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Collaborative leadership

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Collaborative Leadership

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Abstract: Leadership is often defined as the capability to successfully manage change in organisations. The way one manages change is to some extent contextual and influenced by the environment. The environment our future leaders have to operate in is quite different from what we were used to in the previous decade. Leadership styles therefore needs adaptation. In this chapter I will provide an overview of nine changes that I see in the environment and make the case that this new environment needs more collaborative leadership. This is a style of leadership we have committed ourselves to at the University of Cambridge Judge Business School. I will attempt to describe some of the characteristics of this type of leadership and make some suggestions on how one can educate the students in our schools for this new challenge.

Key words: Collaborative leadership, innovation, business education

Introduction

Business schools and MBA programmes in particular are about leadership development. We are preparing our graduates to take on leadership positions in the world of business, government and NGO's. A cursory glance at the websites of many of the top business schools reveals that, one way or another, we put leadership at the core of our unique selling propositions. Developing for leadership, grooming for international leadership, educating leaders that will make a difference in the world, ..., are only a few of the iterations one can find on our websites.

But what do these leadership qualities really stand for? Research on leadership has of course come up with multiple variants of leadership,ⁱ ranging from traditional 'command and control' leadership, moral authority, intuitive, charismatic or seductive leadership, through to the capability to become a global learner. This broad and, to be honest, sometimes disjointed literature on leadership does not help us a lot further in defining what business schools have to offer in their programmes in order to prepare the graduates for the challenges in the professional world. And sometimes it seems that there is no clear difference in the programmes of our schools with respect to what leadership on the one hand and management on the other is all about. Leadership and management are indeed often confused with each other.

In my opinion the best approach to what business schools need to do, is to prepare our graduates to become effective innovators and managers of change. This is very much in line with how Kotter defined leadership: management is about coping with complexity, leadership is about coping with changeⁱⁱ. Organisations need to change constantly to survive, and it is the capability to give leadership to this process of change that will make our MBA graduates attractive for recruiters and successful in their professional development.

Providing leadership in order to manage change is to some extent contextual. It is dependent on the culture in which one operatesⁱⁱⁱ, is contingent on the objectives of the organisation e.g. non profit versus a profit orientation, and has to adjust to the changing challenges of the economic environment. I will build the case in this article that in many circumstances today a *collaborative approach to leadership* is better adapted to cope with the emerging environment in which our MBA graduates will have to operate.

Collaborative leadership

All too often leadership is associated with 'taking power over' people, as opposed to take power with people over the change process. Leadership is then associated with formal command and control, or with a charismatic leadership style, where the leader may seduce groups of followers to sometimes blindly execute his or her wishes. I know that I draw on purpose a rather extreme view, but I want to do so to contrast it with a style of leadership which I would call responsible, collective leadership.

Mary Parker Follett, the early twentieth century social worker and management guru 'avant la lettre' described management sometimes as 'the art of getting things done through people'. She was a specialist on social communities and education, but her analysis has been influential, in particular through the human resources school of management. She essentially believed in the power of people working together and that in order to get things done, one needed to form community. She distinguished between operating change in a coercive manner versus operating in a co-active manner, and she considered community as a creative process that can be effective by constantly reframing the issues at hand.

I will argue that we may have to revisit this because this 'working through' people, who are often your peers, is more aligned with the needs of change management today. Current day leadership may require more than the co-acting that Mary Parker Follett argued for, but it is very much based on it. I will want to argue that effective leadership in the current climate requires collaboration, listening, influencing, and flexible adaptation, rather than command and control. This I define as collaborative leadership. But let me first introduce why such a new approach to leadership is needed.

What is changing in our environment?

Managing change today is not what it used to be. Or rather the environment in which we need to innovate and implement change has changed dramatically. Before the difficulties in the financial sector in 2008 and the ensuing economic downturn, I might have attributed this change to eight important trends. These were, in no particular order, the growing internationalisation of organisations, the fragmentation of value chains, the creeping increase in knowledge workers, the demands that civil society puts on companies to be drivers of social change, the diffusion of sources of knowledge production and innovation, the increasingly networked nature of multinational organisations, the increasing need for risk management in a world where the gradual reduction of borders and trade barriers have led to an increasing level playing field for companies, and the role of information and telecommunication technologies in networking. I will summarise what I mean in each case.

