Models of Leadership and Teamwork: Adairs Action-Centred Leadership Model (1973)

Dr. David Ackah, PhD.
Senior Faculty Member, Akamia University
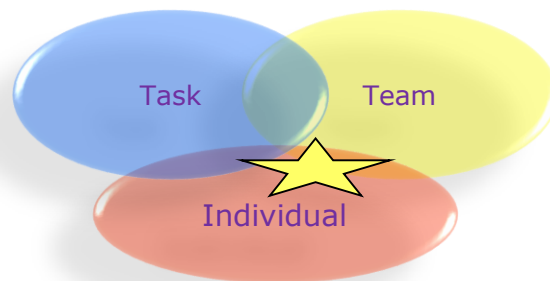*Community Development Departmnet*

Abstract
*John Adair has a long pedigree in the world of leadership emanating from his time in the military. The Adair model is that the action-centred. The Leader gets the job done through the work team and relationships with fellow managers and staff. According to Adair's explanation an action-centred leader must: Direct the job to be undertaken in terms of Structuring the Task (**task structuring**), Support and review the **individual** people carrying out the tasks, and Co-ordinate and foster the working **team** as a whole. His famous three circle diagram is a simplification of the variability of human interaction, but is a useful tool for thinking about what constitutes an effective leader/manager in relation to the job he/she has to do. The effective leader/manager carries out the functions and exhibits the behaviours depicted by the three circles. Situational and contingent elements call for different responses by the leader. Hence imagine that the various circles may be bigger or smaller as the situation varies i.e. the leader will give more or less emphasis to the functionally-oriented behaviours according to what the actual situation involves.*
Keywords: Models of Leadership and Teamwork

1.0 INTRODUCTION

John Adair (b.1934), best-known for his three-circle model of Action-Centred Leadership, is widely regarded as the UK's foremost authority on leadership and leadership development in organisations. He has written over 40 books and more than a million managers have taken his Action-Centred Leadership programmes. Adair (along with the late Warren Bennis) firmly believes that leadership can be taught, that it does not depend on a person's traits and that it is a transferable skill. Adair's ideas remain popular because they are practical and relevant to managers irrespective of working environment, and his works have been instrumental in overturning the 'Great Man' theories of leadership. Adair is prominent for drawing a clear distinction between leadership and management: the latter, he contends, is rooted in mechanics, control and systems. He contrasts this with his teaching method, ActionCentred Leadership that has proved to be an enduring approach defining leadership in terms of three overlapping and interdependent circles: Task, Team and Individual. John Adair is less well-known for his other ideas on the practical aspects of leadership such as decision-making and personal effectiveness, although many of these ideas were ahead of their time and are now widely taught and applied. Under each of the categories or circles Adair included some sub-headings which identified each category. This could be useful to discuss when using this model to explain your team and how it performed. The challenge for the leader is to manage all sectors of the diagram:

Figure 1 Adairs Action-Centred Leadership Model (1973)

Task	- define the task - make the plan - allocate work and resources

	• control quality and rate of work • check performance against plan • adjust the plan
Team	• maintain discipline • build team spirit • encourage, motivate, give a sense of purpose • appoint sub-leaders • ensure communication within group • develop the group
Individual	• attend to personal problems • praise individuals • give status • recognise and use individual abilities • develop the individual

Another model to consider is that of **A Decision Making Model developed by Richard Pettinger (2002).**
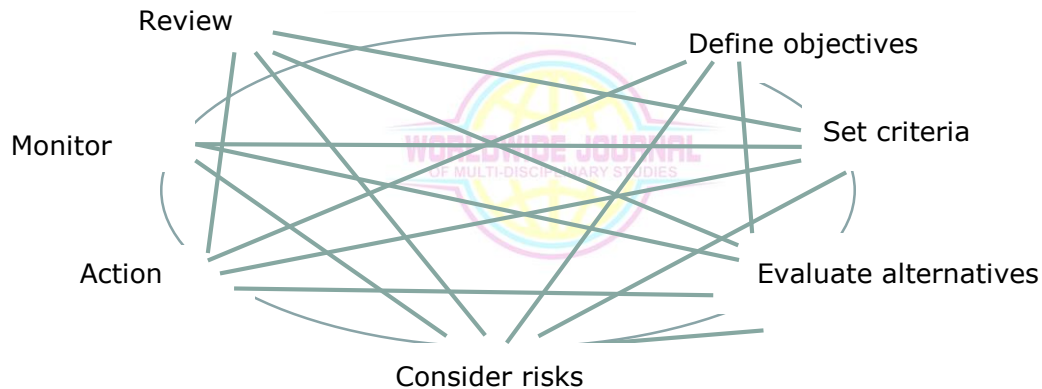
Pettinger (2002) developed this model for decision making for managers in how to become a learning organisation and set it up for processes that managers could form a positive managerial style by 'walking around'. In other words leaders becoming effective by being a part of the team and their workers. Pettinger affirms that in order to gain affective and successful decision-making in any organisation then this requires confidence by adopting the process but that the manager needs total knowledge of everything that is going on in his/her organisation. The same can be related to a team; as Pettinger argues such a decision making procedural process works in any structural and/or culturally different organisation and he gives examples of Boeing; Nissan; Body Shop and Virgin Group. So it doesn't matter how large or small the organisation/team is, the process of collective participation, input and acceptability are the things that are necessary in order to have successful decision making. You could therefore use this model and adapt it to your team work. I have included a chapter of Pettinger's book on blackboard for your information.

