

Theoretical and Applicable Aspects for Conceptual Analysis of Leadership

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Abstract

The main research task in the present article is focused at justifying the need of a unique leadership theory. Analysis is made of conditions for justifying a unified theory of leadership. Approaches are tracked, outlining both the dimensions of interdisciplinary, integrationists perspectives and “open” paradigm for the study of leadership, but also its varieties, specifications, projections and trends in management, economic and political spheres of society. The article presents the multi aspects, the complexity of the integration of external and internal factors discussed under the issue, but also the possibility of combining new models and theories of leadership. The dimensions of global leadership are placed in the context of emerging challenges in the modern world.

Keywords: unified theory, leadership, leading paradigm, a new integrated model, dimensions, global leadership

1. Introduction

Numerous publications, definitions and approaches to the study of leadership suggest not only the complex and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon, but also the need to seek the intersections of different concepts and paradigms outlining leading trends in the theoretical and empirical worked out, including gained historical, organizational and managerial experience of this, perhaps, the most beautiful, dynamic, publicly visible, but often invisible, dramatic – as existential, transforming personal experience – form of human activity. Causing constant amazement of the built, a priori, entirely positive and even altruistic connotations for some over-norm, above-standard human dimension bearing romantic and charismatic alchemy of personal characteristics, emitting a clear vision and will for the launch of innovative ideas or making cardinal and key decisions. But also having an irresistible influence on mass consciousness, forming followers and associates in their implementation.

In this process of “becoming”, construction and operation of leadership, personal, behavioral, situational and social phenomena are intertwined that occur in various small or larger groups of society. On the one hand, its legitimacy may have the nature of spontaneous approval, but may be carried out through the mechanisms of power, its variants and specific requirements. The latter, in turn, have their own object of analysis, leading concepts and categories that explore leadership in a relatively independent aspect, direction or separately differentiated, constructed model of study.

Therefore, it is necessary that the parameters of a single theory of leadership reflect the projections from various fields and aspects of analysis, integrate relevant knowledge from used classic, traditional approaches to the study of the problems, but also modern interpretations of adequate and precise application. Both in terms of research tools and for its consideration as a process of successive steps and effective conditions for its formation in real-life environment. The structural logic of the present article is subject to this main task. First of all, the article is to outline the theoretical frame, to organize and classify the leading ideas of the researched issues, but apart from that the article shall present comparative analysis of the already formed scientific paradigms for leadership. Further, on this ground, there shall be noted the research niches, their possible interdisciplinary and integral projections, the significant factors and the challenges they face by using the already approved model and the already established patterns of G. Bennis & Robert J. Thomas (2002) research. Third, there shall be discussed the theoretical and applicable aspects of the researched events under the theoretical scope and the pluralism among the different social sciences for leadership.

On one hand, as well as under the different leadership application getting us near its nature and purpose. The latter have significant importance for revealing the mechanisms of influence in the government, the leadership priorities in the business, the impact on management, organizational behavior and politics reflecting also the global leadership parameters.

Theoretical frame, literature sources and research perspectives

The **first** component of this unity is linked to the demand of relations with the various sciences that are considered “committed” to leadership such as *management, psychology, anthropology, political science*, etc. that put dominants and shapes their priority focus for research in the following sequence:

- **Leadership and personality characteristics:** specific creative skills and sets of qualities that can vary depending on the situation, the level of control, performed activities, tasks or roles;
- **Leadership and power relations:** position and status in the organization, large or small communities; interactions “subject – followers”, “formal – informal” in which power can reinforce leadership, but it may not carrying such recognition;
- **Leadership as behavioral and social phenomenon:** processes of influence in groups, organizations and communities that have different mechanisms of identification in achieving objectives, level of togetherness, attitudes, normative behavior, but also application of specific perceptual schemes for making solutions, systems for motivation and communication.

