

# Current Principles and Best Practices for Providing Effective Leadership in Sport and Leisure Management

by

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## Abstract

This paper will explore the process of developing a sport and leisure management CLIL-based leadership skills framework and rubric for a CLIL sport and leisure management course in leadership. It will attempt to do this in a way that integrates theory with practice by focusing on current principles and best practices in sport and leisure management. In order to establish a clear, concise, and comprehensive methodology by which to do this, it will look at the evolution of leadership models and how aspects of these models might be incorporated into a framework and rubric, which in turn would be used to develop materials based upon real-world case studies found in current literature.

## Integrating Theory and Practice

One of the underlining premises of my teaching philosophy is that in order to master the field of sport and leisure management, students need to be able to integrate theory with practice. According to Wrenn and Wrenn (2009), “It is imperative that students in professional programs be able to put into practice what they have learned in the classroom.” (p.258) One approach to doing this is through the use of current principles and best practices in sport and leisure management. Regarding theory, and in this case, current principles, one way to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and experience is through the use of frameworks and rubrics. Regarding practice, and in this case, best practices, one way to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and experience

is through task-based activities based upon real-world case studies. That said, it should be noted that since the English courses in our program use a content and language integrated learning approach (CLIL), these frameworks need to be simplified as much as possible in order to provide comprehensible input to our students. This is because the majority of the students in our program are EFL students and on average have a high-beginner to low-intermediate proficiency in English. As such, one of my responsibilities as an educator is to distill the complexities of sport and leisure management theory into simple and easy to grasp frameworks, rubrics, checklists, and case studies through which to teach theory and practice and therefore that is the approach I will be using in this paper. Since I am still in the



preliminary stages of preparing teaching materials on leadership at this point in time, in this paper, I will attempt to establish a CLIL-based framework for leadership skills from which to later build materials on current principles and best practices for providing effective leadership in sport and leisure management from a pedagogical perspective.

### Leadership as a Core Sport and Leisure Service

First of all, I would like to show how leadership skills fits into a general framework for the provision of sport and leisure management services. This is the framework I use to teach students about the basics of sport and leisure management in their first course in the English component of our program. Based upon my studies, current theory, and my research, these are the core services that sport and leisure managers provide. (See Appendix 1!) This framework was created by synthesizing several sports, recreational, and leisure delivery system frameworks, and in particular, The 10 Major Elements in the Modern Leisure-Service Delivery System found in *Recreation and Leisure in Modern Society* by Mclean and Hurd (McClean & Hurd, 2015). I believe that it is a simple but comprehensive model, which my students can use as the overarching framework by which to base decisions on how to allocate resources when providing these services as sport and leisure managers. From this chart, it can be seen that leadership is a core service provided by sport and leisure managers. Currently, in the CLIL component of our program, students take four courses in English, Introduction to Sports and Leisure, Event Management, Tourism, and Leisure Services. One of my goals for our program is to expand the CLIL component of our program to include a course on leadership and in this course provide

students with current principles and best practices in leadership. On a related note, although one of my goals for the CLIL program is to base our curriculum on similar programs in the West, and in particular in North America, when I studied about leadership in the United States, most of the materials used was biographical in nature, such as a review of books by successful CEOs on how to be effective leaders. This approach certainly holds merit, but with regard to the leadership course, I hope to use a more quantitative approach, and by doing so, instill in students a scientific and quantifiable approach to management and leadership. Therefore, instead of focusing on famous leaders, I hope to use materials from sources such as the Harvard Business Review as the foundation for the course on leadership. By doing this, I believe that I can provide students with truly current principles and time-tested best practices.

### Developing a Sport and Leisure Management CLIL-based Leadership Skills Framework

In order to create a current and practical CLIL-based sport and leisure management leadership framework, it is important to understand the evolution of leadership theory. According to Gosling, Maturano, and Dennison (2003), the evolution of leadership theory has traveled through several stages including the Great Man Theory, Trait Theories, Behaviorist Theories, Situational Theories, Contingency Theory, Transactional Theory, and Transformational Theory. (p.6) Each of these theories contains potentially useful concepts about leadership, so I will summarize them here. The Great Man Theory is the idea that great leadership is innate. In other words, it is something you are born with. As educators, when working with students, I think that we have all had experiences where we caught



