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**Leadership and direction**

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## Introduction

Leadership and direction are concepts linked by the position of the actors and diverging in principle. Leadership is a transversal concept that is self-evident as soon as individuals come together to pursue a common destiny. This concept has certainly played an important role in the survival of Homo sapiens in the face of the adversity of nature and time from prehistoric times to the present. Thus, if in the first moments of humanity leadership was essentially a matter of survival, today the stakes have evolved and now touch educational, military, socio-political, professional and economic spectrums. Indeed, the evolution of human societies has favored the grouping of individuals according to their interests.

The leader's position within a group may be the result of a designation or rather of a personal emergence. In both cases, he or she plays a central role from which the actions of the individuals in the group are inspired and coordinated. Leadership is based on principles and objectives aimed at creating a coordinated energy within the group to carry out work of common interest (Allen, 2016; Maxwell, 2018)

Leadership is the sum of several qualities that contribute to making an individual an inspiring, attractive and unifying personality. These qualities can be both innate and acquired through personal effort and training (Allen, 2016; Stogdill, 1948, 1956). In the history of humanity, leadership has always played a crucial role in the processes that have led to changing conditions and the evolution of societies. Thus, American, Asian and African countries have had leaders in their history who, through their strength of character and commitment, have marked the history of their countries (Carson, 2004; Esposito, 1999; Ferguson, 2005; Meredith, 2010; Muir, 1858; Wolpert, 2001).

The world today faces enormous challenges related to climate change, poverty, overpopulation and emerging epidemic diseases. It is important for communities and humanity as a whole to seek out, mentor, and develop leaderships around all issues that threaten the well-being of the earth.

This work is a literature review, an analysis of leadership concepts. It highlights the definition, principles and objectives. It also highlights the traits and characteristics of leadership as well as the types of leadership. This work also briefly reviews the history of some leadership figures in the world. Finally, this work gives an analysis of the importance of leadership in the world and in Africa and also an analysis of the concept of gender in leadership.

## I. Leadership and direction

Leadership and direction go hand in hand. The leader is a personality at the head of a group of individuals. This responsibility can be the result of a personal emergence, in which case we speak of emergent leadership, or it can be the result of an assignment, in which case we speak of direction or assigned leadership. These two long neglected concepts are nowadays attracting everyone's attention. The world as a whole and all human organizations need these two concepts to evolve in a consensual direction. The leader, whether political, religious, sports, military or business leader, is the conscience of the group. He is the one who shows the direction to take and the future of the group will depend on his choices, whether they are good or bad. Thus, the responsibility imposed by these two concepts requires distinctive individual qualities.

### I.1. Definition and principle

The definition of leadership is very ambiguous. Just like some concepts such as democracy, love or peace, it is difficult to give a fixed definition. Nevertheless, everyone naturally understands what it is when it is discussed (Allen, 2016). Leadership is a dynamic concept both in time and in space, since the culture and the time have a certain influence on its conception. However, all conceptions, from the 19th century to nowadays and regardless of the culture, recognize that the leader is a physical or moral personality with a clear and non-coercive power of influence. By his personality and his behavior, he inspires the individuals of the group in which he belongs (Allen, 2016). Thus, the principle of leadership consists in forging an inspiring personality through behaviors and exemplary acts likely to incite a group to act without any constraint in order to reach a common goal.

### I.2. Leadership goal

Leadership is a process in which the leader is like the central link in a gear that operates a machine. Thus, the first objective of the leader is to serve (Maxwell, 2018). It is the source of motivation for the group. Moreover, according to Napoleon Bonaparte: "the leader is a merchant of hope". Indeed, the leader aims to instill hope, confidence and energy necessary to achieve the objectives.

## II. Major leadership characteristics and traits

Psychological studies conducted in the 19th century revealed a number of individual characteristics that are related to leadership. These characteristics are summarized in habits observed in most leaders. They generally like to take responsibility, they are optimistic in the pursuit of their goals, they are risk-takers and willing to take initiative, they are self-confident and like to take responsibility for their actions, they are good listeners and have the ability to influence the behavior of others, and finally they are able to adapt social interactions according to the objectives. (Allen, 2016; Stogdill, 1948, 1956). Some specific personality traits are better shared than most others.

### II.1. Intelligence

Intelligence could be defined as the ability of an individual to adapt over time and in the environment. This quality is of paramount importance for the leader. Leadership intelligence has several components including:

- Emotional and social intelligence which consists of the individual's ability to understand the feelings, behaviors and thoughts of themselves and others and then act accordingly.
- Eloquence which consists of having good verbal skills, the ability to make one's message digestible, convincing and pleasant to listen to.
- Vision, which is the ability to anticipate events. This ability allows the leader to project himself into the future in order to make decisions that will impact the future.
- Intellectual flexibility, which is the leader's ability to refine and adapt available resources to achieve objectives (Allen, 2016).

