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Sotiria Triantari

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From coaching to Mentor Leader: Profile and skills of the mentor leader in human resources management

Sotiria Triantari,
Professor, University of Western Macedonia
striantari@yahoo.gr

Abstract:

We present in this article the personality of the mentor leader in management. The ancient Greek background of the coaching and mentor leader is highlighted. We focus on the differences and similarities of the coach and mentor leader, highlighting the skills of the modern mentor leader, who dynamically contributes to the formation of the personality of the individual, the employee in order to achieve personal and professional development and progress. The mentor leader with basically characteristics of empathy and mindfulness, which are basically communication parameters, transmits to others his experience, making the human resources of a business or organization flexible, creative, and mature. The mentor leader represents ethical leadership and addresses contemporary challenges in management by strengthening the link between theory and practice through education and transmission of knowledge, skills, and experience. The modern mentor leader makes a significant contribution to cultural change in management and to addressing organizational change, which has a significant impact on the psychology and behavior of employees.

Keywords: leader, coach, mentor, coaching, mentoring, empathy, emotional intelligence, mindfulness communication, persuasion.

1. The guiding Leader in Ancient Greek thought. From coaching to mentoring

In ancient Greek thought, the personality of the leader from Homeric times to Aristotle is framed by the basic characteristics of moderation (μέτρον), harmony, self-awareness, self-control. Aristotle highlighted the moral and intellectual virtues that a statesman ought to practice and cultivate. What is important throughout the course of ancient Greek thought is the leader's ability to observe moderation and manage himself and others (Triantari, 2020a).

In **Heraclitus** (6th-5th century BC), the moderation (μέτρον) defines the personality of the excellent statesman, leader, as the executor of his logic outside his individuality. The moderation (μέτρον) reflects the ethically communicative dimension of the leader in a context of coherence and management of the connection between the inner self and the universe (Heraclitus, Ap. B. 64 DK.; Betegh 2007). The concept of moderation (μέτρον) in **Democritus** (460-370 BC) is manifested through right cognition and action, which activates the moral consciousness of the leader. The dynamic personality of the logical leader is highlighted by his moral choices in which prudence plays a dominant role (Triantari 2017; Diels - Kranz 1972). Prudence ensures autonomy, self-control, self-knowledge, independence, being the standard and guide of self-management aiming at personal and collective happiness (Triantari 2017; Triantari 2020b). The ability of self-management, which orients the management of citizens by the leader, was highlighted by **Thucydides** (460-399 BC). The need to assert the leader's power enhances self-management and citizen management, recovering his persuasive prowess as the communication channel for gaining citizens' trust. The leader has self-awareness and self-control of his actions, which help him to be animated by the natural impulses of *honor, fear, and utility* (Thucydides, *Historiae*, 1.76; Triantari 2020a). Through the triptych of honor, fear and utility, Thucydides highlighted the leader's power to exercise and develop the need for self-preservation and self-management in a world of

contradictions, conflicts, and conflicting interests. Management as a controlling factor in the imposition of power is highlighted in the thought of **Xenophon** (430-355 BC). The functional and flexible leader/manager, who through wisdom and knowledge of what is good and bad, just and unjust, beneficial and harmful, raises the moral virtues of the leader as the background to the evaluation of his moral choices (Xenophon, *Memoirs III*, 9. 4.1-6.7; Triantari 2020a; Tsohis 2012), to his insight and negotiating ability to preserve peace and take initiatives (Xenophon, *Agesialos*, 7.1-7.7). The managerial and negotiating ability of the leader was considered by **Isocrates** (436 BC - 338 BC) as a prerequisite for his perfection. An excellent leader knows how to manage difficult situations with prudence, rational thought, and action (Isocrates, *On Antidotes*, 128; Alexiou 2005; Triantari 2020a).

