

# Higher Education Management: The key role of leadership and coaching in Cyprus to follow Educational Administration managerial decisions in Higher Education

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**Abstract:** Leaders operating in institutions of higher education, such as universities and colleges, implement and follow the strategic directions of their educational administration, and guide their administration's decision-making, laws, and regulations in order to achieve important organizational goals. Coaching creates "change" in any organization, which is very important, and also support the overall internal communication in the workplace in order to "decode" the right messages in the right way by the employees. This article presents the key role of leadership as an important tool for achieving the overall strategic and managerial decisions of the educational administration in an organization in the Republic of Cyprus.

**Keywords:** educational administration, higher education, leadership, management, organisational change

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of study

Business world is changing dramatically, and the terms 'strategy' and 'implementation' become even more complicated but necessary. In 2023, all organizations, despite of their area of concentration, are operating in a very complex and competitive environment. The important of effective leadership must be used very successful, be developed and responsibly implemented in organizations. In business, two of the main concepts to create a competitive environment are managers as effective leaders, and leaders as effective managers. These concepts strategically explore the implicit and explicit links between leadership and management. They are also exploring different leadership styles and underlined principles, concepts and models.

The task of this article is to analyze and evaluate the two concepts and encode the overall organizational efficiency and productivity. The article also critically presents and evaluates the mixing of leadership models, ideas and concepts in relation to cultural differences and styles in real life working environments. This is why leadership at workplace should have the very serious attention of any manager. Managers as effective leaders should find the ways to increase the effectiveness of

employees, teams, to create an organization culture. The creation of an organization culture should reach management's goals and achieve a human value for employees.

### *1.2 Aims and Objectives of the study*

An effective leadership through an organizational strategy seeks to solve poor morale, low productivity, poor quality, interpersonal conflict, intergroup conflict, unclear or inappropriate goals, inappropriate leadership styles, poor team performance, inappropriate organization structure, poorly designed tasks, poor response to environmental demands, and poor customer relations.

The fast development of technology has created new methods of decision making implementations, and developed techniques to compare the increasing demands of consumer needs. In the Higher Education sector of Cyprus, as in every European country, the implementation of modern plans is based on careful designing of new innovative strategies to create 'organisational change' in a fast changing business environment for organizations.

Leaders and managers can also benefit from any new study results arising from the examination of the relationship between leadership and management (Cekada, 2012). An effective leader should know: What do I want to achieve? What I need to change? Why this change is important? How I will make that change succeed? How that need for change could help my organisation's effectiveness and productivity? Any 'organisational change' must be realistic, achievable and measurable, and needs to be clearly understood by a leader, so that people can handle it effectively. An organisational change could be more successful when leaders encode clearly the messages of their management. A well-managed change by a leader requires having good planning and sensitive implementation, consultation and involvement of the affected people. Previous case studies related to real life phenomena have been carefully investigated, so for this reason, I have visited a number of public and private universities in Cyprus to collect important information. The observation of internal cultural organisation policies were also investigated very seriously. Leaders as effective managers are always under pressure because they have to make important decisions and act in a very complex working environment. Leaders are always facing new managerial challenges as 'business' is moving into a more complex situations, and the need of designing and development of new skills and capabilities are always important in order to create productivity. Efficiency and effectiveness are also very important for an organization as its operation in a complex business environment could create a competitive advantage, a strong image to the market and reputation. The need to create a competitive advantage for an organisation with high standards and principles can be achieved with continuous improvement and investment on new knowledge and lifelong learning on training courses such as: knowledge management, motivation at the workplace, team building, employee relations, and

diversity. "Leadership Development is an important benefit for both the employees and an organisation because on one side employees appreciate the opportunity given by their management, and on the other side management receive the good results" (Harrison 2008: 118).

