
COLLOQUIA

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Management for leadership – on the need for proactivity

Summary

The discourse presented in this article is focused on the subjects of leadership and management, as well as relationships between these two. This discourse requires the inclusion of multi-contextual changes of the neoliberal world which make leaders face new requirements. The most important requirements are: the increasing role of leadership, management for leadership and need of proactivity. The arguments put forward in this article show that there is a need to generate new attitudes that will go beyond the boundaries determined by partial paradigms so that they are relevant to the dynamics of changes in the contemporary world.

Key words: management, leadership, management for leadership, proactivity

The quality of changes in the contemporary world, referring to the words by Immanuel Wallerstein, “the world that we know” (wherein, what is worth emphasising, according to the author’s vision, the quality of a social change, in fact, can even mean “the end of the world that we know” (Wallerstein 2004: 55)), contributes to changes in thinking about management. Bringing considerations to the following statement, “for the first time in the history of mankind, there is a real chance for personal satisfaction and freedom of initiatives of direct producers of ideas and things to become the condition of proper functioning of their workshops, not only the content of utopian, pro-human slogans” (Obuchowski 2000). Indeed, as Anthony Giddens (see: Whittington 1992) emphasises, the choice is the fundamental component of everyday activities of an individual. Intellectual emancipation and the ability to behave reflectively in the world of a permanent change and diversity of

social environments (in which an individual is engaged in a direct or indirect way), enable to express personal agency by creating individual life styles and “choosing” one’s identity (Whittington 1992: 695–696).

Multicontextual social changes, expressed in the permanent creation of the contemporary society, specificity of qualitatively new transformations in relations between globality and locality, society and an agent, an organisation and an individual, as well as the relationship between them, are not without significance for the quality of considerations in the subject of management and leadership (Cybal-Michalska 2013). The value of the debate on the management and leadership career is evidenced by the fact that it is not free from a lively, critical overview of multiplicity of theoretical perspectives. Considerations presented in this article show that there is a need to generate new attitudes that will go beyond the boundaries determined by partial paradigms, so that they are relevant for the dynamics of changes in the contemporary world and for the challenges that effective leadership or even management for leadership, have to face these days (Cybal-Michalska 2014).

The creation of management strategy and style in the world orientated to a global change, becomes not only a problem of civilisation, influencing the shape of an organisation development, but it also becomes a problem of an individual dimension. The management is the most important part of every organisation and the knowledge about the management theory is the key element necessary to be successful, either in management or in leadership. This knowledge also refers to universities, which are, after all, organisations, as no organisation can achieve its goals without effective management. Thus, management is considered to be a centre of every organisation (Mahmood et al. 2012: 512).

The basis of the considerations presented in this article constitutes an assumption about an inseparable link between management and leadership. This assumption emphasises that “leadership and management create patterns of complementary behaviours, actions, knowledge and skills. They must be seen on a continuum that reflects the implementation of managerial functions, where both categories, though related to one another, are different” (Michalak 2014: 3). The foregoing findings show that, although management is associated with the ability to deal with complexity and leadership – with changes, it is true, as Kotter noticed, that “the moment, companies understand the basic difference between management and leadership, they can begin the process of training their best employees which will enable them to perform both roles at the same time.” (Kotter 2005: 119–120).

A lot of scholars still wonder if an individual is born to be a leader or is it something that an individual can be taught. Is the inborn charisma the essence of leadership or are these features something that an individual can learn? (Bohoris & Vorria 2007: 1). As one can see in the considerations presented in this article, answers may vary. Special glorification of leadership is an aspect that is worth considering due to the thread mentioned in the final reflection. In the 1980s scientists studying the problem of management and leadership stood for treating the leadership as an antidote to any organisation failure. According to Kożusznik (see: Michalak 2014), “Let’s get rid of management” movement was accompanied by the following motto: “people do not want to be managed but they want to be led” (Michalak 2014: 15–18). This movement is surprisingly radical but it is also thought-provoking if it is legitimate to focus the management process on leadership.

