

LEADERSHIP AND VALUE WORK

János FEHÉR

Károli Gáspár University of Reformed Church in Hungary, Budapest, Hungary

E-mail: feherdr@t-online.hu

Summary: Leadership literature offers a wide array of possible definitions for describing its subject. While *influence* had been historically—and still has remained—key in interpreting the phenomenon of Leadership, for the past decades other issues, including the leaders' approach to and working through values have gained central importance in the conceptualization of the topic. The aim of this paper is to highlight and illustrate the leader's *value work* (i. a. a process of identifying, generating, developing, and fostering positive and shared values directed/catalyzed by the leader) as a component of emerging Leadership concepts. It will be addressed how the issue of the leaders' activities toward and around values has become important historically during the evolution of Leadership thought. The paper quotes certain other aspects related to the leaders' concerns of values, as well, and offers some thoughts on the perspectives of the role of the topic of value work within the area of Leadership.

Keywords: Leadership, influence, transformational, value work

Leadership literature offers a wide array of possible definitions for describing its subject. One of the classical definitions sounds: Leadership is „the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts towards goal-setting and goal-achievement” (Stogdill, 1950) An interpretation by Kouzes, Posner from the late 20th century is about Leadership as „the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations”. (1995)

While, as the introductory definitions suggest it, *influence* had been historically—and still has remained—key in interpreting the phenomenon of Leadership, for the past decades other issues, including the leaders' approach to and working through values have gained central importance in the conceptualization of the subject. My aim is to highlight and illustrate the leader's *value work* (i. a. a process of identifying, generating, developing, and fostering positive and shared values directed/catalyzed by the leader) as a component of emerging Leadership concepts. First I would like to address how the issue of the leaders' activities toward and around values has become important historically during the evolution of Leadership thought. Then I would like to quote certain approaches of and offer some thoughts on the perspectives of the role of the topic of value work within the area of Leadership. My observations and suggestions are related mainly to some of the mainstream Leadership, and within that, specifically, to Leadership History sources.

As regards the historical evolution of Leadership, among the most cited theories are the Trait, Behavioral and Contingency approaches (e. g. Humphrey, 2014; Nahavandi, 2014; Zehndorfer, 2014; Gill, 2011; Buchanan, Huczynski 2013; Yukl, 2010; Lussier, Achua, 2007; DuBrin, 2004; Northouse, 2001)

Following, as an example, Buchanan's and Huczynski's interpretation they describe Trait Spotting as characterized by a search for personality markers (personality traits and other related attributes) of the effective leader in order to facilitate the selection of leaders. The authors (2013, pp. 655-672) offer comparisons of comprehensive trait lists, i. a. Stogdill' (a revision of hundreds of studies) and Stewart's (based on a survey of American executives). By analyzing them they state „there was limited value in trying to identify leadership traits, although some weak generalization did emerge”, insofar leaders *tend* to score, for example,

higher on average on measures of Intelligence, Relevant knowledge, Verbal facility, Participation, Cooperativeness, Popularity, Initiative, Persistence. (Buchanan, Huczynski, 2013, p. 656-657)

Behaviorally Based Theories show a „switch in attention: from selecting the right leaders on personality traits to training and developing them in appropriate behavior patterns”. (Buchanan, Huczynski, 2013, p. 663). The main style categories were identified by Behaviorally-based theories as: Considerate, Participative, Democratic, and Involving vs. Impersonal, Autocratic, Directive. An important insight was that ‘Consideration’/‘concern for people’ and ‘Initiating Structure’/‘concern for production’ were independent behavior patterns, and leaders could

From the insight that no one style of Leadership would be universally best came the Contingency approach suggesting that the best style is contingent on the situation. Contingency concepts include i. a. Situational leadership, Situational Decision Making, and Emotional Intelligence style application theories.

A consensus can be found between different authors that the main concern of the three mentioned historical Leadership Approaches was about influencing followers’ behavior on individual and group level. The approaches had less to say on how to catalyze and implement change in organizations, and to show how significant the Leadership effects would be on organizational level. Also some specific – e. g. emotional, symbolic – methods to influence followers were relatively neglected.

Simultaneously with the growing understanding about organizational culture, in the era of the so called “New-Leadership” the *work on and through values*, as a leverage and component of Leadership has increased in importance.

Figure 1 : Leadership challenges of the twenty-first century

Leadership challenges of the twenty-first century (adapted from Bennis, Nanus)	
From	To
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goal setting ● Downsizing/benchmarking/quality ● Reacting, adapting to change ● Designing hierarchical organizations ● Information held by few decision makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vision, new directions ● Creating distinctive competencies ● Pro-acting, anticipating change ● Designing flat, collegial organizations ● Information shared with many

Source: Bennis, Nanus, 1985

By the late twentieth century we find in the literature the recognition of the role of informal Leadership, at all levels, and the use of additional, i. a. heroic, powerful, charismatic, visionary *and* empowering, developmental – best generalized as *transformational* – style-elements.

As one of the above elements, the concept of Charisma comes from Weber (1987, p. 249). His concept already forecasts the growing importance of values in leadership. House’s theory of Charisma underlines strong values (as components of the specific personality characteristics) and trust in leader’s ideology (as one of charismatic effects on followers). (House, 1976, pp. 189-207)

New/transformational Leadership is a complex approach to leadership merging soft tools with specific power elements for handling change situations. It can be characterized by the growing importance of leader's values and complexity of leadership tools, and behaviors. To the soft tools—beyond Charisma—belong i. a. symbolic effects, and working on shared values and visions. In Northouse's wordings: „Transformational Leadership (TL) encompasses multiple theoretical and pragmatic approaches with various scopes of analysis”. (2001, 131)

The contrast between Transactional and Transformational leadership clearly highlights the growing value orientation in Leadership.

