



Editorial: Leadership Education – The Start of a Voyage of Discovery

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Leadership probably ranks highly on any short list of organizational priorities. One can hardly find a CEO who is not concerned about developing leadership capability in his or her organization. As a result “leadership” has become one of the most taught subjects in management development programs in recent years. It should thus be a rich area for sharing new ideas, for revealing the secrets of success and what is to be learned from failure. All objectives of this new International Journal of Leadership Education.

The challenge for the editors has been to tap those people in leadership education who could bring insight to others about what they know and what they practice out there in the real world. This has not been easy. The number of approaches to educating leaders has proliferated as universities, business schools, consultants and individual presenters, facilitators and coaches adopt widely differing conceptual models. A quick search on Google turns up 51.9 million hits on the word “leadership” and 20.8 million on “leadership education”!

Such richness is promising, however with such variety it is inevitable that some successful leadership education models are highly replicable while others are not. To start with, many successful courses are intrinsically woven into the educator’s values and personality. These are difficult to emulate. In addition, one encounters a level of coyness amongst many people in the field. One suspects, either fearing that they may be copied, or that they are not quite clear about why they succeed and have difficulty articulating that success. It is amazing how many very successful leadership educators work off a script that is embarrassingly naïve. Probably many times success in leadership education is process rather than content based and authors often struggle with explaining why certain processes work in some situations but not in others. Shackleton may make a great story for learning about leadership but it is easier than explaining what is actually meant by “learning about leadership”.

Despite such difficulties, all of this diversity is a good thing because it suggests that the whole area of leadership education is rich with models, metaphors and methods that others in the field can learn from. That is the other purpose of the International Journal of Leadership Education – to provide a forum in which leadership educators may share their ideas and experiences. It

is not limited to academics. There are many highly effective professionals out there who never set foot on a university campus but who can have a major impact on the way we think about the challenge we have given ourselves on a day to day basis. Neither do we want to limit our forum to only profit making non governmental organizations. For instance, there are many great success stories in the military that we can learn from. Often in fact, military institutions are ahead of academic institutions in the application of operationally effective leadership techniques. A recent article in *The New Yorker*¹ discussed how leadership education in the military has changed dramatically in the past decade because of the changing nature of recruits and the environments in which they have to operate. Is this any different to what readers are faced with in the corporation of the 21st century?

As a subject area leadership has become a legitimate topic and the subject of hundreds of academic papers, articles and books. There is however a shortfall in research and discussion about the teaching, coaching and education of leaders and leadership. The IJLE is an attempt to create a forum for those in leadership development to discuss the problems that are apparent in our field. Some of our colleagues, and Dr Walton in this edition hints at a suspicion that the whole area of leadership development is fraught with fakirs and snake oil salesmen and with leadership salesmen promising miracle cures on every corner, it becomes hard to tell the difference between those that are based on a modicum of scientific research and those that are more likely to kill the patient than solve his or her leadership problem. Not that scientific rigour need be the only criterion for successful leadership development, there is also a need for robust thinking and concept creation. Too often leadership development programs appear to be based on faulty assumptions and muddled thinking. Too often the sales pitch is stronger than the conceptual model hiding behind it.

In this edition we offer papers that demonstrate tremendous hands-on dedication to providing students with the most intense leadership experience possible. But in leadership development generally there is a dreadful lack of “after sales” follow up. It is not unusual to have the success of programs based on the success of the speakers or the administrators and not on the success of the participants after the course. In the strange world of leadership development courses the people who need help are the last to get our attention. As one commentator says, “We focus too much on the salesperson rather than the customer.”

The objective of the IJLE is to attract as many practitioners as possible as well as a richly varied discussion of leadership education. In this first edition we have tried to demonstrate this variety, from Professor Abell’s broad overview of an institution philosophy for leadership education to Professor

1. “Annals of War: Battle Lessons”, Dan Baum, *The New Yorker*, January 13th, 2005.

Roberto's paper on a different approach in the classroom using a tragedy on Mount Everest. While some business schools are pushing the limits of experiential learning as seen in Professor Useem's paper on experiential learning beyond the classroom to the thought provoking ideas of Professor Dovey's on how limited much leadership education really is. We believe that there is a need to discuss all of these ideas, to challenge and learn from them.

If leadership is one of the most critical issues facing organizations it is also one of the most controversial. Starting with the perennial: born or made, the definition, measurement, development and monitoring of leaders are sources of considerable debate and needs to be a starting point for discussion. We also need to question some of our underlying assumptions – does leadership as taught in business schools and most consultancies find a natural home in capitalist systems? If the answer is no then why do the vast majority of cases, articles and models assume a capitalist context? Is the motivational base of leaders embedded in capitalist systems and how does this transform in environments that are increasingly hostile to big business, globalization and power.