Mintzberg (2013), who is critical of putting leadership on a pedestal and bringing management to the fore, states that by treating leadership as “a function different from management, we give an individual character to something that has a social character. No matter how much we emphasise that a leader’s role is to empower or validate a group of workers, we always think mainly about an individual leader – every time we expose the issue of leadership, we belittle the importance of group members and we treat them only as a leader’s subordinates. Thus, we weaken the sense of community and belonging to a given group, which are important and necessary features in every organisation for its employees to work as a team. Instead of focusing on a leadership, we should address communities of human beings that naturally cooperate to realise their aims, while leaders and managers should be treated as a part and parcel of these communities” (Mintzberg 2013: 26–27). In cooperation with managers at different levels, senior and more experienced managers establish goals of a given organisation, and everyone who works there tries their best to achieve these goals. Management means creating a proper context that will enable effective work and that will help an organisation to find its place among possibilities and threats coming from the outside. Managers on all levels shape values and the culture of organisation with their decisions and setting an example for others. However, it is the most experienced managers who have the most visible and the most direct influence on others. Achievements and success of an organisation best prove the efforts and the effective management of managers (Darr 2011: 8).

To be successful, contemporary organisations (it also refers to universities) need, both, effective leaders and effective managers. On one hand, it means being oriented to tasks, on the other – o innovation and vision (Ricketts 2009: 1).

The concepts of leadership and management have a lot of similarities. They both refer to having influence on others, working with other people and achieving goals (Ricketts 2009: 2). Shaping these dimensions requires an intentional and targeted process of their development on the path of education. Changing concepts about the nature of management and leadership, as well as challenges associated with traditional attitudes to their development, constitute a reason for so many new trends in education in the subject of management and leadership. Williams (2000) notices an increase in the demand for postgraduate studies and training courses, which are offered by universities. Hirsh and Carter (2002) notice a visible shift to more flexible training offers, tailored to individual and organisational requirements.. Such a change requires a reversal of many traditional educational priorities: from theory to practice, from a part to a system, from stages and roles to processes, from knowledge to learning, from individual knowledge to partnership and from analysis to reflexive understanding. One should seek the basis for these changes in paradigmatic breakthrough that determines a new quality of thinking about the nature of management and leadership and in the change of philosophical perspectives about a role of management and leadership. A meta-reflection is expressed in practice and it refers to such issues as: effective management or bigger competitiveness of an organisation. Mole (2000) makes a clear distinction between concepts of a training in the subject of management, education and a development. According to a theoretician, a *training* is focused on the current job of an employee; *education* is focused on a future job, while *development* is concentrated on an organisation. The contemporary trend is focused on education, but, first and foremost, on the development. Development programmes prepare individuals for changes and to go in a new direction, which may be caused by the changes and development in the organisation. Bush and Glover (2004) made a similar distinction, reviewing theories about the leadership development. They identified three contrasting models of leadership development. Each of the identified approaches allows us to identify relative values and strengths of each of them. Each of these approaches represents an important philosophical view on the nature of management and leadership in organisations. The distinguished models are the following: the “scientific” model (the technical one), which means training to achieve clearly defined

aims; the “humanistic” model, which is focused on people and on strategically planned, transformational interactions; the third type is the “pragmatic” (rational) model, which is focused on projects, concentrating on individuals’ and groups’ urgent needs. To better understand education in the subject of management, Holman (2000: 197–217) quotes four recurring motives in the debates about the goal, nature and values of higher education and he complements the list with the fifth element. Next to the *epistemological* motive (reflecting assumptions about the nature of the sought knowledge), *pedagogical* motive (referring to the nature of the learning process, intended results and the methods of teaching), *an organisational* motive (referring to the management and the organisation of education), as well as a *social* motive (reflecting the role of education in a society), Holman mentions *management*, referring, thereby, to the concepts of the nature of management practice. Referring to the diversity of the above motives, it is not surprising that there are qualitatively different attitudes to the subject of management and leadership development. Developing his attitude, Holman identified four contemporary models of the management education. He comes up with the conclusion that academic liberalism¹ (important because of its over-reliance on theory) and practical vocational trainings² (important because of their over-reliance on action) are desirable if we are to educate practicing managers. Moreover, Holman proposes that empirical liberalism³ and empirical/critical attitudes⁴ should shape managers, who will be able to deal with

