# The influence of leadership in the working environment, teamwork and organisational learning: a theoretical review

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# ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to examine the influence that leadership has on creating a good working environment, on work teams and on organisational learning, through a theoretical revision. For this, concepts are addressed related to leadership such as the leader's profile, the role he represents within an organisation, his functions and skills, which will help us understand the importance of leadership within an organisation. This study arrives at conclusions that point out that the leader is the main producer of the organisational climate due to his capacity to motivate and generate well-being in a worker and job satisfaction. In the second place, we can observe that the leader is an essential figure in work teams for his role in carrying out the necessary actions to ensure an effective team, with some of these actions being recognition, rewards, motivation, identification of strengths, creation of trust and recognition of each member's needs. Finally, it is shown that the importance of leadership and its influence on organisational learning is due to the leader having to develop management policies of human resources that reinforce those aspects, such as attitudes, aptitudes, skills and abilities that directly affect the individual's learning ability.

## KEY WORDS

Leadership; work teams; organisational learning; working environment; leadership styles.

# <u>INDEX</u>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the way leadership influences its subordinates has been mentioned a lot. This is a basic and a global human condition, as since the beginning of human being's existence, they have lived in a society where leaders rule over the rest, so much so that with the evolution of society, leadership has also been transformed (Barroso & Salazar, 2010).

A leader's behaviour influences his followers into being responsible for helping to fulfil organisational goals, as he is the one responsible for their success or failure (Moran, 2007). In other words, a leader has the organisation's progress in his power, because all of them need someone to lead them. The existing relationship between leadership and organisational climate is due to the fact that leadership is one of the most decisive and influential factors in the perception that workers have of the organisational climate, for its capacity to motivate, generate well-being for the worker and generate job satisfaction (Ponce et al., 2014). Presently, we find ourselves in a competitive surrounding characterised by sales globalisation, a larger complexity of business problems and an increasing acceleration of change that reinforces the need of flexibility and differentiation (Yukl, 2001). Survival and obtaining benefits in this environment require that the company has the ability to update and take in new knowledge that helps it to do things differently. Learning and creativity are transformed into inexorable premises to guarantee the sustainability of competitive advantages (Andropoulos y Lowe, 2000).

Thus, in recent years, numerous investigations have taken place that try to identify which factors act as learning determinants, with leadership being the one that produces the most concern (Amabile, 1998; Berson et al, 2006; Jung 2008; Mumford and Gurtafson, 1998). Many studies highlight the need of a leadership pointed at the change that will help the learning processes. In order for the organisation to learn, the encouragement of experimentation, communication, dialogue and a shared vision are necessary (Fry et al., 2005). The connection of leadership with its influence on learning is due to the leader's role while developing human resource management policies that reinforce those aspects that influence the ability to learn. It is important that we emphasise that the construction of a work team is a primordial ability for leaders nowadays. A person's ability to function as part of a group or as an individual is of vital importance for the organisations. In the same way that it is essential that the managers adopt a positive attitude and develop a spirit of leadership, because this way better

results can be produced (Ahumada, 2016). The leader is an essential figure to carry out the responsibility of projects within a work team, the relationship of leadership and its influence on a team is due to the essential figure, who represents the leader when carrying out certain actions, to make its team effective.

This current paper tries to highlight the importance that leadership in organisations has nowadays, and at the same time show the influence that a working environment exerts in both the organisational climate and in teamwork. For this, in the first chapter of our paper we will show a theoretical revision of the concept of leadership, its essence, and the different types of leadership that exist. Next, we will expose the differences between management and leadership, and we will concentrate on the capacities of the leader, the functions and profile of an effective leader. To continue with our study, we try to analyse the influence of leadership in the working environment and in teamwork. Finally, we will analyse the influence of leadership on organisational learning.

The methodology used in our theoretical revision has been based on the enquiry of various bibliographical sources obtained by the Google Scholar search engine, along with the library catalogue, from which we have been able to obtain documentary sources such as academic papers and books from different authors, as well as e-books.

## 2. THEORETICAL SETTING

### 2.1. Leadership in organisations

**Definition of leadership**

A definition of leadership that can be found in any of the texts used for administrative education is that "leadership is the process of directing and influencing the activities of members of a group" (Stoner, 1995). Nevertheless, Kotter (2005) acknowledges that "no generally accepted definition of leadership exists", and he defines it similarly as "the process of taking a group (groups) in a particular direction, fundamentally through noncoercive means".

A newer definition of leadership is provided by Peter Senge when he considers: "In a smart organisation (in other words, in which all its components and the organisation as a whole are capable of learning constantly) leaders are designers, guides and teachers. They are responsible for constructing organisations in which people

continually expand their aptitude to learn the complexity, clarify the vision and better the shared mental methods" (Senge, 2004).

In accordance with Clerc et al., (2006), in an organisation, the word "leader" should be understood in the context that the organisation's need for people, given their innate and learned qualities, to be capable to lead a group and achieve common and set goals. In this context, there are definitions of leadership such as: "it is the process to motivate and help others to work enthusiastically to achieve goals" (Davis y Newstron, 1991). According to Kotter (1998) leadership is the process of taking a group in a particular direction, fundamentally through noncoercive means. So, an effective leadership is defined as one that produces a movement towards an achievement that is better, in the long run, for the group" (Kotter, 1998). Generally, definitions of leadership include four components. The first component that is included in the definitions is that the concept of leadership involves other people, employees or supporters. In second place we can say that they delimit irregular distributions of power, which means that, usually the leader is the one who has the most power. As a third component that is often included in the definitions of leadership we find that the leader uses the power to delimit the behaviour of the subordinates, and to end as a last component it is shown that leadership is a question of values (Clerc, 2006). The importance of leadership consists in being the basis to be able to guide an organisation, considering that its survival depends on the ability of the leader to carry out the goals to be achieved. The organisation can possess good planning, but can succumb before the shortage of leadership, nevertheless, even  if the organisation lacks planning it can survive thanks to the presence of a good leadership whose essential intention is to motivate, exert influence and lead people to superior results (Clerc et al., 2006).


