The Manifestations of Positive Leader Roles in Classical Theories of Leadership

JOANNA WEGNER

The Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management,
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland
e-mail: asia.wegner@gmail.com

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to identify the key functions performed by leaders in organisations, and to study how positive leaders affect their teams and the results achieved by subordinates. The paper analyses, through the lens of positive leadership, the importance of motivation, communication between organisational members, as well as delegation and transfer of responsibility manifested in classical theories of leadership. The literature survey is the main data collection technique applied to achieve the aim of the paper.

Keywords: positive leadership, leader, motivation, communication, delegation of responsibilities.

1. Introduction

Effective functioning of any organisation depends on many factors: condition of the economy, availability of resources, staff, teamwork, happiness, and others. All of these elements are very important and can contribute to the development of an organisation but good leadership is the most important feature that guarantees success.

The aim of the paper is to identify the key functions performed by leaders in organisations, and to study how positive leaders affect their teams and the results achieved by subordinates, simultaneously giving followers the opportunity to take advantages for themselves. The literature survey is the main data collection technique applied to achieve the aim of the paper. First of all, the paper discusses the key functions performed by leaders and it refers to the concept of positive leadership. Secondly, the paper concerns the issues of communication within organisations, the importance of motivating subordinates and delegating duties and authority. Each element of the second part of the article is described in the context of positive leadership that is a relatively new, but increasingly appreciated, concept in the management science.

2. The leader's roles in the context of the positive leadership concept

As observed by Karaszewski and Lis (2013, pp. 66–67), positive leadership is one of the up-to-date concepts which originates from transformational leadership and flourishes within the frame of positive organisational scholarship (cf. Karaszewski and Lis, 2016; Blanch, Gil, Antino and Rodriquez-Muñoz, 2016). According to Cameron (2012, p. 2), positive leadership is characterised by "an emphasis on what elevates individuals and organisations (…), what goes right in organisations (…), what is life-giving (…), what is experienced as good (…), what is extraordinary (…), and what is inspiring (…). Positive leadership means promoting outcomes such as thriving at work, interpersonal flourishing, virtuous behaviours, positive emotions and energising networks". The concept of positive leadership originates from three following fields of study: positive organisational scholarship, positive psychology and positive change. There are a few mutually related strategies which allow leaders to practice the idea of positive leadership: positive climate, positive relationships, positive communication and positive meaning (Cameron, 2012).

Positive leadership is a part of a positive orientation and a kind of a trigger which, in the organisational positivity process, leads to other positive phenomena such as: culture, structure, strategy and human capital. As regards its antecedents, positive leadership is based on: entrepreneurial spirit, optimistic attitude, existence of an atmosphere of

trust between leaders and followers, fairness and justice among employees and, of course, hope. As observed by Zbierowski and Góra (2014, pp. 85–88), all these elements are interrelated and very important in creating positive leadership.

Although positive leadership is a new concept in the theory of management science, its ideas have been present in the studies for many years. Many researchers have tried to define and describe the most important functions of leadership in organisations. Most authors agree that one of the most important element of leadership activities is to attract workers and encourage them to achieving goals of the organisation. According to Kanarski (2005, p. 126), engaged subordinates carry out their duties at a very high level of possibilities. Such a situation is connected with three very important functions performed by leaders.

As Majewska-Opiełka (1998) claims, the first function of leaders is to combine the objectives represented by them with the objectives of their subordinates. Then, the implementation of common goals allows organisation members to achieve their personal objectives. Usually, the aim is to meet basic needs, but effective leaders make that followers have a sense of accomplishment of higher-level objectives, which shows them not only the meaning of the taken actions, but even the meaning of life. Many employees discover significant goals thanks to their leaders and begin to pursue them, which in turn contributes to their development. The majority of people are not able to set higher-level life goals. Someone who stimulates this process, ensures himself/herself a leading position in the group (Majewska-Opiełka, 1998, pp. 21–23).

