

Chapter I

Epistemology of Strategic Leadership

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Abstract: A characteristic of the social sciences are their polysemic concepts, and strategic leadership is not an exception, so a framework is required that bases its study. This chapter explores the various theories that have emerged about leadership, with the purpose of bringing to the surface the interrelationships of diverse knowledge, which do not seem to be interconnected. The paradigms and approaches of the social sciences that have underpinned research on human behavior within organizations were reviewed, which made possible to show that theories on strategic leadership have been built from observations on the actions of leaders and followers, which are represented by words that, when interrelated, have generated concepts that are interwoven in a logical way, and thus account for their rigor as a phenomenon studied by the social sciences.

Keywords: strategic leadership, epistemology, organizations, social sciences, human behavior.

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THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE NOTIONS OF WAR AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

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Introduction

The knowledge of *strategic leadership* is part of the field of social sciences and addresses the study of human behavior, its relationships, power and decision-making; all of them, central issues in the social episteme. The social sciences, says Wallerstein (2001), emerged with Modernity, in the 16th century, when a systematic knowledge was developed that has empirical validation on historical accounts, which allowed us to understand the present and laid the foundations for making decisions about the future; that is, the social sciences were born with the technique of empirical research of archives, genesis of the topics that make up the chapters of this book.

Subsequently, studies on social phenomena acquired more figuration in the sciences with the approaches of Augusto Comte and John Stuart Mill, in the nineteenth century, when these authors investigated human behavior through methods that made it possible to contrast “reality” based on empirical discoveries. But it was only with the approaches of the German sociologist Max Weber and the creation of the German *sociological society*, in the 1920s, when the “scientific” study of the social sciences was institutionalized (Castro et al., 2016), with pretensions of becoming nomothetic sciences. The interest of this type of study was to arrive at general laws on human behavior, using quantitative techniques (Wallerstein, 2001). But with this method, the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character with which social phenomena are approached was recast, from varied knowledge, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, politics and organizational studies, among others (Myrdal, 1970). The identity of these disciplines and their interactions in the episteme of the activities of human beings originate various fields of study that analyze, in turn, multiple phenomena -one of them, *strategic leadership*-, which are

required to be enthroned in the very foundations of the epistemology of the social sciences.

Therefore, it is important to investigate underlying premises that, apparently, do not come to the surface in studies on leadership, that is, to immerse oneself in the knowledge of knowledge about leadership, but which account for its rigor, such as the precision in the use of concepts, propositions and theories, where the coherence between the ontological and the epistemic of the variables it deals with becomes notorious. Without losing sight of the fact that the phenomena investigated by the social sciences change in accordance with the constellations of power, in both geographical and historical aspects. This practice is innate to the social sciences and has generated various paradigms, without its research losing its place in science. A different view would be to accept that human behavior, such as strategic leadership, obeys universal laws and is indifferent to situations of time, place and culture.

This chapter draws attention to the fact that science is an activity that produces knowledge using a method that finds answers to our questions (Pérez, 2001) But what is also valued is that raised by Creswell & Plano (2018), who affirm that science is not a single method, but several methods that develop procedures and base their approval on the validity of the propositions on the observations of the actions of human beings; said propositions. In addition, are open to evaluation by the community, so that the theories that arise from such evaluation are approved or rejected, in order to improve the understanding of phenomena such as, for the case, strategic leadership.

In the social sciences, the term *theory* serves to describe a set of interlinked propositions. These propositions are constructed from observations of people's activities, and which are represented by words that, when interrelated, form grammatically constructed propositions, which, in turn, generate concepts that are logically interwoven (Tobón, 2009) In strategic leadership, theories have been constructed following this method, which accounts for its rigor as a component of the social sciences and, therefore, validates its category of object of study within the inquiries of social knowledge.

This chapter explores the various theories that have emerged about leadership, as well as its schools of thought, focusing on its epistemology. The purpose is to bring to the surface the interrelationships of diverse knowledge borrowed from multiple disciplines. It explores some paradigms and approaches of the social sciences that have underpinned research on human behavior within organizations,

whether they are public agencies, companies, non-governmental organizations or Military Forces (FF. MM.).

Here it is observed that the different theories do not start from scratch but are generated from certain instrumental capacities. As Sassen (2019) states, it is a process that generates new logic through the construction of analytical tools to study new situations as society and its organizations mature. But it is important not to fall into the trap of endogeneity, which affects the social sciences. As Sassen (2019) insists, or into the tautology that characterizes the social sciences, as Maxim (2002) asserts.

