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Leading in Times of Disruption: Reimagining Leadership and Repositioning Leaders

Tessie H.H. Herbst

Abstract

Peter Vaill's evocative metaphor of "living in permanent whitewater" is very relevant to universities today. Leaders in our institutions (and elsewhere) are navigating unfamiliar territory—and they are doing so without a map. The demands and expectations placed on leaders can be extreme and is testing the abilities of our institutions' leaders to the extreme. Leaders and leadership paradigms has been disrupted and the old model of fear and control do not work. However, the primary leadership challenge is not simply to develop a new leadership competency model—describing a group of behaviours we expect from our leadership. The deeper challenge is to develop a new mindset that anchors, informs, and advances these new behaviours. The ability to question your own deeply entrenched assumptions and well-established worldviews, habits and mindsets will be critical. When unpacking the case for change versus the capacity for change, this chapter surfaced, five kinds of shifts needed to lead in a world characterised by complexity, disruption and uncertainty. I have labelled these shifts as the Awareness shift, the Identity shift, the Mindset shift, the Paradigm shift and lastly the shift from Fear to psychological safety. Are these the only shifts that matter in the current state? I am sure not, we can add many more. But, I believe that these five shifts that demonstrate the complexities of the challenges facing higher education has the potential to reposition and reinvent our leadership for the future.

Keywords: leadership shifts, higher education, complexity, disruption, transformation

1. Introduction

"How do you lead when there is no map? When the territory is unknown? What skillsets and mind shifts are necessary?" [1].

The higher education (HE) sector globally—like other industries—are under enormous pressure to transform itself. However, higher education institutions (HEIs) are struggling to adapt to the fast pace of change and the increasing social, economic, and technological complexity of the challenges facing them. These challenges are becoming increasingly perpetual, pervasive and exponential, compelling HEIs to change and to embrace a new paradigm designed to meet the

changing needs of society. The current operating model[1] for HEIs is outdated and is misaligned with the realities of a modern-day society. However, HEIs are acknowledging that they need to radically reinvent themselves or possibly cease to exist [3]. In a recent study by Prof. Bethuel Ngcamu (2017)—one of the leading scholars in the HE field leadership in South Africa—he identifies the following factors hampering the transformation agenda and suggesting inadequate leadership in universities, namely inflexible business processes; lack of reward for performance; inefficient change interventions and centralised decision making [4]. Another study by McGrath found that management styles in universities was either predominantly autocratic or democratic, with employees remarking that academic freedom has diminished significantly. The gap between the current leadership skills and capacity and future leadership requirements is widening—a gap that this chapter aims to address.

Work as we know it is changing rapidly—and subsequently the learning needs of our students. The scope and complexity of the technological revolution of the 4IR—distinguished by the fusion of the physical, biological and digital worlds using diverse new technologies [5]—will profoundly change the way we work, live, and relate to one another. Bryan Penprase [6] in the book *The fourth industrial revolution and higher education* describes the 4IR as "the result of an integration and compounding effects of multiple 'exponential technologies', such as artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnologies and nanomaterials" (p.215). The complexity of the current challenges is forcing universities to reconsider how and what we teach our students and how we lead people. Among the avalanche of impeding changes facing our institutions are the changing demographics of students who are both less prepared for HE and learns in new ways; how to motivate staff to adapt; increased competition; a decline in government funding and public confidence. Furthermore, new technologies offer both the opportunity to increase student access but simultaneously threatens the traditional model of higher education itself. To add to the complexity, is the fact that our current leadership has never had to successfully navigate the impact of an unexpected and disruptive occurrence like the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has triggered an unprecedented need for institutional redesign. To make matters even worse is that while preparing for the future, leaders have to deal with all of these challenges simultaneously. The "tyranny of the urgent"[2] has seldom been felt more acute. The world and work is a different place now. Conditions such as these have been characterised in the leadership and management literature as being VUCA, an acronym for volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous [7].