Leaders as effective managers should firstly make a diagnosis in order to understand the needs on an organisation before the management decides the 'therapy'. The survival, growth and profitability of each organisation depend on the speed of adaptation and the success of leadership's actions. The overall strategic management could be created based on the finding demands by leaders whose role is to transfer managerial messages in order to 'design' an organisational culture, to develop team spirit and improve performance, and create change. Team building and performance need power. Power has been defined by McClelland (1970) as "the intentional influence over the belief, emotions, and behaviours of people. Potential power is the capacity to do so, but kinetic power is the act of doing so"...and... "to have power is to be able to get desired things done, to effect outcomes actions and the decisions that precede them". The encouragement of 'power' affects 'influence' and 'leadership'. Without 'influence' people would have no cooperation and no society, and without 'leadership' in medical, political, technological, financial, and spiritual humanity would have no standards of living in today's world (McClelland, 1970).

## *2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY*

### *2.1 Introduction*

Each higher education institute is operating in a different way from another. Whatever are the personal qualifications and working experiences of employees, there is always something new to learn. "Several communication researchers have successfully used quantitative methods in order to evaluate the relationship between leadership and communication, in relation to employee performance" (Contartesi, 2010; Embry, 2009; Kennedy, 2009; Rouse, 2009a; Rouse & Schuttler, 2009). This is why organizations are trying to use lifelong methods in order to train their employees in a way that will act based on the culture of the organization. This chapter presents the impact of effectiveness that training programs can have on a team based on the feedback I have received from employees. The new knowledge can be developed either based on individual needs or be chosen by the organization for personal control and its evaluation is made about each employee separately. The points 3.2 and 3.3 below are showing and analyzing the methodology of my investigation, based on what is exist in theory and what exist in real life actions.

### *2.2 Research design*

This section presents the research questions that are going to be answered for this topic. To find answers on investigating questions the researcher is going to selection a number of questionnaires and participate in a number of interviews in

some higher education institutions of Cyprus, as well as the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA). The research questions will be focus on: What leadership strategies were implemented at workplace of some local higher education institutes? What skills must leaders develop in relation to internal communication between staff? On which level leaders of departments are involved in the management decision making? To what extent employees of each department are involved in the design of a training program for the development of their personal skills?

### *2.3 Data collection*

#### *2.3.1 Brainstorming*

The population for this research topic is employees working in the higher education sector in the Republic of Cyprus at list for three years, and is over the age of 25. Questionnaires are prepared, and interviews are organized even under very busy schedule and difficult conditions. Observations were planned in permission with department managers. "There are three layers: the research strategies, the research choices and the time horizons" (Saunders 2009:136). "These three layers can be thought of as focusing on the process of research design, that is, turning the research question into a research project" (Saunders, as quoted in Robson 2002).

#### *2.3.2 Investigating contemporary phenomena*

The research strategy planning and investigation "for doing a research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context should use multiple sources of evidence" (Robson 2002:178). The examination of the higher education sector by reading implemented case studies offers the opportunity to collect evidence and data in contemporary real life actions in Cyprus.

Saunders (2009:146) argues that "the case study strategy has considerable ability to generate answers to the questions why? what? and how? questions. Also, "case studies involve measuring that is there and how it got there" (Morris and Wood, 1991), while "the researcher wish to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted" (Saunders 2009:146).

#### *2.3.3 Questionnaires*

Questionnaires are the most widely data instrument because "it helps the researcher to examine system practices at both macro and micro levels of the organization" (Hargie & Tourish, 2009). and support a research by gives important information in a very short time (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Downs & Adrian, 2004; Hamilton, 1987). Barker (1986:153) argues that "a questionnaire is well-designed to measure the concerns of employees and the organisation as well as a valid and reliable tool which makes its use appropriate when examining communication in organizations".

### *2.3.4 Qualitative data collection*

The issues of trust and confidentiality, between an interviewee and an interviewer, “give a good opportunity to keep the most powerful of the telling and add some extra questions (if needed)” (Dominick 1999). Interview’s method is used in order to collection data with face-to-face contact that could support the collection of quantitative amount of data, get some reactions and feelings, as well check personal communication skills. Interviews explain and share experiences and opinions with good use of communication methods at workplace. “These might include both positive and negative comments” (Komini, 1991). Furthermore, “having recorded the interviews is also one of the advantages because nothing is missed” (Saunders 2009:329). Cyprus is a small island which makes distances look very short and not costly.

