**Leadership in the Chilean Mine Rescue Operation**

**Introduction**

In the modern world, situational leadership is very essential for organizational executives when handling issues that involve high risk, uncertainty and limited time. This leadership approach was illustrated three years ago when 33 men were trapped underground mines due to rock cave in (Rashid, Edmondson & Leonard, 2013).  Despite the expert`s opinion that there was minimal chance of saving lives, the rescue operation guided by André Sougarret managed to rescue the 33 men after they had spent 69 days underground. This paper discuses the Chilean mine rescue by focusing on the situational leadership approach that was used and how goal-path theory was applied.

**Flexibility and Adaptability in Leadership**

 Flexibility and adaptability allows leaders to consider all possible actions that can be suitable in managing a given situation (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). The leaders embraced this approach in the Chilean Mine Rescue process. In this case, flexibility was illustrated when the leadership quickly designed and implemented a rescue system. In addition, the leaders used both directive and empowering leadership approach which facilitated creativity and innovation in the rescue process. Furthermore, despite their quick action, the leaders took some time to reflect on their decision.

**Leadership Application of Path-Goal Theory**

  The path-goal theory point out the need of leaders to motivate their follower’s basing on leadership behaviours such as being supportive, participative, directive and result oriented (Alanazi, Alharthey & Rasli, 2013).  In this case, the leaders applied the path-goal theory by participating fully in the rescue process. In addition, they supported the rescue team through considering their psychological needs and sourcing for assistance from international organizations. They also encouraged the rescue team thus motivating them to continue working with hope. Furthermore, the rescue novel system designed by the leaders was aimed at rescuing the 33 men. This implies that the leaders were results oriented.

**Leadership Communication**

Successful leadership requires effective communication (Zulch,2014).Leadership communication with the stakeholders played a vital role in the Chilean mine recue process. However, the communication was not effective since it was restricted to a particular time usually morning and evening. In addition, despite Sougarret having great leadership task he was engaged in making daily communication to the stakeholders. In this case, communication would have been more effective, if few appointed experts would have been tasked to pass information to the stakeholders. This would have relieved Sougarret from the media and public pressure thus allowing him to have sufficient time for the rescue process. Furthermore, continuous communication would have increased the hope of the affected families.

**Situational Approach Leadership**

  Situational leadership theory is based on the belief that there is no specific appropriate way that managers can use to lead (Giltinane, 2013). This implies that different circumstances require different leadership styles. In the Chilean mine rescue, situational leadership approach was used. For instance, the team leader used telling leadership approach when he instructed the team to quickly start the rescuing task after assessing the situation. The team leader also delegated some technical tasks to some team members who had commanded great respect from the members and also seemed to have reliable ideas. In addition, selling leadership approach was also used. This approach facilitated two-way communication which enabled the leaders and the team members to share ideas that could be productive on the task. Furthermore, participative leadership was also embraced. In this case, the leaders and the rescue members participated in decision making through reflecting on their actions and quickly learning from their failures.

**Practical Application**

**S**everal practical lessons can be drawn from the situational leadership approach and goal-path theory used in the Chilean Mines rescue operation.  Leaders must know that every situation requires different leadership approach. They are therefore supposed to encourage their followers to be innovative in order to find solution to new challenges. I addition, the leaders must be ready to embrace learning culture that is useful in correcting their failures. This would help them to counteract uncertain and dynamic environmental situations. Furthermore, using both directive and empowering leadership approach can enable leaders to succeed in an environment with high risk and uncertainty. Leaders should be therefore ready to support their followers hence motivate and encourage them to develop new ideas.

**Conclusion**

The Chilean Mine rescue is an example of practical leadership success. In this case, it is clear that situational leadership is suitable in managing in a risky and uncertain environment. Leaders are supposed to be flexible, adaptive and supportive in order to facilitate development of new ideas. Furthermore, leaders should be ready to learn from their failures and improve on their actions in order to succeed.

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