**Management against leadership**


According to Codina (2012) no definition of leadership clearly identifies the difference between managing and leading. Bennis (1996) marks the differences between managing and leading, defining the following characteristics of each of them: a manager manages, maintains, accepts reality, focuses on systems and structures, depends on control, asks how and when, and does things correctly (efficiency), however, unlike a manager, a leader on the other hand: develops, innovates, investigates, focuses on people, inspires confidence, asks how and why, and does correct things (effectiveness) (Bennis, 1996).

Nevertheless, Kotters (1990) position is different, given that he argues that even though management and leadership have differences, they are not mutually exclusive concepts. According to Kotter (1990), there is no logical reason to think that a person with suitable background and preparation can not deal appropriately in both circumstances. Both concepts can complement each other and they often overlap. But, simultaneously, it must be stated that management is more formal, scientific and universal than leadership, given that it involves the use of specific tools and techniques designed to be used in a variety of situations and contexts. Management in accordance with Kotter (1990) is not effective if it is not accompanied by good leadership, as it tends to be rigid. As a result, management without leadership leads to the progressive bureaucratization of organisations and their consequent obsolescence. Additionally, a very strong leadership tends to be too changeable and even arbitrary when not explained by a proper sense of direction. According to Kotter (1990) the culmination of such considerations is that "in general, we can say that in stable times of prosperity, a certain degree of leadership with strong management can be an ideal combination; on the contrary, in times of crisis and chaos, a strong leadership coupled with a limited degree of management could be of convenience" (Kotter, 1990).

**Essence of leadership**

In accordance with Villar (2012), leadership is constantly related to concepts such as power, authority and politics, but we must not get confused because, despite the fact that these words can be found bound together by the degree of influence they have over people, the first notion controls decisions even if there is resistance in between, as in fact, leadership is a type of power. In politics we can see that power and authority is applied to achieve what one wants. Authority, however, is legally established, unlike the previous concepts that emerge from people's qualities, abilities and behaviours. From this we can deduce that leadership is not: an authority established contractually that is practised at the time of the action, the power that inordinately takes advantage of people, the activities that they perform or the political actions that look for the convenience or well-being of an individual, without thinking about the others (Villar, 2012).

Leadership, according to Villar (2012), influences others, but in a positive way, taking advantage of their abilities and orienting them towards achieving a companies or

someones personal goals. Therefore, the true essence begins to form from a single person who wishes to change and improve what they see around them and that, in turn, has the skills, influence and charisma to transform, motivate and inspire others to achieve their set intentions, "being a leader means to influence people to achieve a certain purpose, that is valuable for the organisation" (Aguilar, 1997). This sentence sums up that essence.

According to Aguilar (1997) a scholar of the subject, the formula consists of, if there is a positive influence, there is leadership even if there is not any hierarchy, title or power. In the second place he indicates that if there is any hierarchy, title or power, and no positive influence, strictly speaking, there is no leadership. Finally, he concludes that if there is a positive influence, and also a hierarchy, title and power, the phenomenon of leadership is of higher strength and results. Now we will analyse concepts such as influence, charisma and values to be able to effectively understand the essence of leadership. The word charisma, according to Villar (2012), refers to a set of talents and creativity that a person possesses, and that are used to grow and to make others grow. The influence, however should be considered as a positive term, due to the fact that it is usually used as a synonym of manipulation or conditioning. To respect, love, value, have faith, channel, unite and visualise, are attitudes studied as part of the positive influence (Villar, 2012). The values, on the other hand, involve certain principles that regulate the behaviour of human beings. They are acquired at home, with family, and they are ratified during student life. They are applied not only during this period, but also in professional life. Among these values, we can find honesty and respect because they are universal values, their essence is not affected in another space or time. The three concepts previously stated, influence, charisma and values, confirm the true essence of leadership (Villar, 2012).

**Types of Leadership**

According to Lombana (2013), people who form companies often speculate that if an individual is not a senior executive they cannot lead. Just about 15 or 20 years ago, it was assumed that a person was a leader only when a series of situations arose like for example when leadership was pre-established by the organisation, with this type of leadership being the one that attributes to the managerial positions of organisations, according to their flowchart. A second situation occurred when leadership was inherited, usually being presented mostly in family businesses, and passed from

fathers to sons or to trusted employees. Additionally, another situation happened when leadership was spontaneous and emerging, that is, those innate leaders that normally stand out from the rest and ascend (Lombana, 2013).

Over the years, this thought loses strength, taking into account that a leader is anyone who has the ability to manage, teach and accompany a team to develop activities efficiently. Thanks to the multitude of features that today define leadership like, for example, the evolution of thought, the constant changes that present themselves, the personalities, situations, knowledge, experiences, etc., there are a variety of rules to try to describe the types, forms or classes of leadership that may occur within organisations (Lombana, 2013).

In accordance with Weber (2009) we describe three types of pure leaderships. First of all the **charismatic leader**, is a type of leader that produces enthusiasm, being chosen as leader for the way he enthuses and motivates his followers. Second, we describe the **traditional leader** as one who inherits the power for habit or for a fee, or that belongs to an elite family group who has had the power for generations. Finally, the **legitimate leader** is a type of leader that acquires power through processes based on legal regulations, demonstrating capacity to convene and convince their followers, but without the enthusiasm that the charismatic leader possesses (Weber, 2009).

