

## Leadership as a Tool in Education

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### Abstract

This work reveals some key characteristics of the personality of individuals that have an impact on the behavior of the leader, and therefore, on the importance of leadership in education at all levels, from the direction of educational centers to the administrative part of it.

The importance of applying new learning methodologies based on educational leadership is absolutely necessary to correct some behaviors or beliefs of students from the base to their university studies.

**Keywords:** educational leadership, education, education, teaching methodologies, leader,

### 1. Introduction

The history of mankind is replete with events on the course that the practice of leadership has taken through the centuries, taking into account the successes and mistakes of leaders in all areas of society: political, economic, religious, social and educational.

Evidence appears from the writings of Julius Caesar on the campaigns in Gaul, Hispania or Alexandria; the book 'The Prince' by Machiavelli, a treatise that indicates the recommendations for the correct exercise of leadership, or the ideas shown by Kurt Lewin in the mid-twentieth century.

An approach to the idea of educationally oriented leadership appeared in the head of the young Prussian Kurt Lewin after learning about the traditional methods applied by his thesis director, Professor Carl Stumpf, in his classes at the University of Berlin. During the four years of work on Lewin's doctoral thesis, he did not have a single meeting with him to discuss the work until the very day of the defense. This was typical of the hierarchical university organization of the time, in which professor and student were kept in two distant positions. This mode of leadership had a great impact on Lewin. He reflected on the authoritarian teaching style of Professor Stumpf, whom he considered a leader.

The management style of the time showed what the academic culture of the time, the early 1990s, was like. Stumpf's model was always rejected by Lewin, and he did not apply it when he was hired as a professor at the university years later. He did not like lecture classes, where the focus was on the professor, who recited the lectures and the students just took notes. Lewin liked to interact with the students and talk about any topic with them, in class, on a walk, in the university cafeteria, he did not monopolize the conversation, but led it, giving rise to new ideas, proposals or research hypotheses.

This was not only his usual style of behavior, but it also showed a key element of his personal belief system. He had great faith in democracy, which meant much more than a political system; it meant a way of life, based on the participation of group members and continuous interaction for decision making. In a way, it was the mode of leadership he exercised over the student group, as opposed to Stumpf's authoritarian leadership (4,5).

During 1938 and 1939, Lewin developed a set of experiments at the University of Iowa on how leaders influence their followers and how groups change people's behavior. This was a major turning point for the time.

The purpose of this paper is to show the importance of leadership in education, as well as to show the importance of certain key elements that affect the way a leader is and his or her characteristics in an educational setting.

## **2. Metodology and materials**

In today's literature, one can find a multitude of definitions of leadership, but in general, in scientific research there is a good deal of agreement on what this term means.

### *2.1 Definition of Leadership*

Leadership could be defined as a process of social influence by which a person influences others in a way that guides, structures and facilitates a series of behaviors, activities and relationships for the achievement of a series of shared objectives (9,12).

Leadership is not a characteristic of a specific person, it is a process that is carried out; if it is not done, there is no leadership.

It also implies social influence on other people; the leader will try to achieve the understanding and consensus of others by presenting his ideas and reasoning them out. Leadership is not something a person does on his own.

The influence of ideas must be accepted voluntarily by the followers of the supposed leader. If there is no followership, there is no leadership (14,15).

As a consequence of jointly carrying out a series of activities, objectives, etc., the leader and the followers must do or develop something as an effect of leadership. If a series of acts are not provoked in the group in a joint way, it is not leadership.

Leadership is a multilevel process, only understandable if we look at different levels (individual, group, social, educational, etc.).

### *2.2 Educational leadership*

This general leadership can be extrapolated to the educational field by speaking of educational leadership, which refers to the ability to make decisions related to the management of a training center, school, institute or university (11,13). Thus, educational leadership falls mainly on the principal of these institutions. However, this capacity produces benefits not only for the top management of the center but also for teachers and students (21,23).

Education today faces a problem: on the one hand, it seeks to achieve a greater number of graduates to incorporate into the world of work, and on the other, to train disciplined citizens to respond to the demands of the new society and the competencies demanded by the global economy. It is therefore necessary to prepare students to live in the world rather than for life, so that they are capable of dreaming, thinking, acting with integrity, living happily, sharing things with others, and so on. Thus, new training alternatives will have to be thought of, in such a way that educational leadership demands qualities and characteristics that make a better, more humane society (16).

Thus, the objective to be achieved through the development of educational leadership is to achieve an improvement in the center's decision making with the intention of promoting a higher quality of teaching and services offered by the center (1). However, there are many educational entities that are not aware of this capacity and do not take advantage of the opportunities it offers to all groups involved in the center.

### *2.3 Importance of educational leadership*

Educational leadership offers numerous advantages to all parties involved in the education sector. As a result, in recent years it has become increasingly important

within educational institutions. This training has made it possible to improve the efficiency and quality of the education provided in the educational center (2). Teachers will enhance their ability to adapt to the needs of students in a more personal and direct way. On the other hand, the management will be able to make more precise and accurate decisions for the management of the school and the students will gain better knowledge and skills during their years in the schools.

Due to the leadership qualities of school management, teachers can be instructed through programs, lectures and oriented courses to be able to exercise their work more efficiently and, consequently, to be able to increase the quality of students, obtaining better academic results (3).

#### *2.4 Qualities of educational leadership*

Educational leadership is aimed at ensuring that managers have a series of qualities/skills that will be indispensable for the good development of the educational center they manage.