There are numerous factors that will influence how HEIs respond with no approach that can be applied across the board. Dealing with these conditions requires that leaders change both how they think and behave in order to grow and transform how their institutions respond to the chaos and complexity that abounds. Traditional skills to predict and control outcomes has become redundant and instead resilience, agility and the ability to adapt quickly and recognise patterns has become critical [8]. It requires a shift in our awareness and how leaders perceive and think about their world; moving from an assumption of predictability, stability, continuity, and reliability—to an assumption of volatility, uncertainty, change and ambiguity. Amidst this increasingly complexity, disruption and uncertainty, the

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[1] In studying the history of HEIs, Trow (2007) identified three predominant guiding models namely the *elite model*, the *mass model* and more recently the *universal model*. For a more elaborate discussion, see Ref. [2].

[2] Charles Hummel in his book *Tyranny of the Urgent* (1967) contends that a continuous tension exists between the important and the urgent—and that much too often the urgent wins.

question raised by Amit Mrig and Pat Sanaghan [9] concerning the future of higher education is extremely relevant: "**will higher education seize the future or fall victim to it?**"

This chapter aims to address some key issues in developing the leadership capacity needed to enable leaders to navigate the ever-increasing pace of change, disruption, uncertainty and complexity. It proposes five shifts that leaders in HEIs will have to master to enable them to seize the future and create lasting positive impact. It also advocates for a repurposing of leadership development and a philosophy and practice framework that takes an alternative perspective—one in which we view mindset and culture not from the outside in, but from the inside out. I hope that these shifts can guide the future development of leadership development programs in universities.

2. Are leaders as prepared as they think?

To be successful in dealing with these and other challenges, HEIs—like other organisations—need creative, resilient, agile, courageous, and effective leaders throughout their middle management and executive roles. In many ways, the challenges facing our institutional leaders are similar to the challenges encountered by famous explorers like Columbus and Livingston during their expeditions across Africa and the world. Leaders in HE institutions today are navigating unfamiliar territory—and they are doing so without a map. The demands and expectations placed on leaders can be extreme and is testing the abilities of our institutions' leaders to the extreme. As stated by Nasima Badsha in the book *Reflections of South African university leaders* (2017, p. ix) [10]—referring to the unprecedented levels of change in South African higher education:

"Leaders in universities, as well as those responsible for higher education policy in the government and associated statutory bodies, had no neat script to work off, nor 'manuals' or prescripts of 'good' leadership or practice".

Leadership scholars globally agree that universities need leaders who are not only credible scholars but also progressive futurists and inspiring leaders [11–13]. However, leadership remains one of the most sought after yet elusive concepts in the workplace today. The 2020 *State of Leadership Training Market Report* [14] states that over the past decade, one of the most rapidly growing segments in the learning and development (L & D) market has been leadership training. It further states that the leadership training industry—unlike other segments within L & D—has also been growing annually independent of economic trends. However, despite the $3.5 billion spent globally in 2019 alone on leadership development solutions, the literature talks about the failure of an industry. The reason being that leaders soon revert to their old ways of doing things. When we lead in the absence of a map, we often rely mostly on what worked before or what we already know or think we know well. We fall back on our old habits, practices and traditions, losing sight of the originality and resourcefulness needed and the risks we need to take now. We can observe this tendency to rely more on our experience or "smartship" than leadership across all industries, but HEIs are especially prone to it because of the unique weight we assign to intellectualism, knowledge, tenure and qualifications. In their book *How Higher-Ed leaders derail* (2018), Patrick Sanaghan and Jillian Lohndorf talks about the "peril of smartship" as one of the reasons why leaders in HE derail. Therefore, leaders need to take heed and be mindful of the "confirming evidence trap" as described by Hammond et al. (2006), where we tend to look for information that confirms our original—but often outdated—thinking [15].

