CREATIVITY AND LEADERSHIP

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Abstract: This paper analyses the relationship between leadership and creativity by comparing the characteristics of a successful leader and a creative person and finding out how they may be linked. It is hypothesized that creativity represents one of the most important traits a successful leader should have. It is presumed that creativity unites originality, openness, sensibility, flexibility, fluency of ideas, fantasy, tolerance of uncertainty, creative generalization, and creative differentiation and can be recognized through them. This qualitative study is based on analysis and comparison of the results of different studies in leadership and creativity. Our analysis has shown that creativity is not listed among the key characteristics of a leader (e.g., intelligence, self-confidence, decisiveness and integrity). It should, however, be recognized as such. The main contribution of this study lies in acknowledging creativity as a component sine qua non of successful leadership. The main implication of our results is related to the thesis that encouragement, development and implementation of creativity in every part of the leadership process should result in greater success in every business domain where leadership is necessary. The main recommendation from our results is to encourage and enhance creativity in every business domain, especially leadership. Moreover, empirical exploration regarding the relationship between creativity attributes and a successful leader's characteristics is recommended.

Key words: creativity, leadership, success, business

JEL classification: J53, M54, M12,

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KREATIVNOST I LIDERSTVO

Sažetak: *Cilj ovog rada je da se analizira odnos između liderstva i kreativnosti, da se uporede karakteristike uspešnog lidera i karakteristike kreativne ličnosti i da se otkrije kako one mogu biti povezane. Pretpostavlja se da kreativnost predstavlja jednu od najvažnijih karakteristika koje uspešan lider treba da poseduje. Kreativnost objedinjuje originalnost, otvorenost, osetljivost za novo, fleksibilnost, fluentnost, fantaziju, toleranciju neizvesnosti, kreativnu generalizaciju, kreativnu diferencijaciju i kroz njih se može prepoznati. Ova studija je kvalitativna i zasnovana je na analizi i poređenju rezultata različitih studija u domenu liderstva i kreativnosti. Rezultati analiza pokazuju da, iako među ključnim karakteristika lidera (inteligencija, samopouzdanje, odlučnost i integritet) nije navedena kreativnost, treba je prepoznati kao jednu od najvažnijih. Glavni doprinos ove studije sastoji se u prepoznavanju kreativnosti kao komponente sine qua non neuspešno liderstvo. Osnovna implikacija naših rezultata odnosi se na tezu da podsticanje, razvoj i primena kreativnosti u svakom delu procesa liderstva treba da rezultira većim uspehom u bilo kom domenu poslovanja u kome je liderstvo neophodno. Glavna preporuka koja proizilazi iz ovih rezultata je da podstičemo i unapređujemo upotrebu kreativnosti u svakom domenu poslovanja, a posebno liderstvu. Štaviše, preporučuje se empirijsko istraživanje odnosa između komponenti kreativnog procesa i karakteristika uspešnog lidera.*

Ključne reči: *kreativnost, liderstvo, uspeh, poslovanje*

1. INTRODUCTION

Creativity is a complex sociocultural and psychological phenomenon. Since research results are constantly being updated, it is impossible to single out a unique and generally accepted definition of creativity that would include all the aspects that this phenomenon covers and to which it refers. Based on a series of studies and research on the matter, it is possible to map the territory and determine the direction in which further research will move to formulate a comprehensive definition that would include all different approaches to the study of creativity (Batey, 2012; Glăveanu, 2010; Kaufman, Plucker & Baer, 2008; Mumford, 2003; Runco, 2004; Runco & Garrett, 2012).

Although the way we perceive creativity also determines the way it is defined (Škorc, 2012), the majority of researchers agree that novelty, originality, utility or the value of the product of creativity represent its main determinants (see more in: Batey, 2012; Feist, 1998; Mumford, 2003; Ochse, 1990; Runco, 2004; Runco & Garrett, 2012; Sternberg, Grigorenko & Singer, 2004; Škorc, 2012).

The difference in defining creativity is noticeable regarding the aspects of creativity that different authors emphasize in their studies. Runco (2004, 2012) defines creativity as a useful and effective response to evolutionary changes that allow a person to be flexible. Adaptation to evolutionary changes is possible precisely because of the flexibility and originality of a person. Sternberg, Grigorenko, Singer (2004) and Mumford (2003) define creativity as the ability to produce a new, useful, high-quality product. A broader definition of creativity includes the social and cultural context, implying that it is a complex sociocultural and psychological process (Glăveanu, 2010; Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004).

