Abstract— It has been widely believed that organizational effectiveness could be improved if emotion is recognized as a vital element of motivation, leadership and group dynamics. Leadership has always been intrinsically an emotional process, whereby the leaders recognize follower’s emotional states, attempt to evoke appropriate emotions in followers, and then seek to manage follower’s emotional states accordingly. It is argued that leaders increase group unity and morale by creating shared emotional experiences. The ability of leaders to influence the emotional climate strongly influences performance and foster growth. This paper makes a theoretical analysis of the emotional core of the process of leadership.

Keywords- Emotions, Leadership, Effectiveness, Behavior

I. INTRODUCTION

From infancy the study of history has been the study of leaders – what they did and why they did it. Leadership still fascinates scholars as well as ordinary people. However, the term leadership means different things to different people. Many have defined leadership in terms of influence, group processes, personality, compliance, particular behaviors, persuasion, power, goal attainment, interaction, role differentiation, initiation of structure, and combinations of two or more of these (Bass, 1990). Though numerous attempts have been made to conceptualize leadership the following components are central to the concept of leadership –

- It is a process
- It involves influence
- It occurs within a group context; and
- It involves goal attainment.

Based on these components many define leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of people to achieve a common goal. Therefore, it is obvious that both leaders and followers are involved in the leadership process (Heller and Van Til, 1983; Jago, 1982). Therefore, leaders need to be understood in relation to followers and vice versa (Hollander, 1992) and collectively (Burns, 1978). They are the two sides of the same coin (Rost, 1991). Although the leaders and the followers are closely linked, it is the leader who often initiates the relationship, creates the communication linkages, and carries the burden for maintaining the relationship (Northhouse, 2004).

II. EMOTION

Frijda (1993) maintains that there are four components of emotion. First, is the experiential component. Second, it is always connected to some person, object, or event. Third, there is consensus among emotion researchers that emotional states include recognizable, physiological, bodily changes. And finally, discrete emotions contain particular action tendencies. The experiential or subjective element of emotion is often called ‘feelings’ while what we exhibit, the recognizable, physiological bodily changes, is called ‘emotion’ (Fineman, 2003). Moods and emotions are closely related, but are often distinguished by both the intensity and duration of the affective state (Larsen, 2000). Moods are thought to be less intense and of longer duration. Emotions, on the other hand, have definite beginnings and endings. Emotions exist in relation to a particular person or object or event. Moods lack such a specific object or event. They exist more as a background affective state. This does not mean that they are not caused by something particular or that the individual is not aware of the state. Rather, it means that the cause is not part of the experience itself.

Emotion and business have never been seen as cohesive force, with emotions viewed as an intrinsically irrational and disruptive force. The ancient Greek Stoic idea was that reason was superior to emotion (Solomon, 2000). But during the past couple of decades industrial and organizational psychologists have made substantial progress in understanding the structure and role of emotions in human behavior. One school of thought views emotions as disorganized interruptions to mental activity, so potentially disruptive that they must be controlled. Young (1936; 1943) defines emotions as ‘acute disturbance of the individual as a whole’. He is of the opinion that, pure emotion is seen as causing a ‘complete loss of cerebral control’ and containing no ‘trace of conscious purpose’. On the other hand, the second school views emotion as an organized response because it adaptively focuses on cognitive activities and subsequent action (Leeper, 1948). Instead of viewing emotion as chaotic, haphazard, and something to outgrow, Leeper suggests that emotions are primarily motivating forces; they are processes that arouse, sustain, and direct activities. Modern theories of emotion also view it as directing cognitive activities adaptively (Mandler, 1975). Salovey and Mayer (1990) view emotions as organized responses which typically arise in response to an event, either internal or external and that which has positive or negative meaning for the individual.
When we enter into any workplace we carry with us love, hate, anxiety, envy, excitement, disappointment, pride etc. We meet and interact with others who bring in their portion of emotions, and have their own emotional agenda. Thus the traditional concept of organization is being transformed into emotional organization (Fineman, 2003). Emotion is an integral part of organizational processes like decision making, change, learning, motivation, leadership etc.

