Calling for authentic leadership management essay

Authentic Leadership literature supports the existence of a positive relationship between perceived AL, follower work engagement, and positive attitudes like calling. Our research doesn't confirm that relationship and foster the possibility of AL influence could not be felt by employees. It was also expected, theoretically, a positive effect of calling as well as with trust. We've found a significant negative effect on the relationship between AL and calling. But our findings brought some positive insights. There was a positive significant relationship between calling and work engagement. Calling had also moderated, with a positive significant result, the relationship between AL and work engagement. Future research should focus on the importance of perceived AL within the education public services, and the significant effect of calling on work engagement. Our study suggests that organizations could promote employee calling work orientations, stimulate leaders to become more authentic, improving positively organization performance.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Authentic Leadership, Work orientations, Calling.

Introduction

People need, now more than ever, to believe and trust in their leaders. Believe, as in Gilbert (1991), involves the knowledge and mental representation of significant information, which is regarded as truthful. The authenticity of the leader, in exercising its positive qualities of character, will be the lighthouse that will help people to face the growing complexity and of trust deficit that storms present days. That is why, from the bankruptcy of several global firms (Enron, Northern Rock, Lehman Brothers) and the noticed lack of honesty on the part of its leaders, a new focus of interest in

the study of leadership has emerged that in turn has led both researchers and professionals in management towards the now renamed " authentic leadership" (AL).

Leaders often underestimate the challenge of engaging employees, but it is becoming increasingly important, given that disengaged employees represent a high cost to the organizations (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007). Employee engagement has a direct effect on performance (Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006).

Authentic leadership is positively related to engagement, as authentic leaders strengthen the feelings of self-efficacy, competence and confidence of their followers, , as well as the identification with the leader and the organization, which results in higher levels of engagement (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, et al., 2005). On this topic, Cartwright and Holmes (2006, p. 206) argue that: " As individuals become increasingly disenchanted and disillusioned with work and fatigued by the constant demand to change and to be flexible in response to organizational needs, employers now need to actively restore the balance, recognize the meaning and emotional aspects of work and move towards creating a more energized, fulfilled and engaged workforce".

From a professional's perspective of AL, Bill George (2003) gave the motto and, in his book " True North, Discovering your authentic Leadership", employed a very effective metaphor for presenting the importance of authenticity: top executives should use their internal compass to find and follow the True North in the business world. On the other hand, researchers

such as Luthans and Avolio (2003), helped to improve the AL construct by defining it as " a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development" (p. 243). This alternative of leadership is immersed in a specific field of psychology, known as Positive Psychology, focusing on the study and appreciation of forces, virtues and most positive aspects of life, focusing on the development of people, self-realization and meaning of life (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). Positive Psychology emphasizes the study of grace, excellence and authenticity, raising their importance as determinants for life to the level of diseases, disorders or anxieties (Peterson & Seligman, 2003). Also, the study of work engagement is regarded by Positive Psychology as very important.

We are aware that when we study leadership we must not forget followers. They follow those who lead, not for them, but for a greater good. As Kets de Vries (2001, p. 107) argue, " meaningful activity at work becomes a way to transcend personal concerns; it becomes a way to create a sense of continuity. Leaving behind a legacy through work becomes an affirmation of the person's sense of self and identity; it can become an important form of narcissistic gratification." Meaningful work fosters the employees' self-esteem, hope, health, happiness and sense of personal growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).

In specific case of schools, teachers are followers, working for the greater good of society, but need to be highly engaged in their job, because dealing with young people and their specific traits is not easy and entails more than

merely a salary in return for their work. It is far more than simply a well-paid job and a structured career, working in a mass public school requires a special kind of dedication and a humanitarian orientation, caring for young people, shifting their future. When teachers feel that the organization cares for and is helpful to the community, they feel that they are performing meaningful work. Chalofsky (2003) has consistently demonstrated that people rate purpose, fulfillment, autonomy, satisfaction, close working relationships and learning as more important than money. Frankl (1984) said that the " search for meaning is the primary motivation in life."

