

# What is Leadership Development?

*Purpose and Practice*



Leadership South West  
Research Report 2

Supported by



**South West of England**  
Regional Development Agency



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Research Report 2

Edited by  
**Richard Bolden**  
June 2005

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# Contents

<b>CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	2
LEADERSHIP SOUTH WEST .....	2
<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A NECESSITY OR A WASTE? .....	3
THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT .....	4
<b>PART ONE: THE PURPOSE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
CHANGING CONCEPTS OF LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....	5
THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....	7
LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT .....	11
APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....	13
<b>PART TWO: THE PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....</b>	<b>16</b>
LEADERSHIP COURSES .....	16
FACILITATED WORKSHOPS .....	20
COACHING, COUNSELLING AND MENTORING	22
REFLECTIVE WRITING, PERSONAL JOURNALS AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....	24
ACTION LEARNING IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....	27
ROLE PLAY AND SIMULATIONS .....	30
LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE: SOME NOTES ON OBSERVATION .....	32
THE USE AND ABUSE OF PSYCHOMETRICS IN LEADER DEVELOPMENT .....	35
360 DEGREE APPRAISAL .....	37
LEADERSHIP CONSULTANCY .....	39
E-LEARNING FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....	42
<b>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS ....</b>	<b>47</b>
BEST PRACTICE IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT .....	47
MAKING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORK FOR YOU .....	48
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: CONTRIBUTORS ....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: THE CLS PATHWAY TO MASTERING LEADERSHIP .....</b>	<b>57</b>

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## Leadership South West

Based at the University of Exeter's Centre for Leadership Studies and supported by the South West Regional Development Agency, Leadership South West is a major regional initiative to improve the uptake and provision of leadership development in the Southwest of England.

By working with key partners, agencies and businesses in the Region we aim to enhance awareness of the value of leadership development and to improve the availability, relevance and effectiveness of all forms of support, education and policy.

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### Introduction

Welcome to the second in a series of research reports from Leadership South West, the regional Centre of Excellence in leadership, based at the Centre for Leadership Studies at the University of Exeter. Whereas the first report explored the question “What is leadership?” this second report will look at “What is leadership development: purpose and practice”. The aim of the report is to explore the current range of approaches to leadership development available to individuals and organisations and the assumptions and principles that underlie them. The intention is both to provide practical advice on best practice but, above all, to challenge organisations to consider the ways in which they go about developing management and leadership capability and what they hope to achieve by doing this.

This report will not, however, explore the *content* of leadership development programmes in any great depth, nor will it pay much consideration to the different organisational *contexts* in which it can be applied. Both of these are, without doubt, considerable factors in the effectiveness or otherwise of leadership development initiatives and merit far greater consideration than given here. For this reason, they will form the focus of subsequent reports.

### Leadership Development: A Necessity or a Waste?

Like so much within the field of leadership studies the issue of leadership development and its impact remains highly contentious. Whilst many reports propose that enhancing leadership capability is central to improved investment, productivity, delivery and quality across both the public and private sectors (CEML, 2002) others question the value of leadership training (Personnel Today, 2004).

Central to the argument about the effectiveness of leadership development is the question of whether or not you can train or develop leaders. Early theories of leadership proposed that great leaders emerged because of an innate

combination of ability and personal characteristics (i.e. a belief that leaders were ‘born not made’). Subsequent models have questioned this assertion, arguing that leadership behaviours and competencies can be learnt and/or acquired over time. The current popular view probably lies somewhere in between, to the extent that whilst many leadership qualities (such as communication skills, strategic thinking and self-awareness) can be developed, core personal characteristics (such as dominance and sociability) are less amenable to change and will influence the type of leadership style adopted. In turn, the relative effectiveness of any of these styles will be determined by a whole host of situational and contextual factors.

The theories and models upon which these views are based, however, still tend to be couched in a very individualistic notion of leadership whereby it is conceived of as a *property* of the ‘leader’. Whilst this might make life easy for those recruiting and developing leaders (you simply need to identify the appropriate individuals and which skills/competencies to develop) it dissociates the practice of leadership from the organisational and situational context in which it occurs. Perhaps a more useful perspective is to consider leadership as a *process* – contextually situated within the relationships between people (be they ‘leaders’ or ‘followers’). From this perspective what is more important than the leadership qualities of a number of individuals are the underlying processes that give rise to improved organisational effectiveness.

If considered in this way, it is perhaps possible to understand why many leadership development activities fail to achieve the sorts of outcomes desired by those investing in them. Whilst leadership can undoubtedly be instrumental in organisational performance, the development of a small number of individuals in isolation, is unlikely to result in marked improvements to these or other outcome measures.

Raelin (2004, p.131) proposes that:



## The Structure of This Report

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“Most leadership training that is being conducted in corporate off-sites is ill-advised [...] because the intent of most of this training is to put leadership into people such that they can transform themselves and their organisations upon their return.”

He, and other authors (e.g. Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004; Mintzberg, 2004), propose that this simply does not work and, instead, that leadership (and management) development should be aligned with the organisational culture, context and objectives, amongst a wide array of other factors. To this extent, it could well be argued that much current leadership development is *going to waste* and that effort would be best spent on increasing the quality and precision, rather than the quantity, of provision (Burgoyne et al., 2004).

### The Structure of This Report

This report seeks to explore ways in which leadership development can be harnessed to enhance individual and organisational performance on a range of dimensions (economic, social, ethical, etc.). It is structured into two parts. The first examines the *purpose* of leadership development – what it seeks to achieve and for what reasons, whilst the second presents the *practice* of leadership development – the principle methods and their relative strengths and weaknesses. The report concludes with a summary of the main lessons and sources of further information.

Contributions to part two of the report have been provided by CLS Fellows and Faculty with extensive practical experience of leadership development for a wide range of organisations in a wide range of industries/sectors. For a profile of each contributor please refer to Appendix 1.

### Part One: The Purpose of Leadership Development

In this part of the report we will explore the underlying purpose of leadership development – what it seeks to achieve and why.

#### Changing Concepts of Leadership and Leadership Development

As discussed in the previous LSW Research Report (Bolden, 2004) and the introduction to this one, the past years have seen a considerable shift in the manner in which leadership is conceived and, as a consequence, so too have approaches to leadership development.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century it was assumed that people became leaders by virtue of their personal characteristics. This so-called 'trait' approach saw numerous studies attempting to isolate the qualities displayed by good leaders. Factors including intelligence, dominance, self-confidence, level of energy and activity, and 'masculinity' were all cited as key traits, yet none of these were sufficient in themselves to distinguish leaders from non-leaders (or 'followers'). Furthermore, with each new study, additional traits were identified leading to little consensus (Bird, 1940). Because of the emphasis on largely innate or relatively unchangeable personality characteristics, the trait approach has limited application to management and leadership development, placing the emphasis more on recruitment and selection processes.

As the usefulness of a trait approach was called into question, new models of leadership began to emerge in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The first of these were behavioural or 'style' theories of leadership. In this case, it was considered not so much the innate characteristics of the leader, but how he/she behaved, that is important. Behavioural models presented varying styles of leadership from directive to

participative, person-centred to task-centred, proposing that where the leader has both high concern for people and production they will be most effective (e.g. Blake and Mouton, 1964). From a behavioural perspective, the purpose of leadership and management development is to ensure the development of the most appropriate style of leadership and achieving a universal level of best practice.

A subsequent variation on behavioural models postulated that the most effective leadership style will, in fact, vary in relation to the situation. These models are either termed 'situational', where it is assumed that the leader can modify his/her style to match the situation (e.g. Hersey and Blanchard, 1969, 1977, 1988), or 'contingency', where it is not assumed that the leader is able to adapt and instead should be selected to fit the situation (or the situation changed to fit him/her) (e.g. Fiedler, 1964, 1967). In the case of situational and contingency theories, the leaders' first task is to recognise the salient features of the situation (e.g. nature of task, ability of followers, etc.) and then to adapt accordingly (or in the case of contingency theories to change roles as required). This would argue for the development of diagnostic abilities first, followed by adaptability in leadership style.

From the late 1970's interest arose in the abilities of leaders to bring about transformational change within organisations. Burns (1978) first spoke of 'transforming' leadership – an ability to inspire followers to work towards moral goals, an idea that was subsequently developed into 'transformational' leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1994) where the leader transforms ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results. Such an approach places an emphasis on the leaders' ability to develop and communicate an inspiring vision and motivate followers through a sense of shared purpose that transcends individual concerns such as pay and position. Transformational leadership reinforces the notion of the leader as change agent and would call primarily for

## Changing Concepts of Leadership and Leadership Development

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the development of communication and inter-personal skills.

Whilst we may notice a shift in thinking over time many of the assumptions and implications of transformational leadership are not dissimilar to the earlier trait and behavioural models (Gronn, 1995). They reinforce the notion of the *individual leader*, influencing and motivating 'followers', and their ability to transcend organisational and situational constraints. Indeed, transformational or 'charismatic' leaders might even be accused of being narcissists who engender a culture of dependency amongst followers (Conger, 1990; Maccoby, 2000), but is this really the best thing for the organisations they serve and, if not, what are the implications for leadership development?

A range of more inclusive models of leadership are now emerging (in aspiration if not always in practice) which argue for quieter, less dramatic leadership at all levels within the organisation.

"Quiet management is about thoughtfulness rooted in experience. Words like wisdom, trust, dedication, and judgment apply. Leadership works because it is legitimate, meaning that it is an integral part of the organization and so has the respect of everyone there. Tomorrow is appreciated because yesterday is honoured. That makes today a pleasure.

Indeed, the best managing of all may well be silent. That way people can say, 'We did it ourselves.' Because we did." (Mintzberg, 1999)

Such concepts are not new, however, and indeed there is an uncanny similarity between the definition given by Mintzberg and a quote from the one earliest authors on leadership, Lao Tzu the founder of Taoism, who proposed:

"To lead people, walk beside them... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the

next, the people hate... When the best leader's work is done, the people say, 'We did it ourselves!'" (Lao Tzu, 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC).

Perhaps then we are simply seeing a reawakening to the importance of inclusive and collective leadership. Authors now talk of 'Servant', 'Moral' and 'Team' leadership where the leader takes up his/her role out of a desire to achieve communal goals founded upon shared values and beliefs, rather than "because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions" (Greenleaf, 1970). From this perspective the individual leader should know when to step back and relinquish control dependent on the situation and nature of the task – indeed, the leader should also be a good follower.

"[Followers] have the vision to see both the forest and the trees, the social capacity to work well with others, the strength of character to flourish without heroic status, the moral and psychological balance to pursue personal and corporate goals at no cost to either, and, above all, the desire to participate in a team effort for the accomplishment of some greater purpose". (Hughes et al., 1993, p224).

This definition of followers could equally be applied to leaders and indicates how the boundaries between leadership and followership are becoming blurred: the definition of a good leader need not differ greatly from the definition of any good employee or responsible individual.

The concept of 'distributed' leadership, founded on a shared sense of purpose and direction at *all* levels in the organisation, turns our attention to the *processes* of leadership rather than the *properties* of individual 'leaders' and is becoming increasingly popular in sectors such as education and healthcare.

"From a distributed perspective, leadership practice takes shape in the *interactions* of people and their situation, rather than from the *actions* of an individual leader." (Spillane, 2004)



## The Contemporary Context of Leadership Development

This approach demands a dramatic reconsideration of the way in which leadership is conceived and promoted within organisations. It isn't about making 'everyone a leader' – this would simply lead to too many chiefs and diffused accountability – instead it calls for recognition of the collective *tasks* of leadership (Drath, 2003). Distributed leadership suggests that leadership is an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals, there is an openness of the boundaries of leadership and varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few (Bennet et al., 2003). Practical implications would include the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in the leadership process (e.g. parents and students as well as teachers and governors in school leadership); transfer of the role of 'leader' in relation to the situation, task and experience; and less exclusivity over participation in leadership and management development.

Each of these points offers a significant challenge to providers of leadership and management development. Programmes such as MBAs, for example, traditionally seek to develop a range of cognitive skills and capabilities but place relatively little emphasis on how these can be transferred to the workplace.

"The MBA trains the wrong people in the wrong ways with the wrong consequences [...] Using the classroom to help develop people already practicing management is a fine idea, but pretending to create managers out of people who have never managed is a sham."  
(Mintzberg, 2004)

If the practice of leadership is considered as more than just applying a set of principles, then its development demands a more experiential dimension. Likewise, if we consider leadership as a *collective process* rather than an *individual property* then we need to challenge the traditional approach of sending only senior managers on leadership development programmes, and encouraging others in the organisation to 'follow the leader'.

Figure 1 offers a conceptual framework for leadership development that contrasts approaches depending on the attention given to the individual or the group and prescribed or emergent learning processes.

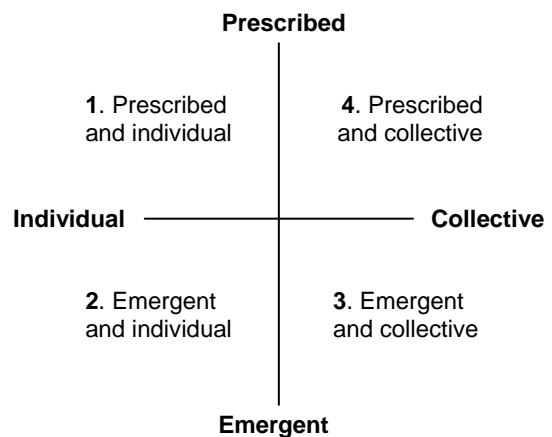


Figure 1 – *Leadership development framework* (LSDA, 2003)

Rodgers et al. (2003) propose that the vast majority of current leadership initiatives still lie within Cell 1 of the grid (prescribed and individual), with most of the remainder in Cell 2 (emergent and individual). Very few initiatives at all address the right-hand side of the grid (i.e. collective leadership development) despite this being precisely where we should be focussing our attention if we are seeking to develop an inclusive culture of shared leadership within our organisations.

### The Contemporary Context of Leadership Development

Management and executive education is big business, with approximately \$50 billion spent per year on leadership development alone (Raelin, 2004). In a 2003 survey the Financial Times found leading European companies to be spending on average £3,336 per participant per year on executive education; 42% of respondents had a corporate university, with a further 12% looking to establish one over the next couple of years; and of the topics offered leadership, followed by general management, were the most typical (Financial Times, 2003). In a more comprehensive study of management

## The Contemporary Context of Leadership Development

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development in Europe there was a pronounced increase in management development activities across all countries since the 1990s, rising from an average of 5.4 days per manager per year to 9.3 days and, despite a lower than average investment in management education, UK companies spent on average £1,056 per manager per year (Mabey and Ramirez, 2004).

Within the Higher Education sector, the number of UK business schools has increased from two in the mid-1960s to more than 100 in the mid-1990s (Crainer, 1998). At the undergraduate level the number of students studying business studies (and related subjects) has risen from 1,000 to 156,000 (Baty, 1997) and the annual number of MBAs has increased from 776 in 1975 to 10,889 in 2000 (Business Schools Advisory Group, 2002).

What has driven such a shift? Certainly, as many academics have argued, there has been an attempt to emulate the success of American business schools but there have also been a range of other factors at work (Tiratsoo, 2004). Since the 1980s British government policy has consistently promoted the importance of management capability, provoking employers to take management development seriously; declining public-funding has encouraged universities to seek alternative income streams; and various supply-side pressure groups have promoted public awareness that business education is a 'good thing'. From the demand-side, there is evidence that organisations are increasingly valuing (and recruiting) students with business and management qualifications and students are seeing this as a desirable career route.

From an employer perspective the imperative to enhance management and leadership capability arises from the changing nature of work, especially the need to cope with increased competition and "more or less continuous upheavals in their organisations" (Hirsh and Carter, 2002), demanding increased intellectual flexibility and alertness as well as relevant skills, abilities, knowledge and self-awareness. Mabey and Ramirez (2004) cite the primary triggers for

investing in management development as changes in the external environment, closely followed by business needs and HR strategy.

Despite the plethora of management and leadership development now available and the increasing level of demand, however, there remains a significant question as to the extent to which current provision meets the needs of organisations. Taylor et al. (2002, p366) conclude that "the global challenges now occurring demand approaches to leadership education that are profoundly different from those that have served well in the past" and Tiratsoo (2004, p118) suggests that "the evolution of the British system had little to do with rational debate about the merits of the U.S. practice and instead often reflected the politics of prejudice and self-interest".

