

Military Officers Leadership Styles; Their Quality, Perception and Behavior*

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Abstract

Generally speaking, military organization requires high standard of task performance. But relationship to subordinates is equally important, too. In the military, 'Situation' and tasks to be performed are changing according to one's rank. So it is natural that officers in higher rank are used to exhibit more matured and balanced leadership behavior than those in lower rank.

Based on this idea, we may suggest an ideal military leadership style. This article extracted a proposed ideal leadership model by applying military leadership characteristics and the leadership theories. Then a group of military officers' leadership style was studied to find out differences from the proposed model.

Author picked the examining group from the active duty marine officers and supplied them with 3 types of questionnaires. Questionnaire A (QA) is to examine the individual quality of leadership, questionnaire B (QB) is to identify each perception to leadership style and questionnaire C (QC) is to find out each actual exhibition of leadership behavior. It is interesting that the group having 'A' quality prefers 'B' leadership style perception and exhibits 'C' behavior.

By and large, the group needs to improve both dimensions of leadership behavior; task and relationship.

Also maturing pattern in leadership shows irregular forms. Ranks from Captains to Lieutenant Colonels show some deficiencies from the normal pattern of maturity. The study result does not represent all military officers but may provide a useful tool to analyze the pattern of military officers leadership style not only as a group but also as an individual.

*This paper is a study of Marine Officers Group.

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I. Preface

Leadership is closely related to the success or failure of an organization. Particularly, in military organization, interrelations between a commander's leadership ability and the successful mission performance of his unit are directly connected. Since the environment of military organization is highly leader-oriented, leader takes a sole responsibility for success and failure of a unit. Thus one's leadership ability is essential in commanding or running a military organization.

This article attempts to figure out military leadership styles existing in the active duty Marine Officers and to provide suggestions for future improvements. Although logical limitations exist, quantitative approach is tried for this study. It must be fairly new trial to describe military leadership styles by predesigned questionnaires.

The first part of this article devotes to formulate an ideal model for military leadership style followed by general review of modern leadership theories. The second part draws the results of questionnaires answered by the selected by the selected Marine Officers who include all ranks (from 2nd Lieutenant to General) and compares the results to the proposed ideal model.

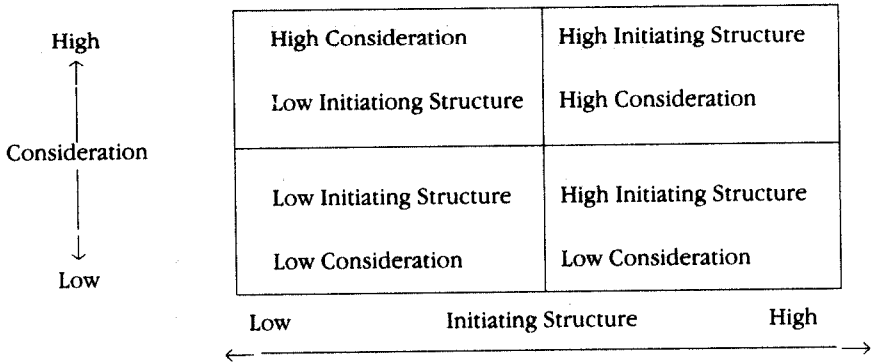
Revealed leadership styles are portrayed on the Managerial Grid style model chart developed by author, and deficiencies in their leadership are identified. Lastly suggestions for improvements and further application to other organizations have been presented.

II. Ideal Military Leadership styles

1. Modern Leadership Theories

Leadership theories are various but this article only concerns those theories developed in the U.S since 1930. As we are well appreciated, Trait Theory(1930-50), Behavioral Theory (1950-60) and Situational Theory (Since 1970) are general trends of leadership theories. For the purpose of the study, Behavioral and Situational theories are concerned. Whether a leader democratic or autocratic is one-dimensional aspect of behavioral theory. However actually over a thousand dimensions of behavior exist, and they could be narrowed into two categories that substantially accounted for most of the leadership behavior described by subordinates.