The present paper extends the study of the relationship between AL and Work Engagement, focusing on an additional construct which is Work Orientations. This study will be endeavored from the followers' standpoint. To achieve this, correlations are sought between the dimensions of those constructs, based on answers given by public secondary schools teachers. This paper is structured as follows. First, a description of the constructs under evaluation is given: Work Engagement, AL and Work Orientations. Next we present hypotheses dewed to the proposed theoretical model. This includes the relationship between Work Orientations, namely of its component Calling, with AL and Work Engagement is analyzed. The objective is to capture relationships between authentic leadership and engagement characteristics and the essence of work orientations. Finally, the usual format is followed: method, results, discussion and conclusions. The main limitations of this research and suggestions for future studies are also explored.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is an important conceptualization of adults' happiness and well-being at work. Engagement refers to the relationship the employee has with his work; the better the relationship, the greater the level of engagement (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). This construct reflects a Positive Psychology trend defined, in 2002, by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romáthe and Bakker as " a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (p. 74). Vigor refers to " high levels of energy and mental resilience while working", i. e., the will and persistence of someone who is engaged with the work. Dedication is defined as a strong involvement in one's work and a fulfilled meaning of it. Absorption means the concentration and happiness felt on one's work that helps time passes quickly.

Work engagement has a close relationship with a phenomenon that has been studied for a quarter of a century, the burnout syndrome. While burnout is caused by deterioration of working health, work engagement is associated to a process of improving that working health. According to a recent review, work engagement is positively associated, for instance, with mental and psychosomatic health, intrinsic motivation, efficacy beliefs, positive attitudes towards work and the organization, and high performance (Schaufeli and Salanova 2007).

According to Buskist, Benson and Sikorski (2005), teachers who have a call, presented different work engagement behaviors, namely: (1) demonstrated a broad and in-depth knowledge of the subject to teach; (2) turned relevant the knowledge on the day-to-day issues; (3) emphasized the critical thinking

on the part of students; and (4) shared with each other their values, trivia and academic enthusiasm.

Authentic Leadership

AL emerged as an important component in the positive leadership studies since its initial conceptualization, in the late seventies, until its theoretical maturity was proposed as a " root construct of leadership theory" (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005, p. 315). The construct AL was initially proposed by Luthans and Avolio (2003) and was developed by Gardner et al. (2005) and Avolio and Luthans (2006). However, Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa & May (2004) were the first to propose this as a theoretical model, derived from the positive organizational behavior, in which leaders are deeply aware of how people think and behave, the context in which they operate and are perceived by others, as well as aware of values/morals systems, knowledge, perspectives. They are also conscious of their own strengths as well as of that of others. In AL, there are four characteristic dimensions that describe the behavior of the leaders and allow its recognition as authentic, as displayed in Table 1:

Insert Table 1 about here

In this way, the theoretical model of AL includes not only leader behaviors but also its characteristics as well as of their followers, such as their levels of psychological capital, suggesting a more integrated approach to the study of leadership and organizational behavior (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans, Norman, & Hughes, 2006). Authentic leaders will be those " who know who they are and know what they believe in (Avolio, Gardner & Walumbwa, 2005,

p. 13). When leaders are aware of how their own actions affect those who are around them, being open and transparent to the processes and influences within and outside of their organizations, the followers have a better sense of the organizational goals/challenges. Hence, a measure of AL will be based not only on the followers' perceptions as well as those of the leaders (Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Nonetheless, AL is emerging as an alternative perspective on leadership in different organizational settings including education. In terms of education it is the work of Paul Begley that is most associated with AL (Begley, 2001; 2006). Often the values-based literature on AL has also been attributed to the work of Robert Starratt (2004). Begley (2006) proposes three prerequisites to AL in schools: self-knowledge, a capacity for moral reasoning, and sensitivity to the orientation of others. Duignan (2007), referring to an authentic approach to educational leadership, argue " that while authentic leadership focuses on ethics and morality in actions and interactions, it also must promote and support the core values of schooling, that is, educative and authentic teaching and learning". So, " Authentic educative leaders challenge others to participate in a visionary dialogue of identifying in curriculum, teaching and learning (especially pedagogy) what is worthwhile, what is worth doing (moral purpose) and preferred ways of doing and acting together".

