

The Emotional Intelligence Approach for Enhancing Skills in Leadership

~ Ph. D. Lecturer **Radu Herman** (Faculty of Administration and Business, University of Bucharest, Romania)

E-mail: radu.herman@faa.ro

Abstract: An appreciated manager coordinates efficiently the team and both his abilities to be a leader and assume his decisions is crucial for the success of the project. In the empirical study "O nouă abordare asupra învățării practice" several conclusions show that some leadership problems were related to the prioritization of the objectives, an efficient coordination of the members by the leaders, fear in assuming the leadership, not defending the leadership position and tension within the group when facing competition. As a leader, a certain state of mind is required to solve a long-term goal, to have a consistent behavior and adapt a certain leadership style to motivate in a specific situation the members of a team. In an emotional intelligence approach, controlling the afflictions of the mind means reducing the barriers towards being "able to" manifest a leadership style. The aim of this article is to argue that the quest of developing leadership skills can become useless when the leader falls into an inappropriate state of mind.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, leadership, afflictions of mind, leadership styles, creativity.

JEL Classification: J50, M12, M54

1. Introduction

Around the globe, employees enumerate commonly a lack of soft skills like leadership, team work, interpersonal skills, knowledge of foreign languages, ICT skills, readiness to learn and ability of problem solving. (Learning workplace skills through gaming, 19 April 2014). Reviewing the literature we can see that there is a strong link between leadership and the employees' creativity. The challenge is to understand how leadership affects the behavior of the team members and how to foster leadership. Leadership is positively linked with employees' creativity and an organization must find ways to mix properly the creativity of the workers with the rigidity brought by administrative, financial and other requirements in order to reach efficiency and performance of the organization. Trust-building, negotiation, communication and leadership are important abilities to develop within the class of "soft-skills" (Learning workplace skills through gaming, 19 April 2014). The challenge is for matching skills with the labour market needs for both "hard" and "soft" skills. When starting a team with the purpose of implementing a project, a leader needs those abilities to motivate, communicate efficiently, negotiate with the stake-holders, to integrate in a multi-cultural business environment and to be responsible when taking decisions. An appreciated manager coordinates efficiently the team and his ability to be a leader and assume his decisions is crucial for the success of the project.

2. Literature review

Delgado (2014: 4712) draws on data collected from students that have finished a leadership program and from the analysis of

their curricula he argues that many institutions in Europe should rethink their research and teaching programs in order to ensure the quality of their leadership training. Crutchfield and Roughton (2014: 131) argue that a personal leadership goal should be to become more influential and gain more authority which increases the ability in becoming a leader and the leadership team should include all the employees of the organization in the process and define clearly the important roles like responsibility, delegation and authority. Vessey et al. (2014: 1048) show in their analysis that a model based on strategic planning and product championing could explain the positive effects of leadership on creativity in a highly creative population. Rego et al. (2012: 429) empirically validates theoretical arguments that authentic leadership and psychological capital may enhance the creativity of the employers. Zhang and Zhou (2014: 150) show there is an interaction between empowering leadership, uncertainty avoidance, and trust that affects creativity and empowering leadership has the strongest positive relationship with creativity when the organization is facing high levels of uncertainty and trust their leaders. Goleman (19 April 2014) defined six types of leadership styles: coercive, authoritative, affiliative, democratic, pacesetter and coaching. Zhang and Zhou (2014: 150) argue that creativity is linked with leadership, uncertainty avoidance and trust. Müceldili, Turan and Erdil (2013: 673) argue that a positive relationship exists between leadership and employees' creativity and leadership has a positive relationship with innovativeness. Singh and Bhattacharjee (2012: 34) argue that the afflictions of the mind are reasons for success and failures in business leadership position.

Destructive behavior occurs when leaders pursue short-term interests for themselves instead of pursuing the long-term interests of the organization (Daan van Knippenberg, 2011:1078) .

3. The Emotional Intelligence Approach

In the project "O nouă abordare asupra învățării practice practica-ta.ro" several sessions were dedicated to forming transversal competencies of the human resources. Based on the results of the interviews, the students were distributed for several types of training, including "Management and Leadership" where were distributed 63 persons with a frequency of 30% from the total students. The purpose of this training is that students will gain some soft skills that will help them become more competitive in the labor market.