Ohio State Studies called these two dimensions as 'initiating structure' and 'consideration' and the Managerial Grid developed by Blake and Mouton, 'concern for people' and 'concern for production.'¹⁾ Situational Leadership Theory developed by P. Hersey and K.H Blanchard shows Tri-dimensional leader effectiveness model which contains leaders task and relation behavior and the readiness (maturity) level



Hersey & Blanchard, Mangement of Organizational Behavior (1982: 86)

Figure 1. 'Ohio' study of Leadership Style

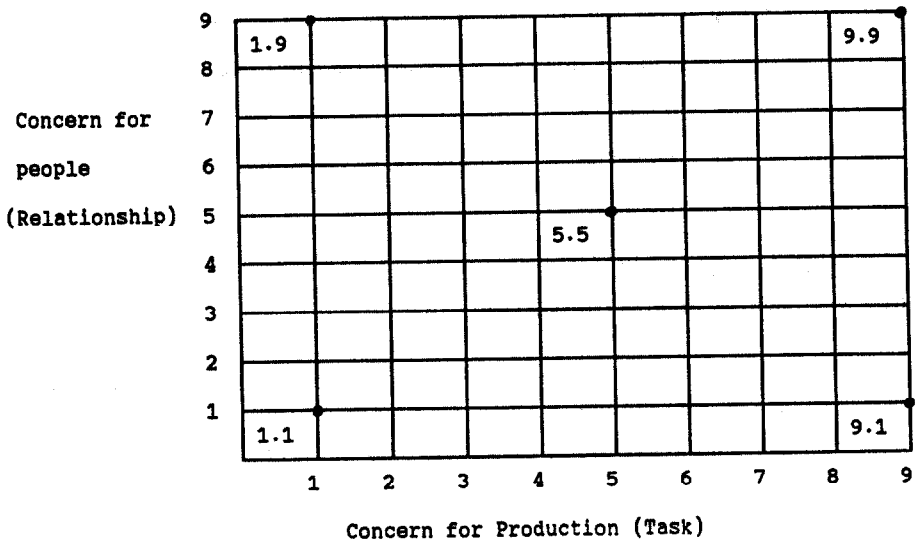


Figure 2. Managerial Grid

of followers.²⁾ The following Figures may substitute detail theoretical explanation.

2. Ideal Military Leadership Style

A. Behavioral Aspect

If many military leadership behavior dimensions were narrowed into two categories, it could be expressed as Mission Performance and 'Subordinate Manage-

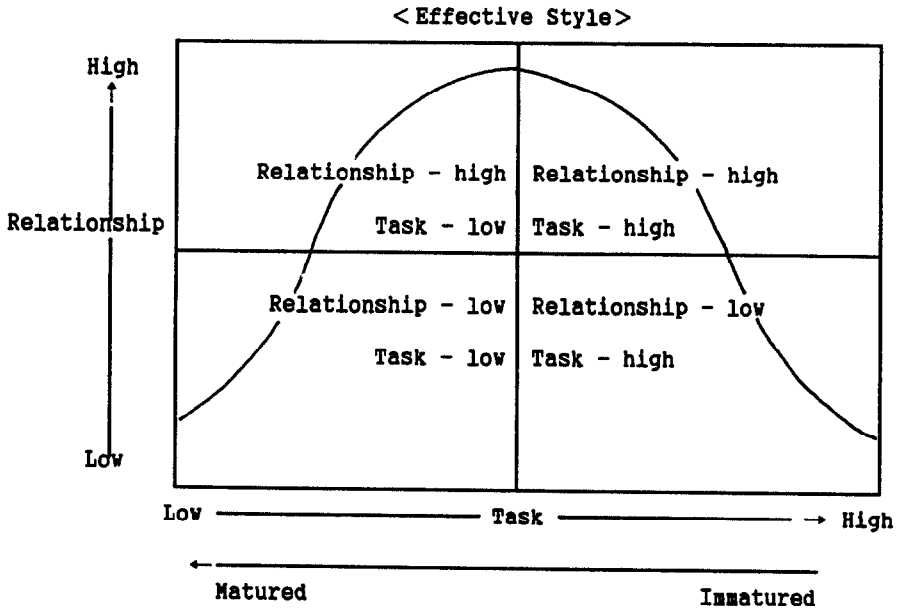


Figure 3. Life Cycle Theory of Leadership

ment.' 'Mission Performance' is related to warfare for one's nation. So it is without question that obeying an order is absolute.