III. LEADERSHIP

Leadership has remained much explored area of research for more than a century. Early studies identified traits such as intelligence, initiative, self-confidence, masculinity, drive and tolerance etc. leading to effective leadership. But it was hard to single out a list of traits that always led to effective leadership. The focus eventually shifted from the traits of individual leaders to the functions that leaders performed within their groups and the behavior they displayed towards their subordinates. A series of research identified two universal and independent dimensions of leader behavior, namely, task oriented and relationship oriented behavior. Success or otherwise of these behavioral dimensions, as added by further research, depends on manifold situational variables such as leader member relations, position power, task structure, development level of subordinates, quality of decisions, degree of participation in decision making, acceptance of such decisions by the subordinates and few others. Since 1980s a new era in leadership research has dawned with focus on leading through emotions among other factors. Theories such as charismatic, transformational began to surface attempting to explain how certain leaders are able to achieve extra ordinary levels of follower motivation, admiration, commitment, dedication, loyalty, performance etc.

In recent years there has been a surge of literature regarding emotional aspects of organizational life (Fineman, 1997). Many have pointed out that, in spite of the numerous studies, we still seem to know a little about the characteristics of effective leadership (Kets de Vries, 1994). However, in studying effective leadership whichever model is examined it is underpinned by the need of leaders to possess and exercise abilities of working through emotions (Goleman, 1998a). Leaders who are able to work through emotions are thought to be happier and more committed to their organizations (Abraham, 2000), achieve greater level of success (Miller, 1999), perform better in the workplace (Goleman, 1998a; 1998b), take advantage of and use positive emotions to envision major improvements in organizational functioning (George, 2000), use emotions to improve their decision making and instill a sense of enthusiasm, trust and cooperation in their employees through interpersonal relationships (George, 2000) etc.

IV. EMOTIONS AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership is defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of people to achieve a common goal (Northhouse, 2004). The source of such influence may be formal or informal. But the very idea of leadership is imbued with emotion and is central to organizational processes. For some followers, a new leader may symbolize a fresh start, the prospect of correcting the wrongs previously done or of finally accomplishing their dreams. For others, the new leader may just be one of many disappointing individuals, who fails to deliver on promises (Fineman, 2003) etc. But great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to analyze why they are so effective we speak of strategy, vision or powerful ideas. But the reality is that great leadership works through emotions. No matter what the leader sets out to do – whether it’s creating strategy or mobilizing teams to action – their success depends on how they do it (Goleman et al., 2002).

A. Providing Meaning

In examining the emotional core of leadership we must consider ‘followership’ which is a process of mutual influence. We follow, readily or reluctantly, the direction of our leaders – whether they are supervisors, managers, President or Prime Minister. The desire to follow has deep emotional roots (Fineman, 2003). Sigmund Freud spoke of leader as a ‘primal father’. He is the person who taps into our hidden talents and shapes them. By accepting a leader people feel strong, protected, secure, supplied with explanations and simplifications in a complex world. In other words, the leader provides a framework of meaning. They can guide in ways that give people a sense of clarity and direction in their work. In any human group the leader is the one to whom others look to for assurance and clarity while facing uncertainty and threat. When an ambiguous situation occurs within a group context, the members often turn to the leader to make sense out of that event. The leader models an emotional response to the situation, illustrating what an ‘appropriate’ reaction should be. This allows the group members to interpret and express their own emotional reactions (Pescosolido, 2002). Effective leaders anticipate potentially threatening circumstances and make conscious efforts to provide appropriate information, knowledge to sustain performance. Most importantly, they continuously strive to help their teams maintain a posture of emotional readiness to the demands of both continuous learning and accelerated change. The task of continuous learning requires a good amount of emotional resilience on the part of the leader to cope with such change and lead others through such moments (Richards, 2003).

