CONVERTING A SCHOOL MANAGER INTO A LEADER

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Abstract

The school manager, by complying with the adequate way of becoming a leader, has to adopt a new attitude in order to reach the basic objectives of his organization, related to time, performance and cost.

The results should be the beneficiaries' satisfaction and quality in education. The school manager has to take the responsibility of a leader, a role that becomes more and more complex due to the others' expectations related to decision making, strategic organization and improvement of educational process.

The speciality literature approaches, from the praxiological point of view, the management and leadership topic and we may notice some differences between the theoretical characteristics and the obvious and necessary practice as a solution inside a successful organization.

This study aims at analyzing the leader's capacity concerning intelligence as a form and attribute of behavioural organization, as an aptitude or capacity, as a process, as a real or potential fact, because the individual differences related to mental features and the development of analysis tools represent the bridge between manager and leader.

The raw material of a leader personality is intelligence, difficult to define but easy to identify.

The capacity to understand what is really essential, to solve problems based on the previous experience represent the attribute of an open-minded, skillful leader, relying on teamwork, with solutions for each *and every situation.*

Keywords: *teamwork, manager, leader, intelligence, successful organization.*

I. Introduction

Everyone knows what a school manager is but nobody can describe him/her exactly. There are many definitions throughout literature, which standardize the qualities of a manager, the ideal model, but these can or cannot

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have an effect on the actors implied in the educational process, both from the position of leading, guiding or controlling and of implementing it.

We admit that there are compulsory competences that have to be achieved in order to work with people in an organizational context, that maximizing the results of a school becomes a compulsory mission of its manager, but the internal structure of a school manager's personality can turn him/her into a true leader.

II. Conceptual details

The school manager, in order to be a leader, has to adopt an other attitude in reaching the basic goals of the organization, in terms of time, performance and cost. The summary of these goals is to get beneficiaries' satisfaction and quality in education.

Thus, the object of the activity stays the same but the way of acting differs for the manager who takes the responsibility of becoming the leadership protagonist. A leader challenges and develops and does not accept the previous situation; he/she does not act the way he/she has to but he/she does the right thing. A leader does not imitate, he/she is original. A leader does not surrender in front of a hostile environment, he/she conquers it. A leader does not manage cold resources, he/she innovates, focuses on people and not on system and structure, he/she does not aim at getting control because his/her goal is to inspire trust.

A leader does not give up the short-term perspective in the favour of the long-term one, his/her goal is the horizon and not the low line and the essential questions are ”what” and ”why” and not ”how” and ”when” (Iosifescu, proda, Gavrilovici, 2004).

In other words, the manager becomes a leader when he/she has the strength to be himself/herself, to act naturally, involved and motivated, to achieve the perfect balance between the personal goals and the organizational ones.

According to the evolution of research and literature that approach the topic of management and leadership from the praxiologic point of view, we can notice a distance between the theoretical characteristics and the necessary and obvious practice as a solution inside a successful organization.

Taking into account the fact that during 2008 – 2016, the positions of leading, guiding and control in schools were taken by assignment of mission and this was done by the general school inspector – the hierarchically superior position.

The manager was imposed to the school staff and this is the reason for which he/she was task-oriented, neglecting the human relationships. Thus, in

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90% of schools there was a ”gap” in the organizational managerial communication, in decision-making, in problem solving and in reaching goals.

Because of a very long period during which the school managers were not evaluated according to a selection/exam, *de lege ferenda* they should attend some courses in the first two years of mandate in order to pass ”calmly” from the rigid leader to a motivated one, with positive attitudes towards the organizational culture.

The leader competence results only from an applicative education, by the practice of concrete situations followed by feedback.

The courses should aim at identifying the abilities necessary for school leaders and also developing the competences for designing and deploying short-term, mid-term and long-term strategies, for evaluating and monitoring the organizational culture, for creating the optimal environment in order to achieve the strategic goals, for using as good as possible the human, material, financial and relational resources. An essential component of school leaders is the communicating competence. Statistics show that 70% of the leader's time is used to communicate, an important key for a successful leadership.

Moreover, the national standards for the positions of leading, guiding and control were elaborated starting from the competences of communicating and interlinking.

For this reason we propose the continuous training of the school leader in order for him/her to be able to elaborate a message and to find the favourable conditions for sending it, to rehearse a clear, logical and operational message, to clearly define the aim of the message and also the best conditions for a good communication, to be able to receive the message, to understand it and to process it and to give answers integrated in the managerial action.