However, this demands the sacrifice of one's life. Therefore Subordinate Management as human beings is equally important. Main issue from behavioral theory aspect could include whether a leader democratic or autocratic (one-dimensional aspect), or whether taskoriented or relationship oriented (two-dimensional aspect).

When we put all this together applying to military environment, the following table can be made.

< Table 1 > Behavioral Theory Applied to Military Environment

One-Dimensional Aspect	Two-Dimensional Aspect		Military Environment
	Ohio Study	Managerial Grid	
Autocratic	Initiating Structure	Concern for production(Task)	Mission Performance
Democratic	Consideration	Concern for People (Relationship)	Subordinates Management

Practicing military leadership from behavioral aspect, it's without question that 'Task' has the first priority. But it is hard to say that task can be performed without good relationship. So rather a leader better have a good sense of balance exhibiting these two categories to produce maximum effectiveness.

B. Situational Aspect

The basic premise used in the Life Cycle Theory by 'Hersey' and 'Blanchard' is maturity of followers.

Maturity is defined as the ability and willingness of people to take responsibility for directing their own behavior.³⁾ The level of maturity is progressed by one's experience and education. This is very significant and unique in the military organization. Rank is the key factor to distinguish the level of maturity. Certain rank is expected to have relatively uniformed leadership capability because the required tasks and billets are used to be classified by one's rank.

When we categorize military officers rank structure into 3 groups in order to simplify leadership requirements in terms of maturity and unique military situations, <Table 2> may give you an idea how they should be progressed. It is apparent that higher rank officers practice wider span of command, and the level of maturity will be progressed accordingly. Therefore it is true that different rank structure requires different leadership style.

<Table 2> Categorized Leadership Requirements

General	Field Grade (Col, LTCol, Maj)	Company Grade (Capt, 1LT, 2LT)
• Harmony	• Practical	• Set an example
• Smooth Communication	• Full knowledge of duty	• Physical Influence in Commanding
• Keen eye for commanding	• Sense of Combat Command and Capability	• Combat Command
• Accurate estimate of Situation	• Professional Job performance	• Subjugation of danger by one's own initiative
• Wide area of interest, Domestic & Foreign affairs	• Ability as intermediate level manager	

On the premise of those situational requirements shown on the Table 2, suitable leadership style can be explained for each group of rank.

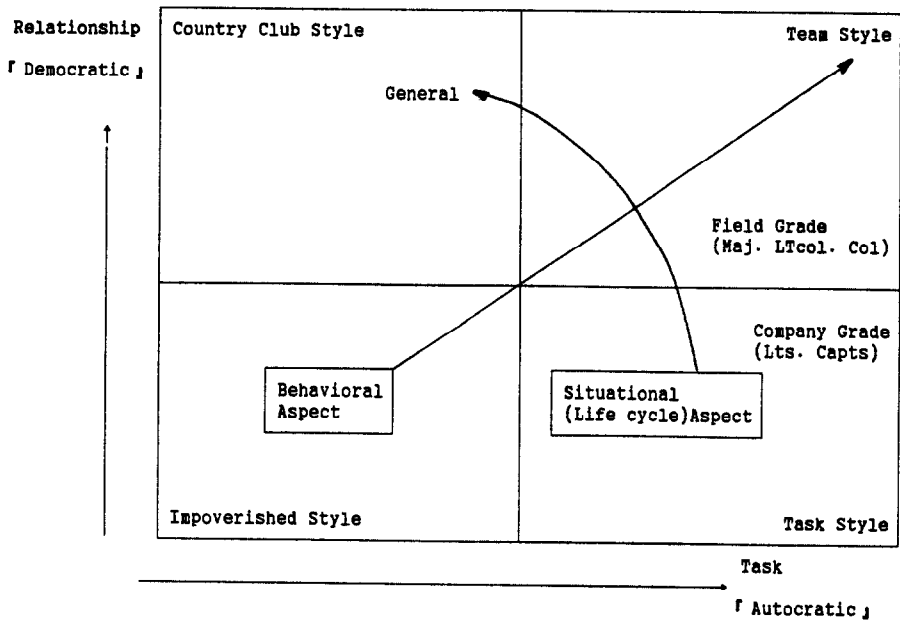
Company grade officers are used to play leading role by set an example in combat field as well as in barracks 'Follow me' style leadership is paramount for this rank. Company grade officers also must be able to negotiate and overcome challenges and

