

**FORMATION OF CAPABLE, INFLUENTIAL AND AUTHENTIC
LEADERS FOR TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY**

**Patrick Duignan
Foundation Chair in Educational Leadership
Australian Catholic University**

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INTRODUCTION

Leaders in schools are confronted by external and internal challenges and expectations that make demands on their time, expertise, energies and emotional wellbeing. They are, increasingly, being held accountable for their performance and are expected to comply with ethical and moral standards in their relationships and practices (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997; Starratt, 1993, Taylor, 1991; Terry, 1993).

While many educational leaders may experience confusion, even frustration, in their attempts to respond productively to these pressures, the current emphasis in many educational systems on corporate management values, strategies and practices has contributed to a persistent feeling among many educators of being used and devalued as people. This perception of 'excessive managerialism' has led to a call for the transformation of managers and administrators into leaders who focus more on people-related issues in their organisations.

At the heart of these 'people issues' are values and ethics. There is an emerging concern with "the paralysis of moral patterns" of life (Pirsig, 1992:357) and a yearning to reclaim the moral, ethical, and spiritual domains of leadership (Conger and Associates, 1994; Covey, 1992; Duignan, 1997; Handy, 1997; Hodgkinson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992).

The findings from a recent study on the leadership challenges and ethical dilemmas faced by leaders of contemporary frontline service organisations (SOLR Project, 2003) indicate that the most difficult challenges facing leaders in contemporary frontline service organisations present themselves as dilemmas, paradoxes or *tensions* that are, usually, people-centred, involving contestation of values and/or ethical contradictions.

Perhaps there is nothing unique about this situation, because paradoxes and tensions are, in fact, a part of the fabric of life in organisations. Handy (1994) suggests that such tensions are “endemic” given the complex, uncertain, and turbulent world of constant change in contemporary organisations. Leaders, he argues, are faced with tensions, dilemmas and paradoxes that are “inevitable, endemic and perpetual” (Handy, 1994).

It is easy, however, to become disoriented, confused and frustrated in such challenging conditions. Handy points out that paradoxes confuse us because:

We are asked to live with contradictions and with simultaneous opposites . . . To live with simultaneous opposites is, at first glance, a recipe for indecision at best, schizophrenia at worst.

Handy suggests that we cannot afford such confusion and we must learn to ‘find pathways through’ or manage paradoxes because they are part and parcel of the fabric of life. We face them every day as we make decisions about our careers and lives. We have to plan for the long term without neglecting our needs today. Handy suggests that parents may have to be “simultaneously tough and strict on their children *and* tender and relaxed. Organisations may have to be both tight *and* loose in their structures, big *and* small in their operations, strategic *and* tactical in their plans”.

There are no simple *either/or* solutions to such tensions and paradoxes. Often choices in such situations necessitate the consideration of seeming opposites in a *both/and* approach to decision making. Educational leaders (primarily principals) in the SOLR Project reported that they, frequently, had to make choices about people in ‘dilemma situations’ where there are no obvious ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ answers. Mostly there were degrees of ‘right’ on both sides. At least, most people involved in such contradictory situations believed that ‘right’ was on their side.

It attempting to make sense of such dilemmas, is not a matter of choosing one side or value over another (*either/or approach*) but, more likely, the most effective decisions will reflect concerns for all people and values involved (*both/and approach*). Kidder (1995) makes this point well when discussing the problems for

leaders and others making choices in situations where values and ethical considerations are paramount. He states: “Tough choices, typically are those that pit one right value against another. That’s true in every walk of life – corporate professional, personal, civic, international, educational, religious, and the rest” (p. 16).

He points out that *right-versus-right values* are at the heart of most difficult choices. While there are numerous *right-versus-wrong* situations, they are, for the most part, more easily discernible, and therefore more easily dealt with by honest, well-intentioned people than are right-versus-right situations. As Kidder (1995 p. 17) suggests, “Only those living in a moral vacuum will be able to say, ‘On the one hand is the good, the right, the true and noble. On the other hand are the awful, the wicked, the false, and the base. And here I stand, equally attracted to each’.” On the contrary, he argues that:

The *really* tough choices, then, don’t centre upon right versus wrong. They involve right versus right. They are genuine dilemmas precisely because each side is firmly rooted in . . . core values (p. 18).

