

IN CHENGDU INSTITUTE SICHUAN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY (CISISU), P.R.C.

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Abstract. This study was conducted to identify and analyze the relationships between situational factors and leadership styles in the Chengdu Institute Sichuan International Studies University (CISISU), China. This study uses a sample of 196 administrators, taken from a population of 400 administrators. The sample was selected from 198 respondents who returned completed surveys using purposive random sampling technique. The instrument content was based on literature reviews, related research and experiences. Questionnaires were used to identify demographic information and to measure the situational factors (Leader-Member-Exchange, Task Structure, and Position Power) and the perceived leadership styles for effective leadership (transactional and transformational leadership styles). The research found a model “Optimal Choice of Leadership Styles for Effective Leadership” for the studied university based on the research results of relationships between situational factors and leadership styles and gives corresponding suggestions for application and further research based on related research objectives and results.

Keywords. Situational Factors, Leadership Style, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Leader-Member Exchange, Task Structure, Position Power.

Introduction

The universities in China are undergoing a changing social context, changing educational context, and changing organizational context, based on the national reform in economics and education. Effective leadership is an important process element that has critical influence on products of the school system (Slovacek, 1996). “Transactional and Transformational Leadership” is a kind of important category that represents the post-behavioral science era and is the newest leadership theory in the last twenty years (West et al., 2005). According to Bass et al. (1988), it was a popular opinion that “transformational leadership is a more effective method than transactional leadership.”

To improve effective leadership and improve the satisfaction level of lecturers and students, Chengdu Institute Sichuan International Studies University (CISISU) adopted popular management opinion in China and advocated “shifting from transactional leadership to a transformational leadership style.” The problem was that the extent of satisfaction was still kept at a lower level and the administrators felt it sometimes difficult to really adopt the transformational leadership style. This study tried to analyze the relationship between situational factors and transformational/transactional leadership styles.

The contingency theory (Fiedler, 1997), suggests that no single model of leadership style is appropriate for all employees, in all organizations or contexts. There exists a gap in models or theories about the relationship between situational factors and transformational/transactional leadership style. Fiedler’s contingency model offers a good reference about situational factors influencing leadership style, but is limited to analyzing leadership about tasks or relationship orientation. On the other hand, James MacGregor Burns, Bernard Bass, and other experts who focused on doing research about “transactional and transformational leadership style,” were able to produce some models of transformational leadership with an analysis of its internal factors.

There is a dearth of studies about situational factors in relation to transactional/transformational leadership style. A review of related literature did not reveal studies that focused on the relationship between situational factors and transactional/transformational leadership style, with a view to guiding leaders to choose appropriate leadership styles and approaches to adapt situational demands toward the efficient and effective achievement of organizational goals, especially in the higher education system.