M.K.Yermekbayeva

*Kazakh-British Technical University JSC, Almaty*

# Kazakh Organizational Leadership Style Development: action-centered leadership vs. situational leadership

The article is devoted to the study of organizational leadership and consideration of the features of leadership theories. Different researches in regard to this issue tend to be aimed at identifying the relationship between leadership and power, the influence of a certain style of leadership on the well-being of the organization, which may be connected to the production objectives as well as the interests of workers. The author identifies certain leadership styles, such as situational leadership theory and concentrated leadership, as well as some specific aspects of the welfare of the organization. The effectiveness of leadership style is determined by a variety of situational factors. The author also considers the relevant methods of developing leadership skills of Kazakhstan companies' leaders.

*Keywords:* leadership, theory of action-centered leadership, situational leadership, Kazakhstan companies, leader, development, culture, skills, performance.

For the past 20 years leadership is the topic of management development programs because many leadership theories have been proven to inspire employees to achieve department and organizational goals [1]. It is important not only to recognize a challenge for leadership but also take first step in awareness that leadership is a demanding and vital vocation [2].

The action centered leadership theory proposed by John Adair is based on the three areas of managerial leadership activity. The main idea of this theory is to manage team, achieve task and develop individual and do these three things simultaneously. The areas of overlap in three interlocking circles are important particularly the one in centre. The leader is effective when he/she keeps the balance and the amount of attention given to each circle is approximately equivalent [3]. The theory is focused on what leaders need to do to be effective emphasizing more on training of leadership skills and less on selection [4]. So, the ideal position of circles within action centered leadership theory is presented below (Figure 1).
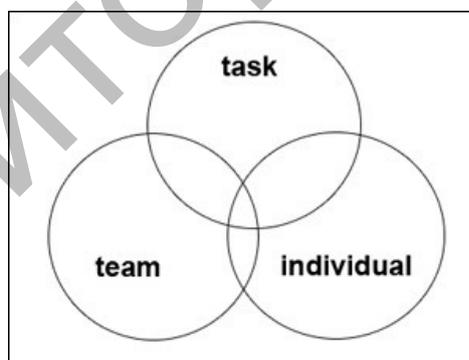


Figure 1. Adair's Action-Centered Leadership Model [5; 283]

In previous times people think about leadership linking to particular individual, nowadays the idea of leadership moves towards the group of people within organization [6; 19–26]. Littrel [7; 21] argues that there are three dimensions in Asian leaderships have been identified: task orientation (production), consideration orientation (people) and moral character building. Consequently, there are some alikeness with leadership tendency of Kazakh management, their culture and values.

The 'task' circle is what organization expects from employee to accomplish. In other words the leaders have to be effective in work performance and make sure that job is done or produced effectively. It is also noteworthy to mention about authoritarian leadership style applicable that time in Soviet Union which is still effective and partially influence nowadays [4]. Consequently, it shows that task orientation has a significant meaning for employees of the majority of Kazakhstan companies. Besides it is argued that Kazakh business

leaders like some Asian colleagues from China put more emphasis on growing revenues and talent shortages comparing with American counterparts who are more focused with customer service and product quality [8].

The 'team' circle means how to build a good team to produce work effectively. Nurmi [3] argues that teamwork facilitates management and leadership, improves communication and creates innovation. According to Dobbins and Pettman [2], leader is a linker who brings together all talents of team members to have a winning team. In Kazakhstan companies general cultural values between different nations are important to consider because they have some similar peculiarities due to historical background. They are, for instance, seniority, which means priority and is considered as respect to elder people. The similarity is that young people living in villages are more following old people rather than same generation in big cities because city is more exposed to external changes and the use of modern technologies develops young generation learning process much quicker.

Besides, Kazakhstani culture accentuates on parent's leadership covering communicating, collaborating, caring, controlling and coaching aspects [10]. The authoritarian leadership style partially presented in Kazakhstani companies [11] and poor interaction of leadership competencies between team members creates the environment of group identity of ideas.