In this paragraph I am summarizing the structure and results from the training for Management & Leadership from the project "O nouă abordare asupra învățării practice" (19 april 2014). Within the training session, students have the objectives to:

- understand some important concepts of management which are applied in the company;
- understand the role of a leader when starting a group activity;
- delegating some tasks and means of checking the quality of the results;
- understanding the purpose and working the organizational structure within a company.

The conclusions of the training were that all of the students were very active, which show that there is a naturally interest in developing leadership abilities. However,

some problems were observed in the behaviors, like:

1. The competition between the teams made it difficult to work between the workgroups;
2. The prioritization of the internal objectives of the team was not coordinated efficiently by the group leaders;
3. Fear in assuming leadership: "many times, informal leaders preferred to give the formal leadership position to another person. The same aspect was seen in the team-work session".

We can see that some challenges appeared – related to the prioritization of the objectives, an efficient coordination of the members by the leaders, fear in assuming the leadership, not defending the leader position and tension within the group when facing competition.

A question naturally arises, why he "felt" fear in assuming leadership? Fear was an emotion felt by the individual who was appreciated as a leader by the team members, but was unable to temporarily assume that role. I am assuming that the role of a leader was a challenge for the individual - which was felt as overwhelming. Temporary, the leadership role of reacting to the groups' needs could not be met, motivation could not be achieved and expressing specific objectives could not be realized. Both the creativity of the leader and the creativity of the group was temporary blocked. In economics, utility is related to the individual satisfaction which means that the utility of the leadership was negative toward reaching the objectives of the project "O nouă abordare asupra

învățării practice” (19 april 2014), with respect to the empirical research of the project. Not communicating the objectives, not fostering towards the objectives and not acting towards the appropriate activities will not bring utility to the project. In other words, the satisfaction of achieving an objective is related with the economic utility of achieving the objectives of the project. The statements above were related to the negative economic effects of not assuming the leadership role within the project. However, the problem persists in understanding the reason why the leadership role was not assumed. In economics we meet concepts like relationships between consumers and producers and in management we find out about relationships between managers and other team members. To this respect, the relationship between the leader and the group members has a strong emotional charge. Perhaps, for this reason, an emotional intelligence behavior approach is appropriate for understanding how leadership skills can be enhanced. Enhancing a skill, analogous to an investment, may have some barriers. Enhancing a skill is a knowledge attribute which can be associated with reaching a certain state of mind in the emotional intelligence approach. If it's not a knowledge attribute it means that the ability of leadership cannot be learned and the appropriate state of mind of the leader cannot be achieved. In this emotional intelligence vision, controlling the afflictions of mind means reducing the barriers towards being “able to” manifest the leadership skill.

4. Enhancing Skills in Leadership with the Emotional Intelligence Approach

Goleman (19 april 2014) argues that the leaders with best results rely on several

leadership styles which they should fit appropriately to a certain situation. Goleman (19 april 2014) defines six styles of leadership

1. Coercive leaders which request a fast compliance;
2. Authoritative leaders who direct the team towards a vision;
3. Affiliative leaders make appeal to the harmony of the team and search for appropriate emotional communication;
4. Democratic leaders search for agreement between the members of the group;
5. Pacesetter leaders expect good results and self-oriented individuals;
6. Coaching leaders develop the qualities of the individuals for better results in the future.

According to this approach, a leader should be wise enough to understand the context of a business, the needs of the individuals in order to choose appropriate the leadership style he will choose to use. The new elements of this approach is that each leadership style has its roots in different aspects of emotional intelligence. Each individual has different strengths and weaknesses with respect to some qualities which have relevance within a leadership behavior. Goleman (19 april 2014) finds out that leaders who know to appropriately use the authoritative, democratic, affiliative and coaching styles have the best business performance. Developing the ability of leadership raises complex questions due to a high number of variables which occur. You know there is a problem, you somehow “feel” it, but it's not always easy to locate it fast and find some general rules which apply and solve the problem. As a leader, a certain state of mind is required to solve a long-term goal, to have a consistent behavior and adapt a certain leadership style to motivate in a

specific situation the members of a team. This shouldn't be too hard to prove, due to the fact that feelings have the purpose to be felt by others and a certain leadership style may require a certain state of mind in order to be felt in a motivational sense by the others.

