave a return rate of approximately77 %. The data was collected between June and September, 2012. All the questionnaires were sorted and the variables were thereafter coded. The questionnaires were

analyzed using the SPSS statistical software (version 17.0). A factor analysis was carried out, where the factors were extracted from principal component analysis using varimax rotation (Table 1).

Table 1. Rotated Component Matrix

Skills required	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Alertness/agility	.869	-.140	.095	-.007	.002	.036	-.059
Downrightness	-.826	-.155	.161	-.159	.099	.088	.089
Global sensitivity	-.553	-.062	-.074	.248	-.313	-.038	-.133
Decisiveness	.081	.871	-.121	-.239	.152	-.046	-.085
Analytical	-.132	.796	.116	.238	-.090	.191	.011
Disciplined/Committed	.410	.567	.106	.038	-.401	-.177	.288
Straightforwardness	.006	.038	.908	.046	.052	-.006	.005
Motivating employees	.007	-.014	.904	-.086	-.041	.048	.081
Employees' Participation	.207	-.147	.795	.078	.078	.141	.222
Excellent Comm.	.176	-.052	.095	.793	-.004	-.104	-.046
Influencing People	-.292	.118	-.216	-.068	.887	.347	.230
Directing Employees	-.122	-.013	.063	-.082	.603	.014	-.059
Competitive Environ	.233	.167	-.051	.268	-.361	-.770	.221
Cultural Diversity	-.066	-.004	.070	-.021	.029	.666	.030
Innovativeness	.192	-.152	.119	.301	-.023	.104	.951

5.   RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Research Question: *What are the most important skills and traits required in a leader to handle the trauma of turbulent times?*

A factor analysis was performed where the varimax rotation method was incorporated for the detection of factors each of which is related to few variables. This finally reduced and narrowed down 15 items to more specific and relevant 7 factors. These we named as: *Adaptability, Analytical Approach, Setting Direction, Excellent Communication, Authenticity, Global Outlook and Creative thinking* (Table 2). These are those leadership skills that are exclusively needed to thrive in turbulent times. To get more insight on these specific leadership skills in combating tough times we again did a review of some of the available major literature on them which along with the importance of each of the 7 leadership skills is briefly described below:

Table 2. Specific leadership skills crucial during turbulent times

Factors	*Leadership Skills*	*Specific Leadership Skills after Factor Analysis*
1	Alertness/agility Downrightness Global sensitivity	Adaptability
2	Decisiveness Analytical Disciplined/Committed	ical Approach
3	Straightforwardness Motivating employees Employees' Participation	Setting Direction
4	Communication	Excellent Communication
5	Influencing People Directing Employees	Authenticity
6	Competitive Environment Cultural Diversity	Global outlook
7	Innovativeness	Creative thinking

5.1 Adaptability

We found that one of the critical skills needed for leaders during turbulent times is adaptability. Adaptability is the ability to be flexible, agile, and adjustable and show initiative during times of change and uncertainty (Joiner and Josephs, 2006). People with this skill are both flexible and versatile. Flexibility is categorized into five attributes namely, confidence, tolerance, empathy and respect for others. On the other side, versatility traits are characterized by resilience, vision, attentiveness, competence and self-correction (Heifetz, 2009). Adaptability helps in making adjustments with a small measure of resistance. This trait is a hallmark of a transformational leader and calls for self-development and self-awareness in order to bring in and develop a culture of adaptability in an organisation. Adaptive leadership can be used in a crisis situation to bring in constructive transformation in the company as needed according to the changed environment.

5.2 Analytical Approach

Different times call for different approaches but some of the basic tools remain the same and one such tool is an analytical approach. One of the critical attribute which emerged in the study as significant in leaders for managing turbulent times is an analytical approach. Badillo in 2007, in his study mentioned that analytical approach involves releasing oneself from locked up thinking and getting out of the box. This skill stands out as an effective way in diagnosing problems where an individual does some scenario thinking, explores new concepts and starts connecting the dots. As new problems appear in the way of progress, this skill becomes a core part to overcome any hurdle. This also reflects that the power of thinking critically is important in times of increased complexity and change, because the demand of the hour is coming out with new ideas, and not looking for the solutions with the same old approach (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). It can thus be implicated that critical thinking in times of uncertainty helps in refined analysis of information, more flexibility in thinking and use of more logical inference.

