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**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP –
POWER SOURCES IN ORGANIZATIONS**

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Abstract

Studies on leadership, as a social phenomenon abound, their evolution is largely progressive one, from relatively simple theories centered on certain characteristics of the leader, to complex theories that try to incorporate as many explanatory factors of the phenomenon as possible. This article will try to present the connection between leadership and organizational culture. It can be shown that organizational culture helps clarify many phenomena that occur in organizations and that culture can act as brake or as an incentive for the organizational effectiveness, as well as the fact that leadership plays a leading role in the formation and development of organizational culture.

Key words: leadership, organization, culture, effectiveness, power, objectives.

1. Introduction

Culture is the strength of the organization, it is the engine, the force that drives the activity in order to accomplish the mission and reach the objectives. Every organization has, more or less consciously, built its own force which should be activated by those in positions of leadership. Powerful organizations, namely those that manage to achieve positive and lasting results over time, are able to recognize and use the energy. The first actor of this process is the leader, the person who runs and manages the organization and he is the reference point in the organizational structure. Taking these into account we can say that, leadership is the ability to read, interpret and operationalize organizational culture in order to drive the organization towards knowing its identity and force and to use it to attain its objectives [1].

The organizational culture is crucial when it comes to the power of leadership. Each organization creates and develops different types of behaviors, rules, values and ideals based on certain factors. The culture of an organization depends on the economic, social, cultural and religious environment, some cultures are conducive to the emergence and development of people having leadership potential and they allow changes when necessary. Others are more reactive to leadership and leaders have to make great efforts to find a group of followers. An organizational culture which allows the leadership to manifest itself effectively allows the people to develop, offers freedom of movement and recognizes individuality. The development of such a culture is extremely difficult and cannot be accomplished in a short time. Leadership and organizational culture are processes which form each other and give each other consistency and value.

Sometimes, organizational culture can be an obstacle for change. Some organizational cultures are open to taking risks, look for and encourage the development of people with leadership potential, they encourage adaptive change. Other cultures are not,

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and the difference in crisis adaptability can be huge. In the first case, adaptive changes may facilitate the way for major changes, in the second case, a crisis can have a fatal impact on the organization.

2. Leadership – a change factor.

The essential function of leadership (leaders) is to run the organization, to plan the activities so as to obtain performance. In order to perform effective leadership, an analysis of the existing situation appears to be necessary then, the direction will be set, but this is a different process from that of planning.

Planning is a deductible process which starts from an attainable goal and builds things from the premise towards the result. Depending on the desired result there are set deadlines and the necessary resources along a reversed time line.

Leadership is an inductive process, it starts from a state of things, a state which is analyzed and then, step by step, the vision and the direction are created. A vision can be good or bad until tests of significance and feasibility are made but what is essential is that people can be guided by it. The significance must be adaptable to each person's vision of the future. The feasibility is the result of the strategy which establishes the steps that are necessary to be taken towards the fulfillment of the vision. A vision that is not consistent with the expectations and needs of the group becomes inapplicable and insisting on its promulgation will turn into a disaster. In conclusion, the visions and the strategies which are applicable tend to be dynamic and to produce effects.

2.1 Theories of Leadership

According to Carl E. Latrin and to Allen K Settle, there are four types of approaches when dealing with leadership [2].

- "The features approach" – it is among the first forms of study of the phenomenon and it is based on a relatively simple idea: certain traits or qualities are essential for occupying a leadership position and for determining the performance; also, they distinguish successful leaders from other people. This approach was characteristic to the years 1940-1950, when there was developed a whole theory about inborn traits that should characterize a leader. Since the researchers failed to identify the common characteristics that define the successful leaders they moved to a different approach: the behavioral approach to leadership;
- "The behavioral approach to leadership". This approach is based on the study of the behavior of leaders and of its implications upon the performance of the group (the degree of accomplishment of the objectives). Thus, between 1950-1970 there were conducted numerous studies on the behavior of leaders and its effect on the group. The studies showed that there was no behaviour effective for all situations and thus it was developed a third approach to management: situational approach to leadership;
- "Situational approach to leadership". Compared to the previous approach, this approach considers that a leader must choose their behavior according to situational issues existing at a certain moment;
- "Transformational leadership". This approach (which is the most recent) supports changes in society and proposes that the effectiveness of leaders should be measured according to the degree (low or high) to which they meet the needs and expectations of people they lead (subordinates).

