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NEURO-LEADERSHIP APPROACH TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Dr. VS Chauhan
Professor- Acharya Bangalore B School.

Abstract
Neuroscience research is expanding at rapid speed with the growth in brain imaging technology. As research in neuroscience expands, the linkages with leadership and leadership development are providing fertile grounds for the development of better and better tools and techniques that help increase the managerial and leadership productivity and effectiveness. It is imperative to identify the factors influencing both backward and forward linkages of neuroleadership. The findings of which would help provide input to neuroscientists for conducting further research in the new field of inquiry.

Key Words: Neuro-leadership, Organizational Change, leadership development, Neuroscience .

Introduction

In a competitive business environment, organizations rely upon their leaders to facilitate the changes and innovations required to maintain competitive advantage. Leaders are perceived as persons who can single handedly create order out of chaos, navigate organizations through unthinkable environmental turbulence, bring efficacy out of mediocrity, and thrive where weak minds quickly fade away. Leadership is changing over a period time, with the changes in employee requirements and organizational goals. Leaders are found to have influenced followers in many ways, including coordinating, communicating, training, motivating, and rewarding. The fact that management and leadership research in the previous century has improved our understanding of human work environment conduct. Recent developments in neuroscience field remain undiscovered. With the fast emerging social cognitive neuroscience research, a new field committed and focused on investigating the methodologies inside the brain that underlie or impact human choices, practices, and communications in the work environment.

Emerging field

Neuro leadership is an emerging field of study connecting neuro scientific knowledge with the fields of leadership development, management training, change management, consulting and coaching. Neuroscience is the study of how the nervous system develops, its structure, and what it does. The field's focus is on the workings of the brain, and although it was originally classified a s a sub--discipline of biology, it has become a more inter-disciplinary science that works closely with other fields such as mathematics, linguistics, engineering, computer science, chemistry, philosophy, and medicine and now in management decision making. Thanks to the emerging field of neuroscience, technological advances in functional magnetic imaging (fMRI), and brain mapping initiative to help understand the workings of the brain to see the physical link these and other management practices have to the brain.

Role of Neuroscience

Leaders and HR professionals are continuously searching for better ways to engage, connect, and lead others. New advances in the field of neuroscience may help us unravel the physiology of leadership effectiveness. Neuroscience is the study of how the nervous system develops, its structure, and what it does. The field's focus is on the workings of the brain, and although it was originally classified as a sub -discipline of biology, it has become a more interdisciplinary science that works closely with other fields such as mathematics, linguistics, engineering, computer science, chemistry, philosophy, and medicine (Nordqvist, 2012). This emerging field is still in its infancy, and neuroscientists acknowledge that there is much more that they don't know about the brain at this time than they do know. Technologies like fMRI and Position Emission tomography (PET), however, have shown definite neural connections in the brain that have allowed scientists to develop a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of the brain and behavior. Neuroscience insights are applicable to the workplace in the following areas:

- *How to promote creative thinking?*
- *How to structure rewards?*
- *Role of emotional intelligence in decision making, and;*
- *Opportunities and (mostly) pitfalls of multi-tasking.*

Neuroleadership

Neuro leadership focuses on applying neuroscience tools to leadership development, management training, change management education and consulting, and coaching. A building body of applicable neuroscience research includes that when managers offer feedback to subordinates (whether it is positive or negative), an emotional reaction is triggered in the subordinate's brain that controls survival. Researchers found that social pain—such as being ignored, ostracized, or humiliated triggers the same area of the brain as physical pain. Other studies suggest that positive relationships between managers and employees trigger an area in the brain that activates openness to new ideas and a more social orientation to others. By connecting hard core science to leadership, these findings may help understand why some employment and leadership practices are more effective than others. However, with application of neuroscience tools in HR domain, there will be considerable changes in leadership styles and behaviors.

Resonant leadership

For example, a recent study found a link between effective leaders and successful relationships with others. Using fMRI technology, the study found that when middle managers were asked to recall specific experiences with "resounding" leaders, 14 regions of the brain were activated. When asked to recall specific experiences with "dissonant" leaders, only six regions of the brain were activated and 11 regions were deactivated. The regions of the brain activated for resonant leaders were associated with exciting attention, activating the social system, and other regions associated with "approach" relationships. Dissonant leaders deactivated the social system and activated regions of the brain associated with narrowing attention, lowering compassion, and triggering negative emotions. It is said that there exists a physical connection in the brain associated with trust, an emotion that is increasingly cited as a critical leadership trait to exhibit. Another study identified that a chemical in the brain called oxytocin when released, makes a person more receptive to feel trust toward a stranger. The brain actually determines trustworthiness within milliseconds of meeting a person.

Basis for change

Neuroscience has confirmed that the gut feelings are real, and this can be helpful in leadership development. A gut feeling is that which occurs without conscious thought —has a real neurological basis that results in physical changes to the body like increased heart rate, sweating, blushing, and goose bumps. Leaders have been taught to suppress gut feelings and to rely on making decisions based on logic and facts, but there is a neurological evidence which shows that emotional reactions like those should not be ignored. Gut feelings or hunches, can certainly be fallible, but can be used to help bypass complex and time -consuming analysis. In situations like risk, negative gut feelings can be used to stop leaders from taking overly optimistic decisions. The neuro leadership can apply these neuroscience findings to their leadership development activities.

Fostering Open Door Policy

Educating leaders about the link between the brain and the importance of building positive relationships with employees. Neuroscience shows that resonant leaders open pathways in their employees' brains that encourage engagement and positive working relationships. Good leaders pay attention to relationship building. Paying attention to trust levels in the organization and among managers and employees in particular. HR and talent managers can emphasize trust development in leadership development activities, and highlight the neuroscience behind why trust is so important. Trust can be fostered through open communication, clearly communicated goals, and transparency.

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HR and talent management can share the science behind gut feelings and emphasize that while they are certainly not foolproof, they are worth paying attention to. Leaders can be taught to recognize and considering them in decision making process. These neuroscience findings would help connect the dots between human interaction and effective leadership practices. As the mapping of the human brain continues, one can expect to learn more about how the brain functions and how leaders can use this knowledge to best lead people and organizations.

Conclusion

Neuroscience research is thus, fast expanding with the growth in brain imaging technology. As research in neuroscience expands, the linkages with leadership and leadership development are providing fertile grounds for the development of better and better tools and techniques that help increase the managerial and leadership productivity and effectiveness. It is imperative to identify the factors influencing both backward and forward linkages of neuroleadership. The findings of which would help provide input to neuroscientists for conducting further research in the new field of inquiry.

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