5.3 Setting Direction

When the change is sudden and unprecedented one major function which a leader has to perform is set direction as stated by John Kotter (1990) in his classic article ‗What Leaders really do'. Kotter asserts that managers cope with complexity but leaders cope with change which has become inevitable in today's environment of competition and volatility. This setting of direction is less about planning but more about vision. This is also a trait of transformational leaders as stated by Bass and Avolvio in their description of Idealized influence. In 2001, Szamosi and Duxbury, contributed in the field of research, mentioning that there are some vital changes, such as a lay-off, merger or acquisition, which may disturb an organization's goals and strategies. Effective leaders must reorganize the company's direction to sustain the change and ensure future success. Setting an appropriate direction ultimately provides motivational accountability, reduces confusion and conflicts, enhances performances and leads to better time and resource management.

5.4 Excellent Communication

In the hyper mediated world of today, communication is assumed unheard of significance as messages travel across the globe at the flick of a button. Goldsworthy in 2009, in his study, has very clearly portrayed communication as the lynchpin of leadership. As has already been researched and concluded that during turbulent time's communication channels have to be

most active and no space should be left empty lest grapevine fills it. Thus excellent communication emerging as a critical attribute in the study was expected. An excellent communication creates an atmosphere in which timely and high quality information flows efficiently within an organization that eventually encourages open expression of ideas and opinions. In a turmoil state of affairs, the business leaders tend to avoid disclosure, which is a wrong approach to cope up with turbulent times. Tough times involve more frequent communication (Rost, 1991). Communicating openly during challenging times can eventually help in building teamwork and cooperation among employees. The skills to listen, invite questions and create effective two-way communication generate trust and can prevent problems during times of change.

5.5 Authenticity

In turbulent times when trust is most needed if a leader is not authentic or trustworthy nothing else will matter. It is the value system or ethos of the leader which followers will listen to, actually in times of change messenger is the message, if the people trust the messenger then only will they trust his message. Authenticity is being loyal to the truth of who you are (George, 2003). Authentic leaders perceive themselves and others truthfully and take responsibility for their feelings and behaviours for all time (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). They demonstrate high levels of modesty to their intentions and commitments. Brown clearly defined in his paper what actually authenticity calls for. Authenticity means signifying consistency between words and actions, and being consistent in the various roles that leaders play. Living an authentic life is more rewarding than hiding your true self. When one lives authentically, he doesn't have to worry about what he said, how he acted, or whether he did the right thing. The most revered example of authentic leadership according to the authors is Mahatma Gandhi, who lived a life of such transparency that his life became his message. Authentic leaders know themselves—their own values, strengths and weaknesses. This helps in preparing them to manage themselves, and others, under unfavourable circumstances.

5.6 Global Outlook

The world today has turned into a global village, with cross border movement of products and people increasing by the day, we have literally become citizens of the world. It is impossible for an organisation to stay local, constrained to one's own country or region and still survive forget about succeeding, growth in the present environment is fuelled by a global approach only. Leaders who appreciate the cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs and values of the foreign markets that they visit and factor in political and historical p erspectives will find entry and existence easier than those who think of the world as one big market. As we are aware that the mantra today of business success is _glocalisation' which is _go global but act local' that means appreciating local values and beliefs. Major factors that make global thinking crucial for future are the remarkable increase in global trade, and integrated global technology, like e-commerce. Technology can help break down barriers to global business (Greco & Roger, 2003). If survival is the aim in the new millennium, then change becomes imperative. Change is obligatory not only in the work, but in the thoughts of how we think about ourselves, organisation and our lives (Stogdill, 1974). A successful organizational leadership should be strong on global concerns and emotional intelligence to create competitive advantage in this transforming landscape. The smart organizations will be

the ones who seize these transformations as an opportunity and the key to the same lies in dealing with three interconnected dimensions of organizational change i.e. leadership, technology, and culture simultaneously (Applebaum et. al, 2010).