Can't wait for great AL results in contexts in which the trust is shaken. However, it is in times of crisis that people discover ways to better prepare the future. Thus, we are convinced that self-consciousness is absolutely fundamental in building great organizations. You cannot be emotionally

intelligent if you are not also self-aware. This requires, in addition to maturity, an intense work of self-examination or individuation. The criticisms, even the toughest, are essential for the construction of self-awareness. To do so, you need to get honest feedback from followers. I. e. the followers must also be authentic.

Especially in public schools, teachers have great need of someone that listen, understand and, above all, tell them the truth. If we practice authenticity, is on teamwork, on the professional department, that such support appears. The authentic leaders have to maintain high levels of motivation, especially in this era of " trigger events". Such extrinsic motivation will help if it is seen as an opportunity to change the future and make it better.

Work orientations

Employees increase their commitment and quality of life due to satisfaction with work (Loscoco & Roschelle, 1991, Wrzesniewski, A. McCauley, C., Rozin, P. and Schwartz, B., 1997). People who consider their work as a Job live simply to earn money, as that allows them to do whatever they wish to do outside of their job. They have little investment and gain little satisfaction other than the paycheck. As Wrzesniewski et al (1997) said, " The major interests and ambitions of Job holders are not expressed through their work" (p. 22). When work is perceived as a job, people look forward to taking a break, finishing work, the weekend, public holidays, and vacations. Outside of their working hours, little or no thought, time, or energy is devoted to the work. On the other hand, people who believe that the most important thing in their life is their Career place importance not only on the money they can

possibly earn, but also on their ability to climb to the upper realms of power or make decisions within their organization. A career is perceived as a progression of continuous improvement through pay raises, promotions, better opportunities and experiences regarded as essential to ongoing advancement. People commit themselves to working far beyond the normal workday, during evenings, weekends, and vacations. As such, they " have a deeper personal investment in their work and mark their achievements" (Wrzesniewski et al, 1997, p. 22). Coetzee (2008) recently presents valuable theoretical framework (career enablers, career drivers, career harmonizers, career preferences and career values) to help individuals recognize the significance of developing their inner career resources and drawing on these psychological resources to improve their universal employability characteristics and abilities. Last but not least, we refer to Calling as the way people live to work. Their work is something that simply fulfills their lives. They are unconcerned with earnings or career advancements. A calling is work that a person feels called to do by a higher power. Work that is a calling feels like it both contributes to humanity and is also in line with an individual's purpose in life. Characteristically, people perceiving their work as a calling indicate they would do the work for little or no pay, so satisfying is it. Bunderson and Thompson (2009) concluded that people feels calling " as a cause rather than as a consequence of choices and sacrifices" so " individuals develop an early sense of their gifts and interests, which leads them to certain types of work, which in turn motivates them to justify their choices, which in turn deepens their occupational commitment, and so on" (p. 53). For those individuals, it is the work itself which provides satisfaction,

rather than any external recognition or reward. People " find that their work is inseparable from their life" (Wrzesniewski et al, 1997, p. 22).

In an article, suggestively named " The Call to teach", Buskist et al (2005) reported that the performance and well-being of teachers and students depend to a large extent on how teachers see their profession as a call.

