How to evaluate leadership skills

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Agenda

• The deep nature of the leadership concept
• How to evaluate if I’m a leader: instruments and other useful suggestions (the same when I evaluate someone different from me)
• A brief exemplary history
The deep nature of the leadership concept

- Too much “seasons” about this issues?
- Too much “speaking of leadership” instead of “practice desirable leadership”?
- To “be” a leader vs to “do” the leader and/or to “have” some skills?
- How could we transfer our normal manner to consider a person in an “olistic” way in the field of “leadership?”

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Too much “seasons” about this issues?

• The “Great Man theory” (why not great women?) - (Thomas Carlyle) – “Born to be a leader....”

• Trait Theory of Personality (not of Leadership....) (Gordon Allport, Raymond Cattell, Hans Eysenck)

Some personality traits are mandatory to be a Leader
Contingency Theories (Joan Woodward, Gareth Morgan, Fred Fielder, William Richard Scott)

“The best way to organize depends on the nature of the environment to which the organization must relate”

……... in other words…..

“it is difficult to imagine that a polar bear can live well in the desert or an alligator at the north pole”
Situational Theories (Paul Hersey, Henry Blanchard)

• Different situations demand different kind of leadership

• More emphasis on the characteristics of the subordinates than in the previous theories

• The assumption is that the subordinates, as group, have specific leadership-needs in terms of directive or support behaviour

• The good leader will be able to modify his/her own style in reason of the level of management and support which is requested by the subordinates
Skills (Behavioral) Theories (Katz, Mumford and coll.)

• Basic skills: technical, human, conceptual

• The importance of every skill depends from the level of the leadership you’re considering in a specific organization
Cultural approach (Hall, Trompenaars, Hofstede, House et al),

- **Ethnocentrism and Prejudice** are key questions to approach the Leadership in different cultures.

- **Nine Cultural Dimension of Leadership** (GLOBE, 2004 Study conclusion)
  - **Power Distance**: The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally.
  - **Uncertainty Avoidance**: The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events.
  - **Humane Orientation**: The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others.
• Collectivism I: (Institutional) *The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.*

• Collectivism II: (In-Group) *The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.*

• Assertiveness: *The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others.*

• Gender Egalitarianism: *The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality.*

• Future Orientation: *The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviors such as delaying gratification, planning, and investing in the future.*

• Performance Orientation: *The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.*
Leader-Member Exchange Theory (Danserou, Graen, Haga, Cashman, Graen, Uhl-Bien)

• Stress the vertical dyadic relationship between a leader with each of his or her subordinates (each relationship is special and unique)

• In a work unit, subordinates are part of a:
  - in-group if they accept to expand and negotiate with the leader his/her role and responsibilities;
  - out-group if they prefer to be considered in reason of the formal role and assigned activities described in the contract;

• a key question for the leader is to obtain trust and respect from both the members of the two groups (so effective leadership is contingent on effective leader-member exchanges)
Transformational leadership Theory
(Downton, Burns, Bass, Avolio, and many others…….)

- .... moves from the model of charismatic leadership .....  
- ... to an integrated approach that include charisma as key factor but 
- .... strictly combined with 

inspirational motivation  
intellectual stimulation  
individualized consideration

- That frequently could be reached passing from a “transactional model of leadership” during which the leader uses some tipical behaviour:
  - contingent reward  
  - constructive transactions  
- management by (active or passive) exception  
  - corrective transactions
Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era

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To stay in the leadership position, I had to learn to do something I had never been trained to do: **take action before I had all the facts.** I learned to **leap before I looked,** trusting that **the bridge would appear.** It was like climbing a mountain on a foggy day when you can only see fifteen feet ahead at any given time. How do you navigate through that? Take a few steps forward until you see the next few steps. Readjust, then take a few more. Do this over and over again.
….. really new ????

**Bounded (limited) rationality** is the idea that in decision-making, rationality of individuals is limited by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make a decision. It was proposed by **Herbert A. Simon (1957)**, as an alternative basis for the mathematical modeling of decision making.
Cybernetics (Wiener, Norbert, 1948) is a transdisciplinary approach for exploring regulatory systems, their structures, constraints, and possibilities.

Cybernetics has been defined in a variety of ways, by a variety of people, from a variety of disciplines. The Larry Richards Reader includes a list of definitions:

"Science concerned with the study of systems of any nature which are capable of receiving, storing and processing information so as to use it for control." - A. N. Kolmogorov

"………………offers a method for the scientific treatment of the system in which complexity is outstanding and too important to be ignored." - W. Ross Ashby

"The art of creating equilibrium in a world of constraints and possibilities." - Ernst von Glasersfeld

"The science and art of understanding." - Humberto Maturana

"The science and art of the understanding of understanding." - Rodney E. Donaldson

"The art of interaction in dynamic networks." - Roy Ascott

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but, in my daily activities....

