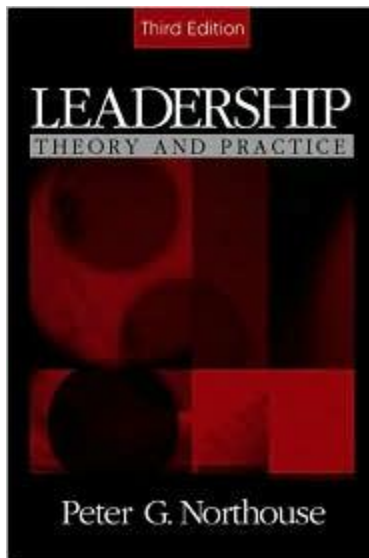


Dr. Aneeta Madhok



Book review

Northouse, Peter, G. Leadership: Theory and Practice, Fourth Edition, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007. Price Rs. _____

Leadership is not an easy subject to capture in theory and practice. Academics and researchers have for long tried to capture the essence of how leaders are born, made and thrown up in the socio-cultural milieu, and place their findings for the world to learn from. The theory of leadership is vast as the subject is complex and difficult to formulate into one clear theory that would be applicable universally. Added to the complexity of the situation is the changing nature of society with the onset of globalization on a scale never seen before. While some of the fundamentals of leadership don't change, the nature of issues and competencies required by leaders to succeed in this changed context, do undergo a change. As a result, many approaches are possible as is evident in the range of theories that have been put to the test. The best way for students to learn about the subject would be to study these various theories and make this knowledge a basis for discussion and debate that will provide road maps for them to follow in their quest for achieving true leadership.

This book by Peter Northouse is a good way to begin the leadership journey. It puts together different theories and approaches to leadership from an academic and teaching perspective. It discusses at length the trait, skills and style approach to leadership with full academic references to research and existing literature. There is a comparative view of research on traits of leadership and the Big Five Personality Factors as well as the role of Emotional Intelligence in leadership. The description of skills of leadership traces the

Three Skill Approach and provides a road map of individual attributes, competencies, and leadership outcomes of skills of leaders. The Style approach to leadership takes stock of the pathbreaking Ohio State Studies and the University of Michigan studies on leadership and the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid.

There is considerable depth coverage of some prominent theories like the Hershey and Blanchard Situational Leadership, Fiedler's Contingency Theory, House and Mitchell Path-Goal Theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, and Bernard Bass's pioneering seminal work on Transformational Leadership. It goes on to outline and elaborate on various approaches to Team Leadership and group dynamics. There is a thorough treatment of Freudian psycho analytics and Jungian typologies in the chapter on Psychodynamic Approach. The chapter on Leadership Ethics traces the theoretical domains of ethical behavior and lays out principles of ethical leadership. Practical applications of theory are available in the short case studies and measuring instruments available at the end of each chapter. Also, adding some depth to the book are the descriptions on the strengths and criticisms of each approach. Two new chapters in this fourth edition are on Women Leadership and Culture and Leadership and these are welcome additions. The role women in breaking the glass ceiling in the ascent to top level leadership has been discussed at length without really looking at the emergence of feminine leadership styles as acceptable in a man's world. Cultural diversity across the globe has been outlined and the imperative of leadership to be inclusive of socio-cultural groups has been emphasized.

As a basic book for beginners who are studying or researching the topic of leadership, it's an excellent sourcebook of elementary material and references. For teachers of the subject of leadership it does seem to meet 60% of the requirements of being an essential text book so can be prescribed for student reading on leadership. The book however falls short of the debate and discussion required to stimulate higher level of thinking. The fact that depth is missing is evident from the fact that ethics of transformational and charismatic leadership is a hotly debated topic and this is given fairly cursory treatment in the book. The world view on the criticality of leadership versus management does not find too much space, and the role of leadership in creating organizational climate and building enduring institutions and societies that go beyond management is an entirely missing perspective. So also, issues of leadership in dyadic situations like boss-subordinate relationships have not been covered. The role of leader as a mentor and coach does not find any place in this book either. Emergent issues of leadership role and influence on dealing with issues of corruption and terrorism are also not touched upon.

The book builds concepts in the areas it touches upon. It is an approach that adds thinking to action and belief but has the inherent disadvantage of getting people to *say* the right things and not necessarily *do* the right things. Teachers and trainers of the subject have to invest their energy in not only building cognitive maps, but also in skill building which this book does not enable. It is left to the reader to build bridges between rhetoric and reality. The true test of leadership lies not in the way we think, but in the way we act and the way in which we influence others. Knowing the theories sows the seeds of debate and discussion needed to work with one's belief systems and to clarify the leadership and

interpersonal propensities that one carries. The beginning of building leadership skills is always with knowing oneself and working with that. After all, it is who the leader is and not what he says and thinks about leadership that matters. These are some leadership fundamentals that don't change.

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Reviewers Profile:

Aneeta Madhok, MBA (XLRI), PhD, CMC, Dean, Centre for Human Resources at the S.P. Jain Center of Management in Dubai and Singapore, is an academician, and a professional trainer and teacher in the field of Organizational Behavior and Human Resources Management. Dr. Madhok graduated with a degree in Psychology Honours from Delhi University and completed her MBA in Human Resources and Organisation Development from XLRI, Jamshedpur. After having extensively worked for eight years in all areas of Personnel Management and HRD, she undertook doctoral studies and completed her Ph.D. in the field of Managerial Leadership and Work Motivation in 1991. Dr. Madhok looks for opportunities to translate management practice into theory and vice versa. She is keenly interested in the ways that individuals integrate themselves with organizations and group dynamics in teams. Her research and consulting work has led her to provide insights and management process solutions to several leading organizations. She has to her credit over 70 publications including refereed articles, consulting projects, newspaper articles and book reviews published nationally and internationally. She is the immediate Past President of the Institute of Management Consultants of India, fellow of Sumedhas Academy for Human Context, a Certified Management Consultant and has been the recipient of scholarship awarded by the Foreign Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, and the Best Management Teacher award of the Bombay Management Association.