ourselves saying to ourselves, ‘this student is a natural leader’. I personally believe that this kind of stereotyping is problematic at best. As educators, I believe that we should try to put aside our preconceptions and avoid stereotyping or judging students. When I catch myself thinking that a student does not have what it takes to be a great leader, I stop myself, and ask myself, what can I do to provide this student with the knowledge, skills, and experience they need to develop their leadership skills. In addition, I try to expand upon and accentuate their leadership skills’ strengths while at the same time addressing potential leadership skills’ weaknesses. Understanding that outdated ideas of leadership, such as the Great Man Theory, still influence our concepts of leadership is a key step in arriving at a more useful and current framework by which to teach students about leadership. Therefore, from this theory we can show students the dangers of stereotyping themselves and others, while stressing the importance of recognizing how people’s minds work in that many people still expect leaders to act a certain way and have a certain ‘gravitas’. (Newton, 2020) By understanding how this theory affects people’s behavior, students can better understand how to use this to their advantage. When I teach students about leadership, one of the points that I stress is that employees are always watching you as a leader. That is why it is important to ‘walk the talk’ or do as you tell others to do. (Boitnott, 2018) In order words, leaders should model the behavior they expect from the group by practicing what they preach. Therefore, our framework could include the kinds of modeling behavior a leader can use to address both ‘the Bottom Line’ and ‘the Top Line’. In sport and leisure management, ‘The Bottom Line’ could be defined several ways including making a profit, providing basic public services, or meeting the needs of people with

special needs. Although in business, ‘the Top Line’ means “gross figures reported by a company, such as sales or revenues” (Investopedia, 2020), here we are using it to talk about Convey’s belief that transformational leaders should transform people and organizations for the greater good. (Stephen Convey as cited in Bolden, Marturano, & Dennison, p15)

The next theory, Trait Theory, also holds both positive and negative connotations for our framework. In this theory, leadership is broken down into individual traits that supposedly reflect the qualities of a great leader. (Gosling, Maturano, & Dennison) This a standard approach still used by many organizations. One of the issues with this theory is the assumption that people’s personalities are rigid and do not change depending on the situation or state of mind of the individual. (Gosling, Maturano, & Dennison) Another issue is that traits can be difficult to define and measure. For example, how do we define brave and how do we measure ‘braveness’. One thing we could consider when developing our framework is whether these traits might be useful for labeling and grouping observable and thus quantifiable behavior. For example, the act of treating people with respect could be grouped under the label of showing empathy and/or emotional intelligence. (Bariso, 2018) Instead of using a word like humble to talk about how to show empathy, we can modify these commonly used traits to describe leadership in a way that incorporate current trends in management and leadership and that focuses on quantifiable behavior. For example, treating employees with respect by taking time to listen to their feedback appears to produce positive outcomes such as building a positive work environment and culture. (Bariso, 2018) Therefore, if we were to include aspects of Trait



Theory in our framework, we might focus on how to use commonly used leadership traits as a means by which to label and group observable and quantifiable behavior that impacts both ‘the Bottom Line’ and ‘the Top Line’.

The next group of theories, behaviorist theories, are more general theories about human behavior and do not only apply to leadership, but also to a whole swath of other fields. Since my first master’s degree was in education, I have studied quite extensively about how these theories apply both to education and the CLIL approach. Regarding leadership, the basic idea is that instead of looking at the traits of effective leaders, we should look at their actual behavior. (Sharer, 2013) This ties in with my observations about Trait Theory, in that as sport and leisure managers, we want to use a scientific and quantifiable approach to leadership skills. One of the strengths of this approach is that it is potentially quantifiable in that we can sometimes measure these behaviors through observation. Therefore, if we were to include aspects of behaviorist theories in our framework, we could emphasize the importance of using a quantifiable approach in our framework through evaluating behavior in a systematic and scientific manner to determine the effectiveness of an individual’s leadership skills.

The next two theories, situational leadership and Contingency Theory, focus on which style of leadership to use depending on the situation. In the Tannenbaum & Schmidt’s Leadership Continuum, there are four main leadership styles, which “can be located along such a continuum.” (Gosling, Maturano, & Dennison, p10). For CLIL purposes, I have simplified this model to three points, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. (See Appendix 2!) Using a simplified version of their model, leadership

approaches can be thought of as points on a spectrum with the autocratic approach being the leader telling the group what to do, the democratic approach being the leader negotiating with the group on what to do, and the laissez faire approach being the leader leaving it up to the group members to decide what to do. One of the strengths of this approach is that it shows the importance of adjusting one’s leadership skills and approaches to the situation at hand. Therefore, if we were to include aspects of situational leadership in our framework, we could emphasize the importance of considering the various interactions between the leader, members of the group and the situations where these interactions occur when deciding on which style of leadership to use.

I would like to finish this section of the paper by comparing the two most current and commonly used leadership theories, Transactional Theory and Transformational Theory. Transactional Theory focuses on the relationship between the leader and the group and the mutual benefits that arise from their mutual ‘contract’. This theory has long been the traditional model for leadership in many organizations. It focuses on ‘the Bottom Line’, clear roles, and hard data. In comparison, the Transformational Theory can be said to focus on ‘the Top Line’, or the greater good, be that society’s greater good, the organization’s greater good, or the group’s greater good. According to Gosling, Maturano, and Dennison, this theory focuses on transforming people and organizations “with a sense of purpose that goes beyond a simple exchange of rewards for effort provided”. (p.16) One of the strengths of the transactional and transformational theories is that these are current leadership practices used by many people and organization all over the world. (Gosling, Maturano, and Dennison) Therefore, if we were to



include aspects of transactional and transformational leadership in our framework, we could emphasize the importance of finding the perfect balance between 'the Bottom Line' and 'the Top Line'. This is especially true in sport and leisure management since so much of organizations' success depend on the customer or client's experience.