The 'individual' circle is attention to every individual of the team. The leader has to pay attention to these employees in order to have a winning team. On the one hand task orientation challenges individual to get new knowledge, skills and experience. Moreover, a positive approach towards work performance allows individual be closer to a leader and have opportunity to learn leadership skills. On the other hand a Maslow's hierarchy of needs representing physiological, safety, affiliation, esteem and self actualization needs may affect individual at stage of self esteem to take another approach towards task orientation style. At this stage person need motivation, recognition as result of effective work from others and establish reputation or own status in organization [11]. Therefore it is important for leader to listen to individual, provide assistance, pay attention when required and create healthy team atmosphere where new ideas are born and as a result encourage people to new products, developments, services and effective work performance.

Thus we can argue that current position of circles within action centered leadership theory in Kazakhstan companies [12] represents low focus of attention from management to teams and individuals (Figure 2). Individuals are de-motivated and need to be developed within area of soft skills development and feedback process. It also might be argued that action centered leadership approach works only at operational level, because task is not strategy and do not give any perspectives to measure it. However, if organization structure is properly designed and managed by effective leader this approach may also work.
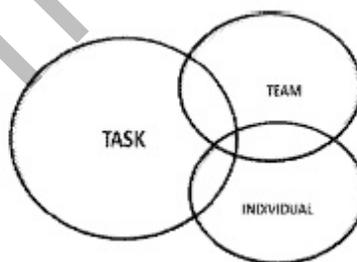


Figure 2. Action-Centered Leadership Theory in Kazakhstan (created by author)

Another significant theory in leadership development is situational leadership model proposed by Hershey and Blanchard. This model is based on three interactive interplays, two of them are relationship behavior, task behavior and the third is readiness or maturity level of employee to achieve a task [13]. According to McKenna [11] maturity consists of two parts: job maturity and psychological maturity. Job maturity relates to technical knowledge and task related skills and psychological maturity to confidence, ability and willingness to carry out the task and be responsible for own behavior. The effectiveness of this leadership is increased by matching level of leadership style and maturity level of employees. Hershey and Blanchard leadership model is highly applicable because it considers people as main resource to fulfill task and achieve organizational success. The maturity level of followers is important part of leadership behavior analyses and this model is simple to understand and apply.

As a result of situational nature, situational leadership applies on the assumption of present situation and circumstances (Graph 3). Therefore, it is important for leader to select appropriate leadership style (tell-

ing S1, selling S2, participating S3 and delegating S4) towards the groups or individuals who are at the different maturity stage because it effects work performance and overall organization success as well as the professional and personal learning and development process of follower. Even the same task within one group may require leader to apply different leadership styles to different followers as the maturity level of employees is not always the same.
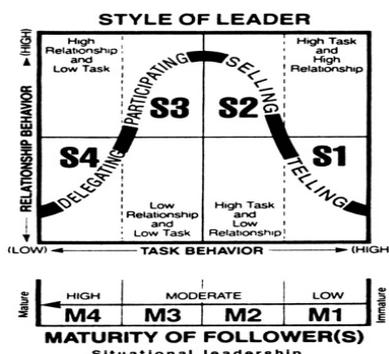


Graph 3. Situational leadership theory [1; 300]

The style 'telling' (S1) is appropriate for the employees where they are unable and unwilling. In this case a leader should provide clear instruction and step by step process [14]. There are some leaders for whom such employees are relevant because followers suit leader's strategy by understanding nothing and only performing work. These employees are like 'raw material' and if they are given with exact tools, information, knowledge and appropriate motivation they perform their job. The style 'selling' (S2) is complicated than 'telling' because employees have willing but no ability. If a leader gives motivation for continuous learning then follower is expected to provide good results. The style 'participating' (S3) is for the employees who are experts in their jobs. Leaders should get more explanatory role and motivate their followers. To some extent line managers might be more interested to retain such employees rather than employees themselves. The leader use 'delegating' style (S4) when followers are able and willing to perform job. At this stage the leader should interest follower, provide information, support and assistance.

