

Leadership and Life Coaching

~ Ph. D. **Magdalena Platis** (University of Bucharest, Romania)

E-mail: magdalena.platis@unibuc.ro

Abstract: Leadership is often considered a desired way of managing things. It reveals specific personal characteristics through which leaders involve people into processes. Coaching has to do with a specific way of interaction between a coaching manager and the people receiving the benefit of it. In fact, a coach behaves like a proper leader and a coached individual like a follower. At the same time, leadership is different from coaching. Main objectives of this paper are the following:

- to explain the leadership process in relationship with coaching
- to provide a set of measures to develop life coaching from leadership way of thinking
- to identify the young generation's perception on coaching

The study reveals similarities between leadership and coaching, as well as differences and contributes to a better understanding of these concepts, based on a literature review. The research based on a questionnaire explains the effects of leadership on coaching process based on the students' perceptions. Therefore, the paper includes a case study for higher education sector.

Keywords: leadership, life coaching, personal development, life model, student-professor relationship

I. Leadership and Coaching; Conceptual Approach

Leadership is a process and a way of acting. It reveals a specific behaviour and attitude. It characterizes both type of subjects – individuals and institutions. Specialists have tried to find proper answers to questions like: Are leadership skills possible to be learned? How to become leader? Is it possible to be sometimes a leader and other times a follower? How does a leader become visionary? In many cases, leadership is considered part of the management or related to it, reason for

which, other questions come up, like: Should a leader become manager, or a manager should become a leader? Which is the difference between leadership and management? Who is more responsible and dedicated – the leader or the manager? Many other topics can be found out.

Adair (2007) explains which are the essential qualities of a leader, what someone needs to do to become a leader, how core leadership functions can turn into skills and how to become a leader by yourself. All these issues apply to higher education sector as seen in the Table 1.

Table 1. Qualities of leadership from general to higher education institutions

Crt. No.	Qualities of leadership (according to Adair)	General explanations	Higher education institution - examples
1.	Enthusiasm	Leaders are ready for actions, happy to do what they are supposed to do.	Rectors, as leaders must show the academic community that they are ready to act forward.
2.	Integrity	Moral behaviours are mandatory and a way of life, specific values are followed.	Ethics is very much integrated into all strategies, actions and behaviours.
3.	Toughness	Leaders must be clear in their expectations from the others; therefore, they are not always loved by the followers.	Rectors are more or less demanding, but effectiveness requires toughness.
4.	Fairness	Leaders accept that people are different, but they do not apply different rules to them, but the same judgement.	At institutional level, there are internal procedures, methodologies and rules which together with specific legislation create a fair context for everybody.
5.	Warmth	Leaders pay a lot of attention to emotions and they do not ignore people's reactions.	Rectors are good speakers and know how to involve the audience into the topic.
6.	Humility	Real leaders are not arrogant. They know who they are, what they have achieved and how much they still have to do.	Real leaders in higher education institutions should be great professionals, but not arrogant at all. Their behaviour should be a normal one, being in contact with people from many social and professional part.

7.	Confidence	Leaders must generate the followers to trust in them. They must show the others that they know what they do and ask for.	Rectors are efficient decision-makers. They act based on trust and reveal a certainty in their behaviour even if the living context is a very dynamic one.
----	------------	--	--

In the process of defining leadership, Northouse (2009) explains it as a trait, ability, skill, behaviour and relationship and he also states that some global leaderships attributes can be identified, from a positive (like motivational and intelligence) and negative perspective (like nonexplicit and dictatorial). Starting from his opinion, all these interpretations apply in higher education context. In order to understand the leadership context in higher education domains, two types of leaders can be considered:

- The manager type of leader, when at different levels and structures, many leaders can be considered, from the rector position, to the deans, director of different departments, directors of research institutes and so on;
- The professor type of leader, when any professor can be considered a leader by himself or herself, in the teaching and learning context, when all the followers are their students.

Leadership in higher education institutions get particular explanations, as following ones:

- Individual characteristic – not all professors become rectors, or deans, or directors, and not even candidates to management positions. In addition, not all professors are good professors, admired and followed by their students;
- Work capacity – leaders in higher education institutions are very much devoted to their tasks. They are demanding and able

to put some pressure on employees when they have to finalize a submission at a specific date, they reveal a clear capacity to lead which is finally reflected into the job done. In addition, good professors are able to get the most from groups of students where from other could not.