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As it can be seen from the presentation above, the emergence of new approaches is due to the shortcomings identified in the previous ones. This does not mean that the first approaches were abandoned. Even today, it is believed that the leader must have certain inborn characteristics.

Generally, the theories which explain how leadership appears are divided into two categories:

- those which argue that leaders' success is based on their inborn qualities;
- those which argue that success is based on leadership skills that can be learned.

In 1990 Bass tried to explain the development of leaders through three theories:

- Inborn features theory - some people are born to be leaders, and those who do not have these qualities cannot become leaders;
- The great event theory - A crisis or some unusual event reveals a person's leadership qualities, qualities that have not been known or identified before;
- Transformational leadership theory - This theory argues that people can become leaders if they want. In other words, the specific qualities and skills of successful leaders can be learned [3].

We can say that the leader's qualities make the changes. The leader communicates, and does whatever it takes to make the people see a vision and convince them to do things. A leader influences the followers and transforms them through his qualities and behavior.

2.2 Managing organizational culture

Whether or not cultures can be managed reflects mainly a modernist concern which caused a fiery debate among theorists. For those who think that it is possible to manage and manipulate culture, the cultural theory opens new perspectives for the possibility to exercise influence and control in organizations. If we assume that culture influences behavior by the norms and values, then it should be possible to manage the organizational norms and values to achieve some desired behaviors and results. This type of control might be carried out, for example, through recruitment and employment practices in order to find the people who are compatible with these values [4].

Those who reject this idea argue that, since the norms and values are based on deeply rooted arguments and indisputable beliefs the possibilities to manage and manipulate culture are more limited.

The conclusion of this debate can be that leaders are the individuals with the greatest influence on organizational culture. Once they are well regarded by the members of the organization and the power structure favours them, their behavior becomes an example for others, their subordinates will follow them and will copy their behaviour thus influencing the results of their work and subsequently the performance of the organization (figure 1). However, we must distinguish between the opportunity to exert influence and the actual exercise.

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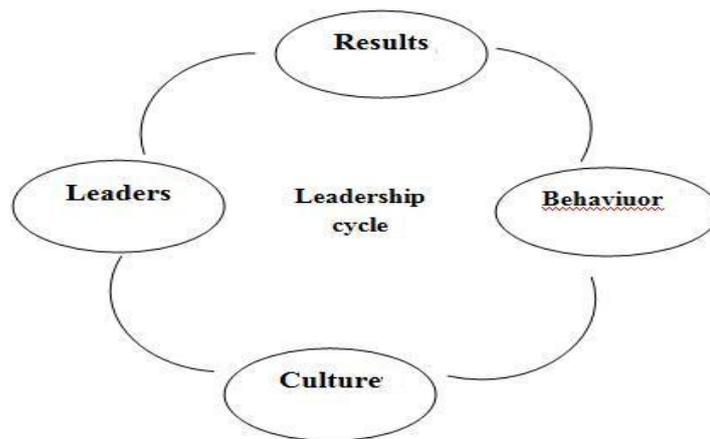


Fig. 1 Leadership cycle

3. Conclusion

It can be concluded that managers can become a powerful symbol of organizations and the drive towards performance. They are a symbol because their employees, as well as other people from outside their organization, associate them with the organization, but it is their influence and power which will lead the organization toward performance. We must admit however, that the symbolic power of managers and significance is dependent on the interpretations of other members of the culture, so, if the leaders want to be successful they have to adapt to the schemes underlying the symbolic interpretation within the organizational culture.

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