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CURRENT LEADERSHIP AS A TRANSFORMATIVE ELEMENT IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN CHIAPAS

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Abstract: The current situation facing small and medium-sized enterprises is forcing them to rethink the management style that leaders are implementing and the results they are achieving in order to remain in the market. The aim of this research is to argue the essential elements that identify leadership in order to differentiate it from other organizations, regardless of their field of activity, and at the same time marked by the managerial skill that benefits the fulfillment of the strategic objectives for the required quality. In this regard, it is important to consider three fundamental pillars in the area of leadership: theorizing about current concepts, the role of transformational leadership as a tool for meeting employees' needs to develop skills, and leadership that involves highlighting the advantage of the boss's authority and the advantage that allows for the mobilization of human resources or groups of people in the company. This is the main concern for senior management in organizations to be able to enhance the conditions and skills of each of their members.

Keywords: Company, leadership, management, managerial skills, and strategic objectives.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, leadership has played a predominant role in different regions of the world, regardless of the difficulty of commercial or productive processes, as it highlights the influence of the leader in the development of activities that must be guided and directed within the company to achieve the objective set by senior executives, forcing managers to critically analyze the new challenges that companies are facing due to

demanding contexts such as globalization, the frequency and high competitiveness required in the markets, and the innovation of the resources that sustain the company in today's markets. Therefore, there is a close relationship with the actions of those who exercise leadership in these production and marketing units. This research aims to identify the central elements of transformational leadership that help companies face the dynamics of today's markets. Leaders have a fundamental responsibility in integrating different organizational resources, and it is here that, through their decision-making, they provide guidance for the fulfillment of organizational objectives, returning to the concept of (Newstrom, 2007, p. 196) where he states that leadership "is the process of influencing and supporting others to follow you and show a willingness to do whatever is necessary."

RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS

In the state of Chiapas, the companies and jobs generated by this size of productive and commercial organizations are very significant for the local economy. The 2024 economic censuses show the size and distribution of establishments and, therefore, of the workforce, which determines the types of leadership that predominate in them.

According to the results obtained by INEGI in 2024, there were 338,000 establishments in Chiapas, employing 1.1 million people, of which 97.5% were micro-businesses, accounting for 68.9% of the workforce. Between 2018 and 2023, the percentage of establishments selling online rose from 1.3% to 2.1%. Informality is high based on the 2024 census. Between 2018 and 2023, the proportion of informal

economic units rose from 73.7% to 77.4%, while formal units fell from 26.3% to 22.6%. The percentage of people employed in formal units also fell from

59.4% in 2018 to 54.6% in 2023. However, it should be noted that 90.9% of the gross added value was generated by formal units, which highlights their importance in the state economy. Although they are less numerous, more than 209,000 establishments belong to the private sector and parastatal companies, generating employment for 590,177 people. Large companies represent only 0.03% and generate 46% of the total added value; the economic activities that contribute most to the state's economic growth are commerce and industry, according to INEGI data.

This allows us to point out that many entrepreneurs visualize market opportunities and adapt to changes. However, the data obtained requires those who run companies to combine administrative and technical aspects with a leadership style that involves all members in order to obtain viable results and achieve permanence in the market. The data obtained by INEGI provides an overview of the state's economy, allowing entrepreneurs to make key decisions for their organizations.

In conducting our analysis, we realize that there are various theoretical approaches that, throughout the scientific development of the business world, give rise to factors that explain the exercise of leadership by possessing certain attributes that favor leaders ("trait approach") and who face various scenarios that require a person to meet these requirements in order to behave differently both individually and collectively, thereby generating ascendancy in the group. This way of influencing and possessing the skills

to generate responses and constructive behavior allows for change in the group being led ("transformational approach"), on which we will focus our research to argue the urgency of its application in organizations, as established by Moran (2007). The leader's attitude influences their followers and is primarily responsible for their success or failure, as they are responsible for helping to achieve business goals and the "process of influencing others to facilitate the achievement of objectives relevant to the organization," according to (Ivancevich, 2006, p. 492).

As is well known, leaders can change their minds when they listen to members of the organization, thereby providing feedback to achieve better results and enhance the team's capabilities.

Many successful entrepreneurs achieved success through trial and error, which is due to stages of empirical training, without forgetting that the environment was stable. In these times of turbulent change, the role that leadership must play in order for subordinates to carry out their activities and tasks in the processes must be in accordance with the needs of the company in order to achieve corporate success. Given the demands of the market and the competitiveness of the business world, a system must be taken into consideration where the leader is the one who guides the team and his followers are influenced by him, as well as influence itself, which is the interrelationship between the members, and finally, the common goal, which are the objectives to be achieved in the company.

Esquivel A. revisits Bass's leadership theory in his article on transformational leadership theory published in November 2024. The components of transformational leadership are known as the "4 I's":

1. Idealized Influence:

Description: Transformational leaders act as role models and are admired, respected, and trusted by their followers.