¹ It assumes that management education should be, first and foremost, about following the objective knowledge about management. Thereby, this attitude tries to spread general rules and theories that can be used in a relative and rational way. From this perspective, the aim of the management development should be to create “a scientist of management”, who is able to analyse and use theoretical rules. Lectures, seminars, case studies and experiments are the main methods of teaching. After: Bolden (2007: 2–5).

² This attitude results from economic and organisational fears that managers should be equipped with the right skills and knowledge that is necessary in a given organisation. That is the role of the management education. Thus, the aim of this attitude is to create “a competent manager”, who has necessary interpersonal and technical competences that are required in a given organisation. After: Bolden (2007: 2–5).

³ Its assumptions are similar to those of the academic liberalism, but more attention is paid to practical approach which results from experience in the sphere of management, rather than from epistemological practice. The main aim of this attitude is to create “a thinking practitioner”, who has the right practical skills and knowledge and an ability to adapt to and to learn from a given situation. Work group, learning through action and self-development are the main methods of teaching. After: Bolden (2007: 2–5).

⁴ As Holman emphasises, the aim of this attitude is to free managers and other organization workers from oppression and alienation. In this sense, this attitude has a lot in common with

prospective changes, as well as the needs of an organisation and a society. Empirical pedagogy promotes learning and development in a natural environment in a work place and it indicates an ability to deal with complex nature of real management practices.

In the context of the debate about the aim of education in the subject of management and leadership, one can see an evident trend, which promotes flexible and empirical initiatives, while traditional, formal programmes lose popularity. Weindling (2003) noticed that surprisingly few programmes are based on clear management theories and leadership practices. While Hirsch and Carter observe three important tensions that people who teach management have to face. First, together with modularisation of formal programmes, we deal with more and more pressure to adapt training programs and make them useful for leaders and managers on every level of an organisation. Second, the increase in the individualised education, such as coaching or 360 degree feedback, constitutes a serious challenge because of temporal reasons – more time is needed to adapt and support a specific provision. Third, together with the disappearance of traditional career structures and lifelong employment, managers get little support to plan their careers in a long-term way. Thus, it is easy to notice that there are plenty of factors that influence current scope and a dimension of management and leadership. Some of them are directly linked with the quality and the development of the management education, while others have a conceptual character and refer to assumptions, education goals, the nature of management and leadership, as well as to the relative character of the relationship between an individual and a group. Each of these issues has a high level of complexity, but without the awareness of the basic problems underlying those assumptions, it will be difficult to choose an effective attitude to the leadership development⁵, including management for leadership.

The amount of developmental and education initiatives evokes reflection about the organisational dimension of education. Gosling and Mintzberg (2004:

empirical liberalism. Though, it requires a more critical level of reflection, which enables individuals to become more reflective in the aspect of the knowledge they have and the quality of their actions, so that they could formulate practical and emancipation forms of action. Thus, the main idea of this attitude is to create “a critical practitioner”, who is able to face and develop new ways of action. The main methods of teaching are the methods that are based on critical learning through action and critical reflection. After: Bolden (2007: 2–5).

⁵ The emphasis is put here on the existing truth that you reap what you sow., giving as an example a situation that if a development and a reward system favour individual contribution, instead of the involvement of all people, then it will be difficult to create culture that encourages cooperation and common leadership. After: Bolden (2007: 2–5).

