HOW DOES A LEADER DEVELOP?

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ABSTRACT: Few issues are of greater concern than the development of the leaders that society needs in allits organizations and institutions. This paper analyzes the subject from a critical point of view and suggestways to leadership development, combining personal effort with organizational support, including leadershipeducation. A great deal of individual effort is needed to become a leader, based on preparing, acting, andreflecting on becoming a leader, and this effort is facilitated if support and opportunities are received from theuniversities where potential leaders get their education and the organizations or institutions in which theywork.

Keywords: leadership, development, training, education

I.   THE PROBLEM OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Since the earliest times, societies have been worried about having the leaders who can lead them towards progress and well-being. There has always been the idea that without capable and competent leaders it is hard to overcome difficulties or achieve significant improvements. Therefore, all organizations and institutions (armies, churches, companies, police corps, political parties, schools, sports teams, universities, etc.) express the need to develop the leaders they need or will need. However, there is also the frustration that many times those necessary leaders do not appear and when occasionally arise rarely it is understood how they became leaders, so it can be learned how to develop new leaders.

Many organizations and institutions invest a lot of time and money trying to form the leaders they need, and many consultants make a living trying to help them in that process, but the truth is that the results are frankly disappointing in the majority of cases. A lot of research has been done trying to decipher the mysteries behind this phenomenon, but there is also no academic consensus regarding the methods to be followed to develop new leaders.

II.   WHO ARE THE LEADERS?

Some authors, such as Carlyle (1841), think that leaders are predestined people, who possess special qualities of personal charisma, intelligence, wisdom, and political skills that make them superior to other people and, consequently, allow them to have power and influence over those people. Others, like Bennis (1989), think that a person becomes leader not by innate personal characteristics but by the development of qualities that allow him or her to become a leader.

In this century, although it is not entirely denied that leaders must possess special personal characteristics or that through a personal effort they can become leaders, it is understood that no one is a leader in all areas and circumstances, but leadership happens when, in a given context, people accept to follow someone as their leader. In other words, leaders must be formed within the context and with the followers in mind that will allow them to be leaders.

III.   CAN EVERYONE BE A LEADER?

Even though many authors agree that leaders are made and therefore theoretically anyone who tries properly can become a leader, this does not seem absolutely true. Indeed, Avolio (2010) stated that leaders are born and made and even estimated that 30% of the leadership characteristics are innate and the remaining 70% are due to environmental events.

In the first place, various studies show that for men is easier to become leaders than for women (Johnson and Lacerenza, 2019). Although this is a reality, it is not an immutable reality. There is nothing in woman's nature that prevents her from being as leader as a man. The reasons why there are no more women leaders have to do with the traditional role of women in society, the prejudices that many men have towards the advancement of women, and the barriers that women often put to themselves (Ely and Rhode, 2010). But all that can change and in fact is changing, although not at the desired speed.

Then there are the personal characteristics and the experience of childhood and youth. Studies also show that it is easier to become a leader if the person is outgoing, pleasant, organized, emotionally stable and open to new experiences and if, in addition, comes from a well-established family and had opportunities in childhood and/or in the youth of acquiring some leadership experience (Epitropaki, 2019). Murphy (2019) commented that there are many leadership opportunities from preschool through college, both inside and outside the school, and their use can contribute to the future development of leaders. However, these characteristics and experiences are usually not decisive and many people who do not have some of them, but manage to control their lack, become leaders.

Finally, there is the will to be a leader. Many people, even if they have the necessary conditions, are not interested in being leaders. They are therefore not willing to make the necessary efforts to become leaders. This is, without a doubt, a strong obstacle, but there are also experiences of people who were persuaded or convinced themselves that they could be leaders even without wanting to.

Even assuming the necessary conditions and all obstacles are overcome, many people never become leaders because their personal qualities never adequately combine with the characteristics of the followers and the nature of the context. The context and the followers are the ones that determine the need of a leader and define the characteristics that he or she must possess. Becoming a leader usually means being the right person and being at the right time and place.

IV.   THE NECESSARY PERSONAL EFFORT

Without a doubt, even if you have a lot of support from others, no one becomes a leader without an important personal effort. This is a sustained effort during the whole life, or during most of it, in which three phases or activities can be distinguished and that initially should be developed in sequence, repeating then the cycle and finally performing them simultaneously and interactive:

1) Prepare. People who wish to be leaders must begin by knowing the business they are in, knowing the world, knowing themselves and consolidating their personal integrity, as Bennis (1989) suggested. It is also necessary to learn to know people and their needs, as Theodore Roosevelt insisted (Goodwin, 2018). In addition, it is very convenient to observe experienced leaders and try to learn from them.

2) Act. Preparing is necessary, but it is not enough. As stated by Bennis (1989) and Ibarra (2015), you learn to be a leader by acting as a leader. Acting as a leader means setting high goals, creating a guiding vision, developing a good team of collaborators, relating to many people, persuading, and guiding them, promoting change, and learning how to manage it, being passionate about what is done and getting used to deciding for yourself. Persistence and firmness in acting is a success key for leaders; according to Goodwin (2018), Abraham Lincoln once recommended a law student: "Always keep in mind that your

own resolution to succeed is more important than anything else".Lincoln and many other great leaders were tireless workers.

