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LEADERSHIP

IN CUBAN CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES

EL LIDERAZGO EN LAS EMPRESAS CONSTRUCTORAS CUBANAS

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ABSTRACT

In today's globalized, complex, changing and competitive world, leadership and values acquire a renewed importance for the competitiveness and success of enterprises. Cuban construction companies are not strangers to the relevance of the issue, given the need of having prepared leaders to lead groups and organizations, from the values shared in the social project, in the midst of ongoing transformations, in order to update the Cuban economic and social model, facing obstacles arising from internal and external circumstances and relationships. In this research, the authors aim to carry out an analysis of leadership and values in Cuban construction companies, based on theoretical and empirical information. For this purpose, the triangulation of sources, methods, and information is applied. The methods are based on the analysis and source criticism, concretized through the logical operations of analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction. The information obtained from bibliographic sources guarantees a knowledge base from which the main concepts are articulated. The case study, the scientific observation and the application of interviews and surveys allow direct contact with the reality of the subject in managers of the selected Cuban construction company, which facilitates obtaining empirical data and information that allow carrying out the research presented in this article.

Keywords:

Construction companies, leadership, values.

RESUMEN

En el globalizado, complejo, cambiante y competitivo mundo actual, adquiere una renovada importancia el liderazgo y los valores para la competitividad y éxito de las empresas. Las empresas constructoras cubanas no están ajenas a la relevancia del tema, dada la necesidad de contar con líderes preparados para dirigir a los grupos y organizaciones, desde los valores compartidos en el proyecto social, en medio de transformaciones en marcha, en aras de actualizar el modelo económico y social cubano, enfrentando obstáculos que devienen de las circunstancias y relaciones internas y externas. En este trabajo los autores tienen como objetivo realizar un análisis del liderazgo y los valores en empresas constructoras cubanas, con base en informaciones teóricas y empíricas. Para ello se aplica la triangulación de fuentes, métodos, e informaciones. En los métodos se acude al análisis y crítica de fuentes, concretado a través de las operaciones lógicas de análisis-síntesis, inducción-deducción. Las informaciones obtenidas de las fuentes bibliográficas garantizan una base de conocimiento desde el cual se articulan los conceptos principales. El estudio de casos, la observación científica y la aplicación de entrevistas y encuestas permite ponerse en contacto directo con la realidad del tema en directivos de la empresa constructora cubana seleccionada, lo que facilita obtener datos e informaciones empíricas que, permiten llevar a cabo el análisis presentado en este artículo.

Palabras clave:

Empresas constructoras, liderazgo, valores.

INTRODUCTION

From ancient to the most modern civilizations, people have developed in organizations. In these organizations, the action of people with the capacity to lead, to influence others and to guide them in the achievement of the proposed objectives plays a vital role. In today's increasingly complex and competitive world, leadership is becoming highly relevant as a pillar of corporate effectiveness and efficiency (Sumba et al., 2022).

Every organization has a certain authority structure, characteristics, behaviors, objectives and goals, while existing in a social context, to which they contribute their products and services, in relationships of complementarity and competition with other organizations, which also seek success and, therefore, attend to key variables, such as: leadership, values, motivation, culture, communication, loyalty, satisfaction, teamwork (Bravo, 2018).

The importance of leadership and values for the competitiveness and success of companies is revealed when it is taken into account that the existence of leaders is a basic condition for teamwork, the design and achievement of goals, the revitalization of organizations, as well as for the resolution of conflicts in group interactions and social relations (Chiavenato, 2007).

Instituted, objective and subjective values regulate the behavior of individual and group subjects (Fabelo, 2008, 2011). Companies have defined the values that should guide the actions of their members, in correspondence with the socially positive meanings that have been instituted in each society. Leaders are required to respond quickly to changes in the environment, such as economic, political, environmental and social changes, guiding the members of the organization based on a set of values that are considered central to promote success.

For Cuban society and its construction companies, the issue of leadership and values has a renewed significance, given the need of having prepared leaders to lead groups and organizations, from the values shared in the social project, in the midst of ongoing transformations, in order to update the Cuban economic and social model. All this in the midst of obstacles arising from internal and external relationships, in a competitive world, serious economic difficulties, and resistance to the necessary changes of mentality on the part of some people who lead processes.

