

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Three programs that maximize learning over time

Abstract

In order to respond to the many challenges that confront them, organizations must assist their leaders to develop their personal and professional strengths. The development of leaders and leadership involves more than just the development of knowledge and must become an integral part of the organizational culture so as to also develop know-how and soft skills. Accordingly, programs have been created that are based on collaborative learning and the contextualization of the various issues demanding resolution, all with a view to developing leadership capable of surpassing the limitations of current management methods. To demonstrate how these programs can influence leadership, this article proposes a theoretical review of leadership, viewed as an ongoing process and then presents three proven development programs: coaching, mentoring and action learning.

Introduction

Both in public administrations and society at large there is a genuine demand for leadership development capable of complying with the imperative, among organizations, for finding innovative solutions enabling them to remain effective (Coughlan & Coughlan, 2015). It is all in keeping with efforts aimed at implementing strategies to improve the quality of services, the performance of organizations, and the competencies of the managers charged with tackling such challenges (Rinfret & Lagacé, 2016). Likewise, a strong trend toward leadership development programs has been emerging in response to the limitations of current management models. For the most part, these programs have been focused on collaborative learning and power sharing, and are thus aimed at throwing into question those ways of doing, thinking, and acting that hamper change (Baron, 2007). Accordingly, these

development programs work from the principle that leadership is not something that is fixed but indeed something that can grow and expand.

Although organizations have been using such programs to an increasing extent. Leadership development nevertheless remains one of the least explored topics within the field of leadership research (Avolio, Avey, & Quisenberry, 2010; Harrison, 2017; Martinelli & Erzikova, 2017; Subramony, Segers, Chadwick, & Shyamsunder, 2018). To bridge that gap, the present article will highlight trends in the developmental approach to leadership. We thus conducted a review of the literature surrounding the concept of leadership development. Using Google Scholar database, the Université Laval library database, and the library of École Nationale d'Administration Publique database (ENAP), we conducted a keyword search with a view to identifying articles relevant to our topic. The key

words used were: (1) "leadership development"; (2) "leadership development programs"; (3) "mentoring"; (4) "coaching"; and (5) "action learning". Our literature search focused on a publication period ranging from 2000 to 2018. However, some publications prior to the 2000s were selected, in consideration of their importance and theoretical relevance.

In order to grasp the impact of leadership development programs on participants, the first portion of this article reviews various theoretical approaches to leadership. We then discuss the development of leadership from a holistic perspective, while also examining the differences between leader development and leadership development. The second portion of this article is focused on leadership development programs and learning strategies, all with a view to shedding light on three different programs which, though differing from one another, are often used jointly in organizations, namely: coaching, mentoring, and action learning.

Leadership development: theoretical view

A steady stream of theories on leaders and leadership has developed over the last several decades. In the process, the definition of leadership has undergone a transformation, with the result that, today, the term is used to refer to a capacity, a process, or a movement which, far from being determined once and for all, must continue to be developed if organizations are to successfully meet the numerous challenges confronting them (Eich, 2008; Henein & Morissette, 2007).

What is leadership? The question of leadership is the main focus of a considerable literature developed from a historical, theoretical, or practical approach. According to Luc (2004), leadership is one of the topics most frequently written about – as far back as the era of Classical Greece and Plato, whose

treatise on the Republic discussed the qualities of the ruler of the State. As organizations became an object of study, authors began to train their sights on leadership, particularly through the emerging "great man theory" (Orazi, Turrini, & Valotti, 2013), which ascribed to leaders such traits as intelligence, self-confidence, determination, flexibility, sociability, and emotional maturity (Orazi et al., 2013).

Only during the second half of the 20th century did the focus of research shift from inventorying the characteristic traits of leaders to analyzing the behaviors associated with leadership. As a result, researchers also began investigating the compatibility of a leader's style and the organizational context in which he or she takes action. This development coincided with the emergence of situational theory and contingency theory, which postulate that a leader is only effective in various situations if he or she is flexible enough to adopt a leadership style that is adapted to each situation. Starting in the 1970s, a variety of leadership theories came to the fore, including servant leadership, team leadership, and, more recently, theories of transactional and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978).