I'm recalling the empirical evidence from the project "O nouă abordare asupra învățării practice" (19 april 2014) that "members didn't agree to the prioritization of the objectives, the leader lacked an efficient coordination of the team-members and fear in assuming leadership, many times informal leaders preferred to give the formal leadership position to another person". In literature we find that the afflictions of the mind are reasons why leaders are not behaving appropriate. Singh and Bhattacharjee (2012: 38) stated that "a leader with afflicted mind could be equated with a prisoner, a prisoner of mind" and the arguments are: attachment to unworthy things, inflated ego, ignoring responsibilities, feelings of insecurity and working in destructive ways. Leaders have the responsibility to provide a clear vision of a business, to choose wisely the sustainable goals, to motivate the team, and according to Goleman (19 april 2014) to choose the appropriate leadership style in a certain context. In order to reach the long-term goal, a leader should first identify the necessary steps and resources, then identify the appropriate management style to fit a business situation and motivate wisely the team members to achieve the goal. A necessary state of mind is required by a leader – which requires training to pass certain barriers which are associated to the afflictions of the leader's mind (Singh and Bhattacharjee (2012: 38):

1. Ignorance, when leaders perceive in a different and non-constructive way an

objective reality;

2. Attachment is related to the short term goals in an egoist manner;

3. Aversion is related to the rejection towards something or someone;

4. Ego is related to a biased perceived separation between the individual and the objective environment;

5. Insecurity is an affliction of the mind related to fear, anxiety, self-esteem, manipulation and other states of mind which create an insecurity behavior of the leader.

The above statements reach many fields of the literature and arguing them are beyond the purpose of this article. However I considered appropriate to choose some reasons which I considered relevant to argue that there are certain paths in literature that could spark a light when deciding to start training the ability of leadership. The aim of the research in this paper is to find arguments for understanding the observed problems in the behavior of the participants from the project "O nouă abordare asupra învățării practice" (19 april 2014). The quest of being able to choose an appropriate style of leadership, while having the "right" state of mind, in a chaotic business situation, is a real challenge for a leader. Developing some leadership skills can become useless when the leader falls into an inappropriate state of mind. Instead of seeing the "right" vision for reaching the objectives, an ego-driven individual "arises" who prefers different self-oriented objectives. The leader ignores the accurate trajectory for reaching the targeted objectives, while he prefers a certain vision which will gain him personal benefits. Perhaps, the short term goals are easier to visualize and reach, but they are not strategic and the expected value brought by achieving

them will be lower than reaching the long term ones. Due to some internal perceptions or other aversion variables, a leader may reject some aspects related to the other team members which will distort the realization of the objectives. Destructive behavior occurs when leaders pursue short-term interests for themselves instead of pursuing the long-term interests of the organization (Daan van Knippenberg, 2011:1078). The members from a group have heterogeneous attributes, and just certain attributes are appreciated by the group members. In order to achieve certain goals of the organization, members need a structure with intelligible activities and leaders provide them. The decision is a complex process and needs a strong value system. However, in some situations, leaders do not take those decisions which lead to achieving the long-term objectives of the organization and this article does some research in this respect. Sometimes it's quite obvious for the team members that doing an activity will bring the expected benefits and the leader rejects it due to some "personal issues". Another reason for why leaders have an afflicted mind is related to the ego. An example is an "egoist" leader which is rather destructive to the organization for not listening to other realistic opinions from the members. A less ego driven leader wants to find out more about the course of the events and is constantly listening and updating his knowledge data-base. Illies and Reiter-Palmon (2008: 251) show that individuals defined and structured the leadership aspects in ways that reflect their value systems and their research results show that individuals with self-enhancement values were more destructive than individuals with self-transcendence values. Self-enhancement individuals

