COMMUNICATIONS

Slobodan Ristic – Zoran Cekerevac *

DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE AND SELF IMPROVEMENT OF THE LEADERS

To be a good leader one always has to have a vision. He knows what he wants to reach and how to get it. In such competitive environment as it is today, leader must prepare himself to daily new challenges. This article deals with leadership, and especially with leader's self improvement and development of leadership competence. Introductory part of the article gives one of possible classifications of leader's skills with a brief explanation of each named skill. There are also given some experiences of some of the most successful world's companies in the area of the strategic rotating and moving managers to appropriate leader's positions. In the article, there are also analyzed contemporary trends in development of leadership skills and the five phases of development of leadership development according to the Witten-Cameron model. Under Conclusions, there are summarized results of the analysis.

***Keywords:** Leadership competences, Witten-Cameron model, leader's skills, Kurt Lewin's model, Kolb's model*

1. Introduction

The strategic studies that exist for about 25 years have shown that the biggest cause of stress at workplace is incompetent managing. These and other relevant data indicate the conclusion that the effective leadership is the primary factor of organizational success [1].

In available literature it is almost not possible to find examples of classification of human's skills. This is the consequence of extreme complexity and uncertainty of this phenomenon. After all, some classifications are possible. If here is applied the established model that exists for skills typology then we could put all the skills into four groups:

- Intellectual skills
- Sensory skills
- Motor skills and
- Sensory-motor skills

In context of organizational behavior, intellectual skills are the most important. Those could be cognitive skills related to a human intellect and the power of thinking and judging, but those skills are almost always seen as abilities [2]. Often, they can be divided on managers, leadership, negotiation, sales, social skills, etc.

Sensory skills are hardly ever mentioned, because the perception is categorized as the group of abilities connected to human's senses. However, and the skills of vine and food testing (enological skills), the interpretation skills of sensor notes (work on radar, sonar, scanner...), the details observation skill, etc. could be put into this group.

Motor skills are often mentioned, especially in psychology and pedagogy. These skills are related to mobility and dexterity of human's body. Most of the researches that are done so far concerned motor skills. One of the first surveys of motor skills, the Time Study, was conducted by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the first decades of previous century. Later researchers, starting with Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, gave focus on the motion study, complex phenomenon like assembling and disassembling small arms, typing skills, playing instrument, dancing, etc. All those skills can be described as the organized compositions of movements and actions. Today, the both studies together they are called "a time and motion study" and represent a business efficiency technique [3].

As the combination of sensor and motor skills is possible, it is also possible to make the group of sensors-motor skills [4].

The differences that can be seen these days are connected to usage of different learning methods. The classical leadership training referring to classroom, now is largely completed or even completely replaced with other activities, such as lifelong learning, training, courses, mentoring, evaluation, etc. On the other hand, more attention is paid to emotional alignment with followers of the leaders. More precisely, the reason is that in contemporary conditions only the absolutely committed employees become the key to success for the entire organization. The greatest attention is given neither to what the leader is, nor to abilities and skills that he possesses, but to the process which is the result of the interaction between the leader and the followers.

Contemporary trends in development of leadership skills have two directions [5]:
- Multiplication of methods of developing leadership skills and

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* **Slobodan Ristic[1], Zoran Cekerevac[2]**
[1] University Belgrade, Faculty of Organizational Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia, E-mail: risticslobodan@fon.bg.ac.rs
[2] "Union" University Belgrade, Faculty of Business and Industrial Management, Belgrade, Serbia

- Emphasis on the importance of emotional leadership characteristics.

There are numerous models and methods of leadership skills improvement. One of the most accepted models of development those skills are the model proposed by David Witten and Kim Cameron. According to them, development of leadership skills is a process that is cyclically carried out in five phases, namely [1]:
- Evaluation of knowledge and skills,
- Collection of knowledge about effective practices for improving knowledge and skills,
- Case studies,
- Practicing the newly acquired knowledge and skills to cases, and
- Application of learned knowledge and skills in personal work environment.

In the Table 1 there are presented the contents and goals of each of these five phases. One can see now, that the essence of the development of leadership skills makes, at the first, the willingness of an individual to go through changes, then permanent learning, detailed analysis of case studies, adopting and practicing of the guidelines of behavior, building the personal leadership style and finally applying knowledge in real terms and, of course continued work on it.

The business environment in which companies operate today is much more turbulent and complex and therefore less predictable.