This brief historical review serves to highlight how the perception of leaders has evolved beyond those theories that once explained leadership in terms of the outstanding, innate qualities of leaders such as Winston Churchill or Martin Luther King, or in terms of particular motivations such as the desire to dominate (Luc, 2004). Nowadays, leadership is viewed as an asset or capacity that may be likened to physical strength and that can thus be improved (Luc, 2004). Leadership is now considered to be a kind of capital that can be grown, and each individual, regardless of his or her position in an organization, can and should be encouraged to become a leader.

Leadership can be viewed as a capacity serving

to transform ways of seeing, thinking, and acting so that the group may adapt to the various challenges confronting it. Furthermore, the exercise of leadership derives its legitimacy in relation to the needs of a group, thereby becoming a moral responsibility (Baron, 2007). On that basis, leadership in the public sector has been associated with a multitude of competencies that are conducive to specific behaviors, such as making a personal impact, thinking strategically and focussing on delivery, giving purpose and direction in order to getting the best out of people as well as learning and improving oneself (Orazi et al., 2013; Van Wart, 2003). Accordingly, leadership may also be considered as a process of reciprocal social influence in which various actors actively interact with one another for the purpose of accomplishing a collective objective (Cullen-Lester, Maupin, & Carter, 2017; Fortin, 2015; Martinelli & Erzikova, 2017; Turner & Baker, 2017; Van Wart, 2003).

Viewed in terms of a capacity for learning and development, leadership, as Cloët and Bournois (2011) have explained, is future-oriented and emphasizes the ability to drive change, motivate, and spur enthusiasm, adherence, and commitment. Leadership is thus a kind of collaborative action performed by people on behalf of people (Henein & Morissette, 2007). As noted by Luc (2004), everyone has a role to play in developing each individual's leadership capital, thereby bringing an intergenerational component into the equation. Thus leadership may be said to be successful when it prepares the next generation to take over and, as Henein and Morissette (2007) have stated, developing talent is thus one of the most gratifying actions of leadership.

In keeping with this view, leadership indeed produces an impact: it plays an important role in improving the performance of public sector organizations, for it embodies a capacity to influence and affects the ways organizations do their work (Beheshtifar & Vazir-Panah, 2012; Fortin, 2015; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Turner, Baker, Schroeder, Johnson, & Chung, 2018). Leadership thus emerges through the creation

of shared meaning, in terms of both sensemaking and value-added (Day, 2000). Consequently, everyone can be considered a leader, provided that this capacity is developed – all the more so since, as Marquardt (2000) has noted, we now find ourselves in a new century that calls for a new type of leader having a wider array of skills and competencies. Leadership styles that may have worked in a more stable environment of the 20th century will no longer be adequate in a new era of uncertainty and rapid change – i.e., one in which it may prove hard to define problems let alone devise solutions to them (Marquardt, 2000). As organizations and work become increasingly complex and interconnected, the role of leaders at any level is also becoming more complex, which in turn compels developing a style of leadership – namely, transformational leadership (TL) – that is more fully attuned to the issues facing organizations (Bass, 1999).

As defined by Lagacé, Rinfret, Deschamps, and Benhadji (2013, p.67):

A manager can be said to have a transformational leadership style whenever he or she creates a genuine emotional relationship with his or her collaborators, thereby prompting them to transcend their individual needs in the workplace on behalf of a vision or a shared project. TL exerts a positive influence on certain organizational behaviors such as satisfaction (Medley & Larochelle, 1995), commitment (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004) and the psychological well-being of followers, namely through reduced stress (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007). In addition, it helps to increase discretionary behaviors (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003) and is more effective in a context of change (Fisher, 2006), particularly by improving perceptions of organizational justice (Tyler & De Cremer, 2005) [our translation].

This leadership style thus meets organizational challenges through the development of the relationship it establishes between leaders and their collaborators. However, as numerous studies have shown, in order to develop and exercise leadership, managers must previously

develop another competency – namely, emotional intelligence (Rinfret, Laplante, Lagacé, Deschamps, & Privé, 2018). By emotional intelligence is meant a number of interconnected social and emotional competencies, aptitudes and facilitators that combine to determine the effectiveness with which an individual understands and expresses his/her feelings, understands other people and interacts with them, and deals with day-to-day demands (Bar-On, 1997, 2006; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Considering the competencies that transformational leadership enables its practitioners to acquire and perfect, it now behoves us to examine the development of such capacities in keeping with the goal of addressing the challenges facing organizations.

