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The Development of Employees in Organizations Under the Perception of Leaders



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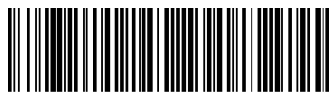
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ABSTRACT:

The study presents qualitative research, of the survey type, which was conducted with individuals in leadership positions, who work in positions of the presidency, direction, management, and other similar positions, about their perceptions about the role of companies in the search for the development of the potential of employees' people. The results indicate that the influence that organizations seek to exert for this type of development is reflected in their competitiveness in the market.



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INTRODUCTION:

The diverse economic and social sectors around the world have advanced in the way they see the need to face major changes, especially over the past 60 years¹.

Drucker¹, one of the great exponents of this change in perspective, stated that we were in a great transformation of the human order, which would cause significant disruptions in the development of this new era, indicated by him as an era of knowledge. He further predicted the fact that, when the history of the present time is written, the most important event that historians will remember will not be technology, nor the internet, nor e-commerce, but the unprecedented change in the human condition.

About the worker, within this new era, Covey² states that a quality knowledge worker is so valuable that, when he unleashes his potential, he allows organizations to create value. He also points out that these same workers are the link with all other investments of the organization and that they provide focus, creativity, and leverage for the use of these investments to better achieve the organization's objectives.

Given this scenario, one of the greatest challenges for organizations seems to be precisely in the task of managing their human talents, much more than technologies or processes.

For the task of managing this human talent, the role of leadership is of recognized importance in terms of providing professionals, even more than having the best technology, processes, products, and updated infrastructure, both means, and stimuli and challenges, so that they develop their maximum potential, aiming at the benefit of the organizational common good.

Providing stimuli, challenges, and conducts that help employees to develop the maximum of their respective potentials is a challenge that several authors have been busy exploring, as this work will demonstrate.

THEORETICAL REFERENCE

Much more than just a set of simple actions and application of methods, there is a more in-depth view of what it is possible to contribute so that each individual can search within themselves the best they can achieve in their evolution as a person and as professional in the process of

education, training, and development of human potential, once it is stimulated by new knowledge to be applied.

We are reminded by Kofman³ that if a person does not feel part of the problem, he cannot also be part of the solution. This means that, only if there is conscious involvement in the challenges to be overcome, there can be effective participation to solve this challenge.

This conscious involvement in challenges to be overcome refers to the fact that a leader, whether in personal or professional life, has as an important part of his role the contribution to the liberation of individual and group potential.

However, it is not possible to make an in-depth analysis of how context and environment contribute to the development of human potential without raising several other issues.

A discussion proposed by Covey⁴ in his book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, is that man is a complex and integral being. Because of this complexity, this man must be aware of the four great human dimensions: body, heart, mind, and spirit. The author states that these dimensions are similar to looking at a universe within each individual, which has an essence and an existence that needs to be developed.

The divisions proposed by Covey⁴, as shown in table 1, are: spirit, which represents the values, beliefs, and meaning of man is the essence; body - the physical and structural part; mind, which represents the ability to evolve through learning; heart, which is related to social coexistence, the ability to build relationships, alliances, and teams.

Table No. 1: Human dimensions according to Covey

Divisions	Representations
Spirit	Values and beliefs. The essence of man.
Body	Physical and structural part.
Mind	Ability to evolve through learning.
Heart	Ability to build relationships, alliances, and teams.

Source: Covey⁴

For the author, the last 3 items would represent existence, through which it is possible to act freely through behaviors that translate values based on the principles of effectiveness.

It is possible to evoke both Kofman³ and Covey⁴ to remember that human potential is also based on values and principles. Both authors state that all individuals, each in their way, value what they do, and what they do represents the practice of these values.

In this way, the values that each claims to have can be translated by the practice of behaviors presented in their daily lives.

When there is an alignment between values and behaviors, according to Kofman⁵, it is said that this is an indicator of integrity and success. Covey⁴, for the definition of integrity, adds another theme to this discussion, namely, the principles.

Still, for Covey⁴, values come from within and all men have values from their essence, for an imperative issue. Often, according to him, these values do not represent the best in the direction of the common good.

Thus, these values must be aligned with the principles that guide behaviors, to build a journey of effectiveness and direction for the common good, to be considered valid. Only then would integrity come. Principles are natural laws and fundamental truths of the universe. We can establish a comparison as follows: they act on individuals just like the force of gravity on planet Earth, acting on them regardless of whether they decide to ignore it.

For Kofman⁵, knowledge is the ability of a person to act effectively to produce the results that are intended to be achieved. The process of incorporating this new knowledge is called learning.