Globalisation

We are living in a world that has become truly international, and where organisations themselves have also become truly international. It may be a sweeping generalisation, but there few 'national' companies any more. Companies are either regional or international.

We know that internationalisation is not completely new. There have been previous waves of internationalisation, notably the one that was started in the industrialising nineteenth century before being halted by the First World War. This should remind us that globalisation movements can be reversed. And current globalisation is not without its flaws. Critics of the free market attitude to internationalisation often point out the short term negative effects of globalisation e.g. the exploitation of labour in low labour cost countries, the faster spread of diseases as illustrated by the H1N1 virus, the rising difficulties associated with migration, or the shift of operational and production jobs to emerging countries. And they warn about the risk of industrial desertification of Europe and the United States. -- Our own research suggests that this not necessarily the case and that the growth of manufacturing in emerging countries e.g. China is much more of a response to rising demand there, rather than a systematic transfer of production capacity.^{iv} -- Others may argue that China does not

always play by the rules of the free trade game, and that internationalisation is one sided. And as a consequence one hears in Europe quite a few voices among politicians for a better managed globalisation, if not for more protectionism. But while I think that the future shape of globalisation may be different from what it is today and may go through some serious challenges and upheavals, I remain convinced that globalisation is a trend that will be difficult to stop and that our companies and non profit organisations must develop more capabilities to operate on an international scale.

This may be relatively straightforward and accepted for large organisations, but even small and medium enterprises and non profit organisations are often networked and integrated into international networks of suppliers, subcontractors, distributors and partners. Many of these smaller organisations have actually also become truly international. As a consequence they have to manage diversity, both culturally and geographically. And they have to understand how international supply chains operate and how global geopolitical trends influence their markets for talent, resources and outputs.

This increased globalisation requires increased networking. A purely transactional approach for doing business may work in some specific business cultures e.g. the USA, but is not the general standard. And partners in internationalisation do rarely accept that one of them dominates. And as I mentioned above, there is no one-fits-all solution for leading change. It is contextual, and has to be adapted to the key characteristics of the cultural, religious and geographical environment in which it operates. This cultural sensitivity has to become an order of magnitude more sophisticated than it used to be ten years ago.

Fragmentation of the value chain

A corollary of the internationalisation of business and commerce is the increased fragmentation of value chains due to outsourcing and collaborative networks for the design and delivery of goods. Few if any companies still control their whole value chain. Vertical integration seems to be out of fashion. In fact the recommendation to focus on the core business of the organisation and to outsource or subcontract all non essential activities has been one of the most successful messages from both business schools and consultants over the last 15 years. As a consequence companies have outsourced many activities and have fragmented their value creation. They have created collaborative networks for value creation.

The outsourcing occurs on an international scale, and often involves partners which are lot bigger than the company itself. Some medium sized European companies have outsourced their supply chain management or their IT division to organisations which are an order of magnitude bigger than they are themselves. That leads to major changes in the natural power equilibrium in the value chain. Some suppliers have become true partners. But some outsourcing partners may be in a position of power vis a vis their principal, and in a position to dictate their terms and impose their systems. Managing change and providing leadership in these collaborative networks cannot rely on traditional power relations and hierarchies, but requires a style of management that again is based on seduction and convincing^v.

