Preface

The authors of Comprehensive Problem-Solving and Skill Development for Next-Generation Leaders support the notion that leadership can serve as the bridge between problems and solutions.

In Leadership: Current Theories, Research, and Future Directions, Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2008) discuss how research in leadership theory stalled during the 1980s. This was, in part, due to how leadership models were almost universally viewed through the dual lenses of productivity and effectiveness. Where it concerned decision making authority and power, leaders were at the top of the totem pole and their followers, or subordinates, were at the bottom, having little to no say on how business was conducted. Leadership was not questioned and employees were expected to do exactly as they were told. Throughout the 1990s, a new type of leadership theory began to emerge from the darkness called new-genre leadership, which included dynamic interactions between leaders and employees such as:

- “Symbolic leader behavior;
- Visionary, inspirational messages;
- Emotional feelings;
- Ideological and moral values;
- Individualized attention;
- And intellectual stimulation” (Avolio et al., 2008, p. 428).

Aligning with this paradigm shift to new-genre leadership, other types of leadership theory emerged to include servant leadership, transformational leadership, and charismatic leadership.

Leadership impacts every aspect of organizational effectiveness. Intentional interventions pertaining to instructional strategies including the use of technology have no impact on the solution of organizational problems if there is ineffectual leadership. In other words, regardless of the membership or resources that an organization can command, there are not great organizations without great leadership. Effective organizational leadership is constructed through the utilization of holistic strategies, blending various leadership styles based on the strengths and weaknesses of the leader, and the collective complexion of the organizational membership. Exemplary organizations excel because of purposely employed strategies by the leader that include attention to the culture and climate of the organization while understanding the dynamics of change inherent to implementation of initiatives aimed at solving organization problems.
DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

There are certain characteristics that all good leaders possess, which contrary to popular opinion, do not necessarily place primary importance on charisma. All good leaders practice a set of democratic principles that result in inspiring trust. There must also be a transparent environment that fosters open communication between leaders and organization members. The ability to build trust in a transparent environment that fosters open communication can be achieved by a leader building credibility at a personal level. In his paper, How the Best Leaders Build Trust, Covey (2009) defines the four core components that work together to build credibility as integrity, intent, capabilities, and results. The higher a leader’s level of credibility, the faster he will be able to establish trust. Aligned with that philosophy, Drucker (2004) speaks of eight practices of successful leadership, first asking “What needs to be done?” and “What is right for the enterprise?” (p. 2) Successful leaders also develop action plans, take responsibility for their decisions, focus on opportunities rather than problems, run productive meetings, and think in terms of “we” instead of “I”.

Toor and Ofori (2009) discuss the application of ethical leadership theory to what they describe as Full Range Leadership. This leadership style encompasses an integration of leadership styles from transformational and transactional to laissez-faire. An individual employing a full range leadership model would have a repertoire of different leadership styles that could be applied to different situations as needed. Ethical leadership is positively associated with all components of transformational leadership. Toor and Ofori further state that ethical leadership includes positive attributes such as:

- Honesty,
- Integrity,
- altruism,
- Trustworthiness,
- Collective motivation,
- Encouragement, and
- Justice.

Transformational leaders offer individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Their attention is focused on what is best for the organization as a whole.

Covey (2006) and Collinson and Collinson (2009), have identified paradoxical qualities inherent in the most powerful, successful leaders. In Servant Leadership, Covey states his belief that all phenomenal leaders possess a paradoxical mixture of humility and professional will, timidity and ferociousness, as well as shyness and fearlessness. The Servant Leader concurrently embodies these seemingly contradicting qualities through the understanding that true leadership is inversely proportional to the exercise of power. In other words, when an authority figure borrows power from his position, his moral authority weakens. Covey believes leaders with high moral authority will be given more formal authority. Collinson and Collinson take an alternative view of these paradoxical qualities dubbed blended leadership,
a model of leadership in which seemingly incompatible opposites are reevaluated as interrelated and mutually necessary. Whereas traditional and new-genre leadership theories are often seen as competing, the authors present research that suggested many employees viewed them as complementary and necessary for effective leadership. Furthermore, the authors found that higher education employees preferred leadership practices that combined a paradoxical blend of qualities such as delegation and direction, proximity and distance, and internal and external engagement. The employees not only valued qualities inherent to distributed and shared leadership, but also qualities inherent to traditional leadership.