From a more current approach, according to Viveros (2003), leadership can be analysed from the point of view between the existing relationship between the leader and their followers, where we find ourselves with a series of types of leadership such as for example the **dictatorial leadership**, whose leader forces their own ideas in the group and prevents the members from being responsible and independent. This type of leader is inflexible and likes to order and be in charge, destroying the creativity of others. Another type of leadership that exists is the **autocratic leadership**, whose leader is the only one that makes decisions about work and the organisation of the group, without having to give explanations nor try to justify them. In this type of leadership the evaluation criteria used by the leader is unknown to the rest of the group, making it a one-way communication. A further form of leadership is the **democratical leadership**, which is characterised by the leader making decisions after strengthening group debate. In this style of leadership the evaluation criteria and its rules are clearly explained. So, there is also a **liberal leadership (laissez faire)**, characterised by the leader adopting a passive role, leaving the power in the group's hands, this way, in no moment does the leader judge or evaluate the other member's contributions. In this style of leadership the members have total liberty, but they only

receive support from the group if they ask for it. Lastly, we should include the **absent leadership**, whose main feature is the incapability of the leader to mingle with his workers. This type of leader is characterised by being a professional authorisation, theorist, egocentric, carefree, ineffective and inefficient leader that does not take decisions, but rather delays them, where nobody knows where they are going, does not direct the people he has working for him, and only concentrates on his own world. The absent leader does not understand that a big part of his work is to help others achieve their goals, he lives in his own world being incapable of motivating and inspiring his followers (Viveros, 2013).

According to Loufat (2012), leadership can be analysed by the influence the leaders have over their followers, so we will include some styles of leader such as those mentioned below. In the first place we will refer to the **Charismatic leader**, whose main characteristic is his ease with people to be worthy of admiration. This type of leader is consistent with speaking and acting, he's the one who, by the way he is, communicates easily with his work team. He is a committed leader, who knows how to give an example, is fitting or suitable for any situation, influencing his subordinates and managing to make them feel comfortable working with him. This type of leader makes his work team feel comfortable and important, thus, the team members care about being accepted and work voluntarily, contributing to the fulfilment of the objectives to be achieved (Loufat, 2012). In second place we highlight the **Authentic leader**, however, who encourages dialogue, breaks paradigms, is innovative, creative, turns the members of his group into participants in search of new strategies and influences them for the changes. The people who form this work team, will be motivated to give their best, suggest new ideas and innovate, actively participating to achieve goals (Loufat, 2012). So, another type would be the **Entrepreneurial leader**, who encourages participation within the group. At the time of decision-making, this type of leader asks for the opinion of the team members to then make a more accurate decision looking to unify the group in a single step. It is usually a work team that is active, committed, with a sense of belonging because they feel important to the person that develops the leadership and they want to make the cut, to continue working in harmony (Loufat, 2012). Finally, we mention the **Intelligence leader**, characterised for being competitive people that always want to stand out, possess a great work spirit and work comfortably only with people they trust. Normally this type of leader hardly delegates tasks or activities to his followers. The people who work with this type of leadership usually feel pressured and wasted, in fact, if the leader does not trust all of his collaborators and

has his preferences, this will generate a bad work environment with high tension (Loufat, 2012).

## 2.2. Desirable skills in a leader

According to López (2013), a leader has the capacity to coordinate, organise, and above all motivate a group of people so they can follow their vision and achieve their aims and goals. To be able to do this, the leader has to gather a series of skills to help them create, strengthen and increase their position. Faced with this kind of skills that the leaders must gather we find the **technical skill**, which supposes having a high knowledge of the paper, with or without specialisation, and it is manifested by an analytical skill, an ease for managing tools and techniques, and an ability to combine raw materials, machinery, etc.; ideas and circumstances that end in tangible results (López, 2013). Secondly, the **human skill** should be mentioned, which basically refers to working with people, and that allows you to handle other people's behaviours, beliefs and assumptions with ease, as well as being able to sense and be sensitive towards their feelings, which allows you to influence their behaviour. The leader can base this skill on the creation of an atmosphere of fear and insecurity that can create a dependency or submission of others, or on the contrary, on the creation of an atmosphere of acceptance, respect and security among his people (López, 2013). Likewise a leader should possess an **intellectual skill** in the sense of knowing how to consider the company as a whole and how to gather all relevant elements that can influence it. The intellectual skill converts into the reward that helps the people who widely develop the previous skills to have more possibilities to reach the highest leadership positions of the hierarchy (López, 2013). These three skills are very interrelated, in a way that it makes it hard to determine where one finishes and where the other starts, as they are systematically united. Continuing with the same author we can say that in the highest management levels, the intellectual skill is the most important, as it is the most capable to create the vision, culture, organisation and all the intangible elements of the company. In lower management levels, technical and human skills are needed, first of all, for better contact between bosses and their subordinates. So, we will now examine some of the differences between manager and leader, with these two roles being played by the same person (López, 2013).

**What do effective leaders do?**

Following Luis (2005), a good leader should offer a profile that includes a number of features. First of all he must have a vision, or something similar, know how to predict change and define strategies based on themselves. Just like that, a good leader must know how to establish goals in agreement with the vision he has and he must know how to communicate his strategy in a direct and assertive way. Continuing with the same author, the leader must have the ability to manage and coordinate teams, encouraging a good working environment. Also, he must know how to distinguish what is important and what is an accessory, and he must be able to manage the team's efforts towards the established goals. Continuing with Luis (2005), an effective leader must be a great team motivator, achieving that everyone follows a mutual interest, and involving them in it, encouraging their participation and creativity. Knowing how to train his collaborators, identifying their training needs and knowing how to make decisions in difficult situations, assuming the responsibility that comes from these, is another necessary feature for the effectiveness of a good leader. Finally, it is necessary that they know how to evaluate the quality of their decisions to resolve problems and that they learn from mistakes in order to improve for the future. This profile undoubtedly requires having a series of qualities or attributes of a personal nature such as enthusiasm, integrity, tenacity, empathy, humility and confidence (Luis, 2005).

