

Development of Leadership Potential in Students within an Education Space of a Pedagogical University

Anar Alimbekova^a, Marziya Asylbekova^a and Raziya Karimova^b

^aEurasian National University Named After L.N. Gumilyov, Astana, KAZAKHSTAN; ^bInstitute of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Kazakh National University Named After Abai, Almaty, KAZAKHSTAN

ABSTRACT

In recent years in psychological and pedagogical sciences there is a trend for increase of interest in studies of students' potential in higher education institutions, because it is the major factor affecting development of student's inner potential. Majority of works in this field deal with the issues of study of student's personal potential, however the problem of leadership potential development in students (i.e. the question of development of leadership qualities directly within education space of a pedagogical university) is understudied, especially concerning students of pedagogical departments. Theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the analysis of psychological and pedagogical understanding of leadership as a phenomenon of development of leadership skills in students. The article contains the results of the theoretical analysis of leadership potential development in student's personality within education space of a pedagogical university, define the structure of student's leadership potential, study the content of the process of leadership potential development within education space of a pedagogical university. The study describes conditions for effective development of leadership skills.

KEYWORDS

Leader, leadership potential, leadership skills, education space of pedagogical university

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Introduction

Modern society of Kazakhstan is characterised, on the one hand, by unstable economic relations and increasing competition at job market, and by expansion and qualitative change of international collaboration in the sphere of education on the other hand (Kazakhstan joined the Bologna process). Under these conditions there is an increase of demand for qualified and active experts, able to make independent and conscious decisions, to build good relationship with other people, to work in team – that is, to demonstrate leadership skills. This makes recent graduates to be ready for self-presentation of personal and business qualities, as well as for development of leadership potential. Education plays great role in solution of these tasks as its national interests are reflected through the concept of its modernisation and are related to qualitative parameters of experts' training, to the use of innovative technologies and competency-based approach in evaluation of institutions' educational work. Questions of leadership potential development in the student within an education space are especially acute.

CORRESPONDENCE Anar Alimbekova ✉ alimbekova_66@mail.ru

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Influence of education space of a pedagogical university upon development of leadership potential in students manifests in the fact that it is the major factor affecting development of student's inner potential. Education space directs and changes the process of development. It promotes evolvement of moral qualities and allows the student to analyse own activity according to the requirements of modern society, basing upon major values and traditions of the society.

Materials and Methods

Upon studying of this problem we faced a need to solve inconsistencies between:

- objective social need for experts with professionally conditioned level of social activity; a skill of prompt reaction for changes, data analysis, prediction of further events; ability to make relevant decisions and act according to them; ability to interact according to modern demand of the society – and lack of attention of pedagogic theory and practice towards the problem of student's personal becoming through development of leadership potential;
- formation (by the professors) of a need for development of leadership potential in a student – and insufficient scientifically grounded pedagogic strategies for activation of this potential within education space of a pedagogical university;
- available potential of the institution's educational activity, allowing to increase efficiency of personal becoming of a future expert with highly developed leadership skills – and insufficient methodological support of this process.

Taking into account the importance of the problem, the idea of our study lies in the search and choice of pedagogic possibilities promoting development of student's leadership potential within education space of a pedagogical university.

We carried out an analysis of psychological and pedagogical understanding of leadership as a phenomenon of development of leadership skills in students. The results showed that leadership is a multidimensional phenomenon. From a social and psychological point of view, it is an element of organisation of team work and management in the system of interpersonal relations (Kotrukhova, 2009). Leadership skills in students is a complex system, formed on the basis of realisation of leadership behaviour within education space of a pedagogical university.

Having analysed scientific literature dealing with questions of definition of the leadership phenomenon, we have come up with a group of leadership skills with three categories in it: system skills, communication skills, personal qualities (Figure 1).

In this regard we needed to define basic notions of our research. Among them there are the "leadership potential" and "development of leadership potential in students within education space of a pedagogical university". Specification of these notions in the context of objective-professional specialisation presents the academic novelty of the research. To give definitions to the notions we were drawing on modern concepts of personal professional potential and approaches to identification of mechanisms of its formation and development, which appeared in recent years in psychology and pedagogics.

