The Education of Public Leaders: Dynamics and Effectivenesses

Mihaela V. CĂRĂUŞAN[1]

Abstract: Education is the most important asset of the people and the one to which the national and European governors should pay more attention. Education is the only one that could give people specific knowledge and could help them to deal with real, practical situations. In order to do this, we should open the public administration and law education system to values that are specific to other disciplines such as econometrics and sociology. The future leaders of the administrative system should know more about the impact of their decisions and to know and use the tools that will help them to do such analyses. A leader is more than a manager and administrator he/she needs specific skills and knowledge and the education system should build a curriculum that will provide him/her the necessary knowledge and tools to become one. In Romania, in the field of public administration, little attention has been focused on educating leaders for public bureaucracy. The hypothesis that led us to this study was that public bureaucracy leaders do not possess the qualities necessary to build the public administration of tomorrow. That it is why, in the future, we should focus more on leaders because they infuse changes in an organization and act as an inner part of the organization. Moreover, the strength of the administrative capacity in times of crisis consists in the qualification of the leading human resources. Leadership can change the nature and the direction of public administration. This is the reason why, we have to establish and re-evaluate the next steps in educating the future leaders.

Keywords: institutional leadership; skills; conceptual matrix; stability; behaviour

1. A Short Plea for Promoting Leadership

Human relations theory places a great deal of emphasis on interaction and communication as a mean to motivate the human factor. As Pfeffer (p. 42) noted: "Control in organizations is exercised through individual, interpersonal influence, in which those in roles of authority motivate and direct others to act as they would like. This interpersonal influence is often called leadership."

Because the question of leadership is closely tied to authority, Weber's comments on this matter are worth considering. More specifically, Weber argued that the effective exercise of authority requires the authority figure to possess legitimacy.

[1] Senior Lecturer, PhD, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania. 6 Povernei Street, Sector 1, Bucharest, Romania, +4021.318.08.97, fax: +4021.312.25.35. Corresponding author: mihaelacarausan@gmail.com.

This can be based on (a) the particular characteristics of the authority figure, (b) on the content of the authoritative commands, or (c) on the occupation of positions of authority. Thus, one way to think about leadership is in the context of the various bases of legitimacy. (Jaffe, p. 84)

Leadership is a process that is similar to management in many ways. Leadership involves influence, as does management. Leadership entails working with people, which management entails as well. Leadership is concerned with effective goal accomplishment, and so is management. But leadership is also different from management. Management is about seeking order and stability; leadership is about seeking adaptive and constructive change. To manage means to accomplish activities and master routines, whereas to lead means to influence the others and create visions for change. Leaders change the way people think about what is possible. (Northouse, pp. 9-11)

Most work on leadership suggests that occupying formal position of authority and issuing rational and logical commands is insufficient for effective legitimate leadership. If it were sufficient, we would not witness the effective legitimate leadership. If it were sufficient, we would not witness the infinite number of studies and handbook on the secrets of successful leadership. One of the central leadership challenges is to solve the fundamental conflict, which Barnard emphasized, between the individual and the organization. According to Henry Mintzberg (p. 62), all managers must adopt, among their many roles, the “leader role” which is designed to bring about the integration of individual needs and organizational goals.

Managers need to promote efficient operation by concentrating their efforts on reconciling subordinate and organizational needs. The subjective informality of leadership makes it immune to easy formalization or codification. It is not mechanical but social. It involves style, symbols, culture, and attitude. Leadership is such an open-ended phenomenon that the thousands of studies and guides on the topic, taken together, produce a bewildering and contradictory assemblage of findings and advice. (Jaffe, pp. 84-85)

It is equally true of our society, and a fact generally overlooked, that most people, at one time or another, are thrust into a position of leading a group. Most people become parents, for example, a leadership position in relation to their children. The teacher, too, is a leader. Each person is a leader who gets chosen to direct a

committee or task group, who is elected president of a volunteer organisation, who assumes responsibility as scout leader or camp director. (Gordon, p. 2)

If being a leader turns out to be a bad experience, it is almost always because of the leader's own ineffectiveness. And considering that few people ever get any kind of specific training in leader effectiveness, it is easy to understand why being a leader so often is difficult, draining, and disappointing. (Gordon, p. 3) But worthwhile.

