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RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP: DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE AMBIENCES

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Abstract

The relational approach assumes that leadership arises from the interrelation of different dimensions - beyond those unidirectional ones between leader-follower - that, besides the individual level, also include the organizational and societal ones. Within such a context, the purpose of this essay, which articulates different fields of knowledge, disciplines and epistemological bases, articulating them from an anthropophagic - or bricoleur (Lévi-Strauss, 1989) method - lies in proposing a device to develop and exercise relational leadership in creation and innovation organizational contexts: the "Relational Leadership Development Spiral" involves the Socialization-Externalization-Combination-Internalization schema developed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997), and the four speeches formulated by Lacan (2008) within the context of psychoanalysis.

Introduction

The relational leadership approach presupposes that leadership arises from the interrelation of different dimensions - besides those unidirectional ones between leader-follower - encompassing not only individual levels but also organizational and societal ones (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Gittel, 2011; Sant'Anna, Nelson, Carvalho Neto, 2015). Thus, it focuses on the complex interactions underlying the dynamics of influence and change at different spheres and levels. According to Uhl-Bien (2006), relational processes make up the core issue that guides her investigations, in which leadership emerges and is exercised.

Therefore, unlike approaches aiming at researching traits, individual attributes or effective leadership behaviors, mostly centered on the individual or, at most, on the leader-follower dyad, relational leadership emphasizes relationships through which leadership is built on, activated, exercised and reconfigured. The relational perspective also aims to overcome leadership notions that are excessively linked to developing the skills required of the occupants of managerial positions, thus validating the importance of gaining a broader understanding of leadership as a phenomenon that permeates the universe of human relations, as well as of different actors and not only those included in the hierarchical structures of organizations (Ospina, Kersh, Quick, 2014). Another feature of relational leadership is its appreciation of the context dimension, both of the macro context and of the organizational and micro physical environments where it takes place. At the same time, it is guided towards building and supporting enabling multi-level contexts within which new leadership styles are required due to new macro environmental and

organizational settings that are increasingly relational: networked organizations, virtual organizations, local productive arrangements, and others.

Despite its potential contributions, relational leadership is a relatively recent theme. Thus, its meaning and implications are still open to different interpretations (Uhl-Bien, 2006). A recent review of international and national production on the topic (Sant'Anna, 2015) corroborates the low volume of works aimed at its research studies, while highlighting studies carried out by Uhl-Bien (2003; 2006), Day and Harrison (2007), Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011), Gittel (2011), Ospina, Kersh and Quick (2014) and, in Brazil, Sant'Anna, Nelson, Carvalho Neto (2015).

According to Gittel (2011), however, two elements are common to the approaches that surround the theme: 1. the notion of decentralized and collective leadership; 2. the notion of leadership that is not linked to hierarchical positions. Furthermore, in terms of its development, they emphasize: 1. the exercise of an intuitive mind that can understand the complex and natural forces that influence the construction of collective meanings; 2. the analytical thinking ability needed to understand complex situations and problems; 3. the skill to integrate uncertainty into the environment.

It is within the current context, which is remarkable for demanding new styles of leadership that are capable of more effective responses to building creation and innovation organizational environments, that the proposal of this essay emerges, which, based on the articulation of different bodies of knowledge, epistemological bases, disciplines and authors, whether directly related to the relational leadership construct (Uhl-Bien, 2003; 2006; Day & Harrison, 2007; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Gittel, 2011; Ospina, Kersh, Quick, 2014; Sant'Anna, Nelson, Carvalho Neto, 2015), or to notions such as femininity, transfer, symptom and fantasy, contributed by psychoanalysis (André, 2001; Miller, 2002; Lacan, 2008), or even to studies on knowledge management (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997), consists of proposing a device to develop and exercise relational leadership within creation and innovation organizational contexts.

Leadership in creation and innovation contexts

At the organizational level, it seems intuitive to articulate relational leadership and the promotion of devices targeted towards building organizational environments that will fit the demands of the current competitiveness standard, which is based on flexibility and innovation, such as those forged around the notions of Enabling Context or Ba, as elaborated by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997). According to these authors, human knowledge is created and expanded by means of social interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Furthermore, individuals learn when involved in everyday activities that require interaction with others and with the outside environment. Hence they call attention to the importance of shared learning, at a collective level, highlighting the importance of the group in this process.