More knowledge workers

For many organisations the main production factors remain people, capital and, in the case of manufacturing, raw materials and components. But knowledge has become a production factor of growing importance. In recruiting we now often look for brains, rather than a pair of hands. A large group of our workforce consists of knowledge workers, of people whose major contribution to the value creation is their creativity and expertise. Modern knowledge workers often have a rather different attitude from their traditional counterparts. They are often more independent, more loyal to their area of expertise than to their organisation, and dislike authority unless it is based on expertise. In short, they require a somewhat different style of leadership, one that is based on seduction and convincing on the basis of rational arguments, rather than on command and control.^{vi}

One can argue that this is not really new. There have always been a small number of knowledge workers in our organisations. Many organisations had R&D departments that were full of experts and knowledge professionals. And many professional organisations e.g. consultants, accountants or lawyers have always been built around people who invest in knowledge production and deployment. But as long as the knowledge workers remained a relatively marginal group in the organisation, or as long as professional organisations were relatively small, it was possible to lead them on a quasi individualised ad hoc basis. T

The growing importance of knowledge workers and the increasing size of professional organisations require systems to be developed to lead them, and this needs in many cases a true transformation of our organisations.

The increasing demands of society

Society has a growing expectation about the contributions from companies in the social area. Over the last twenty years we had seen the triumph of shareholder-value-based organisations. One of the underlying assumptions of this approach was that the main, if not the only, role of a company was to create value for its shareholders. By doing so the company would create wealth for society. No more was expected of them. The redistribution of the wealth was the State's role, or in some cases left to philanthropy. -- This has always been a somewhat stylised view and many companies did engage in social activities, i.e. deployed some activities of corporate social responsibility. –

But the growing trend of corporatisation and privatisation of public services has changed this extreme view. Many companies are now expected by their governments to engage in public-private partnership to support education, health provision, public transport, and in some cases even security and protection, services that were traditionally provided by the State. Society does not care necessarily about the mantra of shareholder value and expects profit oriented organisations to behave as corporate citizens^{vii}. And interestingly enough, even Jack Welch, the former CEO of GE, who was often closely associated with the implementation of shareholder value concept, has recently questioned its relevance^{viii}. And companies in emerging countries have always been expected to help in nation building.

As a consequence of this trend more than before leadership thus requires integrating and working with local and national communities in order to preserve the integrity of the company's image and brand.

Dispersion of the sources of knowledge and innovation

Contrary to the previous century, the source of innovation today is no longer limited to a fixed set of sources in the industrialised world. Thirty years ago the world looked relatively simple. In most of the areas of innovation, in particular if such innovation was enabled by technology, the sources of innovative ideas were rather limited and concentrated. Innovation based on micro-electronics and software thirty or forty years ago virtually all came out of Silicon Valley, Boston or Texas. Pharmaceutical innovation was perhaps a bit more spread out, but there were only a few major centres of innovation in the USA, the UK, Switzerland and Germany. Innovation in the automotive industry was concentrated in a few places, again in Germany, in Italy and Detroit. This has gradually changed and the sources of ideas and knowledge, but also the sources of innovative consumer behaviour have become a lot more dispersed.^{ix} If you want to follow what is going on today in genetic engineering you have to listen to what is discussed in West and East Coast of the USA, Cambridge (UK), the South of Sweden, Munich, the North of Italy, Bangalore, Singapore, Seoul, etc.

At the same time we are witnessing the emergence of a lower middle class with specific consumer preferences in the emerging countries e.g. China, India, South East Asia and Latin America. By my own approximate calculations, on the basis of statistics provided by the Asian development Bank, there are at least about 580 million people living in the South, South East and East Asia at this level of lower middle class (defined as a spending power for an average family of at least 5000 € per year) or above. This is almost twice the number of consumers in the USA and one and a half times those in the European Union. One can see this group as a target for products developed in Japan, the USA or Europe. However they are also a formidable source of new ideas^x. Recently we have seen many examples published on innovation created for the 'Bottom of the Pyramid', and it has been pointed out that when it comes to innovation with mobile phones, operators in emerging countries like India, the Philippines or East Africa have been leading the world.

Leading change in a world where the sources of ideas for innovation have become so dispersed will require people who can listen all over the world, and who can combine these ideas in new products, services and organisations, and roll these out in a very effective way.