Active listening skills and the ability to maintain empathetic and valuable communication with the different groups belonging to the center are objectives clearly pursued in this type of leadership (22,24). It is essential to have the ability to make important decisions and maintain control in times of conflict.

It will also be very necessary to be a tenacious person, with an entrepreneurial vision and with the necessary curiosity or training in the field of innovation and technology.

Finally, a person with educational leadership will have to have a forward-looking perspective, and know how to point out the objectives and strategies that he/she considers most efficient to obtain the expected results for the service offered in his/her educational center.

These skills identified with educational leadership can always be improved. School managers are responsible for ensuring quality education for students and, therefore, their leadership skills must be strengthened (26). Thus, it will be necessary to carry out a series of actions:

- The performance of teachers should be supervised, ensuring that they have sufficient training, skills and knowledge to provide adequate teaching and, at the same time, be able to influence the motivation of students in achieving their objectives.
- The educational center must provide the necessary resources so that both students and teachers can develop their activity in an adequate and efficient manner.
- The center should offer teaching methodologies suitable for the current needs of students, making greater use of digital tools (27).

It is considered essential that educational leadership is part of the educational centers, bringing benefits to students, teachers and managers of the institution.

### **3. Discussion**

Apart from the previous point and the need for the existence of an educational leadership at a hierarchical level among the important parties involved in the education of students, it seems important to mention that the contribution of this type of leadership oriented with some precise methodology and oriented towards female students could modify the decreasing orientation of female students towards science careers.

If we take into account that in Spain only 7% of 15-year-old girls want to study technical professions and that in the University more than 50% are women, of which only 25-30% study technical careers, we have a serious problem, and the first question to be asked is why in Spain girls do not want to study science? (20,25). There is a generalized idea that Mathematics, Physics and Engineering are considered difficult subjects, and that people who dedicate themselves to them are thought to be brilliant. It is common for the image of a particularly bright person to be associated with men.

First of all, girls should be made aware that they are also important, intelligent and brilliant, and that they can also achieve. Having a (female) leader among them would be very beneficial (7,8). Here their social and family environment plays a very important role, the support received by their parents. Perhaps by including leadership courses from the base in education, girls could become mentally prepared to advance in those environments that they consider more created for men. The incorporation of important female references related to outstanding women in the scientific environment could awaken girls to have a reference (leader) and want to become like her. This can be achieved through small works of information research and construction of infographics at a very early level at school. Who has not had their idol at school?... Einstein, Hawking, etc.

Girls have almost no female roles to reflect on. However, with the exception of Marie Curie, their discoveries are rarely talked about and they are hardly known. Women appearing as experts in science news would help to eliminate stereotypes, but their presence is scarce.

Research conducted in Spain in early 2000, using the PAPI personality test, sought to relate a person's personality to his or her leadership capacity. The personality factors studied were neuroticism, extraversion, openness to new experiences, agreeableness and responsibility.

<b>Model: five personality factors</b>	<b>Specific personality traits</b>
NEUROTHICISM	Emotional stability, self-esteem, self-control
EXTRAVERSION	Sociable, energetic, activity level, need for power, assertiveness
OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE	Curiosity, inquisitive, open minded, learning oriented
KINDNESS	Joyfulness, optimism, empathetic, attentive, need for affiliation
RESPONSIBILITY	Dependability, personal integrity, need for achievement

**Table 1.** Correspondence of personality factors and specific traits that lead to the leader's effectiveness (Source: Ángel Barrasa Notario).

It was pointed out that the trait that has the most power to predict leadership in a person is his or her extraversion, with his or her level of energy and activity being very important as factors of influence in the group.

It was also studied which personality traits predicted failure as leaders, reaching the conclusion that the most influential was the boss, hence the hierarchy in the company was fundamental, and as a simile, in educational centers, applying programs aimed at introducing leadership from top to bottom in a transversal and longitudinal way.

#### **4. Conclusions**

A so-called 'educational' leader must be someone capable of influencing all levels of educational centers, administrative, teaching, management, i.e., the entire educational community. There is a difference between management and leadership; the former should focus on administrative management, while the latter should innovate using different teaching-learning methodologies (6,19).

Leaders must monitor the external environment, obtain information in order to identify possible threats and opportunities for the school. It will be necessary to be very attentive to the information received, the interests demanded by the curricula, by the students, the availability of resources, etc.

It is interesting to promote innovative thinking without going crazy, facilitating innovation and entrepreneurial attitudes within the educational environment or fostering efforts in groups related to these ideas to implement important changes (10).

In general, each educational system has a particular look at the conception of so-called 'systemic' or system leadership. For some this is linked to the relationships between schools or organizations, others focus only on the role of principals (heads), while there are cases where systemic leadership is not directly linked to practices or structures, but rather to a way of thinking about the development of the system with broader margins.

In most of the systems studied, systemic leadership policies and strategies are fairly recent. The systemic leader is generally understood as the highest level in the hierarchy of leadership roles, so it is important that he or she be linked to a managerial career (18). The rationale for the implementation of leadership strategies is very diverse, but in some cases, these are related more to political pressures than to technical criteria.

It is difficult to separate and even more difficult to transfer learning without considering, among other things, the values of the countries, their economic system and their educational organization. Nowadays, programs are being developed where the characteristics of the educational environment, the political, economic and cultural characteristics themselves are inserted, where more and more initiatives seem to be developed to generate a cultural change that goes from competition to general collaboration in this type of educational institutions (17).

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