Characteristics: These leaders have high standards of ethical and moral conduct and are perceived as exemplary.

2. Inspirational Motivation:

Description: Transformational leaders articulate an attractive and motivating vision of the future that excites and challenges followers.

Characteristics: They use communication to convey high expectations and express confidence in their followers' ability to achieve those goals.

3. Intellectual Stimulation:

Description: Transformational leaders foster creativity and innovation by encouraging followers to question assumptions, reframe problems, and approach challenges in new ways.

Characteristics: They promote an environment of critical thinking and problem solving, where the input of all team members is valued and actively sought.

4. Individualized Consideration:

Description: Transformational leaders pay personal attention to the development needs of their followers and act as mentors or coaches.

Characteristics: They recognize individual differences and tailor their approach to help each follower reach their full potential.

Some consulting firms in Mexico claim that tyrannical and controlling leadership prevails; however, the importance of the context in which the organization finds

itself in applying this type of leadership cannot be denied.

In his article "Lasting leadership is not about resisting change, but knowing how to manage it with humanity and purpose," Rizo M states the following in Forbes Mexico: "Lasting leadership is not about clinging to the past, but honoring the legacy while building the future. It's not about change for change's sake, but knowing what to change, when, and how... without losing sight of what's essential."

Therefore, leaders must be sufficiently trained to act in accordance with the circumstances in which the company finds itself, giving opportunities to new talent and the experience of those who have been within the organization for some time, as this facilitates strategies such as growth and the achievement of organizational objectives.

It can be said that the achievement of organizational objectives is related to the proper management of the skills and abilities of leaders and members of companies, regardless of their size. However, at present, we can point out that motivation in companies is directly related to monetary aspects, which means that companies will have to implement new strategies that go beyond this motivation so that commitment to the company results in a solid organizational culture.

LEADERSHIP AND ITS MEANINGS

What determines leadership in its applicability and importance is related to environments, so the conceptualization of leadership is linked to a modern and dynamic process that manages to impact the ac-

tual functioning of the company. The concept has evolved towards greater integration, as can be seen in the comparative table of theoretical approaches to leadership.

If we analyze the comparative table, it becomes clear that this concept has evolved over time. On the one hand, Drucker emphasizes results-oriented effectiveness, Burns and Bass incorporate the transformation of values, attitudes, and motivations, and Goleman introduces a psychological dimension that highlights emotional intelligence as a determining factor in leadership.

Regardless of their differences, everyone agrees that leadership is a relational process based on influence rather than hierarchy, requiring analysis from different perspectives: organizational results on the one hand and human development on the other. The achievement of organizational objectives is determined by the use of the skills and abilities of the leader and the members of the companies, regardless of their size. However, at this time, we can point out that motivation in companies is directly related to monetary aspects, which implies that companies will have to implement new strategies that go beyond this motivation so that commitment to the company results in a solid organizational culture. Therefore, we ensure that leadership must adapt to the development of companies and their presence in different scenarios. What is important is that the different ways of interacting with company members become increasingly collaborative.

Therefore, we can affirm that leadership in smaller companies must focus its attention on the contribution of company members, long-term vision, and, consequently, innovation. This will inspire, foster,

and create a creative culture in pursuit of continuous improvement.

Business leaders in Chiapas should consider Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which states that there is no single type of intelligence. Leaders must therefore be aware of this in order to maximize the capabilities of their staff. They should also consider Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence, which establishes four fundamental skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Traditional leadership promotes stagnation because there is no participation in the improvement of tasks and processes within production or marketing units. Therefore, leadership that allows for comprehensive and effective management must be sought.

ECONOMIC UNITS IN THE STATE OF CHIAPAS 2020-2024

When examining the evolution of economic units and the number of entrepreneurs in Chiapas between 2020 and 2024, we can point out that the factors that establish leadership in the region under study are the high percentage of the informal sector and setbacks in the incorporation of technology, not only in operational processes but also in executive processes, which means that leaders are involved in operational tasks. Likewise, the cultural and rural context determines the dynamics of the relationship between leaders and subordinates, since it is interpersonal trust and community roots that consolidate the way leadership is exercised.

Today's leaders must create a competitive environment that encourages creativity

Author	Conceptualization of leadership	Theoretical Theoretical	Main contributions
Drucker (2001)	Ability to lead people toward the achievement of common goals through organizational effectiveness.	Managerial approach	Links leadership with results, accountability, and strategic decision-making.
Maxwell (2007)	Process of influence through which one person impacts others to achieve shared goals.	Leadership based on influence	Emphasizes interpersonal influence and the continuous development of leaders.
Bass (1985)	The leader's ability to transform followers, increasing their commitment and performance.	Transformational and transactional	Operationalizes the transformational model and develops empirical instruments for measurement.
Goleman (2000)	Ability to effectively manage one's own and others' emotions to influence performance.	Emotional leadership	Evidence of relationship between emotional intelligence, work environment and leadership effectiveness.
Drucker (2001)	Ability to lead people toward the achievement of common goals through organizational effectiveness.	Management approach	Links leadership with results, responsibility, and strategic decision-making.