Dobrow (2007, p. 4) argued that some authors have dealt with the sense of calling and differently named, but related, constructs: (1) work orientations, including a calling orientation (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997); (2) work preferences, particularly intrinsic motivation (Amabile et al., 1994); (3) a discerned, conscious sense of calling (Weiss et al., 2003; Hall and Chandler, 2005); and (4) work engagement and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Kahn, 1990; May, Gilson, and Harter, 1999). Dobrow (idem) suggested that domain-specific self-esteem, " one of the psychological conditions of work engagement", i. e., the " people's feelings about their abilities", is a very important calling component (p. 6). The author have considered seven calling " core elements: passion, identity, urgency, engulfs consciousness, sense of meaning, domain-specific self-esteem and subjective sense of longevity" (p. 7).

Hypotheses

We expected, as in specialized literature, AL positive influence on work engagement. Then, we explore the novelty of the positive relationship between AL and Calling accordingly with Positive Psychology study and appreciation of forces, virtues, self-realization and meaning of life. We study also the positive relationship between Calling and Work Engagement. Finally,

we assume that Calling could foster the relationship between AL and Work Engagement. The theoretical model used in this study is presented on Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Leaders Authentic Leadership as predictor of teacher's work engagement

Toor and Ofori (2008, p. 620) give the following description of authentic leaders: " Authentic project leaders possess positive values, lead from the heart, set highest levels of ethics and morality, and go beyond their personal interests for well-being of their followers. They capitalize on the environment of trust and are able to motivate people and accomplish challenging tasks." Authentic leaders are stated as role models by Avolio and Gardner (2005) as " leading by example" (p. 326).

So we can infer that AL causes transformation of the followers, however, this occurs because of the transparency of the leader and not because of deliberate actions with the objective to change followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders also foster authenticity among their subordinates, feel less threatened by the changes that employees' genuine/creative ideas may imply and are more inclined to welcome their creative suggestions (Michie & Gooty, 2005). Thus:

H1: Leaders Authentic Leadership is positively associated with teacher's work engagement.

Authentic Leadership as predictor of teacher's calling

Avolio & Gardner (2005) and later Spitzmuller & Ilies (2010) described authentic leadership, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, and spiritual leadership as positive leadership styles. They explained that these different positive leadership styles are very close in meaning and understanding. However, authentic leadership is considered to be the root concept of positive leadership styles. Thus, authentic leadership can incorporate other leadership styles. Avolio & Gardner (2005) and Spitzmuller & Ilies (2010) outlined that both transformational and charismatic leadership deliberately focus on the follower and his actions, transforming the follower and making the follower identify himself with the leader are the objectives. Csikszentmihalyi's research on flow (1990) has found that the activities that foster optimal experiences, which can be viewed as episodic manifestations of a calling, are characterized by being challenging and requiring appropriate skills. This line of argument leads us to our second hypothesis:

H2: Leaders Authentic Leadership is positively associated with teacher's calling.

Teacher's calling as predictor of Teacher's work engagement

Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) found that the calling orientation was strongly linked to life and job satisfaction. According to Dobrow (2007, p. 7) calling is comprised of the following core elements: (1) passion; (2) identity; (3) urgency; (4) engulfs consciousness; (5) sense of meaning; (6) domain-specific self-esteem, and (7) subjective sense of longevity. The author (p. 6) considered the domain-specific self-esteem as crucial on calling construct.

She quotes the importance of people's subjective perceptions of their

abilities on work engagement and includes it on the characterization of " flow-encouraging activities" from Csikszentmihalyi. Thus:

H3: Teacher's calling is positively associated with teacher's work engagement.

Teacher's calling as a moderator of the relationship between Leaders Authentic Leadership and teachers' work engagement

Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) finding that calling orientation was strongly linked to life and job satisfaction. In their study, Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter (2011, pp. 7-8) considered that " personal resources like self-esteem, optimism, and self-e¬fcacy help employees to cope with the daily demands in organizational life." They also consider the " climate for engagement" where employees are " more likely to respond by investing time and energy and by being psychologically involved in the work of their organization" (p. 13). This line of argument leads us to our fourth hypothesis:

H4: Teacher's calling moderates the relationship between Leaders Authentic Leadership and teachers' work engagement.

