

ROLE OF CULTURE IN LEADERS LEADING

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Abstract

Leadership today and in the foreseeable future consists of multiple relationships, a variety of partnering with each having its distinct characteristics: unique demands, values, and tensions. In many organizations, such informal partnerships based on converging ideas would have been considered disruptive of the basic power structure, illegitimate given the chain of command and initiatives made a commitment to the strategic objectives or culture of the organization. National culture influencing choice of leadership style. Leadership in organizations has a specific focus on managerial leadership in organizations and must be an attempt at bridging the gulf between culture and management. Leading by culture are making work, productions and projects which show different ways of thinking, feeling and experiencing the world - bringing dynamism to the economy and wider society. In this paper, we have tried to describe leadership and culture. And explain the leading in content of culture. For this purpose, we have expressed leadership component and culture components and the role of culture in leaders leading.

Keywords: Culture, National culture, Culture layers, Leadership

Introduction

The confluence occurring today between economic, technological, social, and demographic change is creating an organizational environment in which change is a constant, nimbleness an imperative, a broad base of talent an essential, and maintaining a balance between innovation and brand identity the key to survival. In such an environment, an organization's ability to nurture partnerships at various levels becomes a requirement. For innovation to flourish in the ranks, there must be "tolerance at the margins," as Arie de Geus has observed. The only leadership that is shown by energy conglomerates is to sustain the corporate structure not our energy needs. Jago (1982) Good leaders are made not born. If you have the desire and willpower, you can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience.

Sanskrit literature identifies ten types of leaders. Defining characteristics of the ten types of leaders are explained with examples from history and mythology¹. Aristocratic thinkers have postulated that leadership depends on one's "blue blood" or genes. Monarchy takes an extreme view of the same idea, and may prop up its assertions against the claims of mere aristocrats by invoking divine sanction (see the divine right of kings). Contrariwise, more democratically-inclined theorists have pointed to examples of meritocratic leaders, such as the Napoleonic marshals profiting from careers open to talent. In the autocratic/paternalistic strain of thought, traditionalists recall the role of leadership of the Roman pater familiars. Feminist thinking, on the other hand, may object to such models as patriarchal and posit against them emotionally-attuned, responsive, and consensual empathetic guidance, which is sometimes associated with matriarchies.

¹ KSEEB. *Sanskrit Text Book -9th Grade*. Government of Karnataka, India.

Comparable to the Roman tradition, the views of Confucianism on "right living" relate very much to the ideal of the (male) scholar-leader and his benevolent rule, buttressed by a tradition of filial piety.

Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and discipline ... Reliance on intelligence alone results in rebelliousness. Exercise of humaneness alone results in weakness. Fixation on trust results in folly. Dependence on the strength of courage results in violence. Excessive discipline and sternness in command result in cruelty. When one has all five virtues together, each appropriate to its function, then one can be a leader. — Sun Tzu (Pockell and Avila, 2007). Machiavelli's *The Prince*, written 500 years ago, was a manual for leaders to gain and keep their power. In the 19th century, the elaboration of anarchist thought called the whole concept of leadership into question. (Note that the Oxford English Dictionary traces the word "leadership" in English only as far back as the 19th century.) One response to this denial of élitism came with Leninism, which demanded an élite group of disciplined cadres to act as the vanguard of a socialist revolution, bringing into existence the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Other historical views of leadership have addressed the seeming contrasts between secular and religious leadership. The doctrines of Caesaro- papism have recurred and had their detractors over several centuries. Christian thinking on leadership has often emphasized stewardship of divinely-provided resources—human and material—and their deployment in accordance with a Divine plan. Compare servant leadership. Often overlooked in essays on leadership is the role of the organization's measurement and management system. Effective leaders, however, know that measurement and management systems play a critical role in communication; in establishing the culture and values of the organization; and in aligning diverse units, employees, and constituencies (Segil, Goldsmith, Belasco, 2003: 9). In this paper, we have tried to describe leadership and culture. And explain the leading in content of culture. For this purpose, we have expressed leadership component and culture components and the role of culture in leaders leading.