According to Codina (2012), the specialists focus of attention has been focused on identifying what leaders really do. The most recognised specialist in this field, having undergone research spanning over more than a decade and posing in some books that are considered "classics" on the subject, is John Kotter, from the Business School of Harvard University. After studying the behaviours and customs of dozens of leaders from different types of organisations, Kotter (2005) arrived at a series of conclusions about what successful leaders do. In the first place Kotter arrived at the conclusion that successful leaders create a programme for change, that includes a series of features such as having a vision of what the organisation they lead can and must be. In the second place, he arrived at the conclusion that the leaders keep in mind the authentic long-term interests of the involved parts as well as possessing a strategy to reach that vision. So, following with the same author, the leader takes into consideration each organisational strength of the surroundings involved. Finally, according to Kotter (2005), effective leaders establish a strong network of implementation, that comprises supportive relationships with the key sources of power necessary to put the strategy into practice. In turn, they establish bonds and gifted relationships strong enough to be

able to achieve collaboration, compliance and, when needed, teamwork. Finally the effective leaders attain the creation of a core group of strongly motivated individuals, that commit to converting this vision into reality (Kotter, 2005).

As Codina (2012) points out, research on these behaviours and practices focus on "what successful leaders do", not "how they do it", which can significantly vary. In order for a leadership to be considered effective, according to Kotter (2005), it is not enough to conceive a powerful and compelling vision, to mobilise people to reach it, to establish relationship systems and to adopt means that assure it is compliance, it is necessary that the vision, in the long term, leads to people's improvement. A leadership that leads to self-destruction, that leaves people exhausted and that does not favour and stimulate their growth and development, both materially and spiritually, cannot be considered effective (Kotter, 2005).

Finally, continuing with Kotter (2005), an effective leadership can not ignore the assurance of what are considered as basic management processes. In the first place, as part of the basic process of management, we find what is called planning, which allows to determine the means to reach certain aims. Straight away we find budgeting, where financial resources are required as part of the process of planning. So, organisation, which means creating a formal structure that can carry out the plans and provide it with the required qualified people, would be considered as another basic process of management. The definition of the role that each person should play, as well as the necessary incentives to be able to delegate in them, the requested authority or control that supposes the constant search of deviations from the plan and carrying out the necessary actions to correct them, are features of the management process itself (Codina, 2012). Generally, this does not mean that what we call leadership is good and what we call management (direction, administration) is bad, they are simply different things that serve different purposes (Kotter, 2005).


## The leader's functions

According to Codina (2012) on the functions to be performed by the leader, it is important to point out that the actual leader must not ignore the functions attributed to former management executives. Rather on the contrary, the leader must assume not only these functions but also new ones. These additional functions, specifically try to establish action plans in the short and medium term, programming and budgeting their

implementation. To develop and organise structures within the organisation, assigning tasks to get people to meet the marked plans is another additional function attributed to the leader. In the same way, Kotter (2005) emphasises the role of tracking the work to verify if the plans are accomplished, proposing solutions to the problems or deviations that occur. To suggest new strategies in the long-term based on the company's vision and mission and to involve everyone and achieve its promise to work in the same direction are more functions that the leader must assume. Finally, the leader is assigned with the role of motivating people, not only to prevent a fall in their task performances, but also so they get to be the best that they can be (Kotter, 2005).

## 2.3. The influence of leadership in a working environment

**Leadership and working environment**

By working environment, we understand a set of relatively permanent qualities, attributes and properties of a specific work environment that are perceived, heard or experienced by the people within the organisation and that have an influence on its conduct (Clerc et al, 2006). The working environment is a human and physical environment in which the quotidian work is developed. It influences satisfaction, and therefore the productivity of individuals and as a result of the same organisation or company (Clerc et al., 2006).

According to Stringer (2001), there are important factors that determine the organisational climate and that can be under the control of the organisation. Among these we can highlight as most relevant the leadership practices, as these can establish a good organisational climate depending on the way the manager manages his subordinates (Stringer, 2001). In second place another factor as Stringer (2001) points out is the organisational agreements, that comprise the formal systems of organisation and establish the way in that the information flows through this and influence the perception of advancement opportunities, affecting the organisational climate. Continuing with the same author, the strategies are a decisive factor in the organisational climate because they influence the way the workers feel about the achievement opportunities, and at the same time influence the sources of satisfaction, the obstacles to success and their rewards (Stringer, 2001).

Leadership is the factor that intercedes in the well-being of companies and affects the health and well-being of people (Peiró y Rodríguez, 2008). Nevertheless, Omar (2011)

assures that leadership is an essential component in the way that employees derive satisfaction about the work, and at the same time is closely related to the general well-being of the worker. In this sense, it is determined that leadership skills are necessary to set up motivating work environments, that allow the employees to grow and develop, because leaders have the ability to create work environments with motivation as a main quality (Curtis & O'Connell, 2011). The styles of leadership have a strong and direct influence on the organisational climate, which refers to the perceptions about organisational flexibility, pride of ownership, recognition and communication, having a direct impact on the results (Payeras, 2004). According to Stringer (2001), he assures that the leader's behaviour manages the climate, as this creates motivation, and the latter is what will achieve the level of performance that the workers will have in the organisation, meaning a cause and effect approach. Under this approach, leaders can improve the climate and thus the motivation, finally achieving efficiency in the final performance. The leader's behaviour converts itself into the mediator of perceptions, influencing over the behaviours and beliefs of the workers, directly affecting the commitment of human talent with work and job performance (Carr, Shmidt, Ford, & Deshon, 2003). The lack of clarity about the roles and the lack of autonomy to take decisions affects the perception of well-being. Equally, the styles of leadership with high standards affect the employees perception of the organisational climate (Bloch & Whiteley, 2003).

## Empirical studies regarding the organisational relationship of leadership-climate

The organisational climate can be affected by a multiplicity of variables, nevertheless, literature stresses the protruding role of the leaders in the organisational climate generation (Likert & Likert, 1976), likewise, the literature confirms that a manager's style of leadership affects the perceptions of the organisational climate and these affect the job performance of workers (Bloch & Whiteley, 2003); (Goleman, 2000). On the other hand, González, Figueroa & González (2014) in their investigation showed that leadership influences the organisational climate, determining in addition that leadership also influences other dimensions of the organisational climate, especially and putting more pressure on motivation. It has been identified that the style of leadership affects the well-being of the workers, as it can create motivating work environments, that allow the personnel to grow and develop (Curtis & O'Connell, 2011; Omar, 2011). According

to De la Garza, Ruiz, and Hernández (2013), their investigations show that an interrelationship exists between the motivation that the leader shows and the satisfactory organisational climate, demonstrating that when a leader encourages to improve the quality of performance, it contributes to workers feeling that their work improves the quality of organisation, so that a worker's motivation is produced that translates as an improvement in the working environment.