However, not only are common objectives sufficient but also some impulse which constantly sustains them is necessary. Internal enthusiasm is such an impulse. Arousing enthusiasm is the next feature of leaders which influences internal motivation of their followers. Belief in usefulness and final success of taken actions is necessary in the case of performing this function. On the other hand, when leaders show the lack of enthusiasm (even for a moment) subordinates lose their willingness to work (Majewska-Opiełka, 1998, pp. 21–23).

The externalisation of the qualities and capabilities of organisation members is considered as the third function performed by leaders. Arousing enthusiasm and an individual approach to organisational objectives are strong incentives to act. Leaders are expected to make the efforts to elicit in subordinates both of these features in order to exploit to the greatest possible extent the possibilities of their followers

and give them chances to develop. The vast majority of workers want to do their work well, and at the same time they want to feel that they use their potential and make the best use of their personal qualities (Majewska-Opiełka, 1998, pp. 21–23).

Certainly, positive leadership and the studies on the key functions of leaders are not just theoretical issues. These developed theories enable managers to become good leaders and allow them to avoid mistakes when managing organisations and their employees. The elements of the greatest impact on the effectiveness of leadership processes include: communication and interaction between organisation members, the ability of leaders to motivate subordinates and giving them a sense of responsibility through delegation of tasks.

3. Communication in the team and attention to subordinates

According to Kanarski (2005, p. 132), communication is defined as the process of information exchange between participants of interaction. This activity includes not only verbal communication but also non-verbal elements such as: gestures, facial expressions, intonation, exchanging polite phrases, looking in the direction of a co-worker or reciprocating a friendly smile. Leaders usually communicate on several levels of the organisation at the same time, providing their subordinates not only with information, but also with ideas, beliefs, enthusiasm and commitment (Kanarski, 2005). Therefore, the scope of communication should be considered more broadly than sending and receiving information or mechanically exchanging data (De Pree, 1999, p. 70). Effective intra-organisational communication should strengthen employees and stimulate their imagination, because it is considered to be the basis for any further changes. In order to arouse the feeling of subordinates' self-esteem, leaders should adjust to their way of thinking, devote them a lot of attention, engage in dialogue, mobilise to changes and believe in the potential and capabilities of employees (Kasianiuk (Ed), 2008, p. 18). As Robbins (2001) claims, ineffective communication is a very common source of interpersonal conflicts and one of the most important causes decreasing effectiveness of teams. That is why researchers more and more often emphasise the importance of proper formulation and transmission of messages to make them understandable for all recipients (Robbins, 2001, p. 128).

According to Maxwell (2010), the task of leaders is taking people to places that they would not be able to achieve, inspiring them, supporting in a pursuit to the objectives and helping in activities that can be achieved only through teamwork (Maxwell, 2010, p. 165). Good leaders can be compared to the tour guides. They perfectly know the area because they have already travelled there, and they do everything in their power to make a trip enjoyable for all (Maxwell, 2010, p. 18–19). Implementation of this task is possible only through establishing good relationships with subordinates. The point is not that leaders have to try with all their strengths to satisfy employees or wait for their approval. Sometimes leaders have to do a brave step and make a quick decision without asking followers about assessment. However, it does not mean that they have a negative attitude to subordinates and do not care about their opinion (Maxwell, 2010, p. 165). Positive relationships can be established in a different way – by appreciating workers, praising them for achievements, taking into account their feelings. A sense of humour and faith in own abilities can also help in making good relationships (Maxwell, 2010, p. 211).