- All of these theories can be accepted because they fit with the times I’m living, the problems I’m facing with, the persons with whom I’m discussing ... 
  - or 
    - refused 
  - or 
    - combined with some other theories
• So every theory is useful in my personal portfolio of competences

• My ability is to combine the different skills and relate behaviours in the “right” way
i.e.: assuming that we could have all the possible combinations of the eight theories that we have previously summarized, we have

40.320

different possibilities to be a leader !!!!!!
• How can I evaluate this characteristics in a useful, not time-consuming and feasible way?

• ....... with prudence and humility I try to show you my personal vision and action.......
Two main questions

| Leadership is a question of a person (specific, unique, involved in real life with others….) | As person, I’m continuing in evolution about my personal conviction, social model, information about the environment, and so on….
|
| So we have to consider to “be” a leader and not (or not only) to have “skills” and “behaviour” | It could be reasonable that this evolution also directly influenced my leadership profile |
And one assumption

When I try to measure something, my personal point of view and/or perspective and/or instrument adopted, influenced the results

(so I can reduce the bias but there is no chance of reaching a perfect evaluation system)
Is there a theory that satisfy this premises?

Towards a theory of being-centered leadership: Multiple levels of being as context for effective leadership

Louis Fry and Mark Kriger

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Figure 1  Multiple levels of being and leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of being</th>
<th>Key question</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| V - Leader in the sensible/physical world | What you observe physically about the leader in terms of results  | a. Adaptation to the organisation  
b. Administrative role  
c. Enable the development of subordinates  |
<p>| IV - Leader at the level of images and imagination | What the leader is able to construct and maintain, that derives from vision, values and images | Construction of an organization’s culture |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of being</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III - Leader from the soul (individual self)</td>
<td>Keep in touch with subtle feelings and intuitions that can result in better understanding of the overall context as well as the needs of followers.</td>
<td>Establish open, transparent, trusting and genuine relationships. Aware of the present, other-centered actions, scarcely influenced by negative emotional status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Key question</td>
<td>Focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>II - Leader from the level of spirit</td>
<td>Lead through love and service to others</td>
<td>Enable workers to experience meaningful work and a deeper sense of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I - Leader from the non-dual</td>
<td>Lead responding to each situation as it arises within a unique context and configuration of forces in the moment.</td>
<td>In each moment of the life an infinite range of possibilities exists. Inspiration and creativity, as well as moral standards, are the product of inner work, often only partially perceived or understood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
our "human being" profile is continuously in evolution ...... the same if we consider our being a leader

The Evolution of a Leader

• Emerging leader
• Early leader
• Established leader
• Emeritus leader

…… with some difficulties

… could be that sometimes we assume LSD …..

(Leadership Spectrum Disorders)
How to evaluate the quality of the leadership (limited to the nursing field)

- The concept
- The instruments
- The methods
The concept (that we hope to be able to measure)

- Leadership assessment
- Communication
- Trust
- Empowerment
- Nursing autonomy
- Optimizing Competing Values & Priorities
- Organizational Culture and Climate
- Professional Practice Environment
- Span of Control
- Personal Resources
- Burnout
- Job Satisfaction
- Motivation/Job Involvement
- Organizational Commitment
- Turnover
- Patient Satisfaction

From: Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (2013). Developing and Sustaining Nursing Leadership, (2nd ed.). Toronto, ON: Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario. This work is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.
64 different instruments !!!!
The method

• Self-administrate Scale +++

• Scale/Index compiled by the subordinates ++

• Questionnaire +++

• Audit +

….with a lack of indications about the manner with which we could share in the best way this instruments and methods !!!!!!!!
... but if we also consider

- Forgiveness/acceptance
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Courage
- Humility
- Kindness

- Compassion
- Patience
- Excellence
- Happiness
- ..............

???
Milestones

- At what stage of life (professional and not only) are we observing that leader?

- We have to get an idea, possibly clear, of:
  - the main behavior,
  - the mind,
  - the heart and soul of this person.

- We will have to adopt different tools (at least three/four) and methods that allow us to explore all the features and perspectives from which a leader can be observed.

- Be cyclic and progressive in order to have a complete picture of what is happening every three/four years.
Key questions

• the people were at the first place?

• Have I (he/she) cultivate(s) an environment where it is free and safe to tell the truth?

• Am I (Is he/she) a positive example(s) for my (his/her) team?

• Am I (Is he/she) accountable?

• Have I (he/she) fed a creative culture who is also able to reinvent the organization if necessary?

• Am I (Is he/she) leaving a positive legacy for those who come after me?
Final suggestions

Sometimes it is useful to create a little collection of leader stories that could be used as case studies for the new generations of leader.

... it takes time to build a good leadership profile and so....... no one pulls the blades of grass to make them grow .......

...... knowing that the final goal is quiet difficult: create/maintain a healthy work environment and reach a plain and a satisfactory acceptance of one’s life.