
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Annick Janson is the Microsoft New Zealand Research Director, 'Partners in Learning' programme. She previously held the positions of inaugural Research Director, New Zealand Leadership Institute, University of Auckland Business School; Researcher in Residence, INSEAD and Visiting Research Associate at the Gallup Leadership Institute and Harvard School of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. Since 2003, she is the Principal Investigator, Royal Society of New Zealand's Leadership Research, collating the first New Zealand leadership archive, enabling storytelling analysis and electronic dissemination toward leadership tacit knowledge building. This work also pioneers a visual research reporting methodology for the Social Sciences. She received a Gallup Positive Psychology Award in September 2006 for her research in Leadership Formative Experiences and represented New Zealand at the Global Leadership Summit, Gallup Leadership Institute, Washington 2006. She served on several advisory boards and government steering committees and as an editor for a number of refereed publications in the leadership area. She has a PhD, Management Systems, University of Waikato, New Zealand (emergence of online leadership) and is a registered Clinical and Educational Psychologist. She taught in over 10 tertiary institutions globally.

Allan Lind is the Thomas A. Finch Jr. Professor of Business Administration at the Fuqua School of Business at the Duke University and a Visiting Professor of Leadership and Organisational Behaviour at the School of Business at the University of Auckland. He received his PhD in Social Psychology from the University of North Carolina in 1974, after studying there and conducting his dissertation research in North Carolina and at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris; he did his undergraduate studies at the University of Florida. He has been on the faculties in psychology of the University of New Hampshire and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and he has held visiting the positions at the Leiden University, the University of Washington and the University of California at Berkeley. He also worked for the RAND Corporation, the American Bar Foundation, and the US Federal Judicial Center, conducting policy research studies. For many years, his empirical and theoretical work focused on the organisational and psychological dynamics of fairness judgments and acceptance of authority. During the last 10 years, his work has focused more directly on leadership and the leader-follower relationship. He was a co-director for a number of years of Duke's Center on Leadership and Ethics.

This special issue of the *Int. J. Learning and Change (IJLC)* addresses the relationship among leadership, learning and collective capacity building. Collective capacity building includes a wide range of learning processes playing out at either the individual or the organisational levels (Day, 2000). This special issue seeks to shed new light on the factors that may influence the course of leadership development, particularly, when new methodologies are trialled to effect change through learning at individual and group levels. These learning processes may involve reflective practices, critical thinking, peer coaching or other activities that are undertaken in the course of leadership tacit knowledge development. These issues are particularly relevant, since leadership development activities are growing in popularity with limited research to back up their effectiveness (Avolio et al., 2005).

The contributions to this special issue cover, in the first instance, the attributes of learning situations that are most conducive to leadership learning. Furthermore, our contributors ask how the results of specific learning can contribute to an increase of leadership activities and collective capacity building. These contributing authors focus on the methodology used to affect changes followed by an appraisal of the change. Their research approaches are diverse, including case study analysis, interviews, archival and action research, Hierarchical Linear Modelling, and regression analyses, generally integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in innovative ways.

1 Learning by experience

The never-ending search for methods accelerating learning processes grows the practice of andragogy (the less well-known word for ‘adult pedagogy’ (Knowles, 1984)). In the leadership domain, learning from experience (and mistakes) of others can be done through application of leadership concepts *in vitro*, thus diminishing the risks involved in *in vivo* change processes, where failure risks have higher organisational and personal prices.

This special issue includes three articles on experiential learning and its connection with leadership. Shane Connelly, Matthew Allen and Ethan Waples use case-based and pedagogical principles to demonstrate how learning from experience can be assimilated. Their papers deal with the impact of content and structure on a case-based approach to developing leadership skills. The key findings suggest the case method results in better retention of information than traditional face-to-face lectures. This is an important contribution to practitioners who design leadership development activities. This study also offers significant insight for the design of the case study method of instruction: certain case studies are more effective than others because they offer the optimal balance between content and structure. The authors report how inadequate case structure results in a negative effect on leadership task scores, as measured by the intervention. They also report how reflection helps the learning process by establishing deeper ties between case study material (explicit knowledge) and one’s own experience (and tacit knowledge) acting at the encoding, comparison and combination of knowledge units.

Moving into deeper hands-on involvement during leadership learning, Alice Stewart, Sylvia Sloan Black, Karen Smith-Gratto and Jacqueline Williams used computer simulation allowing aspiring leaders to experiment with various leadership roles at different levels of authority. Compared to more theoretical instruction methods, experience-based learning supports individuals practicing leadership-building

interactions, reflecting and receiving feedback. Because this study reports on individual as well as collective class experience, it shows how this method can impact the effectiveness of members at various levels of organisations and facilitate their change power. This article makes an important contribution because it demonstrates how leadership can be increased at all organisational levels – not just the top levels where the majority of leadership research is focused.