3) Reflect. "Experience is the best teacher", said Franklin D. Roosevelt (Goodwin, 2018). However, for the leadership experience to be useful, it is necessary to reflect on it and learn from the mistakes. Great business leaders, such as John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, Alfred Sloan, Sam Walton, Jack Welch, A. G. Lafley, Steve Jobs and Bill Gates had great confidence in themselves, were not afraid to make mistakes, and were willing to learn from them (Silva, 2014). Reflection is also necessary to think as a leader and develop a leader identity; that is to say, the set of traits or features that allow someone to see themselves as leader and be recognized by others as leader (Ibarra, Snook and Guillen Ramo, 2010).

This is similar to Ibarra's model (Ibarra, 2015) since it includes the phases of Act and Think (Reflect), in that order, but we have added a phase of preparation (Prepare) because we believe that it is difficult for a person to begin acting as a leader without any previous formation, formal or informal. If she doesn't know the business she is in, doesn't know the world, doesn't know herself and has not consolidated her personal integrity it becomes almost impossible to act as a leader. Moreover, after getting into leadership practice she must continue to improve her formation and preparedness, otherwise it is highly probable that she will stop being a leader.

V.   WHAT CAN ORGANIZATIONS OR INSTITUTIONS DO?

Organizations or institutions can do a lot to help develop the leaders they need, but they must do this effectively. They must begin by identifying potential leaders, which is not a simple thing. Appearances often deceive and those who seemed to be good candidates for leaders prove later that they are not competent. It is necessary to give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their capacities, allowing them to exercise progressive leadership positions, discarding those who do not demonstrate sufficient conditions and skills and focusing on those who promise to become good leaders, exactly like professional sports team do to develop the players and coaches they need at the highest level.

Fernandez-Araoz, Roscoe and Aramaki (2017) stated that, in order to succeed, leadership development programs should be based on the identification and development of the necessary leadership competencies in the organization and the assessment of the success potential of the candidates, according to their motivation and curiosity, vision, commitment and dedication. This is what, for example, professional sports teams do to develop their future coaches or trainers and also what some other organizations do, like the United States Army. The United States Army, like any other army, is concerned about the long-term development of its officers and promotes them to higher ranks as they demonstrate greater command and leadership capabilities; but it also requires from them a performance based on the values established at the institution: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (Leader to Leader Institute, 2014).

Many organizations have leadership training programs, although most of them are not successful. Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019) stated that leadership training programs fail for a number of reasons, including: (1) Individuals tend to benefit more from these programs than the organizations that pay for them; 2) Providers fail to develop the "soft" skills that leaders require; 3) It is usually difficult to apply lessons learned in the classroom to the real world. These authors then recommend the combined use of online courses, social platforms and learning tools, from different types of providers, in models such as the "Personal Learning Cloud" (PLC), to help reduce these gaps. However, without denying the usefulness of these programs, you do not learn to be a leader studying or attending leadership classes but acting as a leader, so much more important than these trainings are the opportunities to perform as leaders.

New leaders are likely to experience anxiety, threat, and conflict related to different aspects of their identities. Leader identity is defined as how someone thinks of oneself as a leader. These identity challenges are particularly salient in the experiences of new leaders fromminority and non-dominant groups. Yip et al (2020) proposed a narrativecoaching framework that is practical and amenable to empirical testing. Narrative coaching is an approach centered onan integrative approach to being with people and workingwiththeirstories. Gottfredson (2021) distinguished two types of leadership development: horizontal development and vertical development. Horizontal development is about enhancing leaders' knowledge, skills, and competencies. Vertical development is about elevating leaders' thinking capacity to better navigate more complex and uncertain environments. This author believes that "when we develop leaders for greater future-readiness, what we want is vertical development, but what we are doing is primarily horizontal development".

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

Leadership education has been defined by Andenoro et al (2013) as "the pedagogical practice of facilitating leadership learning in an effort to build human capacity and is informed by leadership theory and research. It values and is inclusive of both curricular and co-curricular educational contexts". Leadership training is typically focused on the preparation of an individual for a specific role or task, but leadership education is more complex and prepares the individual for future opportunities, roles, and contexts (Roberts, 1981).

Although leadership education could be conducted by consulting individuals and firms, as it is done, the term mainly refers to efforts made by universities to help students to develop as leaders. These efforts could combine leadership studies and non- credit bearing leadership programs.

Leadership education should be seen as the preparation phase for leaders' development, and as such may include courses on the specific area that students will work when they graduate, to help them to know the business they will be in, combined with World History, to know the world, Psychology, to know themselves and learn to know other people, Ethics, to consolidate their personal integrity, Leadership Theory, to know the body of knowledgeresulting from leadership research, and Leaders' Biographies, to know how real leaders developed and acted.

Leadership studies could be combined with opportunities for leadership roles in activities, sports, and clubs, as well as informal roles in friendship groups both inside and outside of school, as suggested by Murphy (2019).

Although useful, it should be understood that leadership education is only the basis for leadership development. Acting as a leader and reflecting about this experience will be needed by those that really want to become leaders, as well as looking for the proper fit of their personal qualities with the needs and expectations of potential followers in a given context and time.

VII. CONCLUSION

It's not easy to become a leader. Many conditions and skills are required; most of them can be acquired during the life of an individual, but others are innate. A great deal of individual effort is also needed, based on preparing, acting, and reflecting on becoming a leader, which is facilitated if support and opportunities are received from the universities where potential leaders get their education and the organizations or institutions in which they work. But even so, becoming a leader usually means being the right person and being at the right time and place.

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