Own elaboration based on different authors Bass, B. M. (1985). Burns, J. M. (1978). Drucker, P. F. (2001), Goleman, D. (2000). Maxwell, J. C. (2007).

Year	Economic Units	Source
2020	170,192	INEGI – DENUE / CEIEG
2021	184,932	INEGI – DENUE / CEIEG
2022	187,487	INEGI – DENUE / CEIEG
2023	201,257	INEGI – DENUE / CEIEG
2024	219,825	CEIEG – May 2024

Note: The figures represent formally registered economic units. The data for 2020–2023 correspond to official estimates based on economic directories; the data for 2024

and the constant search for areas for improvement. This is achieved through motivation and the building of trust, which are key to understanding the market, i.e., adaptability in a globalized, computerized, robotized world that demands bold leaders with the ability to reinvent themselves and guide teams in today's context. In other words, the link between the concepts and the will of its members in achieving long-term goals under acceptable working conditions, based on establishing leadership, is a privilege that few companies in the modern world will have. This is where concepts in today's business world require the incorporation of flexibility, participation, and willingness in each and every one of those who make up the business structure, thus bringing about changes in the new challenges imposed by globalization and the practices of modern and scientific management, among others.

The challenges facing leaders of small and medium-sized enterprises are to overcome cultural resistance to change, to have the capacity to manage resources that are implemented in new practices in the production or marketing process, to seek a balance between innovation and sound finances, and in this way to achieve more committed and efficient teams in order to differentiate themselves in a saturated and competitive market.

The above requires administrators, managers, or business owners to implement new forms of leadership that allow them to meet the current demands of the companies with which they compete, and not only consider leadership as a descriptive concept, but rather as the fundamental element that determines an efficient link between the people who are part of the organization, in

order to achieve long-, medium-, and short-term objectives.

Therefore, the fundamental purpose of transformational leadership, as developed by James MacGregor (1978), is to transform companies so that they can adapt to changes and needs as they arise. This theoretical approach is considered the only way to engage and commit company members through the motivation and expectations conveyed by the leader.

According to Contreras and Barbosa (2013), in transformational leadership, the prior establishment of trust between the leader and the members will be the basic ingredient for facing changing scenarios with greater possibilities of achieving long-term objectives.

Methodology

The research in question was carried out using a qualitative approach based on a review of the literature, which translates into concepts and relationships with other theoretical research carried out. In addition, this study includes a rethinking of the phenomenon of leadership based on theoretical, conceptual, and contextual reviews.

The research was carried out in different stages: 1. Discrimination of different scientific theories related to leadership 2. Selection of leadership theories according to the objective and purpose of the study 3. Exploration and analysis of the information obtained, and 4. Critical observations and points for reflection.

Conclusions

In order for entrepreneurs and leaders of small and medium-sized enterprises to achieve more active participation in the market, it is important to prioritize soft skills such as shared leadership, effective communication, and creativity, as these are the best investment for achieving organizational objectives, executing tasks, applying processes and procedures, active listening, and above all, understanding the requirements of their team in order to practice empathy with them on a regular basis. Likewise, the necessary time should be provided for employees or members of the company to propose improvements, thereby promoting innovation on a daily basis.

Regional and national literature finds a positive relationship between participatory and transformational leadership styles and the organizational performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (better working environment, greater adaptation of management practices, and higher probability of survival). However, the lack of formal training for leaders and the centralization of decision-making can limit scalability and professionalization (Araya S. 2023).

Small and medium-sized enterprises must be able to respond immediately to market changes in order to survive. They must solidify a robust organizational culture to achieve greater competitiveness and thus increase their productivity levels. An example of this is that, according to transformational theory (Díaz 2020), they bring multiple elements of human development, including self-development, social responsibility, shared vision, power sharing, and raising the expectations of subordinates. Therefore, for management, its essence is a more

humanistic approach, and this is how they view leadership. Thus, managing workers involves understanding and comprehending the diversity of interests and personalities of those being managed so that they can contribute not only to their personal goals but also to the productive processes of the companies in which they are immersed.

Given the frequent changes and transformations in the business environment, we must not only analyze technical application but also focus on human sensitivity, developing soft skills that will be grounded in collaborative vision and ethical awareness, among other things. We must therefore rethink leadership in order to inspire and lead with greater warmth and quality, thereby achieving more responsible and committed productive, commercial, and service organizations in general for the common good.

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