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Self-Leadership, Motivation to Lead, Trans-Formational Leadership and Superleadership: A Key to Organizational Success in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Leadership is the central basis for an organization. Due to the increasing challenges and changing needs in the knowledge society of the 21st century, leadership studies provide two recent solutions for effective leadership. The heroic phase of leadership studies specifically refers to the charismatic and transformational leadership, the post-heroic phase to self-leadership, superleadership, empowering leadership, and shared leadership. In the present paper, self-leadership, motivation to lead, transformational leadership and superleadership are conceptually related to each other for the first time. An effective leader requires effective self-leadership skills and a high (intrinsic) motivation to lead. Self-leadership and motivation to lead are a key prerequisite for effective leadership. A modern leader of the 21st century combines visionary, inspiring, and charismatic elements of transformational leadership with socialized and highly altruistic components of superleadership. Thus, the capacity for innovation and the viability of the organization in a globalized knowledge society of the 21st century will be secured.

Keywords: Self-Leadership, Motivation To Lead, Transformational Leadership, Superleadership, Empowering Leadership.

"The most appropriate leader today is one who can lead others to lead themselves."
Charles C. Manz und Henry P. Sims Jr. (1991, p. 18)

1. Introduction

Due to the increasing challenges of a dynamic and complex environment (e.g., globalization), 21st century organizations require highly flexible structures to increase innovation and secure their own survival. As part of strategic management, both goal orientation and effectiveness need to be optimized in order to strengthen innovation and bring about the willingness to change. Regarding to this, leadership at all levels of an organization will play a key role. Because of growing autonomy and self-determination in organizations, superleadership is becoming increasingly important (Wood, Stride, Wall, & Clegg, 2004). The individual level (e.g., individualized career, high self-responsibility and self-organization of work processes), the group level (e.g., leadership, shared leadership), and the level of the organization (decentralized structures, performance-oriented organizational culture) demonstrate the need for leaders and employees to have strong self-leadership and leadership skills. Both leadership and self-leadership can be learned (e.g., Furtner, Baldegger, & Rauthmann, 2012; Furtner, Sachse, & Exenberger, 2012). Self-leadership refers to a process of self-influence to increase personal effectiveness (*leading / influencing oneself*) and leadership to influence others (*leading / influencing others*) (cf. Avolio, 2011; Neck & Manz, 2010).

The present paper first discusses the meaning how leaders and followers can learn to influence themselves effectively. Self-leadership is a central key skill for an active and effective leader (Furtner et al., 2012a; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Second, motivation to lead is described as the link between self-leadership and leadership. Superleadership defines leaders, who lead others (i.e., their followers) so that they can lead themselves (Manz & Sims, 1991). Among superleadership Manz and Sims (1991) understand a leadership style, which has some similarities to transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Nevertheless, superleadership focuses more on the development of the followers and transformational leadership on the excellent leadership behaviors of the leader. Transformational leaders inspire their followers with their charisma. They formulate visions and articulate high performance expectations aiming to develop and transform their followers to a self-responsible and achievement-oriented behavior. Third, the stages of development and the applicability of successful self-leadership and leadership for leaders and followers are represented and the importance of superleadership within organizational development for 21st century organizations is described. For the first time, self-leadership, motivation to lead, transformational leadership and superleadership are conceptually related to each other in the present paper.

2. Effective Leadership Starts with Effective Self-Leadership

According to the superleadership concept by Manz and Sims (1991) leaders must first learn to lead themselves before they can effectively lead others: "If you want to lead somebody, the first critical step is to lead yourself" (p. 25). The aim of superleadership is that leaders, who function as positive role models, develop the self-leadership skills of their followers. Therefore, leadership requires self-leadership. This was pointed out several times by practitioners (e.g., Dee Hock, founder of VISA) as well as by scientists (e.g., Furtner et al., 2012a; Manz & Sims, 1991; Pearce, 2007; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). According to Drucker (1999) those individuals of the 21st century knowledge-based society are gaining success, which exactly know their own strengths and can effectively influence themselves. For example, the entire Jesuit novitiates must attend a leadership development program, believing that effective leadership starts with self-leadership (Lowney, 2003). Dee Hock (founder of VISA) describes self-leadership as the most important key component of leadership: "If you seek to lead, invest at least 50% of your time in leading yourself".

