

# Leadership Development

~ Ph. D. Lecturer **Oana Simona Hudea** (Faculty of Administration and Business, University of Bucharest, Romania)

E-mail: [simona\\_hudea@yahoo.com](mailto:simona_hudea@yahoo.com)

***Abstract:** This paper aims at rendering the main characteristics distinguishing leaders from common individuals, as well as from managers, while identifying the progressive steps and the key elements needed for leader development. Learning how to lead oneself is a prerequisite for leading others, but without continuous training, coaching or mentoring, and above all, without effective experience, individuals will never get to become real leaders.*

**Keywords:** leader development, planned experience, action learning, coaching, mentoring

**JEL Classification:** M10, M12

## 1. Overview on leader development

What does leader development mean? It essentially refers to the extension of the capabilities and competences of individuals so as to effectively impact, in a positive way, by their behaviour and role playing, on the convergence of the entire organization to a common goal: success.

The issue of leader development gave rise, over time, to many disputes as for the efficiency of such an action, given the large-spread conception that true leaders rather emerge due to innate qualities of people than to acquired ones. It is generally accepted that being a good leader is indestructibly related to some pre-existing characteristics such

as courage, spirit of initiative, responsibility, capacity of persuasion, creativity, sociability, dedication and so on, but no one can contest that these ones can be cultivated by living and acting. Besides, other leader specific elements like self-awareness, self-control, self-motivation or strategic thinking or acting are mainly generated by adequate and continuous training. This is the reason why various educational programmes have been put in place in order to develop the knowledge, abilities and skills necessary to prepare veritable leaders.

**2. From common individuals... to distinguished leaders**

A leader is a person capable to exert influence on others by power of personal example, acting as a sort of a model that the latter feels comfortable following in order to achieve both the organisational and their own goals. Therefore, a future leader shall come to "possess", beyond the managerial-specific qualities, a series of other ones, most appreciated by people, turning himself/herself into what others would like to be.

From this perspective, the road an individual shall pass in order to become a good leader encompasses at least three important stages (Figure 1), revealed hereinafter:

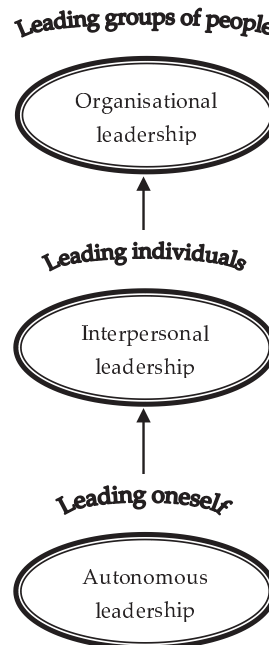
- *Leading oneself* -> emerging leaders. A first step for such an individual is to be his/her own leader, meaning to feel self-satisfied and self-aware and to have clearly defined vision, values, beliefs and goals. This means to have the tools necessary to master himself/herself and his/her own activities and actions and to perform a sort of autonomous leadership.

- *Leading other individuals* -> probation leaders. A second step is to be able to lead

other individuals, that is, beside the above-mentioned, to know how to actively listen, communicate, negotiate with, persuade or organise the same. At this stage, it is essential to have the instruments necessary to master the activities and actions of other individuals and to practice an interpersonal leadership.

- *Leading groups of people* -> executive leaders. The third step is to be able to lead a group of people, going from a restrained one to an entire organisation, in other words to have more particular characteristics like strategic attitude, openness to change and to intercultural approach, capacity to maintain a stable environment and solid relationships and so on. This is the moment when the individual should be able to master the activities and actions of many people working altogether ,exercising the organisational leadership.

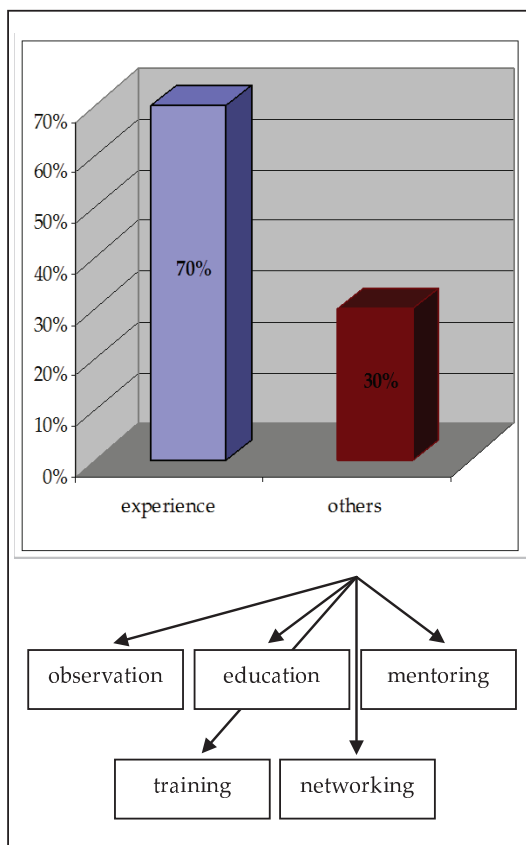
Figure 1



### 3. Tips to develop leaders

The previous section rendered the steps individuals should take in order to become leaders. At each stage, the future leaders develop the already acquired knowledge, skills and capabilities and acquire new ones, all this pushing them forward. Everything gathered in their way to organisational leadership is considered, according to the literature, to be mainly due, about 70%, to experience, the rest of 30% coming from observation, education, mentoring, training, networking and others (Figure 2).