Changing conceptions of the nature of management and leadership, along with challenges to traditional approaches to their development, are driving a number of trends in management and leadership education. Williams (2000) identifies a particular increase in demand for post-graduate and short course or executive education within university provision. Hirsh and Carter (2002) identify an increasing modularisation and flexibility within all types of formal training programmes, an increasing demand and provision of informal and personal development (including mentoring, coaching, 360 degree feedback, project working, learning sets and team facilitation) and a shift from managed career structures to more open internal job markets. Central to many of these trends is a shift towards more flexible, experiential and informal approaches, tailored to the requirements of individuals and organisations. Such a shift requires the reversal of many traditional educational priorities: from theory to practice, parts to systems, states and roles to processes, knowledge to learning, individual knowledge to partnerships, and detached analysis to reflexive<sup>1</sup> understanding (Taylor et al.,

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<sup>1</sup> Reflexivity is defined as "a directing back on itself" (Dictionary.com, 2005). Reflexive

## The Contemporary Context of Leadership Development

2002). A representation of how this impacts programme structure and content is displayed in Table 1.

Key Trends	From	To
The Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prescribed course</li> <li>• Standard</li> <li>• Theoretical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study programme and real issues</li> <li>• Customised</li> <li>• Theory in context</li> </ul>
The Time-frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-off event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A journey with ongoing support</li> </ul>
The Mode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecturing/ listening</li> <li>• Conceptual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory, interactive and applied</li> <li>• Experiential and conceptual</li> </ul>
The Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals within a group and for a purpose</li> </ul>
The Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplier</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner, co-designer, facilitator, and coach</li> </ul>

Table 1 – **Changing trends in leadership development** (West and Jackson, 2002; based on Vicere and Fulmer, 1998)

Underlying these changes are a number of transforming concepts about the purpose of management and leadership development. There are, of course, the practical concerns of creating more effective managers and leaders, enhancing the competitiveness of organisations and providing programmes that people will pay for, but associated with these are changing philosophical perspectives on the role of management and leadership within organisations and how best to develop them.

Mole (2000) makes a distinction between the notions of training, education and development. The focus of *training*, he argues, is the employee's present job; the focus of *education* is the employee's future job; and the focus of *development* is the organisation. Whilst some of the more traditional modes of provision, especially formal management programmes aimed at disseminating

skills and knowledge, tend to adopt a training approach it is clear that the current trend is more towards education and development: "development programmes prepare individuals to move in the new directions that organisational change may require" (ibid, p22).

A similar distinction is made by Bush and Glover (2004, p19) in their review of leadership development, where three contrasting models of leadership development are identified. These include the 'scientific' (managerial/ technician) that depends on training to meet clearly defined targets; the 'humanist' (empowerment/ persuasive) which is more people focussed and emphasises strategically planned transformational interaction; and the 'pragmatic' (rational/ reactive), which is project-focussed with an emphasis on the immediate needs of individuals and groups.

It is possible to identify relative merits and weaknesses of each of these approaches and an associated series of development activities, yet each also represents a significant philosophical perspective on the nature of management and leadership. Holman (2000) cites four recurring themes in debates about the purpose, nature and value of Higher Education (as identified by Barnett (1990; 1994)) and adds a fifth relevant to the understanding of management education in particular:

1. *Epistemological*: reflecting assumptions on the nature of knowledge pursued;
2. *Pedagogical*: referring to the nature of the learning process, the intended outcomes and the teaching methods;
3. *Organisational*: regarding the management and organisation of education;
4. *Social*: reflecting the perceived role of education in society; and
5. *Management*: referring to conceptions on the nature of management practice.

Given the diversity of views on each of these themes it is unsurprising that a range of qualitatively different approaches to management and leadership development have arisen in

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understanding thus refers to the ability for critical self-reflection in relation to previous knowledge and experience.

## The Contemporary Context of Leadership Development

practice. On the basis of his review Holman identifies four contemporary models of management education (see Table 2) but concludes that academic liberalism and experiential vocationalism are somewhat wanting as approaches to the development of practicing managers (the former due to its over-reliance on theory and the latter for its over-reliance on action). He proposes, instead, that experiential liberalism and experiential/critical approaches are most likely to create managers capable of meeting the future needs of organisations and society. Their experiential pedagogies go a long way to promoting learning and development because of the way in which they build upon the way managers 'naturally' learn at work and their ability to address the complexity and non-mechanistic nature of actual management practice.

Gosling (2000) proposes another, oft neglected, purpose of management education: that of catharsis. Management (and leadership) education offers a vehicle for exploring issues of 'goodness' and 'greatness' and enabling individuals to gain a sense of belonging to an essentially moral or just cause. The ethical and emotional dimensions of human endeavour are becoming central to the effective practice of leadership in an increasingly diverse yet inter-connected world, but are still often overlooked in the majority of traditional management and leadership education.

In the context of this debate on the nature and purpose of management and leadership education it is perhaps unsurprising that we are seeing a trend from traditional formal programmes towards more flexible, experiential initiatives but there are also a number of other trends, such as those summarised in Table 3. It is noted, however, that still remarkably few programmes are underpinned with explicit theories of management and leadership practice and/or the educational processes associated with their development (Weindling, 2003).

### Contemporary Models of Management Education

#### **Academic liberalism**

Assumes that management education should be primarily concerned with the pursuit of objective knowledge about management. It thus seeks to disseminate generic principles and theories that can be applied in a relatively scientific and rational manner. From this perspective the aim of management development should be to create the 'management scientist', capable of analysis and the application of theoretical principles. Primary teaching methods would include lectures, seminars, case studies and experimentation.

#### **Experiential liberalism**

Shares many of the same assumptions as academic liberalism but argues for a more practical approach, grounded in managerial experience rather than theory. The principle aim of this approach is to create the 'reflective practitioner' equipped with appropriate practical skills and knowledge and the ability to adapt to and learn from the situation. Primary teaching methods would include group work, action learning and self development.

#### **Experiential vocationalism**

Arises from economic and organisational concerns to argue that the main role of management education is to provide managers with the relevant skills and knowledge required by organisations. The principle of this approach is to create the 'competent manager' equipped with the necessary interpersonal and technical competencies required by organisations. Primary teaching methods would include competence based approaches such as the National Occupational Standards.

#### **Experiential/critical**

Seeks to "emancipate managers and other employees in the organisation from oppression and alienation" (Holman, 2000, p208). To this extent, it shares much in common with experiential liberalism although it demands a more critical level of reflection that enables people to become reflexive about their own knowledge and actions and to formulate practical, non-instrumental and emancipative forms of action. The principle of this approach is, therefore, to create the 'critical practitioner' able to challenge and develop new modes of action. Primary teaching methods would include approaches incorporating critical action learning and critical reflection.

Table 2 – *Contemporary Models of Management Education* (Holman 2000)



### Key trends in UK and US leadership development programmes

- Needs analysis widely regarded as an important element but rarely included in practice.
- Development of staged models for leadership development linked to a planned series of programmes for effective transition into different leadership roles.
- Use of leadership standards and competency frameworks.
- Wider range of providers and funding bodies.
- Increasing emphasis on the importance of learning and leadership.
- Increasing use and popularity of mentoring and coaching.
- More emphasis on 'development from within', 'work-based' learning and 'communities of practice'.
- Widespread use of active learning approaches including experiential learning and reflection.
- Increased use of case studies, action learning and problem-based learning to enhance links between research, theory and practice.
- Growth in collaborative leadership learning.
- Use of online communities to facilitate e-learning and communication.
- Growing clarity and emphasis upon leadership values, beliefs and purposes.

Table 3 – **Key trends in UK & US leadership development programmes** (Weindling, 2003)

Hirsh and Carter (2002) identify three significant tensions currently facing providers of management education. Firstly, alongside the modularisation of formal programmes into 'bite size chunks' there is increasing pressure to provide holistic programmes applicable to leaders and managers at all levels in the organisation. Secondly, the increase in personalised learning such as coaching and 360 degree appraisal poses serious resourcing challenges due to the increased time required for tailoring and supporting provision. And thirdly, with the shift away from traditional career structures and lifetime employment managers are receiving little support for long-term career planning.

We can thus see that there are a wide range of factors influencing the current range and types of management and leadership development provision in this country. Some of these are practical concerns arising from the historical development of management education in the UK and the challenges facing organisations, whilst others are more theoretical – what are our assumptions on the purpose of education, the nature of management and leadership, and the relative importance placed on the individual versus the collective? None of these issues is easily resolved but without an awareness of the fundamental concerns and underlying assumptions it will be difficult to select an effective approach to leadership development.

### Leadership versus Management Development

In the discussion so far I have used the terms 'management' and 'leadership' development largely interchangeably as there is a significant degree of overlap but what exactly is leadership (as opposed to management) development and how can individuals and organisations get the most out of it?

Day (2001) proposes that leadership development is distinct from management development to the extent to which it involves preparing people for roles and situations beyond their current experience. Management development, he argues, equips managers with the knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance performance on known tasks through the application of proven solutions whilst leadership development is defined as "orientated towards building capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges" (p582). He continues by making a distinction between leader and leadership development, whereby *leader development* is about developing individuals in leadership roles, whilst *leadership development* takes a more relational view of leadership as a process involving everyone within the organisation. To this extent, Day views leadership development as being fundamentally concerned with the



## Leadership versus Management Development

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development of collective organisational capacity.

"In this way, each person is considered a leader, and leadership is conceptualised as an effect rather than a cause. Leadership is therefore an emergent property of effective systems design. Leadership development from this perspective consists of using social (i.e. relational) systems to help build commitments among members of a community of practice." (ibid, p583)

This distinction is useful in encouraging us to consider what it is that we wish to achieve through executive development, even if Day's concept of leadership development may be somewhat idealistic in practice. 'Leader development' is an investment in *human capital* to enhance intrapersonal competence for selected individuals, whereas 'leadership development' is an investment in *social capital* to develop interpersonal networks and cooperation within organisations and other social systems. According to Day, both are equally important although traditionally development programmes have tended to focus exclusively on the former. Within the current report we also take the view that both types of development are required and should be an integral part of any development initiative. Therefore, in the remainder of this report when referring to 'leadership development' we refer both to the development of human and social capital.

Even when considering leadership development in this broader context, however, it remains difficult to specify what exactly constitutes leadership, as opposed to any other form of development. Campbell et al. (2003) argue that the current diversity of perspectives on leadership development is misleading as it leads practitioners and researchers to suggest that, firstly, leadership development constitutes *any* understanding that develops individual(s) and secondly that *all* development activities are equally useful/effective.

Like Day, in their review, Campbell and his colleagues identify that the field of leadership development is currently dominated by individualistic approaches to development. Such approaches focus on developing five principle categories:

1. intrapersonal attributes (e.g. self awareness);
2. interpersonal qualities;
3. cognitive abilities;
4. communication skills; and
5. task-specific skills.

At the *intrapersonal* level it could be argued that "there is no difference between becoming an effective leader and becoming a fully integrated human being" (Bennis, 1999, p23) and thus Campbell et al. (2003, p31) conclude that "there is little reason to label this *leadership* development, except in the broad sense that the developing individuals hold leadership positions". The *inter-personal* level fits more closely with Day's conception of 'leadership development', viewing leadership as a social influence process and the goal of development to enhance inter-personal competence in order to obtain the trust, respect and commitment of others (Campbell et al., 2003). The additional three categories (cognitive, communication and task-specific skills) are a range of personal capabilities that help enhance an individual's inter-personal influence. In each case a challenge remains as to how to differentiate the types of skills required by 'leaders' as opposed to 'managers' and/or 'followers' and the response remains largely dependent on your theoretical and philosophical views on the nature of leadership (e.g. if you take a distributive perspective then such a differentiation is inappropriate as who is considered the 'leader' varies over time).

Campbell and colleagues take Katz and Kahn's (1978) notion of leadership as 'incremental influence' as the foundation for their conception of leadership development. Thus, the aim of leadership development is to enhance "inter-personal influence *over and above* the influence that stems from a person's positional authority or legitimate power" (Campbell et al., 2003, p39). From this perspective the most effective leadership

development methods are likely to be those that develop core influencing skills including values that can serve as a 'moral compass', problem-defining and problem-solving skills, task facilitation skills, and communication and motivational skills.

In our own experience of developing people in leadership positions we tend to take the view that it is important to develop all of these skills within a contextual appreciation of the cultural and organisational environment. When considering leadership, rather than management, development the primary emphasis is on enabling people to think beyond the apparent restrictions of their current role and to develop the critical capabilities to move between operational and strategic modes as required - to balance an attention for detail with an understanding of the bigger picture.

"All in all, leadership development within management education should develop the 'character', integrity, skills and discursive intelligence necessary for the responsible exercise of power." (Gosling, 2004)

To this extent, leadership development may well incorporate elements of more typical management and self-development programmes (including time management, project-management, delegation, self-awareness, etc.) but with the objective of creating a reflexive space in which the leader/manager can critically reflect upon current practice and experience. There is no reason to consider, therefore, that leadership development should only be offered to senior managers and, indeed, there would be good reason to encourage this kind of development throughout the organisation to enhance collective as well as individual capacity. The nature of the required intervention, however, is likely to vary depending on the job role and current level of experience of the participants.

"Leadership development is broader than programmes of activity or intervention. It is concerned with the way in which attitudes are fostered, action empowered, and the

learning organisation stimulated" (Bush and Glover, 2004, p19, citing the work of Frost and Durrant, 2002).

### Approaches to Leadership Development

With the multitude of ways in which leadership and leadership development can be conceived and the many purposes they serve it is not surprising that a wide array of development approaches and techniques have evolved.

In a major European study Mabey and Ramirez (2004, p20) ranked HR and Line manager preferences for management development methods in European companies as follows:

1. internal skills programmes
2. external courses, seminars and conferences
3. mentoring/coaching
4. formal qualifications
5. in-company job-rotation
6. external assignments, placements and/or secondments
7. E-learning.

In all countries in the study there was a relatively low preference for on-the-job development (such as job rotation and assignments) and a strikingly low uptake of E-learning given the current interest in this form of delivery. Within the UK there is a higher than average use of qualifications-based development, despite the relatively low rating of this with regards to "what makes an effective manager".

Storey (2004, p26) proposes that most training and development interventions offered in-house and by external training providers can be classified into four types:

1. *Learning about leadership and organisations*: primarily involves traditional classroom and workshop methods to present leadership theory and research.
2. *Self/team analysis and exploration of leadership styles*: a series of methods (including psychometrics, 360 degree feedback, coaching and sensitivity training) to raise awareness of self

## Approaches to Leadership Development

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and others and how this impacts upon leadership styles.

3. *Experiential learning and simulation*: approaches that emphasise the importance of 'learning by doing', such as outward bound courses, action learning and role play.
4. *Top level strategy courses*: executive development courses designed for senior managers. Often associated with prestigious business schools and qualifications.

In addition to these types of course/programme there is also a whole array of less formal leadership development activities conducted within organisations, including projects and secondments, seminars, career planning and mentoring.

Storey also highlights a tension within most leadership development initiatives:

"There is a fundamental dilemma that haunts many leadership development events. Because leadership is perceived as fundamentally about 'doing' rather than 'knowing', there is an inherent bias towards activity-focussed and indeed briskly paced encounters [...] In consequence, there is little time for reflection or strategic thinking. These characteristics of leadership development events are self-evidently in tension with the kind of clear thinking supposedly required of top leaders." (ibid, p27)

If we now consider the relative popularity and use of different development approaches it remains clear that, despite the shift towards more flexible and tailored provision discussed earlier, large companies still use more formal than informal training (Mabey and Thompson, 2000). Furthermore, much of this remains in a traditional face-to-face mode rather than via e-learning, which tends to be used to support rather than replace traditional methods (Burgoyne, 2001; CIPD, 2002).

With regards to personalised and tailored provision, coaching is particularly popular with organisations and managers but its extension to large numbers of individuals is limited by cost and the availability of high quality coaches

(Carter, 2001). 360 degree feedback, like many approaches, is found to be most powerful when integrated within a comprehensive development programme (Kettley, 1997) and is significantly affected by the following three factors: a work context supportive of skills development, the belief of the participant that people can improve their skills, and a belief that they themselves are capable of improving and developing (Maurer et al., 2002).

Mabey (2002) found that successful companies use a variety of formal, informal and external approaches to development and Burgoyne et al. (2004, p49) conclude that:

"The evidence on *how* management and leadership works is that it works in different ways in different situations. The practical implication of this is that to get the benefit of management and leadership development requires the design of appropriate approaches for specific situations rather than the adoption of a universal model of best practice."

Furthermore, Burgoyne and colleagues propose that the relative effectiveness of any development approach will be strongly influenced by the participants' past experience, personal character and preferred learning style. Other key factors include the organisational context, need for buy-in from participants, and the ethos of learning within the organisation.

"All indications are that multiple methods will produce the most effective management learning. No one method has the sole answer." (Burgoyne, et al., 2004, p50)

Thus, the choice of development approach is not a simple one. For maximum effect, we need to carefully consider what it is that we seek to develop and how best this can be achieved. If, for example, we wish to develop a culture of shared, considerate and reflective leadership within our organisation is it wise just to send individual 'leaders' on action-packed or highly prescriptive leadership training courses? Chia (1996) recounts a

Japanese management development programme for high-potential leaders that takes a different approach – they were taken to a retreat in the mountains and encouraged to learn the art of tea pouring and observing the movement of carp. Such a program sought to develop a sensitivity, creativity and imagination that could not be achieved through more traditional approaches.