Method

Data and Sample

Data was collected by distributing a questionnaire containing questions for three different organizational behavior variables. Data collection was done by distributing personally self-administered surveys. This means that those who received the questionnaire were not obligated to participate. Due to the sensitive nature of the questions on the behavior of the leader, we included

a section in the introduction of the questionnaire in which we emphasized the anonymous and confidential nature of the analysis of results. The population which received the questionnaire was a non-probability convenience sample because we distributed the questionnaire within schools on a wide range in the north littoral of Portugal. The dataset contains data of in total 326 respondents, followers that knew and meet frequently their leader, between the age of 31 and 62 years old. Among the employees, or followers, who filled in the questionnaire, were 24. 2% male and 75. 8% female, normal on education research.

Measures

Authentic Leadership We have used the translated into Portuguese 16 items scale to measure the independent variable Authentic Leadership (AL), called the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) which is formed and tested by Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) and has been widely used in research. Some sample items are: (1) Accurately describes how others view his or her capabilities (self-awareness); (2) Listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions (balanced processing); (3) Demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions (internalized moral perspective perspective); (4) Says exactly what he or she means (relational transparency).

The follower's perception of the authentic leader is used to measure AL as it is often explained that the perception of the leader by the follower determines the existence of a leader and his effectiveness, and the perception possibly differs when different values are maintained by the follower (Lord & Maher, 1994; Yan & Hunt, 2005). The original Cronbach's

Alfa of this measure was . 84 and for our sample was . 89. Employees were asked to report the frequency (0: " not at all"; 4: " frequently, if not always") with which their supervisors adopted the 16 behaviors. We conducted a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and we obtain a medium Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy of . 710. After the PCA was checked for suitability, the analysis showed that it is suitable to use the scale as measuring one core factor which explained 41. 23 % of the variance. As the total variance explained table shows, four possible components exist and explained 73, 636 % of the total variance. This finding was supported by the scree plot which showed a clear break after the first component and the component matrix revealed that all items load on component one (Cattell, 1966; Pallant, 2007). We computed an overall AL score as is more appropriate which is consistent with findings of Walumbwa et al. (2008).

Work Orientations We measured work orientations using a translated adaptation of the " University of Pennsylvania WORK-LIFE questionnaire" used by Wrzesniewski et al (1997). We have translated the 18 items into Portuguese asking about specific aspects of relationships at work ignoring the authors' true-false proposition. Some sample items are: (1) " My work makes the world a better place" (calling); (2) " I am eager to retire" (job); (3) " I view my job primarily as a stepping stone to other jobs" (career). A five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being " strongly disagree" and 5 being " strongly agree" was used for the subjects' responses to each of the 18 items. We also conducted a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) and we have obtained a non-acceptable Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy of . 341. Thus, we have decided to consider only the Calling

component, respecting Wrzesniewski proposed items, within the present research and its estimated Cronbach's alpha was . 696.

Work Engagement Follower engagement was measured using the 9-item, translated into Portuguese, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), free for use for non-commercial scientific research, formed and tested by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), which originates from the 17-item UWES. Some sample items are: (1) " At my work I feel bursting with energy" (vigor); (2) " My job inspires me" (dedication); (3) " I feel happy when I am working intensely" (absorption). These items used a seven point Likert scale with 0 being " never" and 6 being " always". Within the present research the estimated Cronbach's alpha was . 94 (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Cronbach's Î±=. 89). The PCA was used to measure the higher order structure of the 9 items scale of follower engagement as well. After checking the suitability of the analysis, the test showed that the scale measured one core factor explaining 68. 67 % of the variance. Additionally, the scree plot showed a clear break after the first component and the factors loaded strongly on the first component (Cattell, 1966; Pallant, 2007). We computed an overall work engagement score as recommended by Schaufeli, W., Bakker, A., & Salanova, M. (2006).