Therefore, it is understandable that in Cuba it is a priority to comply with the provisions of the National Preparation and Improvement Strategy of the state and government cadres and their reserves. This strategy constitutes a coherent and structured system, which guarantees the continuity of the educational process of the cadres and their reserves in their different stages of development, at all levels of management.

Facing the current demands, challenges of Cuban construction companies requires leaders with a broad training in administration-management and technical-professional skills, who possess a solid political-ideological education, structured around values. In this research, the authors analyze leadership and values in Cuban construction companies, based on theoretical and empirical information.

METHODOLOGY

The triangulation of sources, methods and information was applied. As for the methods, the analysis and critique of sources were used, concretized through the logical operations of analysis-synthesis, induction-deduction. The process of selection, compilation and interpretation of the information is guided by the concepts of leadership, values, and construction companies, which are important to the chosen topic, without seeking saturation or redundancy of information, and to achieve an adequate knowledge base from which the proposed analysis could be articulated. The case study, scientific observation and the application of interviews and surveys allowed direct contact with the reality of the topic in the managers of the Garbo Construction Company, which facilitated obtaining empirical data and information that, triangulated with the theoretical information, allow carrying out the analysis presented in this article.

DEVELOPMENT

Leadership is one of the most emphasized variables discussed within the behavior of organizations, due to its link with their performance, the cohesion of people around defined goals and values, the ability of companies to adapt proactively to changes, work environment, teamwork, job satisfaction and the achievement of success in complex, changing and competitive contexts (Chiavenato, 2007; Pedraja, et al., 2021; Sumba et al., 2022).

When referring to leadership, there is a certain consensus among authors that it refers to the ability to lead a group of people to achieve goals. The leader, in turn, is the person who has a set of human, relational and managerial qualities, from which not only influences the members of the group, but also ensures that his or her influence is accepted, recognized and followed by the members of the group (Bravo, 2018; Fuentes et al., 2021).

The types of leadership have been analyzed based on different criteria, such as the use of power and authority, the level of communication and participation of subordinates, the importance given to the fulfillment of tasks, or to people. This gives rise to different classifications of the types of styles through which leadership is exercised, such as: democratic, liberal, autocratic (Pizzete & Da Silva, 2019; Fuentes et al., 2021).

In this sense, leadership, power, authority and influence are interrelated concepts. Coercion, reward and legitimacy, as power, derive from the position a person occupies in an organization. However, not every administrator, manager or boss has the types of power to be a leader in the organization. For the latter, it is necessary to have the power of reference or competence, from which leadership actually derives. In other words, one can occupy a management position but not be a leader (Chiavenato, 2007).

Likewise, exercising leadership in an organization requires a series of characteristics in personal qualities, such as charisma, ethics, cultural flexibility, communication skills, ability to create a learning climate, information and transmission of experiences, skills to design and direct training programs, transmit information and experiences, ability to adapt to changes, creativity, constant self-improvement (Chiavenato, 2007).

In line with this line of thought of the last referenced author, a high-performance leader must have the ability to listen, make an adequate management of time, decisions and stress, know how to recognize, analyze and solve problems, define work priorities, motivate and influence others. They must also know how to be versatile, delegate, take precautions, define objectives, transmit support and build teams, resolve contradictions and conflicts, be assertive, keep the order, rationality and control.

In a general sense, every leader displays his qualities through a certain leadership style, and tries to unite the personnel around the mission, vision, values and goals of the company. According to his leadership style, the leader can, to a greater or lesser degree, encourage cohesion and staff productivity; aspects of vital importance in today's globalized and changing world, in which achieving maximum productivity is a basic condition for survival and positioning in the top places in front of the competition (Añazco et al., 2018).

A look at the contexts and social situations in which business organizations exist allows to affirm that they operate in circumstances that are sometimes orderly, favorable for their development; but at other times the conditions can generate wicked problems, which make it an enormous challenge to manage organizations and achieve their survival. Leadership that knows how to manage processes in the face of perverse problems makes agile decisions and avoids uncertainty, favors the necessary changes to achieve the survival and development of organizations (Riquelme et al., 2020).

If the existence of leaders is a basic condition for teamwork, the design and achievement of goals, the revitalization of organizations, the resolution of conflicts in group interactions and social relations.