To avoid these situations and understand the evolution of theories on strategic leadership, it is important to isolate the foundational components that make up certain totalities. For example, in this book the theories on leadership can be empirically evidenced, and for their study it is required that in the reading of each chapter of the book it is considered that the relevant totalities are the theories of war and that each one has components on strategic leadership, which, in turn, could be isolated as long as they can adopt different forms and contents in accordance with the historical and geopolitical aspects that were experienced in each war. That is, strategic leadership within each war is an analytical category, with its properties and dimensions that characterize it as an object of study within the social sciences.

Schools in the study of strategic leadership

The word *leadership*, according to the Real Academia Española, is “1 Leader status 2. Exercise of the activities of a leader”(Rae, 2022); and in the words of the Spanish Frigate Captain Federico Aznar, “A leader is a tuner of souls and that is an art that is difficult to rationalize, because science cannot be”(Aznar, 2018, p. 19). This would be a definition in the first instance or, as Nobel laureate Kahneman (2017) would say, derived from *System 1*, with which one thinks quickly; one could hastily conclude that leadership is a subject that distances itself from science.

But when the exercise of the verb *lead* is assigned the adjective *strategic*, the compound word *strategic leadership* is generated, thanks to which leadership acquires a new meaning, and makes. For example, Aznar review its definition and affirm: “Strategic leadership incorporates an intellectual dimension, of creation of frameworks” (2018, p. 19); also, that argues about the intellectual dimension through a narrative, by referring to strategy as “an integral term that means, at the same time, clarity of objectives, way of achieving them and rational use of the

instruments. It is the projection and development of thought in time and space”(Aznar, 2018, p. 59). It is inferred from this proposition that the *integral* entails *complex logics* between times, objectives and modes, and that *rational use* implies *cognitive processes* in the projection of thought. This allows us to affirm that leadership is an object of research only through the methods and techniques of the social sciences when reference is made to leadership within the decisive levels in organizations; that is, when strategies are designed that lead to decision making.

In addition, the strategy in the field of leadership becomes an articulating cement of two schools. One of them is the *cultural school* (Parry & Bryman, 2019), which bases its principles on *organizational culture*, an internal belief system that allows the cohesion and enthusiasm of a human group around the achievement of objectives of a common and higher end. The other is the *school of the environment* (Sanabria, 2019), which is based on the exercise of power outside the organization. In this regard, Aznar complements his concept of an organization’s strategy, which he defines as the “crossroads between the culture it offers and what the environment demands for the achievement of its mission” (Aznar, 2018, p. 43). Therefore, its integrating characteristic of the internal with the external is ratified.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of leadership is related to the exercise of influence, and although there are different approaches, the definitions of the leader and the schools that analyze it have as an underlying element the compliance of a human group in order to achieve common objectives (Sastre, 2014). Also, as noted in another definition,

Leadership is a complex phenomenon that affects many organizational, social, and personal processes. It depends on a process of influence, whereby people are inspired to work towards the goals of the group, not by coercion, but by personal motivation. (Bolden, 2004, p. 5)

Yukl et al. (2002) conceptualize in this regard: “Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to achieve common goals” (p.

Professors Parry and Briman (2019) have identified five approaches in leadership research, which became dynamic after the end of World War II, in line with the dynamics of Europe’s recovery and the creation of various international bodies of the global order, such as the United Nations (UN):