Developing leadership. While even at this time some researchers continue to debate whether or not leadership is innate (Parent, 2013), this article, however, is based on theories that instead view it as the outcome of a learning process (Henein & Morissette, 2007). Accordingly, the development of an individual's capacities is requisite for becoming an accomplished leader in the current context and enabling organizations to survive and succeed in today's highly competitive environment (Dalakoura, 2010; Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016). Indeed, as De Beer (2016) has explained, the need to develop leadership has been evolving in response to the internal and external pressures confronting organizations. Internal pressures stem from new organizational structures (i.e., project and process teams) that challenge the traditional role of the leader, now considered as a coordinator, a coach and a consultant, and not as just the "boss" (Dalakoura, 2010). External pressures, on the other hand, stem from the quick changes that generate uncertainty, unpredictability as well as a variety of problems that are too complex to be solved by a few leaders (Dalakoura, 2010 quoted by De Beer, 2016).

For that reason, leadership development is viewed by organizations as constituting a real competitive advantage (De Beer, 2016; Maheshwari & Yadav, 2018). However, the development process is by no means predetermined. On the contrary, it constantly

evolves over the course of an entire lifetime, in accordance with each individual's particular path and culminating in an individual's discovery of his or her identity as a leader (Fortin, 2015; Henein & Morissette, 2007).

Before explicating how leadership ought to be developed, it is worth noting a criticism voiced by several authors (Dalakoura, 2010; Day, 2000; De Beer, 2016; Turner & Baker, 2017; Turner et al., 2018; Wiggins & Smallwood, 2018) – namely, that the concepts of leader and leadership development are often used interchangeably and indeed indistinctly. Many studies purport to discuss leadership development when in fact they refer to leader development, and vice versa (Dalakoura, 2010). Opting to develop a leader, on the one hand, also implies enhancing human capital – i.e., growing the individual capacities drawn on to build intrapersonal skills (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017; Day, 2000). Opting to develop leadership, on the other hand, amounts to developing social capital – i.e., building commitments and mutual obligations (Cullen-Lester et al., 2017; Day, 2000).

If organizations choose to develop the one without the other, the approach will remain incomplete. Developing a leader without also examining the relationships or the interactions occurring between individuals within a social context amounts to disregarding the fact that leadership constitutes a complex interaction between individuals and their social and organizational environments. Conversely, attempts at developing a system of shared meaning and mutual commitments without also developing the individual runs the risk of placing people in situations that are much too complex for them (Day, 2000).

Dalakoura (2010) has offered a possible explanation for the difficulty encountered when differentiating between leader and leadership development in the literature. In her view, researchers have examined leadership as an individual phenomenon, focusing on the behaviors and skills of leaders. As a result, leadership was expected to occur as the result of

training individual leaders and developing their skills and competencies. However, as has already been seen, leadership is not merely an individual phenomenon but is, instead, a complex phenomenon that encompasses the interactions between leaders and their social and organizational environment (Seidle et al., 2016; Subramony et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2018). That is why a number of authors now advocate adopting a holistic approach that ties leader development to leadership development (Day, 2000; De Beer, 2016; Rinfret & Lagacé, 2016).

What does leadership development entail, practically speaking? Several researchers (Henein & Morissette, 2007; Parent, 2013) have argued that the learning process takes time and demands the participants' fullest attention. It involves a broad range of practices that are seen as vital to maximizing the potential of organizations, as is shown by the \$31 billion spent by American companies on leadership development programs in year 2015 (Wakefield, Abbatiello, Agarwal, Pastakia, & Van Berkel, 2016). An entire culture of leadership development thus has to be established as a way of making good on organizations' commitment to development programs. As Hall, Burnett Vachon, and O'Brien (2016) have pointed out, organizations must strengthen their leadership development efforts, which should not be considered as a discretionary expense. By the same token, the evaluation of these development programs is vital for organizations in order to determine which leadership development opportunities are the most effective and align with the changing needs of their organization and employees (Hall et al., 2016).

Leadership development can thus be defined as a process whereby facilitators use a series of activities or mental exercises designed to prompt participants' reflection on learning experiences and thereby promote the transfer of knowledge and skills to work settings (Kotlyar, Richardson, & Karakowsky, 2015). As practiced today, leadership development is a social process that involves everyone in the organization, with special attention being placed on the development of interpersonal relationships (Dalakoura, 2010; Maheshwari & Yadav, 2018).