The third article of this special issue that focused on learning from experience offers yet another perspective by analysing the role of leadership in facilitating organisational learning and collective capacity building. Hosein Piranfar's second case study demonstrates how participative leadership can build crucial relationships – with a leader gathering strength from conversations and interactions with people, which in turn influences the leader's views without threatening his or her control. This contribution stresses how 'micro interactions' serve to weave the threads of trust-building, collaboration, and communication activities through the web of organisational interaction, thus offering insights to practitioners. Piranfar closes a theoretical loop by concluding that the new roles of leaders include facilitating collective learning – and that cooperative learning in turn enhances facilitative leadership.

The aforementioned articles converge in showing similarities between learning principles; other authors offer new understanding by outlining differences in context.

2 Learning from context

Learning can hardly be extricated from context; hence the context in which leadership learning happens is bound to exert impact on its organisational manifestations. This special issue includes analyses carried out for a range of contexts – from medical to educational – prompting us to consider what we can learn from the differences emerging in these studies.

The paper presented by Victoria Konidari and Yvan Abernaud discusses the appropriate conditions to develop collective capacity in education. Though they focus on the educational context, the concepts they develop may extend into other professional contexts. This paper conceptualises the collective capacity as a new landmark in work philosophy and underlines complexity, subjectivity, social capital and time as four primers for the development of collective capacity building. The authors view collective capacity building as representing not only a change of thinking and orientation of works concerned with organisational efficacy and quality, but also a new way of interpreting the world. Relying on concepts of central identity, they explain how collective capacity is not about differences of intensity and quantity but about fundamental modes of action.

For certain educational environments, such as the tertiary sector, abrupt transitions from professional to leader can occur. Shelda Debowski and Vivienne Blake identified three typical challenges of the academic leadership model: lack of prior hands-on leadership experience, the essence and temporality of relationships between department heads and other colleagues as well as the expectation that academic heads continue to be active researchers while assuming positions of leadership. Whereas this transition is particularly important in the university environment, the research has implications for other contexts, where professionals are offered leadership roles, often without preparation for the change in scope and pace. They have to deal with new experiences and responsibilities, such as dealing with previous colleagues who resist the changes that they

propose to bring about. They need to inspire sometimes through clashes of cultures between those supporting and those fighting the changes. Like leaders in other sectors in similar situations, they find themselves in the line of fire between collective and new vs. traditional or old ways of thinking. This may reinforce their feeling of loneliness or inadequacy.

The authors tested ways to help individual academic leaders by facilitating the emergence of peer-networked activity. This allowed for spontaneous emergence of leadership activity but these networks were challenging to sustain. The double edge characteristic of such networks was brought about by their very nature, which eludes traditional organisational control even when the organisation grasps the added value that they can bring. The authors concluded that, aside from benefits to individual leaders, such intervention had significant organisational impact, namely the strengthening of collective capacity. This is important because the bulk of leadership studies concentrate on individual (identifiable) leaders whereas collective capacity is much harder to identify because, by definition, it is spread throughout the organisation.

In the medical context, Mesut Akdere advocates for quality management methodology to study leadership, by examining its implications for organisational performance outcomes. His results show, on the one hand, that most employees' satisfaction depends on their immediate boss, with 97% of the variance in employee satisfaction explained by leadership practices. This exemplifies how leadership activity can be evaluated by focussing on relationships between the identified leader and others in organisation. On the other hand, only 11% variance of customer satisfaction is explained by leadership practices. How can this discrepancy be explained, and why is it that in the medical context so little of organisational performance is explained by leadership practices? Akdere concludes that in this context, clinical outcomes are also influenced by individual factors such as staff knowledge.

Hence, learning has variable impacts in different contexts and organisations. This stresses another point: whilst it may be possible to appraise what individuals have or have not learnt at different points in their careers (by, for instance, analysing their tacit knowledge) how do we articulate what a collective knows and learns?

Day (2000) notes that individual leader development, which focuses on human capital, has been the more traditional option for organisations and that leadership development, through a social capital lens, is a more recent organisational concern. We argue for a more fully encompassing option, underlined by a better understanding of how individual learning can contribute to collective learning and *vice versa*. We call for the development of an integrative framework defining how efforts in growing human capital can become a tributary flowing into the social capital development stream. Conversely, collective capacity building can trickle down to the individual level with appropriate mechanisms to articulate learning from formative experiences (Janson et al., in press). The papers presented here outline the intimate ties between leadership and collective capacity. This relationship illuminates the roles and responsibilities of leaders: make organisational space (Piranfar), build relationships (Akdere) and mechanisms (Connelly, Allen and Waples and Stewart, Sloan Black, Smith-Gratto and Williams) to facilitate collective capacity building (Debowski and Blake) by occasionally developing paradigms outside of the conventional systems of thought (Konidari and Abernaud).

Leadership is about transformation and change through communication and relationship building – certain forms of learning may act as catalysts for this development. The myth of the Trojan horse symbolises how a group can go from a

collective to an individual (one horse) and back into a collective space again in order to adapt to challenge and achieve organisational aims. Understanding what factors control the strength of the learning integrating individual and organisational levels is a key to optimising the impact of leadership.

References

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