There is a tendency in Kazakhstan companies, managers contend that their subordinates do not require additional soft skills for their personal development. The managers are more interested in the employees' hard skills developments that help subordinates be more professional in their area. One the one hand it is the consequences of task orientation. However, it can be argued that managers still want their personnel to develop skills to perform in a better way. On the other hand, this is a negative sign, meaning that the leader does not allow his/her subordinates to attend soft skills trainings such as communication, effective negotiation or English learning classes because it does not correlate with the works associated with these skills. Such leader selects participating leadership style (S3) whereas employees are able and competent but inexperienced or de-motivated (unwilling). The maturity level of subordinates allows leader to apply delegation style (S4) although the latter is not encouraged to delegate because of fear to lose control of functions or being replaced. According to Hershey and Blanchard leadership model a leader at the stage of participating style (S3) should reduce relationship behavior so that the learner can begin to accept responsibility for own risks and progress towards high maturity with low task and low relationship behavior [15]. It means that in most cases managerial involvement is not required with the exception of significant problems. This allows leaders to have more free time and be focused on higher value tasks that are critical and important for organization growth [14].

Mastrangelo, Eddy, Lorenzet [15] highlight professional and personal leadership. Professional leadership is to provide direction, process and coordination in view of achieving organization's goals. Personal leadership is personal behavior of leader by performing the responsibilities of professional leadership including demonstrating expertise, building trust, caring and sharing for people and acting in moral way. In the context of Kazakhstan companies issue we see that professional leadership is prevailing personal leadership and this can be critical and risky for organization because it has some uncertainties with overall readiness of tomorrow people who will be able to respond to any external or internal change [12].

John Adair's theory gives understanding that if organization has a good position of circles meaning a balance between task, individual and team, this organization may increase their productivity and get stability

of tomorrow day. In case with Kazakh companies we see that task orientation circle dominates other circles as individual and team. The ineffective communication with individual demonstrates poor interest from management side which is risky for employer, employee and organization as a whole. Consequently, employees can be very disappointed with leadership style and request from management significant changes in different forms.

Therefore to get balance and put this circles proportionately, it is recommended to conduct anonymous e-test among all employees. It is important to note that it is e-test and for motivation purposes inform employees that the test with best ideas will get awards. The test should contain different questions, standardized responses and suggestion part. The standardized responses may help to determine current situation in area of weakness such as communication, learning from feedback, knowledge sharing. The purpose of suggestion part inclusion into e-test is to collect ideas. The results of test with the best ideas should be anonymously distributed. This test will help employer to identify gaps in people leadership and if required reinforce strategy towards motivation by tangible and intangible values.

The situational leadership model gives 'response' to the present situation emphasizing on how leader perceives this situation but it did not involve such issues as the leader's characteristics and the perception of followers. It has been argued by Chen and Silverthorne [5] that the higher leader's leadership scores, the higher willingness and job satisfaction employee has towards work and the lower the employee's job stress and the lower the employee's turnover. As for Kazakh companies, it is critical to mention that Line Managers are more interested to develop hard skills of employees rather than soft which make the last ones to stay in S3 position and a leader to follow with participating style of leadership.

However, it is argued by Hersey [5] organization should focus on employees to improve leaders' leadership skills, because there is no leadership without someone to follow. So, in order to push leader to use delegating style of leadership and move followers from S3 to S4 position it is recommended to analyze training needs of these followers and prepare training plan with focus on soft skills development. Moreover, it is important to discuss and share knowledge with Line Managers about delegation and if required to organize training course for them. This will be as experiment group which gives not only a picture of the employees' potential including their strengths and weaknesses, but also a tool for management to promote employees and assess their readiness to respond to tomorrow change.

The complexity nature of today's organization and changes in external environments require leadership efficiency and mastery. It is important to recognize that leadership in organizations coincides not only with task performance but also with other leadership capabilities as building relationships, fostering trust and goodwill. The successful leader in twenty one century is the one who has to develop not only knowledge, skills and abilities but also willingness to lead and partner with others to achieve organizational goals.