Literature Review

Culture: In the 20th century, "culture" emerged as a central concept in anthropology, encompassing the range of human phenomena that cannot be directly attributed to genetic inheritance. Specifically, the term "culture" in American anthropology had two meanings:

- the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively; and
- the distinct ways that people, who live differently, classified and represented their experiences, and acted creatively².

Hoebel (1966) describes culture as an integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not a result of biological inheritance. Distinctions are currently made between the physical artifacts created by a society, its so-called material culture, and everything else, (Gerber and Linda, 2010) the intangibles such as language, customs, etc. that are the main referent of the term "culture".

Culture layers: Culture is a multifaceted concept. Models purporting to explain this topic typically distinguish between different layers or strata of culture. Trompenaars (1999) identifies three layers of culture; namely an outer, middle and core. Figure 1 depicts these layers as concentric circles. The outer circle identifies artifacts and products, the middle circle encompasses norms and values and the inner circle comprises basic assumptions held within the group (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1999).

² "What is culture?". Bodylanguagecards.com. Retrieved 2013-03-29.

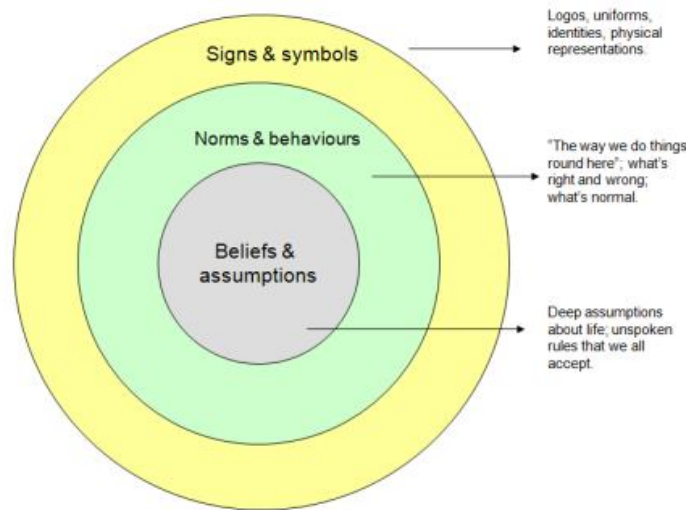


Fig. 1: A model of culture

Source: F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, Second edition, Nicholas Brealey (1999), p. 22.

It may equally be useful to conceive of a three-layer model of culture comprising outer, middle and core layers. For our purposes an outer layer of culture refers to surface-level elements of culture which are quickly and easily understood on even a short visit to another country. Examples could include language, climate, dress and food and drink. The 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* provides an example in which a character in the film has recently returned to the USA after spending three years in Amsterdam. His description of the Netherlands is restricted to surface level anecdotes regarding fast food and the comparative legality and availability of soft drugs. The viewer is invited to mock his failure to understand the greater subtleties of Dutch culture. Aspects of this outer layer can nonetheless be important to a successful cultural exchange in business. Giving a work colleague in the Czech Republic red flowers as a gift may be taken as expression of romantic interest while wearing a green hat in China may signify that one's partner is unfaithful!

A middle layer of culture is the one which will be of most relevance for us as it concerns expressed values, attitudes and behaviors. In terms of organizational behavior, if we accept the evidence that indicates significant differences between cultures, we might anticipate that findings in the following topics should be re-examined to see whether they apply in different societies: "*Leadership, Perception, Motivation, Work Groups, Organization Structure, Human Resource Management and Management Control and Power*". The contribution of writers such as Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars (1999), and Hall and Hall (1997) may also provide useful frameworks for understanding topics within organizational behavior from a cross-cultural standpoint. A core layer of culture relates to the deepest assumptions concerning people and nature held by a particular society. Such assumptions, which may be vestigial, often relate to the topography of a society or the level of threat posed by natural disasters.

For example, it has been claimed that the Netherlands as a small country bounded by larger neighbors has developed a pragmatic flexible approach to business as a result of its location, bolstered by its historic struggle to keep the sea at bay. In the UK the relatively high degree of scepticism towards greater European integration may, in part, be explained by its island status. So-called group mentalities exhibited by some Asian countries could be traced back to patterns of agrarian production exhibited in previous times. Somewhat more arcane and, by definition, difficult to unravel, these core layer assumptions could conceivably manifest themselves in modern day cross-border business dealings.