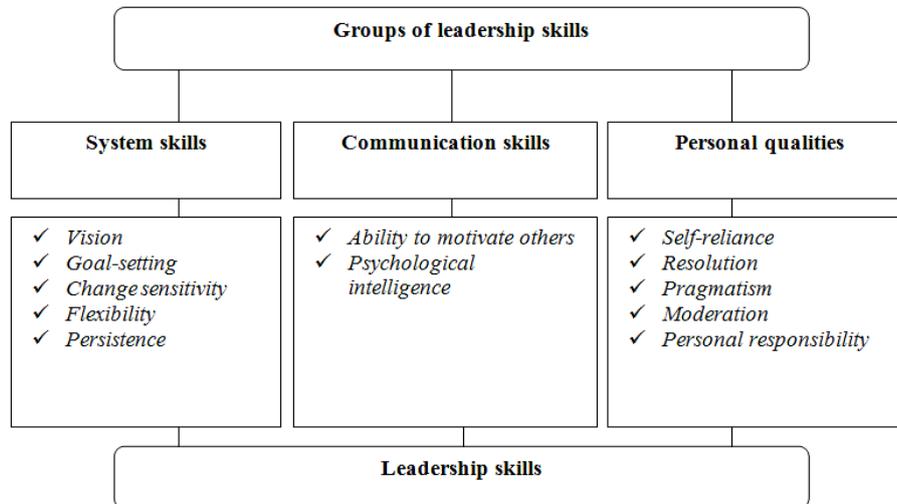


Figure 1. Group of leadership skills

Before we move over to considering of components and structure of leadership potential of an organisational leader, we should specify definitions of potential and leadership potential. The word 'potential' derives from Latin 'potentia' (rus. потенция), which is defined in the dictionary of S.I. Ozhegov and N.Y. Shvedovav (1999) as a possibility, i.e. something existing in a latent form and can manifest itself under certain conditions. In other words, a potential is a certain possibility or force including sources and recourses, which can be used to solve a certain problem or to achieve a certain goal.

Relative to leadership, a potential is usually regarded as a possibility and individual's readiness for effective leadership behaviour. M.V. Kirsanov (2003) presents leadership potential as a social and psychological characteristic of a person, which reflects both a situation-conditioned and independent of a situation individual's ability to successfully implement leadership. I.V. Drygina (2004) presents leadership potential as a qualitative characteristic of a person, reflecting an aggregate of his inner needs, possibilities, values and resources promoting achievement of such a level of integration of expertise, responsibility, activity and communicative skill, which shall give a leading influence upon members of the group within collective search of solutions to problems from different spheres of living (Drygina, 2004).

Students' leadership potential can be defined as a complex of professional and personal qualities, including interdependent and interrelated components (motivational, cognitive, reflexive) based upon value orientation towards development of leadership potential.

Leadership potential development is promoted by possibilities, guaranteed by specially created education space of a pedagogical university. According to S.K. Bondyрева (2006), B.Z. Vulfov (1999), P.I. Pidkasisty (1998), B.I. Slobodchikov (1991), a term 'education space of a college' is defined as an aggregate of interdependent components – the subjects of academic activity, informational and educational environments, educational processes (Gusinksiy, 2004). These authors differentiate notions 'education space' and 'educational environment' (or informational and educational environment), defining educational environment as

an element of education space. Within this approach we may single out specific character of education space in different universities (pedagogical university, technical college, medical college etc.). Specific character of education space in a pedagogical university is conditioned by organisational and communicational peculiarities of a pedagogical university. Among them are: consistency and continuity of secondary professional and higher professional pedagogical education, possibility to receive on-campus and off-campus pedagogical education, students practicing teaching during work experience internship (Gusinksy, 2004).

Results and Discussion

We understand an education space of a pedagogical university as a structured aggregate of possibilities offered by educational environment, promoting effective formation of expertise complex which serve as an essence of leadership potential of students in a pedagogical university. In order to increase efficiency of education space we have defined factors which influence it: curricular factor (based on work in class, mostly teaching); extra-curricular (based on work outside of class – it is mostly educative, not teaching).

Education space of a pedagogical university gives students an opportunity to practice pedagogical activity. It simulates different pedagogical situations in order for student to try various social roles and behaviour patterns, to get social and personal experience in a sphere of organisational and collective work. This promotes development of leadership potential. Free choice of a personal development path creates good environment of ethic interaction and effective collaboration between the space's subjects, which provides pragmatic enhancement of future teacher's basic education.

This conception predetermines our approaches to organisation of value system moulding in future professionals within a university: system-synergic approach, competency-based approach, humanitarian-culturological approach, person-centred approach, individual-differentiated approach. These approaches were chosen because they allow defining an essential characteristic of a leadership potential and a structure, finding out the content and levels of its formation; they help to determine pedagogical conditions for effective development of leadership potential in students within an education space and to create methods of realisation of these conditions.

Pedagogical essence of the process of leadership potential development in students within an education space of a pedagogical university involves creation of a specially organised social-competitive environment in the course of teaching activity and its psychological and pedagogical aspect.

Scientific search of the ways to solve the problem led us to as idea to establish a form of extra-curricular educational activity, which would allow us to maximally use conceptual and procedural potential of extra-curricular activity for development of leadership skills in students in combination with the use of traditional forms. Such activity within an education space of a pedagogical university was created: the "Leader Club" in the Kazakh National Pedagogical University Abai.