The **second** component reflects formed relevant scientific paradigms for analysis of this personal, behavioral, situational and social phenomenon. The literature review made includes famous classical authors and contemporary researcher of the issues concerned and the resume in the comparable classification is made in five directions (scientific paradigms). On this ground there are also proposed the possible research perspectives which develop and “open” the respective paradigms for productive and integrated analysis and effective impact on the leadership behavior. - See Table 1:

Table 1: Comparative analysis of the dominant scientific paradigms for leadership

| Leading paradigms and researchers | Concept essence | Interdisciplinary dimensions (perspectives) |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Personalistic paradigm</i> (Hogan, 1994; Stogdill, 1974; R. Cattell,1973; Eysenck, 1976; Myers, 1990; Judge, 2002; Lord, 2001;Hogg,2001;Foti, Miner,2003; Kouzes, Posner, 2002, et al.) | Differentiation by sets of attributes - persistent or permanent innate personal characteristics; the so-called theory of traits describing the personal determination of leadership | Correlations of the traits of successful leadership in the context of situations, expectations and summarized constructs – emotional and social intelligence, perceptual – cognitive schemes; deployment of cross-cultural research |
| <i>Transactional paradigm</i> (Homans, 1961;Hollander,1992, et al.) | Relationships and interactions between leaders and followers are regarded as a kind of exchange of ideas, values or confidence; it functions as a special kind of rationale, deal or agreement | The exchange can be used as an indicator and stimulus for innovation expanse of leadership bearing mutually beneficial, but also mutual enrichment of the two parties: opportunities for equivalence contribution, growth and development |
| <i>Transformational paradigm</i> (Bass,1998; Gardner, Avolio, 1998, et al.) | The process of transformations and changes of existing personal, organizational and management structures; building conditions and motivation for the formation of new qualities, abilities, attitudes and skills | Patterns of behaviour, training and organizational culture – focused on changes and transformations – be linked with conscious contribution to the human capital of the group, organization and community |
| <i>Charismatic paradigm</i> (Kanungo, Conger, 1992; House, Baetz, 1979; Moscovici, S., Le Bon, G., Gibson, 1999; G. Yukl,1999, et al.) | Presence of capabilities for an impressive vision, interpretations for prospective mission; sets of personal, behavioural and situational components bearing expressive influence style, but also impression management skill | Indicators of charisma should account for: attributive processes between leaders and followers; relationships with narcissism, social orientation and manipulative behaviour; psychology of the masses, the crowd, their cultural specificity and dimensions |
| <i>Clinical (psychoanalytical) paradigm</i> (Freud,1946;Fromm, 1951, Manfred Kets de Vries,2001 et al.) | Inner experiences and their impact on leadership and management styles - with interpretations of psychoanalysis, where the irrational has its context: compensation of psychological discomfort, guilt syndromes of the past, but with the transfer of projections for hypertrophy in power and organizations | Leadership behaviour should be considered in overall introspective-applied context: as a reflexive action with protective effects, cognitive illusions, but also as an opportunity to reconstruct the viewpoint and the situation – with options for applying positive approaches and solutions |

The **third** component is in the field of theoretical and applied analysis, which seeks to “transfer” ideas and approaches (interdisciplinary and integrated projections) between demarcated varieties of leadership, shaped by studies in practice and described in the literature:

- **Organizational and business leadership**– justifying systems and components bearing the characteristics of specific technical, conceptual, interpersonal, communication and administrative skills, reflecting group dynamics and corporate cultural context;
- **Economic Leadership**– outlining trends and leading priorities in economic development, institutional frameworks and economic privileges formed between the iron law of oligarchy, monopolies, elites and approaches, launching the general basis for the development of talent in human communities; marking also leading innovative models to stimulate the complete human expression.
- **Political leadership**– systematizes and focuses primarily regularities and research dimensions associated with: image building, “impression management” phenomenon, need for power, party spirit and ideology, electoral behavior and psychology of crowds, masses, social movements, parameters of cultural-historical evolution (or specific “social order of the age”).

