Servant leadership

Servant leaders pursue a degree of leaderships that goes further than the common meaning of leadership. This kind of leaders stresses part of the most valuable values in the society and they are guided doing emphasis in those values. This has two different lectures.

First of all, it is difficult to image some leader, wherever the place s/he is exercising her/his leadership, without most of those values in her/his personal leadership consideration. We are considering elementary values as ethics, self-aware, empowering, etc. every leader should develop these characteristics in her/his leadership process. A leader without most of these characteristics probably will have many problems in leading people and shortly s/he will find problems such as selfish, authoritarian situation, lack of followers, etc; basically many questions around his/her leadership characteristics with the unavoidable loss of followers and leadership.

Secondly, the characteristics of the full servant leader seem to convert him/her in a guide or facilitator more than a leader itself. It looks difficult to image deep changes coming from a full servant leader. When this leader develops the consultation plus the facilitation processes to achieve some outcome, the possibility of introducing an important change it seems to be diluted in these processes. So, this leader loses authenticity and the possibility of introducing his/her self characteristics that they could lead to a change, improvements, etc.

As first conclusion, the full servant leader seems to be useful in those cases when the follower have a huge protagonism in the evolution and changes, but not the leader his/herself. This leadership lacks of a deep personal philosophy of leadership, that it shares it with others.

We have an interesting study showing part of the previous discussion. Liden et al. (Liden, R., Wayne, S., Zhao, H., and Henderson, D.; 2008) have developed an extensive survey reflecting several hypothesis about servant leadership. They present their results in a useful way showing the degree of accuracy and correlation in their conclusions. Finally, they stress “Results of our study suggest that servant leadership may enhance both job performance and commitment to the organization.”. This sentence shows that the servant leader is closer to a manager definition than a leader itself definition. The authors continue “In addition, our findings indicate that leaders may inspire followers to take an active role in serving the community in which the organization is embedded.” which clearly is related with facilitator (one of the previously discussed characteristics), or the development of leaders more than acting as leader itself. Other interesting paragraph says “Organizations that seek to create such a culture should be careful to select managers who are interested in focusing on building long-term relationships with followers.”; this is interesting in how followers must me implanted more than won, which stress the weaknesses situation of the servant leader in capturing followers.

Other interesting publication (Gillet, J., Cartwright, E., and van Vugt, M.; 2010) shows the previous discussion about the things that a servant leader should give up in order to success as servant leader. The authors state “Our results are consistent with the evolutionary hypothesis that leadership can be a social good for the group by being associated with self-sacrificial behavior; behavior that is good for the group but comes at a cost to the leader”, in addition “In two economic games we find various traces of evidence for servant leadership. Leaders, on average,
earned less money than followers and dispositionally social participants (on the basis of their social value orientation) chose to lead more often than selfish participants.”. This shows that servant leaders should give up important thing in train to maintain their follower with the more than evident risk of diluting her/his leadership (seeing leadership as a tool for changes).

Finally, I am of the idea that effective leadership simplifies the complex, sets aside doubt and makes action compelling and successful. When we talk about important leaders, it is very difficult to have a formula for that and every alignment with some structured leadership framework conducts inevitably to a failure as leader. I tend to see a leader as an authentic source of important changes and improvement, and that the introduction of his/her owns values and perception are keys for the development of the leadership. So, although some of the servant leadership characteristics are necessary in any leader, I think that a more individualist perception and execution of values the leader should manifest and communicate to his/her followers.

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References