The "Leader Club" is a structural subdivision aimed at development of moral reasoning, leadership skills and ambition for voluntary public service in students. "Leader Club" has various programs of leadership potential development in the form of special courses or via participation in public activity.



Results of the research showed a need to prepare a model of leadership potential development within an education space of a pedagogical university and to find pedagogical conditions for effective realisation of this model. At this we single out four groups of personal qualities based on components of the model of a professional:

1) *general professional qualities*: high level of theoretical and practical training; consistent view of professional problems; ability for professional adaptation; ability for prognosis; ability to fulfil functional responsibilities; knowledge of team management methods; ability to spot a key objective; ability to split the work among people in the team;

2) *creative qualities*: wide area of general thought; creative approach to work; knowledge of methods of creative work; high level of knowledge of techniques;

3) *social and psychological qualities*: ability to organise efficient interpersonal relationships and communication within a team; ability to take into account individual qualities of persons in the group; exactingness towards subordinates; discernment of character; charisma; ability to inspire confidence; ability to produce educative effect on members of the group via personal example; ability to set vigorous business atmosphere at work; persuasiveness; mental ballast; propensity for observation of people and interest to their needs;

4) *social and communicative qualities*: ability to advocate the interests of one's group; ability to organise control and stimulate other members of the group; sociability; ease of establishing contacts; psychological tact; responsibility; commitment; honesty and ethics; normal emotional and psychological excitement; correct articulation; good voice placement.

Subject basis of this model is represented by the professors of the university on the one hand (they provide pedagogical contribution to the development of leadership potential in students) and by the students as future professionals on the other hand. It should be stressed that both students and professors are the subjects of the process of leadership potential development. It is explained by the fact that the students are in active pragmatist position within the above-mentioned process as a student should be conscious of the guiding role of his actions for his professional formation.

A suggested structural and functional model is realised at every stage of leadership potential development within an education space. It is assumed that pedagogical conditions should be selected during the whole education process taking into account changes of leadership potential of students. Specific features of development of leadership potential predetermine following pedagogical conditions:

- formation of mindset for development of leadership potential (in students);
- involvement of students in specially established diverse activities of the "Leader Club", allowing students to try the role of a leader;
- organisation of pedagogical contribution to development of leadership potential in students within education space of a pedagogical university.

The conditions defined above are based at possibilities of university education as it is the most technologically advanced and flexible part of culture. University education promotes devolution of universal human values, which are associated with development of personal qualities needed for leadership skills development (Martynova, 2003).

First pedagogical condition is justified by the fact that formation of the leadership is both a process and a result of development of inner structure of psychological organisation. They are manifested together in personal organisational and communicative readiness for management of communication and activity within a group. At this, dynamic development of leadership skills of future professionals depends on social and pedagogical conditions and interaction of the students within a training group, as well as on active individual development of leadership skills by the student himself. Development of leadership skills is successful only under the conditions of active and motivated participation of a student in correct execution of leadership roles in group work. This promotes practical formation of main features of a performer, an organiser and a mentor. Thus, a need for formation of a respective mindset is obvious.

Second pedagogical condition is associated with the fact that theoretical and practical knowledge received at university is not enough to connect the knowledge with practical skills received in the course of individual socially important activity. Practice is a crucial aspect of reinforcing of skills needed for fulfilment of a human-creation and evolving function. It allows to show ability in leadership, to develop certain codes of conduct and communication, values and individual style of “directed and managed activity”. Specially organised activity of “Leader Club” gives students additional opportunity to acquire values, to apply knowledge at practice, to correct professional needs and important personal qualities.

Third condition is associated with an approach to leadership potential as a pivotal personal feature of a future professional. Its development is impossible without purposeful and qualified help from professors. We regard pedagogical help as psychological and pedagogical work of a professor (teacher) upon extra-curricular activity for development of students’ leadership potential. From the practical point of view it is creation of conditions allowing students to acquire leadership skills together with professional motives, professional and cognitive consciousness, stable drive for systematic personal development and reaching of satisfaction with the results of one’s own work.

Conclusion

Thus, these pedagogical conditions are a rough basis for organisation of development of leadership potential in students within an education space of a pedagogical university. Practical result of our research of the problem are represented by cogent research and instructional methodology recommendations for formation of leadership skills in students. These recommendations give teachers an opportunity to effectively develop and apply tools and methods of organisation of extra-curricular activity.

We have experimentally tested all the pedagogical conditions we mentioned. Analysis of results revealed that these conditions promote effective development of leadership potential in students within an education space of a pedagogical university.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Anar Alimbekova Department of Social Sciences of the Eurasian National University named after LN Gumilyov, Astana, Kazakhstan.



Marziya Asylbekova Department of General, age and social pedagogy of Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Kazakh National University named after Abai, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Raziya Karimova Department of General, age and social pedagogy of Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Kazakh National University named after Abai, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

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