Such dilemmas usually present tensions between competing sets of values where each can be interpreted as ‘right’ and justified in a given situation. Many of the tensions faced by leaders in the SOLR project fall into the category of right-versus-right. These include:

1. the rights of the individual (e.g., misbehaving student) *versus/and* those of the group (e.g., class of students) or the community;
2. the exercise of compassion in decision making *versus/and* rigidly following the rules;
3. the difficulty of being loyal to a colleague (e.g., teacher) *versus/and* also speaking the truth about his/her deficiencies (e.g., inadequate teaching);
4. the provision of a quality service (e.g., education to all students) *versus/and* the efficient use of scarce resources and the pressures to deliver measurable outcomes;

5. the choice of consolidating what we are now doing (e.g., support the *status quo*) versus/and the need to respond to emerging pressures for change (e.g., support development);
6. the need to take a short-term view (e.g., focus on immediate pressures and urgent demands) versus/and the imperative for strategic thinking and long-term planning.

In this paper, I will discuss tensions between (1) individual considerations and interests versus/and those of the group or community in dilemma situations, and (2) the commitment of many leaders to care and compassion in their relationships versus/and their obligation to follow rules and regulations in their decision making. I will use these two examples in order to illustrate the nature of a type of dilemma facing many leaders in contemporary organisations.

Tension 1: Individual versus Group Interests

This was one of the most frequently discussed tensions. There are tensions involved when deciding whether to support decisions which promote the good of the group or community as against the rights of the individual and *vice versa*. Generally, the 'community' was perceived by respondents in educational organisations to be the wider student body while individuals were usually teachers.

The two main causes of tensions in the choices between the good of the community and the rights of the individual identified in the SOLR findings included:

1. staff ineffectiveness; and
2. student misbehaviour.

In every case involving student discipline, principals noted the need to provide for student welfare, safety and educational outcomes. In these examples, the principal's decision to suspend or expel was influenced by the detrimental effects of student misbehaviour on the school community. One principal stated: "I learnt

as well a benchmark for when the price for individual 'good' is too high in relation to the 'good' of the whole group". It should be noted, however, that students were not suspended without consultation and or without conscientious attempts to address the problems they were having.

In every case of a tension in this area, principals expressed concern for the welfare of the individual, whether student or teacher. In cases where principals refused to suspend students, the choice was governed by concern for that individual's welfare and the basic right of every child to receive an education.

In the case of ineffective staff, long and loyal service was acknowledged but was, generally, outweighed by the concern for the needs of the student body whose education was being impacted upon by their ineffectiveness in teaching. One principal concluded that the task of removing a long serving and loyal teacher was too difficult and decided to 'wait it out'. This decision was, in hindsight, regretted and the principal acknowledged that the decision to move the teacher on should have been made earlier.

He stated:

I should have put her on an improvement program. Her students deserved better. If she didn't make a change, it would affect her superannuation, retirement, and staff morale. Some staff considered my lack of action weak as she was also undermining my decisions. . . . I made this choice because the process is difficult, time consuming and stressful. I thought about the years of good and loyal service she had given. I should have acted earlier before it got to the stage that there was only one or two years to go before retirement. I have learnt that the process of looking at duty and obligations in ethical dilemmas is really important and I let down the people who are my first responsibility, the children. Being a principal carries with it some truly difficult decisions requiring head power not heart power.

Another principal decided that it was too difficult to fight an effective staff member who was applying for voluntary redundancy for the second time. Whilst the principal did not believe that this payout should be approved she concluded:

I would have preferred to terminate his services. In the end, I approved his voluntary redundancy. I weighed up the time and effort involved in trying to bring an unwilling and uncommitted staff member up to speed against the other priorities I had, together with the emerging initiatives and projects which were in the planning stage. I also thought very carefully about where my time would be better spent in terms of staff development, change management, redirecting the organisational culture and re-positioning the site for the future. I also know what it is like to prove incompetence in the area I work in. I believe I made the 'right' choice. I have worked in the public sector for many years and I have seen and experienced time, money and emotions spent on people and projects with absolutely no progress or outcomes. I have seen and experienced policies applied to the letter and in very inflexible ways all to no great effect other than to disillusion the people involved and create unbridgeable gaps among staff. I have used the time I have 'saved' in this case, to foster innovations and work with people who are committed and wish to be involved and do a good job.