In addition to different approaches to understanding and defining creativity, differences regarding the definition of leadership can also be noticed. The definitions of leadership differ since some authors see leadership as a set of personality traits while others understand leadership as a process or behavior (c.f. Northouse, 2007). With all this in mind, this paper aims to analyze the relationship between leadership and creativity, to compare the characteristics of a successful leader and a creative person and to find out how they may be connected.

2. LEADERSHIP – THE ART OF UNDERTAKING

As it has been singled out in the introduction, leadership is difficult to define because it can be understood from different contexts, both as a set of personality traits and as a process or behavior (Northouse, 2007). Moreover, it can be explored through different areas such as business, politics, science, art or personal everyday life. Having this in mind, leadership in a broader sense implies *creating new values* (Grubić Nešić, 2008, p. 3). It assumes the management and development of a personal business or entrepreneurship and managing one's time, emotions, motives, skills and abilities (Maxwell, 2001, 2007). The term leadership can also imply guiding primarily one's personal development but also the development of one's associates and followers to a point defined by their motives, abilities and knowledge (Grubić Nešić, 2008).

On the one hand, according to many authors, leadership is understood as a set of personality traits that includes intelligence, cooperation, integrity, taking the initiative, endurance, self-confidence, decisiveness, tolerance, openness, extraversion, sociability, etc. (A'yuninnisa, Haqqi, Rusli & Puteri, 2020; Bitel, 1997; French & Raven, 1962; Maxvell, 2001; Northouse, 2007). However, with the constantly changing requirements of contemporary society, the characteristics of successful leadership are changing as well. In the study of Zaccaro and collaborators (Zaccaro, Dubrow & Kolze, 2018), which systematizes the articles about leadership by decades, various models of leader attributes, including multivariate, pattern, nonlinear, and collective leadership models, are analyzed.

These authors focus on psychological traits and attributes, including cognitive abilities, social capacities, personality, motives, and other mental characteristics of leaders (Zaccaro, Dubrow & Kolze, 2018).

Some studies on the leader personality traits deal with the dark side of a leader's personality and extreme leader behavior (Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009; Kaiser, LeBreton & Hogan, 2015). For example, Judge et al. (2009) consider the positive and the negative effects of specific "bright side" personality traits - the Big Five traits, core self-evaluations, intelligence, and charisma. They also consider the positive and negative effects of "dark side" leader traits - Narcissism, hubris, dominance, and Machiavellianism. In addition to this, some authors single out personality traits that do not contribute to successful leadership, such as insecurity, disorganization, inflexibility, rigidity in thinking, intolerance, perfectionism, unwillingness to take risks, authoritarianism, destructiveness, etc. (A'yuninnisa, Haqqi, Rusli & Puteri, 2020; Grubić Nešić, 2008; North-Samardzic & Crawford, 2005).

On the other hand, leadership understood in a narrow sense, is always a process (Lunenburg, 2012; Northouse, 2007; Silva, 2016). Furthermore, it is a means of influencing others, often realized within the group, which implies the realization of group goals (Grubić Nešić, 2008). In other words, in the business context, leadership is a process of defining an organization's purpose and direction (Grubić Nešić, 2008).

The areas where leadership shows its best effects are creating new values, creating and enforcing change, and creating the preconditions for reaching the highest results in all segments, both individual and organizational (Bass, 2019; George, 2003; Lane & Down, 2010; Kujala, Lehtimäki & Freeman, 2019). Because of that, according to Grubić Nešić (2008), leadership could be comprehended as *the art of undertaking* driven by an inner motivation and not by a personal reaction that is a consequence of an external stimulus. This especially comes to the fore in transformational leadership, where the emphasis is on charisma and emotions, inner motivation and personal development. Since leadership is closely related to creation, be it the creation of new values, possibilities or change, it is also closely related to creativity. In the following text, the notion of creativity and the creative process components will be elaborated on in more detail.

3. CREATIVITY

The word creativity is derived from the Latin word *creatio*, which means finding, inventing or creating. It can refer to the creator's combination of the familiar, which provides a synthesis and new content. A good example is a sculpture by Pablo Picasso (1942) called *Bull's Head*, where the bull's head is created from the seat and handlebars of a bicycle. It is more complex than a simple combination of preexisting elements, something that did not exist before. Creativity understood in this way emphasizes creative perception. Creative perception implies how the creator perceives the world around him or her. Moreover, it represents how the creator asks the questions he or she then aims to answer. This is extremely important in the creative process since the solution often depends on the creative perception, i.e., the answer. It implies the ability to look at the world differently from others and search for what is inspiring, interesting, beautiful, exciting, etc. (Panić, 1997).