Addressing the paradoxical nature of good leadership, Kodish (2006) measured Collins’ (2006) concept of the Level 5 leader to Aristotle’s philosophy on leadership. Aristotle had a teleological, ethical, and action-oriented worldview. His idea of leadership was “grounded in reality and rooted in worldviews which encompass the contradictions, the paradox, and the complexity of human existence and human deliberation” (Kodish, 2006, p. 453). Like Aristotle, Collins (2006) in Level 5 Leadership believes the “good-to-great” transformation is not taken in one giant step but is a gradual, consistent progression. Collins (2006) believes that the seed of greatness must already be present in an individual for them to be capable of achieving the status of a Level 5 leader. A person is either born with this seed or not, there is no acquiring it later in life. However, a person merely possessing the seed of greatness within them is not enough, either. It must be nurtured and developed within an individual. Many of the Level 5 leaders in Collins’ five-year study of a 20-year performance span of 1,435 companies polled from the Fortune 500 list also had some sort of life altering experience in common. Whether surviving oppressive regimes, cancer, or a near death encounter, many Level 5 leaders’ perception of life had been altered through ways that many people do not experience. Given that great leaders are a combination of drive and humility, attributing successes to outside factors, and placing the overall good of the company before their personal bottom line, Collins believed that the greatest limitation to achieving greatness is ego. Ego always wants to be first and be recognized. Greatness wants only for the mission to be successfully completed regardless of who gets credit for it. Ego is always looking to build up or inflate one’s personal image. Greatness does not look to be publically recognized. Ego will make decisions based on what is best for an individual in the moment whereas greatness is willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the long-term, greater good of an organization.

No one knows what happens to bring forth greatness in an individual because there is no formula one can follow to be a Level 5 leader, but as Kodish (2006) said in describing what makes good leaders, “Aristotle’s notion of prudent leadership is embedded in reality” (p. 464), as opposed to today’s notion of leadership, which is rooted more in image and semantics- the opposite of reality. Kodish (2006) further acknowledged characteristics of good leadership:

*It promotes substance and moral responsibility rather than a narcissistic approach directed at maintaining an image regardless of the factual state. Leadership is more than a skill, more than the knowledge of theories, and more than analytical faculties. It is the ability to act purposively and ethically as the situation requires on the basis of the knowledge of universals, experience, perception, and intuition. It is about understanding the world in a richer, broader sense, neither with cold objectivity nor solipsistic subjectivity. (p. 464)*
Preface

Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling (2009) similarly discuss seemingly complimentary and competing evidence on distributed leadership in their article Distributed Leadership in Higher Education Rhetoric and Reality. Their analysis of distributed leadership, however, is a sobering one. It sheds a cautionary light on how the idea of distributed leadership in higher education might only be used to create the illusion of belonging, engagement, consultation, and participation in the decision making process within universities when in reality all matters of importance are still being decided from the top down. The researchers also caution employers to not push too hard for the emergent approach to distributed leadership. Instead, they ought to allow time for it to organically take shape; otherwise, the organization runs the risk of losing all sense of vision and direction or of individual responsibility and accountability. It need not be the case of having to choose either an emergent or devolved approach to distributed leadership but of “achieving an appropriate balance between vertical and shared leadership” (Bolden et al., 2009, p. 273). They concluded, however, that the concept of distributed leadership offered little more clarity than the term leadership alone. The researchers found that it was mostly used to shape the perception of involvement and identity in matters of importance and policy while in reality providing cover for the real source of authority. Ultimately, organizational members appreciated strong vision and direction in leadership, but only when it represented the mindset of the collective whole.

Bennis (2007), in The Challenges of Leadership in the Modern World, related how even after studying leadership for sixty years, leadership theory is still very abstract with a surprisingly low number of concrete standards. According to Bennis, great leaders develop through a process not yet fully understood. It is the intent of Comprehensive Problem-Solving and Skill Development for Next-Generation Leaders to provide the reader with insights regarding the requisite qualities of leaders and how their behavior impacts all aspects of organizational effectiveness.

Comprehensive Problem-Solving and Skill Development for Next-Generation Leaders has 5 sections:

Section 1: Arriving at Solutions through Leadership (Chapters 1-4),
Section 2: Understanding and Leading Cultural Change (Chapters 5-8),
Section 3: Developing Leaders (Chapters 9-10),
Section 4: Leading to Student Success (Chapters 11-12), and
Section 5: Leadership and Technology (Chapters 13-15).

Each section addresses an important aspect of organizational leadership. Topics addressed in the book can help the reader not only understand organizational problems and solutions, but also how to arrive at solutions through the use of strategies, technology, and blended leadership.

The objectives of Comprehensive Problem-Solving and Skill Development for Next-Generation Leaders are to provide the reader with an understanding of research-based qualities, strategies, and skills essential to effective leadership. The reader will gain an understanding of the importance of blending various aspects of effective leadership into a comprehensive strategy, personalized to meet the needs of their organization and how to use technology as a vehicle for obtaining organizational excellence. Each chapter is constructed around important aspects of leadership relative to not only the identification of organizational problems and solutions, but also how to integrate evidence-based strategies to accomplish ambitious solutions.
The target audience includes practicing K-20 technology coordinators, principals, department chairs, deans, provosts, students who are enrolled in programs geared at preparation for these roles, and researchers interested in furthering their study of the importance of leadership in organizational effectiveness and problem solving, the skills required of effective leaders, and the role of technology in facilitating effective leadership and organizational success.

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REFERENCES