Learning is, therefore, increasing the capacity to produce the results desired by an individual.

From this definition, it is possible to say that learning is related to the ability to understand that there is a gap between what is known today and what one would like to know at a given moment in addition to the present.

Understanding this gap, however, is only possible if there is an awareness that there is no knowledge that would be needed in the new moment. The recognition of being ignorant, of needing new learning, of not knowing is necessary.

Understanding the need to recognize ignorance leads us to another question: how is the question of ignorance addressed today in different organizations or even in an individual's daily routine? After all, being a world where, from the beginning of student life, the priority is to be sure to be able to get good grades and pass; where, in the discussion between colleagues, showing that knowledge is important to receive the recognition that one is better and, even in organizations, where being right is a passport for promotions, how to expect it to be acceptable to assume ignorance?

Recognizing oneself to be ignorant, therefore, would be an important tool for the individual to learn, but demonstrating being ignorant before his peers could impact the evolution of the employee within the organization in which he works.

These reflections show the importance of discussing the enormous challenge that is presented when trying to understand the individual's model of thinking in a scenario that, in most cases, presents itself as an obstacle to learning.

To make this analysis, we have the definition of Kofman⁵ for two models of thought as a basis for learning, which he calls mental models: the mental model of curiosity and the mental model of certainty.

The model of curiosity is one where the individual understands that what he is seeing is his own opinion and, therefore, is aware that there is a possibility that other individuals may have an opinion different from yours.

So, when you have a model of curiosity and you are at odds with someone else, the subject becomes curious, not ignorant. After all, the subject does not react to prove that he is right. On the contrary: he seeks to understand the opinion of his interlocutor. This is the translation of the apprentice's model - the essence of humility.

The other model, that of certainty, is in which the individual understands that what he is seeing, discussing, or even defending is always correct. Therefore, that individual is sure of his reason and if someone does not share that certainty, the wrong is that someone. The big problem that we can identify in the mental model of certainty is that the subject believes that he understands how things are or even how they happen.

To understand how this certainty can create problems, just imagine a situation in which two people with different perceptions, but with the same mental model, have opposite certainties. If both people are quite sure that they are right about that specific subject and believe that the other can only be wrong, we can assume that the consequences of this conflict would also have serious consequences for the organization.

Thus, one can connect the model of certainty to the type of person who is popularly known as “know-it-all”: someone who does not need to learn, because he understands that he already knows enough about the issue discussed. The comparison between the two models is shown in table 2.

Table No. 2: Model of Certainty X Model of Curiosity

	Model of certainty	Model of curiosity
Posture of the individual before his knowledge	One is sure to have the knowledge.	One recognizes himself as ignorant.
Posture of the individual in conflict with others	One defends his point of view since he understands it as correct.	One is willing to understand other views that differ from his own.
Posture of the individual in the face of new knowledge	One understands that he doesn't need to learn because he understands enough.	One is curious and willing to learn, as he understands that he does not have all the knowledge.

Source: Author, 2019

It seems to be more interesting to use the mental model of curiosity, in which you have an opinion of how things work, but there is a possibility of deception. The mental model of certainty, in turn, has the potential to cause problems when different ideas need to converge.

The great challenge of a process of development, training, and education of human potential, therefore, is to seek to understand this paradox of learning in which, in order to learn, one must start from ignorance, from not knowing.

According to Kuhn⁶, the fact that each human being is an individual being, unique in his model of seeing and perceiving the world, is explained by the fact that perception is conditioned by the references that are acquired throughout his existence, coming from life experiences, relationships he had, psychological predispositions, intellectual training, learning and the cultures in which he lived, among others.

The conditioned perception starts to function as a filter that the individual uses to interpret the reality in which he lives, being personalized and individualized, known only by its bearer. This reasoning is equivalent to saying that each one will see the world through its filter, making elements that may be invisible to some and not to others. We can call this unique view a paradigm or even a mental model.

In view of this scenario, a valid question is: how to help the individual to release his/her full human potential, if each individual is conditioned by his / her existence to see the world through a unique filter that is still reinforced by the culture in which he/she lives?

The challenge that this questioning presents us with is to find the necessary actions so that each one can, at each moment of his life, have the ability to question whether the filter through which he looks at the world still indicates a valid reality.

In order that the individual may be able to question his filter when looking at the world, a factor that can be considered fundamental for the development of human potential is the culture of an organization.