Contemporary organizations have to show exceptional dose of flexibility in order to survive and succeed in demanding market. Thus, both increasing at need for leadership skills and abilities, and techniques are changing their promotion and development. Today, all practical methods of development of leadership skills could be classified into two main categories:
- Leadership training, and
- Leadership development activities.

2. Self improvement of the leaders

In the modern business world a number of programs and trainings for developing leadership skills are developed. Each leading company or SME is trying to give its contribution. There are, also, a significant number of educational organizations with accredited programs for leadership competence development.

The key feature of the majority of leadership development programs is that they are mainly focused on the skills, and less on knowledge and very rarely on abilities and personal qualities of holders of this business and social function [5]. There is no doubt that such programs are necessary and useful but not sufficient for a general leadership development. In particular, the presence of many development and training programs does not promise much to a young man seeking professional recognition in this field and that passes through it he will become a leader. In this sense, Bennis and Goldsmith [6] advocate the theory that a man can become a leader only by discovering his natural energy and desire and with persistent effort to find his own way to use energy and achieve desired goals. Educational programs and trainings continue to play a role of drilling natural crystals. "Many young people with significant innate talent for leadership often do not to achieve what is in them. So the part of our task is to develop what is naturally Leadership in us, but this requires cultivation. Talent is one thing and another is winning demonstration. Generally speaking, the developments of any succeed complex talent searches happy combination of motivation, character and circumstances. Most of the human talent remains undeveloped." [7]

Like the gardener who is not a plant finder, and who is not even a creator, but just a raiser, so the leader is not born as a leader, and is not created. He is educated and trained to. From most previous studies and further, based on the analysis of their own experience of respected individuals, it can be concluded that the leadership can be learned. But that is not all that is required; it is also required the basis on which the great knowledge will be built. So, leaders are neither born, nor made. Instead of that, they shape their inherent potentials into experience, enabling them to develop skills needed to solve major organizational problems. There is a significant relationship between the emotional maturities of managers, which manifests itself through the awareness of their own personality and empathy, and their financial success. "Good people", people who understand themselves but also others around them, first complete the task. Being skilled means to be able to deal with the diversities within the organization. It is a skill to take the best from a variety

Phases of cyclical model of development of leadership skills   Table 1

Component	Content	Goals
Rating Skills	Instruments for measuring, Playing roles	Evaluate the current level of knowledge, skills and abilities and create readiness for change.
Learning Skills	Written text Behaving Guidelines	Learn correct principles and present the explanation of guidelines for behavior.
Skills Analyze	Cases	Provide examples of appropriate and inadequate performance terms of skills. Analyze principles of behavior and the reasons of their action.
Practicing Skills	Practice, simulations, role-playing skills	Practice guidelines for behavior. Adopting the principles for personal style.
Application of Skills	Work Tasks (literate through behavior)	Learned in the classroom transfer to the actual work station. Encourage continuous personal development.

of experiences, skills and perceptions of others with whom one cooperates. The Skill of establishing relationship with other people is in the very own heart of leadership. The criteria for measuring success in leadership are not based only on gained knowledge and skills but also on how those who work in this area can successfully solve problems, how they are successful in relationships with others and how to cope with themselves. This is driven by personal qualities, such as perseverance, self-control, and ability to understand others. However, to become a leader is not easy, but the scientists said, much easier than most people think. [8] Success in solving the problems of leadership depends on the complex series of competencies that make available and necessary knowledge, skills but, also, of a personal potential. In general, the skills needed to solve organizational problems involving the creative arts solving various problems associated with problem's identification, understanding the problem and generating potential solutions. These are the social skills of reasoning, spotting potential solutions, providing a framework and application of social skills related to motivating and directing others in the implementation of solutions. In this sense, several steps in the process of leaders' self-building can be distinguished:

- Master the leadership competencies based on their own experience,
- Get rid of the myths and stereotypes about leadership,
- Understand the treatment of leadership in their organization,
- Self understanding,
- Change the way of learning and
- Learn to put up with failure