- a) **Trait theory:** This approach, which prevailed until the beginning of the Cold War, is characterized by innate qualities in people who exercise leadership in their organizations, said Stogdill (cited by Sastre, 2014).
- b) **Style approaches:** They changed the look from the characteristics of the leaders, to direct it towards their behaviors. In this field, approaches such as the *theory of skills* were highlighted, according to which leaders are formed from educational processes (Mester Cheryl et al., 2003) and that they originate various types of leadership (autocratic, democratic and *laissez-faire*), based on goal-oriented behaviors. This, in turn, gave rise to *behaviorist theories*, such as those proposed by Blake and Mouton, cited by Josanov-Vrgovic and Pavlovic (2014), through a management matrix, and which were rethought, in turn, by Hersey and Blanchard, cited by Kouzes and Posner (2017), arguing that the emphasis of leaders is on behavior, and not on attitude, depending on the situation in which they found themselves, which led to *situational theory*.
- c) **Contingency approach:** From the variables identified in situational theory, quantitative models emerge to measure the relationship between the leader and team members with a structure of tasks and positions of power. This led to contingency theory (Mendoza, 2009), a model that relates the leader's behaviors to the achievement of results based on a series of contingent factors (Parry & Bryman, 2019). Especially, the relationships between the people who make up an organization in search of fulfilling tasks.
- d) **New leadership approach:** With the rise of free trade and globalization in the 1980s, *systemic analyses* were strengthened, where the leader's achievements depend on his own interaction with each team member. Hence the *transactional theory*, which is characterized by the establishment of a kind of "exchange" between the leader and the members of the group, so that the scope of the goals is harmonized with the roles played by each member of the organization (Cuadrado et al., 2008). This theory is complemented by *transformational leadership*, characterized by establishing a correspondence between the leader and his followers that causes a transformation in the organizational culture, motivating them to achieve better and higher levels of performance and job satisfaction (Cuadrado et al., 2008).
- e) **Post-charismatic and post-transformational leadership approach:** Professors Parry and Briman (2019) consider that current discussions on

leadership continue to maintain the dilemma of whether “the leader is born or made”; that is, whether or not it is the product of a charismatic heritage, a formation or a transformation of beliefs and attitudes. Due to advances in science and technology, these two thoughts on the leaders that give rise to *distributed leadership* have evolved, which is based on a leadership exercised by all members of the organization, as a holistic vision, where the dynamic is more than the sum of individual capacities (Shilton, 2004). Another current within this approach is *Authentic Leadership*, characteristic for being a multidimensional and multilevel process that thrives on positive psychological capacities that allow both leaders and followers to self-regulate (Mendoza, 2009). Hence, in turn, *complex leadership* arises, where the results are obtained by the interrelationships of many parties that interact with each other, and creativity, learning and adaptive capacity are stimulated, to find solutions to the problems that arise in a world marked by uncertainty and complexity (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). This leadership has, in turn, a subverter: *relational leadership*, where the relationships of organizations prevail, promoting the evolution of social order and a mutation of behaviors and paradigms.

These leadership approaches and theories incorporate meaning terms that are polysemic, making conceptualization very difficult. In this regard, it is important to consider what Koselleck stated: “The de-substantiation of the nuclear categories of political and social discourse is already indicating the end of the substantialization of several concepts” (2021, p. 56). The latter is the case of the own leadership of the *influencers* of the 21st century, who may be the leaders of greater importance in contemporary society, by recasting the propositions of the approaches set forth here.

The importance of concepts in strategic leadership knowledge

The evolution of theories on leadership makes it possible to show that, from its conceptual roots, based on disciplines such as history and political science - and lately, in psychology, sociology or the sciences of organizations (García-Guiu & Álvarez, 2022), it has been possible to objectify the study of leadership, making it the object of intellectual analysis. The aforementioned sciences provide a framework to

understand the nature of theoretical guidelines, as well as the type of epistemological problems that will be faced (Koselleck, 2021). In this way, knowledge about leadership goes beyond a narrative regarding an activity, an attitude or a skill, and is seen as a phenomenon that generates questions, based on scientific concepts.

The concepts immersed in strategic leadership, considering their historical trait, from the writings of Sun Tzu and Aristotle, carry diverse meanings that make them plural, almost indefinable. Then it is necessary to explore the origin of each concept, but making a transliteration of past concepts into our present vocabulary; that is, to assimilate those concepts of the past that today could be foreign to us, without pretending to study exclusively the categories with which the same actors could conceive their actions, since it would fall into the trap of endogeneity or tautology, which characterize the social sciences, as already noted above. It is necessary to take an analytical distance that allows the concept to be thematized, as Koselleck suggests, and that Sassen had no longer recommended it.

Therefore, it is important to find semantic nuclei with some permanence, which make it possible to establish a link between modern and premodern categories; something similar to what Imre Lakatos proposed in his scientific research program (Castro et al., 2016). In such a way that significant nuclei that cross the various eras would be identified, and thus return to premodern concepts recoverable in the present, as Koselleck argues, to expand our own definition and incorporate into the analysis of leadership that plurality of areas through which it was deployed at its beginning.

