

HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A LEADER

GESTÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR: AS CARACTERÍSTICAS DE UM LÍDER

GESTIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: LAS CARACTERÍSTICAS DE UM LÍDER

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ABSTRACT: Management is the act of managing or administering and is directly related to the manager's leadership capacity. Many understand that specific knowledge in their area is enough to manage a course, but this process involves a need to manage people, which can be facilitated if the manager seeks information in the literature to be able to act in this role. The objective of the study is to evaluate the importance of the characteristics of a leader in the management of a Higher Education course. Higher education course managers indicate that they feel a lack of commitment from the professors so that decisions do not fall only on them, while university professors do not see this need, feel a distance between the manager and the professors and understand that it is up to the coordinator the course makes the decisions, as this is his role, and he needs to have leadership characteristics to be able to handle the role.

KEYWORDS: Management. Leadership. Higher Education.

RESUMO: *A gestão é o ato de gerir ou administrar e está diretamente relacionada com a capacidade de liderança do gestor. Muitos entendem que basta conhecimento específico em sua área para gerir um curso, mas este processo passa por uma necessidade de gerir pessoas o que pode ser facilitado se o gestor buscar informações na literatura para poder atuar nesta função. O objetivo do estudo é avaliar a importância das características de um líder na gestão de curso de Ensino Superior. Gestores de curso de Ensino Superior indicam que sentem falta de um comprometimento dos professores para que as decisões não recaiam apenas sobre eles, enquanto os professores universitários não enxergam essa necessidade, sentem um distanciamento do gestor para com os professores e entendem que cabe ao coordenador do curso tomar as decisões, pois esta é sua função, e ele precisa ter características de liderança para poder lidar com a função.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Gestão. Liderança. Ensino Superior.*

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RESUMEN: *La gestión es el acto de gestionar o administrar y está directamente relacionada con la capacidad de liderazgo del gerente. Muchos entienden que el conocimiento específico en su área es suficiente para gestionar un curso, pero este proceso implica una necesidad de gestión de personas, lo que se puede facilitar si el directivo busca información en la literatura para poder actuar en este rol. El objetivo del estudio es evaluar la importancia de las características de un líder en la gestión de un curso de Educación Superior. Los gestores de cursos de educación superior señalan que sienten una falta de compromiso por parte de los profesores para que las decisiones no recaigan únicamente en ellos, mientras que los profesores universitarios no ven esta necesidad, sienten un distanciamiento entre el gestor y los profesores y entienden que depende de ellos. el coordinador del curso toma las decisiones, ya que este es su rol, y necesita tener características de liderazgo para poder manejar el rol.*

PALABRASCLAVE: *Gestión. Liderazgo. Enseñanza Superior.*

Introduction

Management, by definition, is the act of managing or administering and is directly related to the manager's leadership ability. To achieve the goals set out in an institution it is necessary to have knowledge of the processes that involve the routine of the institution, identifying all data and information that may be relevant to exploit the full potential of employees. This is the so-called knowledge management. This type of management is critical to the failure or success of a manager, because he can be the best leader and administrator in the industry, but without knowledge of the institution and the target audience will make the undertaking more complex and time consuming (ARGENTA, 2011).

Leadership is defined in many ways by many authors, as being, for example, the most important single fact to achieve solutions or else the process of giving purpose to the collective effort causing the desire of all to strive to achieve a goal. It is also seen as a phenomenon of social construction in which the leader interacts with his followers. That is why it is so important that the leader has influence over his followers, described as the ability to induce others to follow his guidance (BENEVIDES, 2010).

Higher Education has undergone changes in its structure over the past few years, leaving aside the appearance of universities as trainers of professionals for a needy market and becoming a financial business. A society full of information and diverse and heterogeneous knowledge begins to yield students from the most varied educational models to universities thanks to governmental programs of incentive to higher education (COLOMBO; RODRIGUES, 2011).

Universities today have a massification of education and a commodification of the institution, based on an education that seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness, short-term answers and more publications, thus turning the institution into an entrepreneurial and business-like format. With this, the manager's work suffers influence, having this a concern to balance the widened access to the higher level with a quality education, knowing how to deal with the pressures suffered by the rectory of the university to yield results without letting this agility interfere with the quality of education offered to students, through the materials needed in classes or the training of teachers (SANTOS; PEREIRA; LOPES, 2018).

There is no single coordination model given that a coordinator's attitudes and attitudes will differ according to the needs that the moment presents, however, some characteristics are fundamental at any management moment: responsibility, ethics, commitment, punctuality, professionalism, assiduity, good relationships - these are some of the personal competences that, by definition, are the ability to understand a given situation and react appropriately when faced with it, of a course coordinator (ARGENTA, 2011).

