

A description of certain

Psychological Dimensions in Leadership Development

THIS article is concerned with identifying and describing certain psychological dimensions which are presumed to be involved in effective leadership development and training. The role of the successful leader involves the use of methods and techniques which engender in followers an enthusiastic and cooperative pursuit of goals or objectives which the leader and a majority of the followers have mutually agreed upon (1, 2, 7, 14).

Leadership Image

The most vital dimension included in the leadership function involves the presence of some acceptable image, in the minds of both the leader and followers, as to just what are the qualifications of an acceptable leader (2). Six major attributes have been proposed in this regard: I. Personal Integrity—self-confidence, sincerity and honesty, devotion to duty, high initiative, and a sense of personal responsibility; II. Consideration for Others—concerned with welfare of others, fair and impartial, and patient and tolerant; III. Good Mental Health—sees things favorably and works for their accomplishment, has good sense of humor, gets along well with others, and is

well adjusted; IV. Technical Information—knows job area well, sees larger picture, can organize and manage successfully, and instills in others a desire to follow; V. Decision Making—is able to make sound and timely decisions, can identify critical elements essential for success, and has good foresight; and VI. Teaching and Communications—can express self well, is able to teach effectively, and ascertains that subordinates clearly understand instructions.

Leadership Decision Pattern

The second most important dimension with respect to the leadership function is the characteristic pattern of decision making utilized by the leader. This entails four usual choices (5): I. Autocratic Aggressive—an ego centered leader decision pattern where the leader alone makes the decisions, and with the group objectives and action plan released bits at a time to the members as required; II. Autocratic Submissive—a resource person, expert, or committee centered decision pattern where the leader em-

Russell N. Cassel is Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Lompoc Unified Schools, Lompoc, California.

phasizes the use of resource persons, and where the total plan for action is provided members prior to the action; III. Democratic Cooperative—a parliamentary procedure centered decision pattern wherein the chief concern of the leader is to implement the will of the majority of the group membership, and where the leader plays the dual role of leader and group member; and IV. Laissez Faire—an individual and independent group member centered decision pattern where the leader exercises a minimum influence on the group members, and merely remains available as an adviser.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

A third dimension in terms of importance is the ability of the leader to separate the important from the unimportant data, the "chaff from the wheat," the critical information from the supporting data, and then to relate such information to the leadership function (6, 7, 8, 10, 11). This is not always accomplished by brainstorming, group discussions, or social interaction. Usually, the leader amasses large amounts of information, and then has the task of relating such information to the leadership function.

In this regard, three important notions are proposed: I. Discerning the Critical—identifying and relating the really important data available, or knowing that the data available are not really critical; II. Hypothesis Developing—this includes the continuous developing and testing of hypotheses, and involves the rejection and reconstruction of portions of a hypothesis during the testing process; and III. Reality Testing—this involves a cybernetic interaction including a continuous interplay of empathy designed to validate leader perceptions, for the pur-

pose of redirection of effort as the needs indicate.

Art of Leadership

The fourth dimension includes a very dynamic and elusive personality variable that varies from situation to situation, and from time to time for the same group of individuals (1, 7, 10, 13). Always the personality aspect deals with compatibility between leader and the followers, and includes interdependent relationships which may not have general application to other groups or situations. In this regard four proposals are made: I. Group Cohesion—causing individuals to feel wanted and needed, establishment of group self discipline, and enriching personalities generally; II. Engendering Cooperation—uses the desires of the group for establishing goals and objectives, continuously earns the right to lead, serves as an agent for the group, and reflects enthusiasm and integrity; III. Delegates Authority and Responsibility—develops the team approach, organizes the activities of the total group, appoints effective assistants, and is loyal and gives support to subordinates; and IV. Technical Mastery—has necessary background to give needed guidance to subordinates.

Unconscious Motivation

The fifth dimension in terms of importance deals largely with the feelings of persons, and with their unconscious motivations (9, 14). In this regard, four separate areas are proposed: I. Sentiments Produce Action—they urge the person to pursuit of their ends, to grow and appropriate what is necessary for their growth, and they select thoughts and emotions that are related; II. Sentiments Subordinate Perceptions—once formed they

serve as a center for orientation, and most happenings and acts are seen in relation to them; III. Secret Distress Feelings—where individual decisions tend to deflate one's ego, or where feelings of fear or guilt are present, there is a vital need for attention to the security and status of the individual; and IV. Self Imagery and Appeal—people need ego gratification, and they need self imagery to build their own self confidence.

Creativity

Leaders are continuously thrust into situations requiring measures and decisions never explored before by man and, because of such unique demands, creativity is an important dimension of leadership (8, 11, 12). In this regard, then, the following areas have been proposed: I. Sensitivity to Problems—the ability to perceive needs and defects; II. Fluency of Ideas—to be able to generate new and different ideas and hypotheses; III. Flexibility—being able to adjust to new and different situations, and being able to shift to new and different approaches for solving a problem; IV. Originality—the uncommonness of ideas, and the capacity for generating new concepts; V. Redefinition and Ability To Rearrange—ability to shift the function of objects; VI. Analysis or Ability To Abstract; VII. Synthesis and Closure—the combining of elements to form new wholes; and VIII. Coherence of Organization—the ability to do systematic organization.

Social Insight

It is common knowledge that one of the main things expected of a leader is that of getting along with other people, and especially the followers. Also, it is

equally common knowledge that nearly 80 percent of promotions in industry are based on how well one gets along with others, and not primarily on how well one knows the technical areas of concern, or not how well one accomplishes his job or mission. Accordingly, social insight is a vital and an important dimension wherever people are involved, and this includes the leadership function (14).

Five different means are proposed for the solution or the resolution of social problems (3): I. Withdrawal—running away or escaping the social situation; II. Passivity—remaining in the immediate area of the problem but not giving attention to the problem; III. Cooperative—acting natural in the face of the problem, and making every effort to resolve the problem with major emphasis in the cognitive or intellectual area; IV. Competition—going on the defensive and competing openly with emphasis on some form of rationalization; and V. Aggression or Hostility—where the emphasis involves the emotion in response to social problems, and where there is a tendency to attack, both emotionally and with hostility, the person associated with the problem.

References

1. Air Force Manual 35-15. *Air Force Leadership*. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Air Force, 1948.
2. R. N. Cassel. *The Leadership Q-Sort Test and Manual*. Chicago, Illinois: Psychometric Affiliates, 1958.
3. R. N. Cassel. *The Test of Social Insight and Manual*. New Rochelle, New York: Martin M. Bruce, 1959.
4. R. N. Cassel and T. C. Khan. *The Group Personality Projective Test and Manual*. Missoula, Montana: The Psychological Test Specialists, 1957.
5. R. N. Cassel and E. L. Stancik. *The*
(Continued on page 199)

Copyright © 1962 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.