THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE ROMANIAN PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

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Abstract: *The obtaining, during the last few years, of poor performances at the baccalaureate in a large number of schools in Romania has been largely the result of an inefficient management, and of the lack of leaders able to efficiently influence the behavior of their subordinates. The improvement of the performance of the Romanian pre-university education system depends on the change of the mentality of the teaching staff and the promotion of transformational school leaders able to assume change and inspire and transform the mentality of the personnel in order to realize the goals of education. In this context, the present work approaches in an interdisciplinary manner the relation between leadership and the benefits of the knowledge society and has the purpose of identifying the factors specific of the knowledge society that can contribute to the creation of a transformational leadership in the Romanian pre-university education system.*

Keywords: transformational leadership, transactional leadersip, emotional intelligence, knowledge society, pre-university education system

1. Introduction

In the knowledge society, the realization of the education ideal, consisting in the "*free, integral and harmonious development of the human individuality, the shaping of an autonomous personality, the taking on of a system of values strictly necessary for one's personal accomplishment and development, for the development of one's entrepreneurial spirit, for the development of an active citizenship in the society, for social inclusion and for the employment of the graduates on the labor market*"[1], requires a profound transformation of the Romanian education system.

The poor results obtained by the pupils at the baccalaureate exam, during the last few years, highlights a poor managerial efficiency in numerous education institutions of the pre-university system.

In this context, the present paper endeavors to answer a legitimate question: how can the Romanian pre-university education system turn into an effective and efficient system?

The answer to this question can be found in a domain gaining more and more ground in the theory and practice of Romania – leadership, *defined as "capacity of the leader to exert influence on people and groups, guiding their efforts towards the realization of the organizational goals*"[2].

2. Manager vs. leader in the education system

All the communities, collectivities and human groups - be they economic, religious, military, sportive or school-related - have a leader, a person in charge, a head playing an important role in the organization, decision, coordination and control of an activity [3].

In the knowledge society, the difference between these categories of decision-makers consists in the way they influence their subordinates, using information, in order to attain the organizational goals.

In the literature, most opinions converge towards the existence of different characteristic features of managers and leaders. A successful synthesis of the differences between a manager and a leader is presented in Table 1.

Table no. 1: Differences between a manager and a leader[4]

Manager	Leader
Administrator	Innovator
Draws tasks	Gives heart, animates
Organizes the resources to serve the goals selected in order to produce the results	Draws his strength from correct principles and values
Works according to other people's goals	Works according to his own goals
The plan is the basis of the actions	Vision is the basis of action (leaders are dominated by vision)
Relies on the system	Relies on people
Uses evidence	Uses emotions
Controls	Gives trust
Supports movement	Gives impetus to movement
Professional	Enthusiastic
Makes decisions	Turns decisions into reality
Is respected	Is adored
Rationalist	Dreamy
Skilled in realizing decisions	Flexible in realizing decisions
Skilled in stabilizing situations	Having initiative in realizing changes
Possesses empowerments resulted from his functions	Possesses power resulted from his person
Does nothing outside the legal framework, being concerned with norms and regulations, focuses on instructions.	Inclined towards experiments
Attention	Imagination
Insistent	Creator
Inclined to give advice	Not indifferent
Interested in the present; focuses on results	Visionary; focuses on ideas
Deals with assuring the necessary structures and systems to obtain results	Deals with efficacy
Prefers complexity	Prefers simplifying things
Relies on logic	Relies on intuition
Is concerned only about the organizational problems	Adopts an ampler vision, including social
Maintains	Develops
Controls	Inspires
Scrutinizes the future in the short run	Scrutinizes the future in the long run
Asks "how?" and "when?"	Asks "what?" and "why?"
Determines the state of fact	Accepts the state of fact
Does correct things	Does things correctly

Regardless of the above-mentioned differences, the organizations in the pre-university education system need both managers and leaders in order to progress. This truth results as well from an original approach of the differences between manager and leader, by C.M. Watson, who refers to the 7 S: *strategy, structure, system, style, staff, skills and shared goals*. He considers that while leaders focus mainly on: style, staff, skills, and shared goals, managers prefer: strategy, structure, system [5].

