

## LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a classic theme in management theory. It has been studied from various perspectives and in different contexts. As leadership studies have evolved, the range of variables taken into account has expanded: from the earliest investigations into the innate traits and personality characteristics that all leaders are supposed to have, to external influences, relations with subordinates and, in recent years, factors entailing an ethical dimension of leadership. In a sense, rather than conflicting, the various leadership theories complement and enrich one another to produce a more rounded view of the leader as a human being.

### 1.1. Brief historical review

The personality- centered approach to leadership is one of the earliest. It focuses on analyzing the personality traits of great historical figures, in the hope of discovering a set of characteristics that were common to them all. The many studies aimed at defining a set of characteristics that are common to all leaders still have not produced a consensus based on empirical data. Contingency theories analyze how leaders behave in different situations. A leader's effectiveness is contingent on how well her style fits the context. Fiedler<sup>1</sup> classified the contexts in which leaders perform in three dimensions: position power, task structure, and leader-member relations (atmosphere, confidence, loyalty, and attraction to the leader). Blake and Mouton's Leadership Grid<sup>2</sup> intends to explain how leaders contribute to the accomplishment of organizational goals through two factors: concern for the task and concern for people. Hersey and Blanchard's situational approach<sup>3</sup> has the purpose to match the different leadership styles to the needs of each situation. According to it, leadership consists of two dimensions: directive behaviors and supportive behaviors. Directive behaviors are aimed at achieving goals by setting targets, assigning tasks, etc. Supportive behaviors are intended to help group members feel satisfied with themselves and with the situation, through specific actions such as asking for feedback, active listening, etc. The most important contribution of the situational approach is that it includes co-workers in the model. Accepting that subordinate's abilities and motivation vary over time, the leader must constantly adapt the extent to which she directs and

---

<sup>1</sup> Fiedler, F.E. 1974. "A Contingency Model of Leadership Effectiveness", in L. Bertowitz (ed.): *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 1, pp. 149-190, New York: Academic Press. Fiedler, F.E. "Style or Circumstance: The Leadership Enigma", *Psychology Today*, March 1969, p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Blake, R. R. and Mouton, J.S. "Comparative Analysis of Situationalism and the 9,9 Approach of Management by Principle", *Organizational Dynamics*, Spring, 1982, pp. 20-35.

<sup>3</sup> Blanchard, K and Hersey, P. "Life-Cycle Theory of Leadership", in *Training & Development*, May 1969, vol. 23, issue 5. Blanchard, K. and Hersey, P. "Great Ideas Revisited", in *Training & Development*, Jan 96, vol. 50, issue 1.

supports. However, the authors do not explain how the subordinates actually learn as a result of the leader's actions. Therefore, the main limitation of contingency theories is that, because they don't allow for learning, they are essentially static.

## 1.2. Relational Perspective

From the 1970s, leadership researchers started to develop theories focused less on the leader's characteristics and more on the relationship between the leader and his subordinates. Burns' leadership theory<sup>4</sup>, later to be modified by Bass<sup>5</sup>, is the first manifestation of what is known as the relational approach to leadership. Burns posits two styles of leadership: transactional and transformational. The transactional leader is the kind of leader who uses the system of rewards and punishments to motivate her subordinates. She has a command-and-control style of management and makes abundant use of formal power. The transformational leader, by contrast, attracts and inspires people. She not only transforms the state of affairs inside the company but also the aspirations and ideals of her followers. In both cases, it's a relationship of influence, which, according to Rost<sup>6</sup>, is what really defines leadership: "leadership is a relationship of influence between leaders and co-workers, who try to bring about real changes that reflect mutual interests".

### 1.2.1. Transcendental Leadership

The most recent theory in relational leadership is one that presents a third type of leader: the transcendental leader<sup>7</sup>. The transcendental leader generates a type of commitment among his co-workers based on personal trust and transcendent motivation. Collaborators are not only motivated by the extrinsic (money, status) and intrinsic (learning, challenge) rewards, but also by motives that transcend their self-interest, such as the good of the organization and the good of the people who can get a benefit from their job. The co-workers are personally committed to the leader *to fulfill a worthwhile mission*. They want to identify with a cause that is meaningful and makes a difference. They will follow not only the leaders' demands but also what the leader does not ask for but they perceive it is important, even if it is hard and they don't enjoy doing it. This pattern of following behaviors is what we call ownership. Typical consequences of it are availability, extra- role effort, and commitment to the team or company.