Summing up, the style of leadership that is used in the organisation directly influences the organisational climate, as this achieves the perceptions of pride of belonging, recognition, communication and organisational flexibility through its ability to motivate, create general well-being in the worker and job satisfaction (Payeras, 2004). In a nutshell, it is who manages the perception of workers on the organisational climate. Performance excellence of the worker can be achieved through great motivation, the same that is created by a favourable organisational climate and at the same time by a good leadership practice (Serrano y Portalanza, 2014).

## 2.4. The influence of leadership in teamwork

**Teamwork**

According to Clerc et al., (2006), teams are groups of people who take an important role in the processes of their organisation, which seek to find or identify problems and/or improvements in everyday processes. It should be understood that a team exists when a group of individuals that work in the same institution deliberately propose to share and serve a common purpose. This involves combining knowledge, willpower and being able to take on roles and responsibilities.

Teamwork, according to Gnecco (1999) is a collective work method in which the participants share their experiences and respect their roles and functions to achieve a common goal or common goals while carrying out a joint task. This definition points to a set of elements that define the importance of teamwork as: teamwork implies the existence of communication and sharing experiences, knowledge and skills. Teamwork involves personal and group growth, as well as involving the existence of knowledge and respect for the role and functions of each member (Gnecco, 1999). Each member of the team possesses a clear vision of their own functions and recognises common interests. The team works by making their knowledge, skills and resources available, with each member sharing the responsibility of the achievements and the problems.

Continuing with Gnecco (1999) each member shows interest, motivation and commitment both for their own tasks and for collective tasks, with the team's interest surpassing personal interests. Team effectiveness is related to its capacity and ability of self-management relying on the existence of a work plan or programme that is scheduled, executed and evaluated together (Gnecco et al, 1999).

Carrying on with Gnecco et al., (1999), the factors that make teamwork easier are on the one hand the clear existence of a vision, a mission, purposes, objectives and common goals, due to the fact that all these enlarge the group's cohesion and can be identified with the organisation. Secondly, the existence of an internal organisation that allows interdisciplinary debates, the actual involvement of everyone and the existence of a working environment free of tension and without fear, is another of these factors. Thirdly, another important factor is the presence of a leader who meets all of the requirements for effective leadership, that is not only a formal leader, but a professional one, who has enough time to programme, evaluate, analyse issues and study them collectively. To come to the end of the factors that facilitate teamwork, it is necessary that all or nearly all of the team members feel as if their objectives are consistent with those of the rest of the team (Gnecco, 1999).

## Advantages of working in a team

According to Clerc et al., (2006), working in a team has a series of advantages that we must mention. It should be noted that when working in a team, the group's decisions are always greater than those of the individual, an individual's capacities are complemented, and there is a greater ability to perform at the same time as it allows, facilitates and provides learning opportunities for each member. Another advantage is that it facilitates the process of internal communication, the transfer of information, the dissemination of achievements, results and impacts making the decision making process easier in a democratic, horizontal and participating way. On the other hand, we can emphasise that teamwork facilitates the process of defining and identifying problems and finding solutions, especially creative and innovative ones that break the organisation routine, favouring the development and retention of a suitable, healthy and non stressful work environment. Continuing with Clerc et al., (2006) and the advantages, we outline that this kind of teamwork enables the information within the group to be handled properly, that is, clearly, precisely, timely, accurately, and for it to reach every member without being the privilege of just a few, nor be manipulated. It

facilitates the development of a system of incentives, known and accepted by the whole team, and it allows the periodic assessment of the maturity and development that has been reached. Another advantage of working in a team is that they allow recreational, sporting and social meetings, which allows the members to get to know each other under another dimension of human activity. To finish off, we underline that the members of the team learn with time to accept criticism and modify their points of view, to be self-critical, to respect other opinions, to learn to listen to others, to defeat fears or weaknesses, and to respect individual differences (Clerc et al., 2006).

## The leader's role in the team

According to Villar (2012), a working group in which there is not an effective leadership is a team without aim nor direction. A leader can carry out certain actions to achieve effectiveness. Such actions include recognition, rewards, identifying strengths, building trust, conferring authority, motivating, inspiring, recognising each member's needs and implementing challenges..

But, which is the leader's role in the team? An important factor in work teams, in accordance with Villar (2012), is the creativity that the leaders should encourage through four basic responsibilities: The first basic responsibility consists in assigning the right tasks to members. Each person is different, every human being possesses skills and abilities that distinguish them from the rest of the group, therefore it is important that the leader determines these responsibilities well to be able to assign them with the appropriate activities (Villar, 2012). In second place another responsibility is to grant self-government, as it is necessary to let the team members act and conduct themselves freely; thus they are able to show their creativity. Leaders should make use of experimentation while developing new ideas, and for this they need enough self-government (Villar, 2012). The third responsibility consists of providing the necessary resources, time and money are therefore essential to be able to create and develop solutions to a problem or to propose something new to the company. Teams must count on these resources to continue contributing to the organisations (Villar, 2012). Finally the fourth and final responsibility is protection, as even though people may think otherwise, among the team members, there are people that can block creativity. In this case, the leader should identify them and try to find measures to stop such attitudes. For example, if immediate criticism to the person that expresses the idea is permitted,

this individual will no longer cooperate; in cases like this, the leader must propose an evaluation of ideas once everyone has made their contribution (Villar, 2012).

Team leadership in a complex approach because it is necessary to deal with various people at the same time, but patience, perseverance, communication and a level of agreement will contribute to achieving the proposed goals and continuity of the work team (Villar, 2012).