risks by showing his own will and ability. As a result, we may expect more autocratic and task-oriented leadership style for this group.

Field grade Officers are used to be assigned as commanders or staff billet higher than battalion. This means they are fully participated to normal command and staff action as intermediate level leaders and managers. More rational and systematic attitude for duty is essential. As intermediate level managers, they must be capable to coordinate and solve conflicts related to task. Professional knowledge about military tactics and management skill could be fully learned at this level. Regarding a suitable leadership style for this group, sense of balance both for task and relationship is critical.

Generals are supreme class in the military rank structure. As top managers, they must be capable to harmonize various military resources and to provide a spiritual guidance to subordinates. This class must have keen eyes to estimate situation and know how to delegate authority and to maintain smooth communication flow in order to create motivation to subordinates. Authoritative attitude is necessary but more necessary to be a good moderator.

Therefore 'relationship' occupies higher demanding position for Generals leader-



* As shown on here, ideally military leadership should be concentrated to the right upper quarter of this grid. The grid is such a combination of Managerial Grid and Life Cycle Theory Arc.

Figure 4. Ideal Military Leadership Model

ship.

C. Proposed Ideal Leadership Model

From behavioral aspect, although military requires task-oriented, task and relationship are equally important. Ideally 'Task-high' and 'Relationship-high' style leadership gives the best solution for military organization. From situational aspect, leadership requirements for each rank group call for different style of leadership. Generally 'immature rank' vs 'task-oriented' and 'matured rank' vs relationship-oriented principle can be applied.

Figure 4 portrays these two concepts put together on the 『Managerial Grid』 and 『Life cycle Theory』 Arc.

This graph does not represent scale but show direction of progress conceptually.

III. Analysis of Leadership Styles and Suggestion for Improvement

—Group Study for Marine Officers—

1. Preparation of Questionnaires and Method of Examination

A. Questionnaires Designed

Questionnaires were initially provided by professor CHO.S.I Seoul National University.⁴⁾ Provided questionnaires were mostly accepted for examination except author carefully modified some of questions to meet military situation.

Questionnaire A(QA) measures one's leadership quality by 5 components of leadership with 6 specific questions each. So total of 30 questions is given. Questionnaire B (QB) measures one's favorable response to specific leadership style (one's inherent perception to leadership) in terms of autocratic, democratic and noninterfered. Each

<Table 3> Composition of Questionnaires

Type	QA Leadership Quality					QB Leadership Perception			QC Leadership Behavior		
	Objec- tivity	Flexi- bility	Under- standing	Communi- cation	Use of Authority	A	D	N	A	D	N
Questions	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

A: Atuocratic
 B: Democratic
 N: Noninterfered

has 6 questions and 18 as total. Questionnaire C(QC) measures one's leadership behavior actually exhibits. The number of questions is the same as QB.

B. Sampling

Surveying object, total active duty Marine Officers as of Nov 1992, was put to the computer program and selected 98 officers as the examining group. Rank composition shows on the <Table 4>.

<Table 4> Officers Examined by Rank

General	Colonel	LT Colonel	Major	Captain	Lieutenants	Total
4	9	14	19	24	28	98

2. Analysis of Questionnaires

A. Leadership Quality (QA)

When we take a look those leadership quality components they could be rearranged by two dimensional leadership behavior, 'Task and relationship.' For example, 'use of authority' may stand for 'talk-oriented' character and 'flexibility' for relationship-oriented.'

