

## **FEATURES OF NAVAL OPERATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

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*Abstract: The study aims to analyze the specific of shipboard Leadership in conditions of life and work at sea. We discuss aspects related to multicultural naval crew, workload, automatisms and delegation, communication in the ship’s multicultural space, as well as emotional, situational, and multicultural awareness. In these particular circumstances, we believe that only an effective leadership system can generate successful completion of missions and safety of the naval ship and crew.*

*Keywords: naval Leadership Effectiveness, multicultural naval crew , emotional, situational, multicultural awareness, multicultural communication, workload.*

### **Argument**

The multinational shipping companies, under the pressure of a frantic competition for financial resources and prestige, are organizations with “international expansion and development, assuming a greater diversity of cultures, customers, competitors and legislation.” (Gomez-Mejia, Palich 1997, Hofstede, 1984). They are strongly influenced by internationalization and globalization in terms of less visible boundaries, adapting permanently to the dynamic and evolution of the requirements imposed by the shipping industry. "In this context, the ability to manage multicultural interactions, multinational teams and global alliances become fundamental to the overall success of the business. The global strategies and the human resources, also, become essential, representing a minimum requirement for the success and survival of the organization ". (Adler, 2002 apud. Pitariu, Budean, 2008).

Responding to multiple demands, the professions associated with shipbuilding are spectacular and challenging, and are due to synergistic interactions and inter-influences between specific conditions and activities at sea (isolation, risk, uncertainty, over-technology, corporate stress ...), the individual personality peculiarities, and diversity of human resources, as well as complex aspects of social dynamics (ship crew as a social, multi-ethnic, multi-religious micro-group, the use of English in communication, other than mother tongue, hierarchical interpersonal relationships, common strategic vision..).

Hence, the urgent need for well-trained human resources, with great potential in modeling transferable skills and facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, in other words an efficient, powerful, highly competitive, highly flexible in adapting to changes, generating innovative solutions human resource.

### **Characteristics of Naval Leadership - a systemic, psycho-social approach.**

Literature in the field is quite generous in terms of leadership issues as an universalia of human behavior, setting it within the broader field of social influence. From this perspective, leadership designates the reality of changes produced in the behavior of the group members, at the level of cognitive-intellectual systems, at the level of attitudes, and behavior-

action level; all the aforementioned should be induced by the leader into his subordinates, in order to achieve mutual goals. (Zlate, 2007 Bass, 1985, Forsyth, 2001 Bennis and Nanus, 2000 Adair, 1983, Rost, 1993)

In the naval leadership, the leader of the ship determines the naval crew members to work together to generate consistent and adaptable changes to a constantly changing external environment, to share the same vision in achieving the mission they have to fulfill, in safe conditions aboard ships; this is done by the leader in a non-coercive, persuasive way, thus, determining the members of the crew to work together. This relationship is mutual, the influence being felt on both sides; although uneven, this inter-influence results in empowering the followers, and in increasing work activism and motivation, along with personal fulfillment.

Going through explanatory and interpretative theories and models of leadership of the literature in the field, we can not fit naval leadership in an unequivocal pattern, or any other psychosocial categorizations. This occurs as a result of the interaction leader - situation - followers, of the specific activities on board ships, of the psycho socio-cultural activities in a multinational crew, which is constituted ad-hoc for a voyage with a limited duration.

Therefore, we propose a systemic-psycho-social approach, similar to an eclectic model, where we find, in different degrees and proportions, characteristic elements of the psycho-socio-cultural, or multicultural approaches, which, in their turn are interchangeable with the naval environment.

A brief and consistent systematization is offered by M. Zlate (2007, p. 160) who emphasizes the following three models, based on logics of science and history:

1. the leadership model of the person's function, illustrated by personality theories (theory of charismatic leadership, traits theory), theories of behaviour (the theory of the two dimensions of behavior, the theories of the behavioral continuum theories) and cognitive theories (the normative decision theory, theory of "path-purpose", the "attribution" theory);
2. the leadership model as a function, of the situation illustrated, in particular, by primary situational theories (theory of obedience to the situation law);
3. the leadership model, as a function, of the relationship between person and situation illustrated by contingency theories (theory of favourability of the leadership, the theory of maturity of subordinates) and social interaction theories (theory of dyadic vertical ties, transactional leadership theory).