Based on the Enabling Context or Ba device, the authors propose the construction of loci that adhere more closely to the demands for knowledge creation within an organizational environment that promotes the initiatives needed for the flow of tacit knowledge. According to Von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka (2001), the enabling context is a shared space that works as a basis for the creation of knowledge and is characterized by a network of interactions. "Ba" integrates the physical, human and virtual spaces involved in knowledge creation. According to these authors, promoting an enabling context implies, therefore, in creating conditions that will make the environment more encouraging as regards promoting creative knowledge and innovation activities. From such a perspective, organizations can be understood as loci that integrate relations among people who mobilize knowledge, one of their functions being the management

of this intangible fundamental resource. This implies, among other factors, in a demand for specific creation, application sharing, and, sometimes, external knowledge transfer Back to TOC 51 processes, this capacity being a key factor to create value and obtain competitive advantage (Bresman, Birkinshaw, Nobel, 1999; Grant, 1996; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997).

Beyond the classic management sphere, there is also demand for leadership relations that can attract, develop and retain the human talents the device requires, as well as to deal with the personal and subjective nature of tacit knowledge. After all, for it to become collective there must be a culture of innovation that encourages the interaction and the carrying out of observation, practice and collective learning activities (Kogut & Zander, 1992; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997). Given its characteristics, it is possible to infer about the difficulties of articulating tacit knowledge, given its status as a captive and valuable asset and, therefore, an important source of value creation and competitiveness (Grant, 1996; Kogut & Zander, 1992; Szulanski, 1996). Thus, it becomes a relevant matter to understand the dynamics through which an organization will create, maintain and exploit this resource.

According to Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000), knowledge creation consists of a spiral that develops from these three elements, thus making it possible to overcome old routines through the acquisition of a new context, a new vision of the world, and new knowledge. In general, it is by using existing knowledge assets that an organization creates new knowledge through the process of converting the tacit and explicit knowledge that occurs in Ba, where new knowledge, once created, will become the basis for a new spiral of knowledge creation (Nonaka, Toyama, Konno, 2000; Nonaka, Krogh, Voelpel, 2006). Knowledge is created through interactions among individuals or between individuals and their environment, occurring at different organizational levels and even beyond the borders of a company. An individual (micro-level) influences and is influenced by the environment (macro level) with which he interacts (Nonaka, Toyama, Konno, 2000). In organizations, many vital processes of innovation, change and renewal can be analyzed through the lens of the conversion of tacit knowledge into explicit one (Nonaka, Krogh, Voelpel, 2006).

As regards the process to convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, the authors assume that knowledge is created and expands through the interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge, based on four modes of conversion: Socialization, Externalization, Combination and Internalization - SECI (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997).

According to them, Socialization is the process of creating new tacit knowledge by sharing experiences, feelings and mental models. In this case, it is common to use informal and loosely structured mechanisms such as informal meetings, group dialogue, communities of practice, and observation activities (Nonaka, Krogh, Voelpel, 2006). On the other hand, Externalization is the process of articulating/clarifying tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. In this stage it is essential to use metaphors, analogies, schema and models. Combination, in turn, implies the articulation of different types of explicit knowledge, generating a more systematized and complex set of explicit knowledge. Lastly, Internalization is the process of turning explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, which is similar to what is called learning by doing. It is when knowledge is internalized to become a part of the tacit knowledge database of individuals, under the guise of mental models or know-how, that it becomes a very valuable asset. Tacit knowledge accumulated at the individual level can initiate a new spiral of knowledge creation when it is shared with other individuals by means of socialization (Nonaka, Toyama, Konno, 2000; Nonaka, Krogh, Voelpel, 2006).

The knowledge creation process cannot be managed in the traditional sense of the term, which implies planning, organization, control and assessment activities. The main function of leadership, Back to TOC 52 in this case, is to create a favorable context for the multiplication of this process throughout the organization (Nonaka, Toyama, Konno, 2000). Furthermore, the leadership process must be distributed. Those involved in a leadership position articulate and disseminate the knowledge management vision, encourage the sharing of knowledge assets and create a favorable context, or a “Ba Context” (Nonaka and Konno, 1998). From this perspective, which are the organizational conditions that would be favorable to Ba? Despite their not exhausting the subject, some variables are recurrently highlighted in literature: structure, organizational model and the relational dimension of leadership. Regarding this last item, what is particularly emphasized is the key role leadership plays in establishing the conditions needed to create knowledge, including a compatible degree of autonomy, a certain creative chaos, diversity, trust, commitment, social and emotional connection (Nonaka, Toyama, Konno, 2000; Nonaka, Krogh, Voelpel, 2006).