5.7 Creative Thinking

If it was expected of business executives to be sensible in their spending till yesterday, today they are being asked to be miserly, cost cutting is the mantra of coping with the present difficult times. To remain competitive in such times innovations and creativity are most needed in the corporations of the world to find ways by which more can be done by less and how more can be delivered to the customer. In such environment innovative leadership is the skill to view situations from various perspectives and produce unique approaches to problems (Choi, 2004; Adelman, Parks & Albrecht, 1987) and it also helps in perceiving the world in new and remarkable ways. Innovative leaders persuade and inspire innovation, thoughts and out of the box thinking. Adil Malia, Essar group feels ‒Innovation is very likely to be an inherent part of an organisation in India, especially since many businesses here are entrepreneurial in nature‖. The top leadership of the organization must do value creativity themselves and be enthusiastic about encouraging new development. Diversity is a key ingredient for innovation to take place. Leaders should therefore encourage creativity and innovation through creating a friendlier environment for diversity to thrive. Thinking-Outside-the-Box requires individuals and businesses to dare and develop their way of thinking. It provides a path to create and implement innovative ideas and solutions to address difficult situations. Leadership today focuses on continuous adaptation and improvement and it is imperative that leaders understand strategic and operational aspects of change.

6. DISCUSSION

Implications for Consultancy Service Industry and ITES Industry

The literature review shows that over the past decade, mega-trends like changing regulatory structures, availability of product in abundance and e-commerce and information technology, would probably have a deep impact on businesses and markets (Useem, 2010). In order to fuel the growth of both Consultancy Service Industry and ITES Industry, effective leadership skills are needed to lead at the managerial level. The seven leadership skills that were extracted in the present study with the help of factor analysis are; Adaptability, Analytical Approach, Setting Direction, Excellent Communication, Authenticity, Global Outlook and Creative thinking. Though any manager in any industry would need these skills but the need of them in the two mentioned industries is absolutely critical. One of the most important leadership skill, a consultant needs is the ability to communicate well with others, seek information and influence diverse set of people. Working with people with multitudes of perspectives constantly calls for being analytical and having an ability to come up with creative ideas and all this with authenticity and credibility. Parks, in 2005, mentioned that when it comes to consulting, to be triumphant in one‘s area, one has to think of many solutions to the same problem as there is no sitting back and letting someone else seize the opportunity. Badillo, in 2007, mentioned, over the next decade, an intensifying number of powerful drivers of change in business that leads to

turbulence will call for a higher concern on authenticity, innovation and adaptation, by both organisations and the consultants that look forward to serve them.

Given the unique nature of the ITES Industry global outlook to the external environment becomes very critical in order to match customer's ever changing demands and remain competitive. Being the main provider of these resources, the IT department plays a key role in analysing and ascertaining that the organization is able to connect the skills and capabilities of the entire workforce (Henderson & David, 2008). As technology keeps on advancing and plays a vital role in enabling business strategy in ITES sector, IT companies would need to take account of the value-chain right from inventing to innovating in business models, to executing till enhancing the technology offerings. Satisfying and retaining clients is of utmost importance to the CIOs, therefore being authentic towards the people, policies and system on his part, plays a vital role in flourishing and sustaining the growth of the business. In order to meet client's needs and to build up strong customer base, adequate communication skills and active listening skills are required to understand and to empathize with customers.

7.   CONCLUSION

In an environment, where existing management viewpoints and approaches are repeatedly being challenged, this paper has tried to explore those leadership skills that are emerging in India because of the rapid shift in the corporate scenario. The present study would help organisation nurture leadership spirit in their employees through imparting these skills and attitudes through training support. While further research is needed to understand the flexible nature of challenges, the present study would aid as an advantage to researchers as well as organizational practitioners. This paper adds significance to the existing body of work due to its distinctive future perspective and its practical implications. As the capacity to find the right skill in the right place becomes more complex, the hunt for high-potential leadership talent will therefore require going beyond traditional pools (Sahni, 2000).

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