Based on this idea, two-dimensional (Relationship-Task) leadership character by rank score could be recalculated from those scores on the <Table 5>. For instance each relationship score of the <Table 6> presents the average of 'objectivity' and 'flexibility' of the <Table 5>.

When we put this result to Managerial Grid, General shape of Marine Officers leadership quality style can be portrayed as shown on the Figure 6.

The result on the Figure 6 shows an overall character of Marine Officers leadership quality. Generally speaking, this specific group's leadership characteristics are located in between Team and Task phase. The group also shows much Task-oriented in general. It is interesting though Majors and Lieutenant Colonels conceive lower relationship scores than Company Grade Officers.

Let's look back <Table 5>. Lieutenant Colonels and Majors mark 2.64 and 3.00 in 'Objectivity' respectively. Instead 'Use of Authority' marks 5.00 and 4.73. This means 'Task-high' tendency. Ranks as Lieutenant Colonel and Major are professionally quite matured by their military education and experience.

However, it seems that the current environment of their assignments as intermediate level commanders and staff and daily tasks they have to carry on may create a great burden to become more tensed. As the result of that, they would have higher tendency to stick on 'use of authority', namely more "Task-oriented."

<Table 5> Group Analysis of QA by Rank

Components Rank	Objectivity	Flexibility	Under- Standing	Commu- nication	Use of Authority
Average	3.17	2.87	4.39	3.82	4.62
General	4.00	3.00	4.50	4.50	4.00
Colonel	3.50	3.00	4.50	4.17	4.83
LTCol	2.64	2.82	4.82	4.00	5.00
Major	3.00	2.80	4.47	3.80	4.73
Captain	3.26	2.87	4.52	3.70	4.78
Lieutenants	3.33	2.98	4.29	3.88	4.68

(Point evaluation) 5-6: Satisfactory, 3-4: Average, 3 below: Poor

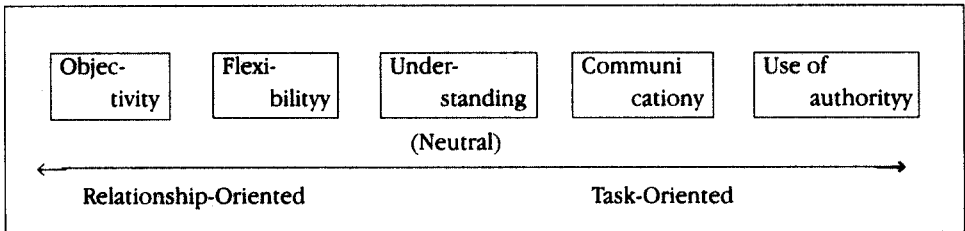


Figure 5. Rearrangement of leadership quality components

<Table 6> Two-Dimension (Relationship-Task) Leadership quality score Table

Rank Category	Average	Gen	Col	LT Col	Maj	Capt	LT
Relationship	3.02	3.50	3.25	2.73	2.60	3.17	3.21
Task	4.22	4.25	4.50	4.50	4.27	4.24	4.26

Nevertheless, their overall leadership quality pattern shown on the managerial grid still shows positive from military leadership aspect if lower relationship attitude be higher.

Again on the <Table 5>, we find out those gained scores in sequence: 'use of authority'-'understanding'-'communication'-'objectivity'-'flexibility'. This means that