Leadership development serves to build the collective capacity of individuals. By engaging effectively in leadership roles and responsibilities, individuals become better equipped to find solutions to problems that could not have been predicted or that arise from the disintegration of traditional organizational structures (Day, 2000). Leadership development should thus be integrated into all everyday practices of an organization and become a part of its culture (Dalakoura, 2010; Hall et al., 2016).

That being said, leadership development is no longer just the outcome of traditional training programs but is also the result of a series of activities designed to develop employees by aiding them to learn from their work and their superiors (Dalakoura, 2010). As has been shown in the report by Stockton, Morican, and Pastakia (2016), practices must evolve in order to strengthen engagement, enhance the culture, foster leadership and capitalize on new ways of working; as part of that process, awareness of new ideas will play a key role in stimulating leadership development. According to these researchers, it is imperative that organizations: (1) "embrace the digital experience" (realizing that digital is the language of a new generation of employees); (2) reset priorities and place emphasis on the organizational culture; (3) make a point of optimizing communication and transparency between executives and employees; (4) foster engagement and adapt management methods in keeping with today's organizational reality; (5) nurture experimentation and innovation; (6) simplify organizational structures; (7) leverage lessons from what works best and change those aspects that hold people back; and (8) take cues from nimble, innovative approaches (Stockton et al., 2016). Given these requirements, the choice of leadership development programs becomes all that more critical for organizations. Indeed, such programs must provide a fit with employees' needs and their organizational context. They must also take into account the holistic dimension of leadership (De Beer, 2016). The alternative is to continue spending billions of dollars every year without achieving return on investment (Kellerman, 2012).

Leadership development programs. Henein and Morissette (2007, p.14) have defined leadership development programs in terms of the “concerted efforts to build an organization’s leadership capacity” [our translation]; they encompass a range of elements such as training, practice, self-discovery, support, and the creation of a learning community. The overall objective is to create frames of reference, concepts, and a shared language, with practice and guidance playing a deliberate, indispensable role in this process (Henein & Morissette, 2007). Learning is thus envisioned in terms of a whole and not just one of these aspects (Rinfret & Lagacé, 2016). According to Eich (2008), relevant leadership programs practice an inclusive, empowering, purposeful, ethical and process-oriented kind of leadership.

A closer look at the aims of these programs shows an emphasis on training competent leaders capable of making strategic decisions and who are endowed with sound, reliable judgment – i.e., people able to quickly size up any situation, reach the appropriate conclusions, and identify the steps required to motivate others (Henein & Morissette, 2007). It follows that the choice of a leadership development program will be critical whenever an organization wishes to develop leaders not only as individuals but also in terms of their relationships with others and their ability to lead teams (De Beer, 2016). Leadership development proceeds along cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral lines (Parent, 2013), which means that programs should factor for the formation, maintenance and transformation of the identity of leaders so as to enable the latter to shift from an individual-based identity to a collective-based identity (Kraus & Wilson, 2012).

Achieving such goals will entail going beyond the structured experience of training programs, which alone do not suffice to develop leaders. Such programs do not embrace the leadership development process as a whole but address a single element that, instead, should be coupled with practice, self-discovery, support, and the organizational community if effective leadership development is to be attained (Henein & Morissette, 2007; Turner & Baker, 2017). The

limitations of a theory-based pedagogy of leadership have been demonstrated time and time again. Leadership development programs must instead leverage a heuristic that stresses know-how and soft skills (Cloët & Bournois, 2011), provides participants with opportunities to learn from their work (Dalakoura, 2010), and makes ample room for their personal experiences and reflections surrounding leadership throughout the learning process (Eich, 2008). In addition, Henein and Morissette (2007) have proposed a number of recommendations designed to frame effective programs such as: (1) viewing leadership development in terms of a long-term return on invested capital; (2) linking leadership development to the organizational context and culture and to the desired results; (3) using the apprentice/master system; (4) fostering diversity and inclusion; (5) clarifying types of programs; and (6) expanding the scope of evaluation.

The success of leadership development will also depend on several factors, as has been set out by Parent (2013). For one, it will depend on the people selected to provide training, who should adopt a therapeutic approach, show empathy, and offer psychological support; they should, as well, have previously engaged in a process of introspection. As well, the selection of participants in leadership development programs is by no means a trivial consideration. As has been seen above, participants must demonstrate a determined, ongoing commitment in order for programs to be effective. Finally, some studies have shown the importance of the workplace in the personal development of leaders: the organizational environment should include enough elements of evaluation and challenge, but also support (Hall et al., 2016). In particular, for leadership development programs to succeed, they must be integrated into an organization’s everyday practices (Dalakoura, 2010). In turn, such programs must also evolve in accordance with the desires of professionals to improve the way things are done and achieve fit with a changing environment so that participants are able to satisfy both their needs and the expectations of their organizations (Henein &

Morissette, 2007).