## *3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS*

### *3.1 Introduction*

This chapter presents the qualitative data received from the interviews and presents important information about the private and public universities of Cyprus and how they operate. In addition, a government authority (HRDA) supports personnel development and presents results in relation to perceptual and multigenerational differences, team relations, generational differences, leadership communication, and employee performance.

### *3.2 Department of Human Resource Management - Public university*

It has been arranged an appointment with Mrs A.Z.K. who is a Human Resource officer of a public university of Cyprus, Mrs A.Z.K very kindly accepted the query to answer all necessary questions, and provided some very tangible information about the development of employees at workplace. Very polite she asked to present all information given for this investigation with respect to the university, and its policy regarding personal information about these data. The university in most cases covers up to 100% of any training costs which depends on the financial organisational resources available at the time of any training program. There is also the possibility those costs to be covered by European Union funding for the continuous training and seminars scheduled for academic and administrative staff of higher education institution in any European country

### *3.3 Training and Development Office – Private university*

According to Mr S.C that works in the training and development unit of a private university in Cyprus, “the University gives the priority to immediate satisfy the training needs of the heads of the departments, schools, and heads that are aligned with the strategic objectives of the University”. The provision of quality and targeted training of employees is very important as it always develops targets for specific reasons. Mr S. C. mentioned that the annual amount for a training need of an average



4 to 5 days per person is around €250.000 Euros, which its results later are checked from a 360th feedback. "The term 360-degree feedback is used to refer to multi-rater feedback, and has to do with performance management systems and as a separate development activity. It provides a better way to capture the complexities of performance, and it is often used to a survey questionnaire and statistical analysis. This feedback can be selected from all staff of all levels, and it can be benefit mainly for the line manager who will be able to observe the individual in a limited range of situations. It can be also be mention that the 360-degree feedback needs to be careful when is used so that the employees will not take this experience as a threat for them by their organizations". (Torrington 2008:311).

#### *3.4 Administrative Staff – Public university*

Miss K.V., an Officer at the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare of the public University in Cyprus, said that one of the her duties is to receive enquiries from staff at all levels regarding their needs for training and development programs. Miss K.V said that "the Human Resource department sends, once a year, to all employees a general questionnaire which asked from employees to inform their organization about their personal needs for training". All questionnaires are collected and evaluated, and then are send to the heads of each department to comment and inform their management that will decide about the next steps and whether the development of training program is needed. A general report is then explaining the results of this process as a compulsory part written on the university's policies.

#### *3.5 Academic Staff – Private university*

Dr C.L.K, Lecturer on Human Resources related topics, mentioned during the interview that "the University does not organize training courses for its staff very often, for economic reasons mainly, except in special cases, like programs that have to do with soft skills i.e. team building or communication, and other like methods of how to 'handle' special needs students, and training on the use of Moodle".

#### *3.6 Human Resource Management – Private university*

This interview was maybe the most difficult one to be arranged due to a very busy schedule, and as a result not easy to have the right time for discussion to collect the necessary information. It is said by the secretary of the Department of Human Resources at a private university that "university's policy is not to give any detail information to people outside of the university regarding its staff and budgets spend on training programs for employee development". Mrs M.K mentioned that in 2016, the number of personnel attended in training programs was only 15 employees, but the next year the number of personnel attended in training programs were increased to 26 persons. Unfortunately, for time limits there was not possible to collect information from other previous years, especially for the pandemic period where things in general were very difficult globally. Unfortunately, there was not time to

collect any information about the amounts spend during the last few years for training programs.

### *3.7 Training and Development Center – Private university*

This private university has created the ‘Continuing Education & Professional Development Training Centre’ in order to offer programs related to computing and technology to support the business development of organizations operating in the Republic of Cyprus. The programs, according to the Training Manager of the Center Mrs S.P, “are always flexible based on each organization’s needs, and their contents are updated based on latest findings, special arrangements and group sizes”. Mrs S.P argued that “the centre gives the tools to satisfy and improve someone’s needs, and the high standards and facilities provide an innovative learning experience that ensures, perfect training investment results for all employees of an organization”. Some training and development programs, can gain skills in minimizing and dealing with stress which helps to avoid feeling overwhelmed in any area of life. Effective communication skills for personal development plays a very important role in the everyday lives of any employee as it can control time management, positive attitude, practical goals and aid in every aspect of life.

