Developing Leaders -
What’s important to focus when evaluating intervention programs?

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The world has become increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) (Vicentini et al., 2018), causing constant and rapid change in the organisational context. A good leader is seen as one who keeps pace with change and enhances their skills, aiming to promote successful organisational change (Vicentini et al., 2018).

Leadership development

It focuses on intrapersonal factors, that is, on the subject and the expansion of their capacity, knowledge and skills linked to their performance as a leader, thus increasing the effectiveness of their performance (Day et al., 2014; McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004).

With the continuous need to have effective leaders and to develop their leadership competencies, organisations invest in learning and developing leaders by undertaking processes, practices and activities (McCauley et al., 2010).

Various leader development programmes stand out

The existence of a range of programmes is marked by providing diverse activities, varying in objectives, content, pedagogical techniques and intended outcomes (McCauley, 2008).

Leader development programmes are based on ways of looking at leadership and can draw on various development strategies such as:

- Job rotation
- Executive Coaching
- Learning by doing
- Mentoring
- Lectures
- E-learning, B-learning
- Developmental Assessment Centres
- Case study method
- Management Games/Simulation
- Role-Playing
- University Level Programmes
- Theatre Training, Music Training
- Outdoor Training
- Behaviour Modelling

Any development initiative should include an evaluation component (Day et al., 2014), a practice which is not always adopted. Barriers to undertaking outcome and impact evaluation (Russon & Reinelt, 2004):

- Insufficient funding
- Low priority for long-term evaluation
- Lack of knowledge on how to guide evaluation

Three evaluation models

Esper’s Evaluation Model

This model provides criteria and action guidelines that enable us to understand the development programme and its learning process. It presents seven criteria to focus on:

1. Guiding discourse of the programme
2. Foundations of the conception of leadership and leader
3. Concept of leader
4. Concept of leadership
5. Foundations of the concept of learning
6. Learning process
7. Depth level of the development process

(Kirkpatrick, 2008)

Kirkpatrick’s Evaluation Model

It provides information on the effectiveness of the leadership development programme, both at individual and organisational level. There are four levels that represent a sequence of ways to carry out the evaluation and each has its own relevance and ultimately impacts on the next level (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Level 1 - Reactions
Level 2 - Learning
Level 3 - Behaviour
Level 4 - Results

The Theory of Change Approach

It explains how and why a set of logically linked activities or events lead to the desired outcomes and impacts (Weiss, 1995).

According to this model, a programme is based on an implicit or explicit theory about how and why the programme will work (Weiss, 1995).

The evaluation should emerge from these theories and present in detail the assumptions included in the programme (Weiss, 1995).

Given the temporal and financial investment made and considering the impact that a programme may have on the leader and in the organisation, it is crucial that an evaluation of the programme takes place to determine its efficacy, pertinence, and adaptability to the context where it was implemented.

References