## Types of leadership and teamwork

In accordance with Álvarez (2001), a team leaders fundamental mission is to create and strengthen his identity. For this, the leader has a basic responsibility: to promote the common objectives that, deep down, are the heart of the team and the basis of its identity. A manager with the art of managing team meetings effectively, but the incapability to continually delve into what makes a group of people a team, would merely be a team manager, not a real leader. Just like in relational leadership three types of leaders can be distinguished depending on the relationship that these are capable to create with their subordinates, in teams we can also distinguish these three types of leadership. In this case, what we need to look at is the kind of goals that the leader is capable to do that involve members of his team. Depending on the qualities of these goals, the team leader will be either a contractual leader, a transforming leader or a transcendent leader (Álvarez, 2001).

Continuing with Álvarez (2001), a contractual leader combines his team around extrinsic type goals; this is, for the prizes or punishments the team can receive depending on the success of the mission. These goals can be, for example, obtaining a group bonus, or defending another enemy team or competitor. The extrinsic goals produce a cohesion that we can call instrumental. The instrumental cohesion consists of a union of people supported by the fact that without them I can't achieve my goal (my part of the group bonus, for example). The instrumental cohesion is the most fragile cohesion, given that it rests on a balance of various specific goals. The contractual leader can keep the team united only while this balance is maintained, which is often difficult, especially when the cohesion between effort and prize or punishment is confusing or not well explained. In addition, the leader must be constantly alert against his members optimistic behaviours, which will tend to achieve the team's goal with minimal sacrifice of their particular goals (Álvarez, 2001).

A transforming leader, according to Álvarez (2001), combines his team around goals that, as well as being extrinsic, also include the intrinsic type; meaning, the internal benefits that arise from the simple fact of working in a team. These goals can be, for example, learning or friendship which is produced from working in a well combined team, or the same sensation of victory that causes the fulfillment of the mission (although the team does not receive an extrinsic prize for their success). The intrinsic goals produce a deeper type of cohesion than before that can be called emotional. The emotional cohesion consists of the union between people that is maintained by the fact that, without them, I do not obtain the same intrinsic benefits (learning, friendship, satisfaction of getting a challenge...) that I would working alone or in another team (Álvarez, 2001).

The emotional cohesion, according to Álvarez (2001), is no longer based on the balance of particular goals, but on a balance between feelings and emotions both positive and negative that each member experiences while working in this team. If the friction, the discussions and the frustrations outweigh the feelings of accomplishments and personal satisfaction, the balance is negative and hurts the emotional cohesion. The transforming leader can maintain a team united only while it is maintained in the positive emotional balance, which can depend on many factors, such as the different personalities of the members, their frames of mind, or their relationships. Therefore a transformative leader knows how to manage the emotional aspect of the meetings very well and makes sure to continually encourage a climate of improvement and friendship in the team relationships.

Continuing with Álvarez (2001) a transcendent leader combines his team around goals that, as well as being extrinsic and intrinsic, also include the important type; meaning, the benefits that teamwork can have for others. These goals can be, for example, giving a client good service, resolving a problem for the company or society, or helping the other team members to develop. The transcendent goals produce a type of cohesion even deeper than before and that we can call structural. The structural cohesion consists of the union between people that is maintained by the fact that, without them, it is not possible to contribute to a mission that makes sense in itself. In fact, we call a cohesion structural because the principle it unites is not extrinsic (like a group bonus) or intrinsic (like friendship), but it derives from its own or structural team contribution, that is, the mission that gives the team identity (Álvarez, 2001). The transcendent leader ensures that the team members are united by the value that those new products have for the company and for the society, and not only for the money that they can win, if they do it well, or for how much they develop professionally while

working in that specific team. The structural cohesion is no longer based on the balance of particular goals, not even on a level balance of feeling and emotions, but on the shared motivation to achieve the team's own mission. The transcendent leader gives a lot of importance to the mission and to the missions sense, and manages to convey that conviction to the members of his team (Álvarez, 2001).

A transcendent leader, carrying on with Álvarez (2001), must look to align the three types of cohesions to the maximum: instrumental, emotional and structural. This alignment produces a synergistic effect as the various aligned cohesions reinforce each other. However a misalignment between the three types of common goals can seriously affect the team cohesion. Through the guidelines and valuations that he uses to make decisions, the leader creates, strengthens or destroys the team's identity, an identity based on extrinsic, intrinsic, and/or transcendent goals shared by its members. If the leader does not achieve the creation of a group of common goals, the team lacks identity and strictly speaking cannot be called a team, but a group. That's why, a team leaders fundamental mission consists of taking decisions in a way that his identity is increasingly deeper and his cohesion stronger (Álvarez, 2001).

To lead a team, according to Álvarez (2001) is not an easy task. The leader's work starts by correctly choosing team members so that it has an adequate level of complementarity and unity. The leader has to master several key processes by which he crosses the entire team: developing confidence, communication, coordination and cooperation. Depending on how these processes are carried through, the team enters into a constructive cycle that reinforces it with each project, or falls into a destructive cycle that weakens it and can even put its continuity in danger. The teams most critical phase is the discussion, where the team decisions are made. The leader must prepare each meeting's schedule and environment beforehand, and protect the discussions dynamics, especially the roles and conflicts that emerge and can immensely favour or harm the meetings result. Nevertheless, the leaders most important role is to create, maintain and reinforce the team member's shared goals (Álvarez, 2001).


**Leadership and work teams in the current organisational context**


Ahumada (2016) defines that the importance of the study of leadership and work teams as a unit of analysis of what is organisational, does not only reside in that a more effective and competitive organisation is achieved through these in a turbulent

environment. The importance of the study is that these are the most representative elements of the dynamics that characterise the current organisational being and the job.

Despite the indisputable importance that the leaders have in organisations and the multiple theoretical focuses and ways of defining what we understand as leadership, we estimate that leadership in current organisations must be understood in a context of work teams in the organisation. Indeed, as the traditional hierarchical structure diminishes and the organisations assume a flexible and dynamic structure, the work teams start to be more independent and the leadership focused on an individual becomes more fleeting (Ahumada, 2016).