The universal reaction of people who get appointed to positions of leadership is that they "made up to the ladder, got to the top". But in reality, anyone who gets a leadership position has not made it; it is only the beginning. Being the leader does not make them one. For after they get to be the leader of a group, they are going to have to do a lot to earn the acceptance of the group members and have an influence on their behaviour.

Even more important, the acquisition of a leadership title soon brings unexpected disappointments and uninvited problems. Undoubtedly, the leader will see evidence of resentment or changes in the way the group members relate to him/her. Even if they were brought in from the outside to be made a leader of the group, they must be prepared to encounter a wide range of unfavourable responses – suspicion, distrust, hostility, subservience, passive resistance, insecurity. People come naturally to these built-in patterns of negative responses; they learned them when they were children. The leader "inherits" each group member's "inner child of the past". (Gordon, pp. 12-14) We can conclude that, in fact, when they become leaders, they have not made it, they had it!

2. The Layers of Leadership

There are at least three underlying fixed perceptions of leadership: firstly those leaders are born, not made; secondly that leaders do not necessarily need followers, and finally that there is no need for leadership in public administration – the political leadership is enough, public administration is just executive.

"Leaders are born, not made." That is what most people thought, until social scientists began to make leadership a legitimate subject for intensive investigation. Back in the old days, when strong social class barriers made it next to impossible for just anyone to become a leader, it appeared to most people that leadership was inherited, since leaders emerged so frequently within the same favoured families. As class barriers crumbled and it became obvious that leaders were coming from

all strata of society, common sense told us that leadership was much more complex than being born with the right genes or in the proper families. A major breakthrough came when social scientists began to look at leadership as an interaction between leaders and their followers. After all, they reasoned, it is the follower who in the last analysis either accepts of rejects the influence of the leader. Obviously, today (n.a.), you cannot be a leader without followers.

He/she will not for long be a group leader without having group members who accept his/her influence, guidance, and direction. It follows that a leader earns and retains his or her role as a leader only if in the eyes of the group members "following the leader" holds out the promise that they will get their needs met. (Gordon, pp. 16-18)

Bryman identified four approaches to leadership in his review of the literature. First, the trait approach emphasizes the relatively fixed physical and personality characteristics, such as physique, height, intelligence, sociability, and assertiveness that are associated with the effective leaders. The second approach examines leadership styles that are less fixed and more malleable and pertain to the actual behaviours leaders employ. The general criticism to the first two approaches gave rise to the third one – the contingency model, in which there is a shift from universal traits and styles of leadership to the relationship between traits or styles and the situation or context.

The fourth approach – what Bryman called the new leadership approach – represents a more general movement toward the creation of an organizational climate and culture that motivates, inspires, and stimulates constant quality improvements, self-initiate, and continuous learning among organizational members (Avolio and Bass 1994; Sims and Lorenzi 1992; Bass 1997). The most widely used term to describe this style is transformational leadership (Bass 1997) which offers leaders the flexibility to model a set of core values to inspire the followers. Theorists often contrast transformational leadership with transactional leadership, which is based on providing rewards for high performance and issuing penalties for substandard performance. (Jaffe, pp. 85-86)

The bureaucratic leadership is the institutional leadership in the administration of public bureaucracies within the executive branch at all levels of government. More specifically, bureaucratic leadership is an active process that emanates from the executive branch and entails the exercise of power, authority, and strategic discretion in pursuit of the public interest. The lack of scholarly interest in

bureaucratic leadership seems odd, given the prominent role of public bureaucracies in a democratic society. Even scholars in the fields of public administration and political science have focused little attention on leadership in public bureaucracies. (Terry, p. 4) It is time to put leadership into the administration of Romanian public bureaucracy.

3. Methodology

Studying literature and direct observation and assessment were the basic instruments used in our research. The technical information anchored the research into larger layers of perception, while direct observation offered the means and the examples necessary to build a conceptual matrix of how leadership works in the Romanian public administration.