Amidst all the confusion, if there is one thing we can all agree on—it is that HE—like other industries—is going through a momentous disruption and change. These trends in the world of work are irreversible and the challenges facing our leaders are overwhelming, pushing us (whether we like it or not) to a new normal. These challenges are adaptive challenges—as opposed to technical challenges. Put differently, complicated (technical) problems are not the same as complex (adaptive) problems and require different solutions. Adaptive or complex challenges is defined by Harvard's Heifetz and Linsky [16] as challenges that require risk taking, innovation, and constant learning. To successfully deal with adaptive challenges, the traditional leadership strategies and skill sets of the past are often no longer appropriate or sufficient. Adaptive challenges requires adaptive leaders who can innovate, experiment, engage in continuous learning and adapt to the increasingly complex organisational environments in which they work. Ronald Heifetz [17] states that adaptive leadership is one perspective on the kind of leadership necessary for today's VUCA work environments which he defines as "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (p. 14). Furthermore, when facing adaptive challenges, the locus of responsibility for solving the problem is shifting to all employees, and the leader should only help to facilitate this. They regard this role of leadership to be the most difficult. They suggest that leaders should get away from the habit of providing solutions, and devolve this responsibility to find solutions to the "collective intelligence of all employees".

This distinction between "technical" and "adaptive" challenges has important implications for leaders and leadership in higher education. *Technical* or compli-cated challenges may be very complex and critically important but are situations we have encountered before with known solutions where we can apply our current resources and know-how to deal with them. This does not make technical challenges trivial but only implies that the solution to the problem already exists within the institution's existing repertoire. In contrast, *adaptive challenges*, has no established knowledge and clear solutions as to how leaders and institutions can effectively respond. These challenges require experimentation, creative and innovative think-ing and risk taking. It requires from leaders to risk challenging the status quo and naming the elephants in the room—finding a way to push people out of compla-cency and mobilising the energy needed for transformation. However, in most of our institutions, adaptive leadership is a rare occurrence since adaptive leadership is inherently risky. As such, "the most common cause of failure in leadership is produced by treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems" [18]. Most challenges facing our universities is a mixture of technical and adaptive chal-lenges. Therefore, it is important to note that adaptive challenges are not only about change, but also about knowing what needs to continue—the essential elements in the system that should be sustained.

Universities that successfully navigate through these adaptive and technical challenges will emerge more dynamic and stronger, more competitive, and more able to educate students who are future fit for our changing society and workplace. However, the path for change is completely unclear and finding new ways of leading and tackling these "adaptive" [19] challenges will test even the brightest and most capable leaders we have. Nether less, we need to keep on trying to find new ways since the current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the life and death impact of leadership, and has also given us the opportunity to reflect on our own ability to deal with the complexity and uncertainty of the current leadership context. As Warren Bennis has said: "It is only when the tide goes in that we can see who has been swimming naked". The current pandemic has placed a spotlight on our existing fault-lines, but at the same time created opportunities for radically

new conversations in our universities—one such conversation is how we can reimagine and reinvent leadership. As stated by Amit Mrig and Pat Sanaghan in their recent Future of HE report [20], "Leadership matters; rarely has it mattered more than now".

3. Do we need a new type of leadership?

If we agree that leadership is now more important than ever before, the next logical question would be: **Do we need a new type of leadership for the new VUCA world and the 4IR?** If yes, what is this new leadership we need to help us navigate this uncertainty, disruption and complexity? And—what does complexity-fit leadership look like? As stated by Mrig and Sanaghan,

"The past and current academic leadership model that prizes vision, academic reputation, tenure and track record, communication and charisma is no longer enough to meet our current and future challenges" [21].

The current turbulence and disruption is forcing institutions to reinvent and renew themselves. In doing so institutions need to bring the much-needed clarity regarding their value propositions. It provides HEIs with an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to ask the most pressing of all questions: **Why do we exist? Who do we choose to be? What do we want to create together?** In his book *Theory-U: Learning from the future as it emerges*, Otto Sharmer [22] states that how we respond to these questions will differ according to the level of consciousness and structure of attention we use to answer them. We can either respond mechanistically from a low level of leadership maturity or we can respond from a more holistic and systemic perspective of social reality creation.