Concepts are grammatical and historical structures insofar as they are constitutive elements of them. It is important to go to its etymological root and to the way it was applied in Antiquity, in such a way that the various significant networks of the exercise of leadership can be identified from the first developments of humanity, both in the productive or survival fields and in the construction of peaceful scenarios. This causes some concept of leadership not to be reduced to traits or knowledge, but to be conceived as significant facts, which can be symbolized, which make sense through a strategy in search of a vision. Only to the extent that events directed by beings within an organization become significant and can be linked to each other by articulating structural orders is strategic leadership conceived.

It is necessary to overcome the aporias that arise among the concepts that make up strategic leadership, avoiding connections between terms that are contradictory due to their nature or etymological origin. It is required to honor the semantic core that remains in different dimensions and multiple levels, such as the

word *strategy*; its scope cannot be exceeded, but it is required to avoid the abuse of its term. It is important to validate its character as a noun (set of techniques to achieve an end) (Farlex, 2023), and *strategic* is an adjective, according to the Real Academia Española.

This analysis provokes lines of action on the construction of an ontological status of the concepts and categories on strategic leadership, which exceeds the scope of this chapter, but is necessary to address the question of the fundamental metatheological problem. The nature of the link between the knowledge of strategic leadership and its object, since there may be the risk of remaining in a mere inventory of individual concepts, and not in a reconstruction of languages on human behaviors in integrated political and social organizations and objectives. What is firm in this chapter is that it is necessary to differentiate between the conceptual framework of strategic leadership and the old descriptions of the actions of commanders or leaders among crowds, decanting a series of eternal antinomies that together cross leadership.

Ultimately, the concepts on strategic leadership are those that all essayists use in a discursive context, those that *saturate theoretical sampling*, in the words of Strauss (Strauss & Corbin, 2016), in the construction of grounded theory, and that, at the same time, surpass ideologies. Those concepts are what limit the battlefield for disputes over the fixing of its framework, the French sociologist Pierre Bordieu (2018) would say. In no way do they propose unanimity or conceptual consensus. On the contrary, they seek the coexistence of various concepts that can interact and demarcate the terrain of strategic leadership. That is, these fundamental concepts, such as the concept of *power*, are not abstractions that circulate in the minds of experts, but actual realities that are immersed in the networks of actions in organizations and institutions, exposed to any understanding or textual representation of them (Koselleck, 2021).

Power as the “core” of the epistemology of strategic leadership

The analysis of the concept of *power* is fundamental to understanding the epistemology of strategic leadership. As observed in the various schools referred to here, the authors support leadership as interrelationships between people in an organization, where different levels of influence and power are presented. The concept of

power generates noise in the social sciences, but Foucault draws attention to the fact that “when defining the effects of power through repression, this conception is very negative, skeletal of power. In this regard, Foucault proposes that if power were always repression, “do you really think that it would be obeyed?” In this sense, he argues:

[...] what makes power persist, that it is accepted, is that it does not weigh only as a force that says no, but that, in fact, it crosses, produces things, induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It must be considered as a productive network that crosses the entire social body. (Foucault, 2019, p. 29)

This Foucaultian concept of “power” has allowed that through the image that the subject forms of himself by the actions that organizations develop, they configure a self-recognition of each individual, which motivates the emergence of strategic leadership, which thus constitutes a new unit of analysis: *subjectivity*, which, in turn, allowed the advancement of knowledge of human behavior in various scenarios. Paradoxically, the relationships that denote power allowed a leap in the epistemology of the social sciences, since not only the Aristotelian substance of the objects of study is analyzed, but also the subjectivity that emerged in Modernity.

The new view of knowledge focuses on human nature. In this regard, Bertrand Russell states that there are several differences between man and other animals; the desires of the former are unlimited, men have taken them as far as the imagination can reach, and one of these desires is *power* (Russell, 2017). When a person has satisfied at least the *basic levels*, of which Maslow speaks (Castro et al., 2013), he pursues power more than wealth; he only seeks wealth as a means to increase power, and that attraction to power is one of the motivators to exercise leadership in society and in organizations.

Based on this premise, Russell suggests that the concept of *power* is the foundation of social science and compares it with energy as a fundamental concept of physics; he adds that the laws of social dynamics are laws that can only be established in terms of power, without confusing them with the means used to exercise power, such as wealth, force or the media (Russell, 2017). Power mutates between these means; the strategic leader achieves this transition of change, and therefore a task of the social sciences is to deepen knowledge about the causes of the transformations caused by leaders in the field of power, within a decision-making process.