The **fourth** component is based on the changes in trends and their implications for concepts and practical perception of leadership in today's globalized world requiring not only global (political, economic, organizational, corporate, business) leaders, but global civil leadership. Here, new ideas and challenges are in respect of:

- Globalization, as a sense of chaos and uncertainty, which puts constant issues related to “losing” the requirement of loyalty and allegiance to the same organization, profession and workplace, but also with illusions of complete, systematic and consistent employment giving the stability of previous generations;
- Global leadership should constantly present vision for the future to serve the public good – economic, technological, political, social and aesthetic organization of society;
- Leaders should have the skills and implement tools for tactical and strategic impacts maintain internal and external networks of influence, but associated with systemic thinking for pooling structures and ideas in arranged integrity;
- Leaders shall use not only intellectual but also social capital of the organization, the nation and the community*, avoiding all forms of concentration of power and apply the art of empowerment, authorization, giving rise to a burst of energy and commitment for innovative ideas and contribution to the common cause ;
- Leaders shall guide optimally the global labor force to market by effectively managing cultural differences, but overcoming with arguments and real actions incumbent historical stereotypes, prejudices or traditional but outdated ideologies.

Proposition 1: The integration of external and internal factors in the analysis results in constructing and grounding of new ideas, models and theories for leadership.

Based on the results of 43 interviews with leaders of different ages (from 21 to 93 years) – acting through different historical periods, Warren G. Bennis & Robert J. Thomas (2002, p. 2-21) offer a new dynamic model and new theory of multi-factorial nature leadership, highlighting the following objective laws:

1. Leadership is not only a process of “becoming”–building and formation of certain qualities (significantly broader analysis is presented in the literature about leadership), but constantly accumulating experience, which is reflected and transformed into a new quality: considered as a new reference terms of rationalization of the “line” of life and its challenges;
2. Leadership in the way of change “tolerates” a chain of reactions that depend on: a) the footprint of a particular historical period, “producing” the relevant profile, requirements and functions of the leaders and their role in it; b) but also from the unique network of events, obstacles and challenges that they will encounter, experience and overcome.

* In its comprehensiveness this “human - social capital” relation, as a concept of the meaning and possible index for personal, organizational and social development, but also an integrated methodology of possible visions of the future, was placed for consideration at the Scientific and Practical Conference “*The Human Capital - Methodology, Dimensions and Practices (Education - Management - Business)*“, (2015) New Bulgarian University.

3. Leadership in this process of change is associated with intense quality personal growth since the necessary leadership characteristics, which are formed and evolve constantly, are seen not only as an indicator of respective personal success, but also as an integral component of the overall human development;
4. In the complex spiral of quality development, it is impressive the distinctive difference between leaders and non-leaders, which consists of: the ability of leaders to transform even the negative in life, by absorbing it in the form of accumulated experience, learning and development opportunities, but also using their broad and sustained record of: adaptive capacity (way, approach and a good understanding of the facts of life); special focus for optimal positive setting preparing individuals for future success; specific scanning or “grasping context” – the ability to accurately assess the “weight” of ongoing events and objective factors.

Proposition 2: The footprint of the age, mission and history command defines the leading characteristics, features and tendencies of the leadership priorities.

Different historical transitions determine the specific impact on the dominant leadership priorities. In one way, economic and social trends taken shape in the Era of Limits have their influence: the development of major industries and dependencies of a clear organizational structure and the impact on the organizational life dynamics with stress role and importance of the so-called organizational person; hierarchical management requirements and the rules of interaction – obedience – performance and hence loyal following of career, devotion to the same profession, etc.

These features enhance the rigid parameters outlining the “halo” of organizational leaders, despite those restrictions. And in quite another way, the Era of Options – a mix of opportunities, alternatives and choices, but without a clear direction and not necessarily a requirement for loyalty as a basic system value. This, in turn, seemed to make the concept of leadership irrelevant, since permanent technological changes, exponentially growing digitalism and visualization of relationships, change in fundamental ways learning approaches, the accumulation of knowledge and experience – here, every advantage is relative, and career development is characterized by continuous and constant process of adaptation in time.

