

## THE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP STYLES IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Educational institutions face an ever more demanding environment all over the world, since the development of human capital, from the initial level, has become an inescapable task, both for the benefit of the people as for the productivity and the development of every society. The people determine a significant difference, as the knowledge that they generate and administer is, precisely, the main source of the competitive advantage of the countries, as well as that of the value offer of public and private organizations.

Even though knowledge is a decisive factor for the development of society, the reduction of the existing gaps and the capacity of individuals to perform with social efficacy are not guaranteed. An example are the high levels of functional illiteracy of the adult Chilean population that, according to the *Centro de Microdatos* of the *Universidad de Chile*, reaches 44% in text understanding, 42% in document comprehension and 51% in quantitative analysis. The fact that half the population are functional illiterates is an unequivocal and demoralizing result if it is considered that Chile forms part of the Organization for Cooperation and Development (OCDE) and that it intends to reach the threshold of development in a near future.

The study of the advances that favor strengthening the quality of education from pre-school to the higher levels, including job training, is undeniable. In this sense it is worth emphasizing leadership and, particularly, the study of its styles, given its potential to influence in the teachers selection, continuing training and evaluation, and in the results of academic activities.

The leadership styles constitute a behavior pattern of the leader and are key in the participation of collaborators and the achievement of organizational results. The leader promotes the best efforts and the largest display of potentialities of the collaborators, allowing to reach the desired goal. The international evidence is clear in showing that leadership has significant influence in the processes and results at all levels of education.

It is important to study leadership in the field of education in Latin America. To know the dominant leadership styles at

different levels, as well as to discover which of them favor the training processes and their results, would contribute to typify the relationships between leadership styles, training processes and academic results that boost education quality and allow to advance in the reduction of the knowledge gaps and in the improvement of the social capacities of individuals. To discover which leadership styles help improve education quality can be a clue for the design of public policies in the region, which seem at present to be less focalized in the future, less centered in the strategic, specially less oriented to quality.

The probable benefits of this line of research can also be associated to the betterment of educational units and even of the classroom, which would contribute to the academic achievements of the students. The generation of good practices, the identification of key elements and the relative weighing of different actions can produce significant effects in the entities and the students.

Finally, it should be recognized that in our region the study of leadership styles in the field of education is in a phase of construction of a frame of reference or dominant paradigm. It is a multidisciplinary task that does not exclude any profession, where small nuances or new angles of analysis can produce significant effects in processes and in results of academic attainment.

There exists a space for professionals of different fields to contribute with quantitative, qualitative or mixed modality studies that address perspectives of the relation between leadership style, training processes and academic results. What is important is to implement such studies with the appropriate strictness, the required strategic vision and the needed intellectual generosity to expand horizons, encourage and significantly improve the quality of education in the region.

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