## II.2. Self-confidence

How can you convince someone when you lack confidence? The leader must be convinced and convincing. He must be optimistic, confident and certain that he is on the right track if he is to influence others. He must have the certainty that one person can tip the balance. Self-confidence is at the heart of leadership as the German novelist and poet Goethe stated: "If you have confidence in yourself, you inspire confidence in others."

## II.3. Determination

Determination is the promise of future change. The leader must be optimistic and persistent to make a difference. Determination enables the leader to overcome obstacles. It is also the secret ingredient that gives the leader dominance at times and during situations when the group is on the verge of breaking down. (Allen, 2016). The will of the leader is a powerful arsenal according to Albert Camus, French writer, philosopher and playwright who states that: "In truth, the path does not matter, the will to arrive is enough for everything".

## II.4. Integrity

Integrity is an essential feature of being a successful member of a group. It is based on honesty and reliability. The leader must be an exemplary man in harmony with ethical and moral principles. Integrity is one of the rarest qualities in today's society, which is all the more reason for a leader to stand out in order to inspire confidence in others and mobilize them around a cause in which they have faith.

## II.5. Sociability

Leadership is only possible in a group, especially since the leader is an individual who inspires, mobilizes and leads a group of people or a company. The leader must have the facility to establish social relationships and to collaborate with others. He or she necessarily needs to be courteous, flexible and helpful. He or she must be sensitive to the needs of others and be satisfied with their satisfaction. The leader's mission is to serve (Allen, 2016).

## III. How to become a leader

According to Jean-François Rial, "Leadership comes from an engaging personality in harmony with an unwavering conviction that provides the ability to mobilize the entourage on ambitious projects". Thus, the idea that leadership is built around a number of intrinsic individual qualities is no longer up for debate. It is also clear that

these qualities are not a luxury reserved especially for one segment of the population, they are accessible to all through personal education. The question that still divides people is the one claiming that some people are born leaders. Assuming that this idea is also tenable, we can distinguish between two types of leaders: the born leader and the self-taught leader

### III.1. The born leader

According to the philosopher Jean D'Ormesson (1925-2017): "Birth is the place of inequality". Thus, we can notice distinctive traits between babies from the first days after birth. Some babies are quite independent from their mothers while others cannot do without them. Also, some babies are quite independent and surprisingly enterprising with their environment while others prefer to remain passive. These distinctive features are evident at every stage of a child's life and often into adulthood. Of course, these distinctive characteristics are not a guarantee of leadership, but children are often found in society who, from the very first moments of their lives, are able to easily surround themselves with friends and even to mobilize them in activities or games, and this in an innate way. Nevertheless, scientific studies have shown that a biological phenomenon called epigenetics, which causes reversible modifications in the genome, favors the transmission of behavioral traits from parents to children. (Crews *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the possibility of leadership by birth cannot be ruled out.

As for the direction or leadership assigned, it is clear that some acquire it from birth. This is the case in monarchical societies where the prince from birth is called to lead as tradition dictates. The only values that prevail in these cases is blood. Thus, in the history of Europe, in 1420, Prince Henry VI ruled the two largest European kingdoms of the time, the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of France, after the sudden death of his father, King of England, and his maternal grandfather, King of France (Johnson, 2019). Ivan IV, the first tsar of Russia, nicknamed "the Terrible" also ruled the kingdom of Moscow at the age of 3 after the death of his father Vasily III in 1533 (Payne *et al.*, 2002). This was also the case of Puyi, the last Emperor of China who succeeded to the head of China after the death of his uncle Guangxu in 1908 (Elisseeff, 2014).

### III.2. The self-made leader

Leadership is based on an inspiring personality in harmony with particular character traits. It also requires an intelligence of interaction with individuals. This personality, these character traits and the necessary intelligence are values that are within the reach of anyone who is willing to learn and educate their soul. The self-made leader is a person who has perfected his or her character over time and through training or personal effort to become a leader. Nowadays, there are many books available on the principles and paths of leadership. For example, Bryce Allen's book "Leadership: Theory and practice" is a book that gives a description of the concept of leadership as well as an analysis of its theoretical and practical principles and approaches (Allen, 2016). Christina Osborne's book "Essential Managers Leadership" provides a detailed analysis of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in the daily life of a leader (Osborne, 2015). In addition to his technical books on leadership, there are also autobiographical books of historical leadership figures in the world. These inspiring figures such as Jesus Christ founder of Christianity, Mohammed ibn Abdullah (570-



632) founder of Islam, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) in India, Martin Luther King JR (1929-1968) in the USA, Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) in South Africa, Thomas Sankara (1949-1987) in Burkina Faso and many others, have by their outstanding leadership written their name in history.