The best way of creating transcendental leadership is by example. "When governance has the texture of service it calls for a like response from those governed"<sup>8</sup>. The transcendent leader is the leader who really cares for the good of the organization and the people who work in it. She is not so concerned about the collaborator's buying in her vision as she is to reach out to the collaborator's needs and development. Collaborators want to work for

---

<sup>4</sup> Burns, G. J. 1978. *Leadership*, New York: Harper Touchbooks,.

<sup>5</sup> Bass, B. M. 1985. *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations*, New York: Free Press.

<sup>6</sup> Rost, J. C. 1991. *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Praeger.

<sup>7</sup> Cardona, P. 2000. "Transcendental Leadership", *The Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, vol. 21, n. 4. Cardona, P. 2001. "Liderazgo Relacional", in Pérez López, J. A. et al.: *Paradigmas del Liderazgo*, Mc.Graw-Hill.

<sup>8</sup> Block, P. 1993. *Stewardship. Choosing Service over Self Interest*, San Francisco: Berret-Koehler Publishers.

somebody who is trustful and worth contributing for. That is why we think one of the possible ways of measuring transcendental leadership is by measuring transcendental competencies. *Wisdom, justice, fortitude and temperance* are the core of the transcendental leadership competencies<sup>9</sup>.

#### 1.2.1.1. Virtues and leadership competencies

Are there universal virtues? Can we talk about character strengths? Do they have a positive effect on the people who own them? Peterson and Seligman try to answer these questions in their recent book, *Character Strengths and Virtues*<sup>10</sup>. They do it from the perspective of positive psychology, focusing on individual traits. However, one of the possible benefits of the classification of the book is the identification or deliberate creation of organizations that enable good character. Peterson and Seligman believe that character strengths are the bedrock of human condition and can be cultivated. Consequently, they are making a very important effort so as to develop conceptual and empirical tools to craft and evaluate interventions.

First, they had to analyze if the topic "universal virtues" was in fact a reality. They searched for virtues and values in ancient cultures recognized for their enduring impact on civilization. Following Smart<sup>11</sup>, they concentrated on China, South Asia (mostly India) and the West, as the most widely influential traditions of thought in human history. They found out that there exist, in fact, six universal core virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. Also, after collecting dozens of inventories of virtues and strengths from historical luminaries like Charlemagne, contemporary figures like William Bennet, statements from the Boy Scouts of America, virtue-relevant messages in Hallmark greeting cards, bumper stickers, graffiti, etc., they selected 24 character strengths related to one of the six core virtues. The 24 strengths define the virtues. For example, the virtue of temperance can be achieved through such strengths as forgiveness, humility, prudence, or self-regulation. Someone is of good character if she displays one or two strengths within a virtue group. The classification of the character strengths is as it follows: 1) Wisdom and knowledge (creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, and perspective); 2) Courage (bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality); 3) Humanity (love, kindness, and social intelligence); 4) Justice (citizenship, fairness, and leadership); 5) Temperance (forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, and self-regulation) and 6) Transcendence (appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality). To enter into the classification, character strengths had to meet 10 criteria. In a very brief account: fulfilling, morally valued, does not diminish

---

<sup>9</sup> These four competencies were already described by the greeks two thousand years ago and are universally known as cardinal virtues. Cardona has worked with these concepts in his book *How to develop leadership competencies*, EUNSA, 2005. Under the epigraph of self-governance personal competencies, he mentions decision making (wisdom), self-control (fortitude), emotional balance (temperance) and integrity (justice). Peterson and Seligman are making interesting remarks about character strengths and virtues, also linked with these four cardinal virtues. See Peterson, C. and Seligman, M. 2004. *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, APA and Oxford University.

<sup>10</sup> Peterson, C. and Seligman, M. 2004. *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, APA and Oxford University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Smart, N. 1999. *World Philosophies*, Routledge.

others, nonfelicitous opposite, traitlike, distinctiveness, paragons, prodigies, selective absence, and institutions and rituals.

Second, they have developed a Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS). It entails self-report surveys, to measure the degree to which respondents endorse items reflecting the 24 strengths. There are separate inventories for adults and for young people. All scales have satisfactory alphas. Correlations are somewhat interesting. For example, demographic correlations are modest but sensible. And there are not many ethnic differences among the major U.S. census groupings. In conclusion, Peterson and Seligman offer for every one of the 24 strengths: a consensual definition and some theoretical traditions, assessment measures, correlates and consequences, what is known about how the character strength develops, enabling and inhibiting factors, very brief gender, cross-national and cross-cultural aspects, and deliberate interventions for improvement. Finally, they admit there is much still not known so as to encourage future research.