The national exam for the positions as school leaders has not evaluated this essential component of communication, the written test measuring only the theoretical knowledge and the practical test – the interview- has just left the impression of evaluating the quality as a good communicator of the candidate.

We advocate this situation by explaining the fact that the interview was actually a lame monologue of each candidate and no member of the examination board was allowed to ask questions. Thus, each candidate presented a managerial offer or an improvement of it and many of them were not able to deliver a coherent speech.

An other critical aspect relates to the fact that the candidates' strategies were not evaluated by specialized persons because the mixed composition of the

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board (representatives of the local public administration, school inspectors) has proved poor competences of its members concerning strategic management.

This could be sufficient reasons to sustain the continuous training of school principals in their first two years of their mandate.

The school manager has to assume the role of a leader, who becomes more and more complex due to the others' expectations, related to decision making, strategic organization and optimizing the educational process. Inside the organization, the leader's influence depends very much on the type of authority he/she has on people.

An efficient leader has to use, for his advantage, the motivational aspects and the satisfaction of successful actions and, at the same time, to remove every aspect that brings insatisfaction and demotivation.

The triangle formed by competences, authority and managerial responsibility offers the capacity of leading to a person who exerts his position according to laws and regulations, benefitting from a suitable training. There are other attributes of leadership added to this triangle:

- the authority that offers the manager the concrete opportunity to influence and control the behaviour of his subordinates;
- the responsibility that represents what the manager owes to the organization.

The progress in the managerial field is a long process, taking place during the whole career and its ideal route would be a combination of the managerial styles, multidisciplinary group work, delegating attributions, vision on the organization as a whole.

But would any good teacher become the best manager? Obviously, in order to be a good school principal, you need much more than a good practice as a teacher. To teach children could be a vocation but not a sufficient one for leading an organization.

In order to adapt himself/herself to the latest educational reforms, to society requirements, to the technological progress and to the needs of the direct beneficiaries of the educational services, the school managers long for a special thing and that is the value and importance of human relationships. And only now we can say that a manager can turn into a leader.

By assuming the leader role, he/she becomes responsible, firstly, for himself/herself and then for the direct and indirect beneficiaries, for his

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professions and for the organization. The moment when a manager becomes a leader could be easily identified due to some obvious aspects related to the others' behaviour towards him/her.

So, a leader is followed by his/her team because:

- has credibility, proving an extraordinary capacity of creating/ developing relationships;
- proves competence and integrity, respects the individual differences;
- appreciates people and the relationships with them;
- optimizes the material and human resources;
- commissions tasks;
- has high expectations by intending to maintain a tension favourable to movement.

Without analyzing the leaders' styles that are defined by the personality features of the actors implied, we have a look on their human side, which influences a lot the leadership act.

The ”raw material” of a leader's personality is intelligence, difficult to be defined but easily identified. We may naturally ask:”What kind of leader has the potential for a continuous evolution and development so that he/she could solve any problem appeared in a school organization?”

The mature manager, who wants to become a leader, through his/her own efforts succeeds in overpassing every obstacle by combining the dynamism of his efforts with the most efficient forms of action. People should not expect wonders generated by their leader because they could easily become servile and lack criticism.

The main quality of a leader is the ability to influence the others. The strategies used by a leader to protect huimself/herself from unrealistic expectations and, implicitly, failure, are:

- inoculating trust in his/her own abilities to make the best decisions;
- maintaining a skeptical attitude, based on dialogue, by encouraging questions with open answers;
- using some structures of decision-making based on cooperation, fellowship, consensus, applied democracy and participation;
- giving up coercive measures and encouraging positive criticism.

In order to have an efficient school organization, the vision has to be simple but vibrating as image in the leader' s mind, it has to describe a future state of fact, credible and preferable to the current one, it has to be desirable enough to energise those who want to join the leader's team, it has to be presented everybody intelligently, at a certain emotional or spiritual level.

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An efficient leader is like an orchestra conductor, who makes different people with different abilities and talents work together for a common goal.

The qualities of a leader are part of his/her intelligence that is the basis of his/her actions, of group activity, of decision-making, of problem solving. We present the most eloquent qualities of an intelligent leader:

- initiative and entrepreneurial motivation;
- ”soft skills” in his/her activities, that is ”soft aptitudes” or interpersonal competences that are usually associated to emotional intelligence and surpass the limit of professional aptitudes;
- charisma, the capacity of managing the respect in oder to motivate his team members; in literature, the term ”charisma” is known as an extraordinary way of leadership;
- the concern for a cause – which consumes most part of leaders' life;
- determination and concentration in setting a clear mission, some SMART goals;
- directing each action towards a certain mission, the prioritization of activities such as more time should be spent for the most important results;
- ability of leading himself/herself before leading the others;
- leading through personal example;
- the ability to encourage and support his /her team members.