These are real prerequisites for formulating and outputting findings, marking the end of “heroic leadership”, standing as if in a remote area, surrounded by the magic of exclusivity, grandeur and severity of their historical functions and purpose. Everything is blurred from fast flowing information that did not seem to feel the need for coherence with the logic of the accumulated knowledge because knowledge flows freely from Internet and different scientific paradigms are looking not only for synthesis, openness, but also vitality, brightness of self-attracting unusual pulsations of crosses and insights.

On the other hand, the constant change of images, leadership and requirements to them turns raised icons or idols in temporary phenomenon, and modernity, in adopting the new, associates more with the ruling empiric of the modern world, the facts of the current reality, which requires first to act, then the person to learn and adapt. Other forms of creativity are coming in the foreground, reflecting the broad base of intelligence (not so certain features or sets of individual factors), which helps a lot more the personality in overcoming crisis situations in the heavier or more light trials in its life – an integrated, complex and comprehensive process of transformation and catharsis, called by the authors “crucible”.

It is in their rethinking that man reaches new levels of competence, which in turn prepares him/her for the next challenges in life. In this extraordinary process of transformation, leaders are actually “supplied” with new tools and skills. Understanding, very different from the old concepts of leadership that were emphasizing the importance and benefits of individual factors, as they were often persuading us that leaders are born, not created, formed or constructed. Or the availability of best genetic predispositions and favorable socio-economic conditions are not enough necessary conditions for the establishment of a leader.

Rather, his ability to adapt and transform the experience, sense and meaning in situations of crisis, key events, historical changes and circumstances are the leading determinants of successful leadership. As noted in some of the latest research findings: “the people who aged most successfully had great adaptive capacity, continued to learn new things, and looked forward, with eagerness and optimism, rather than dwelling on the past”. (Vaillant, 2002)

Proposition 3: Tracking the leadership alchemy is getting us closer to finding universal dimensions of the leadership nature and global purpose.

In this kind of incubator of thoughtful experience, from which is derived the essence of wisdom accumulated in efforts to constantly search for unconventional solutions, personal growth is stimulated. People who went through this process began to look to the past as “ballast and teacher” and to the world in a new light that is changing before their eyes, but also “the exact moment, when my life changed”. It is here that the new identification is received in which values are weighted and abilities are checked, enhanced, modified, by placing them in the right place as they deeply believe that “everyone has their own wall to climb”.

The need for understanding the broader context of information (global, national, institutional), which on the other side flows directly, alive and expressive, suggesting permanently functioning communication skill (so called obsessive communication), but also the ability to logically distinguish different emotional tones in terms of followers. They are also in the main constituents of the mobilizing power of leadership, since “the essence of leadership is mobilizing people to achieve great things”, but in understanding of its creative nature expressed in this thought, the equivalent of law: Effective leaders don’t just impose their vision on others; they recruit others to a shared vision.

This energy is driven by the personal integrity of the following triad: ambition – competence – moral compass, in which any underestimating or ignoring any of these components will always give “side effects” of inefficiency. But as the authors note, what is important is not only the construction of a scheme of real, vital indicators, but also their global purpose and functioning: “Once we identified these essential leadership qualities, we realized that are qualities of leaders in every culture and context”. (Bennis, Thomas, 2002, 122) On the other hand, its integration with social interaction, social welfare and forms of civic leadership should carry us in its present and future use.

Where investments for the development of human capital in an organization, community or nation will reflect the single transformational learning and creativity, not forgetting the other important strategy – the ability of a person to learn from the experience of previous generations. But even with total acceptance, alchemy of leadership involving the accumulation of experience in action, but in conditions of challenges and constant rotations, forming leadership empathy – the ability to communicate at all levels with a wide range of opportunities to influence others, to understand, persuade and reconstruct dissents.

Discussion

In the scientific literature, when analyzing some or other problems and challenges that the world today is facing, very often, leadership researchers seem to be obsessed with their systematization, classification, form of arrangement of facts, research and trends, but in most cases they are deprived not only by their consistent follow-up for related and essential causality, but also concepts for leadership vision with proposals for reasoned and possible solutions. The successful realization of the above perspectives depends on overcoming some theoretical limitations and difficulties in their practical implementation.