These conclusions are borne out by the “70:20:10” framework proposed by Mintzberg (2004), according to whom about 70% of adult learning takes place outside institutional frameworks, while 20% is supported by people who are not professional helpers such as supervisors, colleagues parents, or friends (Kajewski & Madsen, 2012). As such, this model reveals the need to account for the numerous facets of the learning process – encompassing, obviously, formal training, but also the learning opportunities afforded by direct experience or via networks and informal communications. Leadership development programs must make a point of facilitating access to these various learning approaches. In our time, a multitude of leadership development programs combining theory and practice are on offer. Organizations can thus opt to adopt, alone or together, mentoring, coaching, action learning, 360-degree feedback, life stories, etc. In order to better understand how they work, we now propose to explore three of these programs which, in actual practice, can be combined with one another.

An examination of three programs: coaching, mentoring, and action learning

While coaching, mentoring, and action learning share similar conceptions of leadership development and the interpersonal relationships thus promoted, such programs nevertheless remain distinct from one another in terms of how they implement training. Following a thumbnail definition of each of these programs, we will set out their practical implications along with their value added for individuals and their organizations.

Coaching. As defined by Poilpot-Rocaboy and Charpentier (2010), coaching is a form of guidance designed to improve the expression of an individual’s qualities, resources, and competencies. As these authors have noted, this management

practice came into vogue around the turn of the 21st century and subsequently generated a boom in the “supply” of coaching opportunities and publications on the subject. Specifically, it can be defined as support of limited duration provided to individuals or teams in order to develop and actualize potential, know-how and soft skills in relation to professional goals (Cloët & Bournois, 2011). Coaching is made available in a variety of professional situations but occurs primarily in high-stakes situations (for either the coachee and/or his or her organization) and lasts an average of six months.

Coaches play a facilitator role and are often relied on to deliver feedback and develop and execute an action-oriented plan in order to enable coachees to identify, on their own and with the help of their environment, not only their development goals but also the difficulties they encounter when striving to act on a given situation and to modify it as required (Kraus & Wilson, 2012; Subramony et al., 2018). In other words, coaches aim to help coachees to effect change in their environment and at the same time consolidate their skills in keeping with their goals (Guimond, 2010).

The value of this type of program lies in creating a space for verbal interaction where coachees are free to speak their mind. The ability of coaches to embrace the bigger picture goes hand in hand with their lengthy experience dealing with different sets of values, thus endowing them with a neutral, benevolent, and professional listening capacity (Cloët & Bournois, 2011). As a result, they are in a position to pass on specific knowledge pertaining to the exercise of leadership. In contrast with mentors, the subject of the next section of this article, the coaching approach is more focused on the short or medium term, behaviors to be adopted, and tactical advice. In particular, coaches make changes and propose advice in a given situation with a view to producing a relatively immediate impact (Luc, 2010).

Coaching is thus oriented both toward action and learning, focusing on the personal and professional goals of coaches as well as their interpersonal

skills such as self-management and interpersonal communication (McNamara, Fealy, Casey, O'Connor, Patton, Doyle, & Quinlan, 2014). By placing coachees in real situations, coaching enables individuals to see and experience first-hand the problems that emerge in their practice. The coaching relationship helps coachees to formulate solutions specific to their situations (McNamara et al., 2014).

The coach/coachee relationship also brings into play five critical qualities: the equal status of partners; a focus on the personal and professional development of both partners; the integration of reflection on practice in order to identify critical incidents for focus; emphasis on process as well as content that facilitates leadership development; differentiation between dialogue and conversation; and the acceleration of career learning (Parker et al., 2008 cités par Kotlyar et al., 2015). Furthermore, this relationship should include "neutrality" or "independence," understood as having partners who would not be impacted by each other's actions (Kotlyar et al., 2015).

While a steady increase has occurred both in the demand for coaching and customer loyalty, neither of these criteria suffice to assess the benefits of a coaching program. Although it is difficult to measure the value added of this type of training (Poilpot-Rocaboy & Charpentier, 2010; Seidle et al., 2016), a body of research has provided us with a basis for identifying several benefits of coaching.

