Chapter 13

Chaos Management Leadership Resulting From the Pandemic in Ibero–American Universities

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ABSTRACT

The pandemic and its effects on the development of a new normality in the Latin American education sector has transformed the traditional education systems creating new means of communication, co-ordination, and learning assessment. This study uses a qualitative methodology with descriptive basic statistics, applied to 16 leaders (deans and directors) responsible for the direction and management of universities in an atmosphere of chaos. The above allows creating a conceptual model that explains context components, leadership, and initiatives. At the same time, the variables and their connections are defined establishing a novating flexible, technological, and inclusive education strategy in the region that is here to stay for management and building of knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

People need to have control over their life; presence of control is linked with wellbeing and correct psychological functioning, its absence is related with dysfunctional anxiety, stress and depression. Having

control means having the ability to predict what events may occur and what behaviors should be carried out to control the situation (De Miguel et al, 2012; Ajzen, 1985). This way, human brain attempts to minimize uncertainty, and does it as a large prediction to satisfy the psychological need of control has been building a social order that acts as conduct guide, reducing uncertainty based on socially accepted conducts. Nevertheless, circumstances caused by the pandemic COVID-19 have a notable effect on the capacity of the institutions to preserve this social order. When social order loses its ability to guide people's conduct, uncertainty is the fundamental characteristic of the social scenario and fear its psychological translation (De Miguel, 2012; Beck, Giddens, & Lash,1994). We may consider that Covid-19 has created more complexity in the system and has opened the door to chaos.

Complex systems constantly change over time, chaos occurs when these changes are unpredictable and do not follow a fixed and predictable pattern for which there is a prior planning of the actions to follow. Chaos is not generated, but exists naturally, by itself (Turnheim, 2013). Now, leadership and decision-making of the directors of the organization is important, since it is necessary that they learn to sail in the dynamism of a systemic structure and recognize no total stability or linearity of the system.

In the current context of universal dynamism and global chaos due to untimely and unpredictable changes caused by COVID 19 pandemic, the conventional leadership model has become obsolete; it is no longer viable to speak only about personal attributes of a leader, it is necessary to analyze aspects such as flexibility in decision making, adjustment to change and remote or virtual team management; this has led to a new model of chaos leadership within the world chaos. Leadership of Ibero-American universities faced to challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (and variants in the region) becomes an ideal scenario to analyze leadership in terms of chaos management, which has modified the educational strategy for new perspectives affected by disorder, instability, dynamism, and the need to get adjusted to a new reality (Harry, John, & Keegan; 2013).

At this time there is evidence that university leadership in different Ibero-American countries have undertaken things that without crisis possibly would have not done, they have made quick decisions, adjust to current conditions, lead on-line, innovate, diversify, taking into account needs and expectations of their group of interest, continuous learning, enhance collaborators skills and transform new challenges into adjustment opportunities and changes, creating future positive options and communicating them in an appropriate manner.

According to Prigogine, "…systems contain subsystems that continually fluctuate. Sometimes a single fluctuation or a combination of them can become so magnified by the feedback that the pre-existing organization is strongly affected. The speed of context changes and its impact on the organization itself is such that chaotic situations and disorder are generated. These are the ones that allow organization directors obtain flexible and fast opportunities. On the contrary, those who remain in bureaucratic and planning schemes lose the opportunities" (Prigogine & Nicollis, 1895).

Because of the pandemic, university education sector in Ibero-America has faced challenges, problems, experiences, and questions regarding leadership of higher education institutions in times of economic, social, cultural and political crisis. There is little literature may allow contributing with knowledge in the process of decision-making on this matter subject.

Consequently, there is an incentive to study leadership models in the education sector in the region in order to find concepts and strategies that contribute, from the administration of chaos, with the positioning and development of university educational institutions. Hence, the following research questions arise:

Which have been the leadership models to manage the chaos in the Ibero-American educational sector during the pandemic?

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