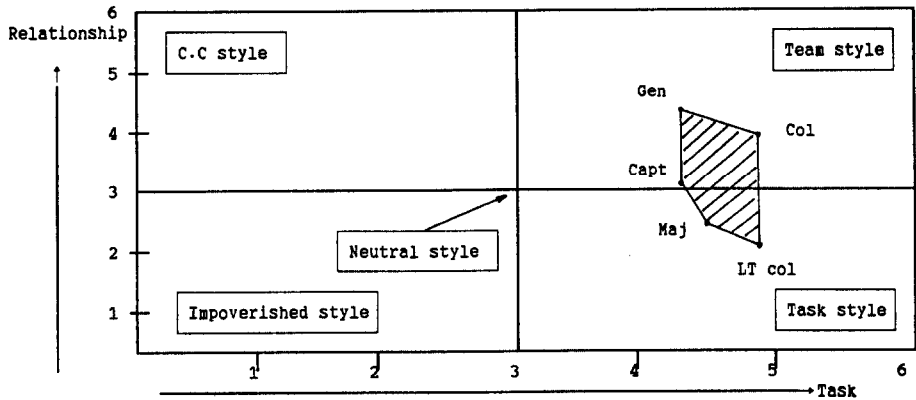


Figure 6. Phased location of leadership quality style applied to Managerial Grid

the inherent leadership quality of this group as a whole is much disciplined in nature. How about score distribution? Higher ranks including Generals and Colonels show relatively even distribution. This means the quality of leadership is related to the amount of one's military career.

However mid-rank (LTcol and Maj) shows irregular form than expected. Logically mid-rank officers should be located in between Captains and Colonels. This class may conceive some leadership quality problems to be identified.

Now let's compare the Figure 4 and Figure 6 in terms of Life Cycle curve line. Ideal model on the Figure 4 shows a smooth curve line from LT to General in maturing one's leadership. The shape portrayed on the Figure 6 is not. It shows young officers 'relationship-high task-low' vs Majors & LTCols 'relationship-low Task-high.' Virtually it should be natural progress: 'lower rank-task' vs 'higher rank-relationship' formular.

Therefore, when if we accept the proposed ideal model, deviation revealed on the Figure 6 must indicates their leadership deficiency to be improved.

B. Leadership Perception (QB) and Behavior (QC)

As mentioned, QB measures one's leadership perception. In other words, it suggests a leadership style you believe so (or you prefer) in terms of autocratic, democratic or noninterfered. QC suggests your actual leadership behavior exhibited.

As we did in the analysis of QA, autocratic-task axis, democratic-relationship axis principle adhered and noninterfered style is disregarded for this analysis. The result shows on the <Table 7>

Further analysis of the above result will be made together with QA result for better comparison.

<Table 7> Result of leadership perception (QB) and Behavior (QC)

(Full Score: 6.00)

Questionair	Your Perception (QB)			Your Behavior (QC)		
	Auto- cratic	Demo- cratic	Non Interfered	Auto- cratic	Demo- cratic	Non Interfered
Average	2.45	3.85	2.96	3.33	4.78	2.65
General	2.00	4.25	2.50	2.50	5.25	2.50
Colonel	2.50	4.17	2.83	3.33	5.17	2.67
LT Col	1.91	3.91	2.55	3.18	5.00	2.27
Major	2.00	3.67	2.87	2.87	4.80	2.60
Captain	2.74	3.65	3.04	3.26	4.48	2.87
Lieutenant	2.69	3.95	3.12	3.71	4.83	2.67

C. Comparison of 3 Questionnaires

When we put the result of all 3 questionnaires together, Figure 7 can be portrayed. In other words the result of the <Table 7> is drawn on the Figure 6 By Figure 7 leadership characteristics of the examined group can be said that the group can be said that the group having 'A' style leadership quality feels (prefers) one's own style as 'B' and actually exhibits 'C' style.

Leadership quality of this group is located in the middle of 'Talk' and 'Team' mean-time leadership perception shows rather democratic and exhibition of leadership behavior in between Country Coub and Team with higher position of democratic style. As the result of that,

1) Exhibiting Leadership Behavior generally occupies harmonized position in between Quality and perception.

2) Difference between Quality and Perception may create leadership deficiency.

3) So Quality and Perception better be upgraded toward 'Team' style which is closer to ideal model.

It is interesting that the result is beyond of one's general perception to Marine Officers leadership style-tough and stubborn autocratic warfighter. It is believed that their inherent leadership quality is much more task-oriented but behavior exhibited as leaders is fairly democratic. 'Once a marine, always a marine' is a proud heritage of the Marine Corps and the unique leadership style revealed by Marine officers may come from this heritage.