In defining the term "leader", the premise of this chapter aligns with the views of Michael Hamman by defining a leader as:

"Anyone—in any role, at any level of the institution, and within any part of the institution—who are willing to take responsibility for their world and able to influence others in creating that world. In doing so, he/she is steered by a deep inner compass founded upon a profound sense of purpose. In addition, there is a visible willingness to recognise and evolve beyond the limitations of their current ways of seeing the world, of seeing others, and of seeing themselves."

In a VUCA world, we need to shift how we think about and exercise leadership since we are all called upon to lead in some way and at some moment in time. The notion of leadership that happens only at the top cannot possibly address the needs of the 4IR. This is because the VUCA world of work today requires a degree of institutional adaptability that can only be attained when the entire system—not just those at senior and executive levels—is in a state of readiness.

"Leadership is an Everywhere Phenomenon"[3].

4. Why is leadership so tough?

Heifetz and Linsky of Harvard tell us that "to lead is to live dangerously" [24]. Leading academics has been compared to the impossible task of "*herding cats*"—either impossible or pointless [25]. However, we think that most leaders will agree with us that with the current uncertainty and disruption, we have moved beyond herding cats "to riding a tiger". As stated by Priscilla Nelson and Ed Cohen [26]—leadership is like

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[3] See Hamman [23].

riding a tiger, not knowing how to get off without being eaten.[4] Therefore, the quote by Margaret Heffernan strikes at the heart of this chapter:

"The organizational adaptability required to meet a relentless succession of challenges is beyond anyone's current expertise. No one in a position of authority—none of us in fact—has been here before."

Therefore, Peter Vaill's (1996)[5] evocative metaphor of "living in permanent whitewater" is very relevant to HEIs today. Without the agility to tolerate discomfort, the courage to see and seize opportunities that others shrink from and do those things that others are not willing to do—effective leadership will be unattainable. The ability to question your own deeply entrenched assumptions and well-established worldviews, habits and mindsets will be critical. In their article *Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis*, Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky [28], give us a renewed appreciation the value of adaptive leadership. They advocate that leaders should ensure that they surround themselves with diverse people who are willing to challenge ideas (especially the leader's ideas). To address the challenges they are faced with, leaders will need every team-member's help—not their blind loyalty—to follow them on a path to the future using the passion and collective intelligence of the whole team to help them to discover the path. Effective leaders will be the ones that can "confront loyalty to legacy practices" that keep people from taking the institution from 'good to great.' Not completely abandoning legacy practices, but rather not following them blindly [29].

The well-known quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson seems like very relevant advice for leaders now "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." To be able to empower innovation and future thinking throughout the institution, leaders will have to lead while not having all the answers. They will have to lead not by telling, not by directing, not even by "going first", or "eating last". They will have to lead by "pointing the way" as explained by Peter Senge [30]. However, in a culture where stability, certainty and predictability are traditionally more valued than innovation and risk-taking, reinventing our institutions will remain a complex challenge. Those who "point the way" or "go where there is no path's" will be met by resistance with people questioning the proposed path likelihood of success. However, this resistance is a trap that lulls leaders into inactivity. That is why the kind of leadership institutions will need going forward will require courage to deal with resistance with new and unproven approaches. Add to that an enthusiasm for continuous learning while leading. To make it even more anxiety providing—you need to do all of this in the full view of everyone. "Most of us are looking for a safe path through—a safe place to be great. There isn't one. There is no safe way to be great, and, there is no great way to be safe. The safe paths have all been taken. The paths left to us require courage. Leadership is inherently risky"[6].

Pollak and Wakid refer to this as "Lewis and Clark problems"[7] where institutions must venture into unfamiliar territory without a clear map [32]. These challenges are not always new, but always require the response to be. Simply applying known solutions—adding new academic programs, offering more tuition discounts, or investing

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[4] On January 7, 2009, the employees of Satyam Computer Services were shocked to learn about the resignation of the founder and Chairman of their company, Ramalinga Raju. This was after he confessed to a massive accounting scandal. In Raju's words, dealing with his own and others' reactions and trying to survive was "like riding a tiger, not knowing how to get off without being eaten."

