

Leadership Profile: Martha Leticia Silva Flores

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It is clear that the world we live in today changes at a fast pace that surpasses theories within the subject of leadership as it was studied several years ago. Drawing on recent sources, I found some examples of how the whole concept is perceived in an innovative way.

Roselinde Torres, who dedicated more than 25 years to look for answers to the question: *What makes a person a great leader?* in a TED presentation held in San Francisco on November 2013, found unexpected answers after research of more than 4.000 companies on the subject.

She came to conclusions, that I would summarize as follows. First of all, a leader is not someone who reacts to situations, instead, he/she molds and gives shape to reality in order to obtain the expected result. This aspect has a lot to do with the ability of a person to *get out of the box*, to walk away from preconceived ideas, traditional ways of doing things and solving problems, and create a different future, leaving aside judgements of people who are not used to different ways of thinking. For that, this leader is a person who also is able to develop relationships with people completely differently that will help him/her to ask themselves different kinds of questions and find different responses to these problems.

Fields Wicker Miurin, in London, in 2009, made a presentation in TED based on testimonies of famous leaders from different backgrounds and highlighted their sensitivity -- their humility was not about them but about the people who needed something done. The Forbes Coaches Council, on the other hand, released an article on December 2017 about "16 Essential Skills of the Leader of Tomorrow," that emphasized the belief that leaders are made, not born. I would summarize these 16 skills with just a few that get to core of what makes the leader of tomorrow. The leader of tomorrow earns the respect of others with his/her empathy and capacity to connect with people, the ability to encourage everyone around them to give their best, and they dissolve fears by their willingness

to really listen; also, this leader has self-confidence, believes in his/her mission, and his/her commitment to goals. The leader of tomorrow is humble and authentic, curious and sensitive, flexible to learn new things, and to adapts easily to changes. It is someone who does not give up and is versatile enough to consider differences as opportunities for growth,

I met Martha Leticia Silva Flores during a social innovation event organized by the Center of High Impact Social Innovation (CISAI) in Jalisco, Mexico last June. She is the center's director and the impression she made when I met her and what I was able to learn about her in just a few days convinced me to write about her as a leader of tomorrow.

Leticia was born in the City of México, in a traditional Mexican family, with her three brothers. She was not the eldest, and yet, thanks to her intellectual curiosity, her tenacity, and perseverance, she wanted to go to college and, at the end, she became the first member of her whole family, from both sides, to obtain a university degree. She got married very young to the love of her life. Four children were not an obstacle to her continuing her goals to keep studying. She repeated herself that "with organization, tenacity, perseverance, and hard work she could obtain whatever she wanted."

In 1999, she started as a professor at the Technological Institute of High Studies of the West ITESO, and in 2006

she won a scholarship from the United Nations to complete a master's degree in Knowledge Management in Torino, Italy. In 2013, she started a PhD on Scientific Social Studies at the Jesuit University of Guadalajara and she graduated with honors in 2017, becoming the only honorific mention given in the history of the Doctorate. Meanwhile, in 2015 and 2016, she did a research in ESADE at the University Ramón Llul in Barcelona, Spain, which enabled her to work in the Social Innovation Institute as a visiting professor designing methodology for the Social Innovations Laboratory in ESADE. At present, she is the director of the CISAI, and research professor of the Center for the High Impact Social Innovations of Jalisco ITESO, at the Jesuit University of Guadalajara. Leticia is also a member of the Academic Board of the Master in Generation and Management of Innovation at the University of Guadalajara and member of the Sectoral of Scientific Research (CSIC) of the UDELAR in Uruguay. Leticia is a member of the Social Innovation Network in Mexico and coordinator of the Mexico's Node of the International Network for the Sustainable Development (inno4sd) based in the Netherlands.

Her line of research is the social innovation regional studies of innovations, ecosystems of innovation, and social impact's assessment. Among her latest publications, the most important are: "Social Innovation: A Social Shared Competence" released in Education in the Knowledge Society (EKS); "The Digital Revolution Facing

the Big Challenges of the World, 100 Initiatives of Digital Social Innovations That Are Transforming Latin America," released by ESADE, Barcelona; and "An Approach to Social Dynamics of the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystem of the Metropolitan Guadalajara's Zone (ZMG)," released by ALTEC, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

To complete Leticia's profile and know the person beyond the academia and professional achievements, I interviewed her with the Q & A as follows.

1. Which aspects of your life, do you consider to be relevant to shaping the person you are today, representing who you are, and what made you work in social innovation?

I have always felt that we all have the responsibility of doing something for others from what we know how to do. It is the reason why, as a researcher, I consider scientific and technological research must be at the service of the social development of a country; not only in terms of generating knowledge that often remains hidden in a database of academic articles or in patents used for the benefit of only a few. For me, it is essential to associate the scientific and technological knowledge produced in research centers with the social knowledge produced in the reality of people, so often conceived as incompatibles. However, I am sure that the intersection of both types of knowledge allows the origin of social innovations which has the ultimate objective of positively impacting people's

lives. For this, what I do from my professional activity is addressed to encourage and facilitate social innovation projects that put scientific findings to the service and benefit of society in a concrete and real way.