#### IV. Emblematic leaders in history

In the history of mankind there have always been individuals who, through their personality, have managed to instill will and self-sacrifice in their community to improve a situation. Such leaders have existed in all communities of the world. These characters have often inspired the whole world in their own way and have thus left their mark on the history of humanity on a socio-political, cultural, economic or spiritual level. Among these world leaders, the names of some always attract the attention of the masses.

##### IV.1. Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is a historical figure who lived over 2000 years ago. He is the founder of the Christian religion based on beliefs, practices and moral principles. Jesus Christ was a historical leader who through speeches and humanitarian actions managed to implant a new religious ideology in the Jewish communities under Roman domination and strongly attached to its ancestral beliefs. In spite of the repression of the Roman power of the time, this Christian religious ideology will impose itself in the populations, will last in time and will spread from Bethlehem (Palestine) to the rest of the world (Ferguson, 2005). The Christian community is estimated today to have over 2.5 billion followers worldwide.

##### IV.2. Mahomet (570-632)

Muhammad is an iconic figure who continues to inspire more than 1.5 billion followers around the world. He was born in Mecca around 570 in an Arab city dominated by ancient beliefs and practices. He is the founder of the Muslim religion based on a philosophy, beliefs, principles and practices that are a complete break with ancestral beliefs. Muhammad is a leader who, through his extraordinary moral principles, the humanitarian sense of his message and the depth of his philosophy, inspired Arab populations despite the repression of the Meccan authorities. Islam, the religion initiated by Muhammad, spread from Mecca to the rest of the world, where it has endured over time and continues to inspire millions of people (Esposito, 1999; Muir, 1658.). Islam is a religion of peace that is nowadays being hijacked by extremist groups that often deceive the vigilance of the international media who often incriminate the religion itself.

##### IV.3. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

Gandhi is an emblematic political figure having strongly impacted the Indian and world socio-political life between the 19th and 20th. He is the prototype of an individual who built and perfected his leadership over time. He is a character who built his reputation through his sense of ethics and morality. He was a pioneer of resistance to oppression through non-violence and mass civil disobedience.





Figure 1: Photo de Gandhi (1869-1948)

Today, Gandhi is a model of commitment and struggle for many civil rights movements around the world. The world still remembers the famous Salt March led by Gandhi in 1930, a peaceful and symbolic protest against the salt tax (Wolpert, 2001).

#### IV.4. Martin Luther King JR (1929-1968)



Martin Luther King JR is an undeniable African-American leader of the 20th century. He was an idealistic Baptist minister who was involved in the fight for the civil rights of minorities during a dark period in the history of the USA dominated by racial segregation.

Figure 2: Martin Luther king JR. (1929-1968)

Martin Luther King, like Gandhi, was a pacifist who advocated non-violence in protest. This earned him a Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. His charisma and eloquence allowed him to inspire generations of African-Americans. The world still remembers his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963 to a large audience in Washington, DC (Carson, 2004).

#### IV.5. Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)



Nelson Mandela is a pacifist African politician. He is the symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. He also advocated non-violence throughout his struggle. His unquestionable leadership within the black South African community as well as his boldness with his ideologies cost him 27 years in prison and hard labor.

Figure 3: Photo Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

Nelson Mandela never lost hope during his years in prison. He was eventually released in 1990 and began peace negotiations with the white minority. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for his peace efforts. And his negotiations led to the first non-segregated election in the country's history in 1993. He won a majority and became the first black president of South Africa 1994-1999 (Meredith, 2010). Nelson Mandela inspires millions of people around the world today with his notorious idealism, humility, and patience.

#### IV.6. Thomas Sankara (1949-1987)

Thomas Sankara was an idealistic African politician, a figure in the struggle against imperialism. He was able to inscribe his name in the history of his country, Burkina Faso, and in the history of the world because of his integrity, his humility, his sharpness of mind and his commitment to the respect of civil rights in the world.



Thomas Sankara came to power in 1983 in Burkina Faso, then called "Upper Volta", in a socio-political context dominated by poverty, famine, corruption and colonial mental, cultural, economic, intellectual and political domination. This outstanding leader, through his ideologies, charisma, eloquence and humanism, mobilized the people around an ideal of integrity. He changed the colonial name "Upper Volta" of the country and adopted the name "Burkina Faso", a name inspired by the local languages. The Burkinabe population learned to value its local products through the concept "consume what we produce".

Figure 4: Photo Thomas Sankara (1949-1987)

Internationally, Thomas Sankara was "the voice of the voiceless" and was a pioneer in the fight for women's emancipation in Africa and the protection of the environment. He was also committed to the struggle for the respect of people's sovereignty and civil rights throughout the world. The international community still remembers his historic speech at the UN summit in 1984, when he eloquently denounced the socio-political inequalities on the international scene.