How to deal with the aspects mentioned above? It is precisely in this context that it is important that the manager has characteristics of a leader, because for some being a leader is an art (BENEVIDES, 2010). Every human being is an administrator, some manage companies, others Universities, others the house or their own life. But the manager of a Higher Education course does not have to be an administrator, but to possess leadership characteristics that provide him with a greater qualification in decision making and a security in his actions that are able to make the teachers of the course or even the students look at him with admiration for doing his work with mastery. These characteristics can be learned from the managerial practice, or they can come from the person who is born with certain abilities, but it is essential that a manager who is at this level is always searching for knowledge in specialized literature to improve his or her function more and more.

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the importance of the characteristics of a leader in the management of a Higher Education course. Specifically, it seeks to contextualize the characteristics necessary for a leadership position or for the management of a Higher Education course, to investigate the previous knowledge of the manager of a Higher Education course about the characteristics of leadership, and to verify the manager's updating of his or her knowledge after being appointed to this position.

It is important to conduct this research, because many managers understand that specific knowledge in their area is enough to manage a course. But this process goes beyond planning a curricular matrix, and goes through a need to manage people. This work can be

facilitated if the manager seeks information in the literature to be able to act in this function in the best way

Material and method

We chose to follow the methodology of an exploratory, qualitative, bibliographical type research, which allows to obtain general and approximate knowledge of facts or situations and the essence and meanings brought in scientific articles capable of answering the research object.

The research was conducted during the months of August 2018 to September 2021, in the Scielo and Google Scholar databases, in search of academic papers published after the presentation of a master's or doctoral thesis, as well as course completion papers in the area studied. Inclusion criteria were: articles with abstracts available online; articles dealing with management in higher education; publication in the last ten years, available in English, Spanish or Portuguese. The exclusion criteria were: articles available in the databases without abstracts; articles whose abstracts did not address the theme in question. The search and selection of articles was carried out using the descriptors: leadership, management, higher education, education. After the search for the articles, only the ten articles that had the greatest identification with the theme of the work were used in the work, according to the publishing norms.

We also selected the main leadership and management books published by recognized authors in the area, which were among the most read and sold books in this period.

Results

Reports from professors who have this experience of managing a Higher Education course indicate that they miss the commitment of the other professors so that decisions do not fall solely on them, but that a collegiate would be more effective, after all, the ideas and perspectives of the other professors would enrich the management process. On the other hand, the university professors don't see this need, they feel a distancing of the course coordination from the professors and understand that it is up to the course manager to make the decisions, because this is his or her function. Of course, the vast majority of these university professors graduate with the goal of teaching, many do not aim to become managers, this ends up happening through the needs of the university that sees in this teacher a manager profile. But

this view is not always correct, it is not uncommon to see higher education course managers who are not prepared for the function or perform it with disgust by overwork, exhausting and constant meetings, in addition to the absence of the classroom, which is where he would really like to be (SANTOS; PEREIRA; LOPES, 2018).

One explanation for this lack of interaction between professors and managers is the lack of motivational capacity that the course manager has in order to achieve the team results requested by the institution. The coordinator of a higher education course is much more involved in a range of administrative activities such as attending meetings with the other course coordinators of the University, elaborating proposals for the course he/she manages, requests regarding curricular components, compliance with the academic calendar, coordinating the enrollment process, verifying course change requests, signing internship commitment terms, coordinating the pedagogical project of the course. Thus, he has the need to have a high knowledge of laws related to education and internal regulations of the University, so that often this excess of managerial activities does not allow him to have time to monitor the teachers and their tasks, their growth, their didactics, their compliance with the pedagogical project, or simply to talk and listen to what these professionals have to say and contribute to the growth of the course (BENEVIDES, 2010).

It is noteworthy that this lack of desire of a teacher to aim for the coordination of a Higher Education course may be related to the pressure of the function, which causes several times wear and tear between institution and manager and ends up falling between manager and teachers, if he does not know how to charge his professionals he may end up discounting in them his dissatisfaction or anger for the charge that was caused by the university. Since this manager has proven to have a lot of influence over the teachers, if he knows how to deal with the demands and pressures he receives without this spilling over to the collegiate, he can use this influence to achieve beneficial results, using a higher level of demand to motivate teachers to achieve established goals or to collaborate in the growth of a project. This will be directly related to the growth of the course, because if there are a lot of good professors with classes that motivate the students, this will be a positive marketing for the University, and new students will come precisely because they have heard good references about the university and the quality of the professors' classes (BENEVIDES, 2010).