- Set of reactions – leaders make a difference between objectives and processes. Therefore, in some cases, leaders pay attention to the result, and in other cases to the processes of achieving things done. Usually, when things tend to become more complicated, there is a change from a task oriented to a process oriented behaviour.
- Set of links – leaders lead through communication, collaboration, developing relationships, partnerships and networking.

Coaching is a way of changing individual's life. Lionnet (2015) explains life coaching as a ten steps process and a way of getting all the information and tools needed for success and personal development. Some of the author's coaching elements include the following:

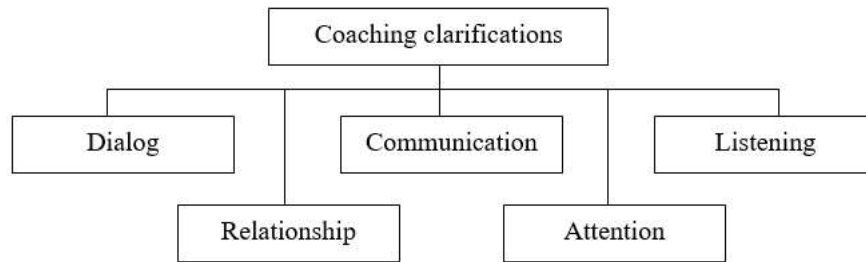
- discover what you really want
- be honest with yourself
- find your adventural spirit
- how to make a proper choice
- look into the future.

Coaching is a relatively new area and profession. It involves a specific language and an art of saying as Cardon (2009) states in the introduction to his commented dictionary of coaching. Coaching has to do with a

good knowledge of a domain in which someone is guided by an expert who is not necessarily more expert than his or her client, on

the basis of listening and communication. The coaching process involves at least the elements from the figure 1.

Figure 1: Main elements of coaching.



Therefore, coaching is not simple as practice, being difficult to be learned. In higher education institutions, there are several ways of observing coaching – direct dialog between professor and student, coaching in the career orientation process, coaching for young assistants etc. Coaching could be improved through leadership methods. The relationship between leadership and coaching is a direct one, many similarities and differences being observed.

II. Comparative Analysis between Leadership and Coaching

Leadership and coaching can be analysed in comparison. The most relevant similarities are described in the Table 2.

Table 2. Common issues for leadership and coaching

Crt. No.	Element	Leadership	Coaching
1.	Relationship between two parties	Leader - Follower	Coach – learner or client
2.	Learning process involved	Followers learn from leader	Clients learn from coach
3.	Type of relationship	Informal, exception when the leader is manager	Informal
4.	Effect on development	Individual and institutional development	Mainly individual development
5.	Training	From leader to follower	From coach to learner
6.	Communication skills	Important	Important

At the same time, many elements can be observed as not being part of both leadership and coaching. For instance, leader must have a vision, and followers must understand it, while coach must listen to the learner who need to know what he or she wants to do; even if the case is when the client in a coaching process does not know clearly where exactly he or she wants to go, the coach role is more complex, to help him or her to clarifies this issue.

Another different issue is that to become a leader is more difficult, although there are programmes dedicated to study leadership. On one hand, studying leadership does not mean that the trained people have become leaders. In fact, if someone is or not a leader depends on the followers, how the potential leader is perceived by them. On the other hand, to become a coach is more possible, since the educational market provides clearer number of teaching and practice in coaching, under special supervision. In other words, is more possible for someone to become a coach than a leader.

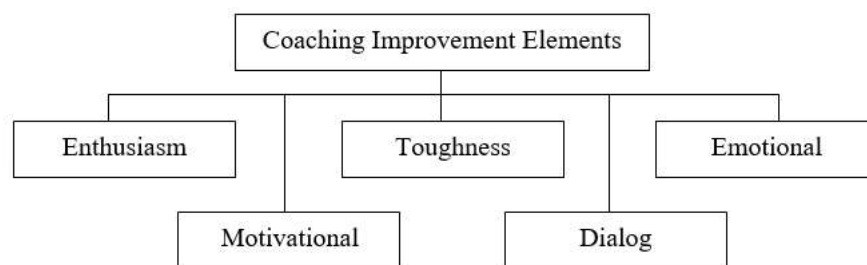
In higher education institutions, coaching can be observed in two ways:

- in a strict sense, when coaching is done in the process of career counselling;
- in a large sense, when each professor can provide training, advice and guidance for personal development of the students in the area of their expertise and life development.