In Figure 2, Tayeb (2003) shows with examples how culture can take effect at a number of levels; from the global through to the personal. Readers may wish to consider how significant cultural differences may occur at the regional and/or community levels in their own experience. Nonetheless studies of culture most usually take the country or nation state as the focus of attention.

Example: wishing to succeed in life	Global layer National layer Regional layer Community layer Personal layer	Behaviors Attitudes Beliefs Values Taken for granted assumptions
Example: avoiding loss of face in Japanese culture		
Example: Bengali culture in West Bengal, India		
Example: helping neighbors in a mining community in Wales, UK		
Example: caring for wildlife		

Fig.2. Major cultural layers

Source: M. Tayeb, *International Management: Theories and Practice*, Financial Times Prentice Hall (2003), p. 14, with permission from Pearson Education Ltd.

National Culture: Generally in the literature, theories that focused on culture study the role of cultural values and norms as well as the compliance of internal (strategy, structure, systems and procedures) and external (national culture, history and politic institutions) factors. Differences in employees' values regarding their work or managerial implementations such as joining group works, promotions and some extrinsic awards which come from different cultural backgrounds appear as the effects of culture (Al-Yahya 2008). In this sense, safety culture will be affected by culture as the integration of organizations' strategies and systems. Moving from the explanations above, in order to establish and sustain a desirable and convenient organizational culture, taking individuals' national cultural characteristics into consideration is necessary. Managing the interaction between the national culture and organizational culture efficiently is what organizations must do which desire to form a favorable safety culture. In this context it is observed that the relation between the safety and national culture appears more than before in the literature. According to Helmreich (1999), if organizations want their safety criteria to be effective and remarkable, they should make a comprehensive evaluation considering the national culture's effect on this. However, empirical researches analyzing the effects of national culture on safety attitudes, behavior and performance are very limited (Mearns and Yule 2009). Similarly, Tharaldsen and Haukleid (2009) emphasize that cultural perspectives have been given inadequate place in safety literature (Glendon and Standon 2000). Brooks (2003) is one of several commentators who draw our attention to the interlinked nature of culture. Figure 3, illustrates the interplay between relevant factors affecting any one national culture.

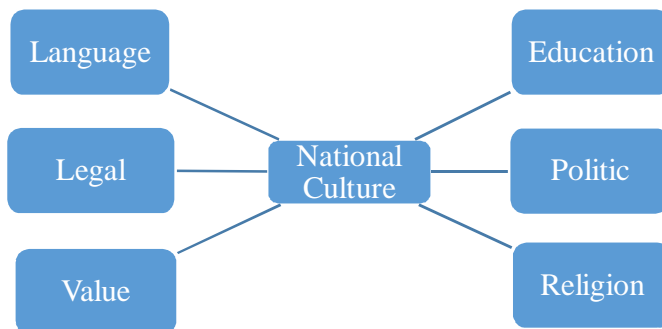


Fig.3: Factors affecting national culture

Dimensions of Culture: Several sets of dimensions have been developed to characterize the concept of national culture. Table 1 provides an overview of the most known cultural dimensions found in several fields of studies.

Table 1. Overview of the most known Cultural Dimensions

Cultural Dimensions	Authors
Power Distance	Hofstede (1997)
Individualism/Collectivism	Hofstede (1997)
Masculinity/Femininity	Hofstede (1997)
Uncertainty Avoidance	Hofstede (1997)
Long-term Orientation	Hofstede, Bond (1997)
Confucian Work Dynamism	Chinese Culture Connection (1987)
Conservatism	Schwartz (1994)
Intellectual autonomy	Schwartz (1994)
Affective autonomy	Schwartz (1994)
Hierarchy	Schwartz (1994)
Egalitarianism	Schwartz (1994)
Mastery	Schwartz (1994)
Harmony	Schwartz (1994)
Universalism/Particularism	Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner (1998)
Individualism/Communitarianism	Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner (1998)
Neutral/Emotional	Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner (1998)
Specific/Diffuse	Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner (1998)
Achievement/Ascription	Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner (1998)
Attitudes to time	Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner (1998)
Attitudes to environment	Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner (1998)
Communication context	Hall (1989), Hall, Hall, (1987)
Perception of space	Hall, Hall (1987), Hall (1989)
Monochronic and polychronic time	Hall (1989)
Nature of people	Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck (1961)
Person's relationship to nature	Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck (1961)
Person's relationship to other people	Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck (1961)
Primary mode of activity	Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck (1961)
Conception of space	Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck (1961)
Person's temporal orientation	Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck (1961)