If the existence of leaders is a basic condition for teamwork, the design and achievement of goals, the revitalization of organizations, the resolution of conflicts in group interactions and social relations (Chiavenato, 2007), values, on the other hand, regulate the behavior of individual and group subjects acting within the framework of groups, organizations in any society (Fabelo, 2008, 2011). When people in an organization truly assume as their own the values that are declared and serve as a reference for behavior, the action of these and of their leaders tends to flow more easily towards the achievement of the company's success and goals, even in social and business circumstances that are not entirely favorable.

Companies have defined the values that should guide the actions of their members, in correspondence with the demands of the branch and forms of activity according to Leal et al. (2021), and the socially positive meanings that have been instituted in each society. When leaders act and respond quickly to changes in the environment, such as economic, political, environmental and social changes, the solidity of their own values and those of the organization's members are at stake.

The consideration that values are at the basis of leadership and the work of people in organizations, in one way or another, is based on the complex nature and the important role of values in social life and in companies, whatever their type, size, functions and complexity. To understand the connotation of what has just been affirmed merits some reflections that are presented below, without pretending to exhaust this complicated subject.

It distances itself from classical axiological conceptions in favor of the multidimensional approach to values, articulated by Fabelo (2008, 2011), which understands them as a complex phenomenon, diverse in its manifestations and levels of analysis. In this sense, it is assumed that in societies values are not homogeneous, there are instituted and objective values, but the form and intensity in which these values are assumed by the subjects can be very diverse, becoming the core of their subjectivity and self-regulating their behavior.

The authors assume from Fabelo's studies (2011) that, in any social environment, it is possible to find, in addition to the objective system of values, a diversity of subjective systems and a socially instituted system. Thus, in any society, individuals and groups in power officially institute their own subjective scale of values, either one or a combination of several of them, from which the functioning of the web of social relations is organized.

When the context is the company and business relations, it is understandable that its values, especially the declared ones, have a certain correspondence with the official values, which are reflected in the official ideology, internal and external policy, legal norms, law, labor legislation,

among others. Nevertheless, given the demands of corporate behavior, there are shared values that transcend particular social frameworks. Among these corporate values are: ethics, responsibility, unity, excellence, hard work, professional growth, sense of belonging, creativity and honesty.

In social reality there is a system of objective values, understood in this way taking into account that values are part of social reality, whether or not isolated individuals want them to exist, configured in a complex process in which subjects grant meanings to the different events, relationships and activities of social life, crossed by the degree to which these satisfy the needs and interests of society. This objective system of values is structured hierarchically, it is not immovable, and undergoes changes as concrete historical conditions are transformed (Fabelo, 2011).

Instituted and objective values are always present in the framework of action and interaction of companies and business relationships, at all levels and scales of a society. These values contribute to the processes that occur in organizations and their social significance, based on the context in which they are manifested, appearing formulated, more or less explicitly, in the statement of the mission, vision and social function for which each company was created.

Nevertheless, objective and instituted values do not automatically become part of subjectivity of each and every individual living in a society. It is common that in social life different subjective systems of values are configured, which come from a process of valuation in each social subject and from how individuals perceive and experience, throughout their lives, the correspondence between objectives values, officially instituted, the general interests of society; and the particular interests and needs of the subjects (Fabelo, 2011).

From this line of thought of the aforementioned author, it is assumed that although all values are regulators par excellence of behavior in social life, what is most desirable is the self-regulation of one's own behavior, based on the active appropriation of values. For this to occur, it is not enough to provide the subject with information and knowledge about the contents and importance of certain values, but, above all, that this knowledge acquires a positive personal significance, so that it produces favorable experiences, emotions, feelings and attitudes towards the direction that a given value marks in behavior.

Based on this approach to values, it is considered that in matters of leadership, leaders and companies, if business success is to be achieved, it must be taken into account that leaders and all members of the organization are subjects with needs, interests and feelings that determine or condition their subjective system of values, which in turn

influences the shared values of the company, a correct harmony between the values of the leaders and those of the company will contribute to increase business effectiveness. Likewise, coherence between the values and needs of the company and those of the workers is one of the keys to business success.

In order to respond to the demands of society, the Cuban State, and based on Fabelo (2008, 2011), a set of characteristics that the leader must necessarily possess in order to achieve results in the formation of values in the company have been developed, being the following: moral exemplarity before the collective that he/she leads. It is not possible to ask anyone to do what he/she is not capable of doing; the leader must lead by example and be the bearer of the values he/she intends to educate in others.

