

A STUDY OF LEADERSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *The way to lead an organization has raised many studies especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, from where they spread quickly worldwide. The authoritarian methods specific to labour relations, to communist ideology and practice, have left much room for other types of leadership in a world where the most important decisions needed the approval of the party. After 1989, Western practices, based on organizational effectiveness at all levels, entered in theory in our country, as well. In practice most leaders continue to behave as before, either from habit or from ignorance or lack of trust in other models than those that have paid off for a lifetime. Therefore, the change cannot come to Romania through channels other than the change in the manner of dealing with decision-making and interpersonal relations at work, or what the Anglo-Americans call leadership. Any action with regard to reform in this context, which does not reach the leader and the manner of behaviour in relation to subordinates, can only be a fiasco, if not a semantic aberration (a genre to make reform. Without changing anything!); the relations within education must be reformed since the claim is to form future leaders.*

Keywords: *leadership, management, educational system, manager, organization*

The Romanian society, generally speaking, has been affected in the recent years of communist dictatorship by passive thinking, which is likely to induce panic in the state of collective mind when it comes to decisions taken by the heads, especially if they threaten the “seat”. This behaviour appears bizarre, and has been transmitted to some extent to the management of education; few leaders who manage the teams look like they run some dynamic organization capable of generating and welfare, not just performance, but change and progress in times of crisis. From this point of view there is a big difference between Romanian management – which knows in most cases, one way of solving the crisis: keeping the “back” of the head, leading inevitably to dictatorship and panic behaviour, behavior which is reported to the team – and the Western leadership, which addresses management positively, noting that it is easier to work collectively, with motivated people in a relaxed, but still competitive style.

What is leadership? It is generally difficult to make a distinction between the quality manager and the leader of an organization. The managerial vision of human activity based on the idea that any group of persons, whether formal, informal or non-formal, especially the formal, can be treated as “an organization”. A special position to coordinate activities towards achieving the group involves the element that relates to management style, the leader's ability to take and implement decisions in a certain way. Although there are several interpretations of the term in its broadest sense it is accepted that leadership refers to how the leader / manager, relying on their natural qualities and skills / specialties / skills acquired throughout life, exercises authority within the organization to make decisions. At the same time the term may be defined as how the leader / manager uses his power of persuasion to influence others, their decisions, so that leadership cannot be separated from group activities and team spirit.

The leader may be imposed, either formally or through elections, but may also be imposed informally, naturally recognized as the bearer of opinion of others, without an organized structure to be normative, confirming these qualities, so that leadership can be classified as follows: *intentional, successful and effective.*

The Leadership of the attempt/intent – it exists no matter what individual initiative exercises influence on group.

The successful leadership – influences when leaders lead the group to confirm the results expected

The effective leadership – where the influence of the leader reaches the objectives the group has proposed.

In terms of management styles, although there have been several classifications, the most concise seems to remain one made by Kurt Lewin and published in 1939, based on research conducted by the American University of Iowa. According to

this classification we can speak of the following main types of leadership:

1. *Authoritarian* - the leader decides alone and gives orders to subordinates, the latter being regarded as mere performers;
2. *Democratic* - the leader involves subordinates in making decisions and solving problems arising in the process, requests feedback from the group;
3. *Laissez-faire (or undecided)* - leader avoids making decisions, regardless of the costs of inaction for the organization and guides very little his subordinates

To better understand the effects of leadership styles, it is worth noting that leadership involves the exercise of the three functions:

- work;
- build and maintain team spirit;
- to care for the individual needs of team members

From this point of view it is obvious the deficiency of organizations led by authoritarian leaders, who have personal goals, an element that can be easily seen in such teams, where personal needs other than his own are not considered formal. And even worse is the situation where laissez-faire leaders, the undecided, where nothing seems to disturb peace and sympathy for the inaction of the head, in which case all three elements that must characterize the leadership are disturbed.

Therefore, there must be certain qualities that the leader performs effectively:

- *above average intelligence*, but not exceptional (exceptional intelligence is more effective than management innovation and research - commonly known that the brilliant personalities of the world have often entered into conflict with society, while intelligent friends or disciples, or those who have innovative ideas, had the capacity to implement them – history demonstrates, n.n.);
- *initiative and resourcefulness* – the ability to understand when and how to act;
- *confidence.*

Based on the above mentioned qualities we can understand why an effective leader does not need to be overly authoritarian. Moreover it was found, psychologically speaking, that dictatorial spirit hides an inferiority complex, which is why leaders can sometimes be hazardous, while others passed failures and low self-confidence, despite appearances which can deceive. This creates a real terror organization, and sooner or later failure occurs, even if it cannot be externally visible. The most serious are the traces left in an organization after the disappearance of such a leader: suspicion, revenge, mistrust, poison relations between members of the organization, to the point that they can no longer take the path of reconciliation. In addition, a rigid manager can come to “be

the increasingly bureaucratic, less creative, leading the company to decline”.

Generally speaking, the democratic management style is the most creative, it offers rewarding, characterized by a higher morality and creates a friendly, consultative, communicative environment, open for subordinates and their problems, so they can face the challenges in the absence of the leader. However the idea of democracy should not be understood as lack of authority, which could lead to *laissez-faire* style management, very harmful not offering any compensation. In this context, the authoritarian style is preferred, because, at least has the merit of producing output, but it is disheartening and can lead to blocking the organization which becomes unable to cope with the crisis. You may also note that the two types of leadership can be completed (according to research done at the University of Michigan) with two management styles: one *oriented towards employees* and the other *towards production*. It is clear that the democratic leadership takes into account the human factor more than the authoritarian one.