The beings who most desire power are the ones most likely to achieve it, and they are the leaders. Therefore, in a social system in which power is open to all, leadership will be assumed by people who distinguish themselves from ordinary individuals. Those who dislike power are not likely to influence strategy much. The leaders who originate social changes are, in general, beings who desire power. The attraction for power, therefore, is a characteristic of leaders: they are not afraid of risk and are attracted to achieve achievements for the benefit of their society or their organization. In this sense, research on human behavior that generates social dynamics must be developed in terms of “power” in its various forms, and thus give rise to theories or models on strategic leadership based on the underlying elements that underpin the ways in which individuals acquire dominion over other individuals.

That domain is volatile and complex; as science and technology have advanced, multiple levels of combination between knowledge and technique have been generated, thus provoking alternative and interdependent powers. A group can acquire growing power over a sector, but it also wants power over the former, for which leaders are required to draw up strategies with a deep, somewhat ambitious prospective look. Spanish Colonel Pedro Baños considers that ambition is a substantial part of human nature and is manifested when it comes to obtaining territories in search of their natural resources, through modern and sophisticated formulas (Baños, 2022). Baños affirms that conquest as a search for power has expanded, that the classic land, sea and air powers, decisive in the past, are not enough today, since new domains have emerged: that of cyberspace and that of knowledge. Therefore, the *multidomain* prevails, which causes the emergence of geopower, understood as the struggle between strategic leaders for the dominion of the globe, where soft power based on psychological criteria has acquired an important weight (Baños, 2022, p. 48), and its study is nuclear in the understanding of theories and proposals on strategic leadership.

Multidomains -and particularly the domain of knowledge- mean that each subject, in addition to understanding his own possibility of the constitution of everything he experiences, also comprises other subjects of which he also has experience; these cannot be “real” subjects, according to Luhmann; that is, they cannot be truly “subjective” and, therefore, there cannot be “intersubjectivity”, of which most social researchers speak, but the interrelationships between subjects obey internal logics within organizations, which thus constitute self-referenced systems identifying elements specific to each system (Luhmann, 2005).

Luhmann argues that social systems work from communication that is understood, since in some cases they can cause various types of conflict, by activating the alter ego of some element of an organizational system, resulting in a power that manifests itself in the neutralization of the will of the other. Luhmann adds that in communication power is not the ability of just one of the participants, but that all actors have the option of provoking mobilizations: some use it to accept orders, and another, the leader, to exercise his power (Luhmann, 2005). This new approach to power shows that the study of its concept is fundamental within the epistemology of strategic leadership to understand the functioning of organizations. The various approaches to the concept of *power* in strategic leadership account for the varied methodological routes that can be followed in the path of strategic leadership knowledge.

Exploring social science paradigms for the study of strategic leadership

In his book *Power*, Niklas Luhmann refers to the fact that *functionalism* as an epistemological paradigm of the social sciences was recurrent at the beginning of research on social behavior, but it has also been the most criticized method from different points of view, and that caused the emergence of various paradigms (Luhmann, 2005). As has already been explained in this chapter, social phenomena - and in particular, the approach to strategic leadership - have different perspectives in order to relate thought to the experience of the leader's actions. This relationship has been studied from various disciplines: initially it was made from philosophy; later, from political science, and later, from sociology and organizational studies. Its genesis is in the books *The Republic* and *Politics*, by Plato and Aristotle, respectively, when addressing the characteristics of the citizens who should govern, which gave rise to models of the State from a *natural law* approach, where society is a natural society as far as it corresponds to the social nature of man (Bobbio, 2016).

Subsequently, the study on the issues addressed by leadership distances itself from the philosophical elements and approaches political concepts. Nicolas Machiavelli then appears, as the founder of modern political science, and who considers that the State is the maximum power that is exercised over the inhabitants of a certain territory, through the princes (leaders), who are constantly tested to preserve power (Bobbio, 2016). From the political point of view, Thomas Hobbes

departs from Aristotelian iusnaturalist approaches and considers that in a State society is the antithesis of the state of nature constituted by an agreement of individuals who decide to leave the state of nature. It is an instituted society where leadership is strengthened, since that created society is made up of free and equal men, a subject on which the English philosopher John Locke and the French judge Montesquieu agree (Sabine, 1998).