Other characteristics should be sensitivity to the problems, concerns, dreams, ideas and interests of others. The leader must consider the worker as the most important thing, not because of his capacity to develop the work that generates wealth, but because he is a sensitive and complex human being who must be listened to, understood and attended to; this contributes to educate values and strengthen them. In addition, the leader must be a generator of dreams, ideas and illusions that create motivation in the collective; he must be able to ignite the flame and spread it throughout the collective in an exciting way where everyone is motivated and generate the expectation of success.

Likewise it must also have the ability to educate. The function of leadership in the socialist society has the responsibility to educate individuals and turns the company into a learning scenario that, at the same time, contributes to the education of the family and society and that education is the one that enhances the desired values. At the same time, the leader must be distinguished by his optimism; enterprising character and confidence in others, so that he undertakes the transformation with the conviction that it can be achieved and that among all, the work is possible, that same feeling must be transmitted to his group.

The leader must also be characterized by good performance as a communicator, that is, he/she knows how to share information that is useful to everyone, knows how to convince because he/she explains the reasons in a convincing way and also knows how to listen because the workers can also contribute solutions and useful information for decision making. No less important is the skill to know how to use timely recognition for the triumphs achieved. Fair and timely recognition is a motivating element for the recognized and exemplary for the laggard.

The emphasis that the authors have placed on this subject is coherent with the importance it has for Cuban society. In this sense, it is suggestive that the National Preparation and Improvement Strategy of the state and government

cadres and their reserves aims to guarantee learning through the preparation and integral improvement of cadres and their reserves to help them achieve a full performance of their functions or acquire the necessary preparation to promote them to higher positions, and strengthen their leadership and authority as leaders.

Although progress has been made in the preparation of cadres and leading officials in the various types of Cuban construction organizations and enterprises, it is no secret that the road traveled and the results are still insufficient to face the challenges of Cuban construction enterprises in the current complex internal and external scenario. The constant calls to change management methods, to banish stagnation in organizations, to increase workers' participation in business decisions and their sense of belonging, among other aspects, reveal that the performance of many of those who should guide workers still does not correspond to what society expects from them.

In order to gain clarity with respect to the above, information obtained in a Cuban company is analyzed. The research focused on the Garbo construction company, which has the mission to nourish, provide comfort and improve the quality of life of workers in the construction system, through the services of food, lodging, recreation and marketing of agricultural and ornamental plants as well as supplies for the construction worker. It has an adequate infrastructure, trained and motivated personnel, and advanced technologies that guarantee the improvement of business management. Its vision is to be an organization that guarantees the welfare of construction workers with food, lodging and recreational services and a specialized production in agricultural and livestock matters in continuous improvement and an adequate environmental management.

In spite of the recognition of the importance of leadership studies from axiology and its incidence and importance in business life, there are deficiencies in the theoretical-practical order, showing a lack of knowledge in the Garbo Construction Company in Holguin, with implications in leadership styles; as well as the lack of a methodology and a manual in the company that allows diagnosing, evaluating and strengthening the values in leaders, according to the changing conditions of the environment.

The board of directors of Garbo Construction Company is a group that has a formal status because it is made up of the highest positions in the Company, its members work in the decisive activities for the company and each of its members feels that he/she wants to work with colleagues of high hierarchy; as established by the cadre policy in relation to the care system, they are entitled to systematic medical and stomatological check-ups and as incentives to participate in recreational activities specifically prepared for leisure and rest, and on commemorative dates they

receive certain gifts in recognition of the work they perform; most members of this group have a car to work, the salary they receive is higher than the rest of the workers (although in general they are low) and their working day is much longer than that of the rest of the workers.

Through the application of a survey to managers and workers, it was found that this group also has an informal status and the main rules shared by its members are the following: not to attack people, to know how to listen, to attend to the problems of the group and of the workers in general.

After analyzing the sociodemographic data of this group studied and within these parameters: age, sex, seniority, profession, militancy, for each of these criteria, the following is found: three people are under 35 years of age; there are only two women, men predominating; the vast majority (13) is white. In terms of educational level, the highest levels of education predominate (9 university graduates and 4 high school graduates).