2. You have written in your Skype Profile the following sentence: "*Passion to live, generosity to coexist, and prudence to survive.*" What does this mean this to you?

"Passion to live," I have always felt a great passion for life, from feeling the sun on my skin, the wind playing with my hair, feeling the company of the forest, or simply sitting at the top of a mountain and seeing the trees.

Contemplating, in nature, the presence of God who nourishes me to feel passion for putting my intellect, my spirit, and my soul in everything I do, as life is the sum of our actions.

"Generosity to coexist," because, we are human beings in relation with each other, this can only be possible by being generous with each other, generosity in sharing time, ideas, spaces. We have to learn to be generous in order to live together, as I have learned by living with my husband.

"Prudence to survive," as sometimes we speak and act without thinking. On the other hand, the consequences of this are misunderstandings or hurting people without noticing. As a result, being conscious of this is important to not hurting others and surviving.

3. Could you in a few words explain the connecting thread – what is the link that articulates your professional and academic activities with your mission as a human being?

Definitively, God is the connecting thread, and my children and husband, the driving force.

4. What would be the skills needed to be a leader in the field of social innovation in Latin America?

First, sensitivity as the human quality to be smart enough to be practical and efficient while using different resources in the service to others. And secondly, resilience.

5. How do you see the subject of social innovation in the region?

Social Innovation is better positioned here in Jalisco, Mexico than in the rest of the country, thanks to the Social Innovation Office which has undertaken several efforts to promote a culture of social innovation, such as Epicentro and Social Valley. However, Jalisco is still an emerging ecosystem. We can see it clearly in events like Campus Party or Talent Land where the axis dedicated to social innovation is barely noticeable. Probably the Reto Zapopan initiative could help better to promote the culture of social innovation.

6. Do you have any ideas for the future of social

innovation in Latin America?

I would like to highlight two ideas:

First, in order for to enable a critical mass to develop a culture of social innovation there is the need to initiate programs that promote the culture of innovations in early education, at school, or middle high school. We don't need to wait until university.

Second, in order to support the present social innovators it is necessary to build infrastructure to make access to financing possible as well as accompanying mechanisms, because through all of my research about social innovation, the main reason important social projects are abandoned is for economic reasons.

Conclusion

I would like to include testimonies of people who have lived and worked with Leticia, to confirm she embodies the skills of a leader and promoter of change that the world of tomorrow needs:

- *"From my point of view, Leticia has in her relevant and rare qualities: a powerful analytical regard, a remarkable capacity of work, a humility that only highlights more her personal and professional achievements; a kindheartedness that is very rare in the academic world, and a willpower to learn and spirit of self-improvement that let's us predict a*

brilliant future. From a distance, I can only send her my best wishes and a warm hug. Her success will certainly be the success of social innovation in the region.” - David Murillo

- *“I met Leticia approximately a year and a half ago. She is part of the Social Innovation’s Network of the Consultive Forum of Science and Technology. She presented the programs being held by ITESO. She combines her academic work with the promotion of social innovation projects on one of the innovations and entrepreneurship clusters that has been receiving a strong impulse from the government. This is very important because many proposals developed in Mexico remain as only good rewards, but they do not scale nor get consolidated. Leticia succeeded in coordinating efforts to get agreements not only at the local level, but also at national and international ones, especially in Canada, England, and Spain, that enable her to gain a long-term vision of the direction of these new strategies to produce solutions that could mitigate poverty and damage to environment.”
- Carmen Bueno Castellanos.*
- *“Leticia Silva is an extraordinary woman, great wife, and committed mother to the four children she raised while studying to get her master’s degree and PhD. She is a model of perseverance and focus to achieve her goals. Her success lies not only in the*

professional level, but also in the personal one as she is a great wife and mother. When it is a matter of cooking, she is wonderful -- making exceptional meals in minimal time.” - Carlos Serrano

- *“I believe that the dedication Leticia gives to education deserves recognition because she has put her knowledge to the service of education in different levels and spaces. In the academic field as a professor she has contributed without limits her skills in designing activities to improve courses. She has always been concerned with elevating the academic quality of her courses and the results achieved by her students; looking for ways to teach in a special way useful content for students, knowing how to connect with each of her students, strengthening her relationships with them in order to make the experience of her courses as enriching as possible. Since I’ve known Leticia, she has been an exemplary person, tireless in her work and deeply committed to what she does. She has been preparing and surpassing herself with the mindset of being congruent with an interdisciplinary thinking, between engineering and social sciences, from classrooms to the creation of projects that could articulate both areas in order to solve social problems.” - Martha Gabriela Solano Aguilar*

Works Cited

"16 Essential Leadership Skills for the Workplace of Tomorrow." Forbes Coaches Council; December 27, 2017. www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/

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