Principals were asked about the lessons they had learned when attempting to resolve such tensions. The following quotations are examples of the main points made.

- "Sometimes there needs to be a clinical approach to situations. Compassionate leadership should be the norm but sometimes a less soft approach is the best".
- "When the going gets difficult and you know you're right, you need to stick with your decision. I believe that surviving this "ordeal" has made me more aware of individual/school and community needs and expectations".
- "Leadership must demonstrate a human side as well as a task-oriented side".
- "Always be guided when making ethical decisions by what you believe is 'right' and 'good'".
- "I also learnt that at the end of the day you need to own the decision and be able to give sound reasons for it. At times I found it hard to distinguish between my personal reasons (her intimidation of me) and the communal reasons (the effect she was having on others)".

Tension 2: Compassion versus Rules

Principals continually face decisions in which choices can be influenced by considerations for either 'compassion' or 'strictly following the rules'. Compassion encompasses looking at the individual circumstance and making a decision that puts care and concern for the individual above all rules and policies, if these should be contrary. Rules or policies provide guidelines for leaders on how to make decisions. Some respondents in this study, however, argued that by complying with rules, they were usually fulfilling their duty of care to students.

The main causes of these tensions in the SOLR study involved instances of:

1. student discipline;
2. teacher incompetence; and
3. parental complaints.

The resolution of these tensions tended to be either positive or negative depending on the personal circumstances of the individuals involved. The cases were positive for students where their personal safety and interests were protected; or special provision in the form of support programs and structures were provided.

The cases often tended to have negative outcomes for teachers (the majority of instances in this study). For example:

- A teacher disciplined a student for breach of rules on a school camp. In order to placate the parents the teacher was disciplined despite the fact that staff and indeed the principal agreed that the teacher had a solid reputation and acted appropriately;
- A teacher was falsely accused of sexually assaulting an infant student. The teacher was a valued member of staff and the accusation was found to be baseless. The teacher, however, suffered loss of reputation and trust from the principal and system.

In some of the cases, the rules were emphasised while in others compassion was given priority. When rules were used to determine the outcome of the tension, attention was usually given to the feelings of both parties. When rules were rigidly adhered to, principals appeared to have no alternative but to commit to system or departmental rules and guidelines or to legislation.

When leaders enforced the rules, they appeared to be, especially, mindful of the litigious nature of contemporary society:

- A student with aggressive behaviour was suspended with allegations of drugs at home. The principal noted that a detailed record of all interactions and decisions was kept in case of complaint or legal challenge;
- In the two cases of sexual assault, both principals followed procedural guidelines strictly because of the stringent laws in this area; and
- In two cases involving violent parents, principals adhered strictly to Departmental guidelines.

In these cases, principals consulted widely with appropriate authorities such as departmental personnel, welfare agencies, police and other members of staff. They needed to 'cover their tracks as well as their backs'.

Where students were suspended or expelled, the rules were followed in order to protect the body of students but it was considered also in the best interests of the individual student, who would learn from the strict adherence to rules and discipline.

In outcomes where compassion was emphasised, rules were suspended when principals considered that a care outcome was the optimal solution to the tension. A disadvantaged student was disciplined and, because of the nature of the offence, the policy proclaimed that he should miss out on a major sporting event. The senior executive disregarded the policy and the student was allowed to

compete. This was said to be a once in a lifetime experience for the student who needed the affirmation from sport because of an unsupportive family life. The principal described the incident:

Our school has a policy where, if a student has received more than one 'blue slip', that student is not allowed to participate in special activities such as excursions, visits or play sports until his/her behaviour has improved. If it is their first 'blue slip', the ban is for one week only. One student, who is a talented athlete, had reached eligibility to participate at regional level. The student had received no support from home (We are a low SES school) and has been known to run in bare feet! One week prior to the regional carnival he earned, fairly, his first "blue slip". Technically the full week was up the day after the carnival. The dilemma of allowing this child a chance at the carnival was taken to the Executive who decided he should go.

