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EXPLORING LEADERSHIP IN THE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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يتناول البحث القيادة المرتبطة بذهنية العمل الفريقي وأشكالها المتعددة، وذلك عبر نبذة تاريخية شاملة. بعد أن استنتج الباحث الفرق بين القيادة التغييرية وتلك التصالحية، تطرق إلى دراسة المعايير القيادية التعليمية الناجحة بما فيها إرساء الثقة، التواصل في العمل، تفويض المهام، إتخاذ القرار، تسوية النزاعات، التعاون ضمن المجموعة الأكاديمية، الرؤية التوجيهية ونقل المؤسسة من تعليمية إلى مؤسسة تربوية وتأهيلية.

يعرض البحث دراسة التجربة اللبنانية في حقل التربية، تجربة شجعت على تنمية القيادة الفردية، وعطلت نجاح النظام التربوي، لأن «قائد» مؤسسة تعليمية مدعو أن يكون خادماً المؤسسة التربوية ومنفذ أهدافها العامة والخاصة.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership, at its best, is a subtle evolution. A leader may incite his followers through inspiring, modeling, and/or mandating. Leadership can be delicate or implicit, or direct and resilient. It can be impulsive and zealous, or distant and scheming.

Each leader has a personal inner eminence that differentiates him/her from other leaders. No one can come up with a personal theory in life. It has to originate from past experiences, intangibles felt, and the current situation a person is passing through. It takes certain requirements to be a leader and those are qualities that can be uncovered, nevertheless acquired.

On the other hand, in an educational context, leadership comes in different forms and styles. It constitutes a diversity of factors and elements. It has been proven that throughout history group leadership has overpowered individual leadership, thus producing remarkable results that could not have been achieved in a hierarchical system (Gorton & Snowden, 2002).

Taking this into account, a national scale outlook change should take place in Lebanon to reshape the hierarchical structure within the educational administrative community into a group leadership approach. It should be noted that shifting paradigms would play a crucial role in the process of achieving this aim, since Lebanon is a high-context masculine culture, where individual gains often eclipse group gains resulting in a competitive society rather than a cooperative one.

Hence, this paper will attempt to define leadership based on a historical overview of different leadership styles. The rudiments of effective leadership in an educational encounter will be scrutinized, comprising trust, communication, empowerment, decision-making, conflict resolution, and collaborative school cultures. Summing up the theories and research studies, a general tenet will be provided for effective educational leadership.

1. DEFINING LEADERSHIP

According to John W. Gardner (Bass & Jossey 2000, p.3), "leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers".

Leadership must not be correlated with high-ranking positions, for the mere fact that the top-ranking person may purely be just a bureaucrat. Bennis and Nanus (1985) claimed that "leadership is necessary to develop visions that can move organizations to change from what they are to what they can be". Other researchers, such as Sergiovanni (1986) defined leadership as "the process of persuasion by which a leader or leadership group induces followers to act in a manner that enhances the leader's purposes or shared

purposes". On the other hand, Rost (1991) defined leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes". Overhauling the leadership definitions presented formerly, Razik & Swanson's (2001) conclude in the same line of thought: "leadership is not definitive but elusive and constantly changing, reflecting an over-changing society and world, a new millennium in which collaboration may be a new, serious, and overarching key ingredient".

2. LEADERSHIP STYLES

Between the 1970's and the 1990's, many researchers focused on studying new arising trends in leadership styles by distinguishing between *transformational* and *transactional* leaders (Bass 1998). Studies were conducted also to define the effect of leadership styles in educational organizational settings. Transformational leaders have high standards and inspire their subordinates by gaining their trust. They have a vision and set goals to reach it. As Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) defined them, they are skeptical of the status quo, which drives them to innovate even when the organization they lead is generally successful. Such leaders empower their followers so they can contribute more competently to their organization. Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) contrasted leaders with these characteristics to transactional leaders, who establish exchange relationships with their subordinates. Such leaders clarify subordinates' responsibilities, monitor their work, and require of them to meet objectives and correct them when failing to deliver. Researchers also distinguished a "laissez-faire" leadership style; that is making a general failure of one's responsibility for managing. Such leaders decline their duties, succumb to pressure, and are only attached to their position. Such leaders fail indeed to take adequate decisions, resolve conflicts efficiently, and communicate openly with their subordinates. Then again, Bennis (1986) argued that transformative power is not based on organizational structures or management functions. Its source of power is the leader's ability to raise consciousness, build meanings, and inspire human intent. Vision, purposes and beliefs embedded in the organization's culture empower participants to excel as meaning is found in routine actions uniting individuals and the organization in a symbolic relationship". On the other hand, Burns (1978) differentiated between *transactional* and *transformative* leadership. He claimed that "in transactional leadership, persons engage in a relationship for the purpose of exchanging valued things. They are conscious of each other's