Changes in the structure of multinationals

Multinational organisations are moving from a triangular organisational structure (with the boss at the top) to a networked structure. Multinational, transnational or global organisations may have had different structures, but most of them had a clear reporting structure into one headquarters. While they may have operated on an international scale, they often had a very clear national image, and bi-national organisations e.g. Shell or Unilever were a great exception. This 'master-slave' organisation whereby the regional organisations and subsidiaries reported into a master at the HQ is gradually slipping away, not least because of the commercial and financial success of some of the subsidiaries in emerging regions, who demand a more equitable balance of power in the organisation.^{xi} This is reinforced by the technological developments that allow for international coordination and integration of employees without having them co-located in one place. This flattening of organisations and distribution of organisational power may reflect better the current reality of these multinationals, but it has the disadvantage that it reduces clarity. Managing change in such networked and flatter organisations, where the core management

group is not necessarily in one location, and where power is more evenly distributed, will require managers than can live with ambiguity and can trigger action through collaboration.

Increased importance of risk management

Good leaders will be those who can calculate and cope with risk. As I argued earlier on, the internationalisation of the world economy goes through cycles and is likely to keep doing so. But unless there is a major geopolitical catastrophe, I dare to predict that we will continue to see in the long term a growing internationalisation of trade, a reduction of trade barriers, and a decrease in the importance of national borders. This reduces the protection of the individual firm by its national authorities and increases the interdependence of the players in the world market. It also means that shock waves will spread faster throughout the world, and that the amplitude of shocks may increase. – The speed with which the demise of Lehman Brothers influenced the rest of the financial world was a simple illustration of this. - It means higher risks.

In such a world, the quality of both management and leadership becomes more important for the success of an organisation, than the protection offered by staying behind trade barriers and the advantages provided by artificial information asymmetries provided by helpful governments. Managers will become more exposed and high quality leaders will be those who can estimate risk and uncertainty, and are better at coping with it through experimentation and quick learning^{xii}. Such experimentation and learning will require people who are more sensitive to weak signals in their environment, and have the ability to avoid that small disruptions become amplified once they start rolling through the networks.

The role of ICT in networking

It has become a commonplace that ICT is changing the world. In reality the world of business has adapted quickly and remarkably well to the opportunities that are offered through better electronic communication. But I am convinced that there are two areas where we have only seen the start of the challenge: how do we exploit the value and the format of the weak ties that are created in the social networking sites, and how do we cope with information overload?

Social networking as we observe it in Facebook, LinkedIn, Baidu, Orkut or Youtube has increased by several orders of magnitude the number and the nature of weak ties.^{xiii} As we know from research carried out since the 1970'ies these weak ties are of high importance in getting things done, in asserting leadership^{xiv}. I am convinced that we still have yet to scratch the surface on how to manage and get advantage out these new types of relationships in the business world. This is a significant challenge not the least because we still don't know which social networking concept will be the winner. The dominant design of social networking has still to emerge. I have seen several companies which experiment with internal social networking sites, but who seem lost at how to manage or leverage the enormous activity that has developed so quickly over these internal networking sites. The leader of tomorrow will need to use this abundance of weak ties to his or her advantage in the management of change.

Moreover as a consequence of these new networks and many other developments in the internet world, we have moved from a world of information scarcity to a world of

information abundance. Most of our decision analysis and management tools were developed for a world with scarcity of information. Satisfying behaviour when it comes to information processing has been one of the mantras in the management literature. We don't have yet the tools to lead and decide in a world where everybody has access to an abundance of information, and where every decision can be challenged, based on evidence available on the World Wide Web. Once again the ability to exploit this abundance of information and the mobilisation of the experts that own this knowledge will be the hallmark of a good leader.