Now let's take a look the shape of maturing progress shown on the Figure 7. Ideal model on the Figure 4 follows Life Cycle Theory curve Our experimental pictures

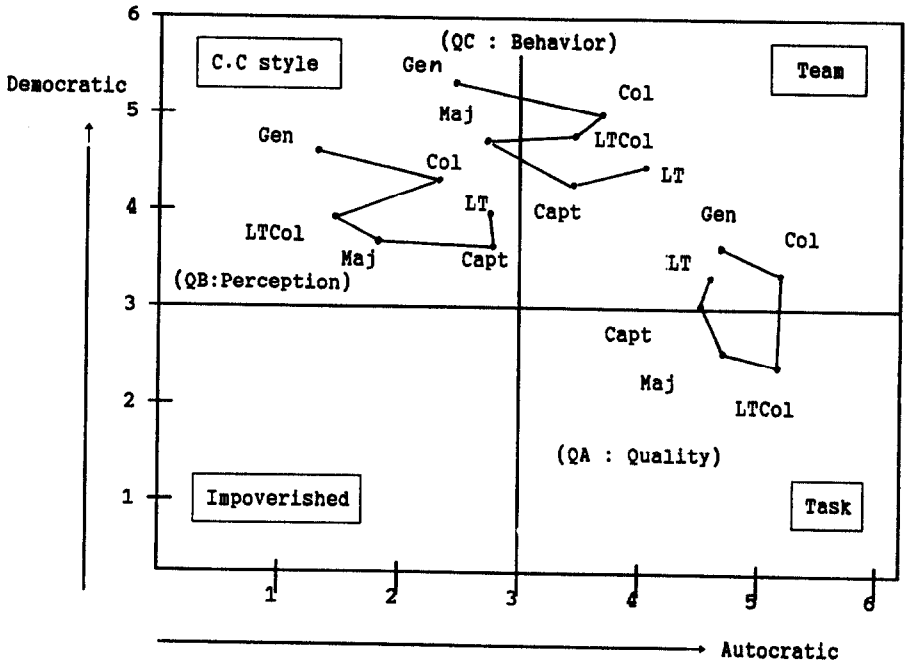


Figure 7. Managerial Grid location of Leadership Quality, Perception and Behavior (QA, QB and QC)

reveal all irregular form; QA, QB and QC shape.

Figure 8 is purposely extracted from Figure 7 for comparison and easy to find out Captain thru LT Col indicating leadership deficiencies.

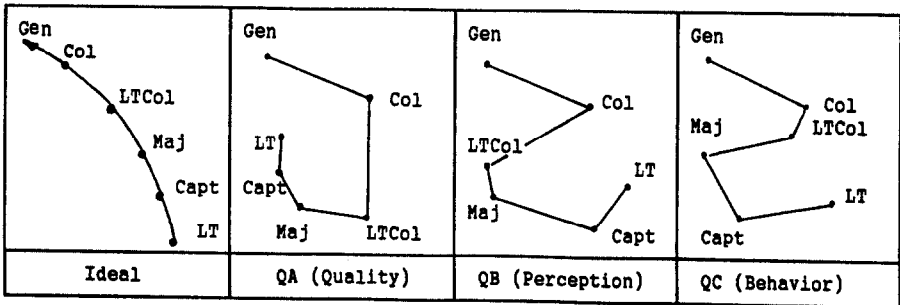


Figure 8. Comparison of the shape of each Maturity arc

3. Suggestion for Improvement

Figure 9 shows examined result and direction for improvement conceptually.