Self-leadership is defined as a self-influencing process relating to one's own thoughts and behaviors (Furtner & Rauthmann, 2010, 2011; Furtner, Rauthmann, & Sachse, 2010, 2011; Neck & Manz, 2010). It is an extension of self-management and includes three primary categories: (1) behavior-focused strategies (= self-management), (2) natural reward strategies, and (3) constructive thought pattern strategies (Houghton & Neck, 2002; Manz, 1986; Neck & Houghton, 2006). The behavior-focused strategies include self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, self-observation, and self-cueing. In order to influence one's thoughts and behaviors effectively, a self-leader uses self-observation (e.g., "Which goals are important to me?") and subsequent self-goal setting. Furthermore, self-observation is used during the process of goal achievement for continuous monitoring, so that persons do not deviate from their goal. For the achievement of subordinate and superordinate goals, persons can reward themselves to reinforce desired behaviors (e.g., visiting a concert, eating excellent food). For weakening undesirable behavior, persons can also punish themselves (e.g., "I was not satisfied with my job performance today, that's why I'm not going to meet my friends tonight"). Self-cueing attends as a reminder. It consists of

post-its, notes, and creative posters, as well as social cues (e.g., friends, relatives, acquaintances). Self-cueing should always remind persons on their goals. It also encourages self-observation (Furtner & Rauthmann, 2010). Furtner et al. (2012b) conducted a four-week self-leadership training study and 69% of the participating individuals mentioned that self-cueing is a very important and frequently used strategy. Furthermore, over 50% stated that self-reward is a very important self-leadership strategy:

“Every night I created a plan with new goals for the next day, to remind me on my big goal. I hung up my plans and some post-it’s with milestones where I could clearly see them.” (Participant 1)

“The (self-)rewards ... are small glimmers of hope, which you can work towards in unmotivated phases.” (Participant 11)

Natural reward strategies put their focus on intrinsic motivation. Persons who are interested in their tasks, as well as having fun and joy at their work, can highly focus on pleasant or positive aspects of a task and replace or ignore unpleasant aspects at the same time. Furthermore, they can actively insert pleasant or positive aspects into their tasks (e.g., Neck & Manz, 2010). According to the self-leadership training study of Furtner et al. (2012b) the natural reward strategies are considered as the most important and most frequently used self-leadership strategy dimension:

“I think that this strategy is very motivating, because you’re not only trying to reach a difficult goal, but you’re even gifting something to yourself at the same time. You don’t think that everything is difficult and a liability, but that there’s something good within.” (Participant 15)

Constructive thought pattern strategies are based on the positive influence and control of habitual thought patterns. They have a positive effect on individual performance. Mental imagery is used to visualize successful performance. This supports self-goal setting and enhances endurance by creating a positive, vivid picture of the future. Persons imagine that they achieved their goal, which is highly motivating:

“As long as the mind can envision the fact that you can do something, you can do it.” (Arnold Schwarzenegger)

Further, positive self-talk can be used to reach goals. This is important to strengthen the self and to maintain personal motivation. Identifying and replacing dysfunctional beliefs and assumptions are used to substitute negative and irrational thoughts with positive ones. This leads to a constructive and positive approach. In the self-leadership training study, self-talk was used very often and over 60% of all participants quoted it as very important (e.g., Furtner et al., 2012b):

“This strategy was negative at the beginning. However, I have endeavored to improve myself and tried to make a specific self-talk as I would talk to someone else who I want to motivate.” (Participant 23)

If leaders possess a broad range of distinct self-leadership skills then they have the basic foundation to lead other people (Furtner et al., 2012a; Manz & Sims, 1991; Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Before leaders can stipulate goals with their followers, they have to set goals for themselves. They must have adequate self-reflective skills and deal effectively with their strengths and weaknesses. This supports self-development. Leaders must have an intrinsic interest, develop fun, joy, and enthusiasm in their (leadership) tasks and use mental imagery, so that they influence their followers effectively and can inspire them through plastic visions. In addition to high self-leadership skills leaders need an appropriate motivation to lead, so that they can influence their followers effectively.

