

Definition of Engaging Leadership

Engaging leadership is defined as

“leadership that that has a powerful effect on the motivation, self-confidence, self-efficacy, or performance, of staff”,¹

the concept being based on empirical research undertaken by Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2001).²

It can be related to the concept of ‘engagement at work’, which was defined as the

“harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work role. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during their role performance” (Kahn, 1990).³

and to ‘employee engagement’, defined as

“a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation” (Robinson et al., 2004).⁴

Initial research

In their empirical investigation of leadership in local government and the NHS, Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2001) elicited the constructs of leadership of direct reports in relation to their line manager, i.e., constructs of ‘nearby’ leadership, based on actual experience.

Direct reports were asked to give specific examples of the kind of leadership behaviours in their immediate line manager that “had a particularly powerful effect on their motivation, self-confidence, self-efficacy, or performance”, in other words, on their degree of engagement in their work.

The sample ($n = 150$) was inclusive with respect to age, ethnicity, gender, and level in the organisation (Chief Executives; top, senior & middle managers). This research led to the development of the ‘Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ)TM’, the factorial structure of which was determined among a sample of $n = 1,464$ local government, and $n = 2,301$ NHS managers and professionals.⁵

¹ Alimo-Metcalfe, Alban-Metcalfe & Bradley (2009b).

² Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2001).

³ Kahn (1990).

⁴ Robinson, Perryman & Hayday (2004).

⁵ Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2001).

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Confirmatory studies

The same range of constructs emerged in 3 other studies: - a Home Office-sponsored study of police officers and staff ($n = 1,022$), which was additionally inclusive in relation to declared sexual orientation (Dobby et al., 2004);⁶ a Home Office-commissioned study of leadership in HM Prison Service, which involved governor grade staff and principal and senior officers in 48 prisons in England and Wales (unpubl.); a study of FTSE 100 and private sector companies ($n = 743$ staff) (Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe, 2007).⁷

Reliability and validity

The 14 scales that comprise the TLQ show high levels of internal reliability ($\alpha \geq .80$) and high inter-item correlations ($r > .30$). Evidence of its validity comes from a number of sources.⁸

Correlational studies

Correlational studies indicate statistically significant relationships between each of the TLQ scales and a wide range of attitudes to work and wellbeing at work of the kind used widely in the leadership literature.

Multiple regression and discriminant functional analyses point to significant predictive relationships between scales and measures of impact on staff.⁹

Cause-effect relationships

Cause-effect relationships can be inferred when independent and dependant variables, between which a causative link can be adduced, are measured at different times, with attempts made to control of the effect of contextual and other moderating factors, and a statistically significant association is found.

Evidence of such a relationship comes from SDO-funded research into the leadership of multi-professional teams in the NHS.^{10 11} The research, conducted by Real World Group in partnership with King's College London Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, measured leadership using an instrument derived from the TLQ, augmented by items that assessed leadership competencies or skills.

Quality of leadership in the teams was measured at Time 1 on the basis of staff perceptions, and the dependent variable (productivity) was assessed at Time 2, 10-

⁶ Dobby, Anscombe, & Tuffin (2004).

⁷ Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe. (2007).

⁸ Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe (2000a); Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe (2000b); Kelly, A., Johnson & Gill (2006); Miller, M. M. (2005).

⁹ Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe (2000a & b); Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2008).

¹⁰ Alimo-Metcalfe, Alban-Metcalfe, Samele, Bradley & Mariathan (2007); Alimo-Metcalfe, Alban-Metcalfe, Bradley, Mariathan & Samele (2008); Alimo-Metcalfe & Bradley (2008); Alimo-Metcalfe, B., Alban-Metcalfe, J. & Bradley, M. (2009b).

¹¹ The sample comprised 741 staff from 42 crisis resolution teams (CRTs), located throughout England. CRTs have been established to reduce the number of in-patient admissions of people with mental health problems by treating them in their own home.

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12 months later. Productivity was defined as the ratio between the number of assessments made to the number of in-patient admissions, divided by the size of the team, as an average over 10-12 months. The lower the ratio, the higher the productivity.

The contextual variables that were examined were: - proportion of service users presenting symptoms of psychosis ('psychosis'); the Mental Illness Needs Index for the area in which the team was located; the availability of alternatives to in-patient bed provision; the length of time the team had been established ('availability'); the ratio of staff to service users ('staff/case'); the extent to which the team determined whether a service user be admitted to in-patient provision ('gatekeeping'); the extent to which the team had the services of a dedicated psychiatrist ('medical cover'); the number of different professional groups represented in the team ('multi-disciplinary'); and the nature of the 24/7 cover ('service').

The evidence

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses and structural equation modelling showed evidence of significant, **cause-effect** relationships between one aspect of leadership quality ('Engaging with Others') and productivity, even allowing for the modulating effect of the 10 contextual factors that were assessed. Similar analyses failed to find any link involving either of the other two aspects of leadership quality that were identified ('Visionary Leadership', and 'Leadership Capabilities' or competencies).

Given that the items that comprise the 'Engaging with Others' scale were derived, mostly verbatim, from the TLQ, ratings using this scale can be regarded as providing evidence of a cause-effect relationship with one aspect of organisational performance.

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