

SKILLS APPROACH

The Skills Approach to leadership is based on *competencies* of leaders. These competencies can be learned and developed.

History and Development

Katz published a paper entitled, "Skills of an Effective Leader," in the Harvard Business Review in 1955. His initial model focused on the three necessary skill areas of a leader; technical, human, and conceptual. Technical skills are specific to a task, human skills focus on interactions between people, and conceptual skills encompass strategic thinking. (Northouse, 2000) Strategic thinking as an important leadership skill was also referenced in Strengths based Leadership. (Conchie, 2008)

Components

Mumford further defined the model in the late 1990s to include five specific components: competencies, individual attributes, leadership outcomes, career experiences, and environmental influences. The heart of the model stresses problem solving, social judgment, and knowledge. (Northouse, 2000) These concepts are restructured from Katz' technical, human, and conceptual.

Strengths

The Skills Approach is strong model of leadership because it supports that critical skills can be *learned* and leaders do not have to *innately possess* these traits. This makes the Skills Approach available to everyone who embarks on leadership training. (Northouse, 2000)

Weaknesses

The weaknesses in the model include the breadth being beyond simply leadership such as conflict management, motivational theory, and it lacks *predictive* value. If a leader is incapable of learning the skills defined, he or she may never be successful. This model also closely aligns with the Trait Approach and the research encompassed military personnel only. (Northouse, 2000)

Practical Application

Leadership Education Programs follow a skills approach to leadership. The content of the classes mirror the skills outlined in the model.

References

Northouse, P. G. (2004). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rath, T., & Conchie, B. (2008). *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams, and why people follow*. New York: Gallup Press.