Undoubtedly, we find, in naval operational leadership elements that apply all these synthetic models; an important place is held by personality attributes and their complex interactions with the leadership situation saturated with risk and ambiguity, explicitly manifest in promoting the principles of Great Naval Leadership.

According to Thomas Juli (2011), we distinguish five important principles interrelated in the form of a functional pyramid that define leadership and the achievement of performance results. We list these principles, adding other specific features of naval leadership.

- *Build Vision*, i.e. identifying the crew with the common vision proposed by the leader, which increases its activism in reformulation, adjustment and in its transposition act.

"Experienced ship masters know where to go. They have a mission. They will not leave a port until their mission is clear and all preparations for the voyage are complete. It is their job and responsibility to lead the naval crew in the right direction. Of course, they can not accomplish the mission alone. They need to build and have a functional and united crew. Each crew member has a distinct role. Optimal operation of the team is not the sum of individual contributions, so expectations should be clearly established. Only together can the master navigate safely and fulfill their mission. Finally, the master is responsible for the direction of the voyage and how they communicate with the crew, ensuring that every sailor understand the direction, i.e. the vision of mission. Therefore, the master build his vision, build and develop it in a team, and thus ensure efficiency." (Juli, 2011)

- *Nurture Collaboration* with reference to collaborative and active cooperation attitudes of crew members, as efficient team work. To achieve cohesion of the crew in the interest of professional efficiency, the leader must self-perceive as an integral part of the crew since its first establishment. Naval crews can be considered social micro-groups formed ad hoc, being rather socio-professional associations of the naval domain for a limited period of time, with a common mission clearly defined.

Training and development of normative work team go simultaneously with the international voyages, being similar to those described by Tuckman's model: forming (at the beginning of the voyage the team is formed and the roles and responsibilities are distributed), storming (the watchkeeping activities may encounter syncopes, tensions, either out of un-professionalism, or non-fulfilment of roles), norming (the leader can make changes to adjust the roles and responsibilities of crew members, in order to adapt them to environmental changes, ie "the right man in the right place"), performing (team building, its operation as a whole).

The merchant vessel, as a group, becomes a well articulated network of statuses and roles governed by procedural rules, conventions, international regulations.

Interactions between crew members are direct, of the type face-to-face, being mainly socio-affective, referring to the individual socio-related potential, mediated by certain marine traditions, culturally transcendent. Naval crews act as composite micro-groups, in a multicultural multireligious environments, of great ethnic diversity who learn (socially) to respect the values, traditions, culture, and the specific patterns of the "other" without evaluative judgments of value. They accept the principle of multicultural "free blame" building the "dialogue with the otherness" and developing partnership relational grids that facilitate coping mechanisms to novel situations and work environments. (Achim, 2007)

From the psycho-sociological perspective, according to sociologist Achim (2007), we believe that three-dimensionality of multicultural socialization becomes synonymous with "to cope with" principle and background socialization, as individual cultural identity, so useful in adaptation which does not suppose essential principle contradictions, or contradictions between norms and values. Socialization remains at the level of assistance, without offering solutions when meeting with new and unusual elements from other cultures.

Being a psychosocial reality of multiculturalism, the English language is used, which is not always the crew members' mother tongue, in which structuring cognition takes on the role of integrator of a "mental shared model", a facilitator of symbolic transactions, of meanings with varied content. Communication in English on board is set up as an interaction

and mutual inter- action and inter - influence of the naval crew, being a solid foundation of social and cultural relations between the parties.

- *Promote Performance*, another important principle mentioned by Th. Juli (2011), which refers to empowering of the naval leader in creating an environment that allows the full use of the adepts' potential, and also in the functioning of the team as a whole, in promoting excellence.

The author considers that this principle becomes operational only through the effective application of rules: *Be a Role Model, Create the Right Environment, Empower Your Team, Develop a Solution - and - Results Towards Problems and Risks, Invite Productive Competition, Let It Happen Celebrate Performance*. (p. 48)

- *Cultivate Learning* - appeals to the attitude towards failure, frustration and tolerance, creating a working environment on board in which the naval crew can learn from their mistakes, to create, to explore new possibilities of action, by adjusting the initial plans, reformulating goals, adapting targets to imminent stages.