A true leader is aware of the fact that he/she cannot be a leader if he/she is followed by nobody on his/her way to success.

People are different and have their own personal points of view. There will always be people who have different opinions and perspectives and this leads to the divergence of intentions and, sometimes, of actions. Such people will not follow their leaders.

We reconsider the allegations already established about leaders from the psychologically point of view by relating them to the most human characteristic: INTELLIGENCE.

1. Each person has a leading potential but not every person has the necessary intelligence to get qualities specific to a leader. The art of leadership comprises the capacity of becoming conscious and understanding your own emotions and the others' feelings in order to manage and use them for positive results.
2. Leaders do not inspire, do not command, they allow and value, they do not restrict and do not disqualify. Intelligent leaders create and challenge, do not manipulate, they attract, persuade and do not put pressure.

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3. The faults in a leader's activity have to be approached as a feedback for his/her actions and not as failures, thus emphasizing the ability to discern what is essential.
4. The leader solves new problems or situations based on his/her previous experience.
5. Leaders, powerful persons, have the tendency to forgive more often, have a larger margin of understanding and forgiveness (Pleșu, 2005). Weak leaders use forgiveness as a tool for controlling and dominate.

Taking into consideration the theory of the English psychologist Charles Sperman who, in 1900, investigated intelligence through a series of aptitudes and factors, we can transpose this theory in defining the essential psychological features of intelligent leaders:

- the leader with spatial skills who has the capacity to imagine objects tridimensionally;
- the leader with thinking skills has the capacity to solve logical problems, to make plans or previsions;
- the leader with numerical skills has the capacity to use very well figures and to solve quantitative problems;
- the leader with verbal fluidity has the capacity to use words rapidly and easily.

The skills and the abilities of a successful leader would not be complete without the development of the emotional intelligence that help him to understand and to manage the emotions for creating harmonious relationships with the ones around him. The leaders with a very complex emotional intelligence have these capabilities:

1. He aware the emotions and their effects to the behaviour, but the impact of these to the others too, has the capacity to estimate the problems about the personal and the professional life.
2. He determines the opportunities and the strong spots, but the limits in achieving a goal too.
3. He has the ability to resist efficiently to the stress and frustration.
4. He is flexible and has a huge willingness to adapt to the change.
5. He has a developed sense of self-evaluation and a huge belief in the abilities to resist the demands.
6. He motivates himself through the demand of personal realization and development.
7. He builds and maintain relationships.

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8. Perseverance in front of the obstacles and, the taking over the control and sustaining his own position if necessary too.
9. He approaches cleverly the management of change.
10. He manages well the conflicts and prevents the negative influences of the emotional factors that affect the capacity of listening, he has the quality of calming down his employees, if making him to feel comfortable.

The benefits of emotional intelligence are: efficient management and leadership, better performances, better motivation, innovation in activity, self-belief and excellent team work. Being emotional intelligent, the leader remarks and fells the emotions, notices what the emotion transmit, being very easy for him to develop and follow a new objective.

The leaders that self-know emotionally, understand how the feelings influence their professional performances.

The abilities of an intelligent leader:

1. Emotional self-knowledge (knowledge of the limits and qualities);
2. Self-confidence;
3. Self-control;
4. Ambition which determines him to overcome his own results;
5. To be open-minded with his feelings, actions and convictions;
6. The optimism which makes him to believe that the obstacles are opportunities, not threats;
7. Initiative, creation and efficiency;
8. Continuously learning resulted from ambition, from high personal standards;
9. Ability to be open-minded to the others;
10. The empathy, which allows him to have a good relationship with different people;
11. Social knowledge which allows him to understand the basic values and unwritten rules that operate in different groups;
12. Oversees carefully the satisfaction of the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the educational services;
13. Formulates a common mission somehow to inspire the others, to follow it in a common scope, making the work more entertaining;
14. The indicators of the power of influence of the leader varies from finding the ideal approach for a listener, to knowing how to convince the key people and to find a network of supporters initiative;

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15. Can offer constructive and timely opinions, is an innate mentor and adviser, teaches the others different abilities;
16. Sustains vehemently the change, even in front of adversities, making the arguments for the change to become the most important, knows to find practice modalities for crossing the barriers which oppose the change;
17. Solves very well the conflicts, is capable to separate the sides in a conflict, to understand every side's perspective, and then to find a common point of view accepted by everyone, brings to the surface the conflict, gets to know about every side's feelings and point of views and then redirects the energy to an common ideal;
18. Is a team player, is a very good mate and is himself a model of respect, mutual help and cooperation, wins the active and enthusiast devotement of the others for the good of the group and build the spirit and the identity of the group.