2.1 Own experience

Acquiring leadership competencies based on personal experience involve the use of all experiences, in families, peer groups, schools, and those obtained in meetings with other leaders and their own professional and leadership experience. Even the experience of young people is a great treasure of information, values and incentives. This is not a direct copy of already experienced, but the mental processing and sublimation of often unrelated experiences. Unconscious behavior patterns and perceptions created on experiences in large measure determine the current and future actions. Using own experiences in the development of leadership competencies is not the application of methods of learning through trial and failure. It is a much more complex management of personal development, based on the application proceedings "reflective practice". "Reflective Practice" or "reflection" is one of the most useful models of learning in adults. This model was designed by David A. Kolb [9] and based on theoretical assumptions about Kurt Lewin's model of learning. This model has stood the test of time, and today, reflective practice is used in many programs, in particular those whose goal is developing of leadership potential. Kolb's model of reflective practice provides four phases in the learning cycle. With Kolb's model is much easier and methodologically arranged the technique of reflective practice, and learning from personal experience.

According to [10], Kolb's learning cycle phases are presented in Fig. 1, where are:
- Concrete Experience - the specific event - the working arrangement - gained experience; the "Concrete Experience" is the "doing" component which derives from the content and process of learning;
- Reflective Observation - reviewing - thinking (reflection) about the experience; The "Reflective Observation" element stems from leader's analysis and judgments of events and the discussion about the learning and teaching that leader engage in with its partners, colleagues and fellows;
- Abstract Conceptualization - the conclusions - learning from experience; it allows leader to come to conclusions about the practice;
- Active Experimentation - planning - checking what has been learned. The conclusions one formed from his "Abstract Conceptualisation" stage then form the basis by which he can plan changes - "Active Experimentation". "Active Experimentation" then starts the cycle again when he implement those changes

2.2 Myths and stereotypes

Under the leadership potential for self-improvement it is necessary to get rid of the myths and stereotypes about leadership. On the way of adoption competencies that are needed to an effective leader, it is good to get rid of preconceived notions as soon as possible. The most common myths and stereotypes associated with leadership are:

- "Leadership is a very rare skill" is one of the most common myths which, of course, is not true. It is true that charismatic leaders are rare. It is true that great actors, musicians, painters are rarely born but the fact is that in each person lies some leadership potential. In various aspects of people lives exists immense ocean of leadership roles. It happens that someone is a great leader in his organization, but in any other environment, even in his own family, has a very minor role;

Fig. 1 Kolb's learning model [10]

– "Leaders are born as such, and leadership cannot be learned" is the enduring prejudice that dates back to the first theory of leadership. Sometimes from the biography analysis of some outstanding leaders it might be concluded that their leadership role was destined from their childhood. From the biography analysis of most leaders with significant results achieved, such a predisposition or a genetic basis cannot be seen. One can conclude that some basic competencies of leadership can be learned if there is a strong motivation in that direction.

Stereotype "charismatic leaders" can be partially proved correct. There are numerous examples that testify to the charisma of individual, successful leaders but the fact for the majority of leaders is that they were such ordinary people who were not much different from peers and colleagues.

"Leaders are only at the highest levels of the organization" is another very common myth about leadership. This myth originated from the practice of leadership training and guidance to the attention of the entire top management companies. With a more detailed analysis of the distribution of leaders, the presence of a number of leadership roles and the holders of these roles can be observed.

2.3 Understanding of the treatment of leadership

Big companies are creating organized and planned more leadership roles throughout self-teams, divided decision making and creating strategic business units that operate as independent business entities.

Understanding leadership in their own organization can be beneficial for the development of leadership competencies. The goal of this effort is to look at the way working environment stimulates the expression of leadership and how and why it discourages the development of the same. This primarily reflects the explicit rewards, recognition and promotion, but in many subtle ways – through training programs, social patterns, values, communication systems and so on. [1]

2.4 Self-understanding

The next phase of self-development of leadership skills is a self- understanding and is derived from Socrates' commandment "know you (yourself)." This exercise in self-improvement business leadership can have the following working steps:

– Self-reflection, thinking of particularly critical events that had successfully or unsuccessfully completed;
– Getting to know yourself through constant contact and socializing with other people or getting feedback from the outside world on the impression given to other people;
– Openness to new experiences and knowledge, a review of earlier beliefs and attitudes in dealing with new information that are contrary to earlier beliefs related to personal priorities and goals;

– Consistency in the sense that there is a tendency of constant correlation between beliefs and behavior.

2.5 Way of learning

Acceptance of a different type of learning involves an active, self-conscious and committed learning and taking risks for fulfillment of leadership requests in today's turbulent and very complex environment. This study simply does not show the acceptance of a set of knowledge or scientific disciplines, but seeing the world as it is and what could be, understanding the differences between the two conditions and making efforts to overcome differences.