Plato (427 BC-347 BC) focused the power of the leader's management and negotiating presence on the "woven leader" as the ideal type of leader. He likened the art of the leader to the art of the weaver, creating a fertile ground for the fusion and harmonization of diverse and different elements in a political community, whose harmonization and cohesion is to be managed and negotiated by the leader, the guardian and embodiment of moderation (μέτρον) and harmony (Plato, *Politicus*, 289e-290a. Chrysakopoulou 1990; Veneti 1990; Triantari20a). **Aristotle** (384 BC-322 BC) presents the image of the designer, reformer, and architect leader through the orator's ability to shape speeches for different audiences. Aristotle attributed the leader's managerial and negotiating ability to the dynamic relationship between speech and action, through which the leader's intellectual and moral qualities are projected. The philosopher achieved through persuasion the interweaving of heterogeneous political elements. Logical and psychological persuasion distinguishes the leader whose action and reaction are based on wisdom and emotional intelligence, creating the appropriate conditions for managing himself and his audience (Triantari 2016; Barboutis 2016).

The ancient Greek image of the leader is the modern model of the true leader, who is a coach and guide for life. In whatever sphere of social and professional life he exercises

authority he can simultaneously guide his citizens or subordinates to understand their strengths, seek self-management, realize what they can and cannot do, and seek harmony and moderation for themselves and others (Eby, Buits and Lockwood, 2004). The leader is a coach and mentor who, through accountability of actions and decisions, brings out mindfulness and emotional intelligence. These are two key competencies with which he can influence and teach those who wish not only to acquire skills but also to accept the specialized transmission of knowledge.

2. The profile of the coaching Leader as a condition of the mentoring Leader

Ancient Greek thought shaped the profile of the modern coach leader, as it emerged from the combination of the professional coach and the new leader (Asimakopoulou, V. 2018). D. Goleman (2002) included Coaching Leadership in the six suggested leadership styles. T. Gallway (2009) defined coaching as "the art of facilitating performance in another person's learning and development", considering coaching as consultative training in self-awareness of one's abilities. D. Goleman (2014) defined the Coach Leader as the leader who helps employees become aware of their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses, combining these with their personal and professional aspirations. He presents the Coach Leader as the leader who encourages employees to set long-term goals, to formulate action plans. Coach Leader provides feedback by assigning roles and responsibilities, which employees should understand with mindfulness. In D. Goleman's thinking, the Coach Leader motivates employees for greater performance and achievement, creating a good work climate with positive consequences for the business.

The definitions give the Coach Leader characteristics that set him apart from any other leader, such as sincerity for personal development and welfare of his employees, encouragement and motivation, self-awareness, mindfulness, self-confidence and stability, emotional intelligence. The Coach Leader leads with

ethical and intellectual principles and values (J. Rogers, 2008). He brings together all those characteristics that bring out the moral and intellectual qualities. He helps and supports less experienced subordinates or supervisors and enables them to learn by allowing them to participate in the planning and shaping of the vision. The leader, together with subordinates, wisely and accurately sets and carries out the short- and long-term goals, all contributing to the successful realization of the vision. The Coach Leader creates a community of subordinates, whose behavior and attitude towards them has a significant impact on them in both the professional and psychosocial domains (Eby, L. Buits, M. & Lockwood, A. 2004. Cf. Triantari, S. 2020a).

S. Triantari considers that Coaching Leadership belongs to the virtuous models and the Coach Leader brings together the moral and intellectual virtues with mediocrity (*μεσότητα*) being dominant and prudence (*φρόνησις*) predominant among the intellectual virtues, in which priority is given to the logical ability of the human. Prudence (*φρόνηση*) guides rational choice (*προαίρεσις*), which is an equally important intellectual virtue, since actions with it are characterized as voluntary (Aristotle, *Ethical Nicomachees C1111b*; Triantari, S. 2014). The moral virtues contribute significantly to the Coach Leader's behavior and the intellectual virtues, representing the logical part of the soul, lead him to the truth, to a true realistic vision (Triantari, S. 2020a. Trogaidou, Ar. Triantari, S. 2023). The virtues based on Aristotelian psychology, which distinguish the Coach Leader are the following:

- Prudence (*φρόνησις*) to think rationally and wisely.
- Wisdom (*σωφροσύνη*) to act with moderation, modesty, to manage one's passions and desires properly.
- Justice to distribute responsibilities and duties and rewards equally and as they are proportionate and deserved to subordinates.
- Bravely (*ανδρεία*) to manage fear, to show courage in facing difficulties, to be distinguished for his diligence and cheerfulness.

- Magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία), to behave accordingly and with temperance in happiness and misfortune, to be a kind and genuine human.
- Magnificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια), to be oriented towards projects and actions of public utility.
- Vivacity (ευτραπελία) to be smart, intelligent, and humorous.
- Freedom to make good management of resources and money, to disseminate and use information well and to be generous.
- Humility (πραότητα) to master anger and all negative passions, having self-control.
- Friendship to pursue good and right interpersonal relationships, built on reciprocity, cooperation, justice, and honesty.
- Fair distribution (νέμεσις) should seek the proper distribution of responsibilities and effective management.
- Honesty to base his words and actions on truth and to accept his strengths and weaknesses.
- Honor to be ambitious but not arrogant, to seek recognition in a positive and honest way.
- Self-discipline (εγκράτεια) to not be excessive in his thoughts, feelings and actions.
- Compassion (επιείκεια) to be able to forgive any mistakes, giving subordinates the opportunity to make amends (Starr, J. 2011; Tsoukas, H. 2017; Asimakopoulou, 2018; S. Triantari, 2020a).

The above virtues empower the Coach Leader with communication skills such as active listening, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, confidentiality, proper feedback, appropriate persuasion, and influence, shaping his profile (De Vries, M.K. 2014; Catalao, A. & Penim, A. 2016).

The Coach Leader acts as a role model for employees, contributing to their personal and professional development and support in order to better address their needs and challenges. The Coach Leader does not focus on the problem but on its solution, which is why his coaching is oriented

towards developing discovery of their potential, their empowerment and development through self-awareness. Towards this end, the Coach Leader helps managers to cope with changes in the internal and external work environment (Newstead, T. Dawkins, S. Macklin, R. Martin, A. 2020).

The historical origins of Coach can be found in Socratic midwifery teaching, which has a basic orientation towards the individual, with characteristics of self-awareness, self-awareness and self-management and aims at changing the way of thinking and behaviour. Coaching is the forerunner of Mentoring, as their similarity focuses on the one hand on supporting the learning process to achieve a specific personal or professional goal through training, counselling, and guidance. On the other hand, the Coaching focuses on the communication between two people, with designed to enhance a person’s knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve a specific goal. Coaching and Mentoring seek to change the culture and behaviour of the individual through the discovery of his abilities and skills (Renton, J. 2009; Serrat, O. 2010; Asimakopoulou, B. 2018).

In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Mentor is the loyal and good friend of Odysseus, who took on the role of animator, guide, and coach to Odysseus’ son Telemachus (Kenworthy, J. 2015). Coaching and Mentoring seem to be two concepts that are identical to each other, but their main difference lies in their similarity, which is their orientation towards the individual. Coaching focuses on work in relation to the individual’s career path and is short-term in its goals and processes. Mentoring focuses with philosophical reflection on the professional and personal empowerment, development of the individual and is long-term in objectives and processes. The characteristics of the Coach Leader coincide with those of the Mentor Leader and the former significantly highlights the dynamics of the latter, as the profile of the Mentor includes the profile of the Coach (Gordon, S. 1992; Renton, J. 2009).

The following table attempts to present the differences between Coach and Mentor:

| | |
|--------------|---------------|
| COACH LEADER | MENTOR LEADER |
|--------------|---------------|

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| He is Professional out of business | He is Senior manager of the business |
| He has specialized training for the mentoring of cooperating managers | He has enough professional experience |
| He is oriented to the problem solving, to the development of skills/competences for the development of the individual without a subject | He is oriented to improve communication, collaboration, motivation & leadership skills with a focus, e.g., marketing/transfer of experience in a specific professional field |
| He aims at self-awareness, identification of shortcomings & weaknesses, strengths, setting goals, optimal way of success | He helps in learning of the strategies/techniques for the development of the employee in the working environment - meeting the challenges of the job (technical skills) |
| He focuses on the Present & the Future, coaching style | He Focuses on advice, directions |
| He focuses on inner self-development, growth, and reconciliation of self. Result in awareness of abilities to find solutions & achieve goals | He transmits of knowledge from his specific experience |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>He focuses on a specific work/target/timelines/learning, behavior and skills required for the successful outcome of the work.</p> <p>Daily supervision of trainees</p> <p>He is oriented to a specific personal pathway of the individual in relation mainly to the work</p> | <p>He focuses on the needs of the individual, discussion of professional life/refining of the approach with philosophical reflection (attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, skills)</p> <p>Individual orientation with focus on goal design, empowerment of self-awareness, discovery of potentials/abilities/skills</p> |
| <p>He has short-term objectives, short-term process, formal style interpersonal relationship (2)</p> | <p>He has long-term objectives, long-term process, informal style interpersonal relationship (2)</p> |

The dynamics of the Mentor is based on the communicative interaction with the individual to activate and motivate leadership skills in connection with the strengthening of his self-awareness for personal and professional development. These two parameters will be highlighted by approaching and highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy for the Mentor Leader.

3. Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness in the Mentor Leader

In the historical-ideological review of the importance of the concept of self-awareness, self-management, and negotiation in the personality of the leader, it is understood that the starting point for the progress and development of these skills is emotional intelligence and mindfulness. In Thucydides, the law of assertion and the constant expansion of power, with the goal of the happiness of the whole, was the starting point in

the emergence of the managerial and negotiation skills of the leader, who uses his persuasive prowess as a communicative tool in its practical application (Koliopoulos, Triantari, Stavropoulou, Spinthiropoulos Garefalakis 2021; Lemonakis *et al.*, 2019).

In the modern era of constant and rapid changes, of the economic, social and communication crisis, the phenomena of greed, self-interest, migratory flows, geopolitical shifts, volatility, uncertainty, eliminating global stability and security, appear strongly. The leader's ability to manage and negotiate critical situations, especially war situations, is a deterrent to the threat of global catastrophe. But the willingness to deter also implies *prevention* (πρόληψις) in a spirit of communicative ethics, which the leader cultivates and promotes cooperation, understanding, and cohesion. *Prevention* (πρόληψις) lies primarily in the leader's capacity for self-management, who with the prudence controls his thoughts, desires, and pleasures (Trogaidou & Triantari 2023; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

The whole of the ancient intellect is pervaded by the passion of reason, that is, the inseparable relationship that exists between reason and emotion. Thucydides perceived reason as a stabilizing factor in the balance of fear (δέος), as the most intense human emotion, as it awakens the necessity of self-preservation. Thucydides and later Aristotle proposed logical and psychological persuasion as the intellectual building block of the excellent orator and leader. They praised *emotional intelligence* (Goleman 2011) and *mindfulness* (Kabat-Zinn 2003) as the basically communicative axes of management and negotiation in critical situations (Triantari 2020b). The complex of emotional intelligence and mindfulness empower the leader and more importantly the Mentor Leader, so that at the right time and circumstance, the leader's capacity for thought, decision making, and action can be brought out (Triantari, S. A. 2020a; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Emotional intelligence is a basically characteristic of the leader and especially the Mentor Leader to understand, feel, evaluate, and practically apply the power of emotions as a source of energy, information, trust, creativity, and influence. The Mentor Leader empathizes with and guides the individual

in a philosophical reflection oriented to their attitudes, behaviors and perception of their life while influencing their emotions to focus beyond specific skills or competencies (Goleman, Boyatzis, Mckee 2014). Emotional intelligence in the Mentor Leader is framed by two main pillars: **a.** *Self-management and self-awareness* oriented towards the recognition of one's emotions and self-control in managing one's emotions, elements that make the leader honest, authentic, rational, and adaptive with a macro perspective in the education of the individual (De Janasz, Dowd, Beth 2023). **b.** The *social awareness* with which he understands others, interprets body language, accepts diversity, and manages relationships, either by inspiring with vision and goals, influencing through persuasion, or directing through the role of mentor, or by managing unpredictable changes or by assuming the role of negotiator in conflict management in order to mentor opposing parties to mutually satisfactory solutions to resolve their disputes (Goleman 2014? Triantari 2020a; Triantari 2021).