In this sense, as Arévalo and Polgatti (2004) point out, the work team can cope with the inevitable context of change, becoming part of it. Assuming this, not only implies adapting to the changing environment, but also forming a human group that must constantly decide who takes the lead, how they support each other and motivate the team members, how daily problems are solved.

## 2.5. The influence of leadership in learning

### Organisational learning

Organisational learning is the organisation's ability to create, organise and process information from its sources, to generate new individual, group, organisational and inter-organisational knowledge, generating a culture that facilitates it and enables the conditions to develop new abilities, design new products and services, increase the existing offer and improve processes oriented at durability (Garzón, 2008). The identification of organisational learning is common with the development of new knowledge, new structures, new systems, actions, or any combination of the previous concepts which results in the absence of a commonly accepted definition. Nevertheless, certain features characteristics of learning can be observed. In the first place, learning is a process that pursues an improvement in the development of the organisation through the identification of new technological, fruitful and commercial opportunities (Daft y Weick, 1984; Hedberg, 1981; Teece *et al.*, 1994). For these effects it is essential that the organisation does not limit itself to receiving information, but that it actively involves itself in detecting problems, suggesting adequate questions at the

right time (Day, 1994). On the other hand, it is a collective process, that is to say, it encompasses the whole organisation and does not isolate individuals. Even though the individuals are representatives through which the organisation learns, individual learning must be communicated, shared and integrated in routines in order to be considered as organisational (Argyris y Schön, 1978; Dixon 1994). The objective of learning is to generate behaviour models and guidelines, to make the organisation's implicit routines intangible and facilitate the collective appropriation of the knowledge embodied in individuals. This way, the different individual knowledge, the developed abilities and the process of learning in the organisation causes the construction of a collective knowledge, which permits the company growth and the generation of income (Spender, 1996).

## Leadership and organisational learning

Through intellectual stimulation, the leader encourages the followers to adopt an exploratory thought (Bass, 2000; Gardner et al., 2005). The leader abandons the expert role, whose principal function is to teach how to do things correctly and, in its place, helps the individuals to solve their problems, supporting them in the process of finding answers. The leader must increase the subordinates awareness about matters of interest, alter the strength of values that have been dormant or inactive, and encourage a climate in which commitment and cooperation and the guideline (Aragón-Correa et al., 2007). Additionally, the leader's ability to create a well-defined vision provides behavioural guidelines, is a benchmark for identifying the most relevant knowledge in the organisation and involves a common agreement to achieve organisational goals (García et al., 2007). The existing gap between the desired future situation and the current situation creates a tension, identified by Senge (1995) as the start of creative tension, under which individuals are motivated to learn to reach the desired situation, at the same time as they overcome the resistance to change.

Numerous investigations have also highlighted the importance that leadership can have in the development of an organisational context that favours learning (Jung y Avolio, 2000; Osborn et al., 2002). The organisational culture represents a collective social construction, in which leaders have important influence and control (Mumford et al., 2002; Jung, 2001). Schein (1992) argues that the leaders are the ones who define what is considered as correct or erroneous, and those personal beliefs convert themselves in part of the organisational culture and climate. When a leader encourages

that the followers force themselves to be creative, questioning their own acknowledgments and looking for new answers, he is contributing among employees to the establishment of an organisational culture that values risk-taking, long-term vision and anticipated management of change, which ultimately favours the development of organisational learning (Amabile, 1998; Duréndez et al., 2011). Also, leaders can determine the type of human resource policies established in the organisation (Berson et al., 2006; Munford, 2000). Shalley and Gilson (2004) point out the importance of the leaders in the development of human resource policies that favour learning.

Training is a key aspect for achieving effective learning due to its contribution in creating a basis of learning in organisations (González Soto & González, 2000). Likewise, training contributes to the knowledge transfer if and when there is a transfer of acquired knowledge towards the job. The transfer of training refers to the application of the required knowledge and skills in their jobs, this way training becomes learning (Antonacopoulou, 2001). The change-oriented leadership encourages individuals to play a more active role in defining their own training goals, seeking greater alignment with the company's goals (Shalley y Gilson, 2004). To provide employees with training opportunities that can increase their knowledge basis and abilities can help them to be more creative and innovative (Beugelsdikk, 2008; Jerez-Gómez et al. 2004). The leader is in charge of the training process, trying to adjust the worker's qualities to the activity, improving and updating the appropriate abilities, skills, attitudes and aptitudes for their performance (Yulk, 1999).

Various studies also consider that the style of leadership influences learning through reward mechanisms. Taking on retributive systems that strengthen the leaders behaviours and include incentives for risk-taking, experimentation and communication will have a positive effect on learning (Berson et al., 2006; Jerez-Gómez et al., 2005; Jung, 2001; López-Cabrales et al., 2011; Mumford, 2000; Shalley y Gilson, 2004). Also, in literature the need to orient the retribution to achieving long-term goals and promote the use of incentives based on the work team's performance is noted in order to promote cooperative behaviours that support knowledge transfer (Jerez-Gómez et al., 2005; Pil y MacDuffie, 1996).

Additionally, according to Pérez-López (2011), change-oriented leadership promotes the worker's involvement in decision-making. The decisions are not unilateral, but they appear from the followers enquiries and their implication, which promotes more creative behaviours and the hunt for creative solutions (Beugelsdijk, 2008; Jung y Sosik, 2002; Kark et al., 2003). As some authors corroborate (Beugelsdijk, 2008;

Jiménez-Jiménez y Sanz-Valle, 2008), leadership improves the employee's agreement with the organisation's goals and favours experimentation and internal communication, stimulating learning. Change-oriented leadership plays an essential role in the creation of a favourable climate to organisational learning (Slater y Narver, 1995). It allows to overcome internal scepticism and external difficulties in establishing such learning (Wick y Leon, 1995). Leadership acts as the engine and transmitter of an innovative culture oriented to the search for better organisational results (Bass, 2000; Bass y Avolio, 1994). Likewise, the type of leadership pays special attention to developing the organisation's members. The attitude or degree of agreement that management shows towards its employees creates a suitable social environment for the workers to use their full skills and knowledge, thus contributing to creating organisational learning. This has important implications for management. The leader must develop human resource management policies consistent with his statements and actions, agreements with the corporate culture, that reinforce those aspects related to the individual, and that influence the learning ability: attitudes (psychosocial level), aptitudes (level of knowledge) and skills and abilities (skills). Without the leaders agreement, the organisation could hardly develop their learning ability, as this must act as a driving force (Pérez-López, 2011).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study we have done is a bibliographical review or theoretical research paper aimed to examine the literature. For our investigation, we have compiled a series of articles, magazine publications, academic papers and ebooks related to the subject of our theoretical revision. We have analysed all the compiled information to be able to identify and select the most important aspects that interest us for our theoretical review.