Another case, described in detail by a principal, demonstrates the complexity of leadership challenges, the tensions involved, and the difficulty of making the 'right' choice. While this is a rather lengthy case, it is worth describing in full because it presents a picture of the complex and challenging nature of dilemmas faced by leaders, such as principals. These complex leadership challenges and dilemmas are, usually, not amenable to simple solutions.

In this case, the principal disregarded the rules and, in so doing, inadvertently allowed the 'abduction' of a child by her grandfather. The principal felt that this was in the best interests of the child and, according to him, the end result proved his judgment to be correct. On reflection, however, he concluded, that this would probably not be a course of action that he would repeat in similar circumstances. The risks were too high and with maturity and experience, he would handle the matter differently.

The principal told the story:

The incident took place in a small village of around 150 people. This is the school of which I am principal. There was a child who attends the school; her mother who is a drug addict; and her grandfather who is a prominent magistrate. The child's mother was not neglecting the child involved, however, her lifestyle was not,

initially, providing the child with the best opportunity for long-term success at school. As the grandfather lived in another part of the state, my contact with him was limited to twice a year face-to-face meetings, and fortnightly phone calls.

There were a series of incidents involving the child that started to concern me. She was coming to school having no food, she was not being picked up in the afternoons, and her personal hygiene was being neglected. I contacted the Department of Community Services, as I am required to do, but nothing was done. I called the grandfather and told him about my concerns as well.

A week later, there was a fire at the child's house, due to the drugs that the child's mother had been taking. It could have been fatal. Later that week, the grandfather called to the school and asked to speak to the child. This is not in line with Departmental policy, but I allowed the child to come to the phone. That afternoon she was taken from the local park by her grandfather to an aunt in another part of the state. Two days later, the child's mother came to the school looking for her daughter.

This incident presented two ethical choices. The first was to allow the child to speak to her grandfather. This choice had to be made on the spot. I knew it was not within normal operating guidelines, but I felt it would be in the best interest of the child. I personally trusted the grandfather. This made the choice more difficult.

The second choice was after the child had been taken and her mother had come to ask if I knew where she was. I was prepared for this choice. I knew that it would come. I could tell her what had happened, tell her where her child was, or claim that I had no knowledge of the incident.

The choices that I made were made with the best interests of the child in mind. In the first instance with the phone call, I decided to allow the child to speak with her grandfather. Knowing full well that I would be doing so outside the guidelines that were set down. When I was questioned by the child's mother as to her daughter's whereabouts, I decided to deny all knowledge of the incident while knowing that I should have reported it.

The first choice was made for a number of reasons. I was becoming increasingly concerned for the child. I was actually relieved when I got the phone call and he asked to speak to his grandchild. I was hoping that it would result in an improved home situation for the young girl.

The second choice, regarding what I would say if I were ever questioned regarding the child's removal, was an easier one, because I had time to think the situation through. I knew that other people in the village had seen the grandfather take the child and that it would only be a matter of time before she found out. I decided that no information that may lead to the child being returned to her mother would be coming from me. This decision was also formed partly due to my breach of guidelines in the first instance with the phone call.

With the benefit of hindsight, I'm not sure that I did make the right choices. The end result could not have been better. The child is now in a warm, safe environment and her mother's visits are short and supervised. No action was taken against anyone, and all parties are happy with the new situation. But I don't think that I can judge my actions purely on the basis of the final outcome. As a leader, I should have been able to work within the guidelines to bring about a favourable result. I think I showed inexperience. I was fortunate that the repercussions of my actions, and inactions, were positive. If I were faced with the same situation in the future, I would hope that I would handle the situation with a much greater sense of professionalism. In fact, I am confident that I would handle the situation differently.

This case reflects the complexity of many tension situations where the determination of which choice to make is not always clear. Despite rules and regulations to the contrary, there may be a number of choices that could be perceived by different people as being 'right'. When a situation appeals to the heart, then choice may be based more on care and compassion than on strict adherence to rules.