2.6 Learn to put up with failure

Finally, leader must learn how to endure a failure. The way in which, the effective leaders deal with failure is perhaps their most important quality. Great leaders do not think about it, many of them, a mistake is simply one way of doing things. Huge number of people perceived a failure as something definite and reacts to it with helpless discouragement; for successful leaders – the failure is just the beginning.

In a study by David Day carried out at 350 companies having leadership development programs and leadership skills, it is written that the most successful programs that are applied are mentoring, active learning and assessment methods. He found that two people participating in the identical 360-degree feedback experience are likely to take away different things from the experience [11]. In self improvement of the leaders a number of different procedures are applied for the same purpose.

One of them is called self-determined learning that can represent the essence of the development of leadership skills. This model of training was designed to develop or strengthen some aspect of personality, or achievement of a role model or both. This training begins with an imagination of a strong picture of the ideal I, and as an accurate picture of what we are now, present objective and observed me. This self directed learning is most effective and gives lasting results, provided to understand the change process and steps needed to it accomplished. Model of learning through personal training was developed by one of the leading researchers and practitioners of leadership – consultant Richard Boyatzis.

According to the systematization of process of self-determined leaders' learning, it takes place in five phases or, as the authors mean, "Discoveries". Their goal is that a man through the changes becomes an emotionally intelligence leader who possesses the necessary competencies. This type of learning requires repetition, the steps are not carried out smoothly and evenly, but each of them requires a different time and effort. By practicing, new habits over time become part of the actual repertoire of behaviors. Changing habits, improving of emotional intelligence and leadership style, lead to desired aspirations and getting closer to the goal, achieving the "ideal I". The cycle of self-directed learning is a lifelong process,
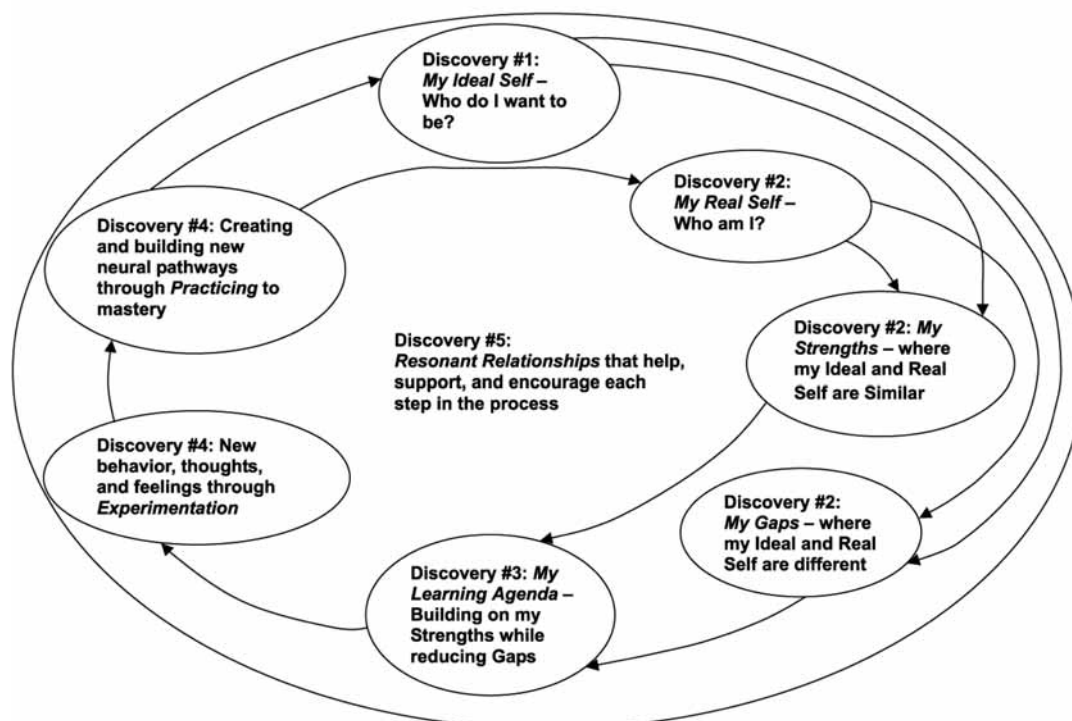
Fig. 2 Boyatzis' theory of self-directed learning [12]