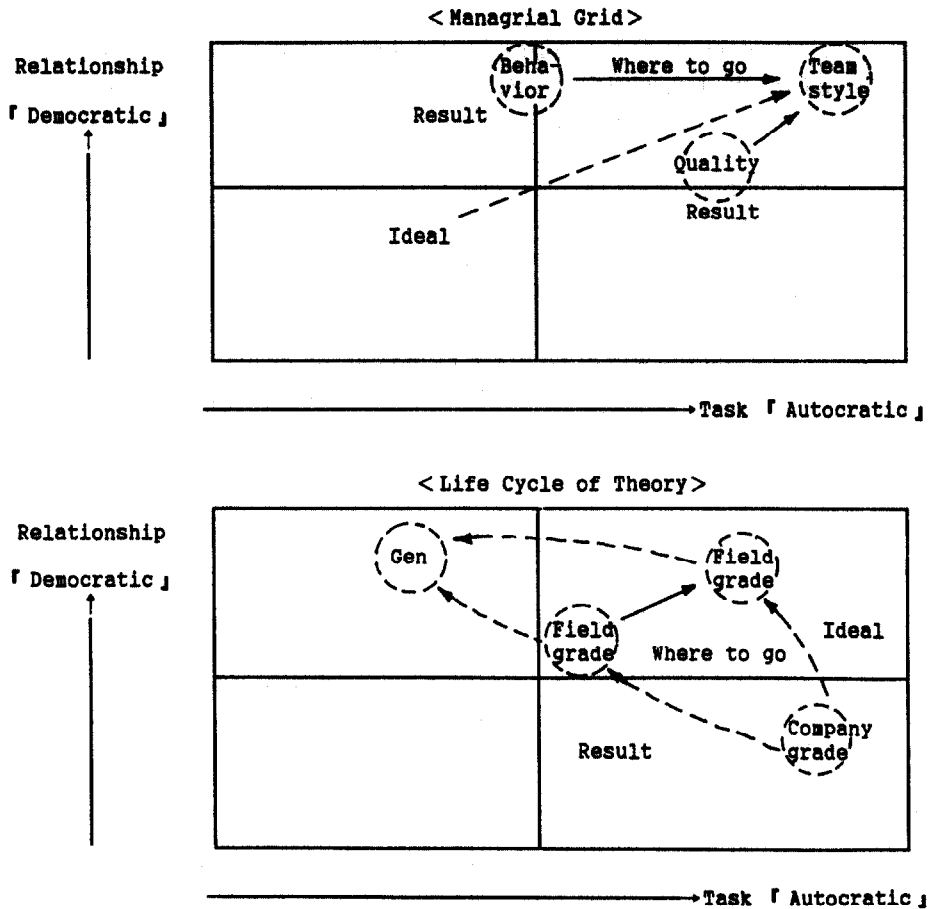


Figure 9. Suggestion for Improvement

1) Being applied to Managerial Grid Theory, both quality and behavior needs to be more Team-oriented. Quality should be focused to fill up the lack of 'Objectivity' and 'Flexibility'. Behavior requires to practice more 'Task-oriented.'

2) Being applied to Life Cycle Theory. Leadership ability of the middle class rank (LTCol, Maj, & Capt) should be improved. How to improve these deficiencies is another part of study for this group.

IV. Conclusion

The first point of this study is to find out military officers existing leadership styles in terms of leadership quality, perception to leadership and actual behavior exhibi-

ted.

The second point is to identify problem area and to make suggestion for improvement. An ideal model derived from behavioral (Managerial Grid) and situational (Life Cycle Theory) leadership theory is provided for standard scale to analyze the result of questionnaires. The article concludes that current marine officers' leadership styles require further improvement to reach Task-high, Relationship-high position with balanced sense of harmony. Nevertheless this study does have logical limits.

Theoretically, the study only deals with the least necessary part of leadership theories to develop the logic in this article. Also the examining group is limited to Marine Officers only, so the result shown here can't represent all military officers' leadership styles. But the way of approach to identify an ideal leadership model considering military situation and quantitative approach to review certain leadership style could be fairly new trial and may give useful suggestion to study leadership in military organization. In order to do so different military organization may apply different variables.

Notes

- 1) S.P. Robbins, *Organizational Behavior* 1991: 357-358.
- 2) *Ibid*: 365-367.
- 3) P. Hersey, K.H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior*, 1982: 151.
- 4) For further information about questionnaires, ask professor Cho or author. Regret not able to attach them due to the limited space here.

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