

# The Concept of Leadership

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## Abstract

*The social status of the school, the qualitative expectations of the beneficiaries of education, the contradictory changes in the pre-university education system and the social dimension of the school organization are factors that underline the imperative of the educational leadership, presented in the literature as an innovative leadership paradigm. Based on competencies (self-knowledge, self-mastery, social consciousness and relationship management), leadership from change perspective is present in the following areas: education, health, politics, army, or religion.*

**Key words:** leadership, education, education quality, teacher quality, school access

**J.E.L. classification:** I240

## 1. Introduction

This article aims to show the importance of leadership as a central element of the discussions aimed at finding solutions that address the current problems of the education system. The general objective is surprised by the theoretical and applicative study of leadership.

## 2. Theoretical background. Perspectives on the leadership process

Leadership is one of the five management functions (Schermerhorn *et al*, 1988, p. 277). The leadership issues have been a concern for people since ancient times. But the systematic, profound study of the leadership began only in the F.W.Taylor's time. Many researches have been done in this regard, but without reaching a unanimous agreement on what is meant by leadership and how it must be studied. A great number of paper works have been written, books, articles, communications have been presented at national and international scientific sessions, in which attempts were made to define the leadership. During the latest two decades, there has been an explosion of the specialty literature regarding the leadership. (Vagu *et al*, 2006, p.3)

Most of the specialists define the leadership as a process of social influence in which the leader requires the subordinates' willing participation to an effort for achieving the organizational goals.

The leadership represents "the capability to exert influence on individuals and groups, directing their efforts towards achieving the organization's goals." (Mescon *et al*, 1988, p 464)

R. Tannenbaum, W.I.Washler and F. Massarick consider leadership as a process of social influence in which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of the subordinates as a reward for achieving the goals. Leadership is a mutual action between people manifested in particular circumstances by means of the communication process and focused on choosing a specific goal or goals.

H. Koontz and C.O'Donnell, also consider that the leadership "consists in influencing people in such a way so that they devote all their efforts, willingly, for the common goals achieving." (Koontz *et al*, 1980, p. 490)

Leadership is "the ability to efficiently use all the existing power resources to transform a vision thought for others into reality." (Vihanskii *et al*, 1998, p. 408)

R.M. Stogdil gives the following definition to the leadership "an influencing process of the activities of an organized group in its efforts towards establishing and achieving the goal." (Stogdill, 1974, p. 42)

### **3. Methodology of research**

Outlining the main aspects of this article with regard to the concept of leadership was achieved through the use of specialized literature, both in Romanian and international, as well as Internet sources. The research methods used have led to an investigation of the leadership process and the importance of its application in an organization.

### **4. The importance of leadership**

Some researchers consider leaderships as the ability of the leader to determine, to stimulate his work colleagues to a high, exceptional degree of participation on the road towards a dream. "Leadership is the skill to awaken in collaborators the dream to which they will tend, inspiration in them of the energy necessary to their movement." (Davis, 1967, p. 96)

In the concept of J. Kotter from Harvard Business School, leadership designates the orientation process of a group or some groups of people, by non-coercive means.

Leadership means the ability to influence others, individually or in group, through communication, in fulfilling meaningful, demanding targets.

Leadership may be defined as the group process involving the interaction of at least two people in order to achieve a goal. The leadership basis is the team spirit, the people's desire to think, feel and act in harmony, in order to achieve a common goal. The team spirit is the result of four processes:

- creating trust between the involved people;
- establishing a clear mission and goals to which these people adhere to;
- development of the participatory decision-making processes;
- strong motivation to maximize the individual's contribution to the common goals meeting.

Leadership involves the practice of some abilities, namely:

- the ability to understand that people have different motivations in different circumstances and moments;
- the ability to train the followers to focus their efforts on accomplishing a certain task;
- the ability to act in a susceptible manner, to raise motivations and to react to them; it's about the style of leadership and the climate it creates. (Vagu et al, 2006, p.7 )

Leadership represents the capability to determine others to define their goals. This is a human factor that provides the link between a group of people and their motivation for the goals achievement.

T. Peters and N. Austin describe the leadership in the following terms: "leadership means vision, enthusiasm, love, trust, vivaciousness, obsession, consistency, use of symbols created by heroes at all levels, managing concerns and many other things. Leadership must be present at all the organizational levels. It depends on one million of little things obsessively made, but all these things do not mean anything unless there is vision and self confidence." (Peters et al, 1985, p. 56)

Leadership means the power to convince, to succeed and the exercise of authority.