From a review of the evolution of leadership theory, a sport and leisure management CLIL-based Leadership Skills Framework should allow students to quantify their impact on both 'the Bottom Line' and 'the Top Line'. This impact is determined by their interaction with the group. Therefore, the framework should show that it is the leader's interaction with the group that determines the effectiveness of their actions on 'the Bottom Line' and 'the Top Line'. (See Appendix 3!) One way to do this might be a rubric that evaluates a leader's strategies and tactics and their impact 'the Bottom Line' and 'the Top Line'. A simple CLIL breakdown of tactics and strategies might start by stressing the difference between a manager and a leader. (See Appendix 4!) Then, these differences could be used to define leadership strategies and tactics in a CLIL-Leadership Skills Rubric. For example, a focus on people could be broken down into strategies such as motivating, rewarding, and discipling members of the group. Each of these categories could be further broken down into sub-frameworks and sub-rubrics. (See Appendix 5!) To test whether this rubric can be applied to current literature on leadership, I used key terms like motivating, rewarding, and discipling, to search the Harvard Business Review premium subscription for related books, articles, and resources. I also did a quick scan of the latest articles on leadership to see whether they could be integrated into this rubric. Since this project is still in its early stages, I recognize that this

framework and the corresponding rubric will need to be revised and adjusted as I work my way through the thousands of articles on leadership in the HBR premium subscription database. However, this allows me to accomplish several objectives at the same time: one, I can test and revised my CLIL-based leadership skills framework and rubric by trying to incorporate real-world case studies into the framework and rubric; two, I can begin the process of building a collection of CLIL task-based 'best practices' case studies using current real-world cases from an authentic and relevant source, HBR; and three, I can learn more about leadership and thus share what I have learned with students using the CLIL approach.

## Conclusion

Now that I have begun the process of establish a CLIL-based framework and rubric for leadership skills in sport and leisure management. The next step is to begin sifting through the thousands of resources connected to leadership in the HBR premium subscription database. Hopefully, this approach will allow me to categorize, sort, and adapt these resources to the needs of my students in an efficient and effective manner by having established a clear, consistent, and cohesive methodology by which to integrate theory with practice through current principles and best practices.

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## Appendixes

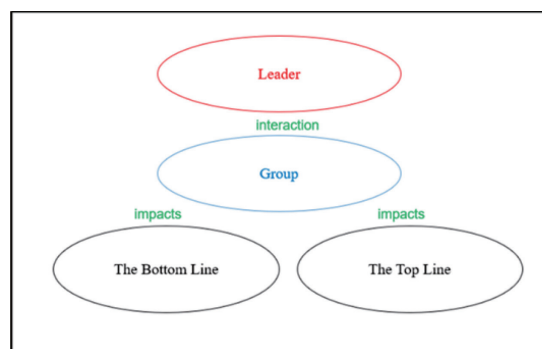
### Appendix 1: The Provision of Sport, Recreational, and Leisure Services



### Appendix 2: CLIL-based Leadership Approaches

| Autocratic      | Democratic                             | Laissez-faire          |
|-----------------|--|------------------------|
|                 |  |                        |
| <i>Do this!</i> | <i>What do you think we should do?</i> | <i>Do as you like!</i> |
|                 |  |                        |

### Appendix 3: CLIL-based Leadership Skills Framework



### Appendix 4: CLIL-based Differences Between a Manager and a Leader

| The Differences Between a Manager and a Leader |      |                               |
|--|------|-------------------------------|
| Managers focus on systems.                     | (vs) | Leaders focus on people.      |
| Managers create goals.                         |      | Leaders create a vision.      |
| Managers try to improve things.                |      | Leaders try to change things. |
| Managers control risks.                        |      | Leaders take risks            |
| Managers think short term.                     |      | Leaders think long term.      |

### Appendix 5: CLIL-based Leadership Skills Rubric

| CLIL-based Leadership Skills Rubric |                                      |   |   |       |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|-------|
| Strategies & Tactics                |                                      | Impact on the Bottom Line                       | Impact on the Top line                          | Score |
|                                     |                                      | Highly effective to highly ineffective (10 - 0) | Highly effective to highly ineffective (10 - 0) |       |
| 1. Focus on People                  | a. motivating members of the group   |   |   |       |
|                                     | b. rewarding members of the group    |   |   |       |
|                                     | c. disciplining members of the group |   |   |       |