According to Taylor⁷, culture is the result of a sum of 3 dimensions, from an organizational point of view. The dimensions are behavior, systems, and symbols. Day-to-day behavior, especially of the main influencers and top leadership. Systems are the mechanisms for managing people and tasks. Symbols show observable events, artifacts, and decisions to which people attach meaning.

Equally important is the concept of how culture can be developed in these places. This happens, according to Taylor⁷, through the messages sent by the leadership about what the leadership values, which is done in a non-verbal way in most cases.

Organizations where leadership shows appreciation through their daily behaviors, which become a reference for people connected in some way to these leaders and, thus, start to act in the same

way, as they understand that to reach the same place where these leaders arrived just do what they do, it is a good example of that concept.

Culture is, therefore, a factor of great significance and decisive when it comes to unlocking the potential of individuals in the environment in which they are inserted.

A consequence of this factor is the reflection of how much education, training, and development are important elements in the process of reaching a new level in human potential, both for those who have the leadership role and for any individual who lives in society.

The influence of culture can be a major inconvenience when individuals question what is happening or even make suggestions about what they consider inappropriate is considered an obstacle. On the other hand, influence can be empowering when it stimulates the questioning of individuals and creates healthy spaces for them to contribute with their views. Thus, it is important to understand the culture and how much it can enhance or discourage the process of evolution of human potential.

The question is how to empower the individual so that he can contribute, through the release of his potential, to be the best he can be within his personal and professional aspirations, to be the protagonist that defines the way forward in his life.

An interesting picture of the size of this challenge for organizations is to verify the parallel drawn by Collins⁸ in his research to write the book *Companies Made to Win*. He makes a comparison with a bus, stating that, for an organization to achieve its goals, it must have the right people on the bus first, and only then choose those with the right skills and the right motivation for the right position.

The role of the educating leader within the organizational environment, according to Covey², must be to always be prepared to communicate the value and potential of people with such clarity that it induces them to perceive these qualities for themselves. Every effort is made to reinforce people's power by using all their resources, be they physical, spiritual, social, or mental.

According to what reinforced Jack Welch⁹, a leader of recognized competence in forming his teams as Chief Executive Officer of General Electric in the 1980s and 1990s, before anyone

became a leader, success results from self-development. He also stated that when an individual becomes a leader, success results from the development of the led team. For him, the leader must nurture and support the team, helping to increase the self-confidence of its members.

Knowing this, what can be done to provide education, training, and development of this potential? Should something be delivered to the individual as a recipe ready to be applied by him? Or should it be possible to generate possibilities for knowledge, skill-building? To allow stagnation or to cause the individual the discomfort of seeing that the choices they need to make are in their hands to put into practice, in their day-to-day, their greatest potential?

We are introduced to the figure of the path liberator by McChesney *et. al.*¹⁰, as an important role of the leader to help his team achieve the goals that the team itself decided to assume and accomplish.

In addition to the figure of the path liberator being present in the leader, he must also be present as the role of each individual with himself, who, when he understands that he is the most responsible for his development, can start choosing his success, making greatest possible effort to become the best within its potential.

With this, this article is complemented with the idea that, if the external action of training, development, and education of human potential are important on the one hand, it is also essential to work in an underlying way to internal issues and, even more, to understand the how much the factors discussed here (protagonism, the model of certainty or curiosity, values and principles, culture, prioritizing the most important and the role of the path liberator) impact the individual's ability to learn and evolve in its entirety.

Furthermore, the empowerment to overcome this challenge of reaching the greatest potential is in the hands of each one, through choices, without ignoring, of course, the role of the one who exercises leadership and must stimulate the individual, through example, to reach the maximum of their potential.

METHOD:

A survey was conducted (opinion poll), consisting of 16 questions, and a scale of answers with 5 items, starting with "strongly disagree" and ending with "strongly agree".

Through a convenience sample, the research was applied to a group of 21 leaders of Brazilian organizations that hold presidential positions (6 participants); direction (5 participants); management (7 participants); and other similar positions (3 participants).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Because of the vast majority of respondents, the results of this survey indicate that there is an awareness on the part of leaders that an increasing number of individuals today can make choices, and it is necessary to manage these individuals and themselves in this new scenario.

It is also possible to note that there is a perception that leaders must work intensively in the new people management scenario, which has permeated companies in recent times.

As for the educational leader, as shown in table 3, of the 21 respondents, only 2 disagree that this role is not valued in the organization and that the fact of communicating the value and potential of people so clearly induces them to perceive these qualities by themselves. However, about 42% of the remaining 19 still have doubts about the valuation, adopting a neutral score of 3. Only about 37% understand that the educating leader is fully valued, and this is more concentrated in functions outside the main leadership.