... And all these changes in a very different context for the markets

As I mentioned above, a few months ago I would have argued that these eight categories captured to a large extent the changes in the context in which we need to exert our leadership. The financial turbulence in 2008 and the ensuing economic crisis have actually created an additional difference. We are coming out of a period of almost thirty years where 'business was good'. The most eagerly pursued jobs were in business and the top talent wanted to have a job in finance or business. Business leaders were upheld as role models. Entrepreneurship had become popular entertainment on TV. Governments were lectured by business people on how to run their affairs. Running public services required a business attitude. Public-private partnerships were often well accepted disguises for privatisation. Regulation could be better replaced by self regulation and codes of conduct. Business was good for you!

The recent crisis and scandals in which some business leaders have shown incompetence and an inability to satisfactorily self regulate may well change this attitude of society in a dramatic way. I fear that the pendulum is swinging back and that in the coming years the business world will constantly have to justify its actions to an increasingly sceptical society. That in turn will impose new requirements on business leaders in terms of interactions with the societies in which they operate. They might be admired less as 'captains of industries', but more vilified as incompetent schemers. Let's hope that this is not true, but we cannot avoid preparing for this possibility. And a cursory reading of any mainstream newspaper is not allaying my fears.

Business leaders will have to become active marketers for the values of good management and leadership. And we will need to convince society that it can learn a few ideas on how organisations should be run. True leadership will require us to collaborate with other stakeholders in society and improve the communication about the role of business in society.

The new collaborative leader

I admit that the trends that I have indicated are fairly general and to some extent speculative. Many of them are also correlated. But when you put them together, the picture that emerges suggests that the future leaders that we will train at business schools will require a different portfolio of skills than in the last decade. What we need is more 'responsible, collaborative leaders'.

This is a different breed of leader from the one who leads through sheer power, expertise, charisma, or based on dogma. It is a leader who can be sometimes at the same level as

those with whom (s)he wants to implement change. And who wants to achieve results in innovation and change management by stimulating collaboration with peers. The four key words that I would like to propose to describe these future leaders are *collaboration, listening, influencing and adaptation*.

Collaboration

In many of the nine trends above the word network was used. Multinationals become networks, value is created in fragmented networks, knowledge workers prefer to work in networks of peers, ICT leads to networks of weak ties, and sources of new ideas come from combining ideas from different geographical and cultural networks. In these networks management becomes 'getting things done through a community of peers'. Action requires *collaboration* with people, i.e. to co-act with others in order to succeed in implementing change.

Good leaders should be able to operate in these networks and become the drivers of the networks. This will require a willingness to constantly make significant strategic investments in networking and collaboration, and create a virtuous cycle of collaboration. Collaboration is in itself not always natural. Under pressure and faced with shortages of time and budget we may prefer to isolate ourselves from a network, fall back on command and control and implement the change all ourselves. But collaborative leadership does require that one makes constantly the trade off between going it alone and working through others, in favour of the latter.

Listening

Collaboration will not be effective unless we develop some other capabilities. A good collaborative leader needs to sense what is going on with the peers. Often the signals they are sending are very weak and not codified. Knowing what is going on in the networks forces one to be alert to these weak signals. Providing collaborative leadership often requires being able to get under the skin of the peers and mastering the art of responding quickly to their needs and uncertainties. Collaboration also requires a strong capacity to trust the peers and leave them the opportunity to develop their own entrepreneurial action in the face of change. All this requires an enhanced capacity to listen, both to internal and external signals and messages. But we need to recognise that the coveted capacity to listen should not lead to procrastination of decisions or immobilism.

Influencing

Change in these networks will not come through command and control. It requires evidence based *influencing*. Peers in social networks, knowledge workers, equals in the multinational networks, stakeholders in society want to be convinced. Influencing rather than telling will become the required modus operandi. These peers often have their own insights, strong expertise and entrepreneurial drive and prefer to act in teams of equals. If told what to do they may have excellent reasons and knowledge to disagree, in particular in a world where information has become abundant, and where information that exists outside one's organisation is often as valuable as information inside it. Their insights may well be as valuable as yours. And they will try to influence you. A good collaborative leader is the one

that is able to influence and convince his or her peers, without falling into the trap of becoming manipulative.