19–22) proposed seven main assumptions, which should constitute a basis for real management. Referring to the subject of the management education, the researchers pay attention to the following facts: a) the management education should be limited to practicing managers, chosen on the basis of their effectiveness; b) the management education and practice should proceed in a parallel way and they should be integrated; c) the management education should use work and life experience; d) cautious reflection is the key issue in the management education; e) the management development should bring an effect in the form of an organisation development; f) the management education should be an interactive process; g) every dimension of education should make learning easier. The implications that result from the distinguished rules are various for both sides, for those who participate in the management and leadership development and for those who create the educational offer and provide it. Special attention should be paid to the interaction between experience, theory, practice and reflection, between an individual development and an organisation development, as well as between an offer provider and a participant. You may look at the management phenomenon from a lot of perspectives. Each of them assumes a processual character. The leadership phenomenon is perceived in a similar way (leadership is not something that you learn or you can learn – it is the process of learning). The processual context allows for the existence of possibilities to create actions to manage one's own career and monitor one's career for leadership. The distinguished attitude points to a new quality of partnership between companies and management and business schools, which will enrich the discourse about the management of an organisation development on both sides. In this sense, the leadership development, especially the possibility of going back and looking again at the practice, should be a component of all the aspects of organisation functioning, thus the management of an organisation. To make sure that we get the most from the leadership development, it is advised to critically evaluate the current leadership concept and to learn from one's own organisation to think about developmental needs of, both, individuals and an organisation. It is also advisable to diagnose how developmental needs change, taking into account the temporal dynamics. It also means recognising different options and offers of development that come from various knowledge providers, as well as negotiating the adaptation of education programmes to the students' needs in order to maximise benefits of learning and to transfer the gained knowledge to one's work place. The quality of the management processes, preceding and

following activities aiming at education and development, is the preview whether newly acquired competences will be appreciated and used in practice. It is also significant to observe other systems and organisational processes, especially HR strategy. The individual perspective also requires listening to the “inner voice”, as well as the identifying and dealing with psychological barriers, which make it hard to be an effective leader. These barriers are, for example, low self-esteem, the lack of self-confidence, fear of failure or rejection, cognitive “narrowing” and the negative effects of stress. To deal with these problems, individuals need such techniques as: strengthening, psychological reconstruction and the development of social skills. It is advisable to rely on one’s strengths and to look for a way to deal with one’s weaknesses. The key to being a successful leader is not filling gaps in competences, but sustaining the strengths and the feeling of uniqueness. Gosling and Murphy (2004) talk about the importance of continuity in the process of changes. The sense of continuity of the Self, despite the passage of time, constitutes one of the most important components of a subject’s identity. There may appear transformational changes, but in most cases, a situation requires a careful approach and the use of individual and organisational, externalised skills. The emphasis is put on the importance of the meaning, role and the influence of culture and the organisational context to encourage, motivate and inspire people to work in a given profession, using an appropriate communication style to present one’s goals and values. At the subject of leadership and an organisation, one should look in a long-term way, realising its processual character. In this context, it is worth considering how different educational and developmental activities are part of the course of life and career of individuals and organisations (Bolden 2007: 9–11).

Considerations about the crystallisation of a leader’s identity prove the value of the debate about the leadership in an educational aspect. The main categories of this firmly established theory were particular stages of a leader’s identity. The process of a leader’s identity development is a process of transition through several stages of development through contact with a group, which changes the way leaders see themselves and other people. It also broadens the perspective on leadership in general. On the basis of empirical research, supporters of the developmental influences illustrate the following stages of the development of a leader’s identity: awareness, exploration (commitment), an identified leader, diversified leadership, generativity, integration (synthesis). The first stage is to notice that leaders exist. The second stage is the time of deliberate involvement, group experience and meeting obligations. This is the

stage where skills are developed, including the observation of the leadership models. On the third stage, participants realise that groups consist of leaders and followers. On this stage, one leader emerges – *the* leader and this person is now responsible for a group's results. On the fourth stage, a role of a positional leader is noticed, as a subject that puts the community together and shapes its culture. On the fifth stage, one can experience leadership activism and notice the desire to make changes. One can see interrelations, responsibility acceptance and the concern for the development of others. The last stage is the active involvement in leadership. Seeing leadership as a daily process, as a dimension of an identity of individuals who are self-confident, striving for congruence and inner integrity. Leaders understand the complexity of an organisation and they show systemic thinking. The investment in leadership, internalised as a personality trait, makes leaders exhibit cognitive flexibility and an ability to use one's own knowledge and skills in new contexts, perceiving leadership as every-day reality" (Komives et al. 2005: 605–607).