Figure 2 : Transactional and transformational leadership

Transactional and transformational leadership	
Transactional leadership focuses on the exchanges that occur between leaders and followers	Transformational leadership refers to the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower

Source: Northouse, 2001, p. 132

In an attempt to synthesize the definitions of several authors it can be suggested that Transformational Leadership puts leaders' own development, values, shared goals, mutually agreed performance criteria, special emotional-symbolic-charismatic effects, and empowerment into the focus of the influence process. It aims at the development of followers, as well as the raising of their level of aspiration and commitment, in order to bring about necessary change in the organization. (Fehér, 2009; 2010a; 2010b)

In a CEE context it can be noted that after 1990 a special transformational challenge to leaders has been the handling and change of the cultural characteristics of organizations of the so-called “Transformational Economies”. (About the Hungarian experiences see e. g. Fehér, Bonifert, 1998)

As to the overall, global level developments, it can be stated that besides direct business and intra-organizational issues leaders have been confronted with those of the external societal, natural and other environmental segments. One of them is the CSR imperative. Corporate Social Responsibility, in one of its interpretations is „the comprehensive approach organizations take to meet or exceed the expectations of stakeholders beyond such measures as revenue, profit and legal obligations. It covers commonly investment, human rights and employee relations, environmental practices and ethical conduct.” (Cable, 2005, 11, in: Mullins, 2007, p. 542)

Another cause for value orientation in Leadership is the Creating Shared Value paradigm. As Porter and Kramer put it: „The purpose of the corporation must be redefined as creating shared value, not just profit per se. This will drive the next wave of innovation and productivity growth in the global economy. It will also reshape capitalism and its relationship to society. Perhaps most important of all, learning how to create shared value is our best chance to legitimize business again. ... The concept of shared value recognizes that:

- societal needs, not just conventional economic needs, define markets

- social harms or weaknesses frequently create internal costs for firms—such as wasted energy or raw materials, costly accidents, and the need for remedial training to compensate for inadequacies in education
- addressing societal harms and constraints does not necessarily raise costs for firms, because they can innovate through using new technologies, operating methods, and management approaches...” (Porter, Kramer, 2011)

Figure 3 : Characteristics of the twenty-first century leadership

Characteristics of the twenty-first century leadership (adapted from Bennis, Nanus)	
From	To
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few top leaders, many managers • Direct and supervise • Leader as boss, controlling • Leader as stabilizer, balancing conflicts • Leader develops good managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders at every level, few managers • Empower, inspire, facilitate • Leader as coach, creating learning organization • Leader as change agent, balancing risks • Leader develops future leaders

Source: Bennis, Nanus, 1985

The aforementioned developments have increased the importance of identifying managers and, possibly, also other members of organizations as leaders, and simultaneously have further contributed to getting out Leadership from the ‘Management Box’. The latter tendencies are mirrored back by the changing contents of the newer definitions of Leadership. As an example, the authors of one source quoted in the introduction, Kouzes and Posner have broadened up their perspective on Leadership as ‘mobilizing others...’ by adopting the definition of Alan Keith, Genentech saying: “Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary to happen”. (Kouzes, Posner, 2007, 3)

As of today’s Leadership approaches, “the essence of Leadership is influence”, argues Rumsey. (2013. p. 1) Birnbaum (2013, p. 256) defines Leadership as “interaction that influences others through non-coercive means”. But besides the influence focus much is told also about the content of the Leadership impact.

Just to quote some of the leading authors in the field, for example, Yukl (2010, p. 26) in his broad definition states that “Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives”. House and Aditya (1997, pp. 444-445) distinguish between supervisory and strategic leadership in a way saying that while Supervisory Leadership behavior is “...intended to provide guidance, support and corrective feedback for the day-to-day activities”, Strategic Leadership “is directed toward giving purpose, meaning, and guidance to organizations”. Gill (2011, p. 9) offers the following definition: “Leadership is showing the way and helping or inducing others to pursue it. This entails envisioning a desirable future, promoting a clear purpose or mission, supportive values and intelligent strategies, and empowering and engaging all those concerned”.

In his review of Leadership definitions Humphrey makes a distinction between two perspectives, saying that “According to a **power perspective definition of leadership**, leaders command, control, direct, and influence followers to achieve group, organizational, or

societal goals”. While, “from the *leaders as representatives’ perspective*, leaders are those who (1) best represent the values of their followers and (2) are better at solving their followers’ problems and achieving their goals”. (2014, pp. 6-7)

Through these conceptual examples I have tried to illustrate how concern about values has become part of the definition of Leadership. Much is known from Leadership and organizational Strategy literature and organizational practice about using values in the course of leadership activities and strategy development process. But in the practice often we can see a high difference in the quality of these varying approaches. Under a narrow view clarifying values is one of the ways of influencing people to basically follow the already–partly or wholly–set goals and directions. In contrast there is a broader Leadership and Strategy concept suggesting that working on and by values is / can or should be made more systematically a prerequisite to goal setting and identifying directions; and that value work becomes increasingly a component of the definition of Leadership.

Value work itself can move on a wide scale between focusing on strictly instrumental business values on one extreme and broader and deeper social and terminal ones (see CSR, CSV and Business Ethics legacy) on the other. Leaders’ concerns about values are instrumental in making the Leadership role more tangible: the leaders’ value aspirations and value work can be helpful in a better understanding of the differences between the Managerial and Leader roles. Besides these conceptual interests my future aim in this research is to show relevant Hungarian data in comparison to international data to illustrate some of the Leadership practices in relation to both influencing others in a conventional sense and helping common understanding, giving purpose, showing the way through shared values.

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