B. Groups’ Emotional Guide

The leader acts as the group’s emotional guide (Goleman et al., 2002). To put it simply in any workgroup, the leader has the maximal power to sway everyone’s emotions or determine shared emotions (Pescosolido, 2002). If people’s emotions can be pushed toward the range of enthusiasm, performance can
soar; if people are driven toward anxiety, distress, performance may be hampered. Thus the emotional art of leadership includes pressing the reality of work demands without bringing undue stress upon people (Goleman et al., 2002). Thus the ability of a leader to pitch a group into an enthusiastic, cooperative mood can determine its success. How expressively leaders convey their feelings will determine how easily we catch on to a leader’s emotional status. Apart from getting the job done followers often look to a leader for supportive emotional connection. In a workgroup, research has identified that, everyone watches the leader more than the others; even when the leader is not highly visible (working behind closed doors) – his attitudes determine the organization’s emotional climate (Bachman, 1988). What the leader speaks is listened to more carefully; even when he maintains silence his behavior is closely watched. This offers a way to the subordinates to react emotionally to a given situation (Gardner, 1995). Indeed group members generally see the leader’s emotional reaction as the most valid response. The reason a leader’s style of doing things matters so much lies in the design of the human brain: what scientists have started to call the ‘Open Loop’ nature of the limbic system, our emotional center (Goleman et al., 2002). An open loop system largely depends upon external sources to manage itself. In other words, we depend on connections with other people for our emotional stability. Scientists describe the open loop as ‘interpersonal limbic regulation’, whereby one transmits signals that can alter hormone levels, cardiovascular function, sleep rhythms, and even immune function inside the body of another (Lewis et al., 2000). This design of our limbic system indicates that other people can change our very physiology and, thereby, our emotions. Concurring research has identified how moods and emotions, e.g. cheerfulness and warmth (Barsade and Gibson, 1998), smile (Levenson and Ruef, 1997) etc. would spread when people are near one other, even when the contact is completely non verbal (Friedman and Riggio, 1981). The same applies to groups too (Bartel and Saavedra, 2000; Totterdell, 2000). In short, leader’s emotional status and actions do influence the people they lead and thereby performance. How well the leader manages his moods and emotions and, thereby, influences those of others largely determines the performance of the business (Ashkanasy and Tse, 2000).

C. Leader Derailment

Studies have also identified that leaders who have high potential to become successful have often been found to have drifted away from the path of success not so much due to lack of technical skills but more so due to lack of human skills. Such drifting is commonly termed as derailment. Derailment occurs when individuals who are perceived to have high potential for success become plateaued at a lower level than expected, or are demoted, or leave the organization either voluntarily or involuntarily (Lombardo and McCauley, 1988). It may be that at one time these individuals were recognized as having potential, but somehow did not continue to develop. This does not take place at the wish of the leader or at a time of his choice (Shakleton, 2003). Research by Center for Creative Leadership indicates that leaders face potential derailers, such as difficulty in building team, difficulty in adapting and poor interpersonal relations etc. (Caruso and Salovey, 2004). One of the most common reasons for derailment is failure to maintain positive interpersonal relationship (Hogan and Hogan, 2001; McCall and Lombardo, 1983). Problems related to interpersonal relationship include the inability to build a team due to poor selection of team members, mould the staff into a team, and resolve conflicts among the team members etc. Study by Leslie and Velsor (1996) identified rigidity, lack of self-control, lack of trustworthiness, inability in building bonds and leveraging diversity, lack of social skills etc. to be blind spots in the lives of leaders. Kaplan (1991) identified a list of common blind spots among forty two highly successful leaders. Some of these are - blind ambition, setting unrealistic goals, driving others, power hunger, insatiable need for recognition etc. Another potential derailer is inability to adapt to changing circumstances (Velsor and Leslie, 1995) and to varied personality states of members. At least two studies replicated the results. Lack of sensitivity in dealing with others (Tyson et al., 1986) was found to be a major derailer. Brindle (1992) found that though the derailed managers were sufficiently intellectual, conceptual, innovative, independent, they were much less emotional, warm and conscientious in dealing with others. Parallel analyses of successful but failed leaders in Germany, and Japan (Goleman, 1998a) revealed the same pattern: those who failed had their largest deficit in abilities related to emotional realm, and their failure came despite strengths and expertise in cognitive abilities.

It is obvious that whatever leaders undertake to perform, achieve or implement is done through followers. What is emphasized here is that if the leader is not able to establish emotional connection with the followers and create a healthy atmosphere within which the followers feel secure to perform, innovate and identify with the organization and its goals, whatever the leader proposes or undertakes to achieve will not only have limited appeal or acceptability with frequent resistance leading to denial or flight but will also lead to conflicts within the organization. Under such a circumstance, either the leader pushes for conformity leading to unrest and deterioration in organizational commitment or leaves or is forced to leave the organization, sometimes blaming the management or otherwise, leading to leader derailment, not due to lack of vision or strategy but primarily due to failure to work through emotions.

V. FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

Developing information technology and globalization have had pervasive and long lasting impacts on work and organizations. There has been increasing use of teams and other lateral mechanisms to make decisions and implement projects. A very important feature that has emerged over the years is the obliteration of boundaries within and between the organizations. In such flexible and ‘boundaryless’ structure, where people shift from team to team, leaders will not be able to rely on the same formal power. With the invasion of virtual world of work, it seems that the challenges lying ahead for the
leaders are more of intellectual and emotional than physical. In other words, supervision will be more challenging and varied. Such developments may lead to less defined and pronounced role of leaders. One could even suggest that the idea of single person taking on ‘leadership role’ may become obsolete in future. Shamir (1999) describes several possible scenarios that imply a reduced importance of leadership in the 21st century. One such scenario may be termed as ‘disposable leadership’. With the invasion of ‘temporariness’ in ‘boundaryless’ organizations, leadership may become a temporary arrangement and any group member having the relevant and requisite knowledge may act as leader. A similar scenario is shared or collective leadership where leadership is not concentrated in the hand of one individual but is performed by many or all simultaneously or sequentially (Shamir, 1999). Another scenario implying reduction of leadership is what Samir and Ben-Ari (1999) refer to as ‘teleleadership’ in which it is perceived that the role of leadership will be reduced to transmission of information with the group members. Others have emphasized on the idea of ‘self managed teams’ implying transfer of the leadership responsibility to the team as a whole (Manz and Sims, 1993).

Whatever are the future challenges and their implications for leadership, there are perceived problems, too. Self management system does not always yield positive results. With the world becoming one space for business and increasing use of team structure, employees often are part of more than one team. Belonging to multiple groups with unclear boundaries may lead to identity problems which will eventually require the leaders to resolve. Increased uncertainty and pace of change may be accompanied with increased feelings of uncertainty and anxiety on the part of the organizational members. West and Altink (1996) point out, a sense of psychological and emotional safety will be essential more than ever before. In the midst of these, regardless of whatever style or approach is undertaken, leaders will be called upon to engage in mentoring (Robbins and Judge, 2013) which will involve organizational learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

With the overload of information that is available it is monumental task for a leader to scan through them. Yet in the process a leader needs to identify and understand the implications of emotional information from the verbal as well as the non-verbal communication constantly emanating from the group members. When people try to suppress emotion, they end up remembering less information. Emotional suppression takes away energy and attention that otherwise could be expended in listening to and processing information. Positive emotions, apart from making us feel good, expand our thinking, help generate new ideas, encourage one to consider newer possibilities etc. In this constant world of change if there is one thing that is certain, then it is change itself. It is hard to think of change as devoid of emotion. Emotions shape the anticipation, expectations and effect of change. A wide range of feelings such as anxiety, pain, distress, insecurity etc. are inevitably related to change management process. As anxiety about change increases, so does resistance. Resistance, if accurately ‘read’ provides important diagnostic information on the way change is being introduced, delivered and supported. It also indicates the hidden feelings and emotions that need to be handled. It falls upon the leaders to work through emotions if both change and continuity are to be achieved. Common experience suggests that learning itself is emotional i.e. driven, shaped and expressed through feelings and emotion. Emotion organizes feelings, thoughts and existence of knowledge, providing the motivation (desire and will) to learn from an experience. Learning and change are unlikely to occur without emotional interference, especially anxiety. For individuals and groups, in the moment of feeling anxious, it is possible to move in the direction of either learning from it or away from it. Leaders are able to sway the emotions of the group members and thereby foster learning. Positive emotions experienced by group members may bring unity among the members while negative emotions toward others outside the group may serve to reinforce group boundaries. When people feel good, they work at their best. Feeling good lubricates mental efficiency, it makes people flexible in their thinking. Leaders need to be able to cope with all the work challenges and deadlines and yet lift the spirit of the group members which will eventually lead to improved performance, innovation, group cohesiveness and higher level of organizational citizenship.

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