Northouse (2013) - Leadership – Theory & Practise - 6th Edition Sage Publishing

Figure 12.1 Hill's Model for Team Leadership

2.0 LITERTURE REVIEW

2.1 Action-Centred Leadership

This simple and practical model is figuratively based on three overlapping circles. These represent the task, the team and the individual. The model seems to endure well, probably because it is the fundamental model for describing what leaders have to do, the actions they must take whatever their working environment, in order to be effective:

1. Achieve the task
2. Build and maintain the team
3. Develop the individual

Task, team and individual: Adair's concept asserts that the three needs of task, team and individual are the watchwords of leadership, as people expect their leaders to help them achieve the common task, build the synergy of teamwork, and respond to individuals' needs.

- o The task needs work groups or organisations to come into effect because one person alone cannot accomplish it.
- o The team needs constant promotion and retention of group cohesiveness to ensure that it functions efficiently. The team functions on the 'united we stand, divided we fall' principle.
- o The individual's needs are the physical ones (salary) and the psychological ones of recognition; sense of purpose and achievement; status; and the need to give and receive from others in a work environment.

For Adair, the task, team and individual needs overlap as follows:
- o Achieving the task builds the team and satisfies the individuals
- o If the team needs are not met - if the team lacks cohesiveness - then performance of the task is impaired and individual satisfaction is reduced
- o If individual needs are not met the team will lack cohesiveness and performance of the task will be impaired

Adair's view is that leadership exists at three different levels:
- o Team leadership of teams of 5 to 20 people
- o Operational leadership, where a number of team leaders report to one leader
- o Strategic leadership of a whole business or organisation, with overall accountability for all levels of leadership

At whatever level leadership is being exercised, Adair's model takes the view that task, team and individual needs must be constantly considered.

The strengths of the concept are that it is timeless and is independent of situation or organisational culture. A further strength of the concept is that it can help a leader to identify where he or she may be losing touch with the real needs of the group or situation.

Leadership functions: in order to fulfil the three aspects of leadership (task, team and individual) and achieve success, Adair believes that there are eight functions that must be performed and developed by the leader:

1. **Defining the task**: Individuals and teams need to have the task distilled into a clear objective that is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Constrained).
2. **Planning**: Planning requires a search for alternatives and this is best done with others in an open-minded, positive and creative way. Contingencies should be planned for and plans should be tested.
3. **Briefing**: Team briefing is viewed as a basic leadership function that is essential in order to create the right atmosphere, promote teamwork, and motivate each individual.
4. **Controlling**: Adair wrote in The Skills of Leadership that excellent leaders get maximum results with the minimum of resources. To achieve this leaders need self-control, good control systems in place and effective delegation and monitoring skills.
5. **Evaluating**: Leaders need to be good at assessing consequences, evaluating team performance, appraising and training individuals, and judging people.
6. **Motivating**: Adair distinguishes six principles for motivating others in his book Effective motivation: be motivated yourself; select people who are highly motivated; set realistic and challenging targets; remember that progress motivates; provide fair rewards; and give recognition.
7. **Organising**: Good leaders have to be able to organise themselves, their team and the organisation (including structures and processes). Leading change requires a clear purpose and effective organisation to achieve results.
8. **Setting an example**: Leaders need to set an example both to individuals and to the team as a whole. Since a bad example is noticed more than a good one, setting a good example is something that must be worked at constantly.

Adair considers that these leadership functions need to be developed and honed to constantly improve the leader's ability.