This unwillingness to manage a Higher Education course is not generalized for administrative reasons, as many of the professors report that they enjoy participating in the coordination of pedagogical projects, such as extension courses, workshops and congresses. In fact, it is at these moments that they feel an integral part of the academic planning and feel

valued for the investment that the institution is having in their training, besides being moments of fraternization with the other professionals that become rare due to the rush of their daily attributions. They also report that they prefer to manage short-term tasks because they are faster projects with less pressure and responsibility (SANTOS; PEREIRA; LOPES, 2018).

Discussion

Education is understood as the process of creation, innovation and appropriation of culture, thus, educational institutions become the privileged space of production and transformation of knowledge, having them the responsibility to form participatory, creative and critical professionals (DOURADO, 2012).

You may have heard the term "educational management," which is defined as a contextualization of the political-administrative process by which the practice of education is organized, guided, and made possible. For many years, it was believed that the problems of educational management were merely administrative, so that the concept of business administration was used as a parameter to manage an educational institution, but it is necessary to take into account that educational management considers the values, specificities, and singularities of an educational environment, thus having differences with respect to capitalist administration, so its interests are not only different but also antagonistic (DOURADO, 2012).

For this reason that an educational manager should not only possess characteristics of a business administrator, but also have knowledge of the educational environment, considering here the aforementioned knowledge management. The manager of a higher education course should not only be a person experienced in the profession and that has great theoretical capacity, but must have attitudes that generate an integration in theory and practice, but someone who is able to perform interactions between educator and student, so that this can generate a benefit in the formation of both (ARGENTA, 2011).

Some other characteristics are necessary, competence is one of them, because it is directly related to the ability to solve problems effectively, efficiently and effectively. But in addition to competence, commitment is necessary, because true commitment inspires and attracts people, they feel that the manager has conviction in what he or she is doing. It is common to see people who work well, but are not committed to their work, and it is precisely this commitment that differentiates a good professional and a spectacular one, between a

company that survives and a company that profits, between a University that sustains itself and one that grows (MAXWELL, 2000).

Knowing how to communicate is also an important characteristic, because people will not follow you, will not obey you if they do not understand what you want to pass on to them, if they do not clearly understand your orders. In the digital world, in which social networks have reached more and more followers, the so-called influencers have been successful in their digital platforms due to their communication skills and the information they pass on, and this gives them more followers. Considering the university world, where universities need to capture students, the communicator leader can be of great value (MAXWELL, 2000).

Having courage is a quality for few leaders. We are not referring to courage related to bravery or being strong in front of danger and seeking adventures, but the other definition of this word, which states that to be courageous, is to have a strong spirit to face difficult emotional situations. The leadership position always presents complex situations, delicate moments that will require courageous decisions. Some people are afraid to take risks and may inhibit growth, because a leadership position does not give you courage, but having courage can give you this position. Discernment is the ability to find the source of the problem, which can depend on both logical reasoning and intuition, this indispensable characteristic can facilitate problem solving (MAXWELL, 2000).

The manager must also have initiative, because this quality is expected by his superiors who do not expect a leader to wait for orders, but to see a need and take action to solve the issue. It is common that bad leaders do not listen to the people around them, and a manager needs to know how to listen and filter criticism, suggestions, in order to seek the best solution for the growth of the course (MAXWELL, 2000).

An efficient leader needs to have a positive attitude, should not be a pessimistic person, always complaining about the facts, the teachers, the superiors, the university, but always think positively in each situation, no matter how bad it is something good can be taken as a lesson. Visualizing a problem and thinking this challenging situation can make your effort a victory for the institution (NOGUEIRA; CUNHA, 2018).

There is no need to stress the importance of a manager being responsible, not letting external factors compromise his efficiency, knowing how to separate personal issues from professional ones even more when working with family or friends, assuming his duties, his attitudes, his decisions, and having the humility to assume mistakes when they happen. But to lead is also to be responsible for the attitudes of others, of the people who are under your command, that's why a supervision of these professionals is important, because any mistake

they make falls under the responsibility of the manager who leads them. A leader or manager needs to have vision, to know that the facts are part of a global plan, he can't think about today without thinking about tomorrow, about the future plans for the course, without worrying about the course's future finances, planning is fundamental for every manager, a short, medium and long term plan, so that he can set goals to be achieved at each moment and thus show the progress of his work and that of the team he coordinates (MAXWELL, 2000).