Adapting

Finally the world is becoming more uncertain and one that contains more risks. And there is less protection in the form of governments, artificial information asymmetries or trade barriers. Change and change management has become at the same time more complex because of the dispersion of sources of knowledge and innovation. Therefore the environment in which change needs to be implemented is becoming less predictable. The successful leader will be the one that is able to *adapt flexibly and* very rapidly to these changing circumstances. She or he needs to be able to appreciate and manage the increased risks in the environment. Agility is a must, but not at the expense of costly short cuts in decision making.

But beware, this is not a panacea

I am not arguing that all leadership should become collaborative. There may be good reasons and circumstances where leadership should be of the old type of command and control. The transaction costs of collaborative leadership can be pretty high and there may be circumstances where the simplicity of the situation does not allow for the investment in collaboration. And one needs to recognise that in the short term collaborative leadership is not always the fastest. One can imagine that for example in management of catastrophes one would prefer straightforward command and control. Or faced with a highly complex situation requiring a very high level of expertise one may want to revert back to leadership based on technical expertise. In the cases where some of the trends that I described higher do apply I would argue that collaboration should prevail.

And as I have already hinted, collaborative leadership may also have its dark side: listening may become procrastination, influencing may become manipulation, flexible adaptation may come at the expense of thoroughness. One of the important elements of collaborative leadership is also restraint, and an ability to walk the fine line between the clear and the dark side of its characteristics.

What does collaborative leadership require?

What do you need to do to prepare young people for such collaborative leadership? A lot is about process which I will discuss in the next section. But there are six insights that those who aspire to be collaborative leaders should pay attention to and understand

Getting the right mindset

Collaborative leadership is partially about having the right attitude and mindset. It is about understanding that others have capabilities and are prepared to share these with you in order to achieve change and innovation, and this on the condition that you work on an equal basis with them. It is up to the leader to leverage this willingness to commit to the change you as a leader propose. It is about being willing to make the trade off in favour of

collaborating over going it alone. It is about being willing to make the investments in relationships. It requires being prepared to recognise peers' contribution.

Corporate change these days is often about the continuing renewal of the business model. In the large majority of the cases, business models involve many partners, and getting the new business models implemented requires the collaboration of the partners and the suppliers, who can help structure the information linkages which are needed to deliver the business model. It is necessary to recognise that operating alone one can achieve little, whereas in a network one can achieve a lot.

Reducing transaction costs

Collaborative leadership does not come free. Collaboration requires interaction, has its coordination costs, and requires often the provision of leadership over the boundaries of your own organisation. You could even argue that collaboration may sap a lot of energy and thus be tiring for some of us.

In order to be successful collaborative leaders must be good at recognising the differences in values and organisational structures between profit and non-profit organisations, between large and small organisations, between firms and organisations with a different cultural anchoring. Organisations that collaborate may have very different, sometimes opposing objectives. This is all the more so when one collaborates with organisations from different countries, or with a fundamentally different value system. NGO's, Government and business organisations increasingly need to work together. Collaborative leaders need to understand how one can get common action between organisations that have incompatible objectives and value systems. A good collaborative leader will know how to reduce transaction costs, mainly by building trust and investing in the informality of relationships. And if successful this will lead to a truly collaborative, which may reduce the transaction costs in many ways.

Seeing beyond the borders of the organisation

A good collaborative leader needs to understand that his or her domain of action does not stop at the border of the organisation. Organisational boundaries become often fuzzy in a collaborative world, and both authority and accountability do not stop at the border of the organisation. Companies can be made accountable for what their subcontractors do, or how their partners communicate. Leadership has to go beyond the borders of the organisation. Persuading other parties to build value together will be essential to any effective collaboration.