Theoretical Limitations and Thoughts for Future Research

The above are connected by the multifaceted nature of the theoretical analysis, the available and many-sided use of the methodological instruments that are not burdened by the paradigm frame of the respective scientific discipline and the wider application of the interdisciplinary approaches to teaching, mastering and formation of local, global leaders.

Each of applied political matrices or functioning economic models have their own logic in the proposed system of tools and approaches, but almost always they have a one-sided effects and often unaccounted projections at the time, since it is difficult for them to cover global, complex nature of ongoing events in the modern world. This can be observed in the annual reports on Human Future under Millennium Project, which attempt to measure the indices of the state of our future development by offering variants of a system of collective intelligence in solving these 15 global challenges: 1) Sustainable development and climate change; 2) Clean water; 3) Population and Resources; 4) Democratization; 5) Globalni projections and policies; 6) Global convergence of information technology; 7) The gap between rich and poor; 8) Health problems; 9) Education; 10) Peace and Conflict; 11) Status of Women; 12) Transnational organized crime; 13) Energy; 14) Science and Technology; 15) Global Ethics. (Glenn, Gordon & Florescu, 2014).

But at the same time that scientific precision in deducing the “chain” of issues is likely to avoid indicating and justifying priority beginning, looking for cause and effect of the avalanche accumulation, understanding the nature of the occurrence of one or another phenomenon.

Only indication of the links may be useful in their analysis in a formal system of ranking, but not in their prognostic practical solution. Therefore, reserving the last 15th place for the global ethics issues suggests a total misunderstanding of the contemporary context in the development of human societies. While they should be leading in this ever more complicated, open and dynamic world of human interactions. And are further evidence of the need of scale of values (priorities), subject to human nature, its capacity for cohesion in community, rather than successive substitutes, sets of objective factors or personality dimensions enclosed in a matrix arranged structures.

Thus embedding the *global ethics*, supporting the values link with humanity – beyond the limits of national, regional and local, but also “producing” models for transnational cooperation, is important prerequisite for multiplier effects for solving the other components of the so formed system of 15 global challenges. Therefore, the construction of a unified theory of leadership should take into account all aspects of reflection, particularities of its different varieties: political, economic, business or organization by examining also their cross-cultural specifics.

But along with that it should be followed the mandatory requirement bearing almost imperative nature, but evolutionary, naturally adopted basic rules of global ethics: 1) to reach the “nature of things” not to exhaust our agenda with the label “radical reform” only – combination of words most used in our time, but in most cases, trumpeted to conceal the status quo for the eternal fight with ... but not to eradication, overcoming emerging challenges: processes that are to convert to cause, public will and debt for current leaders; 2) embed and develop radical honesty in relation to ourselves and others, shaking the meaning of our human purpose; live with a core of truth, not its imitators – external and hypocritical expressions alienating us more and more from what is actually needed to solve our problems.

Practical Understanding of the Leadership Efficiency Multifaceted Dependency

Both knowing the interdisciplinary dimensions and perspectives, stated by the comparable analysis of the classical paradigms and the whole diversity of contemporary research implemented seeking are important, for example, effective relations: among sets of qualities – physical/ psychological distance or for the moderating role of the transformational leadership in terms of the mobile work practices (Brunelle,2013); for the varieties of power and their multi-directional impact on people in organizations where „the Right Power for the Right Organization” is looked for (Goncalves,2013). But currently we are facing also the need of having “bridges” between the reflexive thinking – an important requirement for the operative and actual situational behavior of leaders as well as their strategic, global thinking.

This important multi-factor dependency presents the subjective and objective prerequisites which reflect, trigger and launch management decisions concerning the nature and actual cause of a number of events and key questions in our world, such as: Which are the determinant and leading indicators for the currently arisen inequalities and asymmetries – to what extent they stem from populism of the economic, political, organizational and business leaders; on the other hand – to what extent they are dependent on the limited institutions and bad practices; and third, are they strongly defined by the undigested basic cultural values, mentality and social attitudes of the masses?

