Reflexive Practices of Managerial Actions: a Way to Promote Health and Well-Being without Losing Sight of Productivity

Práticas Reflexivas das Ações Gerenciais: um Modo de Promover a Saúde e o Bem-Estar sem Perder de Vista a Produtividade

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Managing organizations has always been a challenge, and the person who is in charge of a team is constantly being questioned about his decisions and actions. Because of his strategic role, the manager has a great impact on the results of an organization, as well as on the perceptions that his team has of him. And he must still encounter his own feelings, disappointments, joys, jubilations, and uncertainties. This review is intended to present the work Reflexive Practice of Managerial Actions: a way to promote health and well-being without losing sight of productivity, written by Dr. José Carlos Zanelli and Dr. Andreia Costa Tostes.

The writers are a duo with extensive experience in the organizational world, both in scientific production and in everyday practice. Tostes has experience in the Board of Continuing Education in the Secretariat of Health of the State of Santa Catarina, covering eleven hospital units. He has also developed research activities at the School of Public Health and consultancy work in the area of planning and management in public, private, and non-profit organizations. Zanelli is a seminal reference in the area of organizational and work psychology, and has published dozens of books and scientific texts such as the renowned "Psicologia, Organizações e Trabalho no Brasil", together with Borges-Andrade and Bastos. He has worked for

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over 40 years as a professor and researcher, in addition to performing consulting and advisory activities.

This book offers an intersection between psychology and management, and is intended to teach a strategy for a leadership development program for leaders at all levels. It starts from the assumption that it is possible to promote healthy organizations by equating well-being at work and productivity. As an action strategy, it adopts reflexive practices as a way to learn, that is, it proposes reflection on organizational daily life as a way to learn. Regarding the method, they present interventions at the individual and group levels, considering that they are aimed at managers, a smaller number of people in the hierarchical structures in force. And, that the effectiveness of the proposal is materialized as it offers a safe space for managers to think about their actions and the consequences resulting from them.

The theoretical treatise of the text begins with a presentation of organizations as psychosocial systems, that is, a set of simultaneous actions and reactions of the agents that make the institutions exist: the people who work in them. As the writers themselves say, "working is living together" (p.17) and, therefore, understanding the interactions and the bonds produced by them should be the basis for management analysis. They also point out that a thorough analysis of human interactions at work involves understanding the organizational culture and its impact on workers' health.

In the second and third moments, the work refers to the role of the manager in the development of those who have the function of leading, especially in the transformational aspects. This guideline advocates that management that promotes involvement and enthusiasm is more effective than that based on traditional models. However, the book goes beyond the transformational leadership model and inserts the precepts of collectivity and health at work. They describe the leader's role in the perpetuation of organizational values and beliefs, and the consequences in the socialization process of the workers, more specifically, in the ability to promote values related to respect, diversity, and healthy and productive coexistence. They explain that the authentic interest and appreciation of people should be the basis of managerial actions, when they reiterate that organizations do not achieve lasting and consistent results without the construction of healthy relationships at work. The authors also refer to Bendassolli, Magalhaes, and Malvezzi (2014) to identify the elements

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that characterize transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Still in this excerpt, Zanelli and Tostes discuss an important role for those who decide, or are chosen, for a management position, the exercise of power. It is a fact that the world is full of aversive or unpleasant conditions and that they control our actions. It is common to believe that in organizations power is exercised by force and imposition, through strategies of deprivation, coercion, and punishment. However, such choice has other consequences, which eventually become uncontrollable for any people manager, that is, the use of imposition generates psychological impacts on the team, many times unavoidable. The authors identify these consequences: "feelings of guilt, mistrust, insecurity, resentment, rebellion, aggressiveness, antisocial behavior, social inabilities, performance problems, difficulties to participate, to solve problems, and to innovate, among others" (p.26).

After presenting the social relevance of the development of managers, the theoretical and ethical assumptions, as well as the basis for intervention in organizations, Zanelli and Tostes build the elements of the reflexive practice proposal for managerial actions. It is a pacific point in psychology productions that education is based on the reflexive processes of individuals, that is, in the perception of themselves admitting their life story as a corollary of their actions. Right or wrong are already value judgments, established when the results of one's actions are compared to the models accepted by the groups, organizations, and society in which one lives. Learning takes place in social interaction in any context as in organizations, places where the worker spends much of his life, therefore in a "continuous flow of experiences" (p.33).

According to the authors, the performance of the manager is inserted in the work collective and his actions are responsible for the trust and the good coexistence, factors that impact the mental health of the workers. As an intervention method, the book adopts reflexive practice as a tool to develop the skills of managers. This proposal allows the learning to occur from the daily organizational routine of the trainee, so that every experience is a favorable learning condition. This guideline is important, because it removes the manager from a passive condition, an 'organizational automaton', who only reacts to demands. On the contrary, the practice invites the manager to reflect on the facts occurred, based on the elements: the analysis of

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the context, the behaviors adopted, the feelings experienced, the solutions adopted, and the consequences observed.

The final stage of the work is dedicated to presenting the collective meetings prepared for managerial reflexive practices on their respective themes. To this end, the authors offer the reader their own didactic material used in their consultancies. This didactic approach brings professionals closer to direct intervention, considering that they can make use of the strategies, tools, forms, and aesthetics of two renowned professionals in the management field. The authors emphasize that the purpose of the meetings is to "develop managerial competencies to build healthy and productive collaborative and reflexive work environments" (p.38). It is suggested that the sessions last 90 minutes, in which subjects chosen for their relevance to the intersection of health and productivity are worked on, and consulted with the participants in order to verify their interest and reverberation in their daily lives. The interaction format for the participants can be face-to-face, semi-presence or telepresence, mediated by the coordinators, with the use of visual material in PowerPoint and group and individual exercises. The authors also suggest that the focus groups have between four and six participants, and that subgroups can be formed according to the team.

