



Ghassan Aouad

Chancellor of Abu Dhabi University, Past President of the Chartered Institute of Building (CI...
1w

Leadership Schools and Philosophies: A Historical Journey

Leadership is a timeless concept that has played a pivotal role in shaping societies, organizations, and individuals throughout history. Over the years, numerous leadership schools and philosophies have emerged.

The Great Man Theory of Leadership, which dates back to the 19th century suggests that some individuals are born with innate characteristics that naturally make them skilled leaders. The term "great man" was used because, at the time, leadership was primarily associated with male qualities, especially in terms of military leadership

The trait theory of leadership emerged in the 1930s and focused on identifying the inherent qualities and characteristics that make an effective leader. This school of thought emphasized that certain attributes, such as confidence, intelligence, decisiveness, and charisma, are essential for effective leadership.

During the 1940s and 1950s, behavioral theories gained prominence, shifting the focus from inherent traits to observable behaviors. These theories emphasized that effective leadership is not solely determined by personal traits but also by the actions and behaviors of the leader.

In the 1960s and 1970s, situational leadership theories emerged, emphasizing the importance of adapting leadership styles based on the situation and the needs of followers. This approach recognized that effective leadership is context-dependent and requires flexibility.

Transformational leadership, which gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, focused on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. Transformational leaders foster trust, encourage innovation, and promote personal growth among their followers.

During the same period, servant leadership emerged as a contrasting philosophy to traditional leadership models. The servant leadership emphasizes leaders' commitment to serving the needs of their followers and the community. Servant leaders prioritize empathy, humility, and fostering the personal development of their followers, aiming to create a positive impact on society as a whole.

Authentic leadership gained prominence in the early 2000s and emphasizes the importance of leaders' self-awareness, transparency, and genuineness. Authentic leaders strive to align their actions with their core values, building trust and credibility among their followers. This philosophy recognizes that leadership effectiveness is closely tied to leaders' ability to be true to themselves and others.

By understanding the historical development of these leadership schools, we gain a broader perspective on the diverse range of ideas and practices that continue to shape leadership theories and inform contemporary leadership practices. Post COVID 19, a new leadership philosophy will emerge.

"The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority." Ken Blanchard

[Hamad Odhabi Mohammad Fteiha Khulud Abdallah Abu Dhabi University](#)



197 · 14 Comments