Figure 2



*Observation* starts from early life: first we see our parents, then our teachers and later our chiefs acting as leaders and guiding

us, and this makes us create models and try to imitate the behaviour of the same.

*Education* helps us understanding and analysing what we observe, discerning what is useful to retain from others' behaviours and experiences, acquiring knowledge and developing ourselves as persons and as future professionals.

*Mentoring* indicates us the right direction, the ways to find solutions to career issues, provides us with the opportunity to think about career options and progress.

*Training* is the core of apprenticeships, determining us to acquire vocational knowledge and skills relating to specific competencies and having as purpose to improve our capability and performance.

*Networking* is the source for the exchange of information or services with other individuals, groups, or institutions, helping us in cultivating productive employment or business relationships.

*Experience* makes us effectively learning by doing. We get experience by living, by interacting with other people, by acting. We become professionally experienced while working in our field of activity. We are able to become true leaders in time, after being just leaders, by exercising our capacity to turn into professional models for our followers.

As we can see, observation, education, mentoring, training or networking form the foundation on which the career of the future leader is build, however experience, especially the organisational one, seems to be the icing on the cake that pushes the individual towards the position of a veritable leader.

Yet, how can we take as much benefits as possible from experience? The 3 D-actions could help enhancing the abilities of a good leader:

- Discover:
  - the needs of the people you are working with
  - the needs of the whole organisation
  - the strengths and weaknesses of the internal environment
  - the threats and opportunities provided by the external environment
- Design:
  - the optimum activities, actions and tasks to be performed and their timing
  - the best methods to effectively solve problems
  - the most appropriate ways to avoid and/or annihilate conflicts
  - the modality to make people freely following you without constraint
  - the adequate incentives able to render the people you are working with increasingly efficient
- Develop:
  - new strategies for strengthening and/or improving the market position of your organisation
  - a network of sustainable relationships with the organisation stakeholders
  - an organisational culture to which the people your are working with would be willing to adhere

When speaking about leader development, we usually think about the steps an individual should take and the efforts the same should make in order to become a true leader. And it is normal for that individual to be the most interested of all in getting there. Yet, there is also another entity which should manifest interest in such respect: the organisation where the said individual performs.

Any organisation attempts to be successful, to be on top in its field of activity, but this cannot be achieved without competitive people coordinating it.

Therefore, organisations, aware that current leaders would not stay around forever, have to endeavour to permanently identify capable individuals and to help the best of them turning into remarkable leaders, this supposing the use of several instruments, such as the following:

- involving individuals into in-house and/or external courses
- organising workshops and training sessions for the same
- coaching, counselling and mentoring individuals
- challenging individuals to take part in action learning
- providing individuals with planned experience by job observation and/or swaps
- making individuals play roles and simulate situations

By combining their qualities, education, training and experience, accumulated in time, with the focussed formation process provided on spot, through various means, by the organisation, individuals might be ready to become leaders, but only by experiencing as leaders, they will be finally able to distinguish themselves as true leaders.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The study puts into evidence the long and complex road an individual should pass in order to become a true leader, meaning a person with veritable qualities, able to persuade others to follow him/her, by the power

of example. Leaders develop in time, both in their own environment, by observation, education, mentoring, training, networking or experience, passing from leading oneself to leading other individuals, and in the organisational one, through specific courses, workshops, coaching, counselling, action learning, job swabs, role playing and so on, ending by leading groups of people.

Yet, becoming a leader is not the end of the road, as a leader needs to continuously develop, to acquire more knowledge, to improve himself/herself, and this is mainly related to his/her openness for discovering issues impacting on the organisation, for designing patterns to provide the well-being of the same or for developing appropriate organisational culture and strategies.

---

#### REFERENCES:

1. **Acuto, Michele.** "The new climate leaders?". *Review of International Studies*, vol.39 no.4: 835-857 (2013).
2. **Day, David ; Zaccaro, Stephen; Halpin, Stanley.** "Leader development for transforming organizations: growing leaders for tomorrow". Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (2004).
3. **Kets de Vrie, Manfred; Korotov, Konstantin.** "Leadership development". Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA : Edward Elgar (2011).
4. **Middlehurst, Robin.** "Sustainable leadership in challenging times". *Higher Education Management and Policy*, vol.22 no3: 1-19 (2010).
5. **Trowbridge, Mark.** "How to find, maintain and motivate top talent". *Supply Chain Management Review*, vol.17 no.3 (2013).