As Peterson and Seligman concentrate on universal virtues and character strengths from the point of view of personal traits, Cameron, Dutton and Quinn<sup>12</sup>, focus on positive phenomena within organizations as well as positive organizational contexts themselves. They focus on aspects to be cultivated by organizations in order to encourage positive organizing, virtuous processes and behavior, and positive change<sup>13</sup>. Some of the chapters of the book rigorously define a particular organizational virtue and offer scientific evidence for why the virtue has salutary effects on individuals and organizations<sup>14</sup>. The main conclusion, however, is that virtues inoculate and strengthen organizations against adversity and they facilitate a greater degree of improvement than a focus on problem solving or weaknesses. When the focus is placed on strengths instead of on weaknesses, individual and organizational functioning increases.

Considering the positive associations between virtuousness and desirable individual outcomes, it is reasonable to assume the existence of positive associations between virtuousness and positive organizational outcomes. That is why we think it is worth the effort to continue this line of research from a cross-cultural point of view. In the recent past, we have paid attention as to how to develop virtues and character strengths in the

---

<sup>12</sup> Cameron, K., Dutton, J. and Quinn, R. (Ed). 2003. *Positive Organizational Scholarship. Foundations of a New Discipline*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

<sup>13</sup> A growing literature on the topic of virtuousness in organizations is emerging. Seligman, M. and Csikszentmihalyi, M. 2000. "Positive Psychology: An Introduction". *American Psychologist*, 55:5-14. Snyder, C. R. and López, S. J. 2002. *Handbook of positive psychology*. New York: University Press. Snyder, C. R. 1994. *The psychology of hope*. New York: Free Press. Sternberg. 1998. "A balanced theory of wisdom". *Review of General Psychology*, 2:347-365. Solomon, R. C. 1998. "The moral psychology of business: Care and Compassion in the corporation". *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 8:515-533.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Cameron, K.S. "Organizational Virtuousness and Performance", chapter 4, in Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J. and Quinn, R. (Ed), op. cit. Emmons, R. "Acts of Gratitude in Organizations", chapter 6, in op. cit. Sutcliffe, K. and Vogus, T. "Organizing for resilience", chapter 7, in op. cit.

everyday work<sup>15</sup>. But now we intend to concentrate in this academic research from a cross-cultural point of view.

### 1.3. Cross-cultural perspective

Summing up, the leadership concept has developed over time. Together, the different frameworks have succeeded in giving an increasingly realistic account of leadership. And yet, to some extent, they still have not answered the main question: How can leadership be developed? From a cross-cultural perspective, how can leadership be developed in different cultures? Robert J. House, Norman S. Wright, and Ram N. Aditya<sup>16</sup> have contributed to a very deep critical analysis on cross-cultural research on organizational leadership. One of the topics they revise, in which we are especially interested, because of our main focus on transcendental leadership, is the differential effects on followers. Followers differ by culture in their preferences of leader behaviors<sup>17</sup>. Some of the antecedents to the differences in preferred leader behaviors are dominant norms, dominant elites, religious values, modernization, unique role demands, and historical experiences with leaders. We think it would be interesting to question what leadership competencies (or character strengths) would better match with the preferred leader behaviors considering antecedents in different cultures.

So far, there are many questions that need further research. How are virtues and leadership competencies best identified and measured in organizations of different cultures? What leadership competencies are most valued in every culture under study? What leadership competencies are associated with each of the four different leadership styles to be adopted according to the situation? How are virtues and leadership competencies, and the positive outcomes associated with them, nurtured in organizations? How enduring are various strengths interventions? What time horizons must be taken into account in studying the development of leadership competencies and the effects produced by leadership competencies? To what extent are the demonstrated associations between virtues and individual outcomes transferable to organizations of different cultures? To what extent is motivation related to leadership in the different cultures under study?

---

<sup>15</sup> We have already studied ways of developing strengths of character (which we call leadership competencies) in Cardona, P and García-Lombardía, P. 2005. *How to develop leadership competencies*, EUNSA.

<sup>16</sup> House, R. J., Wright, N. S., and Aditya, R. N. "Cross-Cultural Research on Organizational Leadership. A Critical Analysis and a Proposed Theory", in Earley, P. C., and Erez, M. (Eds) 1997. *New Perspectives on International Industrial/Organizational Psychology*, The New Lexington Press.

<sup>17</sup> Earley, P. C. 1984. "Social interaction. The frequency and use of validation in the United States, England and Ghana". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 15, 477/485. Dorfman, P. W. & Howell, J. P. 1988. "Dimensions of national culture and effective leadership patterns". *Advances in International Comparative Management*, 3, 127/150. Bass, B. M., Burger, P. C., et al. 1979. *Assessment of managers. An International Comparison*. Free Press.