Educational leaders require frameworks or guidelines to help them make sensible, informed and balanced choices when faced with difficult tensions and dilemmas, such as those just described. I will now propose such a framework.

Developing Frameworks for Managing Tension and Paradox

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor
fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement
from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still
point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

(From T. S. Eliot, 1963, "Burnt Norton", *Four Quartets*)

T. S. Eliot provides an intriguing insight into the nature of tension and paradox by employing the dance imagery to implicitly question either/or logic, and its accompanying mental models which have dominated Western thought since the time of Aristotle. Eliot's world view presents a framework for understanding reality which rejects simplistic dualisms based on either/or thinking and acting or on Aristotle's 'law of excluding middle' (e.g. A or not A), which enshrined dichotomy and dualism into our Western mode of thought (heaven and earth; good and evil; body and soul; masculine and feminine, value and fact).

Eliot's frame of reference provides a perspective on reality that embraces an idea or family of ideas which includes "shades of grey, blurred boundary, grey area, balanced opposites, both true and false, contradiction, reasonable not logical . . ." (Kosko 1994: 67). Such a view recognises that the world is full of uncertainty, ambiguity and contradiction. The great Bertrand Russell also warns of our often simplistic use of symbols in a vain attempt at developing precision and certainty in our descriptions of reality:

All traditional logic assumes that precise symbols are being employed. It is therefore not applicable to this terrestrial life, but only to an imagined celestial one. The law of excluded middle [A or not-A] is true when precise symbols are employed but it is not true when symbols are vague, as, in fact, all symbols are." (Bertrand Russell, quoted in Kosko, p. 92).

Zadeh (in Kosko, 1994), a seminal figure in the development of fuzzy logic, when presenting his 'principle of incompatibility', has argued along similar lines:

As the complexity of a system increases, our ability to make precise and specific statements about its behaviour diminishes until a threshold is reached beyond which precision and significance (or relevance) become almost mutually exclusive characteristics A corollary principle may be stated succinctly as, "The closer one looks at a real-world problem, the fuzzier becomes its solution" (Zadeh cited in Kosko p. 148).

It would appear, indeed, that we live in a world where the boundaries between ideas, phenomena and events and their supposed opposites are often unclear, fuzzy, even overlapping. Leaders in contemporary organisations require frames of reference that can assist them manage such situations of uncertainty, ambiguity and seeming contradictions or paradox. They need frameworks for making choices that can encompass seeming polar opposite considerations and values. This perspective is not well accepted, never mind understood or appreciated, by a majority of those who study and practice leadership and management. The traditional perspective of a world of certainty and precision, based on linear, mechanistic and logical claims, still dominates leadership and management thinking and practice.

There is a need for leadership and management frameworks that, according to Handy (1994), help us appreciate that "the opposites are necessary to each other" (p. 48). He advocates that we must learn to frame the confusion and find pathways through the paradoxes by understanding what is happening and by learning to be different (p. 3). We must break the bonds imposed on us by the either/or dualistic mindsets.

English (1995) prefers to regard paradox as a tension situation that is, primarily, characterised by relationship and complementarity. He recommends that leaders and managers should analyse paradox and dilemma situations, not in terms of contradiction, polarity, and either/or frames but in terms of a *relationship* that encompasses both competition and complementarity (a *both/and* and *A and not-A* approach). They should, he says, determine, as best they can, the qualities and conditions of relationships in each situation. In this way they can better

understand and manage a change situation (usually characterised by uncertainty and confusion) by building a profile of the tensions - in Handy's terms they are framing the confusion.

A tension situation, says English (1995), can then best be described as a *double-headed arrow*. Seeming polar opposites are actually in a complex relationship and influences are rarely one-way. Instead of being mutually exclusive, most seeming opposites are 'in tension', characterised, partly, by competition and, partly, by complementarity - as the song suggests, "You can't have one without the other". Indeed one implies the other and we often describe a situation in terms of its opposite, for example, "We are not an exclusive organisation", meaning "We are inclusive".