By continuing to encourage social learning on board ships, the mechanisms of coping to change act more evidently, the more so as the naval environment is not a friendly one, but uncertain and dangerous. Although there are a number of conventions governing the working time and schedule of the sailors in watchkeeping service, studies in the naval field reported alarming levels of occupational stress, emerging, mostly from workload.

Recommendations of the naval domain require the use of all available resources, progressive workload by support and encouragement of the inexperienced crew members, a closer monitoring of results, delegation of tasks.

This implies that the leader's attention should be centered not only on objectives, but also on the assessment of the human psychophysical potential, i.e. fatigue, physical and mental health, emotional balance, self-control. This leads to an invigorating work environment with positive and proactive attitudes, focused on the situation and immediate action; it also stimulates creativity and innovation. (Juli, p.54)

- *Ensure Results* - emphasize the managerial qualities of the leader: pre-planning, planning, monitoring, control, development in the periods of time determined in accordance to check -lists on board, objective evaluation of the intermediate results, accurate predictions on the final developments.

Th. Juli (2011) makes, by the statements above, a portrait of Leadership Effectiveness, a model of personality attributes of leadership, a multifaceted bio-psycho-socio-cultural construct, characterized by flexibility, efficiency and adaptability to routine situations and, most often at sea, by problematic situations of crisis, risk or uncertainty. The naval leader is described as leading by example, being a fine connoisseur of his own personality, but especially of the crew members' personalities, as a whole (motivations, interests, habitual attitudes, values).

Good communicator, cognitive and emotional empathetic, the crew leader offers freedom of action, sharing information that can generate group decisions based on the experience of the team, showing proactiveness and self-confidence of followers who can showcase their and psychosocial and technical skills. Only in such a way can problems and risks be identified, directing the crew to solutions and results on which the crew survival can depend on. Fulfilling the mission securely is connected with the best collective performance,

by stimulating creativity, innovation, generating new, innovative solutions, through formal or informal rewards, celebrating the success of the mission.

One of the stringent requirements imposed by naval leadership is rapid adaptation to challenging risky, threatening the safety of the crew on board situations. This adaptation is achieved by the help of the naval leadership through emotional, situational, and multicultural awareness.

High level of technology and the complexity of equipment on board, besides the great advantage of simplifying nautical activities, is a real factor of stress and overload, inducing confusion and surprise when it senses a feeling of lack of control over what happens, or when knowledge related equipment usage is poor. Specialists positively correlate the high level of technology with the decreased performance and situational awareness, with the introduction of new types of errors.

A prerequisite to the exercise of effective leadership is "own effectiveness" of the leader and crew imposed by the stringent naval environment through emotional, situational or multicultural awareness. We include the emotional awareness in the wider field of emotional intelligence, present at different levels of the leader's personality, being a way of adapting to the own self, to the team partners, and to the marine environment.

Summarizing the conceptualizations of emotional awareness, we can conclude that this implies: the ability to correctly perceive emotions and to express them; the ability to access or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; ability to know and understand emotions and to adjust them so as to promote emotional and intellectual development. (Mayer and Salovey, 1995)

There are also similar constructs: self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, social skills. (Daniel Goleman, 2001).

The analysis of naval leader's personality attributes, application of the principles set out above, in the exercise of effective leadership and emotional awareness, creates the prerequisites of instantiation and development of multicultural awareness on board merchant ships.

Related to emotional and multicultural awareness, the naval leader who is aware of time and spatial coordinates of the marine environment, anticipates intuitively the consequences of own decisions, along with the information flow; the time pressure affects crew and its mission.

As a dynamic process, which is constantly under development, the situational awareness involves the entire naval crew at different hierarchical levels, sharing a common mental representation with the leader (shared situational awareness), structured on sensemaking as a "state of knowledge" and prospectively designed by anticipation. (Endsley, p.39)

The stringent need for the exercise of Leadership Effectiveness, mutually beneficial for multinational companies and also for shipping safety, for the efficiency and development of a successful career in the shipping industry requires training, practicing management skills, in order to achieve professional excellence.

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