Several reasons lead us to investigate national culture through six dimensions - individualism/collectivism”, “power distance”, “masculinity/femininity”, “uncertainty avoidance” (Hofstede, 1997), “time perception (monochromic / polychromic)” (Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner, 1998, Hall, 1989) and “high context/low context” (Hall, 1989). First, these dimensions rely on variables that are more directly linked to social and organizational process: they focus on human values, rather than on general beliefs about the way we see the world. Indeed, “culture is primarily a manifestation of core values” (Straub et al., 2002), therefore, in order to better capture the relationship between culture, and behavior, Triandis suggests using values (Triandis, 1972). Second, the first four dimensions (Hofstede’s cultural dimensions) constitute the most used and recognized dimensions as a whole or separately in studying cross-cultural issues in management and organizations. Provided its global coverage in terms of respondents, it seems that Hofstede’s study has been unrivalled (Smith and Bond, 1999). In fact, the identification of the cultural dimensions was based upon a field study covering a sample of forty countries in which more than 116000 questionnaires were collected. Hofstede’s work has also been validated directly or indirectly by many other researches in different settings.

Leadership

Believe it or not, there isn’t a right or wrong answer to this question. Leadership takes on different meanings depending on the person who leads and the people being led. On any given day, leadership can mean teaching, coaching, assigning, cheerleading, counseling, guiding, correcting, protecting, explaining, and observing. Leadership asks you to fill out forms, chair meetings, hold hands, explain decisions, think about the future, and resolve conflict. None of these actions or tasks will happen discretely; usually they’ll happen all at once. If you thought becoming the boss would give you more control of your time and tasks, think again. Like the new entrepreneur, you’ll discover that you have less control over your daily activities as you work to help and support the people you lead (Clarke-Epstein Ch., 2002: 11). Leadership

is more than a skill set. Real leadership is a combination of well-honed skills combined with an open and gracious spirit (p.13). There are many ways of looking at leadership and many interpretations of its meaning. Leadership might be interpreted in simple terms, such as 'getting others to follow' or 'getting people to do things willingly', or interpreted more specifically, for example as 'the use of authority in decision-making'. It may be exercised as an attribute of position, or because of personal knowledge or wisdom. Leadership might be based on a function of personality, or it can be seen as a behavioral category. It may also be viewed in terms of the role of the leaders and their ability to achieve effective performance from others.

Taffinder suggests that everyone has a theory but, although we know quite a lot about management, we do not know as much about leadership (Taffinder, 1995). Handy believes that: "like motivation, the search for the definitive solution to the leadership problem has proved to be another endless quest for the Holy Grail in organization theory" (Handy, 1993: 97). Leadership is related to motivation, interpersonal behavior and the process of communication. For example, according to Sir Paul Judge: 'Thirty years ago it was very much about what you knew, the technicalities of things. Managers now are leaders of their groups, their departments. Although they may well need some specialist knowledge, the human relations part of the management job is more important than ever. People have more flexibility and choicer in their careers, which are themselves more fluid, so keeping people motivated is very important (Judge, 2003:19).' Leadership is also important in attempting to reduce employee dissatisfaction (Crow and Hartman, 1995: 10). Good leadership involves the effective process of delegation and empowerment. The leadership relationship is not limited to leader behavior resulting in subordinate behavior. Leadership is a dynamic process. The leader-follower relationship is reciprocal and effective leadership is a two-way process which influences both individual and organizational performance.

Lord Sieff (1991) for example, maintains that:

Leadership is vitally important at all levels within the company, from main board to the shopfloor. Leadership is the moral and intellectual ability to visualise and work for what is best for the company and its employees ... The most vital thing the leader does is to create team spirit around him and near him, not in a schoolboy sense, but in realistic terms of mature adults ... To be effective leadership has to be seen, and it is best seen in action (p. 133).