To begin with, coaching can help increase individual performance, improve a professional situation, or gain traction on the problems confronting an organization such as a change in culture (Day, 2000; Kotlyar et al., 2015). The main value of coaching resides in its capacity to stimulate and support the self-reflection, practice, and personal transformation of coachees. As such, this personal development can be achieved in terms of behaviors, beliefs, and frames of reference and values; in the process, it can facilitate the development of emotional intelligence and the management of complexity (Cloët & Bournois, 2011).

In addition, coaching can be a short-term activity designed to improve specific leadership skills or resolve particular problems (Day, 2000). For that reason, this type of development program can increase coachees' confidence and interpersonal effectiveness and, at the same time, foster the establishment of contacts inside and outside of the organization. Ultimately, it lays the groundwork for the emergence of collective competencies (Cloët & Bournois, 2011).

Furthermore, as has been noted by Day (2000), the use of executive coaching as a follow-up to a training program increases productivity by 88% in public sector managers. Finally, Cloët and Bournois (2011) have emphasized the lesser-known benefits of coaching: increased political maturity and capacity for reflection and organizational transformation.

Coaching has thus been integrated into numerous public and private organizations keen to develop leadership in the short term. In comparison, mentoring, a type of program offering a strong resemblance to coaching (Le Comte & McClelland, 2017), offers a longer-time learning relationship.

Mentoring. Mentoring has been described as a support relationship involving two individuals in which knowledge, strengths, and experiences are passed on from a mentor to a mentee, thereby fostering the intergenerational transfer of knowledge (Martinelli & Erzikova, 2017; Rinfret & Lagacé, 2016). Mentors also aim to provide support, direction, and feedback concerning the career plans and personal development of their protégés (Lamm, Sapp, & Lamm, 2017; Monserrat, Duffy, Olivas-Lujan, Miller, Gregory, Fox, Lituchy, Punnett, & Bastos F. Santos, 2009). Mentoring can thus take on a diversity of forms, and the mentor-mentee relationship may or may not involve people from the same organization. However, Kraus and Wilson (2012) counsel selecting the mentor and mentee on the basis of job knowledge and compatibility in order to establish mutual trust and respect, which are vital to mentoring relationships.

There is a variety of mentoring formats, meaning

that such programs can be either formal or informal. In the case of formal mentoring, the mentor-mentee relationship is determined by the organization, whereas with informal mentoring this relationship is directly and spontaneously initiated by both individuals, albeit with the encouragement of the organization (Day, 2000; Monserrat et al., 2009). According to Trorey and Blamires (2006), informal mentoring relationships appear to work best; in particular, mentor-mentee pairings prove more satisfying to the parties involved, as they mutually select each other and share advice without working according to a formal agenda (Bernatchez, Cartier, Bélisle, & Bélanger, 2010). There are, however, several problems connected with this type of relationship, such as access to mentors or the ethical issues that can be raised by a relationship by two employees in the same organization (Bernatchez et al., 2010; Lamm et al., 2017). For that reason, several organizations opt to work with a formal mentoring scheme, which, according to the mentees discussed in Boyle and Boice (1998) quoted by Bernatchez et al. (2010), establishes pairings that have proved more satisfactory than those afforded by informal mentoring. In effect, formal mentoring pairs met on a more regular basis, meetings were spread out over a longer period of time and participants were engaged more fully in their organization (Bernatchez et al., 2010). Whatever the case, both approaches to mentoring foster access to a mentor for each newcomer and thus appear to promote a certain shared culture within the organization.

Viewed in terms of the master/apprentice relationships, mentoring schemes are based on the observation, accompaniment, and emulation of masters, the catalysts of leadership development (Henein & Morissette, 2007). As with coaching, mentoring is a program of socialization that serves to guide new leaders in accordance with their organization's visions and values.

While the line between coaching and mentoring can be rather hazy – in terms of how the two programs are defined as well as the type of pairing

relationship favored – one of the main differences lies in their duration. Mentoring requires more time, since mentors guide mentees in the acquisition of values and vision, not to mention personal, professional, and organizational orientations, all the while allowing mentees to step back from their day-to-day tasks. Mentoring involves a long-term effort designed to impart direction to mentees' decisions (Luc, 2010). On this basis, several characteristics can be used to define a good mentor, as has been shown by Rinfret and Lagacé (2016). In order to maximize the potential of the mentoring relationship, mentors should not only be strongly motivated to share their experience and "pay it forward," they must also lend an attentive ear, make themselves available, show generosity, and be able to aid their protégés to develop and use their networks.