It is also worth noting that the very process of leadership development serves many purposes beyond simply developing talent. Executive education can be an effective retention strategy that helps drive the motivation, enthusiasm and commitment of participants; it can serve as a reward; and can also help in teambuilding and engendering a sense of shared purpose. On the flipside, singling out certain individuals over others for involvement in leadership development can lead to unintended consequences such as disappointment, alienation and resistance. Little can be more demotivating than having a colleague or superior go off on all-expenses-paid trip only to come back and try to change everything and tell you how to do your job better!

In the next part of this report we will look at a range of popular leadership development approaches to identify elements that tend to improve their effectiveness for enhancing individual and organisational performance.

# Part Two: The Practice of Leadership Development

In this part of the report we will review some of the most prevalent forms of leadership development. The entries are contributed by a selection of CLS faculty and fellows who draw both on their extensive practical experience of delivering leadership development as well as research evidence.

Clearly the relative impact and appropriateness of each of these approaches will be largely influenced by programme content, context (including organisational, sectoral, regional and national culture) and the nature of participants (seniority, personal learning preferences, etc.) however, unfortunately, these debates are beyond the scope of the current report and will be touched upon in subsequent editions.

The practices described are listed in no particular order of importance and include:

- Leadership courses
- Facilitated workshops
- Coaching, counselling and mentoring
- Reflective writing and journals
- Action learning
- Role play and simulations
- Leadership exchange
- Psychometric testing
- 360 degree appraisal
- Leadership consultancy
- E-Learning

## Leadership Courses

(By Jonathan Gosling)

For many people, leadership development means going on a course. Most business schools offer programmes of various kinds, many organizations run in-house versions of the same thing, and several consultancy companies specialise in their own distinctive versions. While many such programmes incorporate learning-oriented activities such as coaching, 360° feedback, action-learning and so forth, at the core of these

programmes is some kind of classroom experience. What do these achieve?

Firstly, they can help build a cadre of people who understand themselves to be part of the leadership population (networking out of class is the most important opportunity). They can also promulgate shared models that provide a common conceptual 'language' for talking about leadership. They can act as a reward for people of whom much is asked (in this case the status of the course provider is often as important as the relevance of the content). They can prepare individuals for new appointments by giving them a bit of distance from the organisation so they can return with a fresh view (sometimes also to facilitate someone's exit from the organisation!). They can give hard-pressed managers a little reflection time and offer a different perspective (lifting people out of the day-to-day to a long-term view, show the business logic of proposed changes, and so forth). They enable participants to concentrate on some aspects of leadership development which can only be achieved through face-to-face conversation (especially building mutual familiarity and trust). And they can help launch or sustain a change initiative in the organisation, often with opportunities for executives to explain their plans and 'inspire the troops'.

Long-term improvements in leadership ability, however, cannot be achieved through a 2-day workshop; in this case something like the Exeter integrated leadership development framework (see Appendix 2) which provides both conceptual challenge and personal coaching, is much more suitable. But, on the other hand, a short but intense opportunity for facilitated discussion can also do a lot to empower and enthuse a cadre of leaders.

In a recent article on management education (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004), Henry Mintzberg and I set out seven principles which apply as much to leadership development:

**(1) Leadership development only makes sense for people who have current leadership responsibilities,**



because they need to be rooted in the realities of accountability and choices between less-than-perfect options. While there are many good reasons to educate young people in the principles of leadership, the politics of power and inequality and their historical antecedents, this kind of analytical and abstract knowledge is quite different to the moral and aesthetic awareness called for in real leadership roles.

**(2)** While the staff of development programmes should be clear about what they want to teach, **participants should be able to weave their own experience into the process.** On our Advanced Leadership Programme ([www.alp-imp.com](http://www.alp-imp.com)) each module has participants working in a distinct 'mindset' (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2003). This guides us in terms of relevant content (change theories for the catalytic mindset, self awareness in the reflective mindset); it also helps us to handle the tension between the need to bring new ideas and at the same time stay relevant to challenges faced by participants. Our job is to help them to approach these challenges in new mindsets, and thus to widen their repertoire of appropriate styles.

**(3) Leadership development should leverage work and life experience as fully as possible.** This seems obvious – but how often is class time filled up with case-studies and PowerPoint presentations, with time only for a few questions on the agenda set by the presenter? To quote from our paper, "theories are like maps of the world, case-studies like travellers' tales. Both are best appreciated – as are their limitations – by people who already know the territory" (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004, p20). This has important implications for the way programmes are run: a presenter may want to explain a company's code of ethics, but participants find the crucial question to be about non-executive directors intent only on meeting regulatory controls. Leveraging experience means sharing control of the agenda, and following the questions that arise from the meeting of theory and experience.

**(4) The key to learning is thoughtful reflection.** This means allowing time for it. Look at the programmes that seem intent on replicating the high-pressure environment of work with late-night sessions, over-night preparation of massive case-studies and ceaseless team competitiveness. Or those modelled on a bizarre banquet, an endless procession of disconnected lectures and exercises with no time to taste and savour the distinctive flavours of each, let alone absorb and digest the benefits. Programmes need to provide for two aspects of reflection – reflexivity about one's own internal thoughts and feelings; and remembering (literally remembering, bringing together scattered parts of experience). Some of this is best done privately, and people need both time and encouragement to do this – specific moments for writing reflexive notes are very helpful. But reflection is also a collective activity, and people often recognise their own thoughts and feelings in well-focused discussion. We start each day with structured reflection sessions, and practices such as coaching and 360 degree feedback are further examples.

**(5) Development of leaders and improving leadership should have an impact on the organisation.** Leadership is not something pre-formed and then applied to a context; it "unfolds, emerging through constant adaptation and invention [...] with recurring patterns as in a series of musical refrains" (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2006). Leaders who are constantly discovering new things about their work can have an immediate impact by bringing these discoveries into the workplace. But there are more radical alternatives. On our ALP we reverse the process: leadership teams from several companies come together in the programme, presenting and discussing their key strategic issues. The classroom acts as a reflective vessel, each group acting as 'friendly consultants' to the others. Because the participants are all working on issues for which they are responsible, they can take decisions and move forward on the basis of their new understanding: this is really bringing the workplace into the classroom!

**(6) Leadership development becomes a process of interactive learning.** Teachers present their ideas expecting them to be tested and refined; participants present their issues and experiences with the same expectations. The collective work is to deconstruct the inherent logic, the underlying assumptions, and to discover therein both an understanding of the limits of knowledge and an appreciation of the insights, moral sensitivity and qualities of judgement that leaders draw upon in doing their jobs.

**(7) Every aspect should be facilitative.** The value of skilful facilitation is immense; but we need to go further. Business-school amphitheatres put all the focus on the teacher's performance, and interventions from the audience put the spotlight on the questioner's performance too. There is always an element of theatricality about any public event, and leadership itself is an act; but we should not be promoting the entertainment factor if it gets in the way of thoughtful enquiry, careful reflection, facilitative questioning. So the architecture of the buildings deserves attention, so too the design of programme evaluation – we know the power of measurement to drive behaviour! But we can take this further still. If we are trying to develop a reflective mindset, it helps to get away from the bustle of every-day life. Similarly, if we are exploring a change it helps to be in an environment which speaks naturally of transformation. As it happens, nature itself does just this, especially at the height of spring or autumn; on one programme designed along similar lines to the ALP (but this time for a single company) we go to Bosnia where an enthusiasm for change went too far, and the real challenge is to re-establish the basis for carrying on together – for continuity. Here the environment and the experiential and symbolic aspects of development are carefully selected to facilitate the learning – not the teaching of lessons.

In describing these seven tenets I have drawn particular attention to the implications for formal leadership courses; they apply equally to more

diffuse methods such as coaching and action-learning. But there are some things that can only be achieved by bringing people together with colleagues from their own and other organisations (preferably in groups from a number of organisations working together). I want now to draw to attention to some of the dysfunctional effects of *not* bringing people together in this way.

Note first that one of the powerful features of coaching is that it provides a safe and confidential setting to explore aims, purposes and doubts. This depends on the regularity and reliability of the coaching process, just as much as on the skills of the coach and the willingness of the coached. (By the way, this is frequently a downfall of using line-managers and internal HR specialists – they too often get sidetracked by 'operational priorities'). In the same way, participants on a leadership programme will quickly sense if it is chiefly about propaganda and wishful thinking (in which case they will feign earnestness in class and save their irony and sarcasm for the bar). So much more can be achieved if they feel secure enough to face the uncertainties and ambiguities, including the moral dilemmas which are such a central part of any leadership role. The next few paragraphs describe what must be in place for this quality of 'containment'.

The term 'containment' is drawn from psychoanalysis, where it is used to describe the quality of a relationship in which one party is able to manage her or his own emotional response to another (Bion, 1962). Classically, this refers to the way a mother is able to be fully attentive to her child while not being carried away by the infant's own emotions – if the child feels hungry and desperate, the mother must be aware of this but need not feel overtaken by the desperation herself. This attentive but measured response helps the child gradually learn that his/her own feelings pass, and that in spite of present anxieties, he/she will be OK. In the same way leaders often provide containment for the people in their organisations; teaching staff do the same for their students. When this works well the

students are able to feel confused and uncertain about the topic, perhaps even at a loss to make sense of it. This is a normal and very proper position to be in as a learner and is equally true for mature participants on leadership development programmes. But how can this work in the kind of participative learning environment I described above? If everyone shares in the learning journey, who provides containment? Herein lies one of the strengths of formal leadership programmes. The structure, timetables, specified development pathways and scheduled events, along with dedicated administrative staff, faculty, programme branding – all these serve to create a sense of identity and stability to the learning process. Conversely, the current trend for open-ended menu-driven optional and pluralistic development opportunities may offer flexibility, but inadequate containment. Does this matter? The answer depends on what is wanted from the development programme. A simple distinction can be drawn as follows:

**(a) Techniques** - Skills and methods for dealing with relatively well-defined problems. At more senior levels these range from quite high-level analyses of markets, organisational structures etc, through to coaching and presentation skills, but it would be unusual for a leadership course to concentrate mainly on technique (as distinct from a management skills training programmes, or standard MBA, for example). These pose little challenge to the way people see the world or their place in it, so technique based programmes tend to be less anxiety-provoking although the value should not be underestimated: especially at more junior levels people can discover significant new things about themselves.

**(b) Themes** - The major issues facing an organisation often deserve concentrated attention informed by experts, models and discussion across the relevant community. Managing a major change, re-focusing on customers, driving a quality programme or global integration – these are the kinds of themes around which a programme could be built, with modules, field visits,

formal input (and some techniques). These are especially relevant for experienced, well-qualified middle-management – with more senior involvement – who have to make the organisation effective within its changing competitive and social context. For example, many so-called Executive MBAs are designed around thematic modules, and the same is probably true of the majority of in-company leadership programmes.

**(c) Realities** - In any organisation, large or small, some people find themselves wondering what the main themes really are, and what they ought to be. They are trying to figure out the emerging patterns in the context, the energy in the company, the appetite of investors and the behaviour of competitors and consumers. One of the most important contributions of a leadership programme for these most senior people is to provide the opportunity and stimulation for high quality conversations amongst this population. And it is at this level that the question of containment is most pressing, and most delicate.

There are a number of approaches to work at this level. Most involve a level of 'discovery', open-ended exploration into situations which might offer useful analogies, because one of the key challenges at this level is recognise issues which don't yet have a clearly packaged identity they are not yet 'themes'. It is often easier to notice something happening in another industry, or even a different sector or culture altogether, and then to recognise similar dynamics in one's own situation.

This is precisely the level at which we pitch the Advanced Leadership Programme, currently running in various versions in the UK, North America and India. In one company-specific example, leaders meet on five modules, each in a different country in programme designed to get them seeing, thinking and talking a distinct mindset (receptive in the UK, reflective in India, competitive in the USA, collaborative in China, catalytic in Bosnia), More usually we work across three mindsets, (reflective, connected and catalytic), and with three to six

## Facilitated Workshops

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company groups – sometimes on their own organisational issues, and sometimes interacting across the groups. All this provides a fine balance between a number of features: individuals can follow up non-conformist ideas with participants from other companies if these ideas (counteracting group-think in their own company culture); yet they are clearly on the programme as members of a delegation from the company, and for whom they must apply any new insights. A clear focus on the issues facing each company is countered by the requirement to work on these issues in sight of peers from other organisations, who often notice relational and cultural blind-spots, leading to subtle – sometimes radical – re-framing of the issues.

However it would be a mistake to claim that we can engage in leadership development – especially at the level of ‘realities’ – in a smooth and painless way. When we deal with leadership, we deal with power, accountability and choice. None of these is easy to deal with, and all involve a degree of inter-personal and intra-personal conflict. The realities of leadership include making choices between less-than ideal options, competing with colleagues for influence and rewards, the frequent need to ‘move on’, the ability to live with unpleasant consequences of one’s decisions and actions. A good quality leadership programme must face these realities – not apologise for them, nor try to absolve leaders of responsibility; they would be the last to buy into such soothing rhetoric. But proper consideration means addressing the big questions – of guilt, ambition and pride; the fact that people capable of greatness are also liable to cause or collude in great evil. Leadership programmes are supposed to help successful, influential people become more powerful, to have greater impact. With this comes greater risk – that they may do more harm, either by their own actions or by being part of some collective mistake. In tragic theatre this is called ‘hamartia’, when the tragic hero literally ‘misses the mark’ and makes a practical error (Aristotle, 350BC). Any leader worthy of the name is aware of this danger; a great appeal of

coaching is the opportunity to voice private doubts about these matters; a good leadership should find ways to deal with them at a collective level – we can all think of bad things done by groups of well-meaning individuals. But there are also plenty of examples of good things not done because people were unable to discuss their ideals and hopes for a better way. As we face the effects of climate change, global poverty and the uncertainties of genetic engineering, we need leaders who are not put off by anxiety, but are able to responsibly exercise what power they have on the basis of collectively made value-judgements. To encourage this is the special contribution of formal leadership development programmes.

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## Facilitated Workshops

(By Alan Hooper)

When you talk to people who have undergone a good leadership programme, invariably they will focus on the individual(s) who facilitated the sessions. Indeed, this is usually the first thing they talk about. Only once they have told you about the facilitator, often with considerable enthusiasm, will they talk about the process – and only then about the detail of what they actually learnt. The relationship between ‘teacher’ and ‘student’ has been the key to learning throughout the ages. One of the earliest recorded examples can be



traced back to classical times when the Greek General Xenophon explored leadership with “the world’s first and greatest teacher of the subject, Socrates” (Adair, 2003, p.20).

The relationship between teacher, pupil and subject matter is explored in detail in Plato’s *Symposium* (Plato, 360 BC) and in the modern psychological parlances of Transactional Analysis (TA) such relationships are often characterised by ‘parent/child’ dynamics (Wagner, 1996). To be really effective, however, the relationship should develop into one of ‘adult/adult’ over time as the pupil grows in confidence and the teacher steps further back. This movement is the key to good facilitation and it is the experience that individuals on development programmes value the most.

So what are the characteristics of good facilitators? Based on my own experience I believe there are five key characteristics.

First, they empathise well with their group. They have honed the skill of developing a good relationship with a group, quickly. Most have a warmth that helps the establishment of this rapport, but this does not apply to all of them. They tend to be self-aware and confident in their ability to reach out to a group. Interestingly, there does not appear to be a common methodology and many different types of personalities can be equally effective. Indeed, some good facilitators are not really aware of what it is they do that makes them so effective; but they are sufficiently self-assured to know that it works.

Second, skilled facilitators are good at emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000). This is not surprising since EI is founded on a high level of self-awareness and a thorough understanding of how an individual relates with others. Just as significant, they combine EI with their own experience to enable them to relate to a variety of scenarios which may be raised by the group. This enables them to understand, and deal quickly with, difficult and delicate situations when they occur within the group (the ‘test’ of a good facilitator).

Third, and linked with the second, effective facilitators are extremely good at observation, they choose their words carefully (to ensure precise meaning). They think constantly about the best way to develop the learning of the group; they have a finely-tuned awareness to the general mood of a group and notice subtleties that indicate a change of mood or unease; and they are very conscious of those individuals who become disengaged or isolated. Neuro Linguistic Programming, described as “the study of what works in thinking, language and behaviour” (Knight, 2003, p.1), has had a significant impact in this field. However, although NLP has grown in popularity since the early 90s only a minority of good facilitators are formally qualified as NLP practitioners (despite many of them using similar techniques).

