

HEALTH PEDAGOGY OF LEADERSHIP

A VEZETŐI MUNKA EGÉSZSÉGPEDAGÓGIÁJA

A statisztikák szerint minden negyedik ember pszichés gondokkal küzd. Vajon, mennyire befolyásolja kiegyensúlyozottságunkat, mentális egészségünket a munkahelyi környezet, a főnökünk vezetési stílusa, vagy esetleg vezetőként mennyit árthatunk, segíthetünk beosztottjainknak? Ezek a kérdések igen fontos problémák, hiszen napjaink nagy részét a munkahelyünkön töltjük, s bizony, nem mindegy milyen hangulatban.

Statistics say that one person out of every four struggles with psychological problems. To what extent can work environment, manager's leadership style effect our balance and mental health? What harm can we cause or what support can we provide as leaders to our subordinates? These questions are significant problems, as we spend most of our times at the workplace and it is important in what kind of atmosphere.

The problem that has made me think recently concerns everyone, I think. What in fact is the reason behind the high number of depressed and neurotic persons these days? Statistics say that one person out of every four struggles with psychological problems. What harm can we cause or what support can we provide as leaders to our subordinates? These two are most probably interconnected especially regarding the amount of time we spend at the workplace. The subject is especially important nowadays as the employment of many people became uncertain due to the economic crises. It would be good to get over this phase with the least possible stress and without causing much tension as leaders to employees. Anxiety and depression, as the most frequent mental illnesses, do not only cause difficulties to the patients but also lay a burden on society and economy. Mental illnesses in Europe are the first ones in the rank of health problems that serve as the most frequent reasons for sick leaves and also that cause the most people to go on early retirement or to become disability pensioners.

What is my manager like? What I am like as a manager? We can easily give an answer by the help of an observation: do I like to be in the company of my boss or do I try to avoid him? As a boss do I realize that my colleagues try to avoid meeting me and pose me only quick questions concerning work?

How do general state of health and mental state relate to pedagogy? To give a clear definition let us turn back to the original meaning of the word pedagogy.

The term pedagogy is rooted in the Greek 'peidagogos' word. In ancient Greece adults who accompanied children to school were called 'peidagogos'.

Pedagogy is a science with double face. On the one side it is a field of scientific research, dealing with the options and leading of different age groups' teaching and teaching potential. At the same time teaching is also an art of leading. I think a manager is a peidagogos at the same time. The manager's usual day consists of dealing with other people and influencing other's behaviour. In fact the manager carries out education all day long. So, how education can be defined? Education is an activity aiming to influence other's behaviour and helping them develop in an optimal way and strengthening them in the preferred fields. If a leader values accuracy and precision highly his demands obviously will be determined according to those.

The foundation of pedagogy on authority theoretically is based by Friedrich Paulsen. His views are significant, however, rather controversial. He stated: „a pupil favours only the person whom he can respect”.

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That is, authority is essential in education, however not as a tool of frightening and intimidation but as a tool of motivation and stimulation. In Paulsen's - well based - interpretation authority is superiority. He distinguishes three different basic forms of authority: physical, economic and intellectual/moral superiority. Therefore it is a key question what importance is given to authority: is education based on it or it is considered as an element of a complex set of relations. Authoritarian pedagogy is based on the exclusive system of commands and prohibitions. This kind of 'pedagogy of barracks' is well described by Thomas Mann's hero Naphta, who says in *The Magic Mountain*: 'All professional educational bodies are conscious of what in fact pedagogy has always been: the absolute order, the iron-strong restrictions, discipline, sacrifice, the denial of the self, the oppression of personality.' André Gide can also be quoted here to illustrate views on authoritarianism: 'the pupil must obey the adult's decision even if he or she does not comprehend it.' According to *Michel Foucault's* philosophy to exercise power is the commanding of behaviour. Violence is only an accidental means of that, as authority itself as well. However the theories of extremely anti-authoritarian education can not be justified either.