Many employees spend long hours in their workplace. Therefore, a pleasant atmosphere has a significant impact not only on employee commitment and performance but also on their private lives. Good leaders know that subordinates enjoy even the smallest cordial gestures – that is why ideal managers try to find a moment to talk or they show the appreciation by making compliments. Highlighting positive employee qualities improves mood and helps to overcome the hardships of everyday life. Simultaneously, leaders should constantly control their behaviours in order to avoid humiliating subordinates in front of co-workers, showing excessive scrupulosity or elevating the tone of speech. Blaming workers for making misguided choices is not allowed. Success of the team depends mainly on positive attitudes of organisation members. That is why leaders are to ensure that every employee feels valued and respected, that he or she identifies with other members of the team and knows how to work with them (Pietrzak, 2012, pp. 82–83, 90). Time devoted to creating a good atmosphere usually reduces time and costs of accomplishing tasks and achieving organisational objectives. Therefore, leaders should consciously build positive relationships to recruit and support the development of employees in order to improve the performance of their organisations (Deering, Dilts and Russell, 2009, pp. 132–133).

A pleasant atmosphere in the workplace is the outset to achieve organisational goals. However, there are some other elements necessary for the development of organisations which cannot be omitted. Good leaders are to identify the strengths and weaknesses of subordinates to assign them to the jobs which are best suited to their knowledge, skills and competencies. Every person has some qualities that can be exploited for the benefit of others. For every employee there is a position where she/he can use their potential. Leaders are to help employees to find their niche as they have already discovered such a niche for themselves. Assigning the right people to the right jobs allows to achieve significant success. Professional development is closely linked with personal development. Becoming a better employee means at the same time becoming a better person. Because more effective employees mean a more efficient organisation, a great potential is embedded in the process of employee personal improvement (Maxwell, 2010, pp. 84, 104, 112–113).

According to Marques (2013, pp. 54–56), in order to effectively motivate subordinates, leaders should ensure continuous communication through e-mails and meetings designed to inform about the current situation and progress, as well as meetings on which employees will have the opportunity to ask questions – because they have right to know what is going on in the company and they can also deliver their opinions and concerns. All members are equally important for activities of the organisation – therefore, each of them should be respected. Coworkers should not be treated only as the means to achieve goals. Leaders are to strive to create and maintain good relationships with subordinates because it stimulates their motivation and provides support for all activities (Marques, 2013). However, healthy relationships between leaders and subordinates are not enough – such relationships are expected to occur between all team members. Building long-lasting relationships within a group is extremely important because it has a strong impact on relations with customers and business partners. Leaders are the most important members that affect the development of such working conditions (De Pree, 1999, p. 14). As observed by Maxwell (2010, p. 102), creating positive relationships is the starting point to gain confidence and loyalty. Requiring these features in advance does not work and it does not bring the desired effects. It is not a position held, but achieved results and an appropriate approach to subordinates which allow to gain respect and growing group of followers. Loyalty is a kind of reward for

good leaders for placement of welfare of followers at the first place. The atmosphere of trust begins to develop when subordinates find that leaders know where they are moving. Relationships based on trust are stronger, when managers more often make right decisions supported by adequate motivation (Maxwell, 2010).

To sum it up, a good leader should focus on positive communication that ,,occurs in organisations when affirmative and supportive language replaces negative and critical language" (Cameron, 2012, p. 65). As Glińska-Neweś (2013, pp. 129–130) claims, quality of positive inter-personal relationships in a workplace is very important because it has a significant impact on worker behaviours: proper relationships foster a positive attitude towards assigned tasks and as a consequence – sub-ordinates feel less overloaded with their work. The fact that employees spend most of the day at workplace is the case for friendship at work. As we know, positive relationships between individuals result in the efficient functioning of the whole organisation.

,,Minimizing criticism and negativity, and replacing them with an abundance of positive feedback and expressions of support, can enable the affirmative effects of communication" (Cameron, 2012, pp. 72–73). According to Wińska (2013, p. 204), proper communication leads to raise in employee motivation, helps them to express their feelings and emotions and stimulates team work. Communication also builds trust among all of organisation's members (this applies to both subordinates and supervisors). In addition, communication reduces risk and supports knowledge management.

4. Motivation of team members

According to Kanarski, motivating employees is one of the basic responsibilities of leaders. It results in employee commitment in the implementation of the objectives, their identification with the organisa-tion, creativity and willingness to cooperate. Effective leaders are able to mobilise subordinates and to trigger enthusiasm in them by their own attitude and determination (Kanarski, 2005, p. 133).