To carry out this study, three different phases were established. In a first phase, for the localization of the bibliographical aspects we have used various databases and documentary sources. A bibliographic search took place through the "google scholar" search bar using various descriptors like "leadership", "work teams", "organisational learning", "working environment" and "styles of leadership". In addition, to obtain a wider variety of bibliographical sources needed for our revision, we used an ABI database from our the digital library of our library. The third source that we resorted to to obtain more bibliography was our library, in which we made use of the library loans obtaining several human resource manuals related to the theme of leadership, teamwork and organisational learning. The second phase focused on guidelines of

collection and selection of the documentation, in a way that we selected the information we thought was most relevant from academic sources and documentaries that contained the most relevant aspects needed to elaborate our theoretical revision.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Due to the rapidity in which the business sector and increasing competition evolve, we have seen how necessary a leader figure is who directs, guides and motivate to accomplish the company's goals. We have also been able to confirm that leadership and management are two different and complementary acting methods, each one has their own function and characteristic activities, both being necessary for the success of the current business environment. Management deals with coping with complexity, its practices and procedures are, to a large extent, an answer to the appearance, in the twentieth century, to big and complex organisations. Leadership, on the other hand, deals with change, therefore the importance it has acquired in recent years is due to the business world being increasingly competitive and volatile, since leaderships function consists of causing change, deciding the direction of such change is essential for leadership.

The leader is vital for the survival of any organisation for his ability to manage, communicate, make decisions, motivate, establish a working environment, resolve conflicts and promote learning, as an organisation with adequate planning and control cannot survive for the lack of an appropriate leader. Among the reasons for why this subject motivates the interest of investigators, we find that leadership has maybe been considered as the most important competitive advantage for public and private sector organisations in most countries (Choo, 2007). In that regard, Peiró (2000) suggests that the success of failure of any organisation will depend largely on the quality of their leaders. Amongst the leader's responsibilities is the guarantee of the existence of an organisation, he must be able to carry out the mission and strategy of such organisation (Bass, 2003). It is also decided that the leader must ensure that the organisation generates relationships that allow the desired results, as leaders strive their work in creating new opportunities to share and learn what they have learned, reaching the transformation of the context (Fullan, 2002). For this, the leader must reunite a series of skills that allow him to coordinate, organise and above all motivate to achieve goals and aims. Regarding the functions to be performed by the leader we conclude with the most important ones, which consist in establishing action plans, developing and suggesting new strategies depending on the mission and the vision,

and including everyone to achieve its agreement of working in the same direction and motivating them to achieve greater performance in their tasks. It appears that the leader continues to perform an important role in the companies based on work teams, the leader is an essential figure to take responsibility for the projects and tasks entrusted given that the work group in which an effective leadership does not exist, is a team without way or direction. The importance of leadership in a team, is to carry out certain actions to make your team effective. These actions comprise knowledge, rewards, identifying strengths, creating trust, motivating, inspiring and recognising each member's needs and introducing challenges.

From the theoretical revision of leadership and its impact on the organisational climate, it can be concluded that the leader is the main generator of the organisational climates quality due to its ability to form in workers those perceptions that give life to the organisational climate. The style of leadership that is employed in the organisation directly influences the working environment because in it, the one who manages the perceptions of pride of belonging, knowledge, communication and organisational flexibility, through his ability to motivate, create well-being in the worker and job satisfaction (Payeras, 2004). On the other hand, it seems that to obtain a good working environment, good relationships need to be favoured and encouraged as the basis for a smooth running organisation with the intention of increasing human capital and this way obtaining worker satisfaction and a sense of belonging.

The leader is he who achieves that the organisations obtain the desired results through the creation of opportunities that allow the transformation of the context (Fullan, 2002). He is the one who influences the workers, taking part in their actions in a way that creates a motivation that allows maximum performance in search of organisational excellence. The most important thing in a leader is his practices, as to improve his subortinates' performance it will exclusively depend on the improvement of leadership practices (Stringer, 2001). On this basis, the leader will be able to encourage personal growth and develop skills and competencies in the organisations members and teams. If the leader does not achieve that his followers work with enthusiasm and aptitude to achieve their goals, he is simply not being effective. The attitude or performance level that the leader shows towards his employees create a suitable social environment so that the workers fully use their skills and knowledge, contributing, like this, to the creation of organisational learning (Bass y Avolio, 1994). Without the leader's agreement, the organisation can hardly develop its learning ability, as this must act as a driving force (Pérez-López, 2011). The importance of leadership and its influence on organisational learning is because the leader must develop human resource

management policies consistent with his statements and actions, agreements with the corporate culture, that reinforces those aspects related to the individual, and influence the learning ability such as: attitudes, aptitudes, skills and abilities.

Finally, it should be noted that the current study presents a series of limitations from which future research also derives. The current study allows an approach or global and generic analysis of the concepts and relationships analysed here, focusing on the most relevant literature but they could have been analysed more particularly and specifically. As future research further progress could be made in studies to deepen the influence of leadership in organisational learning or from business results. To include other variables, such as culture, communication, experimentation and risk taking could contribute to better understand the relationship between leadership and learning.

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