TEAM LEADERSHIP AND ASSERTIVENESS ON BOARD VESSEL

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Abstract: The study proposes an analysis of leadership from a psychological perspective as a process of social influence correlated with authority and assertiveness taking into account the interaction of ranks on board ships and the attitude towards authority. We emphasize the necessity of learning and practicing the assertive type of behavior in order to ensure the safety and efficiency of the voyage.
Keywords: leadership, assertiveness, authority, team

1. ARGUMENT

Working on board ship may mean a beautiful job but at the same time a dangerous one implying risks, isolation for long periods of time as well as a lot of duties carried out under time pressure and sometimes bad weather. All these generate the professional stress which has a dramatic impact on the crew on board ship. Hence, the necessity of a good team in point of human and professional relationship, as well as the presence of a leader capable to lead the crew towards the achievement of the objectives regarding the safety and efficiency of the voyage.

2. AUTHORITY AND ASSERTIVENESS ON BOARD SHIP

From the psychological point of view, Leadership is associated to a social influence process which the leader exerts for attaining the objectives of the team both in social environment and on board ships. Therefore, the efficient leader is the one who is able to act in such a way on the individual and collective psyche as to obtain positive psychosocial and psycho-organizational effects: productivity, innovation, motivation, satisfaction increase, as well as the psychological involvement of the crew.

The complexity of the leadership concept triggered a multitude of researches in the scientific world with a view to knowing, understanding and controlling it. Two broad categories of theories and models have been put forward:
- the traditional ones with reference to **Personologic theories** (The Theory of Charismatic leadership, the Feature Theory), **the Behavioral Theories** (the Theory of the two behavioral dimensions, the Theory of the Behavioral Continuum), **Contingency Theories** (the Theory of leadership position favoritism, the Subordinates Maturity Theory) and
-the modern ones drawn from the necessity to adapt to the changes concerning the situations in which the leaders have to act: the **Cognitive Theories** (the Normative Theory in Decision Making, the "way-aim" Theory, the Attribution Theories), the **Social Interaction Theories**(the vertical Dyadic Relations Theory, the Transactional Leadership Theory).

In M. Zlate's opinion (2007,pp.160-165), each of these theories resulted in models of leadership which explain various ways of conceiving and interpreting Leadership.
- **the model of leadership as the function of a person**
-in the centre of the leadership activity there is the person with their personality features irrespective of their provenance (inherited or acquired);
-the leadership is an effect, an attribute of the leader;
- **the model of leadership as function of the situation**
-the leadership is explained by the particularities of the situation the leader is confronted with.
-interpersonal relations are established between the leader and their subordinates
-the situation allows for a certain psychological, social, cultural feature of the person to become a trait of a leader;
- **the mixed model of leadership**
-leadership is related to both the person and the context, a bi-univocal relationship existing between the two variables
-the group offers action schemata to the leader and they, in turn, control the situation of the group

-the model is eclectic and variable as far as practice is concerned. These models of Leadership, subsequently, permitted the analysis of the leadership styles. The specialty literature shows a series of leadership typologies.

In **Bridge Resource Management (**2005, p.32) four Leadership styles encountered mainly on board ships are presented:
1. DIRECTING-the leader provides specific instructions and closely supervises task accomplishment; such style is recommended for people who lack competence but are enthusiastic and committed. As qualities of directing leader:
- Identifies problems
- Sets goals and defines roles
- Develops action plans to solve problems
- Controls decision making about what, when, how and whom
- Provides specific directions and engages largely one-way communication
- Initiates problem solving and decision making
- Announces solutions and decisions
- Supervises and evaluates the work of employees

2. COACHING-the leader continues to direct and closely supervises task accomplishment, but also explains decisions, solicit suggestions and supports progress; such style is recommended for people who have some competence but lack commitment-so, the leader must offer direction, supervision, support and praise to build their self-esteem and involving in decision making in order to restore confidence and commitment. As qualities of coaching leader:
- Identifies problems
- Sets goals
- Develops action plans to solve problems then consult employees
- Explains decisions to employees and solicits ideas two-way communication
- Supports and praises employee's initiative
- Makes a final decision about procedures and solutions after hearing employee's ideas, opinion and feelings
- Evaluates employee's work

3.SUPPORTING-the leader facilitates and supports subordinate's effort toward task accomplishment and shares responsibility for decision-making with them; such style is recommended for people who have competence but lack confidence or motivation-they need no much direction but support to bolster their confidence and motivation. As qualities of supporting leader:
- Involves employee in problem identification and goal setting
- Asks the employee to define how the task is to be done
- Provides assurance, support, resources and ideas, if requested
- Shares responsibility for problem solving and decision-making with employee
- Work with employee to evaluate employee's work