Relational leadership development spiral

In view of the path delineated up to now, which turned out to involve a mainstreamed perspective of different knowledge fields, epistemological bases, concepts and notions, the effect of this anthropophagic method (Oiticica Filho, 2011; Andrade, 1976) - or bricoleur (Lévi-Strauss, 1989) - leads to the proposition of a Relational Leadership Development Spiral, which runs through the SECI schema (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997), incorporating elements of the psychoanalysis.

By engaging in conversation with psychoanalytic knowledge (Miller, 2002), and by analogy with the roles of manager and leader, we could consider the position of the therapist and the analyst according to the dominance of the position they place themselves in the four speeches formulated by Lacan (2008). They are the speeches of the Master, the University, the Hysteric and the Analyst. We could summarize the Master’s speech as the one in which subject occupies the dominant position, there being a subject who knows and not a subject supposed to know. Also, we could limit ourselves to stressing that the speech of the Analyst is the reverse, the only one in which the other takes the place of subject. If we adopt the Master’s speech as a starting point, we will find it possible to obtain the others by a one-quarter spin of the letters that make up its formula. Thus, by a one-quarter spin starting from the Master’s speech we will arrive at the Hysteric’s speech. In this speech, the symptom is the dominant position represented by the subject. In it, the hysteric will embrace the other as the master to whom he will drive his demand to cure the symptom. By observing the production of the Hysteric’s speech we will find knowledge occupying the place of production, which places itself in the field of the other.

By performing one more quarter turn we will reach the University’s speech. As the statute of the University’s speech we will find knowledge that intends to objectify the other in order to produce a subject decoupled from its primordial significant (Coutinho Jorge, 2008). On the other hand, the leader circulates the speeches, focusing his ethical stance with reference to the Analyst’s speech. His position is that of the object that causes desire in the other. He recognizes that fantasy is something that no one wants to know about, inasmuch as it leads to the axiom of “his way of being”. He also recognizes that no significant is able to highlight it, as well as being well aware that it is impossible to change it. Therefore, such findings assume a much deeper change, because what is sought is a certain change in the person’s subjective position. And this is not a matter of a problem-solving technique, of training or of cure.

In other words, what is sought is fantasy as a means to place *jouissance* within the pleasure principle. Its operation consists of once again opening the dimension of what lies beyond the pleasure principle, looking to link - to the extent to which it may be possible in the space among the registers of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary - *jouissance* and pleasure. And that, Back to TOC 53 according to Miller (2002, p. 109), "[...] when it deals with the issue of fantasy it is very useful because it corresponds both to the manifestation of the desire of the Other while, at the same time, corresponding to the manifestation of a lack in the field of the significant".

Still according to Miller (2002), the symptom and the demand for its resolution are only points of entry, the points to establish the relationship. However, it is the fantasy that determines the symptom. Thus, given a symptom it would be possible to find the fantasy that determines it. As per Freud, Miller (2002) believes the movement would, therefore, happen from symptoms to fantasies, on a journey that makes the latter appear as a precursor of the former. Thus, the operation of the analyst would thereby promote turns on the symptom-fantasy spiral, aiming at subjective, successive subjective rectifications.

Relational leadership development spiral

As result, a relational leadership development and exercise device is suggested at the organizational level, covering four moments. At the first moment is the Master's speech that prevails. At this stage, called Socialization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997), the leader-led dyad would be oriented by a transfer-repetition, and the subject in a leadership position must be aware of the underlying seductions to the demand or complaint that is directed at him. Such seduction stems mainly from his position as the Other in the structure of the relationship. As he has been promoted to the position of supposed to know subject, the subject in a leadership position must be aware that relational leadership will consist, primarily, of allowing the group to find out that, in a real sense, there is no such supposed to know. Actually, it constitutes the subject in a leadership position's desire. The desire not to identify oneself as the "Lord of the truth", to respect the group's individuality by not being an ideal, a model, an educator. In short, the desire to leave room for the group's desire to emerge. To extricate oneself from such a trap, the device assumes that the subject in a leadership position is able to listen, to allow the group to speak. The core issue permeating this moment is, therefore, "[...] to which problematics does the symptom introduce us to?" (Miller, 2002, p. 97).