## References

1 Feldman D. *Leadership as a resource — interpersonal skills* // Aslib Proceedings (Vol. 39), 1993, No. 10, P. 299–301.

2 Dobbins R. and Pettman B. *Give leadership* // Equal Opportunities International. (Vol. 16), 1993, No. 4, P. 19–29.

3 Nurmi R. *Teamwork and team leadership* // Team performance management. (Vol. 2), 1996, No. 1, P. 9–13.

4 Raiklin E. *The disintegration of the Soviet Union // International Journal of Social Economics.* (Vol. 20), 1993, No. 3, P. 2–132.

5 Chen J., Silverthorne C. *Leadership effectiveness, leadership style and employee readiness* // Leadership & Organisation Development Journal. (Vol. 26), 2004, No. 4, P. 280–288.

6 Lloyd B. *Leadership and Learning* // Leadership and Organisational Development. (Vol. 15), 1994, No. 4, P. 19–26.

7 Wang J. *Understanding managerial effectiveness: a Chinese perspective* // Journal of European Industrial Training. (Vol. 35), 2011, No. 1, P. 6–23.

8 Conte V., Novello D. *Assessing leadership in a Chinese company: a case study* // Journal of Management Development. (Vol. 27), 2008, No. 10, P.1002–1016.

9 Low P. *Father leadership and small business management: the Kazakhstan perspective* // Journal of Management Development. (Vol. 26), 2007, No. 8, P. 723–736.

10 Low P. *The value of diversity: the Kazakhstan perspective* // Journal of Management Development. (Vol. 26), No. 7, P. 683–699.

11 McKenna, E. *Business Psychology and Organisational Behaviour A student's handbook.* 3rd ed. East Sussex: Psychology Press Ltd., 2000, P. 352–383.

12 Ardishvili A., Gasparishvili A. *Leadership styles of Managers in the Countries of the SNG* // World Economy and International Relations, 2002, № 002.

13 Papworth M., Milne D., Boak G. *An exploratory content analysis of situational leadership* // Journal of Management Development. (Vol. 28), 2009, No. 7, P. 593–606.

14  Hind M. *The challenge of Managing People* // Logistics Information Management. (Vol. 5), 1993, No. 4, P. 38–41.

15  Page D. *Leadership in Management — some popular theories reviewed* // Education + Training. (Vol. 25), 1993. No. 3, P. 91–96.

16  Mastrangelo A., Eddy E., Lorenzet S. *The importance of personal and professional leadership* // Leadership & Organisation Development Journal. (Vol. 25), 2004, No. 5, P. 435–451.

М.К.Ермекбаева

## Ұйымдық көшбасшылықтың қазақ стилінің дамуы: шоғырланған және ахуалды көшбасшылық

Мақалада ұйымдық көшбасшылық және көшбасшылық теориясының өзгешелігі қарастырылған. Бұл сұрақтың зерттелуі көшбасшылық және билік арақатынастың басын ашуға бағытталған, ұйымның игілігіне таңдалған көшбасшылықтың түрі қалай ықпал етсе, сондай-ақ жұмыскерлердің мүдделерімен тікелей байланысты. Автор көшбасшылықтың келесі стильдерін белгіледі: ахуалды көшбасшылық және шоғырланған көшбасшылықтың теориясы, сонымен қатар ұйымның игілігінің нақты аспектілері. Басшылық стильдің тиімділігі түрлі ахуалды факторлармен негізделеді. Және автор қазақстандық компаниялардың басшылық дағдысының дамуының релевант әдіс-айлалары тізімін ұсынды.

М.К.Ермекбаева

## Развитие казахского стиля организационного лидерства: концентрированное и ситуационное лидерство

В статье изучено организационное лидерство и рассмотрены особенности теорий лидерства. Исследования этого вопроса, как правило, направлены на выявление соотношения лидерства и власти, влияние определенного стиля лидерства на благополучие организации, которое может быть связано как с производственными целями, так и с интересами работников. Автором статьи выделены определенные типы стиля лидерства, такие как ситуационное лидерство и теория концентрированного лидерства, а также некоторые конкретные аспекты благополучия организации. Эффективность лидерского стиля обусловлена различными ситуационными факторами. Также автором рассмотрены релевантные способы развития лидерских навыков лидеров казахстанских компаний.