The use of mentoring as a leadership development program is thus particularly effective for promoting development in an organizational context.

Observing and interacting with members of senior management serves to develop a more sophisticated and strategic perspective on the organization (Day, 2000). The individuals paired with a mentor stand to benefit strongly according to three main dimensions: confidence, focus on objectives, and career and network development (Dashper, 2017). Increased confidence can be seen particularly in the willingness of mentees to express themselves more at meetings and to put forward their ideas to their superior with greater self-assurance. Confidence also plays a vital role in encouraging mentees to pursue career advancement, particularly by prompting them to apply for a promotion or seek out new assignments.

Finally, mentoring programs offer a significant opportunity for networking (Dashper, 2017), as testified to by this mentee's comments:

My mentor put me in contact with loads of people. He's incredibly available. He sends me things to read. He allows me to step back from the day-to-day, better identify my priorities, develop critical

thinking, express my views on a controversial topic (put a name on things) – yet always on a basis of respect. I can talk about particular cases with him – all this even though his own career is taking off (Rinfret & Lagacé, 2016, p.viii).

The learning relationships represented by mentoring and coaching thus constitute key components of leadership development programs (Seidle et al., 2016). In these one-on-one relationships, the individuals can learn, reflect, and try out a new way of experiencing and meeting challenges. Although, other organizations have opted to develop leadership in their employees not within the framework of a one-on-one relationship but rather within a group relationship – in particular via action learning.

Action learning. Drawing on the experiential learning of Kolb (1984) and the action research of Lewin (1946), action learning was popularized by Revans (1982) in the United Kingdom during the 1980s (Baron & Baron, 2015). Action learning is defined as a process of reflection and learning aimed at solving practical problems and achieving best results; it is rooted in the observation according to which human beings learn and develop better through experimentation and reflection on experience than through the teaching of formal, decontextualized contents (Baron & Baron, 2015; Chivers, 2011; Day, 2000; Marsick & O’Neil, 1999). A highly popular paradigm among researchers in recent years, action learning brings participants together with other managers of their organization to work in small groups on real problems involving four types of activity: the application of a scientific method; the quest for a rational decision; the sharing of advice and frank criticism; and the learning of new behaviors (Parent, 2013). Action learning, as developed by Revans, is concerned more with getting results than with self-discovery, and is aimed solving of problems, improving strategies, and achieving best results (Baron & Baron, 2015). Action learning is thus designed to

develop leadership in managers by factoring for their environment, stimulating their reflection, and promoting their capacity for adaptation (Baron & Baron, 2015).

In practical terms, the action learning-based development program takes place within smaller groups (numbering five to twelve members) who agree to meet on a regular basis over a defined period. The members thus set out to work up a project aimed at troubleshooting or confronting a recurring source of dissatisfaction, thereby laying the groundwork for active participation in spaces for discussion, reflection, and action. So doing, they enable themselves to observe their actions attentively, reflect on their experience, develop avenues of understanding and experimentation, and, finally, implement new ways of seeing, thinking, and doing. The learning process thus circles back on itself, with all participants gathering to discuss their problems and make progress (Baron & Baron, 2015; Cloët & Bournois, 2011; Coghlan & Coughlan, 2015; Marquardt, 2000; Walia & Marks-Maran, 2014). In sum, action learning does not focus on acquiring compulsory learning contents but instead on empowering participants to solve daily problems (Chivers, 2011). It is on that basis that this development program links the world of learning to the world of action – i.e., via a reflexive process that takes action as part of the learning cycle.

It is also worth differentiating action learning from codevelopment. While both programs present the same core learning philosophy, they nevertheless remain distinct owing to a number of methodological considerations. With codevelopment, meetings are structured around a consultation process. Throughout a series of meetings, the participants are asked to take on the role of client and consultants and then swap roles at each encounter (Payette, 2000). With action learning, on the other hand, such things as client, consultant, or subject of consultation are not part of the group discussion. Action learning instead develops the conversation in respect of a specific project that each member conducts in real time in

his or her day-to-day work, with each meeting being devoted to covering the progress made to date. This approach makes for a very different type of engagement on the part of the group's participants. With action learning, all group members are involved in a real project of their own, thus making for greater continuity and ease of supervision that with codevelopment (Payette, 2000).