The fourth characteristic is associated with the size of the group. In discussions with facilitators about the ‘ideal group size’, invariably the answer is: “between 10 and 12”. The range seems to vary between 8 and 16: it is difficult to maintain meaningful dialogue for an extended period below 8; and the dynamics appear to change significantly above 16<sup>2</sup>. The ‘ideal group size’ is based less on objective analysis but more on the intuitive feel of facilitators about ‘what works’. Indeed, faced with a group size of more than 16, they will often adopt very different strategies, such as Open Space Technology (Owen, 1977). In contemporary leadership development linked to major organisational change it is increasingly important to work with very large groups. Some of our colleagues and CLS Fellows often work with over 600 managers together, moving in an out of various sub-groupings. This format is particularly important for international organisations that need to achieve a common understanding and collective commitment during relatively short (and expensive) face-to-face events for a worldwide population.

The final characteristic is the one referred to at the beginning of this

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<sup>2</sup> This experience matches Dr Meredith Belbin’s assertion that an ideal ‘team size’ is ten (Belbin, 1981).



## Coaching, Counselling and Mentoring

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section: the ability of the facilitator to move from a 'parent/child' to an 'adult/adult' relationship. The timing of this movement requires particular care. Move too early and the group will not have sufficient knowledge and confidence; move too late and the group may never progress beyond the 'child' stage. With the right timing this can become the most rewarding part of the whole relationship with facilitator and course participants moving towards an equal partnership.

These five characteristics are at the heart of good facilitation. They are 'what works'. It is perhaps relevant that, just as we remember the teachers who had most influence at school, so we remember those facilitators who were particularly good at helping us develop our leadership skills.

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## Coaching, Counselling and Mentoring

(By John Potter and Richard Bolden)

Coaching, counselling and mentoring are words that have crept into common usage in organizational behaviour and organisational development literature and practice. They represent three facets of a possible developmental relationship between two or more individuals but are often used interchangeably, which can lead to confusion.

Of the three concepts coaching is perhaps the most widely talked about and it is estimated that up to 70% of organisations use it at a senior level (Lambert, 2004). Coaching is about using day-to-day work experiences as a learning opportunity via the facilitation of an experienced 'coach'. It involves encouraging self-reflection to unlock a person's potential to maximize his or her

own performance by helping them to learn from experience. Coaching typically has a practical focus aimed at addressing real workplace challenges and can either be treated as a short-term intervention or a longer-term developmental process.

Counselling shares many similarities with coaching but is closer to the therapeutic relationship between therapist and patient. Although often instigated in response to work-related issues there is a significant psychological dimension: addressing the person as a whole rather than just in a professional capacity. The processes involved are more about understanding, challenging and enabling than providing feedback. Counselling is not about giving advice but is about getting people to see things from a different viewpoint and encouraging them to take action to solve their problems themselves.

Finally, mentoring is usually described as "the relationship between a senior and more junior member of an organization directed towards the advancement and support of the junior member" (Fowler and Gorman, 2004). It is a long-term relationship (either formal or informal) associated with the provision of support and guidance and 'passing on of wisdom'. Although typically used for the support of inexperienced managers new to a job or organisation it is now increasingly common for CEO's and directors to have their own mentors. A trusted external mentor or coach can be an invaluable support in problem solving and acting as a 'friendly ear' with whom to share sensitive issues that would be difficult to share with colleagues or more junior members of staff.

Figure 2 shows how these three concepts are inter-related and overlap. From this diagram it can be seen, for example, that it is possible for a combined coaching/mentoring relationship but it should be noted that this would be different from a purely coaching or mentoring relationship.

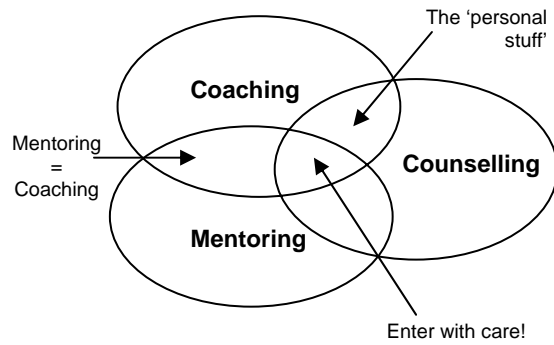


Figure 2 – *Coaching, Counselling and Mentoring Overlaps* (Lambert, 2001)

The Centre for Excellence in Leadership makes a further distinction, indicating that counselling is primarily based on the resolution of personal problems based on past experience, coaching focuses on recent, current and future performance, whilst mentoring takes a longer-term view of career development and building a 'life's work' (CEL, 2005).

So how do these three related, but different processes relate to leadership and leadership development?

Firstly, the nature of the relationship is important to consider and agree in advance, as are intended outcomes and the manner in which these activities integrate with other individual and organisational development processes.

In a recent empirical study of mentoring Fowler and Gorman (2005) identified eight primary functions of the relationship as perceived by mentors and mentees. These were personal and emotional guidance, coaching, advocacy, career development facilitation, role modelling, strategies and systems advice, learning facilitation and friendship. Additional research has demonstrated a long-term impact of mentoring on organisational commitment and company loyalty (Payne and Huffman, 2005).

With regards to coaching, the Careers Research Forum (Lambert, 2004) proposes six key attributes of effective coaching and the same could be said of mentoring and counselling.

1. A clearly defined purpose linked to individual and organisational needs.

2. A visible and open relationship with organisational support and a clearly agreed budget and contract.
3. The choice of a high calibre coach with a good 'fit' to the individual receiving coaching.
4. A proven and planned learning process with regular activities, feedback and reviews.
5. Good supportive relationships between the coach, manager, HR and individual.
6. Regular evaluation against individual and organisational objectives.

Coaching, counselling and mentoring often draw on feedback techniques such as 360 degree appraisal and psychometric assessment and can complement and support more wide-reaching educational programmes, particularly as a means for aiding the transfer of learning from the classroom to the workplace.

Secondly coaching, mentoring and (to a lesser degree) counselling can be powerful leadership tools in their own right. Hirsh et al. (2004) talk of the importance of managers developing others and coaching and mentoring skills are essential elements of this ability. Characteristics of positive development support include engagement via personal relationship, informal access, care with trust and encouragement, sharp focus, coaching (but also help finding experiences), working within a wider career context, and an evolving relationship.

Thirdly coaching, counselling and mentoring, like a number of other leadership development practices, can be powerful techniques for enhancing social cohesion. At an individual level these practices, by increasing self-awareness and awareness of others, are likely to result in enhanced inter-personal relations via improved understanding and acceptance. A number of authors, though, now argue that the most effective outcomes can be achieved through group coaching. Kets de Vries (2005), for example, provides a case study of where joint coaching was used within an organisation to bring about durable changes in behaviour and concludes that "leadership group

## Reflective Writing, Personal Journals and Leadership Development

coaching establishes a foundation of trust, makes for constructive conflict resolution, leads to greater commitment, and contributes to accountability, all factors that translate into better results for the organisation" (p.61). In a similar way as group slimming, stop-smoking and drink/drug rehabilitation programmes rely on the power of the group to both support participants and to exert pressure to change, making a commitment to adapt and develop leadership behaviours is more powerful when expressed in public.

In a similar vein, coaching and mentoring can be important processes in organisational acculturation. It could be argued that setting the tone for organizational culture and how it develops is a key responsibility of leaders (Schein, 1992). In this case, the supportive relationship between coach and coachee or mentor and mentee can greatly guide and shape these processes.

The triad of coaching, counselling and mentoring is therefore an important part of the toolkit for the leader of the future both for one's own leadership practice as well as development.

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## Reflective Writing, Personal Journals and Leadership Development

(By Peter Case)

Many writers working in the field of leadership education and development argue that successful leadership style now and in the future will require a strong focus on self awareness, behavioural sensitivity and interpersonal skill (Hodgkinson, 1983; Maccoby, 1981; Mumford, 1995; Pedler et al., 2001; Reason and Rowan, 1991; Senge, 1990). The implication of this view is that skilful leaders will value openness, will share

goals with followers/subordinates, be concerned about others, be supportive, good listeners, receptive to others' ideas and insights and be able to communicate effectively. Although there may be certain obvious exceptions, organisations are increasingly managed by persuasion and consent rather than overt command and control and it is arguably important, therefore, for persons occupying positions of responsibility to acquire the requisite 'soft skills' to perform effectively in these 'negotiatl' contexts.

In order to develop leadership skills of the sort outlined above, we need to adopt innovative methods that will enable participants on leadership development programmes to integrate theory and practice and make their learning relevant to their own organisational lives. The encouragement of reflective writing through the use of some form of personal journal or personal development portfolio can be extremely helpful in turning everyday work experience into 'data' that participants can learn from. Experiential learning journals bring many educational advantages. For example, they provide participants with:

- an opportunity to identify and reflect on critical workplace incidents and experiences;
- a means by which tutors can offer feedback and support to the learner and gauge their future development needs;
- an opportunity to practise critical and evaluative thinking with respect to actions and experiences;
- a means of integrating theoretical learning with workplace leadership practice.

### Using Learning Journals

Learning journals are typically personal to the participant and shared only with their tutor or coach. On occasion a tutor might give specific directions to participants to make entries in their journal, but the main intention of a learning journal is that it becomes a repository for participants to make entries on any and every appropriate occasion throughout a programme of leadership development (and, indeed, possibly beyond should they find it

## Reflective Writing, Personal Journals and Leadership Development

sufficiently beneficial). The kinds of reflections that participants might make in a journal are as follows:

- critical incidents at work that need to be 'thought out loud';
- thoughts that follow a particular piece of formal study on a programme;
- exploration of work-related issues with reference to the theoretical or conceptual elements of a programme;
- a return to a previous entry in the journal for the purposes of further reflection.

Reflections, in turn, might be promoted by self-referential questioning and inquiry of the following sort:

- How do I behave and respond in a given workplace situation?
- Can I identify habitual patterns of behaviour/response?
- Are these helpful or unhelpful behaviours/responses?
- What leadership strengths are apparent in the behaviour patterns?
- What leadership limitations are apparent in the patterns?

It is good practice to encourage participants to take ownership and to make choices about the contents of their journal. In this way, a journal can act to capture snapshots of interactions and events which participants find significant. Most importantly, it provides a record of the participant's personal development in a leadership context. The journal becomes a dynamic and living document which will develop as the participant progresses through any given programme.

### ***The Concept of Learning Journals***

A learning journal is ideally a portfolio of learning experiences, which is organised in its presentation, and therefore accessible and understandable to those reading it. The idea of a 'portfolio' will be familiar to designers, architects and artists amongst others but in terms of its extension to leadership development and education, the portfolio is a relatively new concept. Writers such as Mumford (1995), Pedler et al. (2001), Reason and Rowan (1991), stress the importance of systematic self-inquiry and analysis in

management and leadership development. Such reflection, they argue, enables us to learn more fully from experience. Without systematic reflection, we may simply be accumulating experience haphazardly and perhaps learning from it only unconsciously. Systematic reflective writing in a learning journal provides us with a means of analysing and unpacking our experience, which, in turn, contributes to self-insight and awareness.

The learning journal, however, is not an end product in itself but a process of exploration; a road down which one travels as part of one's self-development. By keeping a current journal, one maximises one's chances of learning from experiences and actions, rather than leaving learning and development to chance. It is an investment in oneself, as it were.

### ***Models for Constructing, Organising and Analysing Personal Journals***

There are various models for structuring personal journal entries, ranging from open-ended recordings on blank sheets of paper through to systematic processes of data collection and analysis. It is important to avoid the journal becoming nothing more than a collection of 'dear diary' entries that lack relevance to the leadership context. Accordingly, offering some guidance to participants on how to approach keeping their journal can be highly beneficial, particularly in the early stages of the process. A number of alternatives are worth considering.

#### *(1) The Experiential Learning Cycle*

This provides a useful framework for organising the reflective writing process (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's learning cycle and associated terminology derive from his work on the nature of experiential learning and is rooted in the educational philosophies of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, and J. P. Guilford. Grounded in a cognitive psychology tradition, Kolb attempts to generically model and explain the way in which humans learn. He suggests that learning follows a specific sequential cycle, beginning with concrete experience and progressing through to phases of reflection, abstract



## Reflective Writing, Personal Journals and Leadership Development

conceptualisation and, finally, active testing of conclusions against experience. The cyclical process may be represented as follows:

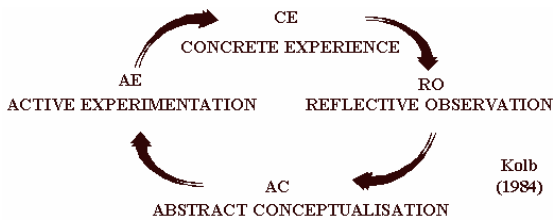


Figure 3 - *The Experiential Learning Cycle* (Kolb, 1984)

Although it is probably more accurate to visualise this process as a spiral, the learning cycle can be used to help participants *organise* the way in which they record and reflect on workplace experiences. Ordinarily, we may not be aware much of the time that we are learning. By paying attention to each stage in the learning cycle, one is consciously reviewing and evaluating one's experiences and performance, taking decisions and planning action for improvement and development.

### (2) Personal Journal Activity

Another model that makes use of experiential learning philosophy is that proffered by Pedler, Burgoyne & Boydell (2001) as part of their useful collection of developmental resources, *A Manager's Guide to Self Development*. Activity 6 of this book provides a clear and practical set of guidelines on how to keep and analyse a 'Personal journal' (ibid, pp.78-81). The model requires participants to describe an event and then to reflect on and evaluate it from a variety of perspectives. In outline, the framework consists in the following elements:

- *What happened?* Offer a description of the learning event.
- *Feelings.* A description of the feelings that accompanied/prompted the event.
- *Thoughts.* An account of the thoughts that accompanied/prompted the event.
- *Action tendencies.* A description of one's habitual response to this kind of event; one's predisposition or preferred style.
- *Actual behaviour.* A description of what one actually did in response to

the event, which may or may not be how one habitually responds.

Having gathered data using this framework, Pedler et al. also set out a three-step process of reflection aimed at assisting participants identify problem areas in their responses to workplace situations. This process can thus help one discover strategies for changing responses that one deems unhelpful or counterproductive.

### (3) Left Hand Column, Off-line reflection and Learning Pathways Grid

In their long term work on the action science approach to research, US professors Chris Argyris and Donald Schon have developed a number of influential theories and tools that can be used to analyse the kinds of micro behaviours one might typically get recorded in a personal journal. For an overall introduction to their thinking, for example, see Argyris (1986). Argyris and Schon (1974) differentiate between two kinds of theory: (1) theory that people intend or hope to use – *espoused theory* – and; (2) what they actually do in real life situations – *theory-in-action*. They also suggest that people find it very difficult to alter their habitual practices and that a different kind of learning is needed in order to surface the basic assumptions and beliefs that underpin organisational behaviour. They call this 'Model II learning'. A variety of techniques can be employed to explore and potentially rectify the 'gaps' between espoused theory and theory-in-action, or, in other words, to make our actions consistent with our prescriptions.

Peter Senge (1990), for instance, advocates the use of the 'Left Hand Column' (LHC) technique for studying micro leadership and management interactions. In outline, this entails taking a sheet of paper and drawing a line down the centre to create a left and right hand column. In the right column, one records details of a dialogue relating to a significant workplace event in which one was involved and which left one feeling discontent or dissatisfied in some way. In the left hand column one reflects systematically on the subtext of the interaction: the motivations of the



parties involved, feelings that arose during the course of the dialogue, and so forth. This provides data that can then be reflected upon and alternative scenarios planned out in which one might imagine acting or responding differently.

Rudolph et al. (2001) and Taylor (2004) have taken the LHC approach and developed a more comprehensive scheme of what they term 'off-line reflection'. Based on the same action science principles, for example, Rudolph et al. introduce a technique known as the Learning Pathways Grid (LPG) which enables one to analyse different aspects of a workplace episode in great detail, again with a view to thinking about how one might alter one's future behaviour and responses if so desired (see figure 2). As with the LHC technique, the LPG requires one to record a workplace episode in close detail, focussing on the 'actual frames' of the various parties involved, 'actual actions' and 'actual results' that occurred. When reflecting on the episode 'off-line', it becomes possible to contrast the actuality with what one would have liked to have transpired in terms of frames, actions and results. Rudolph et al. suggest that participants work back through the experience using their 'desired results' as a starting point. This retrospective process then yields alternative ways of approaching similar episodes in the future.

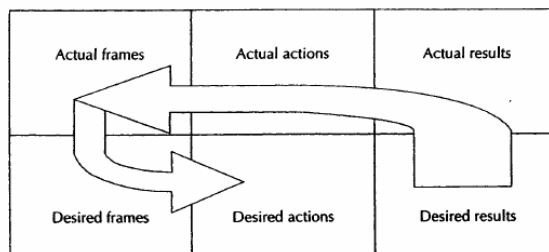


Figure 4 - *The Learning Pathways Grid* (Rudolph et al., 2001)

The various theories and techniques reviewed in this section provide valuable tools for helping to structure reflective writing and/or keep a systematic personal development journal.