Good management leadership helps to develop teamwork and the integration of individual and group goals. It aids intrinsic motivation by emphasizing the importance of the work that people do (Tustin, 1989: 5). The changing nature of work organizations, including flatter structures and recognition of the efficient use of human resources, coupled with advances in social democracy, have combined to place growing importance on leadership. The nature of management is moving away from an emphasis on getting results by the close control of the workforce and towards an environment of coaching, support and empowerment (Gretton, 1995:18). 'The maxim that: "there is nothing you cannot achieve if you don't mind who gets the credit" should be the watchword for all team leaders ...

The view that is beginning to emerge, is that if teams are to come up with the goods, the leaders need to step out of the limelight and let others take a bow' (Lucas, 2001: 10). Hooper and Potter (1999) discuss the importance of leadership in times of change and uncertainty, and that good leaders are sensitive to the impact of the change process on people. 'Never is leadership more sought after than in times of change and uncertainty. Effective change leadership is the key to shifting people's perceptions from seeing change as a threat to seeing it as an exciting challenge'. Fullan (2001).also discusses leader- ship in a culture of change and points out that leadership is key to large-scale improvement. It is essential for leaders to understand the change process, and moral purpose without change will lead to moral martyrdom. Leaders must be able to operate under complex, uncertain circumstances. Vecchio (1999), *raises* the question of whether leadership does make a difference and suggests one interesting way to learn whether leaders can have an impact is by studying the results of a change in leader. As work-unit achievements result more from the efforts of the unit's members than of one individual, and organizations have rules and policies that govern behavior, a good argument can be made that leadership has only a modest impact on group performance. However, Vecchio (2000) also contends that: 'one has a sense that a leader, under the right circumstances, can have a powerful impact on group performance'.

Gratton (2000) points out that while we are part of organizations shaped by technology that has created the patents, ideas and innovations that brought success, the past will not bring sustainable competitive advantage for the future. To do this we have to build the potential of people in our organizations, the knowledge they bring and their commitment and enthusiasm. Building human potential demands a new agenda, a new set of challenges for leaders and a redefined set of

managerial capabilities. This new agenda creates a set of expectations of the leaders. Gratton sets out four expectations as the message for leaders.

- **Expectation 1: dream collectively** – create a time and a process for you and your colleagues to dream about the future; create enthusiasm and excitement and a vision for the future; view the present as a pathway to the future; allow people to work independently but within the frame of the general direction; and work to identify and coordinate the major themes for action.
- **Expectation 2: balance the short term with the longer term** – think in the past, the present and the future; be aware of the human scale of change and create plans of action that reflect human time scales and a capacity in human potential; build a vision for the future that engages people and allows them to understand their future role.
- **Expectation 3: build an organization that values people** – treat people with respect and have their ideas taken seriously and allow them to believe they can make a difference; be aware of the need to create communication channels with employees; demonstrate a commitment to people; treat people with politeness, respect and dignity and create a strong role model for others to follow.
- **Expectation 4: understand the reality of the organization** – create a deep, shared understanding of the current state of the business, and examine the metaphor of the organization; put the building of a highly committed workforce at the center of strategy; build a model of your organization around high levels of trust, commitment and inspiration; develop an understanding of process fairness and justice, and understand employees' perceptions of integrity, consistency and pride (Gratton, 2000).

Leadership and Culture

National culture influencing choice of leadership style. For example, *McGregor* (1987) concluded that the social, economic and political environment affected the leadership relationship, together with the attitudes and needs of 'followers'. *Tannenbaum and Schmidt* (1973) identify leaders' own value systems as factors which influence their chosen style. They also highlight subordinates' – or non-managers' – needs for independence and tolerance of ambiguity as relevant variables in the choice of style. These factors vary according to the cultural context in which the leadership relationship takes place. One should be wary of stereotyping the behavior of leaders or subordinates, and many myths appear to have grown around notions of 'orderly' German, 'undisciplined' Italian and even 'obstructive' British workers. However, there are reasons to suggest that there may indeed be national cultural differences which are relevant to an understanding of leadership. According to Hofstede (1981) one dimension for classifying societies, power distance, is said to influence the extent to which subordinates accept inequality, which in turn may influence the extent to which leaders wield power.