Building consensus

Action that is implemented through a community of peers requires consensus building and creating ownership for the implementation of the decision among the widest group of peers

But consensus building has a big risk: it may lead to the acceptance of the lowest common denominator of the group and thus to suboptimal decisions. We need to understand how to

build consensus, but at the same time how to get the optimal and most performing decision with the group

We know from earlier research on culture and management that diversity can enhance the quality of decision making, on condition that we confront the cultural and contextual differences^{xv}. The least effective thing to do is to cover up differences between individuals with a different cultural background, out of a misplaced sense of politeness, respect or political correctness. We do know that multicultural teams, compared to mono-cultural groups, either regress to a lower performance in the face of decisions, or perform significantly better. The worse performing groups are those that cover up the differences. The better performing multicultural groups are those that confront and address the differences. Groups that are able to do so perform better than mono-cultural groups, because they benefit from the creativity and the differences in perspectives that the diversity offers.

It may still be a conjecture, but I would like to offer the hypothesis that collaborative leaders need to build consensus, but doing this in such a way that they bring out the differences and tensions in the team, enhancing thereby the creativity and avoiding getting to a lowest common denominator.

Ability to network

Collaborative leaders need to be good social networkers. The creation of a wide network of weak ties will enhance significantly their capabilities to perform. We can and should teach them how to build and maintain these networks.

They need to understand how to carefully build the perception of their identity with their peers, how to manage status and power relationships in the network, and how to develop the capabilities that the literature on R&D Management describes about technological gatekeepers^{xvi}. Gatekeepers are not necessarily the core social networkers in the internal team, or the eternal organisers of group activities, e.g. TGIF's or sports outings. But they are usually high performing, have social skills and are well connected both inside and outside their organisation, and have a capability of translating the information and knowledge, that is available abundantly outside the network, in the jargon that is recognisable and actionable within the network. This ability to spot the important information externally available and translate it back into the internal network was no doubt their key value added.

Again I would like to venture a hypothesis, i.e. that collaborative leadership has a lot in common with this ability to develop social networks, but also with infusing them with know-how that others may not have spotted, or where the relevance for the change to be implemented was not as clear. This role of translation is no doubt a key element in collaborative leadership, because it is part of the building of the credibility of the leader.

Managing the dualities

The world is full of dualities.^{xvii} The right approach is often not 'either, or', but 'and and'. We need to conform to the group and yet creatively think out of the box. We need to be formal and informal. We need to listen to experience and at the same time challenge it through experimentation. We want to make money, and we need to be socially responsive. We need to compete and we need to collaborate.

It is uncomfortable to live with such dualities. But in a collaborative world we have no choice.

Can you prepare for such collaborative leadership?

Can you teach for this type of collaborative leadership? The answer to that is similar to that for many other skills and capabilities that require some innate talent. You cannot transform a person without any talent into a successful collaborative leader. But you can take a rough diamond and polish it. You can hone the skills of those who have some knack for it.

Adult learning in a professional environment is always a combination of five major areas of activities: on the job training, mentoring, special projects, job rotation and formal education. The formal education is a very important element of this, because it helps making sense out of all the other activities.

Preparing a young high potential for a role as a collaborative leader also requires a combination of these five. Formal education at a business school can be a tremendous boost in helping people to discover the experiences they have had in collaborative leadership, conceptualising these experiences, and giving them the confidence that these concepts are not idiosyncratic but can actually be generalised and applied in many different circumstances. Business schools can and do play a very important role in speeding up this process of adult learning.

We have at Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge been experimenting with collaborative leadership for almost a decade now. It is probably partially in our genetic heritage as a Collegial University. Our University consists of more than 40 independent institutions that have to work together in the Cambridge ecosystem. A Collegial University is probably an age old experiment in collaboration and collaborative leadership, because nobody has really strong power. And yet we only are effective by working together and sharing strong values. Interesting enough, the ecosystem of small and medium sized entrepreneurial high tech companies clustered around the University of Cambridge seem to work in this same collaborative approach. One of the most successful companies in Cambridge, the producer of risc processors for the mobile phone industry, ARM, is also an extreme example of working in networks^{xviii}.

But even so, educating for collaborative leadership is still a new area for us and I do not pretend that we have here in Cambridge all the recipes to do this successfully. To stimulate a debate on how we can help grooming of collaborative leaders for the next decade I would like to make five propositions.