By research and observation, we identified many of the critical requirements of effective public leadership. We also emphasized that it is the public administration schools' aim to organize the knowledge so that it may be more easily understandable to those who aspire to become public leaders and more available for their use. The results obtained were further integrated in both mainstream leadership theory and administrative leadership theory to establish with higher precision where Romania stands in the first decade of the 21st century. The research paper ends with an assessment of administrative leadership in Romania and identifies lines of development to attain effective leadership: education and job experience.

The conceptual matrix presented in the paper is a possible framework to discuss administrative leadership in other countries. A future comparative study may offer a mirror and direction of leadership in the post-industrial society and may trigger new approaches to the reform of public administration.

4. Public Leaders' Dilemma

Leaders working within a formal organization are caught in a dilemma – they must meet the needs of the organization, as well as satisfy the needs of their group members. The trick lies in learning how to balance the needs from both directions, so as to be perceived as effective by both superiors and group members. As anyone who has worked in a formal organization knows this is not an easy task, because

organizational needs are primarily oriented to increase performance and efficiency, while the group members' needs are often those that motivate them to resist pressure for increased performance.

Public administration institutions are recognised as being formal organizations, a hierarchical one and for that the public leaders need two sets of skills: one to meet their own needs (needs connected to the idea of keeping as long as he/she can the leadership position within the organization) and another set of quite different skills to satisfy the needs of group members. (Gordon, pp. 19-20)

As Gordon showed (p. 20) these two sets of skills are:

A. Skills to meet group members' needs:	1. Behaviour that increases group members' self-esteem and personal worth.
	2. Behaviour that increases group cohesiveness and team spirit.
B. Skills to meet organizational needs	1. Behaviour that motivates productivity and the achievement of group goals.
	2. Behaviour that helps members reach goals: planning, scheduling, coordinating, problem-solving, providing resources.

An effective public leader cannot be only a "human relations specialist" neither can he/she be only an "efficiency specialist". He or she must be both. Even more important, the effective public leader must also acquire the flexibility or sensitivity to know when and where to employ these quite diverse skills to achieve mutual satisfaction of the needs of group members and the needs of the leader.

Finally, the effective public leader must learn the skills to solve the inevitable conflicts that arise between two competing sources of needs.

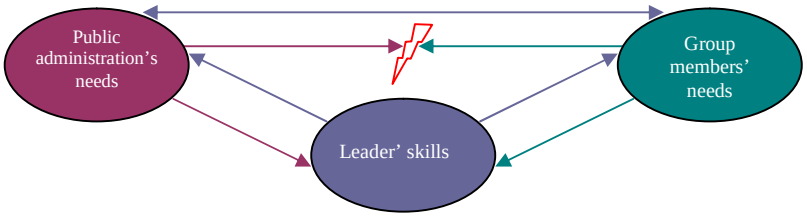

Figure 1. Leaders' Skills

Source: the author

Unfortunately, rushing in to take charge, to reorder the needs, can get leaders into hot waters. Eager to produce quick reforms, instant cures, and dramatic increases in efficiency, leaders succumb to the well-known "new broom" temptation, with high expectations of sweeping clean the mess left by the group's previous boss. Groups resist change and hang on tenaciously to their habitual ways. Any action of the leader that is perceived as being a threat to the maintenance of the group standards, to the "fair day's work", is strongly rejected, especially if the action of the leader is regarded as arbitrary. Groups also strongly resist the introduction of new methods and procedures, especially if they are arbitrarily and unilaterally instituted by the leader. Thinking of effective public leaders as persons with skills in problem-solving, we have to emphasize that leaders need to assume full responsibility to solve the problem alone; rather they can enlist the resources of every members to help them (but not for every problem). In theory at least, the ideal group would marshal the creative resources of every member (including the leader) as it faces its problems and searches for the best solutions. (Gordon, p. 38)

5. The Dynamics of Becoming a Public Leader

We started our study by considering education as the pillar which could support effective public leadership. Higher education has a particularly powerful effect on the access to professional and managerial occupations and to the creation of future leaders. In Romania almost all academic institutions have public administration as a field of study, but not all of them have leadership in their curricula, as a study subject. A great number of them accept the idea that public administration is more the implementation of the law and less about leadership. In order to diminish this old idea based on research and observation, we designed a matrix of public leadership.