According to Panić (1997), different components of the creative process can be distinguished. They include the characteristics of work, personality and cognitive processes that participate in it (Škorc, 2012). The components related to the qualities of work include originality, fluency of ideas, and flexibility. Experiential openness, sensitivity to the new and tolerance for uncertainty are associated with personality traits. In contrast, the characteristics of the cognitive processes are associated with creative fantasy, creative generalization and creative differentiation. For the components of the creative process, please see Table 1.

Table 1

The Components of the Creative Process

The Components of the Creative Process
Originality
Openness
Sensitivity
Flexibility
Fluency of ideas
Creative fantasy
Tolerance of uncertainty
Creative generalization
Creative differentiation

Note. Authors presentation.

Originality

In the strictest sense, the original is only that which appears for the first time in the world and leads to significant changes for humanity. Originality is manifested in a person's ability to come up with rare, witty or remote ideas, which gives a stamp to his individuality and uniqueness. However, it is not only crucial for the work to be new and different, but it is also important that it is relevant to society's given conditions and demands. When it comes to solving problems, it has been shown that originality comes to the fore more during their discovery and formulation than during the actual solution (Panić, 1997).

Openness

Openness is related to experience, and it is associated with the willingness to accept and process new experiences, thus expanding and creating a new scientific system. It opposes already established knowledge or attitudes, and it is contrary to the psychological defense that aims to protect the organization of the personality. In this way, a person who has an open mind and is ready not only to accept new knowledge but also to synthesize it into a new knowledge system is characterized by an openness that allows him or her to overcome old habits and understandings.

Sensitivity to new and problem formulation

This component is closely related to curiosity. It is visible in the need to investigate what is already known and somehow taken for granted and to give answers to "ordinary" questions because "where no one sees a problem, a creative person sees it" (Panić, 1997, p. 61). Discovering, noticing, formulating and developing a problem is the most important part of the path to a new solution since an adequately posed problem is also the biggest part of the solution.

Flexibility

Flexibility refers to a person's ability to offer as many diverse answers and solutions as possible which do not belong to the same class of notions. Two principles underpin flexibility: the principle of quantity – as much as possible, and the principle of diversity – as diverse as possible. It is essential to approach a problem flexibly, i.e., with multiple aspects and different strategies, because it increases the possibility of arriving at an original and meaningful solution.

Fluency of ideas

Fluency can be understood as the ability to offer as many different answers and ideas as possible that lead to a given goal. It differs from flexibility because fluid responses belong to the same class of notions. With flexibility, associations

appear in leaps and bounds and go in different directions, and with fluency, they flow in one direction. There are different forms of fluency in which words, images, associations or analogies line up. It is an expressive ability that comes into the spotlight when control and critical thinking are reduced.

Creative fantasy

According to Panić (1997, p. 60), creative fantasy is "reflected in the ability to separate a person from reality in the direction of the realistically impossible". It means to invent, dream and imagine to search for a solution to the problem, allowing one to step into virtual reality and search for a solution to the problem or inspiration from it.

Tolerance for uncertainty

Tolerance for uncertainty is also recognized in the literature as a kind of tolerance for ambiguity (Guo, Gonzales & Dilley, 2016). It happens very often that people who create believe that the first solution that comes to their mind is also the best one. However, the higher the tolerance for uncertainty, the bigger the possibility that a person will leave more space to think and thus produce a better solution. Since a person tends to define an uncertain situation too quickly or run away from it, this component is essential for any problem solver. The longer a person can endure the discomfort of uncertainty and ambiguity, the more likely he or she is to come up with the best solutions, usually the last ones he or she thinks of.

Creative generalization

It represents the ability to generalize and connect information and distant facts into a whole in a new way. Because the creator often has to approach the work from different perspectives and value systems, this ability is vital because often, in the creative process, a person has to use different information and combine the incompatible with succeeding in arriving at original solutions.

Creative differentiation

It implies the analytical ability of an individual to find differences and to be able to perceive their opposite in every phenomenon. It requires a specific sensibility of a person who knows how to see the same thing differently and who can find the opposite in one expression. Creative differentiation includes the ability to understand both the ambiguity and the multi-meaning of any phenomenon.

All these components of the creative process are the characteristics of a person who could be deemed creative. Since leadership entails the inspiration and empowerment of coworkers so that they can succeed in these times of uncertainty (Bass & Riggio, 2006), many authors point out that creativity is a significant attribute of a successful leader (Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman & Legood, 2018;

Guo, Gonzales & Dilley, 2016; Lee, Legood, Hughes, Tian, Newman & Knight, 2020). The following chapter will analyze the relationship between leadership and creativity.