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## Action Learning in Leadership Development

(By Robin Ladkin)<sup>3</sup>

I argue in this short article that Action Learning is a powerful and effective method for developing leadership. In many programmes I have designed and led for organisations in the commercial, professional and governmental sectors over some fifteen years, action learning has consistently been appreciated, often to the surprise of participants. They are surprised because action learning is fundamentally simple in its conception if not always so simple to implement well.

I take the view that leadership development should attend to three related aspects:

- *The contextual*, i.e. the particular organisational situation.
- *The personal*, i.e. raising awareness of self as leader and encouraging a wider repertoire of choice.
- *The relational*, by which I mean both the need to lead recognising a plurality of interests and that leadership acts are essentially relational, indeed conversational.

I will set out the general case for action learning as an appropriate method to attend to all three of these aspects and suggest particular versions as relevant, depending on the emphasis of the intervention.

<sup>3</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge his colleagues at Ashridge Consulting with whom he has developed his appreciation for Action Learning over many years. In particular he would like to name David Pearce, a previous colleague of Reg Revans, with whom Robin has initiated a number of leadership development programmes using action learning methodologies including, notably, a programme for Welsh farming families in a project sponsored by ELWa.

## Action Learning in Leadership Development

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### **Action Learning – an Introduction**

Reg Revans is rightly recognised as the inventor of Action Learning and it is worth attending to his fundamental principles in applying the method. In an article in *People Management* (Levy, 2000), entitled "Sage of Reason", Revans is said to have learned the distinction between 'cleverness' and 'wisdom' from his father. As a consequence he always stressed the need to ask the question 'why' in search for understanding rather than 'what' in pursuit of a ready made answer. This distinction between enquiry and an expectation of a 'right' or 'expert' answer lies at the root of the method.

Two further principles are extracted from this review of Revans's formative experiences. He apparently remembered from school some Aristotle: "that which we must learn to do, we learn by doing" (ibid). Action Learning is, fundamentally, about taking action. As I will suggest later, differences in emphasis between action and learning lead to different versions of action learning. But one reason the method is so effective in leadership development is that it empowers action in the form of experimentation – 'having a go', and then learning through subsequent reflection.

Revans was a notable sceptic of experts, relying instead on self-organising work groups and the wisdom of peers. This leads to the third crucial principle which is of peer based coaching. Both the preparation to act and the subsequent learning are accomplished through the help of peers, albeit aided by a learning coach or facilitator.

### **Developments of the basic method**

Marsick and O'Neil have published a helpful survey of different forms of Action Learning, (Marsick and O'Neil, 1999), in which they cite Revans as the author of the 'Scientific' School in contrast with the 'Experiential' school based on the experiential learning cycle of David Kolb (Kolb, 1984), advocated by McGill and Beaty, and the 'Critical Reflection' school identified with Marsick and Pedler.

There are clear consistencies between these different schools which are reflected in the approach developed over a number of years by my colleagues and myself at Ashridge Consulting. The consistencies relate to the principles outlined above:

1. Participants in action learning work on real problems which are characterised by the absence of clear or right answers and are best tackled in different ways by the particular leader determined through questioning and insight.
2. Participants meet on equal terms, in effect as a peer coaching group. The group has considerable significance as a source of support and challenge and as a place to report on progress.
3. Action learning relies on action as the basis for learning. Participants are encouraged to leave a set meeting intent on experimentation and return to it to reflect on their learning.

These consistencies are a potent endorsement for the basic method which has been used and developed by many practitioners over half a century. They each relate thoroughly to the three aspects of leadership briefly identified in the introduction above.

### **Action Learning in Leadership Development**

The *contextual* nature of leadership means that appropriate actions can not be determined generically or through set formulae. The enquiry based approach to leadership issues in action learning stresses the situational and encourages experimentation.

The *personal* nature of leadership demands behaviour based on awareness and choice. One leader will react differently to a similar situation than another, and each will be an equally 'right' action. Peers who are themselves likely to face similar situations can usually offer great questions and suggestions to 'coach' each other. Peer participants in action learning sets often resemble the 'best of friends', genuinely in support of each other, comrades in adversity, and prepared to offer the difficult challenge. There is also a significant encouragement in a peer set

which meets regularly to be able to report on intended actions.

The *relational* aspects of leadership are thoroughly susceptible to both the process of the action learning set and the cycle of experimentation and reflection. Many sets create the kind of 'safe container' in which difficult relational issues can be thoroughly discussed and potential solutions rehearsed. They also provide a community in which differences can be thoroughly aired, with a growing appreciation for the significance of differing perspectives or assumptions held by set members. In this way the set mirrors the pluralistic perspectives and possibilities inherent in the individuals and groups with whom leaders have to relate.

### ***Different approaches for different purposes***

In the same way that consistencies of approach to action learning relate well to the suggested leadership characteristics, so too do the main differences identified by Marsick and O'Neill (1999, p164). These are:

1. The focus of the project on either individual challenges or a common group challenge.
2. The role of group dynamics in the life of teams.

The differences in approach to action learning vary according to whether the focus is on action or learning. Where taking action is the focus, particularly in a group or team setting, probably associated with some kind of strategically intended change, then project based action learning sets are likely to work well.

In this method sets are determined as working groups over the life of the project. The emphasis for the facilitator or coach to the set in this form is to help maintain a process of working which will help lead to a good result. It may also be that the coach has some knowledge or experience in the nature of the project, as well as the required good processing skills. The role of group dynamics in this project form are likely to be crucial to the success of the team, and will therefore figure in their learning.

Although the focus in this form is on a successful outcome, learning for the future is always a crucial aspect of action learning. A set coach or facilitator will, therefore, help by making explicit the process decisions in terms of conflict resolution approaches, consensus building, effective communication both in the present and remotely and so on which make for good project working. In many examples of this kind of action learning with which I have been associated, working with international teams with all the associated considerations for culture and logistics, has been a fascinating area for serious, practical learning.

In contrast, where the development need is more individually based, a set in which the facilitator focuses on peer coaching is appropriate. It is in this respect that the 'Critical Reflection' approach to group process may be more prominent, focusing for example on communication, conflict resolution and consensus building as leadership skills for participants to practice outside the group. The facilitator is also likely, in this style of action learning, to model the quality of support and challenge which might help participants re-frame their understanding of themselves and/or their situation. In my experience of working with professionals, this re-framing process may involve a substantial, and sometimes painful, shift in identity from professional to leader.

### ***The practicalities of action learning***

The 'typical' action learning process with which I have been familiar now for many years has the following characteristics:

- A set of, ideally, six participants (four to seven the acceptable range) to offer diversity and practicality.
- Each set meets for an initial contract of six sessions, separated by about six week intervals. These timings create a good working relationship and maintain learning progress.
- Ideally each participant should have allocated time at each session. This creates a good balance to the learning environment, encouraging high levels of trust. Consequently sets should meet for a minimum of

## Role Play and Simulations

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half a day and often meet for a full day.

- Many action learning sets continue well after the initial contract and may develop their own capability for facilitation. The facilitator should aim to create this independence.
- Action learning sets are formed either within or across organisations. Set members should ideally have some similarity in terms of the nature of their work. Sets for chief executives, HR professionals, managers at roughly similar levels within an organisation all work well, for instance.
- Action learning sets need to be 'safe containers' for learning, which many times crosses boundaries between the professional and the personal. They therefore need to be recognised as completely confidential.

While action learning has been typically practised in face to face encounters, the pressure of international companies has created a new form, audio action learning which is now in a state of development at ACL. The demands and possibilities of this new venture attest to the abiding power of the basic principles.

### **A hint of caution**

Action Learning, by its nature and if true to the principles outlined above, is both an empowering form of development and a potentially challenging one for the organisation. When working well, action learning sets generate a significant degree of community spirit and common purpose. If a number of sets are set up within a defined leadership community the impact can be considerable.

But the outcome of such a peer based, essentially democratic and non-expert led development process is not necessarily predictable or controllable. This is, indeed, its power, to foster and generate genuine and sustained development at both individual and group, potentially community levels.

The executive responsible for introducing such a process should ideally be a leader open to challenge as well as wishing to unleash considerable energy for change.

It is my experience that this form of learning offers great potential for

sustained change for participants individually and organisationally.

### **Further Reading**

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## Role Play and Simulations

(By Keith Kinsella)

Although there can be many objectives for leadership development activity, the most immediate and practical has to be different more effective behaviour in the everyday situations that constitute the bulk of management practice. It's all very well for a manager to understand in the classroom what 'situational management' theory is about and to have a grasp of what might be involved in using a 'tell' or 'sell' mode of interaction with staff, and be committed to using it. But unless a manager can convincingly demonstrate e.g. 'delegating' or 'devolving' behaviour with another person in a real and quite probably fleeting situation, something like 'situational management' theory remains just that – an interesting theory – and life continues on as before.

What is often missing from development workshops and training courses is the opportunity for managers to actually translate any new thinking like this into convincing behaviour with others. In other words they don't have the opportunity to rehearse, practice and polish their abilities to perform such desired behaviours before having to do it for real in the workplace. Football teams and other sportsmen and women wouldn't dream of trying moves out for the first time in a real game, particularly if the moves required quite a change in current behaviour involving, as they do with new management practice, not only verbal but non verbal and emotional changes. Moving from a 'control and command' style to a more participative and influencing style represents a substantial shift in attitudes and skill



patterns, and is not something that most of us can conjure up after a few days in a classroom training environment.

And I'm assuming here that it's obvious what the desired new behaviour looks like and it's something that can be delivered in a wholly standard way i.e. no account needs to be taken of the individual's own style and the situations that he/she works in. Which of course can sometimes be true, but more often than not the behaviour is complex and the individual has to create their own version of the behaviour to suit themselves and the situation. In other words the behaviour has to be created, experimented with, and gradually fashioned to satisfy a sophisticated set of criteria if it's to work with real people in real situations.

This is where role play and simulations can start to make an important contribution. Of course role play is a simulation of a kind – usually two people performing an interaction in order to try out a technique or practice a skill – but I tend to use the word 'simulation' itself for work with larger groups who work on an issue that concerns all of them. How can you use these activities to enrich the learning activity and increase the possibility of the learning 'sticking' and being applied in work situations? Here are some ideas:

- show how current modes of behaviour (e.g. trying to use a more participative style of managing) can lead to misunderstanding/confusion;
- demonstrate what 'doing' new behaviours (e.g. 'influencing' vs. 'directing') actually looks like by modelling the behaviour in situations that resemble the workplace;
- offer realistic 'opposition' in helping managers develop their own style in interactions by providing relevant 'others' (e.g. the boss) in rehearsal mode;
- give in-depth, high quality feedback on how to improve and refine skills by providing action coaching based on how the other role player experiences the manager's behaviour in the present – this is often the most powerful feedback a manager could

receive as it can be specific, objective and timely

While many organisations involve colleague managers in providing the 'other' in role plays, these colleagues often find it difficult to engage openly and fully in such role plays, and often lack the performance skills needed to provide a realistic quality of interaction. So we usually find it makes much more sense to use external actor-coaches who can bring their professional experience of the theatre and improvisatory/rehearsal techniques to help managers experiment and practice new behaviours. When using such people, you can add the following further activities:

1. provide one-to-one support on site. Here the actor-coach joins the manager on an ad hoc and as required basis to work on specific issues that arise in the workplace over time e.g. getting set up for an important presentation/meeting or preparing for a difficult interview.
2. use actor-coaches and the 'forum theatre' approach to simulate important interactions. Here the actor-coaches help an organisation set up specific 'live issue' situations in the present, which involve groups in powerful 'real time' experiential learning. Here a group of people can learn to do 'what works' by finding out what 'doing' does work in the simulation, and agreeing what conditions are needed to support this in the workplace

Here are a couple of examples illustrating how these methods can be used:

**(a) As part of a major management development programme:** in this 12 month programme involving some 800 managers in a large public service organisation, a half day in each of three 2 day workshops was devoted to helping senior managers improve their abilities in giving challenging feedback, influencing colleagues outside their direct authority, and handling conflict situations. Working in groups of 5/6 supported by an actor-coach/facilitator, each individual manager had the opportunity to address specific difficulties



## Leadership Exchange: Some Notes on Observation

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in the workplace, using the coach and colleagues to provide practice, feedback and advice. Managers found that changes/improvements achieved in these sessions translated quite easily into the workplace.

**(b) As preparation for management-union negotiations:** a one day event involving key players from both management and the unions in a major organisation was held to establish a new framework and raise the quality of communication prior to an important round of negotiations. Before the event, a facilitator and two actor-coaches worked with both sides to create a realistic simulation of a major issue that was dividing the parties and promising to complicate the upcoming negotiation, using the 'forum theatre' technique. During the early part of the event the actor-coaches modelled existing patterns of interaction, inviting participants to add and enliven the debate – which they did! Subsequent stages involved modelling and trying out new approaches, with the actor-coaches again providing the initial stimulus, followed by individuals from both 'sides' taking the debate further and often arguing against their own 'side'! The final part of the event was devoted to working out and getting agreement to a new set of guidelines for behaviours and values which had been modelled/created in by the parties the event itself.

Through using these processes where they can explore and practice in relative safety, managers are able to move quickly towards understanding what embodying new learning means: that behaving differently doesn't require personality change but is more about bringing appropriate aspects of a personality to a situation and extending/adapting the range of behaviours to suit the demands of such situations. This rehearsal work allows managers to make inroads in this most difficult part of the from-thought-to-action 'leap' providing the realistic practice managers need if they are to 'hit the ground' walking (if not running) when they return to the workplace.

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## Leadership Exchange: Some Notes on Observation

(By Jonathan Gosling)

The Leadership Exchange is an experiential learning opportunity for practicing managers that enables them to pair up and observe leadership in practice. Whilst it shares some similarity with work shadowing and related techniques it is distinct because of its emphasis on the importance of acting both as observer *and* host.

The general leadership exchange process comprises the following steps:

- *Pairing* – participants are paired up and assigned a coach.
- *Visit 1* – one member of the pair initially acts as host and the other as observer. Visits are usually between 3 and 5 days per person.
- *Visit 2* – at the second visit the roles are switched, with the previous observer becoming host and vice versa. This usually occurs within a few weeks of the initial visit.
- *Feedback and debrief* – following each exchange, both partners provide one another with feedback. After both exchanges a debrief process is completed with the coach.
- *Reflection* – the process is usually completed with the writing of a reflective paper by each partner.

We have found this technique to be extremely powerful when used with experienced senior and middle managers, giving participants personal feedback on their daily leadership style, seeing another leader in action, getting connected and extending networks, working with other leaders, offering independent insights into current priorities, and benchmarking practice. Furthermore, work colleagues and team

members often benefit from engagement with a curious visitor.

Central to the exchange process is an ability to observe and to reflect on what you see. In the rest of this article I will discuss some of the principle issues to consider when given the opportunity of observing managerial practice.

### **1. Role**

When you follow someone around all day and watch what they are doing you are clearly not observing what happens in the same way that a scientist watches what will happen in a test tube. Like the scientist, you will have certain preconceptions about what to look for, and probably have some emotional attachment to particular outcomes; but you are also likely to have an effect on what your host does, and how others behave in your presence. You are clearly, therefore, going to influence what happens. You will not be an 'objective' observer in the pure sense of the term. On the other hand you will probably not be a participant in events in the same fully committed way as your host and his or her colleagues. You will be somewhat detached from the things they do and the events they are trying to influence. You are not, therefore, either a pure researcher or a pure participant. Whatever you see and hear, and however you respond to people in the immediacy of the situation, will have an effect on them and on what you take in yourself.

This situation gives rise to two main kinds of question:

1. *Ethical considerations* about what it is right for you to do.
2. *Practical considerations* about how you deal with your own opinions and the effect these have on the situation.

Both of these become much easier to cope with if you are clear about your own role as a co-participant on the Leadership Exchange. Your primary responsibility is to gain a deeper and broader appreciation of managerial work, and to collaborate with your partner in doing so. You may be able to help him or her to understand the predicaments that he or she is in but it is not your role,

however, to provide solutions or to get caught up in the local politics as well. Your host is likely to gain more from a visitor who offers new insights into his or her assumptions and priorities than they would from yet another advisor.

There is an ethical issue here too: what have you actually been given authority to do, and for what will you be held responsible? Certainly not to take up a managerial or consultancy position in the Host company. If you have access to meetings and informal interactions, what are you expected to report on? There are both commercial and personal confidences to be considered. You risk behaving unethically if you try using the information for anything other than stated purposes (i.e. to help you and your partner to better appreciate the predicaments of management). It is important not only to respect the confidentiality of people you've spoken to and the things you've witnessed during the visit but also subsequently. For this it may become necessary to withhold information or at least to disguise the identity of informants.

### **2. What to look for**

There are a number of tools and techniques that will help you maximise what you observe.