With the maturity of the social sciences, sociologists, led by Max Weber, go beyond philosophical and political approaches to leadership, and focus on social aspects; one might think that their writings are the prelude to studies on strategic leadership, based on the identification of a charismatic leader with his characteristics of authority, power and influence in socioeconomic structure (Saavedra-Mayorga & Sanabria, 2020). Several paradigms have emerged from this type of study, and in this regard Luhmann (1998) invites us to travel the path of continuity and rupture: continuity to establish links with the questions that characterize the study of strategic leadership and identify it as a field of study. Simultaneously rupture, to get rid of traditional answers, which no longer respond to a society where the domains of cyberspace, knowledge and geopower prevail. Within this framework, some paradigms could be identified:

- a) **Functionalism:** Understanding *function* in the logical sense of the term, which allows comparing with each other, as functional equivalents, mechanisms that interact in the leader's activities, and that reflect their beliefs when drawing up the strategy. That is, moving away from causal analysis and building interaction functions (Maxim, 2002). This is a paradigm that can be used for research on strategic leadership with a quantitative approach.
- b) **Functional structuralism:** It is the function that precedes the structure, and this function consists in the understanding and reduction of complexity; a theoretical framework can be put together from the complexity of human behavior in an organization, where its limits are not physical, but meaningful (Luhmann, 2005). The question to be asked in leadership research is about the functional possibilities that comparable solutions of the same strategy could offer, where the solution proposals make sense.
- c) **Systems theory:** Strategic leadership is related to organization and social dynamic processes, similar to the components of organizational studies, which are behavior, structure and processes (Hamel, 2011), and their relationship can be assimilated to an information system, which, through

various transformations, codifications and processes (beliefs, culture, symbols, meaning, strategy), it goes from the physical and social environment (demands of society to an organization, as input) to decision-making and response (solutions for society, as output) (Bertalanffy, 1981). Thus, knowledge about strategic leadership is dynamic, it is built permanently in the face of a continuous exchange between the individual and his environment.

Within the systemic paradigm, it is pertinent to review Walter Bluckey's (1981) proposal on a transactional epistemological model, supported by three elements, the theory of information as a framework, the transactional between the internal and the external and approaches to a model of knowledge on strategic leadership.

First, the principles of the model (information theory) are based on a relational concept, which involves the application of a subset of elements organized in a certain way (for example, words organized into written sentences) in another subset of elements organized in a correlative way (mental concepts organized according to complete ideas) (Buckley, 1981). Similarly in strategic leadership, a subset of elements (e.g., beliefs organized in an organizational culture). In another subset of elements organized correlatively (the symbols of the leader's actions organized into forward-looking meanings).

Although it is not a narrow analogy, there is a similarity, since in both cases the input signals undergo several transformations, despite which the initial configuration is preserved with a certain degree of fidelity, taken away from other paradigms that concentrate on obtaining the "fundamental data" by sensory means and produce cognitive constructions, which does not make sense, according to Bluckey (1981). Since information is a relational concept and transmitting information is equivalent to preserving through transformations, it goes beyond the single question of how the external world can be known.

Secondly, the functional aspects of the model are based on the entirely transactional nature of the relationships between the subject, who is the protagonist of knowledge, and the external world. The individual helps to organize the reference set corresponding to internal knowledge, a set that gives meaning to the additional signals generated from the thoughts or emotions of the leader. The organization behaves as an open system with the capacity to adapt to the environment, and intervenes in socio-cultural

processes, including the beliefs, symbols, meanings and prospective vision of the leader. Where their perception and decision-making constitute a system of components of the leader, interrelated in a complex way and generating logical concepts that are built from the operations arising from the strategic coordination carried out by the leaders on those objects.

Thirdly, systems theory allows an approach to a model of knowledge about strategic leadership, in that the mental processes of a leader depend on his ability to manipulate symbols and to place his own self in the plane of objects; both skills are developed by exercising the transactions between the leader and his followers. Through followers' response to the leader's actions and using symbols as a means of conceiving of interrelationship as an object, actions and interactions among members of an organization become mentally manipulable.

In this sense, the model of knowledge about strategic leadership considers a wide range of social and cultural scenarios, such as strategic visions and other internal states of people with whom the leader's actions must be coordinated. In this way, "knowledge" about strategic leadership becomes a complex matter, a network of the events of the daily transaction process between the leader and the followers, intimately related to the internal moral, emotional and cognitive schemes.