For a long time many researchers have been interested in the issues related to effective employee motivation. Their research has resulted in the discovery of several important theories. The theories represent different points of view because it is practically impossible to establish

an universal model of motivating employees. Similarity of approaches to this issue can be discerned only in the assumptions, research methods and empirical verification. The key contributors to the motivation theories which take into account the needs of workers are: Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg, McGregor and McClelland (Sekuła, 2008, p. 18).

Maslow establishes the 5-level hierarchy of human needs including physiological needs, safety, belongingness and love, appreciation and respect, and self-fulfilment. The pyramid of needs is an educational canon for leaders because it allows them to capture the essential aspects of motivating systems, starting with identification of employee needs and to determine the ways to satisfy them through various motivators (Sekuła, 2008, pp. 19, 22). Maslow also emphasises the importance of the fact that subordinates could satisfy the same need in different ways. It is therefore necessary not only to identify the dominant needs, but also the ways to satisfy them (Karaś, 2003, p. 20).

Alderfer uses the achievements of Maslow's theory for developing his ERG theory of needs. Alderfer distinguishes three categories of needs: existence (including physiological and financial security needs), relationship (including psychosocial safety needs, belongingness and recognition), and personal development (including the need to preserve the autonomy, self-improvement, and self-fulfilment). The ERG theory, similarly to the theory of Maslow's, assumes that identifying of individual needs should be the basis for the motivation process. An important change in relation to the concept of Maslow is the claim concerning the possibility of experiencing several needs at the same time. It forces managers to adopt such solutions which allow meeting the needs at different levels simultaneously (Karaś, 2003, pp. 21–23).

Herzberg does not focus on the needs, but on the determinants of job satisfaction. Based on studies concerning satisfaction and dissatisfaction of employees, his theory distinguishes two types of factors: psychical hygiene, including broadly understood material work environment and policies of the organisation (ensuring proper working conditions and adequate remuneration to performance, relations with superiors), and the factors contributing to satisfaction (taking care of subordinates, creating perspectives of development and planning opportunities for employees, rewarding outstanding achievements). Herzberg's research proves that both wages and relationships with superiors and colleagues, as well as company policy, they are very strong motivators – should therefore be used simultaneously (Sekuła, 2008, pp. 23–24).

McGregor in his investigations draws attention to willingness of employees to perform assigned tasks, thus creating the theory X, according to which people have no desire to work, so they need to be motivated by external stimuli (mainly salary) and the theory Y associated with employees willing to work that are in a greater extent motivated by internal factors such as: the perspective of development and the ability to exploit existing potential (Sekuła, 2008, p. 26). Therefore, in case of this theory the first step should be to determine to which group a given worker belongs and to establish, on this basis, an appropriate stimulus motivating him/her to perform assigned duties.

McClelland focuses on the study of higher-order needs. In his theory McClelland distinguishes three groups of needs: achievement, which is connected with praises and which is at the same time the measure of success in relation to other employees (it concerns those wishing to publicise their professional achievements), affiliation, that expresses in a desire to maintain positive relationships (for employees who are motivated by opportunity to work which requires wide cooperation and that allows to gain interesting contacts), and authority, relating to the desire to influence subordinates by instructing them and exercising control. Assumptions of this theory allow leaders to choose appropriate type of work to subordinates preferences in order to motivate them to even more effective professional activities (Sekuła, 2008, pp. 28–29).

Majewska-Opiełka (1998) argues that the appreciation of subordinates is the easiest way to motivate them to work. Each team member should know that he or she is needed and valuable for an organisation. Calling by name, saying compliment or noticing something positive about someone's work does not require much effort, and can bring positive results. Everybody likes to feel awarded and noticed and the fair and friendly attitude to employees not only gives them pleasure but also significantly stimulates their motivation (Majewska-Opiełka, 1998, pp. 225–228).