power, usually pursue their own purposes and goals, and form temporary relationships. In transformative leadership, one or more persons engage with each others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. In such a relationship, purposes are fused, power bases are linked, and leadership becomes moral as leaders and followers unite to achieve higher goals. Burns bases his general theory of leadership on a hierarchy of human needs, structure of values, and stages of moral development. The role of the leader is to help followers transcend the levels of need and stages of moral development to achieve mutually held higher purposes. Bass (1985) contended that “transactional leaders work within the organizational culture, the shared values and meanings of organizational members, whereas transformational leaders work to change subordinates values and beliefs in order to change the organizational culture. Thus, for Bass, the transactional leader induces performance among followers by negotiating with them an exchange relationship of reward for compliance. Transformational leadership arouses transcendental interests in followers and/or elevates their need and aspiration levels”. Bennis and Nanus (1985) argued that “transformative leadership is the ability of leaders to shape and elevate followers’ motives and goals to achieve significant change through common interests and collective energies. Leaders define a vision that is congruent with followers’ key values and construct a social architecture, or an organizational culture, that provides shared meanings where followers can pursue tasks and strive for success. To accomplish this, leaders must be able to create a vision, communicate the vision through symbolic actions and shared meanings, exercise integrity through persistent pursuit of that vision, recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, evaluate ability in relation to job requirements, and focus on positive goals”. Bennis and Nanus focus their interpretation of transformational leadership on the behavior and skills of the leader. Although a key point of Burns’ (1978) definition of transformation refers to the ability of leaders and followers to raise each other to higher levels of motivation and morality, Bennis and Nanus beliefs appear unidirectional, with no reference to the moral implications of the participants’ motives and actions. Rost (1991) reinterprets transformational leadership as the involvement of “active people, engaging in influence relationships based on persuasion, intending real changes to happen, and insisting that those changes reflect their mutual purposes”. Corresponding with this notion, Sergiovanni (1986) contends that

“transformative leadership produces a broad values perspective that includes “justice, community, excellence, democracy, and equality”.

3. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

In order for an educational administrator to lead effectively, s/he will have to apprehend, adopt, and apply the central creeds that hoist and upraise the essence of leadership. Those creeds are: *trust, communication, empowerment, decision-making* and *conflict resolution* and *collaborative school cultures*. Moreover, a *leadership vision statement* and a depiction of the school as a *learning organization* are needed to tangibly reveal the core quintessence of leadership.

3-1 Trust

Trust in an educational encounter is vital since it initiates transformation. “Trust is the essential link between leaders and led, vital to people’s job satisfaction and loyalty, vital to followership. It is doubly important within institutions like schools that offer few extrinsic motivators i.e. money, status, power, etc. It is fragile as it is precious; once damaged, it is nearly impossible to repair” (Bass & Jossey 2000, p.287). Kouzes and Posner (1987) claim that “leaders seeking change need to begin by thinking of what will inspire trust among their constituents. The answer is direct: we admire leaders who are honest, fair competent, and forward-looking. Although these qualities seem so obvious that they are easy to gloss over, they are the basis of trust”.

Bennis (1985) tries to define honesty by consistency, “for honest we may read “consistent”. Consistency is the lifeblood of trust. People who do what they say they will do- meet their commitments, keep their promises- are trustworthy; those who don’t, aren’t. Most of us prefer to be led by someone we can count on, even when we disagree with him/her, than someone we agree with but who frequently shifts his position”. The key to both is authenticity. Leaders who are followed are authentic; that is, they are distinguished not by their techniques or styles but by their integrity and their savvy. Integrity is a fundamental consistency between personal beliefs, organizational aims, and working behavior (Bass & Jossey 2000, p.288). Moreover, integrity and trust have two enemies: “bad character and poor information” (Prusak 2003, p.12). Additionally, “Leadership is about character. Transparency and openness of action create trust in organizational



settings. However, although trust is built over long stretches of time, it is often lost through a single thoughtless act. In a professional relationship, never be the cause of a surprise, because doing so inevitably erodes trust. Trust is inextricably linked to honesty and sincerity” (Bowman, 2004).

3-2 Communication

The second component of effective educational leadership is *communication*. It should flow horizontally and vertically in an educational setting to produce positive results. The internal communication process has been proven to be more effective than authoritarian leadership (Bovee et al. 2003). The flow of communication is explained as such:

- a. *horizontally*: it relates to information that passes between people in the same department; staff members from different divisions, etc.
- b. *Vertically*: it relates to information moving from top to bottom and vice versa; staff members to the managers.