Thus one might expect a more autocratic style of leadership to be characteristic of organizations in countries as diverse as France, Spain, Hong Kong and Iran which all display a high level of power distance. In contrast, countries identified as low power distance societies included Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries and the USA. Given the inclusion of the last country within this group, it is perhaps not surprising that so many American writers advocate adopting participative styles of leadership. We have already identified the contribution of contingency approaches to understanding leadership, which suggest that contrasting types and styles of leadership may be more or less appropriate in different situations. *Kreitner* (2001) puts forward a model which identifies national culture as an important contingent variable in evaluating appropriate leadership styles. This framework builds on the 'path-goal' model put forward by *House*, and *House and Dessler* (1974). (discussed earlier in this chapter). *Kreitner* (2001) takes *House's* four identified leadership styles set out below and suggests that they may be relatively more culturally acceptable in particular societies:

- directive
- supportive
- participative
- achievement-oriented (*Kreitner*, 2001)

Several points could usefully be noted from this model which, it should be stressed, *Kreitner* intended to serve as general guidelines for international managers and other interested parties. Participative leadership, which involves

consultation with workers and consideration of their views, is seen as sufficiently applicable and desirable to be appropriate in all cultural contexts. Employees in countries which Hofstede identified as exhibiting 'low power distance', for example the USA, may have less inherent regard for hierarchy and seniority; respect in such cultures is related to actual achievement, so it is not surprising that a directive leadership style is not recommended in these countries. Some countries, for example Hong Kong, may either have a sufficient cultural mix or be pragmatic enough to be tolerant of all four styles. Whatever a manager's individual preferred leadership style, they may be constrained by the relevant legislative framework of that country. As an example, in Germany an extensive system of co-determination operates in which managers are required to engage in varying degrees of consultation and joint decision-making with employee representatives. Such national institutional frameworks will clearly affect leadership and management styles more generally, and it is interesting to record that Kreitner suggests that a directive leadership style would not be appropriate in Germany.

Conclusion

Leadership today and in the foreseeable future consists of multiple relationships, a variety of partnering with each having its distinct characteristics: unique demands, values, and tensions. Our case of Carmen, the executive director of a nonprofit community service *The Multiplicity of Roles and Demands for the Leader as Partner* organization, illustrates the reality of these multiple demands of partnering she had to manage (Segil et al, 2003: 118). The leadership was able to do this because it had established a culture in which people in the ranks felt comfortable building relationships across lines and levels, units and divisions, and exploiting the power that resulted from these new alliances to partner on seemingly off-the-wall experimental projects. In many organizations, such informal partnerships based on converging ideas would have been considered disruptive of the basic power structure, illegitimate given the chain of command (Segil et al, 2003: 28). Most of the initiatives we examined made a commitment to the strategic objectives or culture of the organization. Almost all of these initiatives have a message or vision upon which change or development was built. Emmis Communication stressed the following objectives in its change effort to promote better understanding and agreement on its structure, strategy, and culture: "Great Media, Great People, and Great Service." Lockheed Martin designed its cultural change management program around its three core competencies:

- Candid and open communication
- Taking personal action to unblock obstacles that prevent effective performance
- Acting when the need exists rather than ignoring issues (Carter, Ulrich, Goldsmith, 2005: 18).

McDonalds's leadership development program for regional managers enabled newly promoted managers to meet expectations while furthering the organization's mission and strategic objectives by building the following competencies:

- Developing a strategic perspective
- Maximizing business performance
- Gaining skills in insightful reasoning, problem solving, innovation, and mental agility

Sometimes leadership development and change programs transformed perceptions, behaviors, and culture(s) within a company. At MIT, employees have been documented as saying that they find themselves being more authentic in their interactions with coworkers and have the desire to create and be a part of an organization that "anticipates" learning opportunities. Decentralizing the institution and control of resources improved the way that operating divisions, previously functioning in independent silos, were innovating (Carter, Ulrich, Goldsmith, 2005: 19).

So, Leadership in Organizations has a specific focus on managerial leadership in organizations and must be an attempt at bridging the gulf between culture and management. Leading by culture are making work, productions and projects which show different ways of thinking, feeling and experiencing the world - bringing dynamism to the economy and wider society.

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