### *3.8 Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA)*

The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) is “a semi-government organization which originally established under the provisions of Law 21 of 1974 under the name of Industrial Training Authority of Cyprus and has been designed to meet the needs of the economy as a whole, as well as to support those enterprises that need some help and for the labor force” (HRDA 2020:2). Mr. E. S., Human Resource Officer at the Training Directorate of the HRDA, is responsible for the assessment of the economy’s manpower training needs, the formulation of training policies and the upgrading of the training system. Mr. E.S. said during the interview that “a participant should meet the training needs of existing staff and the training of managers in new concepts and methods of management, and specialized topics aimed based on the planning, organizing, and implementing of training programs from business conducted either in Cyprus or in abroad if necessary”. According to the HRDA in the year 2015 (HRDA 2015:286-288) 5393 training programs were subsidized for 57152 participants and the total expenditure amounted to €12.494.614. There is an increase compared to 5012 training programs, and 52829 participants from €10.542.522 in 2014 (HRDA 2014:21). 95% of the programs implemented in 2015 fell in the category of Continuing Training, whereas the percentage for Initial Training was only 5%. Each year, the HRD Authority offered two scholarships awarded to a member of its staff at Bachelor’s and Master’s level at a selected higher education institution of Cyprus. The amount covered by the HRDA for training programs has increased from €35.541 Euros in 2010 to €102.352 Euros in

2016. The appendices below are showing very important information and number about the continuous education of employees over the recent years.

#### 4. ANALYSIS

##### 4.1 Introduction

The effectiveness and the level of success confirm better performance, more satisfaction, and productivity. Downs and Adrian (2004:11) classifies that “the benefits of performance review is related to effective strategic planning, feedback, training and participation benefit, and provide how employees view the implementation of effective leadership actions at workplace in relation to management’s goals and vision”. The leadership actions will effectively control the internal environment in order to satisfy organisation’s strategic decisions.

##### 4.2 Survey evaluation

The research questions for this study were focused on: *What leadership strategies were implemented at workplace of some local higher education institutes? What skills must leaders develop in relation to internal communication between staff? On which level leaders of departments are involved in the management decision making? To what extent employees of each department are involved in the design of a training program for the development of their personal skills?*

Below is an analysis of the results collected from this qualitative case study research:

*What leadership strategies were implemented at workplace of some local higher education institutes?*

The investigation of this research topic helped to fill a gap on the implementation of leadership strategies by managers of higher education institutions. The gap is related to the limitation of attention that some employees show on understanding the multigenerational differences. Leaders mainly are concentrating on how to earn more money instead of trying to communicate effectively with their colleagues with respect on some different approaches. The research showed that the difference generations are very high because older employees act based on working experience (‘mechanically’), without paying attention to the modern methods or techniques that they might have learn in training courses. On the other side, younger employees have entered the organization by learning new methods and strategies during their recent studies, and also, the fact they are new in the organization, is making them to act more ‘ethically’ by following the rules in order to survive in the competitive workplace environment. As a result the two sides come in contract, by showing ‘the problem’ with bad communication ways (like emotions, words, tension).

*What skills must leaders develop in relation to internal communication between staff?*



In every organization any bad internal communication can have an effect on its contact to the 'outside world' and its market in general. Any tension or disagreement internally might be transfer externally. The use of an Emotional Intelligence (EQ) test, in some cases, might be an important training course, as it gives the opportunity to examine the other side of 'how to see things'. The creation of a training program to explain and test EQ can teach new methods to communication for staff and prepare individual personalities for something different. The generational difference in a multinational working environment can create serious problems to an organization especially if employees talk a different language or have different believes (e.g religion).