A perceptive educational leader would recognize the important role internal communication plays in the success of the strategy planning of his/her educational organization and “how it helps employees do their job, develop a clear sense of the organization’s mission and identify and react quickly to potential problems” (Bovee et al., 2003, p. 11). Communication is the underlying foundation that determines whether the school system would fail or succeed. For the mere fact that without clear, concise and a smooth transitional flow of information – effective communication, there can be no organization or successful execution of command. Theories cannot be implemented properly and there will be no structural system to work with. Instead, confusion and chaos would envelop the whole configuration of the school (Gorton & Snowden (2002) & Bovee et al. 2003 & Devito, 2004). Therefore, the communication process should be explained to everyone associated with the organization. It is constructed as follows: it begins with a source thinking of an idea and wanting to transmit the message (verbally or non-verbally) through a channel to a target audience. However, it is imperative to be aware of the barriers that might obstruct the message from being received effectively, knowing who the targeted audience is, what its background is, what barriers might hinder it from receiving the message, *i.e.*, listening abilities, preconceived prejudice, etc. it is a wide-scope process that

comprises endless factors, while each element should be studied and understood.

3-3 Empowerment

The third component of successful leadership is *empowerment*. A key ingredient of transformative leadership is empowerment: "Empowerment is the ability of leaders through an active and creative exchange of power to encourage followers to achieve a vision and realize goals. Leaders empower followers by bringing significance, competence, community and enjoyment to leader-follower work relationships, where extraordinary efforts are perceived as the means to realizing vision and achieving goals (Bennis and Nanus 1985).

An educational administrator empowers his/her subordinates when s/he delegates tasks. Research studies have also examined the power struggle in organizations. According to Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992, p.63), effective leadership drifted from "military-style authoritarian management in favor of an approach that empowers people thereby increasing both productivity and profits". In educational settings, administrators can foster collegiality and partnership spirit through empowering teachers and thus enhancing the learner's educational experience. Empowerment appeared in the education literature in the late 1980's with the advent of school site-based decision-making (Edwards et al., 2001). Educational research studied the principal's behavior in empowering teachers. When principals have an "authentic" transformational leadership (Kirby and Colbert, 1994), they use a human relations leadership style and collaboration. Their teachers tend to be more empowered (Edwards et al., 2001).

3-4 Decision-making and conflict resolution

Decisions can be crucial to educational leaders since they have to use their analytical skills with great focus on prediction and explanation in order to be able to take effective decisions. The *decision-making and conflict resolution* processes are aligned with empowerment in view of the fact that when an educational administrator empowers his/her subordinates, it implies a shared decision-making style and a bottom-to-top conflict resolution approach. Another trait of leadership style that has been prevalent in research is to which leaders:

- a) Behave democratically and allow subordinates to participate in decision-making and/or conflict resolution or
- b) Behave autocratically and restrain followers from participating in decision-making and/or conflict resolution (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

Salmon emphasized the fact that good administrators should focus their energy on predicting problems before they arise (Shannon, 1994). Furthermore, he believed that decisions should be made at the lowest level possible and as close to the point of origin as feasible (empowerment). He advised administrators to communicate in order to resolve conflicts; they have to think like a judge in resolving disputes (Shannon, 1994).

3-5 Collaborative school cultures

The *collaborative school cultures* model is the last ingredient for leading educational organizations effectively. Collaborative school cultures exist within an atmosphere that critically examines existing practices and seeks better alternatives. Thus, problem solving, negotiating, clarifying, listening and reflecting are central elements of this process. Collaborative supervision is based on equity and the purpose is to solve problems as a group. Educational administrators, as all other participants in the group advocate for their own position, urge others to express their standpoints and act as motivator to move the group towards a decision. Interpersonal relations become vital and the principal must role-model effective conflict resolution strategies and assist in solving difficulties when they arise (Shautz, 1995). Collaborative school cultures share the same characteristics with the democratic and transformational leadership approaches. In a collaborative setting, communication is informal, simple and clear. An important factor that promotes management success in a school is *team work*. Additionally collaborate work can produce effective, fruitful and creative work, which enhances the planned strategy formation, the teachers' academic standard, performance and the overall caliber (Bovee et al. 2003). Consequently, a school leader should encourage teachers, staff members and educators to participate in setting out the goals, missions and the agenda of the school.

3-6 Leadership vision statement

Educational leaders' traits can be so sundry and controversial, with many styles and diverse qualities. There are rouse leaders and tranquil leaders.

Some derive their vigor from perspicuity, some in shrewdness, and some in bravery.