(a) Remember to pay attention to what you glimpse out of the "corner of your eye". Things that go on almost on the margins of the events you are supposed to be watching, comments that are made as if they are insignificant, thoughts and impressions that flit through your own mind. These can be important clues: notice them, make a note about them, and think about them, then or later.

(b) Think of yourself as an instrument: your feelings and reactions deserve your attention. If, for example, you are *not* surprised by what you see, you should notice this, and wonder why – are you being sucked in to the surrounding assumptions? Are you avoiding noticing something that might have uncomfortable consequences? Or is this situation really just the same as those you face at home? If so – isn't that surprising in itself?

## Leadership Exchange: Some Notes on Observation

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You may also find yourself experiencing sensations such as boredom, frustration, excitement, impatience or anger. Think about why this might be. Are others feeling the same? Are they projecting these feelings onto you, so that they can carry on as if their work has no element of frustration, anger, etc.? Or perhaps these feelings come to you as echoes from your own job, where you might be too busy to notice them, but now have somehow become available to experience them more fully. Notice these, make a note about them, and think about them, then or later.

(c) Perhaps the most significant instrument or tool in this kind of observation is the 'working hypothesis'. This is basically a statement of what you think is going on and what you think is causing it, or *why* people are behaving in this way. More precisely, there should be two parts:

- A description of what people are doing
- A 'Because' clause: "they are doing this because they are concerned about xyz". This 'because' clause should be testable. "If they are concerned about xyz, what else would they do? Do we see this in practice?"

Using a working hypothesis like this should help you to be rigorous and alert in your role but it may also bias your opinion. There is a real danger that you may simply look for and note occurrences that support your assumptions, whilst overlooking a wealth of data in support of an alternative viewpoint. Indeed, when determining whether or not a theory is correct, it is the single instance that runs counter to your argument that will lead to the theory being disproved, rather than the many instances in support. Therefore, the working hypothesis should not be used so much as a way of arriving at a final explanation of events, but more as a tool for framing your observations. To this extent, it becomes a starting point from which to determine a series of alternative hypotheses and can be shared during feedback, not as an absolute explanation, but as a tentative

proposition to encourage further thought.

### 3. Recording observations

Spending an extended period as an objective observer requires a certain amount of discipline. Failing to record your observations in a systematic and timely manner can lead to a whole host of difficulties including selective memory, subjective interpretation and becoming over-accustomed to the situation. To avoid this, it may be advisable to create a template on which you record your observations, including details such as:

- *Setting*: the physical environment, time of day, location, etc.;
- *Human/social environment*: the way in which actors (the main individuals involved in any situation) interact with one another;
- *Actions*: any distinct actions or events and the way in which they affect the actors;
- *Language*: it is useful to record actual quotations where possible (rather than just your interpretation of the meaning) as well as instances of particular jargon, terminology and verbal style;
- *Non-verbal communication*: what non-verbal cues are actors displaying and what effect does this have?
- *Notable non-occurrences*: is the situation marked by a clear absence of anything (e.g. poor communication, lack of planning, etc.)?
- *Personal reflections*: the template should also leave space for your own reflective thoughts, which will be useful when analysing and interpreting what you saw.

Your observational notes will be a useful source of information when it comes to making sense of the leadership exchange but you shouldn't allow them to get in the way of the experience. Excessive note taking can be perceived as threatening by those people you're observing and particular care should be taken in confidential situations. It is also important to make sure that you're not so busy writing that you fail to notice what it is you're meant to be looking at. To this extent, it may be necessary to take only brief notes, which can be

written up later, or even to delay note taking at all until a more appropriate point in the day.

### **4. Making sense of what you see**

Observation is only one part of the process. Other key skills include analysis, interpretation, feedback and reflection. There is not time to enter into a discussion of these here, but for further details please refer to the following reading.

#### **Further Reading**

Gosling, J. and Mintzberg, H. (2004), Reflect Yourself. *HR Magazine*, 49 (9).

Gosling, J. and Western, S. (2003) *Pairing for Leadership: Anxiety, Containment and Hope in Leadership Development*. University of Exeter Discussion Paper 03/14.

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## **The Use and Abuse of Psychometrics in Leader Development**

(By Donna Ladkin)

Several years ago I received a phone call from a former MBA student who had been offered a job with a Bluechip company. He was thrilled with the appointment, but had rung me for advice about a request that the human resources manager had made when making the job offer. It seems that the job interview process had included candidates taking a number of psychometric tests, something he'd done directly after the interview. According to the human resources manager, the candidate had come out 'too perfectly' on a number of the tests. Because the match was TOO good, there was a concern that the candidate would be seen to have been lying when he took the tests. The manager wanted the candidate to re-take the tests, giving different answers which wouldn't so neatly fit the profile of the perfect candidate. My MBA student was asking me for advice as to how to 'lie' successfully when he retook the tests.

It's a true story, and the human resources manager of the company in

question really should have known better. But it illustrates one of the many ways in which psychometrics can be misunderstood and consequently misused by both lay people and professionals concerned with the categorisation and measurement of personality. This paper briefly considers some of the assumptions informing the use of psychometric testing<sup>4</sup>, the ways in which such instruments can beneficially be incorporated into leader development activities, and some of the guidelines developers might bear in mind when deciding whether or not to use psychometrics.

### **What psychometrics are trying to do**

Psychological testing is a burgeoning market, with an increasing number of instruments being readily available to both human resource professionals and those engaged in leader development as well as to lay people (through their proliferation on the internet). Some of the key assumptions which underpin their existence include:

- 'Self', as represented by 'personality' is conceptualised as being distinct and to some extent stable over a range of different situations
- Aspects of 'personality' can be identified and categorised.
- These aspects of personality can be measured.

Of course, each of these assumptions is subject to critical debate, thus putting the entire use of instruments which purport to identify, categorise and measure into question. Although personally I hold the view that psychometric instruments can be of value in an individuals' development, it is from the ground of appreciating the significant questions surrounding their validity that I do so. Bearing this 'health warning' in mind, I'll consider what psychometrics are purporting to do.

### **Types of Psychometric Instruments**

Broadly speaking, psychometric instruments can be divided into two

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<sup>4</sup> Psychometric instruments can be used to assess ability as well as personality, this paper focuses on instruments used to assess personality attributes in whatever way they are conceptualised.



## The Use and Abuse of Psychometrics in Leader Development

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different types. There are those which are trying to establish individuals' personality 'preferences', and there are those which are attempting to identify and measure personality 'traits'.

Preference based psychometrics, such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Myers, 1962), or the Learning Style Indicator (Honey and Mumford, 1982) are generally based around a view that individuals have to engage in a range of different ways of being, but that they will have preferences for those ways of being. For instance, the MBTI, based on the psychological type theory of Carl Jung (Jung, 1923) recognises four psychological functions, sensing (S) intuition (N) thinking (T) and feeling (F). According to Jung, we all need to use all four of these functions, however we will generally have a preference to either 'sensing' or 'intuition' as a way of gathering data, and to 'thinking' or 'feeling' as a way of making decisions.<sup>5</sup> Professionals administering the MBTI are charged with stressing that there is no 'right' personality type and that these preferences are akin to 'left and right hand dominance'.

How these preferences arise is a source of debate within the field of psychometrics. Jung believed individuals were born with these preferences, that they were part of our 'soul's DNA', but this view is not shared by all who use preference-based psychometrics.

Trait-based psychometrics attempt to categorise and measure certain personality traits. One of the most long-lived of such psychometrics is the 16 Personality Factor Inventory (16PF) which was developed by R B Cattell in the 1940s. Based on a dictionary search of descriptive terms for behaviour, Cattell used factor analysis to establish sixteen core factors, including measures such as 'Reserved: Outgoing' and 'Shy: Uninhibited'. Although these sixteen

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<sup>5</sup> Jung also believed that individuals had a preference for drawing energy from their inner world, as enacted through introversion, or from their outer world, which was expressed as 'extraversion'. Jung's theory was codified and developed into the MBTI by Isabelle Briggs and Katherine Briggs Myers during the 1940s.

factors have never been replicated by statistical feats modern computers are able to perform, the questionnaire is still used extensively, especially within selection processes. Other commonly used trait-based psychometrics include Eysenck's EPO instrument, used to measure Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism, and the Californian Psychological Inventory.

All of the aforementioned instruments rely on self perceptions for their results and therefore rely on a number of factors for the accuracy of the information they provide, including a degree of self awareness on the part of those taking them! Other psychometrics, such as the 360 degree feedback instrument takes into account perceptions of others as well as the subject of the test. Although 360 degree feedback is becoming an increasingly popular means by which data is collected concerning a leader's style, its interpretation needs to be tempered through the organisational context within which it is operating to provide truly insightful data.

### ***The Benefits of Psychometric Testing***

Psychometric instruments can be a useful element of leader development in a number of ways. Firstly, they can provide a quick way of ascertaining information about people which would be difficult to deduce merely through observation. In particular, they can point to the factors underlying certain behaviours, thereby providing additional insight into how behaviours might be effectively altered or developed.

Secondly, psychometrics can provide a 'neutral' language for discussing aspects of individual personality and behaviour. For instance, a person who is continually chastised for not paying close enough attention to detail may gain understanding of that 'shortcoming' through understanding their preference of 'intuition' or 'big picture patterns'. In other words, their lack of attention to detail isn't necessarily a sign of laziness on their part, but can be an expression of a preferred way of relating to data. I'm not suggesting that such insight should then be used as an excuse for the



individual's continued mistakes in adding up accounts correctly! Rather, in the best situation, a preference can alert the individual to their developmental needs. Alternatively, it can raise the need for them to develop strategies for dealing with this preference effectively, such as developing partnerships with those more inclined to engage at the detailed level with data.

My experience of working with psychometrics is that when a profile accurately reflects someone's understanding of themselves it can give them permission to consider their developmental needs in a more open and accepting way. People often speak of experiencing a sense of relief when a profile identifies an aspect of themselves they may have felt troubled about: "Oh that's why I find conflict so difficult", or perhaps, "That's why I find myself unerringly leaving projects until the last minute". A degree of compassion for the self can be fostered through non-value-laden exploration of different profiles. For leader developers, such insight can provide the needed buy-in for coaching and other kinds of developmental work

### ***Things to Look for in a Psychometric Test***

In deciding which psychometric is appropriate to use for a given situation the following questions might serve as a helpful starting point:

- What is the instrument's theoretical base? In this matter, all psychometrics are not created equally, some will have a robust theoretical underpinning, others less so.
- To what extent is it sensitive to gender and culture dynamics. For instance, what kind of 'English' is being used? Many psychometric tests are developed in America and use language in slightly different ways. Look out for 'British' English versions, and be wary of using English-based psychometrics with those whose native language is not English.
- What is its pedigree? How long has it been being used and by whom?
- What is its level of reliability and validity?

### ***In Conclusion***

Psychometric instruments can be a powerful resource for the developer in identifying an individual's capacities and areas for challenge and growth. Perhaps the results they offer can best be seen as a STARTING POINT for discussion, rather than the end of the story. With that in mind, I'd like to offer the following list of 'health warnings' for those contemplating using these tools.

- Because of a certain association with 'science' which psychometrics have, they can be seen as being more powerful in indicating the 'truth' of an individual than is actually possible. Those administering instruments might bear in mind this bias and stress the limited nature of any psychometric, along with the insights it might provide.
- When a number of psychometrics are used in conjunction with one another, the information they give can seem contradictory. Such contradictions are a useful point for discussion, particularly around the situations in which certain behaviours or characteristics are expressed.
- Along these lines, situational factors will have an impact on an individual's results, and it is important to consider any result within the context in which it arises.
- Results rely on a degree of self-understanding.
- Tests are not infallible. Results are often most helpfully used as a starting point for discussion.

### ***Further Reading***

- Jackson, C. (1996) *Understanding Psychological Testing*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Kline, P. (2000) *A Psychometric Primer*. London: Free Association Books.

## **360 Degree Appraisal**

(By John Potter and Richard Bolden)

One of the most notable trends in organisational development in recent years has been the emergence and implementation of the 360 degree appraisal process (Chappelow, 2004; Atwater and Waldman, 1998; Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998). By 360 degree appraisal we refer to the process of

## 360 Degree Appraisal

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gathering and comparing feedback from subordinates, peers and bosses on an individual's management and leadership practice. The process is normally based around a relatively straightforward questionnaire: one version (self rating) that the manager completes him/herself and another version (other rating) that is distributed to colleagues at different levels in the organisation. The results are then compared and differences in perceptions between the individuals' self rating and the ratings given by others can be used as the basis for both formal appraisal and informal development conversations.

The power of 360 degree appraisal is that it offers the manager a 'reality check' whereby they can receive honest feedback on their behaviour and performance. Ideally the process should be anonymous and thus enables the sharing of feedback (both positive and negative) that would be unlikely to be provided during the normal course of events.

As a developmental tool 360 degree appraisal enables an individual to monitor changing perceptions over time by repeating the exercise at regular intervals (for example at the start and end of a leadership development programme). It is rather like holding up a mirror to one's own appearance that reveals things that would otherwise go unnoticed. In a post-heroic age of leadership where consideration is given to the moral, emotional and relational aspects of leadership "self-knowledge is the single most important factor in the practice of leadership" (CCL, 2005).

360 degree appraisal is not, however, without its pitfalls. Firstly, as a process it can appear threatening both to the person being assessed and the people giving the assessment. It is essential therefore that the appraisal is conducted in an environment of trust, honesty and openness. Secondly, it could be perceived that the upwards appraisal process could undermine the authority of the individual leader or manager. Thirdly, it has been suggested that 360 degree appraisal offers the possibility for disaffected individuals to lodge complaints against their manager

without having to substantiate them or follow formal procedures. Furthermore, participating in a 360 degree appraisal process commits one to action. Failing to respond in any observable way to criticisms levied through the process further enforces dissatisfaction and resistance. And finally, the completion of a 360 degree appraisal is a somewhat laborious task and one that should not be repeated too frequently with the same people if one expects them to give due time and attention to the process.

A fundamental assumption of the 360 degree appraisal process is that negative or discrepant feedback (ratings that differ between respondents) will enhance self-awareness and motivation to change. Whilst this may sometimes be the case (especially where a manager participates voluntarily as part of an integrated development process) research indicates a concerning tendency for such feedback to be disregarded as inaccurate (Brett and Atwater, 2001). Such findings imply that 360 degree appraisal should be treated with caution, particularly if used for performance assessment rather than personal development (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996).

Our experience of using 360 degree appraisal in a developmental context, however, implies that people tend to approach the exercise in good faith. Colleagues and subordinates tend to respect a leader who is genuinely interested in how she or he performs and how they can do better. Indeed, opening oneself up for such feedback can actually enhance respect. Furthermore, participants are usually their own worst critics and so tend to find themselves pleasantly surprised by the feedback from others. To gain a balanced range of feedback it is important to distribute the 'other rating' forms to a variety of individuals including some who are obviously going to give positive assessments together with those who will be neutral as well as those where it is felt that the feedback will be strongly negative. The comparison of all three types of feedback enables the participant to discuss and consider feedback within its wider context.

The 'other rating' forms may be completed anonymously or by named individuals. There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches although the former is usually recommended. Anonymous feedback is likely to be more honest and less inhibited but can provide the vehicle for unsupported criticism. Named contributions, on the other hand, enable subsequent discussions and the possibility for the recipient to take direct action to resolve specific issues. When anonymous feedback is sought, however, attempts should be made to ensure that responses can not be traced back to a particular individual and so require more careful administration.

In one major defence contractor, one of the presents author used a 360 degree process as part of an assignment between modules of a leadership and management development programme. The results were particularly interesting in that some years previously, an attempt to use 360 degree appraisal had been totally rejected by the workforce because of the insensitive way it had been administered. In the author's case, the concept was introduced as a challenge by asking the group if they felt up to handling the feedback as opposed to telling them they must use the process. The participants rose to the challenge and agreed wholeheartedly to undertake the assignment. In hindsight they all agreed it was useful if sometimes uncomfortable to find out what people really think of your ability as a leader. In most cases, individuals under rated their abilities on a variety of dimensions compared to the ratings of the people who reported to them. Peer ratings were very similar to self ratings. Ratings by the person to whom they reported varied but in most cases provided a very useful basis for discussion. In all cases, the feedback strengthened the performance and self-perception of each individual leader.

The Center for Creative Leadership, one of the main proponents of 360 degree appraisal, offers the following guidelines on how to use this technique most effectively (Chappelow, 2004).

1. 360 degree appraisal should not be used as a stand-alone event, but rather integrated within a developmental model of assessment, challenge and support.
2. Support from the participants' boss is critical, as is buy-in from the recipient and a commitment to addressing development goals arising from the appraisal.
3. The 360 degree feedback process works best when it starts with executives at the *top* of an organisation and cascades downwards to other levels.
4. Poor administration and management of a 360 degree appraisal process can be fatal and result in a worse situation than before.
5. The timing of a 360 degree appraisal process should be chosen carefully to minimise the potential impact of other factors within and outside the organisation (e.g. redundancies).