4. CREATIVITI AND LEADERSHIP

In the last two decades, it has been shown that intelligence, self-confidence, decisiveness, integrity and sociability represent the key characteristics of a successful leader (A'yuninnisa, Haqqi, Rusli & Puteri, 2020; Bitel, 1997; French & Raven, 1962; Maxvell, 2001; Northouse, 2007). Moreover, a study by Judge and collaborators, which analyzed the articles dealing with the relationship between "big five" personality traits and leadership published in the period between 1967 and 1998, showed that extraversion and openness are all traits of an effective leader (Judge, Bono, Illies & Gerhardt, 2002).

Guo, Gonzales & Dilley (2016) recognized creativity as an essential characteristic of an effective leader two decades ago. It was then shown that leadership faces multiple challenges to its traditional roles in this rapidly changing and increasingly complex society. Due to that, creativity has become a critical concern for most organizations that attempt to overcome these challenges and uncertainties (Guo, Gonzales & Dilley, 2016; Mumford, Hunter, Eubanks, Bedell & Murphy, 2007). What brings the fields of creativity and leadership together are the complex problems that are brought up by change (Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011). Moreover, it has been shown that leadership is a significant predictor of employee, team, and organizational creativity and innovation (Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman, & Legood, 2018). The strongest relationship between leadership and employee creativity and innovation is related to creative performance and authentic, empowering, and entrepreneurial leadership (Lee, Legood, Hughes, Tian, Newman & Knight, 2020).

When a comparison between the components of the creative process and leadership is made, a strong connection can be noticed. The creative behavior of a leader is reflected in the following abilities: producing many different ideas, reacting to a problematic situation flexibly and diversely instead of following a pattern, merging and connecting previously unconnected data into a coherent whole, discovering something new and different in something that seems familiar, as well as tolerating a current failure and focusing on future success. It also means that a leader possesses a high degree of imagination in everyday situations and the sensitivity to recognize new, original solutions to problems (Grubić Nešić, 2008, pp. 49-50). The relationship between leadership behavior and the components of a creative process is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Leadership Behavior and the Components of Creative Process

Leadership behavior	The Components of the Creative Process
Producing many different ideas	Fluency Flexibility
Reacting to a problematic situation flexibly and diversely instead of following a pattern	Flexibility
A high degree of imagination in everyday situations	Creative fantasy Originality
Merging and connecting previously unconnected data into a coherent whole	Openness Creative generalization Creative differentiation
Discovering something new and different in something that seems familiar	Openness Sensitivity Creative perception
Sensitivity to recognize new, original solutions to problems	Sensitivity Originality
Tolerating a current failure and focusing on future success	Tolerance of uncertainty Flexibility

Note. Authors presentation.

Our key implications may be summarized into a few points. According to the findings of contemporary studies, it can be concluded that even though creativity was not listed as a key characteristic of a leader in the initial exploration of leadership, nowadays, it should be recognized as one (Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman & Legood, 2018; Guo, Gonzales & Dilley, 2016; Lee, Legood, Hughes, Tian, Newman, & Knight, 2020). The constantly changing contemporary society, especially with the ongoing pandemic crisis, requires creativity from leaders. According to Guo, Gonzales and Dilley (2016, p.127-128), "creativity is a critical factor in effective leadership that enables an organization or institution to solve problems (Mumford & Connelly, 1991), to respond to opportunities (Shalley & Gilson, 2004), and thereby, to maintain a competitive advantage (Reiter-Palmon, 2004) in a world full of uncertainty".

5. CONCLUSION

Creativity is an essential characteristic of life, a condition for its development, and it is present, to a greater or lesser extent, in the activities of every human being. Panić (1997, p.95) states that the desire for automatism, ready-made solutions and conformity is the opposite of creativity. In this sense, he emphasizes that a man is free concerning authority and ready-made solutions offered by theory and practice, as much as he or she devotes to creativity. Creativity is in a dynamic relationship with existing knowledge and previous experience. Although ready-made solutions, proven forms and contents can be used in every discipline, real creativity begins only when people move towards overcoming ready-made solutions. Creativity should be encouraged and enhanced in every aspect of leadership. Moreover, an empirical exploration regarding the relationship between creativity attributes and the characteristics of a successful leader is recommended.

If we return to the initial premise that leadership implies the *creation of new value*, creativity in the context of leadership brings us to this conclusion: "Only a person who has developed his or her awareness, who has synchronized his or her needs with the possibilities and wishes without destroying the personal development can count on the realization of his/her potential and on the access to the solution of the problem which would create new value and contribute to the development" (Grubić Nešić, 2008, p.5).

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