According to the information obtained through different research instruments (interviews, survey, observation), among the determining elements of values, they valued with a strong behavior, the degree to which they identify with the company, the use made within the group of collective review and self-criticism, and the mutual respect that exists among its members were highly rated.

However, it was found that a system of shared values is not consolidated, nor how to determine the values in the leaders of the company, which is evident in the different criteria that exist regarding the Mission of the company, there are no varied reward systems, nor adequate coordination mechanisms and this influences the power relations, the sanction systems are not shared by all, this is supported by the fact that there is no shared vision of the company's Mission, nor is there consensus on the methods and ways to achieve the desired results, and although change is a priority of the management, verbally manifesting a constant spirit of renewal, it was not observed that this was impregnated and assumed by all members with the same intensity.

This analyzed group considers that the development of strategies to motivate, the behavior of upward and downward communication and the development of extra-work activities are not entirely strong; in short, they consider that the structure is not entirely appropriate for the promotion of the maturity of the worker. As for the determinants of the organizational process, the level of trust among group members is medium; work morale is high, as are cohesion, understanding and problem-solving skills.

In addition, it was verified that there is a continuous raising of work goals, conflicts are stimulated and confronted to generate solutions, there is involvement in decision

making, effective work strategies are designed and there is skill in planning for the future, however, in this group there is not a total fulfillment of individual expectations, communications are not entirely effective, the degree of autonomy is average and there is not total coordination between the different area

On the other hand, some information suggests that Human Resources policies have not played their role in generating a high degree of commitment, so that the members of this group are not fully motivated to hear, understand and respond to management communications regarding changes in the demands of the environment with implications in salary, work practices, requirements and others.

This group shares the following values: ethics, unity, excellence, hard work, professional growth, sense of belonging, responsibility, creativity and honesty. The Board of Directors considers that the purpose of the organization is to satisfy the needs of its clients and for this purpose it must pay attention to its internal processes as well as to its environment. In its ethical operation, being, knowing, the common good and the attitude towards human nature is optimistic and creative man is considered.

This group is based on the need for self-fulfillment, and the viewpoint of management is focused on the objectives; the attitude towards a crisis is active in the search for opportunities and power is based on the capacity and competence of its managers; group decisions are made; the basis of relationships is collaboration and team spirit; tasks are conceived in a broad profile, the attitude towards conflicts is one of solution and openness, and innovation and development is sufficient.

The human being is considered as a primary value, which is assumed to be good by nature, creative and interested in self-fulfillment. A good subordinate is associated with a person who works hard and is concerned with achieving the objectives set by superiors. A good leader, on the other hand, is seen as one who prioritizes compliance with rules and regulatory requirements. People who "do it right" are aware of and responsible for their formal obligations, have a strong sense of loyalty to the company, and are controlled and influenced through the interest and enjoyment they find in their work. In this company, the individual is treated as a member of a team that contributes its capabilities to the achievement of the common goal.

In interpersonal relationships, tradition and hierarchy are emphasized, competition between people is generally given to gain a position of higher status and prestige within the formal structure of the company, conflicts are controlled by the intervention of superiors and eventually encouraged by them to maintain their power, it is considered legitimate for a person to control the activities of others if their position involves the responsibility of directing others

and they work together when coordination and exchange are specified by the company.

However, Garbo Construction Company does not have an instrument that allows it to determine the personality traits of current and future leaders to be detected, nor a self-assessment scale on the characteristics of the leader, nor a refined survey on decision-making styles. Likewise, the leaders have not been tested on their management style and there is no test on communication in the company, all of which are included in a manual to attract, retain and develop people with the skills or knowledge required by the organization at present and in the future, and consequently determine the effectiveness of the leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

Values and leadership in enterprises have been studied from different perspectives by national and international authors, each one of them approaching a certain edge or dimension of the subject, which allow an approximate analysis of it. Given the importance of this complex subject for Cuban society and organizations, the authors of this work, like others, should continue to deepen the knowledge acquired.

The preparation of cadres and leading officials, in the various types of Cuban construction companies, is a matter of importance in this society. However, what has been achieved so far is far from the expected results. The confrontation of Cuban enterprises with the challenges and dangers arising from an adverse national and world context demands leaders and organizations that are up to the challenge of these times.

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