In our matrix the “X” axis is the scope axis so if we want to pass from the administrative management to institutional leadership, we have to increase the attention given to education and career experience. That is why the education of human resources in public administration must distinguish between the necessary training for leadership positions - senior managers (who generally have a political nature), specialized administrative positions and the positions that need only medium training.

Regardless of how education is made, it is known that the value of an administration, its effectiveness, depends mostly on people who compose it. But to obtain leadership, it is necessary that the entire academia which provides education for government staff should rather focus on one hand more on research than teaching, and, secondly, more on practice than theory as it concerns, for example, the leadership skills. Thus, education and training will be focused more on development and will cultivate the necessary skills rather than the technical/ administrative skills. So, it is obvious that only achieving theoretical standards is no longer sufficient. The competencies stated as being essential for public leadership are: the ability to manage, the ability to communicate, strategic thinking, flexibility, vision, team building, accountability, customer service, political savvy etc.

The lack of leaders can be destructive, mainly in transition times. The visionary capacity of a leader can increase the level of trust in the future, even if in our days nobody sees a flourishing future for public administration. Depending on the “X” axis we can locate a person considering how much he/she realises, how ambitious his/her goals are, namely how important it is to pass the management and to be lined-up in the leaders group.

The other axis of the matrix is the capacity one, which describes the personal ability to evolve from the administrative management to leadership, from the technical overview, to the conceptual one, more precisely to change.

Considering education and stability as professional determinants in public administration, we can identify three possible links between recruitment requirements and qualifications, namely, jobs with appropriately qualified civil servants (employed at their skill level), jobs with overqualified civil servants (employed below their skill level) and jobs with underqualified civil servants (employed above their skill level). (adapted after Porket, p. 586)

Stability is determined on the basis of the perceived degree of permanence of performance: permanent – this reflects an enduring feature, something that remains for the future (ability and task characteristics); temporary – a transient feature, something that is likely to change over time (luck, effort or temporary paid activities).

Combining the two dimensions, the scope (career) and the strength (capacity) into a single graphic crossed by the lines of stability and of the educational level, we will obtain a matrix similar to Figure 2.

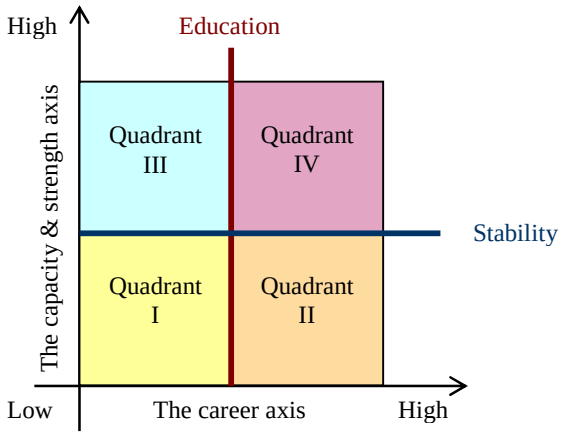

Figure 2: The Public Leadership Matrix – the serpent evolution

Source: the author

The matrix is divided into four quadrants that have different consequences on the public sector leadership, namely:

Quadrant I – leaders among executives, they do not yet posses the human and conceptual skills, but they follow educational programs in order to accomplish them. They carry on a more technical job and dream to become an institutional leader. In this quadrant, taking into consideration the legal requirements for higher education studies in the field of public administration, we also may include those who follow courses in this respect. They have to split the time between family, work and education. They are without stability and education, but they do their best to get them.