Furthermore, why are most of our models dominated by males? Female leaders appear to be thin on the ground if one is to believe most published material – yet, one's experience is quite to the contrary. One fears that while teachers may emphasize the equality of leaders and leadership opportunities, do we implicitly disadvantage our female participants through activities such as the outstanding outdoor leadership development programme being conducted at Wharton's leadership ventures and reviewed here? Because of our business orientation bias most leadership education would also seem to address action orientation (who hasn't completed a programme without an action plan?) without developing a strong theory of action. The military have given us a great insight into leadership education in action focused environments. Many of our business schools may be reluctant to acknowledge that or even that the military has dealt more decisively with the issue of female leaders than we have done in many of the organizations we serve. In fact, do we adopt action orientated education without understanding action theory and do we give time to other models? Do we address the issues of thought leadership at all – or is this a no-go area to be left to the philosophy department?

A few business schools and universities are already offering programs of management philosophy for leaders. However Dr Walton ("Leaders? Who Are They & What Do They Believe in Anyway?" Page 23) is somewhat pessimistic and concludes that the results are not promising. The need for leaders to articulate and implement a set of beliefs and values has become more pressing given the ethical challenges our global organizations face today. He contends that the "business leadership industry" is missing the point and emphasizes short term functional skills at the cost of losing long term

effectiveness. Professor Friedman would not agree (Four Studies of Executives Helping Employees Align Their Actions and Values, Page 29). He introduces four case studies outlining innovative attempts to integrate work and personal life. The companies researched – AlliedSignal, SAS Institute, Seagate Technology and Ernst & Young – have executives willing to create and sustain organizational cultures that acknowledge work/life issues. The cases also reflect some of the excellent work undertaken by the Wharton's School Work/Life Project.

Professor Derek Abell in his paper ("Leadership Education as a Moving Target", Page 9) frames his discussion in terms of challenges common to emerging leaders. He develops what he calls a career roadmap along which capabilities need to be shaped. His view is not a short term one nor emphasizes functional skills in particular. Rather he flags the need for institutions to create models incorporating a long term view on leadership education. His paper leads one to suggest that leaders should return regularly for reeducation whilst progressing on their career roadmaps.

In practice Professor Michael Useem and his colleagues outline developments at Wharton on implementing such a broad conceptual model ("Leadership Development Beyond the Classroom: The Value of Leadership Ventures to Instruct Leadership Decision Making", Page 159) and then they focus on their experience running Wharton's Leadership Ventures. Given the limitations of the classroom experience their paper covers the creation of challenging environments in which students have to make their own decisions. If climbing Cotopaxi in Ecuador or trekking across Antarctica's King George Island or the foothills of the Himalayas doesn't provide a "challenging environment" we would like to know what you're doing that is more challenging. Under these conditions the authors explore real uncertainties and constraints that in the classroom are simply theoretical. They find they build stronger self awareness in students and better team leadership than they could in the classroom. Their paper challenges those who confine the education process to traditional settings.

While Professor Useem is pushing his students to experiential extremes Professor Ken Dovey ("Leadership Education in the Era of Disruption: What Can Business Schools Offer?", Page 179) suggests that such learning is constrained because it is the relationship between teacher and student that is critical and that probably what differentiates average from great leadership cannot be simulated by business schools. Many of the qualities that we admire in leaders such as Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Ghandi, Patton and Churchill are learned in confinement, isolation, oppression, military action, social marginalisation and even social privilege. At best he proposes that conventional pedagogical practices need to be challenged through a multidisciplinary approach and application.

Professor Michael Roberto adds to this discussion by exploring the motivations of leaders on the face of Everest. His paper ("Teaching Business Leadership Using Non-Business Case Studies: The Mount Everest Example", Page 195) outlines his use of a case study of leadership taking decisions under extreme conditions. He would probably contend that in one and a half hours in the classroom he could cover many of the issues that take weeks to discover in more extreme settings. He describes the issues that he develops with students in the classroom as well as their reactions to this real life Everest tragedy of 1996. The stark outcome – the two leaders of the expedition lose their own lives and as well as those of the clients – cautions those who would take leadership responsibility too lightly. This paper is a good example of how leadership educators may break routinized thinking and discussions in classrooms through applying metaphors and models beyond those of corporate life.

Leadership itself is a primarily a social construct – the popularity of the situational leadership models bear witness to that. However the social construct of leadership goes further than just the context – we seem to assume that leadership is the same wherever one is and we may be able to transplant our leadership model into any environment with some adoption. One's observation seems to negate that – leadership in a country such as Mexico, though physically close to the United States is quite different in terms of style, values and form. Because of the pervasive nature of popular leadership models teachers apply those models – there is probably no major model which hasn't been franchised to someone in every major city of the world – but the adaptiveness of such models is seldom questioned. What works in Salt Lake City works in Cancun?

In early attempts to simulate global organization structure and relationships we at IESE found that leadership seemed to take on a new role or at least a different role. Through a combination of technology, vast distances and youthful dexterity and knowledge we found in our Global Rollout Workshop that leaders didn't fall into the normal characterisation of leaders – charismatic, assertive and the like – more often they were marshals of ideas, of concepts and feelings. While a new theory of the firm may be developing as organizations move cybernetically we don't seem to be keeping apace in the development of leaders. In fact, in global organizations with multihubs in different geographic centres maybe we're not looking at transformational or transactional leadership at all. Maybe we're looking at transcendental leadership, more individualistic, less accountable, riskier and more self sufficient. One starts to realize that providing leadership in such nodal businesses is going to be more complex. These and many other issues will be explored in further editions of the IJLE.