On account of how peers work on problems specific to their organization's reality, the selection of participants is critical because action learning projects are tied to a business imperative (Day, 2000). Furthermore, in order to maximize the full potential of an action learning-based program, participants and their organization commit to acknowledging their limitations and indeed to challenging the beliefs and rationales for action that are at the heart of their identity (Baron & Baron, 2015). Finally, a number of authors (Baron & Baron, 2015; Coughlan & Coughlan, 2015) have noted the need to rely on a facilitator during sessions of action learning who can play a number of different roles on behalf of the group: coordinator, catalyst, observer, communication enabler, etc.

Action learning enables individuals to become aware of their own system of values, especially since the problems confronting them present a risk of personal failure (Parent, 2013). It thus enables them to create their own holistic, adaptable model of leadership based on their organizational situation; to that end, they work on real organizational problems via activities centering on personal reflection and the sharing of views designed to highlight the underlying challenges (Kraus & Wilson, 2012; Parent, 2013). Participants are led to recognize how their habitual, unconscious ways of seeing, thinking, and acting contribute to their recurring difficulties or dissatisfactions; they are then encouraged to retool their approaches and achieve greater fit between managerial action and the organizational context (Baron & Baron, 2015). Participants are thus able to develop their aptitude to listen, negotiate, and to resolve conflict in order to stand tall in the "face of change" (Marquardt,

2000).

To sum up, action learning programs contribute strongly to leadership development, which includes the development of specific critical competencies such as communication, team-building, and decision-making (Baron, 2016). In addition, action learning is relevant owing to its focus on particular individually relevant leadership skills, and its emphasis on real-world practice problems and actionable solutions (McNamara et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Both in personal and professional terms, leadership development is a source of considerable benefit in a constantly evolving professional environment. The development of leadership – and thus leaders (the two go hand in hand) – plays a vital role in ensuring the survival of organizations in the current context. Indeed, considering that leadership is a no doubt complex but nevertheless essential interaction between individuals and their social and organizational environment, it is essential to consider the development of leadership as an all-encompassing phenomenon (Turner et al., 2018). For that reason, leadership development programs must promote a holistic approach in their vision and actions (Turner & Baker, 2017).

Accordingly, efforts designed to achieve that goal involve a degree of complexity and a longer-term horizon. Furthermore, organizations must implement a genuine culture of leadership development in order to make the latter an integral part of managers' thinking and behavior. By doing so, managers will be empowered to successfully tackle their day-to-day challenges.

Coaching, mentoring, or action learning are three examples of programs that adopt different approaches to framing problematic situations within their organizational context and, as such, they enable leaders to reflective collectively on the

various problem-solving options available to them. It is important to note, however, that these three programs are far from standing independently of one another and should, instead, be implemented in a complementary manner so as to embrace all the opportunities available for learning, engaging in self-reflection, and improving an individual's personal and interpersonal capacities (Seidle et al., 2016). If these programs are made to complement one another, they can enable participants to go beyond just acquiring knowledge contents and indeed develop their know-how and soft knowledge (Subramony et al., 2018).

One prime example of the benefit of mixing these three leadership development programs is to be found in the Cercle des Jeunes Leaders ("Young leaders circle"), a research and training program established by the École nationale d'administration publique. The subject of numerous publications (Lagacé & Rinfret, 2014; Rinfret & Lagacé, 2016), this program features a training component that provides up-and-coming senior managers in Quebec's public service with opportunities for acquiring all the tools they require for their personal and professional development. It also features a research component serving to gather a considerable body of data that affords evidence of the long-term benefits of development programs and demonstrating the importance of evaluating the results. Such findings bear out the observation of the Conference Board, according to which the more that research is devoted to leadership development and its effects on organizational performance, the more it can become a contemporary practice for organizations wishing to increase and improve their leadership capabilities and abilities (Hall et al., 2016). By way of conclusion, leadership development should not be considered as a once-off measure or an optional expense item for organizations. Quite to the contrary, it should be made an organizational priority. The development of the personal and professional strengths of managers will enable the latter to act from a posture of leadership since, by responding more effectively to the demands of the

social context framing their action, they will be in a better position to maximize their organization's performance.

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