were considered to be oriented on achievement and power, while self-transcendence towards universalism and benevolence. In other words, self-interest values determine a more destructive behavior than self-transcendence. In my opinion, the most relevant affliction of the mind which can be associated to the behavior of fear in assuming leadership is due to the personal insecurities of the leader. I consider that the first and most difficult step in developing the leadership skill is related to the insecurities. With respect to the empirical research of the project "O nouă abordare asupra învățării practice" (19 april 2014) I associate the behavior of the leaders - who felt fear in assuming the leadership and not defending the leader position - with the insecurity affliction of the mind. In this context, not assuming the leadership position and preferring to give the formal leadership position to another person is a form of insecurity. Lack of confidence in the leader is reflected in his behavior, and shows both fear and timidity. If he expresses doubt and doesn't know what to communicate and to show an appropriate behavior to a leadership style, the other members of the group will decrease their confidence in the leader. Instead of being creative and brainstorming, they will feel the same doubt and reluctance as the leader. Practically, the expression of the leadership style stops before it starts manifesting. Although he may know what leadership style to appropriately adopt in motivating the team, he couldn't deal with his insecurities and he couldn't manifest any longer the leadership role.

5. Conclusions

The behavior of a person is changing when he assumes the leadership role. An

explanation for this change comes from the emotional intelligence approach that he is dealing with insecurities or other afflictions of the mind. The quest of a leader is to have the state of mind that allows him to choose and use the appropriate leadership style to reach the strategic objectives of the project and foster the creativity of the team members.

In my opinion, I consider that the first and most difficult step in developing the leadership skill is related to the insecurities. If the leader expresses doubt and doesn't know what to communicate and how to show the appropriate behavior for a leadership style, the other members of the group will decrease their confidence in the leader and the strategic objectives are harder to reach.

REFERENCES:

1. **B., William Vessey, Barrett, Jamie D., Mumford, Michael D., Johnson, Genevieve, Litwiller, Brett,** (2014), *Leadership of highly creative people in highly creative fields: A historiometric study of scientific leaders*, The Leadership Quarterly, Available online 21 April, Pp.1048-1058
2. **Delgado, Olga,** (2014), *Improvement Areas of Leadership Training in European Institutions of Higher Education*, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 116, 21 February, Pp. 4712-4716
3. **Goleman, Daniel,** *Leadership that gets results* [online], Available: <http://standanddelivergroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Goleman-Leadership-that-Gets-Results.pdf> [19 april 2014]
4. **Illies, Jody J, Reiter-Palmon, Roni,** (2008), *Responding Destructively in Leadership Situations: The Role of Personal Values and Problem Construction*, Journal of Business Ethics Vol. 82, No. 1, September, Pp. 251-272
5. **Knippenberg, Daan van,** (2011), *Embodying who we are: Leader group prototypicality and leadership effectiveness*, The Leadership Quarterly, Volume 22, Issue 6, December, Pp. 1078-1091
6. **Müceldili, Büşra, Turan, Haldun, Erdil, Oya,** (2013), *The Influence of Authentic Leadership on Creativity and Innovativeness*, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 99, 6 November, Pp. 673-681
7. **Rego, Arménio, Sousa, Filipa, Marques, Carla, Pina e Cunha, Miguel,** (2012), *Authentic leadership promoting employees' psychological capital and creativity*, Journal of Business Research, Volume 65, Issue 3, March, Pp. 429-437
8. **Singh, Sandeep, Bhattacharjee, Anindo,** (2012) *Leadership and Afflictions of Mind*, Purushartha: A Journal of Management Ethics and Spirituality, Vol 5, No 2, Pp. 34-54
9. **Zhang, Xiaomeng, Zhou, Jing,** (2014), *Empowering leadership, uncertainty avoidance, trust, and employee creativity: Interaction effects and a mediating mechanism*, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Volume 124, Issue 2, July, Pp. 150-164
10. Learning workplace skills through gaming, [online], Available: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/learning-workplace-skills-through-gaming> [19 April 2014]
11. Matching Skills and Labour Market Needs, Building Social Partnerships for Better Skills and Better Jobs , [online], Available http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GAC/2014/WEF_GAC_Employment_Matching-SkillsLabourMarket_Report_2014.pdf [19 april 2014]
12. O nouă abordare asupra învățării practice, [online], Available> http://www.practica-ta.ro/files_to_download/companii/O%20nou%C4%83%20abordare%20asupra%20%C3%AErv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83rii%20practice.pdf [19 april 2014]