Provided it is administered with a degree of sensitivity, 360 degree appraisal is a valuable tool in terms of developing leadership ability particularly in terms of emotionally intelligent leadership. Once the initial reluctance to finding out what people really think about our operation as leaders is overcome, specific feedback both positive and negative plays an important part in developing the individual leader's ability to develop organisational capability and unlock human potential on the individual level.

### **Further Reading**

- Alimo-Metcalfe, B. (1998). 360 degree feedback and leadership development, *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 6, (1), 35-44.
- Chappelow, C. (2004) 360 degree feedback. In C. McCauley and E. VanVelsor (eds.) *Handbook of Leadership Development* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 58-84.

## **Leadership Consultancy**

(By Neville Osrin and John Potter)

Our thinking about leaders and leadership is changing. We used to think that leaders were those who were born to lead and that it was fruitless to even try to turn ordinary people into leaders.

This was the so-called 'Great Man Theory' of leadership. For much of the early and middle parts of the twentieth century leadership was associated with inherent traits that predisposed one to assume the mantle of leadership and exercise it with aplomb. Some of the earliest applications of prevailing leadership theory was in officer selection for the armed forces and it is therefore unsurprising that during the forties and fifties leadership was strongly identified with the military, predominantly male, and with a strong emphasis on 'heroic' leadership.

However, things have moved on and most organisations require people in positions where effective leadership is an imperative. There are simply not enough talented 'born to lead' individuals in our society. We need to be able to develop 'ordinary' people so that they can become more effective at carrying out leadership activities and establishing effective leadership processes and practices. Leadership is not simply about individual attributes and character, important though these may be, it is also about developing organisational capability and mobilising human potential. It is against this background that leadership consultancy has emerged as an organisational intervention.

Leadership consultancy as applied today seems to fall into four broad categories: the assessment of leadership capability, executive and leadership development, leadership and organisational effectiveness, and facilitating strategic leadership. While closely interrelated, the four areas differ in terms of their primary focus. Although it is beyond the scope of this review to explore in depth each of these areas, in the following sections we attempt to highlight the most recent advances and emerging trends within the orbit of leading edge leadership consultancy.

### ***Assessment of leadership capability***

While processes for the systematic assessment of leadership talent have a relatively long history, for example psychometric evaluation and assessment centres, several new strands have emerged in recent years. For example, rather than simply assessing eligible and

suitable candidates for leadership roles, we are now equally concerned with the early identification of talent, and appropriate development as people pass through the leadership 'pipeline.' This trend has been supported by compelling evidence that ultimately leadership effectiveness is strongly influenced by early organisational experiences.

Another strand relates to the ubiquitous use of competency frameworks, in effect a mix of traits and abilities. Conventional wisdom decrees that as the level of a particular competency displayed by a person increases, so does the effectiveness of that individual. While this may be largely true, there is emerging evidence that the competencies that differentiate between average and very good performance are not the same as those that differentiate between very good and truly superior performance.

Increasingly we are starting to pay more attention to the risks and vulnerabilities of leadership, and to why leaders fail. The research of McCall (McCall, 1998) has provided new insights into this area, while that of Hogan has led to the development of a psychometric instrument able to identify potential leadership 'derailers' (Hogan et al., 1994; Hogan and Hogan, 2001). Applications resulting from these new insights are being applied increasingly in leadership development and executive coaching.

A further strand relates to the broadening of the application of leadership assessment. The Centre for Leadership Studies has pioneered the development of an approach for training analysts and fund managers in the financial services industry to enable them to draw more comprehensive conclusions about the capability of specific corporate leaders or management teams effectively to implement the company's stated corporate and competitive strategy.

### ***Executive & leadership development***

Over the past decade, the use of a combination of multi-source feedback (also referred to as 360 degree feedback) and individual coaching has



emerged as the method of choice for leadership and particularly executive, development. This is not of course to suggest that other approaches and programmes have fallen into disuse! However, this approach is particularly appropriate to external intervention, and leadership consultants are often engaged in preference to the use of internal corporate resources in order to ensure the necessary confidentiality. Experience indicates that where a combination of 360 plus individual coaching is desirable, significantly better outcomes are likely where the process is externally managed as a confidential relationship between leader and coach, rather than part of an HR-managed development route.

A further enhancement to the process is the use of highly customised array of items on which multi-source feedback is obtained, as opposed to generic systems. Generic approaches have little advantage over customised ones other than to provide normative data across a spectrum of companies or sectors. However, given the contextual nature of 360 information, normative data is often quite spurious, and its benefits tends to be offset by the advantages of a company-specific, customised array of attributes that resonate with those who are asked to rate behaviours.

Another, often unanticipated benefit of a formal multi-source feedback process (as opposed to conversational feedback), is the value of the aggregated data. This data can often provide an excellent basis for an organisational review, illustrating as it does the prevalence or absence of specific organisational behaviours, as well as the relative importance attributed by staff to these behaviours. The latter analysis is often a far more valuable indication of the impact of real versus espoused values within the company than other types of investigation into this phenomenon. The independent, external perspective, free of political and hierarchical influence, offered by the leadership consultant is often an especially appropriate intervention. Having said this, however, there are instances where leadership consultants are brought into organisations to

legitimise decisions that have already been taken by senior management (such as large scale redundancies) and in this case the consultant's independence and potential to find new solutions is seriously inhibited.

### ***Leadership and organisational effectiveness***

Many practitioners, and indeed some academics, seem perennially engaged in seeking the holy grail of leadership effectiveness. While it is quite conceivable that leadership consultants may be similarly engaged at a cerebral, or even fantasy level, the reality of their engagement with their client demands a somewhat more systemic approach. The goal of simplification is both admirable and desirable, but as Einstein said: "we should make things as simple as possible, but no simpler". The reality of organisations today is that they function within a context of greater complexity than ever before. Simplicity is not an option. Context has become king.

Perhaps the overriding rationale for leadership consultancy is the combination of the systemic and the contextual. Consultancy should enable the integration of an independent, external perspective with a systemic mindset. But this is not enough; the integration has to occur within the realities of the external environment or context within which the organisation and its constituent parts, operates. And in the process the leadership consultant further has to balance continuity with change, and to translate ideas into action and into positive outcomes.

Paradoxically, many leadership interventions are not initiated at the leadership level. The challenge is to have an understanding of how the organisation works systemically, thereby allowing the consultant to initiate an intervention at the most appropriate part of the system, with a clear view of how the variable being addressed will ultimately have an impact on leadership effectiveness, and crucially, *on the other parts of the system* as well. Many organisational interventions fail to add value because of potential dysfunctional pathways within the system that may



## E-learning for Leadership Development

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have been overlooked or underestimated.

It is also becoming clear that leadership, organisational performance, and change cannot be separated in practice, and any consultancy that revolves around the leadership dimension needs to be competent and willing to engage with the other dimensions.

Since James McGregor Burns first drew the distinction between transformational and transactional leadership (Burns, 1978), this concept has become firmly embedded into the organisational lexicon. However, it is only relatively recently that we have started to appreciate fully the interactions between these notions, and their respective impact on the change agenda. The intricacies of these interactions fall squarely within the leadership consultancy remit and this too needs to be factored into the organisational performance equation.

### **Facilitating strategic leadership**

This area of consultancy is generally more concerned with process than with content. It is the level at which strategy is created, where corporate leadership has to decide the significance of external events, how they are likely to impact the organisation, and its strategic response. In practice this translates into determining the strategic intent, (mission and corporate/competitive strategy) and ensuring that appropriate leadership (values and attributes) is in place, both suitably aligned with the culture. The leadership consultant can play a vital role in facilitating the processes, interactions and strategic frameworks that enable this to be achieved. Many organisations have recognised the value of such external facilitation, and will routinely engage leadership consultants for this purpose. This type of intervention is often used as the platform from which to develop broader organisational initiatives, thereby ensuring alignment between a broader range of issues (for example, team effectiveness, business performance, reward, quality, change management) and the strategic imperatives of the business, and crucially, top management buy-in.

Consultants who provide such facilitation recognise the importance of mobilising internal resources in pursuit of enhanced outcomes. They eschew the 'expert' view, believing instead that employees' accumulated experience, if correctly channelled, is generally sufficient to determine an organisations strategic architecture and commit to effective implementation.

In summary, leadership consultants can introduce leadership frameworks, may assist in identifying and developing talent, can help individuals assess their own performance in handling people and situations, contribute to the formulation of strategy, and promote a positive corporate culture. As such they are able to make a valuable contribution towards achieving superior individual and organisational performance.

### **Further Reading**

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## E-learning for Leadership Development

(By Peter Case, Richard Bolden and Jonathan Gosling)<sup>6</sup>

This article is based on our experience of developing and delivering e-learning programmes in leadership and a systematic review of a major public-sector e-learning programme and offers some reflections on how this approach can be most effectively used to offer and support leadership development.

### **The problem with e-learning**

E-learning offers the promise of breaking down many of the traditional barriers to education: location, mass customisation, cost and timing. Students can now

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<sup>6</sup> We would like to acknowledge the immense contribution of Nick Birbeck and the rest of his team at LaTIS, University of Exeter, in helping us to establish an effective online learning environment.

study any where, any time, and with greater flexibility and at lower cost. The problem, however, is that, apart from a number of notable exceptions, the uptake of such programmes is low and attrition rates high (British Learning Association, 2004). It seems that e-learning can be successful for knowledge-based topics and for people with a high degree of interest in computer technology and/or persistence. More skills and behaviour-based subjects (such as leadership and management), however, have tended to fair less well.

There is a growing body of research into e-learning which shows that attrition rates are highest on programmes where students are simply given access to a large body of online materials and then, more or less, left to their own devices to complete their studies. Such a learning approach soon becomes dry, isolating and demotivating. Without the interaction of other learners and tutors the student might as well be reading a book!

In a review of the evidence Romiszowski (2004) concludes that many e-learning initiatives fail because they place too much emphasis on the 'E' and not enough on the 'L'. Thus, programme designers focus on the technology rather than the learning processes. Further problems arise where the provision is not matched to the individual learner's needs and where there is insufficient support for the intervention from management.

### ***From 'distance' to 'close' learning***

In order to counteract these problems, we have devised programmes<sup>7</sup> that require students to move through a sequence of study as a cohort and have utilised interactive online facilities, such as discussion forums and chat rooms, to promote a sense of their belonging to a learning community, rather than working in isolation. In addition, we make extensive use of an online learning log facility to enable students to respond to weekly set activities under the guidance of a tutor. The students' learning log is one of the principal means by which

tutors on the programme (we call them 'academic coaches') can offer feedback to students as they progress through the programme. Academic coaches are expected to comment on learning log entries on a weekly basis thus offering considerable support to students. Indeed, the level of support is greater than usually offered on a conventionally delivered classroom-based programme. Our aim is thus to transform what might otherwise be perceived as 'distance learning' into 'close learning'; that is, close to the context in which the learner is working. We feel this experiential 'closeness' is important in meeting the needs of part-time postgraduate and post-experience students attracted to our programmes, most of whom are practitioners occupying high status positions in their organisations. Contrast this with traditional 'distance learning', so called because it is bundled in books and CDs, to take place at a distance from the supposed origin of knowledge—universities and colleges.

This prompts a question: what knowledge, skills, awareness, or appreciation do we wish students to develop? Traditional management education gives prominence to the kind of knowledge that can be formalized and tested: did the student imbibe the lessons, and can he or she reproduce it when asked? Close learning is concerned with knowledge that exists primarily in the mind-body-relationships of the learner. It is created and displayed in the way things get done—and in what gets done. As thinking changes, these practices change, and more aspects come into focus. It is a process of discovery and, in essence, mastery, rather than one of explanation (Batteau, Gosling and Mintzberg, 2005).

The masters degrees we offer are two-year part-time programmes structured around seven 7-week 'study phases', followed by a dissertation (also available on a pathway via certificate and diploma). This arrangement approximates a term-like structure and further enhances the students' sense of belonging to the university and participating in a course that follows a conventional academic cycle. The

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<sup>7</sup> The MA and MRes in Leadership Studies by Coached e-learning – see Appendix 2 for further details.

## E-learning for Leadership Development

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pedagogy of each study phase has been carefully designed to satisfy a range of learning styles and proclivities, mixing traditional study (reading assigned texts and note taking) with case studies, observation activities, consultancy assignments, use of psychometrics, and so forth. The emphasis throughout is on interrogation of study materials followed by detailed personal reflection and group interaction.

In addition to the online materials, students are encouraged to engage in face-to-face workshops and seminars, a group consultancy activity and leadership exchanges. Thus, the emphasis moves from pure e-learning to 'blended learning': combining a range of techniques designed to optimize the learning experience.

### ***Lessons learnt from our own programmes***

There have been a number of generic lessons deriving from the use of our experiential e-learning model on our masters-level programmes. These fall broadly into two classes: 'pedagogical' and 'course management'.

The pedagogical lessons relate to the learning process and the manner of student engagement. Three key factors we have identified so far include:

- *'Containment' of the student experience.* Many students embarking on our programme are returning to education after a significant break. It is important to take this into account within the design of an e-learning programme. For example, we have incorporated an extensive 'induction' process at the start of our programmes, which involves: forming a learning contract between staff and students (interactive communication over mutual roles and responsibilities), introducing students to the use of online learning resources offered by the University library and requiring students to work through postgraduate study skills material. Weekly study activities are also relatively highly structured in the early phases of the programme in order to help 'contain' the inevitable

insecurities and uncertainties that surround embarking on a masters degree.

- *Developing a learning community.* For an e-learning based programme to succeed it is important for students to identify with the course, their fellow students and the wider University. By using various interactive online facilities, we have sought to promote a genuine learning community amongst the participants. Indications thus far derived from monitoring of online activity and informal student feedback indicates that these features of the programme are working well.
- *Catering to differing learning styles.* We have been careful to structure the programme so that various study phases give differential emphasis to various learning styles (e.g. Kolb, 1984).

Course management lessons refer to the manner in which the programme is administered and managed.

- *Tutor selection and training.* The integrity of programmes of this sort hinge crucially on the calibre and suitability of the tutoring staff. We have devoted a great deal of time and energy into recruiting and training tutors, especially focusing on the unique features of tutoring in an online environment.
- *'Containment' of tutor-student interaction.* In order for the experience of tutoring within an e-learning environment not to become overly diffuse and time consuming, it is necessary for tutors to be disciplined in the way they interact and feedback to students. For example, we encourage tutors to post 'virtual office hours' – times when students know that they can contact their coach either online or by telephone – and recommend that both tutors and coaches use the dedicated web-email system for correspondence (rather than their personal email accounts).
- *Time management.* Experience and feedback from tutors indicates that providing online feedback can be highly time consuming. It is

important that tutors set themselves reasonable expectations regarding the time they dedicate to online feedback. Careful design of online activities can help with this issue but a level of personal discipline also needs to be exercised.

- *Administrative support.* It is crucially important that a course of this sort has a skilled, technically competent Programme Manager in place to support the Programme Director, other academic faculty and students. In addition to competencies normally associated with course management, this person needs to be thoroughly familiar with the operation of the online learning platform (WebCT in our case) and be capable of editing online materials, managing the course calendar, managing release of materials, and so forth.

### **Some further recommendations**

The points raised so far are based on our experience of delivering masters-level programmes to senior managers, but what about more generic programmes for a broader population of managers? The following recommendations are drawn from an extensive review of a major public-sector leadership e-learning programme.

- *Ease of use:* the online learning environment should be easy and intuitive to use. This could be facilitated by a comprehensive annotated table of contents and flexible navigation system.
- *Level of content:* the level (and type) of content should be suitable for the target audience. When presenting materials for multiple audiences is it a good idea to offer multiple levels of information, with the ability to delve into greater detail as and when appropriate. Impressive graphics are no substitute for poor quality content!
- *Currency:* the development of online materials is a time-consuming and skilled task. Systems should be put in place to enable easy updating of content as it becomes outdated and an ongoing review process is recommended.
- *Technology:* whilst interactivity is one of the principle benefits of online versus printed documentation, excessive use of moving graphics (such as Flash animation) can be frustrating. This is especially true where the student is using a dial-up connection, has an old computer or wishes to print materials.
- *Off-line access:* practicing managers frequently seek to do their learning whilst out of the office travelling. This can cause problems for programmes that depend entirely on an active internet connection. In this case, a stand-alone version on CDROM could be a valuable resource, along with a printed version of the materials.
- *Learner support:* it has already been mentioned that lack of personal support is a key factor leading to high course attrition rates. In order to optimise the student experience individual support should be offered via coaches/tutors familiar with the online materials, interactive tasks such as the learning journal, relevant pre-course training on study skills and using e-learning and a designated student support officer.
- *Learning community:* central to the successful sharing of ideas, experience and discussion is the establishment of a 'learning community'. This moves the learner from the relatively isolated position of studying on their own to being able to interact with a group of learners pursuing the same development path at the same time. Whilst the establishment of a learning community may be relatively natural for face-to-face programmes it is something that is often overlooked for distance and e-learning programmes yet can greatly improve their success. This can be assisted by means of discussion forums, newsletters, coordinated start dates, face-to-face events, action learning sets, etc.
- *Monitoring and evaluation:* a major benefit of online learning is the ability to monitor the way in which users are accessing materials. Such data, not only indicates who is using the



## E-learning for Leadership Development

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material, but when, for how long, which elements, etc. Monitoring of such data should be supported by regular student feedback and programme evaluation.