2.2 Motivating people

In many ways, Adair's ideas in the area of motivating people are in line with those of the classic motivational theorists, such as Maslow, McGregor and Herzberg. **The 50:50 rule:** just as the Pareto principle (or 80:20 rule) is the ratio of the vital few and the trivial many, the Adair 50:50 rule (from his book **Effective motivation**) states that '50% of motivation comes from within a person, and 50% from his or her environment, especially from the leadership encountered therein'.

Adair's view is that people are motivated by a complex and varied number of different factors. So, for example, the carrot and stick approach is not dismissed by Adair, but is seen as one of the stimulus-response approaches that can be one factor among many others in motivating or influencing people's actions. For Adair, an individual's strength of motivation is affected by the expectations of outcomes from certain actions, but it is also strengthened by other factors such as the individual's preferred outcome (as demonstrated by Victor Vroom in the 1960s); conditions in the working environment; and the individual's own perceptions and fears.

Adair's 8 rules in motivating people: Adair proposes that understanding what motivates individuals to act is fundamental to engaging their interest and focusing their efforts. The will that leads to action is governed by motives, and motives are inner needs or desires that can be conscious, semi-conscious or unconscious. In **The John Adair handbook of management and leadership** the point is made that 'motives can also be mixed, with several clustered around a primary motive'.

Adair emphasises the importance of a motivating environment and a motivated individual. The third, crucial factor is the role of the leader who must, he believes, be completely self-motivated. In **Effective motivation**, eight basic rules are outlined to guide leaders in motivating people to act:

1. Be motivated yourself.
2. Select people who are highly motivated.
3. Treat each person as an individual.
4. Set realistic and challenging targets.
5. Remember that progress motivates.
6. Create a motivating environment.
7. Provide fair rewards.
8. Give recognition.

2.3 Developing a personal sense of time

Adair's view of time management accords closely with Peter Drucker's, in that he argues for the prior need to manage time in order to manage anything else. Adair was one of the first management thinkers to emphasise the critical importance of time management and its central role in focusing action and helping leaders to achieve goals. For Adair, time management is not simply about being organised or efficient, or completing certain tasks: it is about managing time with a focus on achievement. Time management should be goal-driven and results-oriented.

Success in time management should be measured by the quantity of productive work achieved, and the quality of both the work and the person's private life. Ten principles of time management given in **How to manage your time** are:

1. Develop a personal sense of time.
2. Identify long-term goals.
3. Make medium-term plans.
4. Plan the day.
5. Make the best use of your best time.
6. Organise office work.
7. Manage meetings.
8. Delegate effectively.
9. Make use of committed time.
10. Manage your health

Of these ten principles, developing a personal sense of time is central to Adair, again highlighting his emphasis on individual characteristics.

3.0 CONCLUSION

It is perhaps unsurprising that there has been something of a backlash against Adair's thinking, given the pace and scale of changes in the work environment during the last twenty years. Adair's ideas were very new when they first appeared, and for many people their main value lay in the successful challenge they offered to the then-dominant Great Man theories. These theories, because they insisted that leaders were born and not made, completely undermined the possibility of training or developing people in leadership skills. Since Adair's views have been successfully established, however, he has become more of a target, with critics claiming that his approach (developed in the 1960s) has become outdated.

One major criticism of Action-Centred Leadership is that it takes little account of the flat structures that are now generally advocated as the best organisational form. Action-Centred Leadership is also criticised for being too authoritarian, applicable in a rigid, formal, military-type environment, but less relevant to the modern workplace where the leadership emphasis is on leading change, empowering, enabling, managing knowledge and fostering innovation.

Other criticisms levelled at Adair's approach include the view that his approaches are too simple, are not academically rigorous and lack real substance in that he is merely stating the obvious, common sense view. For many others, however, it is exactly this practical simplicity and clarity about what a leader should do that is so valuable -

and timeless. For this reason many organisations and business schools worldwide continue teaching the Adair approach to developing leadership. For over 40 years his overlapping, three-circle model of Action-Centred Leadership has been integrated into company cultures and individuals' leadership styles, and is an established hallmark of management training for many organisations.

The continued relevance of Adair's concepts for organisations is reinforced by the re-publication of some of his key works: **Leadership and motivation** (2006), which was originally published in 1990 as **Understanding motivation**, and the **The art of creative thinking** (2007) first published in 1990. In addition, **Leadership for innovation** (2007) is a revision of his original work **The challenge of innovation**, which was again first published in 1990. Several more books have followed, strongly indicating the appetite for and continued importance and influence of his ideas for inspiring leaders today.

References

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