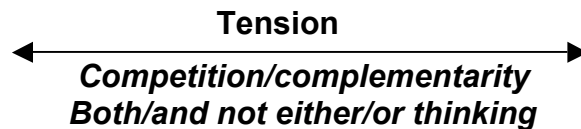
By emphasising the relationship and complementarity instead of the seeming contradictions and opposites, English argues that leaders and managers have a better chance of influencing the direction and intensity of the positive side of the tension. Otherwise, they will opt for the either/or approach, perhaps believing that seeming opposing forces are mutually exclusive and incompatible, thereby creating a win-lose situation. In other words they have fallen for the either/or, *A or not-A* dichotomy.

The challenges facing many leaders in contemporary service organisations are complex and multidimensional (Duignan and Collins, 2003). As stated earlier, many of the challenges present themselves as tensions where choices are often between 'right-and-right', rather than 'right-or-wrong' alternatives. Finding optimal resolutions to such tension situations demands mindsets and approaches based on *both/and* rather than *either/or* thinking and acting.

Let us take an example of where a staff member in an organisation (eg, a teacher) has contributed quality service for over 25 years but is currently performing at a much lower level. A number of 'tensions' may exist in such a situation and decision makers require frameworks for dealing with such contradictions.

A 'tension,' as used here, does not have to be the type of tension that emanates from interpersonal conflict, even though such tensions may also be present. If we take the case of a teacher who after many loyal and high performing years with a school is now performing poorly, we can apply an analysis of tensions in the situation that will help frame and then manage the problem. The concept of the double-headed arrow, as an aid to analysis of the tension, can be depicted in diagram form, as in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Double-headed Arrow

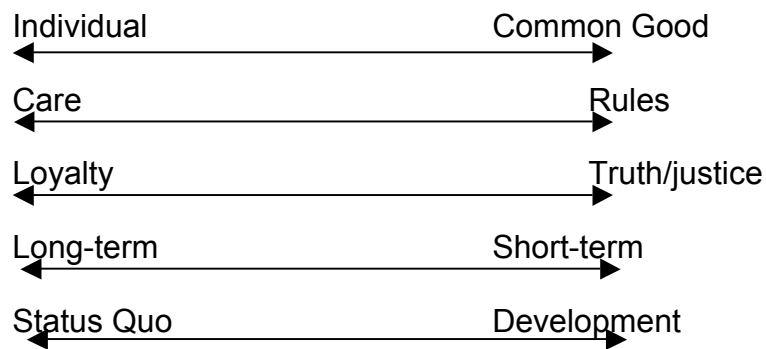


With regards to the teacher, we can apply a number of the tensions identified in the SOLR project to this situation (See Figure 2). There is a tension here between (1) considerations for the **individual** (the teacher) *and* the **common good** (the clients/students); (2) **loyalty** (to teacher for long service) *and* **truth/justice** (being honest about the situation in the interests of justice); (3) **long-term** (interests of teacher and students) *and* **short-term** (the quick but not necessarily easy way could be to dismiss the staff member); (4) **care** (showing compassion and a caring attitude to the teacher) *and* **rules** (following the 'letter of the law' with regard to the rules on performance appraisal); and **status quo** (It is usually easier to leave things as they are but this will not solve the problem) *and* **development** (An obvious option is to provide the staff member with professional development opportunities).

If we approach this situation with an *either/or* mindset, then we may tend to see the issues in terms of the common good without due consideration for the individual rights of the staff member. Or we may decide that 'rules are rules' and compassion isn't really an option. However, if we adopt a *both/and* mindset we will look for the complementarity (common ground) in these tensions and try to

choose options that reflect a balanced consideration for the common good as well as the individual. We can actually depict our options related to these tensions in diagram form (See Figure 2). In this way we can better frame the problem or tension (dilemma, paradox) and make a more informed and balanced choice.

Figure 2
Framing the Tensions
Look for the Common Ground



By applying each of the double-headed arrows to the problem encountered, a profile of the problem or dilemma emerges and informed choices are more likely to result.

However, it needs to be pointed out that this approach to decision making in difficult situations will not provide *the answers*. It will help frame the issues and tensions and, through a profiling of the problem, make choices more reflective of and sensitive to the problem's complexity. Judgments will still have to be made using the best available information and facts.