The leaders of organizations in Romania do not adopt a democratic style of work. The answer is the fear of failure, the mixture of the political factor in changing managers in the educational system disturbing leaders' and organizations' balance. In general, however, risk is something normal in an enterprise, it can occur at various levels: design, technical (application), decision-making, resources and access resources. But because of the special situation of Romanian state-owned enterprises that I have mentioned, leaders prefer to maintain appearances and not to venture into change, just to keep the reins of power generating benefits for as long as possible. Hence, the policy of unconscious isolation from the group.

Without going into details, the predominant idea in the West encourages team members to express doubts about the success of a particular action, highlighting the risk factors which should not discourage the manager in his actions, but put him on guard. In Romania, by contrast, expressing your doubts can be seen as a critical threat to the manner of management, especially, as an attack on the leader's way to make decisions. Making decisions in most Romanian organizations is *authoritarian* and we wonder why it might be otherwise, as long as those who have training and external relations are perceived as a threat even to the governmental level and kept waiting when major decisions are taken or made to leave the country at the expense of people belonging to the totalitarian mentality of the old structures. We all see the effects in Romania, when we look at measures to combat global crisis and which are – most of us think – anemic, even unreasonable. It expresses a lack of awareness / recognition of another important level in management, the organizational culture, which comes hard in our field. The leadership is closely related to what we call organizational culture, “ethos” organization, a phenomenon that originates in the corporate culture (not to confuse the term with fascism) and includes the dominant values in the organization. If in small organizations, change is slow and conservatism does not significantly endanger future, in large organizations, globally competitive challenges are serious and the changes, very rapidly imposed by the crisis, result in the need for effective mechanisms, of a strong corporate culture that can quickly change.

In this context we should not imagine that educational organizations are small, insignificant. Rather, they are cogs in a much higher global gear, and must be at the forefront of change, as long as it is necessary, and society needs it (not a change without goals and objectives that are understood and assumed to base). Education has evolved over time, from the medieval scholastic model, which broke the conservative thought, until the present era where globalization raises new problems of knowledge. That is why education cannot be

unilateral but must only meet the complex needs such as: social and individual, systemic and personal, common and specific, current and potential. Therefore a policy of expectations can become bankrupt even while educational organizations, according to dramatic changes, including the management plan, which crosses the world; an effective leader must have the power to think his job survival in new formal and informal contexts. Interestingly, in Western countries even survival guides for the teaching profession have emerged; they deal very directly and honestly, with good and bad problems such as teamwork, adequate knowledge of the departments that make up a school organization, logistics class, managing the main lesson activities, control and communication in the classroom, relationships with parents, stress management, all general transformations seen in perspective. It must be said in this context that globalization not only affected businesses but also the management. The tone was set by the Americans, who by their big companies such as *Coca-Cola*, *Ford*, *General-Motors*, *Texaco*, were able to expand business worldwide, and also exporting North American management style. Then came along the Japanese companies: *Honda*, *Nissan*, *Sony*, *Toyota*, with new methods and practices of staff infiltrating the Anglo-Saxon markets, people who could be considered the creators of scientific management. Specialists discuss a true “international management context”. How about China, despite the forecasts, the idea that an economy is overheated and will become inevitable in the crisis, earlier this year it managed to become the second world economy after the U.S. with no sign of fatigue. Obviously someone who has an overview might think: “What do I care about Japan, China and America?”. In reality it is not so. Even the Americans fired a warning about the greater effectiveness of Chinese textbooks to the U.S., for example, and have not been ashamed to do so. Why shouldn't we! Any strong economy is a starting point for personal performance and skilled managers. School is essential to their training.

We should also take into account developments in change management and global business environment. The emergence of a ruthless global elite when it comes to competition, is a reality increasingly recognized. These leaders, elite world-evaluated in approximately 6,000 people by David Rothkopf, are no longer necessarily tied to the idea of nation, which appears to be outdated, but business, affiliations, education and personal wealth. In this complex international context an effective leader should have a much broader global phenomenon of which may trigger irreversible ways to lead the organization and to avoid:

- requesting information from subordinates before making changes that affect their responsibilities;
- not to understand the real reasons that motivate subordinates to resist change;
- not to understand and change control mechanisms;
- not to anticipate change;
- not to understand that the true purpose of a leader is to create stars, not to believe he is one.

Finally, in the work: *The six dimensions of leadership*, Andrew Brown divided the qualities of a good leader into 6 categories: *hero*, *Actor*, *immortal*, *power-broker*, *ambassador*, and *victim*, which makes us think of listing some ancient resonance, such as *heroism*; a *visionary*, others drawn from the qualities that require a wise *leader as actor or ambassador*; management: *the broker*, or even the idea of self-sacrifice – *leader willing martyrdom* (willing Victims) – for a good cause (the most praised example being that of Mandela' s life), which true leaders should show. Therefore, a review of the types of management is not sufficient as long as it is not complemented by a list of personal qualities the head needs to show. However, in this respect, patience, showing confidence in the team that one leads, compassion, and fairness for those who

**“Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy Scientific Bulletin, Volume XV – 2012 – Issue 1
Published by “Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy Press, Constanta, Romania**

can bring success in the organization can become successful arms of a leader who has to wrestle with old systems. The final conclusion is that an open, democratic organization, based on shared values, on a strong corporate culture – where group members feel good, like a family, consciously assume roles and send feedback while managed by a talented leader,

informed and open to new – can better face the challenges, crises, can turn failures into victories; even in learning, without panic, reflexive first, then active, participatory and effective. To do this, however we cannot deny that such an organization needs talented, brave leaders, true examples for others. We cannot stop to ask rhetorically in the end: is Romania in a crisis of leadership?

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