Being focused on attaining the organizational goal, the leader will prove qualities that will command respect in the eyes of his subordinates, recommending him as a remarkable person: *determined, optimistic, adaptable, principled, conscientious, determined, honest* [6].

Success depends on the leader's skillfulness in approaching the group, in conquering it, in clarifying things for it, in shaping people's discernment and availability for a proactive attitude [7].

School organizations need efficient managers and leaders, and also criteria based on which they should be selected. The seminars training individuals for leadership will highlight the importance of the role of trainer, mentor or coach, for such a person to desire self-improvement and to ceaselessly endeavor in this sense [8].

Since the leader is a model of energy, intelligence and motivation, he will also the role of facilitator, since, by his specific skills and behaviors he will also facilitate both the harmony of the group and the progress towards the desired goals [9].

Given that the national education system is a social system undertaking teaching and learning processes, transmission and assimilation of knowledge, the human resources working in this system need to be creative people, who can be more efficient in organizations led by charismatic and efficient leaders intelligently turning to good use the human potential to attain the organizational goals.

An efficient leader supposes the accomplishment, at the same time, of two roles [10]:

- *the charismatic role,* by which he formulates and communicates to his subordinates the vision and empowers the subordinates;
- *the architectural role,* by which systems, control and rewards are designed.

The leader is the possessor of a special individual force, he has the capacity of attracting and guiding the people around him, showing them respect and appreciation. The effort to realize the organizational aims goes hand in hand with his concern for the psychical welfare of his subordinates [11]

The leader's tactics will be to convince that decency, calm and cordiality serve good understanding, and the psychosocial climate is a result of the group conscience. Moral beauty needs to rhyme, and he, the leader, will be a guarantee of humanity and of the spirit of justice [12].

3. Transactional leadership and transformational leadership in the pre-university education system

According to J. Burns, leadership can be considered as a transactional or a transformational
process [13].

"Transactional leadership is primarily passive. The behaviors associated most with this type of leadership are: establishing the criteria for rewarding followers and maintaining the status quo". [14]

The transactional model presents the leader as having the task to influence the group, while being at the same time sensitive. Between the leader and his subordinates, a social - psychological exchange process takes place. Therefore, a more active role of the subordinates is highlighted in the exchange relation with the leader and, in this case, we can talk about a relation of bilateral influence. On the basis of this theory, the group will make certain propositions to the leader and will want to

impose them, but the leader will come with his personal offer of challenging skills and actions. This will create a dynamic bilateral relationship between the leader and the group and a transfer and counter-transfer of intentions will take place. Once established a unanimously accepted way to progress, the leader can guide the group towards success, the subordinates offering him appreciation and respect Attentive to any kind of obstacles, the leader will always come with a proposition, asking the group to adhere to overcoming them [15].

„Transformational leadership is a style of leadership where the leader is charged with identifying the needed change, creating a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executing the change in tandem with committed members of the group*"* [16].

The capacity of transformational leaders can be judged according to their ability of bringing added value to the organization. At their departure, the value added to the organization needs to be higher than at the moment when they were hired [17].

From the subordinates' perspective, transformational leaders are *charismatic, inspiring, benevolent and stimulating people* [18].

P.S. Nel attributes the following features to the transformational leader [19]:

- credibility, ability to support trust, conviction of acting correctly, sincerely, honestly in the relations with others;
- understanding the mission and the goals;
- ability to communicate to the others the mission of the organization;
- capacity to obtain high performances;
- capacity to inspire others;
- result-oriented;
- emotional intelligence;
- ability to participate, completely, with people at all levels;

- strength to resist the pressures that appear and faith in defending the truth;
- ability to highlight qualitative elements in others and will to set responsibilities according to these qualities;
- will to learn to adapt and to develop at the pace of changes.