Most of the researchers who analyzed the leadership mainly tend to reveal the basic principles of an efficient leadership.

Leadership may also be defined as a type of management interaction, based on the most efficient jointing, for a give situation, of different origin, power sources which is directed towards the people determination to achieve the common goals.

Leadership must be understood taking into consideration two important aspects; the art or process of influencing the member of an organization, in such a way that they willingly act and devote their efforts in order to assure the organization existence, on one side, the common goals achieving, and then the organization development, on the other side.

Leadership can be found in all activity fields, regardless if it is education, health, business, s.o.

In order to define the leadership, as an interaction, it is necessary to do the following clarifications:

- leadership does not occur in isolation;
- there is no leadership without people following it; it is influenced by the followers' qualities;
- any form of leadership happens in a context, in a situation that involves a certain type of behaviour.

The issue of leadership is complex because the leadership styles differ depending on people and circumstances, in other words, some styles of leadership go together with certain people or with certain situations. The leadership styles is shaped by the influence of the personality of both the leader and the followers, all these being approached in a certain situational context. In this regard, leadership is approached as interaction.

An important aspect of the leadership is the power relationship between the leader and his follower. It is necessary to be known which is their behaviour and for this, answers to many questions must be found:

- What can we say about the mentality of the subordinates?
- What are the subordinate's expectations from the leader and from the work?
- Do the subordinates need the leader guiding?
- In what relationships are the followers with their leader? (Vagu et al, 2006, p.14)

## **5. Leadership as part of management**

Leadership approach in a global context requires as a necessity the resuming in synthesis of the management and leadership complementarities. In the specialty literature, the "management" and "leadership" concepts are distinct, but, in fact, they are inseparable in practice.

In the management definition, the leadership is mentioned as one of the five functions of the management. According to it, the managers act working with people, accomplishing the leadership as one of the key elements, among the management many tasks.

Because the managers are asked to work with their subordinates, what is the management behavioural side, the leadership is applied everywhere and at any level. Despite the fact that these concepts of management and leadership seem to gradually converge, a particular distinction between management and leadership is obvious. Leaders help to get

shaped the vision of the organization, with the purpose that others work and live. Managers, as opposed to, operate totally with the vision. Leadership and vision remain fundamental to understanding a community and its institutions. Therefore, the perspective of the leadership implies the ability to inspire and influence the population thinking, attitude and behaviour.

Howsoever would we distinguish between management and leadership, it is obvious that the effective leadership is indispensable for the permanent success in the international affairs. In order to face the rapid and dynamic change of the international environment and competition strengths, the leadership must be visionary, inspiring, motivational and dedicated.

Leadership is not intended to maintain the established order, but to generate movements, to make changes, to cope with constraints and new needs, that is to change the guided people so they constantly adapt to the new conditions.

Leadership, as a specific type of management relationships, is mostly based on the conscious social influence and, more precisely, on the interactions inside the organization. This process is much more complex, it requires a high level of the mutual dependence among the participants in it.

Leadership is included in the sphere of the social influence phenomenon represented by power and influence. As a process of building relationships involving the dynamics of the organization's members, the challenge is the start of the change process as well as the implementation of the interpersonal relational values.

From the humanist perspective, the leadership process is important, because the human nature by its essence, needs a direction. The activities of the people in different organizations need a control function, hence leadership.

The classical authors refer to the moral aspect of the leadership – *the public good rather than the individual interest*, (the Republic of Plato), *virtue and justice research*, (Aristotle's Policies), *the individual gives up his freedom for the good of all*, (The social Contract of Rousseau), or *keeping in power* (The Prince, by Machiavelli).

## 6. Conclusions

This article is part of the current study of educational leadership in school organizations in the pre-university education system.

Educational leadership is oriented towards vision, values and professional relationships between members of the organization.

Formulating goals, evaluating the efficiency of the school organization, involves concrete actions of the leader.

The leader is the person who proposes objectives that lead to changes in the organization. He conveys the desire for positive change and the desire to redeem new things with enthusiasm, conviction and competence.

The force of a leader's influence is directly proportional to the degree of acceptance by the followers of what the leader proposes.

Explaining each distinction between manager and leader leads to the final conclusion on the two concepts: management - doing the right things (managers) and leadership - doing the right things (the leaders).

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