Many authors relate leadership as influence, and this is indeed a central characteristic of a leader, because if a course manager has enough influence over educators to the point that they believe they need to follow an educational line that may come at odds with what the manager has been doing for years. Or, even, that the student may understand that the teaching techniques of his institution may not be as advanced as those of another university that has more financial resources, but this technological deficit can be compensated with studies directed to the reality of that student in question, are methods that require the influence of the manager (BENEVIDES, 2010).

Leaders are agents of change, and this sentence by itself already demonstrates how a manager should act so that he/she can be the necessary change that the university needs. Of course, leadership is intrinsic and for many a leader is not made, he is born a leader. But for Costa and Castanheira (2015, p. 17-20, our translation), leadership can occur in three ways:

- Born leader: is the one who is born with a leadership profile, the child who already commands the games, who organizes the little friends in the games, based on the theory of traits that presupposes that there are characteristics that indicate a leader and it is up to the researchers to find these people to put them in the right position to lead an institution;
- Trained leader: this type of leadership is conquered through effort, through learning, he is trained and prepared for a function. A superior sees in his employee a leadership potential and trains him to take his place or the function of another person who has left or will leave the company. Thus, he is not born with leadership imputed in his actions, but is developed to give his best for the institution.
- Adjustable leader: regardless of whether leadership is born or learned, the leader needs to adjust to the situations that are imposed on him/her. In his/her routine, a series of issues arise and need to be overcome, being flexible to adjust to these changes is necessary, because the very rigid and inflexible leader does not last long in the function in a globalized world of constant changes.

Benevides (2010) also comments that there are two types of leaders: the democratic and the autocratic or centralizing, and their actions say a lot about the success or failure of leadership, because the leader who only delegates and directs actions tends to have a greater failure than the leader who participates and persuades his followers.

According to the author, the democratic leader divides the task of leadership, doesn't get overloaded, but encourages the participation of his team in all projects, urges them to participate with their opinions, doesn't feel threatened by his followers. There are leaders who don't empower or delegate for fear that a teacher may stand out and conquer his place in the course coordination or in the direction of a company, but the good democratic leader knows his potential and believes in his competence, therefore, he doesn't need to fear, but rather develop his followers, because this tends to make the team have better yields and higher productivity. In turn, the autocratic leader tends to control all decisions, to centralize orders, which may occur due to the leader's insecurity in trusting that a certain task may not be to his liking and therefore he prefers to do it by himself, or due to insecurity and fear of highlighting an employee who can replace him. The understanding of these characteristics and attitudes can be crucial to the good managerial development of a higher education course (BENEVIDES, 2010).

The relationship of the manager with students, teachers, employees, deans is of great importance not only for the manager himself to have professional success, but for the course to walk smoothly. The educability enters this process in two ways, first with the manager's education in knowing how to treat all people in the same way and with respect, and in a second moment, the manager's attitude in being willing to educate himself, to grow with the contact with other people, whether they are students or teachers, he will always have an opportunity to learn and grow as a person and as a manager. Still within the concept of relating, the manager must be helpful, always willing to help by doing whatever is necessary for the moment and the situation, and not shy away from a particular job because it is not his or her job; here, a little self-discipline comes in, to know that the first person you lead is yourself, and many times words can be avoided for the good of the group. The secret is to concentrate most of the efforts on your strengths, because they are what brought you to this position, and that is what the rectory expects from you, and to leave a little time to deal with your weaknesses and new things (MAXWELL, 2000).

Leading a course is not only knowing and extracting the best from your group of teachers, but being able to know their strengths and weaknesses, maximizing the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses, knowing what you want and how you want it, knowing how to communicate and join forces to achieve your goals. But above all to have passion for what you do, this is the essence of working in education (ARGENTA, 2011).

Final remarks

Many people reach a management position by indications, by merits within a line of work, by time of work in a particular company, but not always have the qualifications to exercise this function that is not only a position within a branch of activity, but it is a function that can cause the growth of the institution or can cause its bankruptcy.

In this study it became clear that the manager of a Higher Education course needs to have leadership characteristics to be able to deal with the function, which requires professional qualification, experience in the course area, but also some qualities that will make it easier for the manager to deal with the pressure exerted by his superiors in favor of results. Among the characteristics that provide the condition to adapt to the changes that arise over time and deal with students and their expectations, also influences having a good relationship with everyone, have a manager posture that not only collaborate for the growth of the university, but also that their students look at him as a mirror and see in him an example of professional to be followed.

For future studies it would be important that more research would focus on these characteristics of a manager, because this subject is more addressed in books written by independent authors, which for many are qualities cited based on opinions of people for their experience in the field. Thus, in scientific articles we do not find many citations, and within the scientific research is necessary to have a deepening bibliography so that research has more credibility.

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