- *Incentives and rewards*: finally, e-learning, like other education, is more likely to be successful where students are motivated to complete the programme of study. Such incentives could include making completion an essential precursor to promotion, offering an academic (or other) award and offering a range of further development opportunities.

In conclusion, e-learning for leadership development appears to be most successful where it is promoted as part of an integrated blended-learning solution that combines elements of online learning, coaching, workshops, learning sets, peer group discussion, and online and offline resources to give a rounded, in-depth and holistic learning experience. There is a distinct need for tailored and individual support as well as establishing a learning community. Programmes should be continually monitored and evaluated and users engaged through interaction, relevance, active facilitation and incentives.

### **Further Reading**

- McFarlane, A., Bradburn, A. and McMahon, A. (2003) *E-learning for Leadership: Emerging indicators of effective practice*. National College for School Leadership, Available online at [[www.ncsl.org.uk/media/F7B/98/random-lit-review-e-learning-full.pdf](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/media/F7B/98/random-lit-review-e-learning-full.pdf)]
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### Summary and Conclusions

This report has drawn together a range of perspectives on leadership development: we have explored its purpose, history, context and practice. Part One has shown how philosophical questions about the nature of leadership, purpose of education and the function of organisations influence the way in which we go about developing leaders and leadership. Part Two has presented a range of approaches to leader and leadership development and what seems to make them most effective in practice. Between them, these sections have revealed a range of factors at the heart of leadership development. In addition to the content of programmes, we have seen the importance of practice and experience; of self-awareness and critical reflection; of feedback and a motivation to change; of facilitation and support; of openness and collaborative learning; and of the complex interplay between individuals, groups, systems, processes and culture. To neglect the role of any of these factors within leadership development is to diminish its likely impact and effectiveness.

In this final section of the report I will endeavour to draw together some of the common strands; the evidence of how to get the most out of leadership development; and some best practice principles.

### Best Practice in Leadership Development

In a review of best practice in leadership development amongst blue chip companies in the UK, James and Burgoyne (2002) identified a set of three strategic imperatives, six strategic choices and one evaluation principle, that should form the foundation of effective leadership development in medium and large companies (see Table 4).

<b>Principles of Best Practice in Leadership Development</b>
<p><b>Strategic imperative principles:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Driven from the top with specialist support</li> <li>2. Leadership development supports and drives the business</li> <li>3. Consideration of the leadership concept, cultural differences and different development approaches</li> </ol> <p><b>Strategic choice principles:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Articulated framework for career and management development</li> <li>2. Varied degree of formal vs. informal development activity</li> <li>3. Growing your own vs. recruiting senior leadership talent</li> <li>4. Considered use of business schools and other external resources</li> <li>5. Leaders and managers; the value of competency framework, capabilities and performance management</li> <li>6. Retention and reward strategies</li> </ol> <p><b>Evaluation principle</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An explicit and shared approach to evaluation</li> </ol>

Table 4 – *‘Leadership Development: Best Practice Guide for Organisations’ Principles* (James and Burgoyne, 2002, p11)

In order to address each of these principles, they propose a five step process for the development and implementation of a leadership development strategy.

1. *Current situation:* leadership analysis (Strategic Imperatives 1 and 3)
2. *Future scenario plan:* where you want to be (Strategic Imperatives 2 and 3)
3. *Analysing the gap* (Strategic Choices 1,2,3,5,6)
4. *Closing the gap* (Strategic Imperatives 1 and 2; Strategic Choices 1,2,3,4,5,6)
5. *Evaluate* (Evaluation Principle)

This approach clearly indicates the importance of a considered, consistent and integrated approach to leadership development based upon a true awareness of the current situation and future requirements of the organisation. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of leadership development on

## Making Leadership Development Work for You

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a range of performance indicators, on an ongoing basis. All too often organisations shy away from evaluation because of a concern that it is too expensive, too difficult and does not contribute towards performance yet, as James and Burgoyne argue, “it has to be recognised that evaluation, like breathing, is not optional” (ibid, p50). All decisions on whether or not to continue or implement specific development activities are based on some sort of evaluation – whether an instinctual reaction or a detailed piece of research. When we consider the financial investment in leadership and management development (an estimated \$36 - \$60 billion annual global spend, or 1% of GDP according to Burgoyne, 2004) it seems crazy to base such decisions on insubstantial evidence.

Evaluation, however, isn't just about measuring the impact of development against a set of indicators after the event. It can also be instrumental in the process of designing and selecting an appropriate approach. Tyler (2004) talks of the importance of evaluation to “maximise the benefits of a programme *before* it has begun” (ibid, p165 – original emphasis). This ‘formative’ evaluation process can reveal current assumptions about the nature of leadership and leadership development that shape subsequent actions and decisions. By challenging these assumptions *prior* to investing in leadership development it is possible to ensure that the resultant initiative *will be* successful, rather than the more typical ad-hoc, trial and error approach taken by many organisations.

### Making Leadership Development Work for You

Whilst the above recommendations are valuable for large organisations in the process of developing and implementing a leadership development framework, they provide only limited assistance to individuals and organisations trying to decide which programmes/approaches to choose. With the plethora of leadership development initiatives currently on offer and the wide range of providers, the

practical issue of deciding which to go for can remain confounding.

From extensive experience of working with management and leadership development over many years and different contexts, Jonathan Gosling and Henry Mintzberg (2004) propose seven basic tenets upon which true management education should be built:

1. Management education should be restricted to practicing managers, selected on the basis of performance.
2. Management education and practice should be concurrent and integrated.
3. Management education should leverage work and life experience.
4. The key to learning is thoughtful reflection.
5. Management development should result in organisation development.
6. Management education must be an interactive process.
7. Every aspect of the education must facilitate learning.

The implications of these tenets are manifold both for those purchasing and participating in management and leadership development as well as those providing it. Of particular significance is the emphasis on the interplay between practice and reflection, individual and organisational development, and the provider and participant.

“There is a certain quality of conversation that takes place in a well-managed classroom that is almost unique, where the fruits of experience, theory and reflection are brought together into a new understanding and commitment.” (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004, p22)

This approach “points toward a new partnership between companies and business schools that would enhance the level and depth of conversations about the field of management and organisational development on both sides of the equation” (ibid, p22). Leadership development, particularly the opportunity to step back and reflect upon practice, should be built into all aspects of organisational functioning. Likewise, development doesn't just occur in the classroom – there are opportunities to learn from just about everything and,

indeed, this richness and diversity of learning is pivotal to developing balanced, reflective, yet decisive leadership as and when required.

“Leadership is not taught and leadership is not learned. Leadership is learning.”  
(Antonacopoulou and Bento, 2003 – cited in Burgoyne et al., 2004, p.11)

So, what can we do to ensure that we get the most out of leadership development?

Well, firstly critically evaluate current conceptions of the nature of leadership and learning within your organisation. To a large extent you reap what you sow – if development and reward systems favour individual recognition over collective responsibility then they are unlikely to result in a culture that encourages collaboration and shared leadership.

Next, think carefully about the development needs of both individuals and the organisation: “needs analysis provides the crucial information to ensure that professional learning is appropriate, valid and relevant” (West-Burnham, 1998, p99 – cited in Bush and Glover, 2004, p15). Consider ways in which the impact of development can be evaluated from a range of perspectives; how benefits can be optimised both for individuals and the organisations they serve; and how development needs may change over time.

On the basis of these considerations, explore a range of development options from a number of providers. Enter into a discussion with providers to see how programmes could be tailored to your requirements; how they could maximise the benefits of experiential and reflective learning; and how the learning can be transferred and sustained within the workplace. Approaches that integrate a variety of learning methods are particularly effective, especially when combined with opportunities for receiving and discussing individual feedback (Burgoyne et al., 2004).

Ensure that learning and development are recognised as essential and valued activities within your organisation and

that everyone is encouraged and supported in their learning. The quality of management processes preceding and following development activities are a key predictor of impact (Mabey and Thompson, 2000) and instrumental in ensuring that newly learned competencies are put into practice (Boyatzis, 1993).

Review other organisational systems and processes, especially HR strategy, and how these interface with and support leadership and management development. Purcell et al. (2003) found that the *manner* in which HR practices are implemented is a greater predictor of success than *which* practices are adopted. A sophisticated approach that enables one to go ‘the extra mile’ is most likely to be effective.

“Those organisations with the Big Idea that were value-led and managed were much more likely to sustain their organisational performance over the long-term” (ibid – cited in Burgoyne et al., 2004, p37).

Identify and remove/limit personal barriers to learning and the exercise of leadership. Gill (2001) identifies a range of psychological barriers to effective leadership, including low self-esteem, lack of self confidence, fear of failure or disapproval, cognitive ‘constriction’ and adverse consequences of stress. To overcome these he recommends a range of techniques, including desensitisation, reinforcement, psychological re-enactment, social skills development and group dynamics.

Consider the role and impact of organisational culture and context. What is the nature of the task? How experienced and able are employees? And what are appropriate ways of conceiving of performance? In many sectors, focussing on economic outcomes alone is wholly inappropriate. What drives people to work in healthcare, education or the military are quite different from one another, and from more commercially-orientated sectors. To engage, motivate and inspire people, goals and objectives must be couched in



## Next steps

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culturally appropriate values and language.

Take an appreciative rather than deficit approach to development. Build upon strengths that already exist and find ways of working with or around weaknesses. The key to effective leader development is not filling in gaps in competency, but nurturing a unique and genuine approach to leadership. Gosling and Murphy (2004) talk of the importance of continuity in the change process. There may be a time and place for dramatic transformational change, but in the majority of cases a more subtle and considerate approach that builds upon existing individual and organisational features is what is required.

And finally, take the long-term view to leadership and organisational development. In creating genuine and sustainable leadership within organisations there is no quick fix (despite what consultants may promise!). A series of initiatives following the latest management fads is more likely to engender a climate of cynicism than engagement. 'Leadership' too, has suffered at the hands of faddism, with each guru stating their 7, 8, 9 or 10 principles more vociferously than the last. It pays to be selective and critical in what you sign up to and to consider how development activities fit within the longer-term life and career span of organisations and individuals.

## Next steps

The content of this report is based on a review of the literature and draws on the extensive experience of faculty and fellows of the Centre for Leadership Studies. Whilst much is now understood that can inform the practice of people and organisations engaging with leadership development many gaps remain in fully understanding the myriad ways in which leadership development contributes towards improved individual and organisational performance.

The content and context of leadership development (i.e. what people actually study and their work environment) has as much impact as the development

techniques discussed in this report. The next Leadership South West research report will focus on these issues.

Besides this, however, it is clear that substantial additional research needs to be conducted. This research should move beyond simply generating generic descriptions of what is being done, to identifying and appreciating the subtle processes and interactions that inform both leadership and leadership development within organisations and communities. At the Centre for Leadership Studies in Exeter we are involved in a number of projects that begin to address these issues and through our programmes and consultancy activities we continue to experiment with and develop new ways of delivering leadership development, both at an individual and organisational level. We also organise a network of professionals in this field with regular seminars/events and an accreditation process for affiliates. We would be delighted to hear from anyone wishing to join us in this work.

To find out more please visit the CLS website at: **[www.leadership-studies.com](http://www.leadership-studies.com)** or feel free to contact us to discuss your requirements.

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## Appendix 1: Contributors

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### **Richard Bolden**

#### *CLS Research Fellow*

Richard is an experienced researcher and educator in the fields of leadership and organisational psychology. He has worked at the CLS for five years and is currently Research Fellow for Leadership South West.

### **Peter Case**

#### *CLS Professor of Leadership and Organisational Studies*

Peter is a sociologist by training who uses tools drawn from the literary and performing arts to understand management practices and organisational behaviour. He contributes regularly to management education workshops throughout Europe on dramaturgy and narrative analysis and is a Chair of the International Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism. His work has been widely published.

### **Jonathan Gosling**

#### *CLS Director*

Jonathan has designed and directed development programmes for many companies, especially focusing on international and rapidly changing businesses. His current research looks at how leadership can foster continuity through tough transitions. Jonathan was co-founder of the International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM), a collaboration of business schools around the world.

### **Alan Hooper**

#### *CLS Founder and Fellow*

Alan is the Founder and an Honorary Fellow of the CLS and is also a Visiting Professor at Bristol Business School. He consults widely on leadership and change-management, and is a much sought after speaker on Leadership, based on his practical leadership experience, authorship, consultancy and business school lecturing.

### **Keith Kinsella**

#### *CLS Fellow*

Keith has 40 years experience in large organisations, as engineer, manager, and change management specialist, including 8 years as HR Director within the Hoechst Group. Founding Kings Consulting Partners at Kings College London in 1989 he has worked for organisations like Scottish Enterprise, Greenwich Council, NHS, VISA, Lex Service Group, and the BBC where he has provided change management and development support for the past 12 years.

### **Donna Ladkin**

#### *CLS Programme Director*

Donna joined the CLS in January 2005 as Programme Director for the Masters and Diploma programmes. She has a background as a lecturer in Organisational Behaviour at Cranfield School of Management where she focused primarily on developing effective learning interventions for senior managers, particularly aimed at developing personal effectiveness. For the last seven years she has run her own consulting business, Learning Matters, which specialises in coaching senior managers and their teams.

### **Robin Ladkin**

#### *CLS Fellow*

Robin is one of the founding Business Directors with Ashridge Consultants Ltd. He is an Associate Consultant of the company, where he focuses on leadership development set within a context of strategic change. He works in a variety of settings including large group facilitation; developing intact executive teams; designing and leading leadership development programmes; and one to one executive coaching.

### **Neville Osrin**

#### *Director of CLS Professional Network*

Neville is Director of CLS consulting activities. Before joining the Centre he was a Principal in Hewitt Associates and Vice-President of Strategic Development and Marketing in Financiere Strafor, a major French multinational. He holds post-graduate qualifications in both business economics and psychology and has written, consulted and lectured widely on organisational effectiveness and business strategy.

### **John Potter**

#### *CLS Fellow*

John is a Chartered Psychologist with a PhD in Leadership. His current work is in management development with a particular interest in leadership, corporate culture and teamwork. John specialises in training and development programmes to involve the whole workforce and promote their commitment to the corporate vision and mission statements.

For further details please visit the Centre for Leadership Studies website at:

**[www.leadership-studies.com](http://www.leadership-studies.com)**

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- research and resolve 'wicked' leadership problems

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The Postgraduate Certificate in Leadership Studies, starts with building self-awareness and confidence in one's own leadership style. This then develops into a rounded view of leadership theory, again comparing this with real-life practice. The Certificate stage concludes with a leadership exchange in which participants undertake advanced training in observation methods to study how leadership is actually accomplished in each other's organisations.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Leadership Studies, commences with a review of what we know about the role of leadership in change processes but also considers the need for stability and continuity. Participants are then guided through a brief but focussed consultancy assignment in another organisation in which they are required to bring to bear their own experience, their theoretical understanding and the explicit and implicit needs of the client. The Postgraduate Diploma phase ends with an update on current debates on leadership studies and insights into future directions.

The third stage, leading to the award of a Masters Degree (either MA or, for those working towards a PhD, an MRes) consists of a thorough grounding in research methods and guided enquiry into an issue chosen by the participants themselves.



The first stage is six months, leading to a Postgraduate **Certificate in Leadership Studies**, helps participants improve their own leadership practice and the support they can give to other leaders.

The second stage is nine months, leading to a Postgraduate **Diploma in Leadership Studies**, shows how to lead major change processes, as well as other forms of intervention in organisational life. The aim here is to enhance organisational effectiveness through paying attention to leadership.

The third stage is nine months, culminating in an **MA in Leadership Studies** guides participants through structured enquiry into complex leadership questions and is especially relevant for people aiming to be internal or external consultants.

The underlying philosophy of all these stages is one of 'close learning'. This means the learning and advice that the participants receive is close to their current practice. Theories are highly valued as ways of helping participants to see more in their own experience. The teaching approach comprises personal coaching augmented by a

dedicated website providing extensive study material, activities, discussion forums, a personal learning log and links to key resources. Participants will be supported by a personal tutor who will arrange meetings as appropriate. This flexible method of delivery is a 'world-first' for a University Leadership programme.





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