There is one more dependency and a key question: To what extent relying on the macroeconomic indicators, statistical and quantitative analyses reporting leadership success even with “one tenth” of GDP should be related also to the Human Development Index, the standard and quality of life, the maximum deployment and respect of human rights, etc.?

In this aspect, global leadership does not mean hegemony and power of coercion, but power of: a) global citizens (who have prerequisites to become such, when all their rights are respected, not just camouflage, selectively chosen, according to leading political doctrine or economic model); b) power not for the sake of the people, but carried out by people when parties (P) launch ideas, but they are settled through consensus; c) a conscious movement to dreamed community – its vertical and horizontal integration is carried out by global leaders who use their individual potential (individual good), but it is completely subordinate to collective good (actions and evolutionary expanding cohesion of institutional and civil preconditions, something like inverted, open pyramid, to use the famous scheme described by Maslow). See Figure 1 “Valuing power and global leadership – possible parameters for theoretical and practical concept”

Conclusion

The parameters analyzed in the article and marking the outlines of a unified leadership theory prompt the necessity of overcoming the modern conformism of the different scientific disciplines and of looking for their intersections in the pluralism of the diverse knowledge of the researched phenomenon. This is also the challenge that is yet to reveal its heuristic capabilities in relation to the theory and practice of modern leadership. This is also the desire stated in the international student plea for pluralism in economics, management and other social sciences.

This means that behind the terms, facts, data there should be not only the context (sociological, political, psychological, historical, etc.) but also their interrelation, the reasons for one or another event, the launched model, strategy or behavior. On the other hand, the diagnostics accuracy is not enough if no consequences of the undertaken strategies are taken into account. As well as the complexity of the transformational role in defending the leadership vision for commitment to alternatives, in case this is required in the specific situation, economic, political and institutional decisions for effective management interventions.

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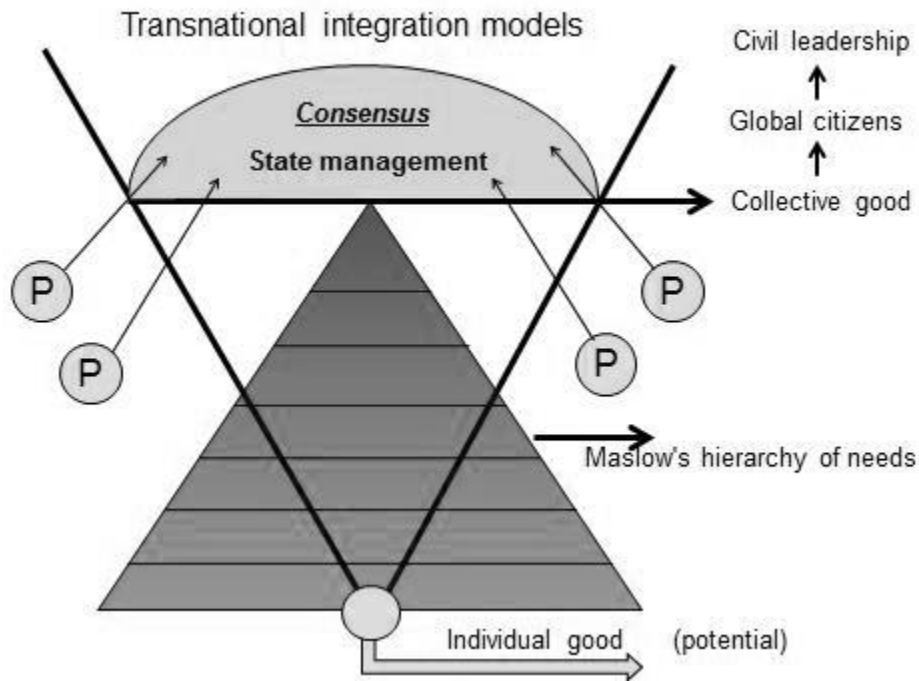


Figure 1: Valuing power and global leadership – possible parameters for theoretical and practical concept