the process of development and adaptation. As it is presented in the Fig. 2 [12], its discovery and development phases are:
- The first discovery: *My ideal I;* who do I want to be? Practicing new behaviors: Creating new neurological ways of improvement.
- The second discovery: *My real I;* who am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses? My strengths: Where do my ideal I and my real I match? My weaknesses: Where do my ideal I odd of my real I?
- The third discovery: *My learning plan;* how can I consolidate my strengths while reducing weaknesses? The learning plan is based on qualities and reduction of failures.
- The fourth discovery: *Experimenting and practicing* new behaviors, thoughts and feelings until they are perfect.
- The fifth discovery: *Developing relationships* that will give support and trust and provide the change.

3. Evaluating leadership development initiatives

It is always necessary to make an assessment that refers to a diagnosis of the current state of the individual or organization in terms of leadership capacity. These data could help one to learn clearly what needs to be improved or changed.

The most successful world's companies do not only give huge importance to development of leadership but put a great accent on trying to measure and quantify the effort invested in development of leadership skills. These companies "measure" the quantity of leader's gift needed in specific spheres, the degree of talent dissipa-

tion and make work catalogues, task catalogues and catalogues of leaders or managers who, by their nature have bigger influence on development of leadership skills. This gained knowledge is then used strategically, by rotating managers and moving them on certain positions providing them further training and improvement that will have positive effect on their development in a desired sphere.

"Evaluation helps people in organizations... make informed decisions about how to improve leadership development initiatives and examine the degree to which development goals have been accomplished and what work remains to be done" [13].

The data can be gathered from people through feedback, customer evaluations, etc. Also, leader can get information alone, as self-reflection, scores on personality inventories, etc. "Good assessment data also provides the motivation to close the gap between the current and an ideal future state. If no gap exists, this assessment data can still be helpful in terms of enhancing self-confidence" [11].

The main criteria for leadership development initiatives evaluating are:
- *Reactions,* that could be measured by post-experience questionnaires,
- *Learning,* that could be measured by tests or demonstration of skills,
- *Transfer,* that could be evaluated through self-reports, and ratings,
- *Results,* which could be measured through profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction, or staff morale.

Evaluation in the best practices includes stakeholders' involvement in all phases of process, consideration of multiple measures and perspectives, as well as clarifying of outcomes and well defined purpose of evaluation. Big mistakes in the evaluation can appear if the evaluation is not focused to outcomes, or does not pay attention on long-term impacts, or when evaluation is focused only to the factors that can be easily controlled. The worst use of evaluation is when the evaluation is used in the purpose to blame instead to learn and fix problems.

4. Conclusions

Leadership means competencies, knowledge, skills and expertise abilities. Although every manager needs to have some leader capabilities, real leaders belong, by their position, to the top management. They confront an increasingly complex milieu, with fast-moving world of changes. Large corporations, SMEs, low-cost competitors and entrepreneurs, they all share the same space. Every company needs to have good and effective managers that perform well at the operational or strategic level, as well as on functional or personnel issues. A company must help its managers to improve their capabilities, but the managers also must foster and improve their leadership skills themselves.

Although in available literature it is almost impossible to find examples of classification of human's skills, some classifications, like the model that exists for skills typologies, are possible. Then all skills could be classed into four groups, into intellectual, sensory, motor, and sensory-motor skills. In context of organizational behavior, intellectual skills are the most important. Now days, besides classical leadership training, attention is paid to emotional alignment with followers of the leaders, because only the absolutely committed employees become the key to success for the entire organization. All practical methods of development of leadership skills follow two main streams: the leadership training and the leadership development activities. The key feature of the majority of leadership development programs is that they are mainly focused on the skills, and less on knowledge and very rarely on abilities and personal qualities of holders of this business and social function. Leaders' self education and their self improvement are gaining in importance in today's doing business. In this sense, six steps in the process of self-building of leaders can be distinguished: mastering of the leadership competencies based on their own experience; getting rid of the myths and stereotypes about leadership; understanding of the treatment of leadership in their organization; self understanding; changing of the way of learning; and learning how to put up with failure.

The most important action in the leadership development is process of evaluation. It must cover: reactions, demonstration of skills, transfer and results measured through profitability above all. Also, evaluation has to be used on a proper way, always aiming to achieve better results in doing business.

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