An internal satisfaction affects the amount of effort that workers put into their work. However, there is also another important factor – the amount of remuneration and rewards offered by the management. Motivation to work depends therefore mainly on what employees expect to receive as a result of work (Webber, 1984, pp. 69–70). Understanding the expectations of subordinates and creating favourable conditions of work is a key part of the whole process (Jankowska, 2010, pp. 108–109).

The purpose of a leader is to understand what motivates people and use that (not only show them the way) (Deering et al., 2009, p. 134). Such an approach helps to trigger human activity because attitude to work is determined by both management systems as well as socio-economic conditions (Jankowska, 2010, pp. 108–109).

Besides a fair salary which is the basic tool of motivation, leaders should extend the set of non-material motivators they use. Among them more and more appreciated by employees are: training, career planning and development, support in development and acquiring new skills, opportunity to participate in decision-making process (Jankowska, 2010, pp. 110–111). In order to maintain employees, leaders use a number of motivation methods, starting with caring for them from the moment of entering into the organisation, through focusing on their continuous development and providing employees with remuneration adequate to their performance (Jankowska, 2010, p. 226).

According to Jankowska (2010), different groups of factors affect employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Satisfaction is typically based on motives focusing directly around the work. Whereas frustration is usually caused by the factors belonging to the work environment. Incentives such as matching job position to competence, opportunities of development and promotion, a sense of responsibility and recognition for achievements have a strong impact on the state of employees satisfaction. Feeling of dissatisfaction arises through the use of improper personnel policies, inadequate working conditions or bad relationships with supervisors or co-workers (Jankowska, 2010, pp. 107–108).

Although positive leadership is a new concept in management sciences, its assumptions are strongly connected with theories of motivation that were created many years ago. As many researchers claim, employees are the most important element of each organisation, while the leader is someone who should take care of employees. Positive leader appreciates subordinates, meets their expectations, assists in the development, supports in case of problems. Such approach contributes to increase employee motivation and as a result – to achieve better performances and development of the whole organisation.

5. Delegation of responsibilities and transfer of authority

As Maxwell (2010) claims, effective leaders should learn not only how to achieve the vision, gain employees and motivate them to action, but also how to delegate responsibilities and tasks. This step requires a lot of trust, but it is a very important (and often necessary) element of management in modern organisations. Leaders should deal only with major matters, not all of issues. Focusing on unimportant details leads to the loss of perspective and management capacity. In every company problems should be solved at the lowest possible level because consultation all of cases with leaders takes too much time. Moreover, the best solutions to the problem are usually possible to be found by organisation members who have a direct contact with the issue (Maxwell, 2010, pp. 123–124).

Nowadays, delegation of responsibilities is a more and more important aspect of business management. In the 1980s, only certain employees could participate in decisions directly related to their work. Today, subordinates often exercise full control over their positions. Sometimes, there is even the formation of self-managed teams in organisations whose members operate largely without superiors. Such a situation forces leaders to abandon complete control, and employees to take responsibility and increase knowledge and improve skills in order to make right decisions (Robbins, 2001, p. 25).

During the process of delegation, leaders have to identify the three main factors: scope to which they intend to delegate setting of objectives, scope to which they want to delegate determining ways to achieve these goals, and the time for which they intend to delegate tasks (Deering et al., 2009, p. 195). As observed by Giuliani (2003), the starting point in the process of delegation of responsibilities is to find and appoint an appropriate follower. Employees who expect every time to indicate them the way, who do not like taking responsibility and prefer to make decisions at higher levels of the organisation, should not be taken into account during selection made by leaders. Someone who has been selected in such a process, begins to be entitled to a relatively large amount of power and a broad room for manoeuvre in decision making processes. However, the role of a leader does not end at this stage. Certainly, an appointed person takes a part of tasks and responsibilities, but supervisors have to control subordinate's actions all the time. Tasks to perform by leaders are still: making plans containing detailed targets for

subordinates, advising, encouraging to take action and providing necessary resources needed to achieve the goals (Giuliani, 2003, p. 115).