The turn that follows on the spiral will involve an equal turn in the speech, which will seek to orient itself by the University's speech. The idea is to allow the group to seek out and try the external, the weird, the outlier. To lead the group to investigate the possibilities of settling the demand or complaint through bibliographic surveys, conversations with experts, contacts with other people, situations, groups and organizations. In this stage - Externalization - the occupant of the subject in a leadership position must then act as the one who fosters the process of articulating-explaining tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge by allowing the group to symbolize it through metaphors, analogies, diagrams and drawings. Such a step is vital for the next turn, whose emphasis is on the histerization of the speech, as a harbinger of the move to the level of the Analyst's speech.

Therefore, this third moment concerns a turn in the direction of the Hysteric's speech. The focus will fall on the group's questioning his own demand, complaints or the early means used to settle them. It will also involve the group's recognition of the prevalence of desire, which, as such, will always go unsatisfied. It will also involve recognizing that there is no perfect solution. Through the Combination of the elements and the remnants of the previous moments, it will be possible

to produce a new and more complex set of possibilities or even the emergence of new significant, allowing the opening of new significant chains, the creation of something effectively original. This is done by combining proprietary aspects that derive from experts, other groups, situations and organizations.

Lastly, the fourth turn - Internalization - aims to achieve a much deeper transformation than the settling of the symptom that triggered the relationship. What is being sought in this stage is a certain change in the group's subjective position within the fundamental fantasy that mainstreamed the relationship. It is not a question of interpreting this fantasy, even as it falls outside the significant. Neither is it of "curing", as Miller (2002) has advised us. On the contrary, the transformation that is sought is that the group components should question themselves about what his fantasy masks in the relationship, overcoming the illusion that one Other will appear as a complete one, as the master and Lord of his desire. In other words, he must recognize his own style, his uniqueness, his "way of being", and leadership style (Miller, 2002, p. 128).

Conclusions

To sum up the management-leadership dyad, Zaleznik (1977) believes that while the goals expected of a manager would derive from needs and not from wills, as they would come to the fore as they pacified conflicts and, at the same time, ensured that an organization's day-to-day activities would be met. Leaders, on the other hand, would adopt personal and proactive attitudes in relation to objectives, they would look for opportunities and rewards that are right there, inspiring and fostering the creative process through their own energy. Their relations with subordinates and colleagues would be intense, and the work environment would usually be chaotic. However, this author believes that if organizations are to survive and succeed, they must be challenged to demand people who can articulate themselves through both of these positions - similar to the movement of the Möbius strip, which we have already mentioned - as well as to overcome obstacles and identify opportunities to build enabling contexts that are favorable to them.

Three decades later, the same challenges identified by Zaleznik (1977) become even more apparent, although, paradoxically, they perpetuate a certain managerial mystique around the leadership function that emphasizes developing managerial personalities that depend on disciplined work patterns and that strive, as much as possible, to maintain them. Just like a certain management ethic related to power that emphasizes collective leadership, however, it seeks, to the utmost, to eliminate risks and vulnerabilities arising from individual dependencies. In addition, of course, to a mystique around the very notion of leadership that assumes that only people of great value are worthy of the drama of power and politics.

If in Zaleznik's time the traditional notion about management was centered on structure and organizational processes while focusing on management development with an emphasis on qualification, control and balance of power, thus omitting essential leadership elements of leadership, nowadays it can be ascertained that organizations increasingly concern themselves with enhancing the scope of knowledge, skills and attitudes of their management profiles, incorporating individual attributes that used to be expected only of those who occupied leadership positions. But why not develop leadership on new and broader bases, more horizontal and on more relational bases? Why not emphasize organizational learning processes and organizational development that will emphasize creation and innovation through

leadership? This essay's findings point to an articulation between different knowledge fields and theoretical perspectives as possibilities to reach answers.

Lastly, as Maturana (1997) reminds us, reductionist solutions cannot be applied to complex issues. On the contrary, the best solution often comes exactly from introducing more complexity into the system, which will lead to the opening up of new mental paths and to forcing an organization to not limit itself only to the instance of overcoming the symptom, but to advancing Back to TOC 55 the fortunes and misfortunes of creation and innovation by overcoming the fantasies that mainstream it.

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