Yet, what kind of characteristics should a leader have to become a facilitator? Why do subordinates consider one leader exemplary and others less so? Obviously, it depends on several factors. First, a self-conscious, motivated leader who pays accurate attention on employees will formulate positive, understanding relations with them and will identify with their problems easier, will make less criticism and will perform the task of leading more effectively. This kind of leader knows the employees well help them proceed and in further education. As a result, the employees will do their jobs in a better emotional atmosphere, will work with more pleasure and will accept orders even if those do not make sense for them.

Mental health means the physical and mental state in which the individual has the capacity to formulate harmonic relationships with others and can creatively contribute to the efforts of the community. The personality of an individual is supposed to develop to be able to direct natural drives in an acceptable way for the community and in the meantime to be able to realize his/her capacities according to own expectations. It follows from the above that mental health similarly to physical health is a constantly changing state. It often occurs that one can not accommodate to his or her circumstances or can accommodate only with significant difficulties. It can also occur that one can not achieve according to one's capabilities, capacities, etc.

A leader is not only a decision maker, a controller, a commander and a judge but also someone who regulates human psychological processes. This regulation is performed by participation and communication. That is, the leader takes part in the procedures, can not keep a distance. To be able to do so, one should be able to give up traditional, authoritarian manager behaviour. This is not an easy task, as authoritarian behaviour has its traditions and also provides a number of advantages to the leader. If a leader tries deliberately get rid of this mentality might turn to another incorrect behaviour, might become far too indulgent and might lead in a 'laissez faire' manner. Doing so, the leader avoids participation just like in the case of authoritarian methods. It is also a rather difficult task to distance from authoritarianism as employees often expect and require it. Personality improving trainings for managers were initiated all over the world to answer the problems of democratic leading methods and to learn proper way of communication. The aim was to develop interpersonal sensitivity usually with the help of group training methods.

In an autocratic atmosphere at the workplace there is a high number of destructive rivalry, hardly definable personal antagonisms, communication breakdowns. Such atmosphere challenges the personalities of the members of the working community. From a mental-hygienic point of view it can not be considered useful. The informal small groups can function in such atmosphere only in a hidden, 'illegal' way. Thus these can form an oppositional platform against the official frameworks. In an effective management style the informal groupings can become visible and formal groups can especially be open about their own informal contents. Out of this a vivid inter-group communication and a healthy rivalry can develop.

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The influence of the management style on the atmosphere of the workplace is many folding. The management is responsible for the fair regulations, prescriptions and norms of the workplace. This is of essential importance from the point of view of the employees, as they can identify with these the most easily out of the workplace relations. Most of such conditions are sensed unconsciously in the person and in the community. Thus it is understandable why the manifested ones are overestimated. If the distribution of benefits and punishments is not fair the loyalty almost automatically declines, the employees will perform only the necessary tasks and will strive for mostly for the appearance performances not the real achievements. 'Therefore, if the manager abuses the power of controlling function or neglect the responsibilities of such function will harm drastically the organization by obstructing the identification and damage the workplace atmosphere.

The management style is essential in the leading and decision making function from the point of view of the atmosphere of the workplace. It is about manifestations of subtle, hardly definable nuisances of behaviour. However their effect on the employees is significant. The way the manager gives orders, asks for information, makes the decisions and behaves in social situations is in the focus of attention of the working community. The expressions of the leader might easily hurt others and may cause inhibitions in the employee. They may also be discouraged to say no. Good ideas, constructive initiatives might not get realized because the employees can not foresee the reactions of the management. The power of leaders can result fear and suspicion among the subordinates, sometimes it might reach a paranoid degree. It weakens the mental-hygiene of the organization.

If the manager will not recognize these processes, can not be sympathetic and can not place oneself into the 'shoe' of the employees might make a lot of hidden mistakes. The practice of power by leaders in leading position is a usual, often almost natural mistake. It is also a mistake if they take the distinguished attention (devoted to their position and not their personality) far too seriously, they get used to it and take it for granted. The personality behind the leading role is usually hidden or is manifested in a distorted manner. If the leader is authoritarian will miss the direct communication, required by all employees, will miss the free mutual exchange of ideas, that the decision making and the directives require, and will miss the tolerance of diverse opinions. A gap can slowly grow in between the manager and the employees, however it is invisible but its consequences are rather serious. In such a case instead of identification the employees will alienate from the organization more and more.

