

Contemporary Leadership Development in Kazakhstan

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INTRODUCTION

Since the independence of Kazakhstan, 25 years ago, universities in the country have developed the system of educating and training managers and leaders for all spheres of the economy. Obviously the world-wide processes such, as globalization, integration, information technologies in higher education as well have their impact on the formation of leadership. As in many other countries in order to educate new managers and leaders, traditionally western models of human resource development were translated and adopted. This article is the continuation of the series of social-psychological researches in the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK). The co-authors began their collaboration in spring semesters of 2009 and 2010, when Dr. Tazhina was undergoing an internship at the Columbia University and together with Dr. Parker developed a joint international research project. Later, in 2012, Dr. Ivashov joined the research when he had internship at the NYU.

BACKGROUND

The Traditional Culture of Kazakhstan and Contemporaneousness/Globalization

Traditional Kazakh culture has historically been determined by the nomadic lifestyle and harsh

living conditions of this vast territory and became a regulatory mechanism for daily life. Clan membership, a clear age hierarchy and inter-familial relationships were a priority. Elders were at the top of the hierarchy and the family was and still is in charge of resolving social and psychological conflicts. (Masanov, 1998). Later Akshalova (2002) clarified, that “from outset, it should be asserted that within the Kazakhstani culture, there is respect to elders and seniors and hence, all the more, father leadership should be encouraged and practiced in small business management. After all, it is a benevolent leadership style that benefits all parties concerned – the leaders, the people and the organizations”.

For this reason, from the point of view of the identity formation and managerial education, it is important to consider the impact of globalization and a joint conflict between western mind-set and traditional values (Tazhina, 2010). The latter and a number of other social phenomena led to risen demand for applied psychology, which takes form of social-psychological training of skills such as leadership, effective communication, motivation, etc.

While individual leadership is important, the context of the organization can enhance or inhibit the leadership of its members. Dorfman and House (2004) report that at the first GLOBE research conference in 1994, there was a consensus of the 54 researchers from 38 countries (of which Kazakhstan was one) about a definition of

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organizational leadership. “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members” (p. 56). GLOBE is international project, which is aimed to seek answers to questions like: in what ways can community culture and organizational culture affect behavior of leaders/managers and company’s/organization’s development, commenting on the effectiveness of both?

Contemporarily, Kazakhstan is actively involved in the processes of globalization and integration. The following are just some examples of such activity: OSCE Chairmanship of the RK in 2010 and the largest international exhibition of the decade, EXPO, is to be held in the capital of Kazakhstan in 2017. In this context the necessity of studying leadership and its development in each segment of the society and economy is evident.

Leadership Issues

The American historian David McCullough (2008) emphasizes that “We need leaders and not just political leaders. We need leaders in every field, in every institution, in all kinds of situations. We need to educate our young people to be leaders” (p. 45). He asserts that “the great leadership lessons don’t change” (p. 45) and cites numerous historical figures that he considers demonstrate these fundamental qualities.

In an effort to analyze leadership itself, numerous authors and researchers have delineated types of leadership. Lojeski and Reilly (2008) begin with noting that the most “traditional view of leadership is that of a manager: one who monitors, controls, and, more importantly, rewards desired behavior and punishes undesired behavior. However, they label several other types of leaders. They note that “Charismatic leaders are people who can make the emotional connection”. (p. 124). “Transformational leadership includes four kinds of behavior: 1. Idealized influence refers to actions that demonstrate vision, values, and beliefs and creates a sense of identification with the leader among

followers. 2. Individualized consideration involves coaching and encouraging and also promoting each individual’s belief that they can be successful. 3. Inspirational motivation involves creating a clear and appealing vision and serving as a model for desired behavior. 4. Intellectual stimulation involves making the team aware of problems and bringing new ideas so that followers become engaged in finding solutions. Transformational leaders also create an emotional connection with their followers so that their behaviors contribute to followers’ sense of ownership and commitment to the team’s goals and tasks” (p. 124-125).

However, putting these types of leaders into the context of a technology rich society, context, Lojeski, & Reilly (2008) note that transactional, charismatic, and transformational views of leadership were developed before the Digital Age, when organizations and teams were likely to be collocated and more culturally homogeneous. They suggest that today’s organizations need the ambassadorial leader. “The ambassadorial leader is a boundary spanner. Like an ambassador, the leader must span geographic, cultural, and organizational boundaries and foster trusting relationships among disparate groups of people” (p. 130). Wiseman and McKeown (2010) categorize leaders as multipliers and diminishers. They explain that “some leaders make us better and smarter. They bring out our intelligence”; some “focus on their own intelligence and their resolve to be the smartest person in the room had a diminishing effect on everyone else”. Their “research showed, that most of us fall along this spectrum and have the ability to move toward the side of Multiplier” (p. 29).

Culture and Leadership

Leadership is inextricably intertwined with both national and organizational culture. Hofstede (2001) explains the relationship between national culture and leadership by suggesting that “ideas about leadership reflect the dominant culture of a country. Asking people to describe the qualities of a good leader is in fact another way of asking

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