Life coaching for students is an informal process in which a professor, leader or not in the institution helps a student to identify and move forward to his or her personal goals. In fact, the employees working at the career counselling centre, usually sociologists or psychologists are trained to be effective coaches, by their profession and activity.

From the leadership characteristics, many determinants can be applied in the coaching process. In Figure 2. main influences from the leadership behaviour, attitude and skills can be observed as coaching improvers.

Figure 2: Coaching Improvement Elements



In higher education institutions, professors are every day informal coaches for their students. Unfortunately, they do not realise their role in helping them to find their way in life. In order that the professors become more

aware of their coaching role, leadership must concentrate to actions related to the connection among the three missions of the higher education institutions. Proper strategies involve the following:

- academic community should be involved in strategic decisions, but not in a declarative manner
- extra curriculum activities should be developed as many as possible
- professors should learn from their colleagues and accept some other may be better than they
- effective benchmarking should be promoted and encouraged
- examples of good practice and bad practice should be distributed.

III. Leadership Influence on Life Coaching; Students' Perceptions

A simple research was conducted at the Faculty of Business and Administration within the University of Bucharest where students from under-graduate and graduate level were asked about the professors' behaviour, starting from the following questions:

- Do you have professors who are more capable of organising students in teams for projects?
- Would you consider the professors-leaders better communicators with the students?
- Do you have professors open to dialog with students in other time than the teaching time?
- Do you feel free to talk to professors about your life goals?
- Do you have a life model among professors?

The respondent's distribution was of 164 students at undergraduate level and 48 students at graduate one, a total of 212 students. Their answers were simple and consists of the following ones:

- There are professors better than others in organising students, but the teaching methods are tough and the students are not integrated in the decision-making process (194 students, meaning 92% of the respondents);
- All the students agreed that there are professors better communicators than others, but not all of the open to dialog, mainly because of their time. They suggest to meet the students other time and there is never enough time for open dialog (62 students, meaning 30 % of the respondents);
- Only 80 students would feel free to discuss with some professors about their life goals, meaning only 38 % of the respondents;
- Only 27 % (57 students) have identified life models among professors.

The research can be developed furthermore, in the process of understanding the differences between undergraduate and graduate students. At the same time, professors should be integrated in a future research to see how much the answers match.

In conclusion, leadership affects directly the coaching process. In higher education institutions, there is room for coaching developing. Leadership is not enough for a better students' understanding, listening and guiding.

REFERENCES:

1. **Adair, J.**, (2007), *Develop your leadership skills*, The Sunday Times
2. **Anderson, N.**, (2014) *Top-Down or Bottom-Up Approaches to Successful Change*, <http://www.tbointl.com/blog/top-down-or-bottom-up-approaches-to-successful-change>
3. **Cardon, A.**, (2009) *Dictionar de coaching comentat*, CODECS
4. **Downing, K. and Ganotice, F., A., Jr.** (editors), *World University Rankings and the Future of Higher Education*, IGI Global, ISBN13: 9781522508199, ISBN10: 1522508198, EISBN13: 9781522508205, 2016, <http://www.igi-global.com/book/world-university-rankings-future-higher/150147>
5. **Leaming, D., R.**, *Academic Leadership. A Practical Guide to Chairing the Department*, Anker Publishing Guide, second edition, copyright 1998, ISBN-13: 978-1933371177, ISBN-10: 193337117X
6. **Lionnet, A.**, (2015) *Life Coaching. 10 pasi esentiali pentru a-ti transforma viata*, Editura ALL
7. **Nordhouse, P.G.** (2015) *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th edition, SAGE Publications, INC
8. **Riggio, R.** (2009), "Peter Drucker On Leadership", <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/200911/peter-drucker-leadership>
9. **Tabatoni, P., Davies, J. and Barblan, A.** *Strategic Management and Universities' Institutional Development EUA*, Geneve, Editors, www.eua.be
10. **Warren, B.** (1989) *On becoming a leader*, <http://www.hbs.edu/rethinking-the-mba/docs/session%206.pdf>
11. Academic Leadership Journal (ALJ), published by Fort Hays State University-College of Education, <http://contentcat.fhsu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15732coll4>
12. University Leaders perspective: Governance and Founding (2015), <http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage-list/university-leaders'-perspectives-governance-and-funding>