*On which level leaders of departments are involved in the management decision making?*

Leaders have an everyday communication with their teams. Leaders can examine the everyday actions and suggest solutions according to each situation. Leaders are together with their teams, and they do not give orders like some managers use to do. Leaders can understand team's needs and transfer to the management of an institution (college/university) on the right time the right messages and final results of teams' actions. 'The Leadership fan model' which has been presented above shows the role and 'power' that a manager has as well as the different role that a leader has as one of the propellers of that fan. Everyone needs each other in order the fan to give 'fresh' air. The managers, as the power of an organization, must listen leaders and its suggestions to turn the three 'propellers' of the model, to create trust and passion, to support motivation and build organization change. A Learning Organization is an effective process that works better when training build change for an organization.

*To what extent employees of each department are involved in the design of a training program for the development of their personal skills?*

At the end of an academic year, academic and administrative staff of colleges' and universities' are asked to complete a questionnaire which has been prepared by their management in order to evaluate the change of each year. Employees must complete with good faith this questionnaire for a better future. By lying or saying that 'everything is perfect' can damage 'the whole (operational) system' of their organization. 'The leadership fan model' can not work properly if it does not have the right transformation. Even a small piece of the 'fan' can damage the plan. Without managers (the power!), and without propellers (the creation!) the process can not be productive and efficient (air production). The levels of each action (stages of the fan), must be designed based on wants and needs thru continuous training courses. The application of new knowledge by employees will show if training was successful or not, and if this excellent performance could not be achieve with an excellent

collaboration between the department (leadership) and the employees. In some cases, the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA)'s can financially support the training programs of new knowledge in the working environment, in order to encourage managements, especially during the current economic crisis, to implement the project for their employees.

#### *4.3 Limitations of the work*

The measuring of the effectiveness of communication within an organization has both strengths and weaknesses (Tourish and Hargie, 2009, p. 41). It is clear that each organization works differently, so some methods and strategies that are implemented in one organization, cannot easily implement by other. This research has some very good findings, but at the same time, there were also some findings that needed more detail investigation to achieve better results. Most of the research questions have been answered clearly to fill the gaps of this topic, but some of them looked to difficult be answered because of the general way that they have been presented. Time pressure in a busy working environments I have been participated, looked a serious problem for getting in depth answers for the research topic. Time counts for all, so the respect of participants' time and on the same time the collect of data (questionnaires/ interview) in order to find quality and in depth answers are very important. The selection of numerical data can show some very positive information about participation and training involvement, but are not easy to collect numbers about participation to the investigated topic. On the same time, it was not possible to present training success because the quality of the results cannot be measured. In the future, any new investigation could be related to topics of communication for an organization success, to examine weaknesses, and analysis more in depth specific questions.

#### *5. CONCLUSION*

The globalization and the demanding competition between higher education institutions need very good internal communication and continuous organisational development to create change. In the higher education sector, the need for good communication is very important because colleges and universities must operate effectively in order to satisfy stakeholders' needs. Institutions are part of a big global community that are trying to improve the future of employees and students. All kinds of organizations, in this case higher education institutions, must be close to the society, and often to get understand its needs and wants. When the organizations (colleges and universities) come close to the societies are receiving their messages and try to design the new contemporary actions.

'The leadership fan model' is an operational system that works and produces 'the air of success' for both the society and the organization. The improvement, productivity and efficient of an organization is based on good communication which target to encode and decode the coming messages. The management of each

organization invests every year some very serious amounts for the personal employee development in order to create as a result an organizational change. It provides the opportunity to leave anachronistic habits, acquire new knowledge and improve attitudes.

The evaluation of a training program must be creative and must follow correct steps in order to be analysed positive. Creativity can satisfy performance and design productive organisations. Furthermore, the creation of team building environment is very important, as good results can not come without an excellent collaboration between the team members to achieve the targets. The implementation of oral and written communication at workplace needs the attention of managers in order to understand needs and complete gaps.

New researches that examined interviews and questionnaires as a method of investigation found that the design of an organizational chart for a higher education institution could control the operational system, and successfully communicate - both horizontal and vertically - the correct messages for an organization's success. There is no doubt that leadership actions always need improvement to become more effective for individuals, teams as well as productive for an organisation to create value. (Savvides, 2011).

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