3. Motivation to Lead: The Link between Self-Leadership and Leadership

Leaders with a high motivation to lead can easily identify with their leadership role and show an active and effective leadership style. A person’s motivation to lead is relatively stable, but it can also be developed. According to Chan and Drasgow (2001) there are three dimensions of motivation to lead: (1) *Affective-identity motivation to lead*. This represents the most ideal dimension of motivation to lead. Such leaders perceive fun and joy during the leading process, have a high intrinsic motivation to lead, and show a “natural” tendency for influencing others. They trust in their leadership abilities and effectiveness (Hendricks & Payne, 2007). Persons with a high intrinsic motivation to lead seek for the leading role in self-managed groups. They quickly take the initiative and are satisfied with their position (Hong, Catano, & Liao, 2011). Intrinsic motivation to lead shows strong relations to power and achievement motive (Bobbio & Manganelli Rattazzi, 2006). Those two fundamental motives have been described as a key for successful leadership (*Leadership Motive Pattern*; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). (2) *Non-calculative motivation to lead*. A person leads because of altruistic reasons and shows high agreeableness. The group’s harmony is its goal and its ideal ranks higher than personal

values (e.g., “I agree to take the lead, even if that role has no special reward or does not bring any benefits for me”). (3) *Social-normative motivation to lead*. Leadership is seen as a social duty and obligation (e.g., “If I am asked to take the lead, I feel obliged to really take it.”).

The affective-identity motivation to lead corresponds to a high ideal of intrinsically motivated leadership. Persons with high self-leadership skills, which are interested in leading others and have fun and joy while they are leading, possesses the ideal requirements to lead others. Intrinsically motivated leaders are perceived as active and effective leaders by their followers and their self-leadership skills are attributed as very high (Furtner et al., 2012a).

4. Transformational Leadership and Superleadership

Leaders with high self-leadership skills and an intrinsic (affective-identity) motivation to lead serve as ideal role models for their followers. This is the basic requirement for superleadership. In their seven-step process model of superleadership Manz and Sims (1991) particularly put the focus on the development of self-leadership skills of followers to increase organizational effectiveness:

- **Step 1: *Becoming a self-leader*.** Before leaders can effectively lead others they primarily need to lead themselves effectively. If leaders have a lack of self-leadership skills, this lack could be developed with a self-leadership training program (cf. Furtner et al., 2012b).
- **Step 2: *Modeling self-leadership*.** Leaders serve as positive role models by demonstrating their self-leadership skills. They reinforce and develop their followers’ self-leadership skills as required. Especially during the critical implementation phase of new organizational members the focus must be put on the development of the followers’ self-leadership skills.
- **Step 3: *Encouraging self-set goals*.** Leaders encourage their followers to set challenging and specific goals. The vision of the leader is brought in line in with the self-set goals of the followers.
- **Step 4: *Create positive thought patterns*.** Leaders encourage their followers to believe in themselves and in their expectations. They convey confidence and promote their followers’ skills. They have a positive influence on the thoughts and behaviors of their followers and encourage them to act autonomous, responsible, and self-determined.
- **Step 5: *Develop self-leadership through reward*.** The use of rewards and reinforcements is a key strategy for leaders to develop the self-leadership skills of their followers. They show their followers how they can reward themselves and how they can integrate “naturally” intrinsically motivating aspects into their work.
- **Step 6: *Promote self-leadership through teamwork*.** Leaders promote self-leadership skills in teams (e.g., in self-managed teams), reinforce and learn from each other, as well as share the leadership. Shared Leadership in turn requires high self-leadership skills (Pearce, 2007).
- **Step 7: *Facilitate a self-leadership culture*.** At the organizational level a self-leadership culture will be implemented. This promotes the innovativeness of individuals, teams, and organization.