Some researchers argue that internal motivation is a more effective form of motivation than the external one which is shorter and brings smaller results. Transfer of authority (even for a fragment of some project) encourages employees to become involved in efforts of the team and perform tasks at the highest possible level. In some cases, workers are afraid of taking over a large responsibility. However, a worse situation for them is when a supervisor says exactly what to do – in such a case organisation members feel only like meaningless, and having any effect, executive force (Majewska-Opiełka, 1998, pp. 232–233). Employees who are not involved in activities, they are not interested in results of work, and as a result they use only minimum of capabilities (Bergmann, Hurson and Russ-Eft, 1999, p. 74). Therefore, it is necessary to give followers a chance to obtain results using their own ways and means, which they consider to be the most useful. Everyone, of course, needs information about standards of properly performed work, everyone also wants to know what expectations are in front of him and on what basis the results of his/her activities will be billed. Simultaneously, everyone also wants an identification with the efforts, which can be obtained for example by adjusting method of work to skills and capabilities of an employee. The person who really feels responsible for something performs assigned duties better, because it involves then not only hands and mind, but also the heart (Majewska-Opiełka, 1998, pp. 233–235).

The process of delegating responsibilities combines psychological and mechanical dimensions. It assumes persuading subordinates to take over the responsibility for the tasks that were previously carried out by leaders. Therefore, among leaders' responsibilities is to stimulate workers' willingness to take over a part of their responsibilities and constantly maintain this enthusiasm (Deering et al., 2009, pp. 187–188).

Delegation of responsibilities and transfer of authority is highly connected with talent management that in turn is an important part of positive leadership. As Glińska-Neweś and Stankiewicz (2013) argue, talent management is a contemporary challenge to any organisation. We constantly observe increasing intensity of competition and growing role of innovations. Positive leaders carefully select potential subordinates and try to encourage them to stay in the organisation because talented workers are able to build up competitive advantages of the company.

Effective talent management allows talented employees on continuous development and it creates opportunities for them to meet new, ambitious projects and challenges (Glińska-Neweś and Stankiewicz, 2013, p. 29). According to Chodorek, "matching people to their roles in an organisation increases their efficiency and gives them the chance to do what they like doing and they are good at. In such circumstances employees make use of their potentials. As a result, the positive upward spiral begins. Positive effects follow positive emotions of employees who are happy with their jobs. Employee motivation increases which contributes to employee engagement and better performance. In effect, the higher level of customer satisfaction is achieved while the fluctuation of personnel decreases" (Chodorek, 2013, p. 184).

6. Conclusions

A positive leader is a person who not only affects the behaviours of followers but also inspires them, motivates to take action, properly delegates duties and responsibilities, as well as gives awards and punishments. Positive leaders are to influence the members of their teams in order to reach goals and make positive changes in the organisation.

Positive leadership is a new concept in the theory of management science but its ideas have been present in the studies for many years. Numerous researchers have tried to define the most important functions of leadership engaging subordinates to perform their duties at the highest possible level. The catalogue of the key leaders' roles includes: combining leaders' objectives with the objectives represented by subordinates, arousing an enthusiasm in followers and externalising the qualities and capabilities of organisation members.

Moreover, researchers have distinguished particular elements that strongly influence the effectiveness of activities: communication within the organisation, the ability of leaders to motivate subordinates and delegation of tasks. Effective communication allows to build good relationships between team members, leads to achieving better results and significantly influences workers' personal life. Motivating employees results in a full commitment, employee identification with the organisation, creativity and willingness to cooperate. The key contributors interested in the issues related to effective employee motivation are: Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg, McGregor and McClelland. Their theories

are listed to the present day. The third element, delegation of responsibilities and tasks, requires a lot of trust to followers but simultaneously it usually brings positive results – subordinates (in order to make right decisions) increase their knowledge and improve skills, and as a consequence they perform assigned duties more effectively.

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