Quadrant II – belongs to leaders who are ready to occupy a top management job, but because they do not have career experience or just entered the public system

(with career experience but not in the public sector) they could not access such a position. Usually they are informal leaders or back up leaders, so they possess the necessary leadership skills. In the same quadrant we can include those young leaders that are in the "waiting room" because elderly people who are in top positions and who have only management skills are on those positions. Also, they can produce resentments among those persons who view them as blocking their career prospectus and their communication with the group. Moreover, in this quadrant we can find leaders who have high relationship and low task, but they have the support of the group. As well, they can, sometimes, be attracted in politics, because there, they can manifest their skills and they have the followers' support. And yet they do not want this type of political position because they search stability. In the same quadrant, we can bring the qualified individuals who are regarded as politically unreliable and, therefore banned from employment at their skill level.

Quadrant III – consequently, in this quadrant, we can observe those people who have vested interests in holding their positions and show little inclination to job-changing, the head officers. They are satisfied with their position, because it is a leading one but not one in the top, so they can skip responsibility, hiding behind technicality and procedures. They are limited in their accession to the top or middle management positions, because they are at the beginning of their professional career. Often, because of the lack of experience, and more often of studies, they have to occupy a lower level position. In Romania we can observe that, most of the times, in this quadrant married women are included, because they prefer a job with low responsibility, low task and low relationship.

Quadrant IV – inhabited by acreditated leaders, the experienced ones. They pursue the change, because they see their future in the institution, they conduct, sometimes, professional bodies and inspire the others to follow the same career path. They have the knowledge, the group support and the skills necessary to be successful; they are true vectors of changes. They do not run away from responsibility, they know how to delegate the power and to make the others aware that they are part of a group; their power is a legitimate one. In addition, they have high tasks and high relationships which help them keep their position even under political instability. They are professionals with leadership skills.

If he/ she is in one of the quadrants it does not mean that he/she can keep his/her place forever and cannot pass from leadership to management. For example, if he/

she closes 'the gates' of professionalisation or he/ she not aware of what is going on around, he /she will 'sit on a King/ Queen chair' and you may risk to go back from one quadrant to another. As a consequence, those who are in the 3rd quadrant and are politically undesirable can find in the change of government their opportunity to obtain a leading position based on their professional qualifications. What is at stake is stability but education will still be there.

Not surprisingly, the position within the matrix depends on the number of objective and/or subjective factors including the stage of development reached – the existence or non-existence of traits, the supply of and demand for specific educational qualifications, political considerations, the assignment system, family and personal connections, patronage, vested interests and the individual's attitudes.

6. Instead of Conclusions – Humane Public Leadership

Public administrators must think and act in a broader context than ever before. Constitutionalization makes public administration more akin to governance than to management alone. Judicial supervision of public administration is no longer a novelty. It is well entrenched. (Rosenbloom, p. 315) So, we have to think more of the human relations and human development and how they are affected by laws.

Human relations theory suggests that a major role for institutional leadership; in order to energize human effort beyond formal obligations may require particular leadership styles and traits. The literature on institutional leadership has identified many leadership types and authority strategies, but it has not been able to demonstrate a significant relationship between these types and larger institutional level outcomes as the ones of public administration.

Most generally, the significance of the human relations and human resources approach to organizations is in its explicit acknowledgement – in theory and practice – of the tension between human capacities and organizational structure. As long as humans occupy organizations, there will forever be a need for extrastructural and informal modes of coordination and administration. (Jaffe, p. 88)

Organizations, either public or private, will continue to be peopled by and dependent upon leaders who exert physical and mental energy. In this article we sought to legitimate the exercise of bureaucratic leadership. We accomplished this

task by drawing the public leadership matrix and by promoting a careful education of future public leaders.

We consider it the duty, the responsibility of higher education institutions and of the system itself to coach people to become leaders. It is also their responsibility to offer potential leaders the chance to experiment and make good use of their vision as long as it is sustained by solid conceptual knowledge and broad education. As obvious, from the matrix, the constant, in the evolution of a leader is education, so evolution is of utmost importance.

Countries in transition, such as Romania, would improve their status more rapidly if it had real leaders, an elite of leaders. That is why we consider that we need special programs (both social and educational) to identify and create leaders in the public sector.

The matrix can also help any coaching bodies or institutions to find and motivate persons into assuming its role and, can be the basis for designing training programs. If the transition countries want to bridge the gap more rapidly, they should be looking for leadership.

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