The focus is strongly put on the development of the followers’ self-leadership skills within the seven-step process model of superleadership. Leaders act as positive role models and teachers. Step 1 refers to the development in terms of effective self-leadership skills of the leaders. At step 2, the leaders act as positive role models for their followers and demonstrate their self-leadership skills. In subsequent steps does the transformational process begin: The leaders create the conditions (step 6 and step 7), promote and enhance the self-leadership skills of their followers (step 3 to step 5). Although, Manz and Sims (1991) distinguish superleadership from visionary “heroic” leadership (i.e. charismatic or transformational leadership) and transactional leadership, some significant conceptual overlaps are shown. The currently most popular and most important leadership model, the full-range leadership model is explained below. This model includes transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The relationship between superleadership and the full-range leadership model and how they can complement and stimulate each other is also presented.

Transformational leadership and superleadership aim to develop the skills of the followers and motivate them to act autonomously and independently. Transformational leaders establish high standards and goals. They give purpose and a deeper meaning to the task. They inspire their followers by enthusiasm, charisma, and use the strongly influencing power of emotions (Bass, 1998; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Harms & Crede, 2010). As within superleadership transformational leadership tries to create a working environment, which promotes intrinsic motivation and attenuates extrinsic needs at the same time (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Transformational leaders use charisma by high authenticity, credibility, and emotional excitement. Moreover, the leaders serve as ideal role models for their followers. They formulate plastic and challenging goals, inspire and set high expectations into their followers, which are intellectual supported through their leaders. Transformational leaders also consider the individual needs of their followers. The goal of transformational

leadership is to encourage the followers in terms of higher effectiveness and performance, to develop and to “transform”. The necessary space for this goal is created as it is within superleadership. Therefore, autonomy, self-determination and the promotion of intrinsic motivation come to the fore.

Transactional leadership refers to an exchange process between leaders and followers. A particularly effective form of transactional leadership is contingent reward (a special form of achievement-oriented reward), which can increase the effectiveness of transformational leadership (e.g., Judge & Piccolo, 2004). On this reason, common goals are stipulated between leaders and followers that must be achieved within a certain time period. An employee that can achieve these goals within that time period will be rewarded positively. This is necessary to reinforce desired behavior. If these goals are not achieved, negative reinforcement (e.g., lack of a positive reward) or in serious cases punishment (e.g., redeployment, dismissal) will occur.

Superleadership, transformational and transactional leadership behaviors can complement each other. While the central goal of superleadership is to increase the self-leadership skills of organization members, transformational and transactional leadership is a specific goal-oriented leadership behavior, which is shown by leaders in everyday life. Self-leadership, motivation to lead, the active dimensions of leadership behavior (transformational and transactional leadership), and superleadership can highly relate on a conceptual level:

- **(1) Development of self-leadership skills of the leader.** Effective leadership starts with effective self-leadership. Leaders develop their own self-leadership skills. This serves for a double purpose. First, leaders can influence themselves in a more effective way and increase their own performance. Second, they serve as positive self-leading role models for their followers.
- **(2) Development of an intrinsic motivation to lead.** Particularly, the natural reward strategies (with focus on the intrinsic motivation) of leaders cause that their followers see them as (a) active and effective leaders and (b) as persons with high self-leadership skills (Furtner et al., 2012a). According to Shamir et al. (1993) and Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005) an intrinsic motivation to lead is the central base for authentic, charismatic leadership. If leaders conceive interest, fun and joy in their job, they will have the ideal requirements for an active and effective leadership. Intrinsic motivation to lead has a direct and positive impact on the followers’ perception. It seems to be catching and inspiring. Followers attribute highly positive qualities to an intrinsic motivated leader. According to this, an intrinsic motivated leader with high self-leadership skills serves as an ideal role model. Because intrinsic motivation to lead highly relates to the need for power it is crucial that leaders have a socialized (inhibited, controlled) power motive (McClelland, 1975). This guarantee that intrinsic motivated superleaders share their power for giving autonomy and self-determination to the followers within the leadership process.
- **(3) Formulation of a plastic vision and common goal.** Intrinsically motivated leaders seem to be very authentic and emotionally captivating (Ilies et al., 2005; Shamir et al., 1993). This is a basic requirement for the charisma of leaders. To inspire their followers, they formulate a plastic vision, convey a deeper meaning, and settle common goals on a transactional level, which have to be achieved within a specified period.
- **(4) Transformation of the followers.** Leaders provide autonomy to their followers and encourage them to act autonomous and self-determined. They foster and develop - on transformational and transactional levels - the self-leadership skills (e.g. self-goal setting, encouraging task-specific intrinsic motivation) of their followers, as well as gain their expectations and confidence with regard to the achievement of their goals. They increasingly act in the background as an emotional and intellectual support while the transformation process goes on. The skillfulness of superleaders is to start the transformation process (particularly for new members of the organization) on a directive or participatory level, to set goals or to settle them together and to give enough autonomy to the followers, so that they can achieve their goals independently and can develop their self-leadership skills.
- **(5) Promotion of self-leadership in teams.** Leaders encourage self-leadership skills in teams, so that team members are role models for their peers and support each other. It is crucial that leaders and teams define specific performance standards, in which the self-leadership skills of the team members contribute to a higher performance and effectiveness. Self-leadership relates to higher innovation and creativity (c.f. DiLiello & Houghton, 2006). Self-managed teams, which operate autonomously and independently and which use the existing knowledge in the context of shared leadership are very innovative and productive (Pearce, 2007). Higher self-determination and autonomy stimulate the intrinsic motivation of the team members (cf. Deci & Ryan, 1987).
- **(6) Promotion of self-leadership in the organization.** Leaders who can develop and strengthen the self-leadership skills of their followers can also anchor superleadership in their organizational culture. In a top-down process, it is crucial that top executives and leaders urge this process and anchor self-leadership in the center of the organizational culture (Hartnell & Walumbwa, 2011). Leaders at all organizational levels can create an organizational culture in which self-leadership can grow and survive.

5. Superleadership within Organizational and Personnel Development

Autonomy and self-determination tend to gain within organizations to promote flexibility, innovation, and creativity (Wood et al., 2004). To implement super- and self-leadership in an organization the following prerequisite are necessary:

- **(1) Support and promotion from the top management.** This refers to the CEO and top executives of the company and the leaders at all levels.
- **(2) Creation of wide spans of control for the promotion of autonomy and self-determination.** A wide span of control (with a smaller number of leaders / level) has the advantage of cost reduction, increased flexibility, autonomy for followers, and faster decision-making processes. According to Robbins and Judge (2009) there is a current trend toward wider spans of control in organizations.
- **(3) Decentralization of the organization structure.** The employees at lower hierarchical levels are allowed to participate. Thus, in decision-making processes the followers' knowledge from the middle and lower levels can be involved. This also corresponds to a trend in today's organizations (Robbins & Judge, 2009).
- **(4) Establishment of relatively autonomous self-managed teams.** Self-managed teams can behave innovative and autonomous, when they share knowledge and leadership within teams. Those teams need members who exhibit high self-leadership skills. Persons who were used to work under a direct supervisor may have some starting problems, if they suddenly take part in self-managed teams. Therefore, they need the support of a superleader and a corresponding self-leadership training to act effectively with autonomy and self-determination.
- **(5) Creating a supportive organizational culture.** CEOs and top executives have a central influence on the organizational culture with their vision and the establishment of standards (Hartnell & Walumbwa, 2011). They serve as role models, their thoughts, values, and attitudes are acquired by the members of an organization. The organizational culture promotes the commitment to the organization and the identity of the organizational members. They convey higher ideals and a deeper meaning. To apply superleadership in an organization, it needs the implementation of the vision and the support of the top management. If superleadership can be successful implemented into an organization and if it exhibits a large number of people with high self-leadership skills, then the organizational effectiveness will be attained based on extraordinary achievements.