How, then, can we better prepare educational leaders to make informed choices in the type of complex and paradoxical situations identified in the SOLR findings? It is proposed here that educational leaders who have to make these judgments need preparation and formation that involves not only competency training but also the development of their leadership capabilities. I will now discuss the

concept of leadership capability and suggest that it is 'capable leaders' who are most likely to be successful in providing influential leadership in situations of uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity.

From Competencies to Capabilities

Stephenson (2000 p. 4) argues for a clear distinction between 'competency' and 'capability' in leadership training and development:

Competency is about delivering the present based on past performance; capability is about imaging the future and bringing it about. Competency is about control; capability is about learning and development. Competency is about fitness for (usually other people's) purpose; capability is about judging fitness of the purpose itself.

He (1992, p.1) points out that, "capability depends much more on our confidence that we can effectively use and develop our skills in complex and changing circumstances than on our mere possession of those skills". He goes on to suggest that capable people have confidence in their ability to "take effective and appropriate action within unfamiliar and changing circumstances". He defines capability as:

an all round human quality, an *integration* of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding *used appropriately and effectively* – not just in familiar and highly focused specialist contexts but in response to *new and changing* circumstances (Stephenson, 2000, p. 2 - Italics in original).

Capable leaders, it would seem therefore, need to have the capability to make sensible and wise judgments when faced with new and changing situations, often involving dilemmas and value conflict. Many leaders who seem to have skills in, for example, interpersonal relations, conflict management, even decision making, do not, necessarily, perform well in these areas. They seem to lack the

confidence, courage, commitment, character and wise judgment to apply these skills in unfamiliar and changing circumstances.

The tensions inherent in many of the leadership challenges identified in the SOLR Project, call for qualities, mindsets and dispositions which help leaders form creative frameworks for choice and action, that transcend competencies and management skills. Leaders require creative, intuitive frameworks based on in-depth understanding of the nature of human nature and of the ethical, moral, even spiritual dimensions inherent in human interaction and choice. Above all, they need sound judgment and wisdom derived from critical reflection on the meaning of life and work.

The concept of capability is closely related to Groome's (1998) idea of 'reasonable wisdom' which ". . . engages the whole person . . . and encourages integrity between knower and knowledge, to become wise." (p. 288) He points out that wisdom includes, but goes beyond knowledge and reason:

Wisdom is the realization of knowledge in life-giving ways – for self, others, and the world, Becoming wise is eminently reasonable but goes beyond reason to engage the whole person – head, heart, and hands, and all the capacities thereof, in activities of cognition, affection, and volition.

A reasonable wisdom constitutes a "wisdom way of knowing," which, in essence, is "knowing with an ethic." (Groome, p. 288) It also constitutes a quest for truth which has, according to Groome (p. 301), *cognitive, relational, and moral* aspects.

The cognitive aspect of truth points to what 'rings true to experience,' 'makes sense' to one's way of thinking, and 'works' for life.' (Groome, p. 303) The relational aspect of truth refers to loyalty and faithfulness in commitments and relationships. The moral aspect of truth constitutes a commitment to 'living the truth,' as truth must be ". . . one's way of life." (Groome, p. 304)

This holistic view of truth is compatible with the idea that capable leaders must be, first and foremost, capable human beings. Capable leaders help others “. . . learn and discern what rings true, makes sense, and is useful, but then should invite them onward to truth as relational and as moral imperative.” (Groome. p. 303)

The challenge, however, is to take the concepts and language of capabilities in leadership and translate them into more concrete terms for leader practitioners and for those involved in their preparation and development. To date, we know a great deal about leadership competencies but very little about capabilities. In attempting to do this for educational leaders in five Catholic Diocesan Education Systems in Queensland, Duignan, Kelleher and Spry (2003) have categorised leadership capabilities into three dimensions - personal, relational and professional (a fourth category, ‘organisational capabilities’ is also emerging). These categories and their components are indicative only and are not meant to be exhaustive of possible leadership capabilities. They are, in fact, the focus of ‘research in progress’ and will be subject to much greater refinement and validation.