Fenton's (see: Bhamani) statement constitutes an interesting cognitive context for reflective reference to the discussed subject: "leaders are distinguished by the fact that they are different. They question assumptions and they are suspicious of tradition. They search for truth and they make decisions based on facts, not on prejudices. They prefer innovations" (Bhamani et al. 2012: 14). If we assume that the author refers only to leaders, it should be acknowledged that managers, not necessarily, seek truth and prefer innovations. It would also mean that managers stick to the tradition. *Zeitgeist* does not allow for such great simplification. Discussing conditions necessary for a manager to become an initiator of changes, Seiling (see: Brown) lists features that can be attributed to a leader. These are skills ascribed to such areas, as: "noticing a different reality, expressing things that are not said, questioning and taking huge risk to be perceived as an unrealistic person – or even an unreliable person – because of the desire to create a totally new work environment" (Brown 2006: 45–46). Thus, the complexity of conditions of leadership and management can be applied in reference to new ideas and trends indicating relational character of the constructs under discussion. The discourse about leadership and management, as well as relations between those two, makes it necessary to include multicontextual changes of the neoliberal world that make leaders face new challenges.

The wealth of theoretical attempts at a better understanding of career in leadership demonstrates the multitude of problem approaches in the analysis

of this complex phenomenon. Today's discussion of careers underscores, to a large extent, the proactive behaviours of the leader. A considerable input to the development of this perspective in the discussion of the concept of career in leaderships might be supplied by the interactive orientation. Bandura (1989) developed the concept of proactivity in career understood in this way as an element of the social learning theory (*social modelling*), conceptualised as a social cognitive theory. This tendency manifests itself in treating a career as an individual's 'property', and also in understanding a career as providing intertwined opportunities for individual and organisational development, and for effecting a change in the social environment.

Adequate and accurate self-assessment and perceptions about social facts provide a feeding ground for innovative proactivity in the individual dimension, but also in the social one, as "careers, jobs and the market are all social categories" (Bańka 2016: 35). The creation of oneself as a leader, i.e. an attractive 'market product', ought to be accompanied by proactive behaviours geared towards 'creating' (as opposed to 'being given') a job and developing one's career, while viewing it from an 'agent's perspective' (Bańka 2016: 35). This perspective coincides with Bolles's (1980) view that "you will improve your effectiveness and your sense of yourself as a person 300% if you can learn to think [...] of yourself as an *active agent* helping to mould your own present environment and your own future, rather than a passive agent, waiting for your environment to mould you" (Bell & Staw 2004: 232).

The situation where "the essence of the initiative is not merely to initiate changes, but to become involved in the process of seeing the change through, i.e. achieving the desired goal" (Bańka 2016: 9), stresses the individual's proactivity. The special feature of leadership initiative expressed in proactive behaviours is not merely being pro-development in response to environmental stimuli but undertaking activity leading to a goal, towards the leader exerting influence on themselves and having the power to change their surroundings. In this sense, the key criteria for identifying proactive leadership behaviours are anticipation, as well as planning and creating a result for the future. The concept of proactive behaviours in a career in leadership negates the perception of an individual as a relatively passive actor in social life and instead stresses the individual's agency and independence in their career. Networking, as a manifestation of proactive behaviour, is one of the key and decisive ingredients of success in a career in leadership. Proactivity as a process, with regard to initiating actions, involves a set of three activities: participation, planning and striving to have an impact (De Vos et al. 2009:

762–763). Proactivity as an individual's attitude manifests itself in processes aimed at goal achievement and endeavours, which in effect turn the individual into a manager and creator of reality rather than just a forecaster (Bańka 2007: 217).

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