Thomas Sankara was assassinated in 1987 but his ideology continues to inspire African and global youth throughout time. He is the author of a famous quote that is a source of leadership inspiration: "You cannot accomplish fundamental change without a certain amount of madness. In this case, it comes from non-conformism, from the courage to turn your back on old formulas, from the courage to invent the future. It took the madmen of yesterday for us to be able to act with extreme clarity today. I want to be one of those madmen." (Murrey, 2018).

## V. Importance of leadership

Leadership is a concept that has always been important in human history. The stories of people, as mythical as they may often be, are full of characters whose strength of character would have changed the course of history. Leadership has no era, no culture, no territory. The world needs leadership, and the African continent even more so.

### V.1. Importance of leadership in the world

The world is today at a decisive turning point in its history. Humanity is approaching 10 billion people, climate change is more worrying than ever, threats of world war are looming on a daily basis with their share of arsenals capable of destroying the globe. The world is facing a crisis of humanism, social inequalities are very pronounced and taint the well-being of humanity, the search for material comfort has taken over from ethics and morality. Ethical and moral values that once in the distant past were the pride of humanity are nowadays ignored and even trivialized. The world is in dire need of leadership to avoid the worst. Well-guided leaderships that touch all spheres of life would be able to make the world a better place. Leaders have demonstrated this throughout history. For example, Martin Luther King JR through his commitment has strongly contributed to make the USA a society where the rights of minorities are also important. Nelson Mandela through his struggle won the bet of a South African society where the blacks and the benches live together without problems. Bill Gates has been campaigning for years for the protection of the environment, the fight against hunger in the world and the fight against malaria, one of the deadliest epidemic diseases in the world. Elon Musk with his vision will certainly lay the foundations for a new era of humanity where interstellar travel will be possible.

### V.2. Importance of leadership in Africa

Africa would be the poorest continent on the planet, or so they say. It is undeniable that Africa is among the richest continents on the planet because of its subsoil, which is very rich in natural resources, and its climate, which favors the abundance of food resources. However, for decades it has been home to the poorest populations on the planet. The reasons for this humanitarian drama are mainly social and political. African countries need leadership to get out of the economic, political and social abysses that plague their development. There have been leaderships of this kind in the history of humanity. For example, China, today one of the world's economic powers, owes its success to the revolution of Mao Zedong, whose futuristic vision in the 19th century laid a solid foundation for a strong and prosperous economy. In Africa, some countries have also experimented with these kinds of leadership. Ghana, which is one of the most economically and politically stable African countries, owes it to the leadership of Jerry John Rawlings, a man who instilled discipline and hard work in the Ghanaian

people. There is also the example of Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso, who in the 19th century succeeded in raising Burkina Faso socially, politically and economically to a level that his fellow presidents have never been able to reach even in the 20 years of his reign. There is also the example of President Paul Kagame who succeeded not only in healing the wounds of the civil war that had plagued his country Rwanda since 1990, but also in making it respectable on the international scene

#### VI. Leadership and gender

Leadership is not a matter of race or culture, let alone gender. History has been home to both male and female leaders. If the capacities of women have long been ignored in most societies, nowadays the trend is to recognize and value the place of women in history as well as in the different spheres of society. For example, history retains the name of a woman, Queen Cleopatra VII who ruled Egypt between 51 and 30. The legend of this queen crosses time and borders. She was a very intelligent and daring woman who led armies and fleets and rubbed shoulders with the great men of her time, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony (Frain, 2016). There is also the emblematic American media woman, Oprah Winfrey. Oprah' is a female personality who is a symbol of female leadership. She is a daring and successful woman who has founded a very powerful communication industry. She has imposed herself on the American media scene in a way that cannot be ignored, hence the term "Oprah effect" which has become a legend according to which "Everything Oprah touches turns to gold". Indeed, between 1986 and 2011 Oprah Winfrey has contributed through her charisma and leadership to launch the careers of many businessmen (Garson, 2011; Ilian, 2016).

#### Conclusion

Leadership and management are topical concepts that attract a lot of attention nowadays. The two hats are linked through the central position of the personalities who wear them and are differentiated only through the choice of the latter. The principle of leadership is based on the development of an inspiring and convincing personality capable of mobilizing the mass around a cause in a non-coercive way. The ultimate goal of the leader is to serve. Personal qualities such as intelligence, self-confidence, determination, sociability and integrity are essential traits to build leadership. Leadership can be the result of innate character traits or the result of personal effort, hence the respective terms "born leader" and "self-made leader". Many historical figures such as Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King JR and Thomas Sankara are sources of leadership inspiration through their lives. Leadership contributes to the well-being of the world and Africa which is still waiting for development and the concept transcends gender. All the changes that have changed the course of history of communities and humanity have seen the birth of leaders who have known how to lead. What would the world be without dreamers, idealists who dare to push their thinking beyond conformism.



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