Key Capabilities of Educational Leadership:

Personal Capabilities:

- optimism and confidence
- personal reflection and critique
- personal vision
- intuition
- passion and courage
- focus and discipline
- practical wisdom
- commitment to growth
- responsible for actions

Relational Capabilities:

- trusting disposition
- emotional maturity
- respect for integrity of human person
- collaborative commitment
- team player
- open to dialogue
- positive politics

Professional Capabilities:

- contextually aware
- visionary
- strategic thinker
- curriculum and pedagogical 'know how'
- change mastery
- managerially adept

Duignan and Marks (2003) have also argued for the inclusion of such capabilities in the preparation and *formation* of leaders. They argue that at the heart of a leader's capability is his/her ability to *influence* a variety of aspects of organisational life, especially the people and their relationships. Leadership capability, therefore, is inextricably linked with a variety of influencing processes that require leaders not only to be competent managers but also capable human beings. The human side always has and always will be the cutting edge of leadership. We need to focus more in leadership preparation and development on this human face of leadership.

I now suggest that the preparation and development of leaders is best placed within a 'formation' framework as opposed to the more traditional training or competency-based models.

Developing leadership capabilities: leadership formation

One of the central questions that should shape a formation programs for leaders is: “How can leaders be better prepared to make informed, wise and ethically responsible choices in complex, tension filled situations?” Perhaps, instead of thinking in terms of preparation and training leaders, it would be more useful, first, to focus on their formation as ‘depthed’ human beings (Duignan, 2002).

Capable leaders tend to be people with ‘character’ shaped by a value-set fine tuned through the warp and weft of life’s experiences. They often have “spiritual scars and calluses on their characters” from having battled with the complex perplexing dilemmas and tensions of life and work (Bogue 1994). They are morally courageous, unafraid to question unfair and unjust processes and practices when conformity would be the easier path.

The starting point for the formation of a capable authentic leader is personal transformation leading to a deeper understanding of personal values and a passionate conviction about one’s capability to make a difference in the lives of all who are connected with them. The formation of educational leaders is essentially an educative process which involves not only the mere acquisition of knowledge, the transmission of facts, or the development of skills or competencies, but also the creation of ethical and moral “horizons of significance” (Taylor, 1991).

Educative processes are, essentially, value-based, indeed value-driven. Hodgkinson (1991:17) argues that, “education is the art of calling others to seek the truth as to what it means to be human, to explore the essence of their being; to discover the spiritual chemistry of relationships; to make judgments about significance, rightness, wrongness”. He also points out that it is through education and learning that we acquire our moral dimension. While a vocational, pragmatic, economic rationalist approach to education may ensure our survival as a species, Hodgkinson (1991) argues that education, as a moral force, will

ensure that the struggle for survival is worthwhile as it provides purpose and meaning to our existence.

It is not my intention in this paper to diminish the importance of the cognitive and intellectual dimensions in the formation of leaders - a formation program for leaders should be intellectually challenging leading to the disciplined cultivation of the mind. However, the acquisition, analysis and synthesis of knowledge is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve a more meaningful, moral and purposeful life. Formation processes should assist leaders develop their own ethical and moral frameworks for the study and analysis of the complex problems and tensions they face each day, examples of which have been discussed earlier in this paper. The challenge is to combine the intellectual and the moral into frameworks that help transcend knowledge generation and skills development to one of reflective critique of contemporary dilemmas and tensions, and the promotion of personal and professional formation through an exploration of what it means to be more fully human.

Many current leadership preparation and development programs need to be transformed by engaging participants in educative processes that draw on their life experiences and inner wisdom to better equip them make informed and wise choices in situations of paradox and dilemma. An understanding and appreciation of values, ethics, spirituality, art and great literature, including poetry, as well as habits of critical reflection on key issues of the day, can be important resources for leader formation programs.

As well as having an individual focus, it should be remembered that leadership involves all organisational members sharing their deepest feelings and unlocking their individual capabilities by breaking the bonds imposed by habitual ways of thinking and doing. A challenge for all organisational members is to create conditions that foster mutual growth and creativity. By conceiving of leadership

as a shared responsibility, organisational members empower each other and, therefore, help enhance organisational capability.

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