The above axes that make up the skill of emotional intelligence in the leader are reinforced by mindfulness, which highlights the ability of the Mentor Leader, with a clear and stable consciousness, to control himself and in each present situation to bring out his ethics (Tan CH. 2023; Ashford Sj. & DeRue, DS. 2012). Knowledge, perception, and emotion empower the Mentor Leader's empathy in critical situations (Triantari 2020b; Lewicki, Saunders, Minton 2004). Particularly in our time, where challenges to the threat to global security and stability are frequent, the prevalence of leaders is at stake in a competitive context through the risk of expansionist policies, which in its extremity may dismantle democracy and promote the annihilation of the humans' race through the imminent use of nuclear weapons. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness are basically parameters in Mentoring. The conscientious Mentor Leader is based on his *intention* to enhance his *attention* as an observer of inside and outside events and his *attitude* as a decision maker in observation, rational decision, and action (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, Freedman 2006). Mindful Leadership builds self-

awareness, which is the heart of leadership and mentoring Leadership (Ehrilch, J. 2017).

Within the bosom of emotional intelligence and mindfulness are contained the core skills of the Mentor Leader.

4. Essential Skills of the Mentoring Leader

One could ask what the main implications are, arising from the complex of emotional intelligence and mindfulness in the management policy of the Mentor Leader. This reflection requires focusing on the skills derived from emotional intelligence and mindfulness, such as:

- Self-assessment
- Self-control
- Self-awareness
- Transparency
- Adaptability
- Aptitude
- Optimism
- Honesty
- Attentiveness
- Authenticity
- Stability
- Creativity
- Intuition
- Insightfulness
- Coolness
- Active listening
- Reliability
- Resourcefulness
- Flexibility
- Temperance
- Resourcefulness (Triantari 2020a; Ntisiou, Triantari (2023); Trogaidou, Triantari (2023)).

These are skills that bring out the personality of a Mentor Leader with the ability to manage relationships and situations,

negotiate, consult, communicate, and select individuals with better productive results.

In this era of complexity, constant change, fluidity, instability and uncertainty, the complex of emotional intelligence and mindfulness in the Mentor Leader has implications:

- The reducing stress and panic
- The preservation of peace
- The ensuring and advancing culture
- The strengthening mental endurance
- The motivation for creativity and adaptability
- The optimal performance in all areas of human life
- The solving problems related to under-generation
- The avoiding addictive behaviors
- The prevention and deterrence of migratory flows
- The rational decision-making
- The improving of education and health, which are important parameters for the existence of a healthy state
 - The development of an international strategy and entrepreneurship, attracting alliances through peace processes
 - The tackling climate change
 - The protection of the environment
 - The development of ethical principles and values
 - The avoiding the waste of energy and mineral resources
 - The orientation towards digital humanism.

The Mentor Leader emerges as a true, excellent, and “regenerative” leader (Storm, 2019) and manager (Warren 2009), who portrays in his image the transformational, charismatic, and negotiating leader. He is in’ a constant struggle of harmony with life, moderation, and self-awareness, control and proper criticism and evaluation, balance of emotion and logic, flow of events and focus of attention, exhortation, and deterrence. It is the struggle that distinguishes the image of a

Mentor Leader, who in the generalized discussion and search for one's identity must develop self-restraint, self-control, self-management and awaken the negotiation that we seek from birth. It is the struggle of the "regenerative" leader, seeking a sustainable conscious management policy in every business activity, cultivating those conditions of life with products and services that enhance the individual, society, and the environment. He is the Mentor Leader who adds value to the person, the ecosystem, the planet, striving responsibly for the happiness and prosperity of man, preventing any conditions for his extinction. He is the leader who can practice Mentoring in a business or organization, seeking to guide and support the professional development of his employees by maintaining the communicative relationship and designing the alliance. Mentoring is based on the relationship of mutual respect and trust (Bezzina, 2006). Mentoring Leadership finds application in the complex and multifaceted field of management, activating the society of employees to become willing and supportive in the process of their professional support by changing their way of thinking and behavior.