The intelligent leader is in accord with the values he guides after and can often infer the best deployment of the action, being capable to see the overview in a complex situation. He has a particular talent in identifying the aspects that he has to improve and accepts the feedback and the constructive critics.

The type of self-believing leader has a presence and a certitude which makes him to remark in a working group with well-defined objectives and precise tasks.

The leader that remains calm in maximum stress conditions or while being in a crisis situation wears the emblem of the self-control, being appreciated by his employees. He recognizes when he makes a mistake inappropriate gesture, he is modest in his relationships with the others.

A win belongs to the entire team, does not arrogate the victory. He is flexible and he adapts to a variety of challenges, changing his behaviour by the changes that appear and he proves to be flexible in his thinking when he has new information and events. He takes advantage of opportunities or creates them, instead waiting for them. This kind of leader does not hesitate to deviate from the rule when this action is necessary for influencing the future chances.

An optimistic leader sees the others in a positive light, waiting for the best from them, listens carefully and understands the point of view of the others.

The leader with a powerful social conscience is politically shrewd, capable of detecting the important social networks and to interpret the important

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relationships of power. He masters the solicitude and this competence favours an emotional climate that permits to the ones who are in direct contact with the beneficiaries of the national services to maintain the relationships in good conditions.

The leader which is source of inspiration creates resonance and mobilizes the people offering them a convincing vision or a mutual mission, has the power of influence, is persuasive and charming when he addresses a group, he knows to recognize the necessity of a change when it is well argued.

A true builds the spirit and the emblem of the group. The ideal director is flexible, diplomatic, is a person that establishes optimum relationships of cooperation with the school workers, with the parents, students and another factor that contribute to the educational act, cooperate with others education institutes horizontally and vertically.

III. Conclusions

The leader, the director and the manager, any of them must develop a collective type of action for the entire managerial team, based on an unstopped cooperation.

This thing needs a democratic climate, knowledge, leaders with skills and abilities for solving the specific problems of the group phenomenon and being able to build efficient and performant teams of work.

Basic activities of a leader:

- shares tasks and responsibilities, according to the interests and knowledge of the group members
- facilities the communication of the participants from the working groups
- He ensures that the participants get involved equally, actively, flexibly, voluntarily, that there are not situations of exclusion from the groups because of the conflicts
- He prevents and mediates the conflicts from the group
- He consults and oversees permanently the members of his group
- He assumes the role of facilitator of the discussions

Communication is linked to the personal side of the leader, to his reputation and to his self-respect, to the ability to motivate the others in the current activity, to de abilities and techniques of transmitting the message he has, both written and oral, acquired through hard work and practice, bust we have to say that most of them are innate.

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Whatever his daily activity is, a leader must manage his time to communicate because this is the only way the fundamental needs of effectiveness and efficiency from a school can be met: the need of knowledge, the need of understanding and the need of expression. Communication bases very much on the confidence a leader must win with ability from his employees and from his contributors.

A good leader must know to listen, and to get to the level of his employees, because anyone needs permanently to feel important.

Responsibility of the informational flow belongs mostly to the leader and is considering:

- His concern of informing the contributors in the decision work and to get informed correctly by them;
- His capacity to create good conditions for everyone to express himself freely.

The intelligent leader doesn't use the premature critics against a point of view that he doesn't agree, or he doesn't understand, on the contrary he gives the opportunity for a free discussion.

His work of leading in the collective act includes the capacity to permit controversies, to synthesize the opinions, to advise the opinions, to clarify everything, allowing the informational flow to himself and from himself.

The success of the leader and of the school organization leaded by him depends very much on the successful fulfilling of the communication act, an essential characteristic of the intelligence.

To understand what is very important in the act of leading, using the accumulated experience, finding the best solutions in activity, communicating efficiently in the group – represents the attribute of the clever leader, dignified to have a leading job in the actual context of the Romanian education.

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