"A good leader perceives the presence of what is new, discovers means of going over obstacles, is flexible and full of trust, is open toward this permanently perfectible effort. Animated by the idea of success, he is aware of the specifics of the education environment and intervenes in changing rigid mentalities, so present in the school environment" [20]. He will intervene guiding the teachers who do not manage to attract the pupils' interest for the discipline they teach, the teachers who cannot organize efficiently the training and education process, the teachers with an unbearable attitude towards mediocre and submediocre pupils.

"In school, the intellectual and moral forces of each employee are worth using in a profitable way, and the leader, as a "lucid mind and big heart" will solve them professionally. The analysis of the results on curricular areas, individual counseling or the initiation of training courses will be useful for the leader to give an impetus to the continuing education of each teacher concerned by his career" [21].

In the institutions with poor performances from the pre-university education system, it is necessary to shape transformational leaders, able to propose plans meant to change the organization radically, able to become agents of change and to adequately motivate the employees to implement these plans.

A transformational leadership, based on a high emotional intelligence [22] will facilitate teamwork, cooperation among the employees and the creation of an organizational culture oriented towards high performance.

4. Conclusions

The poor efficiency of the management in numerous pre-university education institutions, materialized in the low promotability of the pupils at the baccalaureate exam (Table 2) imposes a radical change in the way these institutions are led by means of an efficient leadership, oriented towards performance.

Table no. 2: Promotability at the baccalaureate exam (2004-2014) [23]

Year	Promotability after one session	Promotability after 2 sessions	Promotability after 3 sessions	Promotability after 4 sessions	Promotability after 5 sessions	Promotability after 6 sessions
2004	85.9%	95.3% (+9.3%)	96.5% (+1.3%)	97.0% (+0.5%)	97.2% (+0.2%)	97.3% (+0.1%)
2005	86.0%	94.9% (+9.0%)	96.3% (+1.4%)	96.9% (+0.6%)	97.2% (+0.3%)	97.5% (+0.2%)
2006	82.5%	92.5% (+10.1%)	95.0% (+2.5%)	96.2% (+1.2%)	96.5% (+0.3%)	96.8% (+0.3%)
2007	84.6%	95.1% (+10.5%)	96.4% (+1.3%)	97.2% (+0.8%)	97.5% (+0.3%)	97.8% (+0.3%)
2008	80.7%	91.9% (+11.2%)	94.6% (+2.7%)	95.9% (+1.3%)	96.0% (+0.1%)	96.1% (+0.1%)
2009	83.9%	95.7% (+11.7%)	96.2% (+0.5%)	96.5% (+0.3%)	96.6% (+0.1%)	96.6% (+0.0%)
2010	71.8%	81.2% (+9.4%)	82.8% (+1.6%)	83.5% (+0.7%)	83.9% (+0.3%)	84.1% (+0.3%)
2011	50.4%	59.3% (+8.9%)	62.6% (+3.4%)	64.8% (+2.2%)	66.2% (+1.4%)	66.8% (+0.6%)
2012	51.5%	61.9% (+10.4%)	66.9% (+5.0%)	66.9% (+0.0%)	68.6% (+1.7%)	
2013	63.1%	70.0% (+6.8%)	72.4% (+2.4%)			
2014	69.1%					

The reasons why poor results were obtained by the pupils at the baccalaureate exam can be multiple:
- diminished motivation for learning among the young in the context of a society in which there is no clear hierarchy of values;
- reduced possibility of infringing the rules during the exam through the introduction, in the exam rooms, of video surveillance systems;
- low motivation levels among the teaching staff;
- material difficulties of the young caused by the low standard of living;
- underfunding of the national education system;
- frequent changes of the regulations in the education system;
- precarious state of the education-related infrastructure in many rural localities;
- the practice, in numerous education institutions, of a transactional, inefficient management.

Under these circumstances, transformational leadership represents a solution for an intelligent and efficient development of the Romanian pre-university education system.

It is only by means of a transfor-mational

leadership that the inefficient education institutions of the pre-university education will be able to assume plans of change, whose implementation shall contribute to the efficient transformation of the educational processes and of the mentality of both the teachers and the pupils.

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