Such state of affairs will stress and overburden the leader as well. Not being able to recognize the root of the problems he will try to help by a stricter control and attention. Thus this person will get into emotional tension and will get hurt as the reactions of the employees will not be understandable and reasonable for him. Some form of the developing and the improving of group behaviour of the employees is necessary from a mental-hygienic point of view. However the necessity and main features of such aspect is well known, the ways of realization are not yet. All participants are somehow responsible for the quality of the workplace atmosphere and therefore everyone should cultivate it. Further training of human expertise and the construction of self-help networks would be necessary.

According to the experiences managers' neurotic symptoms (such as fatigue, the decline of concentration, hand trembling, dizziness, paleness, serious headache) do make the personality's accommodation to the environment and performance of leading role more difficult, however these do not mean the personality's break of relation with his/her environment or the loss of decision making capacity.

Inner tensions might lose their importance within stressed groups and the members will more and more accept a strict leading. The larger the danger seems from the outside, the more intensive the stress is and the more important the group tasks are seen by the members, the chance of the leader's manipulating the members will get higher. Group members will also accept strict leading easier what is more they will feel it inevitable.

Mental conditions of effectiveness of a small working group:

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The maturity and the efficiency of a group depend on a number of objective and subjective conditions. There are essential conditions that are crucial and in the lack of which these can not be realized. These conditions are the following:

- *Mutual trust.* It takes a long time to formulate it and can be damaged easily. It can be realized if everyone in the group can feel free to express what they think of a given problem. Everyone may pose questions that might reveal their ignorance and everyone can contradict anything without the fear of becoming ridiculed, revenged or any negative reactions.
- *Mutual support.* It develops if the group members are frankly concerned with each others' improvement, personal achievements and care about the good working results of the other. If mutual support is created in a group the individual member will not have to waste time to defend the individual self and the position. In the common efforts of the group everyone will be provided and will provide support.
- *Real communication.* Communication has two sides: the seeker's openness and sincerity, and the listener's true attention free of prejudices. Real and open communication is possible if no one has to be over cautious, as there is an atmosphere of mutual trust and support.
- *The recognition and solution of conflicts.* People differ from each other on the base of their specific features and may have different views. According to the heritage of the former, 'Human Relations' school people tend to create harmony among each other by all means. In an effective group (where there is mutual trust, support and real communication) members accept and take conflicts as inevitable things, and even they can see in what way these can be advantageous. The conflict can create a new situation and development most often can derive out of it. The solution of conflict anyhow is always a group process. The trust in the leader's capacity to solve conflicts among employees is nothing else but a myth.
- *Mutual respect of personality.* Within a goal oriented group certain decisions are made by the whole group as all members are supposed to contribute to the realization. An effective group will not require conformity from the members. A group however might easily get into a situation when the decisions are made instead of the individual, it is forced onto the individual member even that the individual's own development and the interest of the group would also require an individual, personal decision making process.

People can often be heard to complain about their workplace as the source of their nervousness and as the circumstances disturbing their mental balance. It is interesting to observe that frustrated individuals criticize and complain the most. However this is not the same as sensitive people's characteristic behavioural patterns. Mental problems can cause serious physical symptoms. Leading position in itself can be a source of stress: worry about deadlines, organizational problems, complaining employees. Conflicting roles, overburden can result stress. A boss especially, as a source of stress for others can influence the subordinates' self respect in a negative way and thus can harm their carrier perspectives. If an employee feels that the manager is hostile towards and not in favour of him or her, then this person might suffer from anxiety. It can have a number of negative effects as the decline of self-respect and worsening capacity of concentration on work. It is reasonable for managers to think their own responsibility and leading methods over. As a result of the requirements of the age it is inevitable that individual leader's have a high responsibility in maintaining the employees mental health.

Kulcsszavak: Vezetés, pedagógia, mentális állapot

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