The model suggested in the book features thirteen sessions. Each session is composed of the following steps: agenda of activities; recent events; objectives of the session; introduction to the theme; exercises and themes; highlighted comments; and, closing questions. The purpose of the agenda is to present the activities that will be proposed in the meeting; recent events ask the participants to report their managerial experiences associated with the contents learned in the program. After the objectives, there is an introduction to the theme, and then the exercises are carried out through group activities mediated by the organizers. Finally, the highlighted comments emphasize the main contributions of the group, in order to synthesize them as solid learning, and the closing questions provide reflections for the participants in the interim until the next meeting.

The book's content offers an abbreviated and robust guideline on how to manage people in work organizations. Psychologists and managers draw on knowledge from this area to understand motivational, attitudinal, emotional, and behavioral aspects. Historically, significant changes in management models have been

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observed. The studies by Münsterberg (1913), Lahy (1916), Mayo (1933), and many others, proposed an understanding of the human factor in management, task execution, and performance enhancement in the workplace. Later, attention was turned to the processes of illness arising from the incompatibility between workers' desires and organizational demands (DEJOURS, 1992). And, concomitantly, it was observed the revival of emotions as a dimension of the worker's life (CHANLAT, 1991). The work shares this ethical-political path of reintegrating the discussion about the importance of perceptions, thoughts, feelings and emotions in the management of people in work organizations. And this vision occurs in a learning process that presupposes a collective, as characterized by the authors themselves, the "harnessing of everyday work experiences", "sharing of experiences, facilitating collective learning", constitution [...] of mutual support networks" and in the "potential of reflexive practice to take root as the culture of the organization" (p.42).

A careful reading is necessary in order not to blame and punish someone when what was planned does not happen, something common in work organizations, as well as in life. It is recurrent to see the individual as just another part in making the result happen. However, the authors' proposition is on the path to humanizing the leader. The book understands that the manager, as a human being, gets emotional, has joys, sorrows, anxieties, frustrations, and all of this influences his daily actions. To ignore these psychological factors is to ignore why someone acts as they do, to understand them requires reflection, as the authors propose.

A factor of utmost importance, the text presents, in some parts, an articulation about the commitments and responsibility of organizational agents, namely: directors, managers, and operational workers. It stresses that organizational effectiveness results from the involvement of all levels of the organization. And, also, it warns about the existence of manager development programs that position the manager as a fundamental factor for the organization's results, without mentioning the necessary conditions for the development of his/her work, namely: working conditions, autonomy, various resources, etc.

Complementarily, it presents the proposition of a social responsibility in order to develop healthy organizations. In the authors' view, to deny some aspects that permeate the work is to ignore what makes people work well or badly, more or less, with or without health. The actions around these issues, sometimes veiled or hidden,

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are characterized as: "Dissimulating objectives and acting in a deceitful manner, aiming to convey an image of credibility, but with hidden underlying intentions, will eventually emerge as cynicism and

hypocrisy" (p.10). These points are developed in the introduction and in the first part of the text, in observance of the reflexive role in organizational actions.

From the learning point of view, this book adopts a practical path, designed for those who are in the daily routine of an organization, in its workforce, or as a consultant, developing leaders. The writing is fluid, clear, and organized, and the sections are linked together to reach their final part with the tool proposals used by the authors themselves during the proposed meetings. Those who read the work will quickly understand the authors' assumptions, their theoretical starting point, objectives, and their work systematization.

The final stage of the book is a transition from these assumptions into a real, plausible program that has already reaped results in organizations, as identified by the authors. The proposal offered to the reader in this section is a model that is easy to understand and should be considered as a starting point for those who intend to act as agents in the development of leaders. On this aspect it is salutary and essential to consider that the organizational contents and demands are local, so it is up to the reader-development agent to understand the model and apply it according to his/her organizational reality. For Daniellou (2004), a model is a guideline characterized by a dated, provisional body of knowledge that serves as an engine for knowledge acquisition, but not a mold whose organizational realities will have to be adjusted.

The book, being eminently practical, is intended for administrators, psychologists, and students who are sensitive to work-related social and emotional factors. Those who work directly with leadership development programs, management training, or even executive mentoring, will benefit from the knowledge explained. Undergraduate professors in administration, management, and organizational psychology can use it as a perspective for understanding organizations with a view to health and productivity, as well as a list of techniques and tools to develop, monitor, and evaluate decisions and actions of managers at various levels. We highlight the relevance of the book as a model of an abbreviated technical manual, however, of theoretical and methodological robustness. Such a proposal makes scientific

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knowledge accessible to management teams and certifies the justification of this knowledge for people's daily lives.

In the field of studies about emotions and work, Zanelli and Tostes offer a different perspective to other authors who blame the individual for what he feels. It is important that it diverges from managerialist productions, which advocate in favor of a total organizational control, including of the emotions, of oneself and of others. This notion is known to overload workers at all levels, and result in sickness and loss of performance. The proposition of a health and productivity ethic has direct impacts on individuals' performance and perceptions of their satisfaction, well-being, and health in the workplace. The text also takes great care not to encourage the election of the manager as the new scapegoat for bad results in work organizations, by portraying the complexity that occurs in the processes of organized human production. And, perhaps, this is one of its most important points to contribute to the discussion about people management, currently, in a practical reflection.

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