4.DELEGATING-the leader turns over responsibility for decision-making and problem solving to subordinates; such style is recommended for people who have both competence and commitment-they need just a little supervision or support. As qualities of delegating leader:

- Defines problems with employee
- Sets goals collaboratively
- Allows the employee to develop an action plan, controls decision-making about problem and how is to be solved
- Accept employee's decisions and only periodically monitors employee's performance
- Allows employee to evaluate own work
- Allows employee to take responsibility and receive credit

Considering the leadership style as "the concrete way of playing a role, that is the actual transposition at behavioral level of demands derived from the leader status" (M.Zlate, 2007, p.169), this acquires value when it is contextually interpreted. Thus, we may state that there are no pure leadership styles, irrespective of typology, but mixed profiles according to the leader's personality, subordinates, context.

On board ship the leader exerts their leadership style in relation to their crew which, may be considered as a social micro-group or a team work characterized by the following characteristics:

- the activity of the seafarers is interdependent and coordinated
- direct interactions of the "face-to-face" type are established among the crew members
- interaction is centered on the carrying out of common objectives or aims
- each crew member has a status and a particular role
- there is a specific articulation, a "network" among the crew members statuses and roles
- there is a composition derived from the characteristics of the group members

Therefore, on board ship, the interactions among the group members as well as between the leader and crew members are direct and reciprocal. There is a conscious and direct psychological implication regulated by psycho-individual, psycho-social and socio-cultural factors.

Under these circumstances, the authority of the leader, based on the status and role implicitly expressed in the leadership style, is manifested in the maximal influence which the leader can exert on the crew members in the psycho-social context on board ship.

The authority of the leader can manifest in different types of power:

-**the power of reward and coercion**: a person can be influenced by being promised a reward if they accept a request or by being punished if they refuse it. In this case, the influence depend on the needs and the psychological state of the subordinate. In this way the public and private conformity is created. The power of coercion generates discouragement, hostility and negative feelings whereas the power of reward generates positive feelings.

-**the legitimate power:** a person has influence only because their right to lead is recognized on the grounds of their hierarchical position on board ship.

-**the power of the expert**: acceptance of an opinion depends very much on the prestige of the person who expresses it

(skills or knowledge). The power of the expert is strongly and solidly correlated with the performance of the teamwork.

-**the power of the referee**: emerges from the positive feelings emanated by the leader especially the charismatic one.

The imposition of a reasonable level of authority on the shipboard crew differs from one leader to another and it depends on the knowledge, expression abilities, behavior, experience, communication and mostly the personality traits of the leader.

The inability in exerting authority may lead to frustration, hostility, even conflict within the work team. That is why there is the need for imposing the study and practice of the behavior of the assertive type to counterbalance the authoritarian and aggressive behavior. Assertiveness represents an attitude and a way of action in situations in which we must express our opinions, feelings, believes, manifesting, at the same time, respect and consideration for own person and for the others. The assertive behavior can be placed between the two extremes: aggressiveness and submissiveness.

According to CRM and Human Factor (2004), to be assertive means:

- to act in own interest make personal decisions, set and work towards personal goals, trust own judgment, ask for support if necessary)
- to be able to take stands on your views and attitudes
- to express own opinions honestly and spontaneously
- to carry out personal rights (react against any injustice to own or others rights violations)
- to avoid insulting others' rights (avoid criticizing, dominating, offending, threatening and manipulating others)

That is why the two concepts: authority and assertiveness are complementary and the essential role of the leader is to find an equilibrium between the two aspects of leadership in order to ensure performance and safety of the voyage at operational level.

The same source quoted above (2004,pp.45-46) describes the situations in which there is an imbalance between the two behavioral types.

Too high authority leads to:

- total command expectations
- poor communication (lack of communication skills)
- failure to delegate tasks
- performance oriented attitude
- leader needs to prone himself

Too low assertiveness in return:

-may be silenced by the leader's authority
-unaware of what is expected
-poor communication and leadership skills
-leads to personality clashes

Taking into account the essential role of the leader in promoting efficiency of activities on board ship, in maintaining an optimal work and psycho-social climate in an environment dominated by psychological risk particularities, we consider that the emphasis should be placed on the students' personality modeling as well as on the development and self-actualization of the personality of the experienced leaders through academic programs and training courses which should develop the managerial and leadership competences necessary to achieve the objectives.

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