The model of knowledge on strategic leadership, following Bluckey (1981), comprises three types of correspondence: correspondences between the leader's mind and other individual minds (followers and other leaders), as well as between these and that and a relatively common world of experiences. Since the systems where leaders act are developed in complex contexts, the result is a multidimensional and multilevel correspondence that interrelates external objects and relationships, common symbolic systems and a number of premises of the study of organizations.

In summary, and in accordance with Buckley (1981), one could think of an ontological status of "relationships" in the knowledge of strategic leadership, as is done with objects and facts, since a property or an attribute of an "object of study" in leadership corresponds to that resulting from the interaction of the object with various elements. Thus, the properties of the alleged object or alleged event vary according to contextual relationships or systems. That is, the properties of the object relate to the *properties of the relationship*.

The cognitive development of strategic leadership is a process where inter-related individuals act, and with the ability to adapt, each of them involved in a constructive exchange with the others creating possibilities to be studied from the paradigms of phenomenology and constructivism.

- d) **Phenomenology:** As a philosophical current, Alfred Schutz considered it the most appropriate way to ground the social sciences, arguing that the objective properties of socio-historical realities are based on universal structures of subjective orientation (Dreyer, 2016, p. 97). Later, Dreher states that in phenomenology the concept of *constitution* is fundamental, since it refers to the constitutive processes of subjective consciousness, which form the basis for the development of the individual's world (2016, p. 98). Phenomenology is, mainly, a philosophy of the human being that allows us to explain the meaning of the vital world; its object is the demonstration and explanation of the activities of consciousness of transcendental subjectivity (Dreher, 2016). Phenomenological research in strategic leadership allows to create a link between the structures of subjective orientation of the leader, and the basic forms of intersubjective action of all the individuals of an organization and the objective properties of the socio-historical realities that frame the strategy in a context, in such a way that it can be shown how the transcendental subjectivity of the leader, from his beliefs, gives rise to all meaning to his objective strategy within an organization.
- e) **Constructivism:** It is a field inhabited by different positions that have three axes in common: the subject, reality and knowledge, and agree in the criticism of the epistemological current of positivism. They propose that the subject is inclined to the social construction of reality and the construction of human knowledge, in which scientific knowledge is included (Retamozo, 2016). In the constructivist field, ideas participate that knowledge arises from brain processes from biology (Maturana), and from the philosophy of mind (Rabossi), as well as from psychological developments (Piaget), according to Retamozo (2016). In the face of notions of reality, several positions also converge that, in general, share the critique of realistic positions that postulate a complete and objective external reality, independent of the subject, which constructivists do not share. They propose that reality is configured with some degree of intervention by the subject, that the world is a consequence of language, the world is an image of language (Retamozo, 2016, p. 377). This postmodern vision opens the doors to

relativistic positions on knowledge and reality, and thus creates the possibility that in an investigation on strategic leadership different theories coexist and that these define their world of reference.

The epistemological approaches presented here are based on various ontological sources. In this regard, for example, Bertrand Russell suggests that the concept of *power* is the foundation of social science. Bluckey suggests thinking about an ontological status to *relationships*. Alfred Schutz considers phenomenology to be the most appropriate avenue for the foundation of the social sciences. Luhmann's functionalism proposes that the unit of analysis are dynamic stabilities that allow us to study strategic leadership from diversity, not as constructivism proposes, but as self-referential systems that control the production and distinctiveness of its elements.

Conclusions

There are several theories and approaches to strategic leadership, each of which describes a set of linked propositions, and incorporate terms that are polysemic, and this makes it very difficult to conceptualize. However, its conceptual roots are based on disciplines such as history, political science and, lately, the contributions of more experimental and modern sciences, such as psychology, sociology or the sciences of organizations. The latter favors objectifying the study of leadership, making it the object of intellectual analysis. All the aforementioned sciences provide a framework for understanding the nature of theoretical guidelines, as well as the type of epistemological problems to which it is confronted. This perspective breaks with the imaginary of seeing leadership as an activity, an attitude or a skill, and that it becomes an object of questioning, based on the concepts that make it up.

In the study of the concepts that integrate knowledge about strategic leadership, it is essential to go to its etymological root and to the way it was applied in Antiquity, transliterating past concepts into our present vocabulary. In such a way that the various significant networks of the exercise of leadership can be identified from the first developments of humanity, both in the productive or survival fields and in the construction of peaceful scenarios. In order that no proposition about leadership can be reduced to traits or knowledge but is conceived as a representation of significant facts that can be symbolized, which make sense through a strategy in search of a vision.

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