The main advantage of superleadership lies in the collective strength of the organizational members with high self-leadership skills to enhance the effectiveness of an organization. The focus of superleadership is on the use of the unique potential of any individual. Persons who can effectively influence themselves in terms of their functions are intrinsically motivated to deliver a significant contribution to team performance and organizational productivity. A very old proverb corresponds to the transformational role of superleadership (cf. Manz & Sims, 1991):

"Give a man a fish and he won't starve for a day. Teach a man how to fish and he won't starve for his entire life."

Therefore, superleadership corresponds to a very subtle form of influencing others. The aim of the leaders is to develop the self-leadership skills of their followers, so that they can finally lead themselves. Leaders - especially at the higher organizational levels - set the vision and strategic goals of the organization. Individuals and teams accept to these and formulate goals independently, which are based on the central vision or strategic goals. Especially in the critical personnel implementation phase superleadership is of central importance. New organizational members will be lead on those ways, so that they can finally lead themselves. During this implementation phase, the new member of the organization can get customized to the self-leadership culture of the organization and identify with it. Intrinsically motivated leaders inherently have fun and joy with their leadership tasks. The skillfulness of leaders is to take a step back so that their followers can act autonomously and self-determined to influence them in a more subtle way. This requires a high degree of self-control and cognitive restructuring. The leaders must consciously recognize that not only the direct but also the indirect (subtle) influence on their followers can be satisfying and finally lead to success.

In order to promote intrinsic motivation, superleadership provides the conditions (high autonomy, self-determination and participation) and conveys self-leadership skills, so that the followers' intrinsic motivation can be increased. If new organizational members exhibit low self-leadership skills, they will have the opportunity to learn and practically apply them within a systematical personnel development. Organizational development obtains on change-oriented interventions, which base on humanistic and democratic values and attempt to improve organizational effectiveness (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Superleadership contributes to the systematic organization development towards a learning organization, which has got enough capacity for adaptation and change. According to Senge (1990) there are five key characteristics of a learning organization: (1) there is a common vision, (2) the organizational members dispose of their habitual thought and behavior

patterns, (3) the members of the organization see the organizational processes, activities, functions and relations in a holistic interaction with the environment, (4) the organizational members communicate openly with each other (without fearing criticism or punishment), and (5) the members of the organization take back their personal or department interests to achieve the shared vision of the organization.

Top executives formulate an organizational vision, based on transformational leadership. Superleadership and participatory top-down processes make sure that all organizational members accept and share the vision of the organization. The self-influencing self-leadership strategies help to support the organizational members to reconsider their habitual and dysfunctional ways of thinking and behavior patterns as well as to direct them into a positive and effective course. Due to the high autonomy and self-determination of individuals and teams and the common vision of the organization, organizational members' meaning and a holistic perspective are conveyed. The decentralized organizational structure with wide spans of control allows the employees to communicate openly with each other and to share their knowledge. The reversal of personal interests in favor of the organizational vision can also occur through the use of positive self-influencing strategies. Altogether, transformational leadership and superleadership foster the intrinsic motivation and self-leadership skills of all members of the organization. The decentralized structures and wide spans of control provide the framework for the creation of a high degree of autonomy and self-determination. The organization benefits from increased productivity, effectiveness and innovation. In combination with the vision-based transformational and transactional leadership, superleadership provides a significant contribution to ensure innovation and survivability of an organization in an increasingly uncertain, complex and dynamic environment in the 21st century.

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