5. Mentor Leader in Human Research Management

The skills of the Mentor Leader in Human Resource management also reinforce the purpose of Mentoring in management, which is the transfer of knowledge, skills, experiences from the Mentor Leader to younger and less experienced employees, so that they develop not only specific professional skills but also to guide them in their personal development (Parker, P. B. & Carroll, 2009). Mentor Leader and Mentoring Leadership is an important innovation because it contributes to:

- the rapid and effective integration of new employees into organizations/businesses
- the transfer of better knowledge and skills with specialized experience
- the developing of cooperation and interpersonal relations between employees

- the promoting of learning
- the self-development, self-awareness, self-management, and negotiation
- the improving of employee performance
- the increasing of professionalism
- the development and motivation of employees
- the increasing of productivity
- the selecting of appropriate employees for roles and responsibilities
- the creating of career paths
- the managing of retired staff
- the promoting of innovative methods, ideas, and practices
- the decision making and their implementation (Newstead, T. Dawkins, S. Martin, A. 2020. Alfano, M. 2013).

The Mentor Leader upgrades both himself and the management function as a bearer of ethical principles, knowledge, and experience, as a guide in the professional and personal development of employees. The Mentor Leader's strategy guarantees a change of thinking and behavior, i.e. a change of culture that is identified with the identity of the organization/business. The experience of Mentor Leader is essential especially for new employees who seek to receive emotional support through reliable role models with knowledge and skills that will boost their morale, build on their strengths, and strengthen their weaknesses (Shollen, S. & L. Brunner, C. C. 2014; Ruwhiu, D. & Elkin, G. "2016). The Mentor Leader helps in motivating employees and leaders, empowering their energy, creativity, and enthusiasm. Mentoring Leadership forms and promotes strategies to motivate and recruit talent, leadership skills and leadership types because it builds a positive work culture and career advancement in the business, increasing its reputation in the society (Pinnington, A.H. 2011).

The Mentor Leader meets the most basic needs from Maslow's pyramid, the needs of self-esteem and self-

actualization. The first needs focus on self-esteem, independence, self-respect, recognition, and respect for others. These are elements that strengthen self-confidence and lead to self-actualization. Self-realization means better self-development and helps the employee to first become a leader of themselves, so that his self-perception becomes a reality. The self-concept reinforces the sense of responsibility and satisfies the need for power, which is fueled by the desire to have authority and self-control in life situations and in the work environment. In this context, the need for social integration is satisfied in terms of communicative relations with others. The set of needs is directly linked to the social needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The development of these important needs enhances two basically parameters of emotional intelligence and mindfulness, contributing to the integration of the individual's personality and his connection to the business/organization and society (Knights, D. 2021).

The Mentor Leader goes a step beyond the Coach Leader and focuses on meeting the individual's needs for personal and professional development, contributing to the empowerment and happiness of human resources in management. The presence and contribution of the Mentor Leader in Human Resource Management means a new leadership practice with implications in a new economy, which is related through rational rules to the development of emotions and interpersonal relationships, as well as to the mutual personalization of the experiences of human resources in management (Holmberg, I. & Strannegard, L. 2005). Mentoring Leadership signals the need for leadership to emerge in the light of a humanistic approach that makes it ethical through its engagement with employees, the business, institutions, and society.

Conclusion

Mentoring leadership has its roots in ancient Greek thought with the mentor or coach leader as the central figure. From coaching leadership received all those elements that made it

dynamic in shaping the personality of the individual, leader, and employee, who zealously desires personal and professional development and progress. The Mentor Leader with his empathy and mindfulness reveals all those skills that he possesses and can pass on to others together with his experience in order to make the human resources of a company flexible, mature and creative. Mentor Leader brings closer the need for ethical leadership that can meet the challenges of the modern era at professional, political, social, and economic levels. Mentoring leadership enables the connection between theory and practice through the education and transmission of knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences that will contribute to changing the culture and behaviour of leaders and employers in management.

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