Educational leaders should have the ability to fragment the dilemmas they encounter in order for them to mend them. Concurrently, they have to perceive the consequences of their actions and connect it to a larger whole. They have to have a global vision, an accurate forecast of the organization's future track. Educational leaders provide direction, long term planning, spirit cohesion, and a clear futuristic look at where the educational institution is heading. They should form a code of ethics for all the staff members to follow, thereby creating a homogenous, solidarity and amity atmosphere where all the subordinates could work as a team with a unified goal; which engenders the success of the organization as an entity.

Moreover, the ability of an educational leader to recognize and respond to weak indicators is one of the prevalent factors that contribute to his/her success. Like a good leader, s/he never underestimates the danger of arising conflicts; on the contrary, s/he casts them away at their initial starting point.

Following the research work observed previously in this paper, a personal leadership vision statement must be elaborated in order for the subordinates to be able to implement the theories in a real life setting, which is the educational organization in this case.

3-7 A learning Organization

Starting with the educational organization, an efficient leader will turn it into a learning organization, since leadership is a continuous learning process not only for oneself, but also for one's organization. Examining the organization educational culture should be the first step towards changing the status quo. Effective leaders pay attention to the symbols of the educational organization's culture. They don't consent with the existing stagnation and reshape the culture if they deem it necessary. They create a new "character" or "profile" to their educational organization that will embody the vision. This character is acquired through the shared values with which the leader is able to empathize. The leader should carry the fire, make people and things move, s/he is similar to Plato's philosopher King whose faith is his motto. When the values are clarified and accepted, the educational institution grows to be a community who moves smoothly towards the goals set by the leader.

Modern leadership approaches aspire to initiate a collaborative work environment where administrators and teachers work hand in hand to enhance the pupil's wellbeing and education. In order for a leader to accomplish this endeavor, s/he has to:

- Follow a collaborative decision-making approach and avoid using unilateral and autocratic measures.
- Distribute roles and duties clearly and impartially.
- Influence his/her staff members' behaviors and attitudes by modeling, consequently establish trust.
- Ensure that all staff members abide by the rules and regulations.
- Be the center of communication. S/he should transmit messages, seek feedback, and evaluate responses.
- Care about and maintain the group needs. Exhibit consideration and warmth toward staff members.
- Empower subordinates and delegate tasks.
- Enhance sense of ownership and belonging to the institution.
- Prevent and resolve conflicts between group members by listening, understanding, communicating and building consensus.
- Be a strategic manager with the external community.

4. THE LEBANESE EXPERIENCE

Conducted research on group leadership in the educational administration field reveals a challenging system to be followed in Lebanon. However, implementing it in Lebanon will prove sometimes quite difficult to fully achieve on both, educational and national scales. This has shown through the history of Lebanon in the power struggles between the nationals creating a dysfunctional hierarchical system due to political, economic and global issues difficult to embrace, where the most influential person wins, leading to a bias environment, regardless of rightness, appropriateness and suitability.

All modern psychological, educational and managerial studies focused on group work to enhance achievement. This envelops every single person dealing with interpersonal relationships regardless of the field of work. On the contrary, the Lebanese people on a general basis, do not follow group

work to boost accomplishments, instead they hinder the learning process by encouraging individual success impeding the educational system unconsciously. Again arriving to the same conclusion as stated above that influential people are the rulers, the doers and the ones that lead others to where they deem appropriate.

This sounds as if there is no hope for the Lebanese educational institutions; quite the opposite, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and it just depends on the new generation of educational administrators who are formed, oriented and/or trained to implement group work. They need to find a way to obliterate their coworkers' minds from competition and to show them the gains of working for a group instead of against a group.

CONCLUSION

The educational leadership that counts, indeed, is the kind that impinges on people distinctly. It faucets their sentiments, appeals to their ethics, and reflects their relations with other people. It is an *ethical leadership* that comes in a form of *stewardship*. The educational leader should be the servant of the organization and its goals.

Furthermore, like other organizational domains, educational leadership must not only be effective, *i.e.*, "do the things right" but also efficient, *i.e.*, "do the right things" (Razik & Swanson 2001, p: 157).

Additionally, to succeed, educational leaders must be able to envision and forge an emancipatory community free of social, economic, and discriminatory constraints, because leadership occurs within the community and is developed through communal relationships. Leadership is shared and exchanged among leaders and followers and does not reside permanently in a power position (Razik & Swanson 2001, p: 479).

Educational leaders affect the lives of others; how and to what extent, determines whether they succeeded or failed? The skilled educational leader is the one who exercises power as if s/he is an orchestra conductor, who thinks about leadership as power through other people and not over them.

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