DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

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Abstract: This paper main goal is to reveal the nature of the distributed leadership, its distinctive features and its impact on the complexity of the leader's role. Brief comparison between the command and control leadership and the distributed leadership is made. Distributed leadership step-by-step application is uggested applicable for big corporations and small firms.

Keywords: leadership, collective form of leadership, distributed leadership

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1.   Introduction

Nowadays the work and corporate environment have become too complex and broad scope demanding. As a result, the leadership and the criteria for effective leadership have changed over the years. The *charismatic hero-type leader* has become *more hero of old times* and place is made for new approaches in leadership. According to Temelkova (2017) "Those changes require such a fundamental restructuring in the internal structures, which would ensure harmony with that environment. This may be achieved through the application of innovative approaches and toolset in management, which would provide a reliable mechanism for:

- timely detection of the changes;
- risk evaluation;
- elaborating and taking efficient management decisions in the conditions of a growing uncertainty. (p. 30)[1]

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1 Temelkova, M (2017) *Development of Controlling in the Organizations from the Service Sector under the Conditions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences, Vol 6, No 3, 28-43, ISSN: 2278-6236, p 30

2.   Task and challenges

This paper main goals are first to reveal the nature of the distributed leadership, its distinctive features and its impact on the complexity of the leader's role, and second to suggest a simple step-by-step application applicable for both big corporations and small firms.

3.   The complexity of the leader's role

The complexity of the leader's role can be revealed by reviewing some of the *various functions* the leader is dealing with. (i) *An administrator* - this is his most obvious function. (ii) *Planner* - this feature includes both identifying immediate steps, methods and tools, and long-term business plans. (iii) *Politician* - one of the leader's most important functions is to set goals and dictate the line of group behavior. (iv) *Expert* - the leader in the group is the person most often referred to as a reliable source of information or as a classified expert. (v) *Representative of the group to the outside environment* - the leader is an official representative of the group and a spokesperson on its behalf. (vi) *Regulator of the internal relations within the group* - the regulation of the business relations in the group is done through a communication network. (vii) *Source of encouragement and punishment*, etc. [1]

On the other hand, the complexity of the leader's role is determined by the wide expertise in various fields, which leader must possess - law, economics, psychology, marketing, etc. This broad knowledge is required along with the specific expertise in the field of work in which the leader operates.

Is it then possible for a one person to acquire all these skills and knowledge to become a successful leader? Often the answer to this question is that the good leader is the one who can form a good team. Such a team, however, will always need control and ongoing coordination. That is why he clarification of the problem of leadership in its various aspects is extremely important.

The last decade the leadership theories has evolve in a less linear manner. Rather than seeking 'one true theory' of leadership, contemporary thinking has explored the idea of leadership from different perspectives.

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[1] Detailed on Leadership Features see Марков К., *Лидерство и формиране на екипи*, Издателски комплекс при НВУ „Васил Левски", Велико Търново, 2014, ISBN *978-954-753-205-2, p 58-59*

4.   The nature of the distributed leadership

The command and control leadership is exercised individually by appointed leaders in formal positions of authority in a clearly defined hierarchy and by using top-down decision-making. Vice versa the *distributed leadership* is exercised by multiple leaders - some in formal positions of authority and some not who work collaboratively across hierarchy levels.

The distinctive features of distributed leadership are:

(i)   Distributed leadership concentrates on the leadership practice rather than the particular person. As Spillane (2005) formulates "Distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures" (p 144)[1].

(ii)   The individuals involved are not necessarily appointed formal leaders. The distributed perspective focuses on the interactions of individuals through leadership practice. It is often noted that leadership needs to be shared and distributed leadership is collective contribution of all leaders to the organization.

(iii)   This is achieved through cooperation, reliance on others and a willingness to engage, working together with people who are different from us, sometimes leading and sometimes following[2]. That is the reason why distributed leadership involves leadership practices that are more collaborative, open and decentralized.

(iv)   The borders in distributed leadership are not definitive and strict.

(v)   Distributed leadership is solving problems oriented

(vi)   Distributed leadership is a collective form of leadership. Collective leadership is an umbrella term for shared responsibility in an organization and the distributed leadership is one of the possibilities.

Distributed leadership has been mostly criticised for failing to conform to traditional views of 'the leader', and that not all leadership occurs in the context of a problem.

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1 James P. Spillane (2005) Distributed Leadership, The Educational Forum, 69:2

2 On distributed leadership nature see also Deborah Ancona and Elaine Backman (2017) *Distributed Leadership from Pyramids to Networks: The Changing Leadership Landscape*, Management Sloan School, Leadership Center

5.   Distributed leadership first steps in a step-by-step application

The steps for using the distributed leadership advantages in a big corporate structure or a small firm are the same.

Step one - *people have to be engaged to become leaders*. The easiest way is to separate their talent from the day job routine and to give them a chance to prove themselves. This will improve their confidence. The importance of this step is connected mostly with the fact that the biggest resistance will come from the people themselves.

Step two - *encouraging risk taking*. Communication is a key factor in making sure people understand what the risks are and what risks they can take. The size of a company is also an influential factor in determining how quickly a decision can be made. Employees in large corporate organizations tend to take far fewer risks than the ones in a company with ten to twenty employees.

Step tree - *building a no-blame culture*. Mistakes have to be talked about and learned from.

6.   Conclusion

Distributed leadership is not about just taking collective decisions is about finding the ad hock leader. The one who will react best depending on pending issues and problems to be solve. There are few small steps to be taken first in engaging people to become leaders.

7.   Further researches

A more complex research on step-by-step approach of distributed leadership should be made. More practical suggestions for the big corporate structure or a small firm must be made.

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