Leadership development is essentially experiential: adult learning is often about making sense out of the own experience gathered through projects, on the job learning, etc. We need to provide our students the opportunity to become master of their own leadership destiny. Therefore our programmes need to include a significant element of experiential learning. We do that, like many other business schools, through a lot of group work, and classroom interactions with leaders. But we have also found it most helpful to include in the programme two major group projects, one with a small local organisation (often high tech entrepreneurial companies) and one with a globally operating large organisation. These

projects provide a relatively low risk environment to experiment with collaborative leadership.

Learning about collaborative leadership requires *dialogue*. Rather than sticking to one single pedagogical method at the Cambridge Judge Business School, we believe in mixing lectures with cases discussions, interactions with leaders, group work, etc., and, above all, that dialogue between all involved in the learning process is at the heart of adult learning. I do believe that in the end we learn when we can formulate our insights ourselves. And on top of that, dialogue is probably at the heart of what collaboration is all about.

Collaborative leadership development requires interdisciplinary interactions, beyond the boundaries of a business, and of business. It requires strong interactions and learning from scientists, social leaders, politicians, philosophers, etc. to create openness in one's thinking and a capability of listening to information coming from unexpected corners. In a sense we are blessed by being a business school that operates at the heart of the University of Cambridge, and that has resolutely chosen to be integrated with the other departments. Beyond the interdisciplinary research opportunities that this creates, it is also an opportunity to bring in a wide range of colleagues from other departments in the learning activities.

Collaborative leadership requires our students to learn *how to manage the difficult triangle of listening, influencing and yet keep an action orientation*. Collaborative leadership requires all three, and it is all too easy to fall into the trap of overemphasizing only one or two of them. Listening only may be good for a coach or a counsellor. Influencing only is good for a teacher or a consultant. And action only is perhaps good for a crisis manager. But true collaborative leadership requires a careful balance between the three. The balance is also important because it is the best way to exercise the restraint that I mentioned earlier. Collaborative leadership has its dark sides, and striking the right balance between listening, influencing and action is perhaps the best way of exercising that restraint.

Leadership is about *managing constant change*. Collaborative leadership requires that such change is managed through others. But constant change is tiring, and the collaborative leader needs to find the energy to keep on driving through the change, as well as developing the energy for his or her peers to do the same. I find this at once the most challenging and the easiest task in helping students to learn about collaborative leadership. We need to inspire our students to find and create energy for themselves and others. It is difficult because energy is not that easy to create. But it becomes easy because when we can make them discover that there is energy in working with others and in doing things you like to do.

Finally we need to accept that leaders in a risky networked world cannot predict and control everything, and that some *dose of luck* is needed. Tongue in cheek I would like to argue that we need to believe in the logic of luck. Successful action is not only about cold analysis and structured decision making. *Once you are lucky you have to be able to spot it and exploit it quickly*. That is another trick that we our students can learn.

Conclusion

It is an old adage that leadership styles have to 'fit' the context in order to be effective. The case that I wanted to build is that the changes in the environment of our enterprises and

non profit organisations is such that a more collaborative style of leadership is perhaps more appropriate than some of the more traditional styles of leadership. I defined that type of leadership by four key words: collaboration, listening, influencing and adaptation and described what focal points should be for those who want to adopt such a leadership style.

As a leader of a business school I have to constantly think about the role that we can play effectively in grooming good managers and good leaders. I am strongly convinced that business schools have a very important role to play in helping young high potentials to recognise and conceptualise their own experiences with collaboration. And we can also help them in making the concepts actionable and useful in their professional environment.

But in order to do this effectively I am convinced we in the future oriented business schools need to adapt our processes of adult learning. Most of us have gone away from a style of learning which is pure class room teaching, or a dogmatic adherence to one particular pedagogical method. Our approach in Cambridge is non dogmatic and one of stimulating dialogue. And there is a lot to be said for more experiential and interdisciplinary learning, as well as showing them to keep action, listening and influencing in balance.

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