Control variables In all analyses, time of work with current leader, service time in school and age of the respondent were controlled for because of their possible influence on the outcome variables included in the present research. These variables were included in the demographics section of the questionnaire.

Data analysis

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between leaders' authentic leadership, on the point of view of the followers, and follower calling and work engagement and to test calling for moderation. This analysis accounts for the step by step inclusion of controlling, independent, dependent, and moderating variables in the analysis (Hox, 2002; Pallant, 2007). The independent and dependent variables and the moderator variable in this study were individual-level variables. In the analysis, the hypotheses were tested in three steps. In the first step, the control variables (i. e. time of work with current leader, service time in school and age of the respondent) were considered. In the second step, the independent variable (i. e. perceived authentic leadership) and Calling were entered. In the third step, the independent variable (i. e. perceived authentic leadership) and the moderator variable (i. e. calling) were entered.

Results

Descriptive results

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all study measures included in the present research. The amount of males and females in the sample reflected the normal settlement of gender distribution on education sector (M = 1. 76, SD = 0. 43).

Insert Table 2 about here

Test of Hypotheses

Table 1 and 2 both show results to test the stated hypotheses. As table 1 shows the correlations among the variables, table 2 contains the results of the hierarchical regression analysis of the two dependent variables (i. e. work engagement and calling). Table 1 shows significant correlations between perceived authentic leadership and calling ($r = -.25$, $p < 0.01$), time of work with current leader ($r = .27$, $p < 0.01$), and service time in school ($r = .17$, $p < 0.01$). We must also refer the significant correlation between calling and work engagement ($r = .56$, $p < 0.01$).

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis within table 2 are used to test the stated hypotheses. Step 1 show that the controlling variables (i. e. age, time of work with current leader, and service time in school of the followers) have significant statistically influence on work engagement ($Î''$ $R^2 = .10$, $p < 0.001$). Including the independent variable, perceived authentic leadership, and work engagement and calling in step 2 led to a significant shift in variance explained for the dependent variable calling ($Î''$ $R^2 = .08$, $p < 0.001$).

Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that a positive association exists between the perceived authentic leadership and follower work engagement and calling. Hypothesis 1 was not supported and we don't have found statistically significant results. Hypothesis 2 was not supported too because we have found statistically significant negative results ($ß = -0.30$, $p < 0.001$).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that a positive association exists between follower calling and work engagement. A significant and positive support was found with a statistically significant data ($ß = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the calling of the followers moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and follower work engagement. Hypothesis 4 was supported as being statistically significant ($ß = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$).

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion and conclusions

Making sense of the main findings

The present study didn't confirm the results of previous studies (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Ilies, et al., 2005; Toor & Ofori, 2008) in emphasizing the significant effects of perceived authentic leadership on the follower work engagement. We can notice even there was a not significant negative effect ($ß = -0.09$). This could be explained because followers in that public schools context had a specific relationship with leaders. They work daily without close control. They only contact leaders when there were disciplinary and pedagogic problems or meetings during the year. Thus, they feel freer to do their job proposing their own solutions. Begley (2006) proposes three prerequisites to AL in schools: self-knowledge, a capacity for moral reasoning, and sensitivity to the orientation of others. We can also say that AL is not yet a characteristic leadership process on every school. While few school leaders claim to be authentic leaders, there is no empirical research on whether

these perceptions are shared by their followers. We shall conclude that followers we have studied didn't feel or perceive AL as the respondents of other referred studies.

About AL effect on followers' calling, a significant negative effect (-. 30, p <0, 001) was found and it becomes a bit strange because it was expected, theoretically, a positive relationship between AL and calling. In fact, Avolio et al (2004) suggested that AL increases employees' identification with the organization and the leader, thus fostering employees´ positive emotions (as well as trust, hope and calling), which in turn promote their optimism and positive work attitudes, thereby influencing their work engagement.

The predictive power of