Chapter 7
Setting the Context for Transformation towards Authentic Leadership and Co-Creation

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ABSTRACT
This chapter presents a new educational approach for developing authentic leadership and co-creation based on Theory U. The main arguments are that authentic leadership and co-creation develop together and cannot be taught through lecturing. Leaders must themselves experience going through the U in order to reconnect with their authentic self. To help the process unfold it is argued that 1) a holding space of trust and respect must be built previously, and that 2) the context, here understood as physical space, social atmosphere, and pedagogical principles and practices, must be designed appropriately to provide encouragement for co-creation. These arguments are sustained by empirical material and practical examples from an executive master education.

INTRODUCTION
Twenty-first century society yearns for a leadership of possibility, a leadership based more on hope, aspiration, and innovation than on the replication of historical patterns of constrained pragmatism. (Adler, 2006, p. 487)

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The general purpose of this chapter is to discuss new learning approaches that depart from traditional management education by emphasizing direct experience, exploration, and reflection. An empirical case study of an international executive Master program of Leadership and Innovation will be drawn on to provide practical examples
The data include extracts from 4 master theses. More specifically, the focus will be on developing authentic leadership and co-creation by applying Theory U developed by C. Otto Scharmer (Scharmer, 2007). Theory U not only offers new learning territory by introducing levels of consciousness not previously included in management education, it also audaciously suggests that it is possible to learn from the future as it emerges. Theory U provides a holistic approach towards change and transformation, which resonates with people because it involves meaning and engages spirit. By adding two new dimensions of ‘open heart’ and ‘open will’, Theory U nourishes and irrigates the dry lands of management thinking, which has mainly been centred on the first two levels of the U, ‘downloading’ and ‘open mind’. This chapter will primarily explore how we can access the dimensions of open heart and open will in order to harvest the implications for educational contexts of leadership and innovation. I will argue that going through the U can help leaders reconnect with their authentic self, i.e. their source. I also want to draw attention to the importance of building relations of trust and respect between the participants before starting the process, as this creates a holding space and a sustainable foundation for co-creation. Furthermore I want to point out that in educational practice the setting of the context greatly influences the learning process. Context is here understood as involving physical space, social atmosphere and pedagogical principles and practices.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: Initially, the concepts of authentic leadership and co-creation will be clarified and discussed. Secondly, these concepts will be discussed in relation to each other and to Theory U. Thirdly, it is argued that authentic leadership and co-creation cannot be taught. What is possible, however, is to design the context and provide the conditions for inviting the processes to unfold and to offer methods that can encourage and inspire their development.

The last part of the chapter will therefore suggest and discuss conditions, processes, and methods that will be illustrated through examples and empirical data. Because the nature of the topic is subjective and experiential, first person research will also be presented when relevant. In the conclusion, the main findings and contributions will be summarized.

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

I have often thought that the best way to define a man’s character would be to seek out the particular mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensively active and alive. At such moments, there is a voice inside which speaks and says, ‘This is the real me’. (William James, Letters of William James quoted in Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005, p. 343)

One of the core concepts in theorizing about authentic leadership is the concept of the ‘true self’, and according to Ladkin & Taylor, the overall theoretical discussion can be condensed to three themes: First, authentic leadership is the expression of the ‘true self’; secondly, the leader must be aware of that self in order to express it authentically; and thirdly, the self is normatively inclined towards moral virtue (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010).

We will thus start by examining and discussing the concept of the ‘true self’, beginning with the “real self” controversy as proposed by Wilson (Wilson, 1988). In psychology, there are basically two schools with different views on the concept of self: a humanistic approach as represented by Maslow (Maslow, 1954) and Rogers (Rogers, 1961), whose focus is on ‘self’ as an aspect of personality and inner life, and an interactionist approach as represented by Mead (Mead, 1934) and Elias (Elias, 1989), who understand ‘self’ as social and as being continuously created between
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