Table No. 3: Is the role of the educating leader valued within the organization?

Answer	Percentage
Strongly agree	33.5%
Partially agree	19%
Neutral	38%
Strongly disagree	9.5%

Source: Author, 2019

With regard to considering that the leadership team sends messages about how much the organization prioritizes the development of its followers in the direction of being the best they can be at any given moment, there was no agreement, with 10 respondents understanding that they send, 7 that do not send and 4 presented neutral responses.

Table No. 4: Does the leadership team send clear messages about how much the organization values the development of its followers?

Answer	Percentage
Strongly agree	47.6%
Neutral	19%
Strongly disagree	33.4%

Source: Author, 2019

It is clear, therefore, that the way the leadership sees its own behavior is different among respondents. It is worth noting that this work did not aim to confront the vision of leaders with that of those being led.

Most respondents (71%) do not agree that education, training, and development have clear success indicators and are followed accurately and frankly, with a focus on the greatest potential of each trainee. They do not see the results of education, training, and development efforts and how much the individual has translated these investments into practice.

This is problematic, as it directly influences the organization's investments in developing the professionals' potential.

For most respondents (57%), there is in the organization in which they work a clear view that investment in training and development is part of the educational process that promotes the sustained development of the individual's potential.

It is possible to see here the conflicting views between the importance of the role of the educating leader within the companies where the research respondents work, since, for the respondents, this type of leader is not valued, does not send clear messages, as shown in table 4, does not produce a job with clear indicators, but still consider education important to promote the development of individuals.

For the majority (52%), unleashing the potential of team members so that they can deliver the best they can at every moment is a measure of leadership success. However, it is worth noting

that there is a certain difficulty for the chief executive (half of the respondents in this position) to value this skill.

The vast majority of respondents (90%) indicate that the organizational culture can cause a direct impact so that the professional can have better performance in the organization.

On the possibility of changing habits and also on the need to change paradigms and to constantly act proactively, 57% of respondents showed agreement.

Thus, it is interesting to note that, if leaders have the impact of organizational culture on the professional's performance, they recognize that the same professional can change their habits and act proactively, closing a cycle on the organizational culture itself.

The group of 21 respondents considers that the joint work of the teams is directly linked to the extent to which the professionals understand their roles in the organization.

There is disagreement on the part of the respondents that the internal human potential in organizations does not impact the short-term result, because what matters is that the professional produces according to the purpose for which he was hired and knows that he has to deliver what the leader wants.

This conflict also makes the role of those responsible for developing potential a major challenge, as it is necessary that their actions are translated into short-term results.

For the vast majority of respondents (71%), training is part of the development and performance process, and it is necessary to ensure the daily practice of these new stimuli in the participant's life with appropriate tools. It is noted, with this, that the potential development team within the organization has a green light for its work, regardless of how challenging it may be.

For only 42% of respondents, work teams (including education, training, and development) must jointly plan how to achieve the organization's common goals, aiming to maximize the result of the whole, with 33% neutral on this issue and the whole the rest contrary.

CONCLUSION

It is evident when taking into account the observations resulting from this research, how much the subject does not yet have a sustainable alignment, that is, a shared vision of what is expected as a role of leadership in continuously developing the human potential of the organization's talents.

If, on the one hand, leaders have some understanding of their importance in the process of developing the human potential of their followers, on the other, organizations do not seem to have developed all the mechanisms so that this role can be performed.

Likewise, there is still a lot to be done by organizations and leaders when we analyze the results so that they understand the importance of this development in achieving results, not only in the short term but also in the medium and long term.

It is extremely important to deepen the results of the research carried out, as it was possible to observe several distortions of perception among the respondents, which, on the one hand, are useful for their diversity, on the other, are dangerous as to the divergence between what is important for the organization and people reach their greatest human potential.

In a future investigation, the investigation of the causes of distortions in perceptions between leaders of different roles and different organizations may prove interesting for a deeper understanding of the issues addressed in this work.

If it is important to stimulate the individual's awakening so that he understands the need to be the best he can be at each moment of his life, break paradigms and adopt mental models that support his growth, it is equally important to understand that this function also falls on the leader.

Since the organization has the role of creating systemic and cultural structures so that employees can develop their potential, it is up to the leader to understand his important role as an educator, analyzing the way he is transmitting messages about the valorization of the growth and education of the individuals under his command, as he is the provocateur, the stimulator, the enabler, and the great example so that the potential of each one can be reached.

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