[5] See Vaill [27].

[6] See Anderson and Adams [31].

[7] Lewis and Clark problems are ambiguous situations that involve numerous variables with no clear solution or by relying on past knowledge or experience.

in new infrastructure—will no longer be sufficient to set aside public doubt, nor to increase the value and relevance of higher education, nor to ensure our students are future-fit for the 4IR. The immense challenges facing universities have created a watershed moment for HEIs. In their *Future of Higher-Ed Report* Mrig and Sanaghan advocates that leaders in HE recognise that it is senseless to continue to make incremental changes to delay the inevitable reinvention needed. They state very clearly that the tide has turned and that "waiting" is no longer an effective strategy [33].

But, we know that change is hard—in fact, Alan Deutschman contents in his book—*Change or Die*—that even when our lives or institution's survival depend on it, old patterns and behaviours give up their dominance reluctantly [34]. For example, even when their doctors tell cardiac patients they will die if they do not exercise more and change their lifestyle or their diet, only one in seven will change their lifestyle. So, if staring death in the eye is not enough of a threat to invite some change, what will be? For a variety reasons—both neurological and psychological—few leaders actually undertake change. This is exactly the same pattern that plays out with intelligent, motivated managers who attend a leadership development workshop where they are taught new models, techniques and tools to increase their effectiveness as leaders. At the end of the program, everyone makes a commitment for changing their behaviour going forward. However, when they return to the office, they soon fall back into the same old behaviours they had before the program.

So how does all of this start to play into the future of leadership in universities? How do we remap leadership's place in the university within this new landscape of disruption, uncertainty and everything else that comes with the 4IR?

We do not have the research available for universities, but the *MIT 2020 Future of Leadership Global Executive Study and Research Report* [35] provides ample evidence that leaders are holding on to previously effective but now out-dated behaviours that stifle the talents of their employees. The report (based 27 executive interviews and on a survey with 4394 respondents) highlights the mounting mismatch between how many organisations are being led and how they should be led. The majority of respondents were of the opinion that their leaders do not have the right mindsets to lead them forward.

As stated by Mrig and Sanaghan[8] developing leadership capacity is the strategic wedge [36]. However, the primary leadership challenge in the 4IR, is not simply to develop a new leadership competency model—describing a group of behaviours we expect from our leadership. The deeper challenge is to develop a new mindset that anchors, informs, and advances these new behaviours. Behaviour is only a function of mindset. Leadership mindset and style, set the overall tone for institutional culture and overall performance, including how we approach change initiatives. For example, a command and control leadership style does not work for transformational change, yet it is remains the most dominant leadership style most leaders and institutions still rely on. To change our behaviour and our institutional cultures, we first need to change our mindsets about the nature of leadership if we want to produce sustainable behaviour change. To truly lead universities through disruption, **leaders themselves must change. You need to disrupt your leadership**. Furthermore, our ability to change our institutional culture begins with the understanding of how we have helped to create it.

"Personal change must precede or at least accompany management and organization change … by attempting to change an organization or a management style

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[8] See Mrig and Sanaghan [21].

without first changing one's habit patterns is analogous of attempting to improve one's tennis game before developing the muscles that make better stokes possible" [37].

5. A new kind of leadership and a new kind of leader

"The world as we have created it is a product of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking". Albert Einstein.

When unpacking the case for change versus the capacity for change, I surfaced, five kinds of shifts needed to lead in a VUCA world characterised by complexity, disruption and uncertainty. Are these the only shifts that matter in the current state? I am sure not, we can add many more. But, I believe that these five shifts that demonstrate the complexities of the challenges facing higher education has the potential to reposition and reinvent our leadership for the future.

I have labelled them as the:

1. Awareness shift

2. Identity shift

3. Mindset shift

4. Paradigm shift

5. The shift from fear to psychological safety

Although each shift will be discussed separately, they are intertwined and interdependent. As I discuss each shift, I would like to invite you to think about how each one of these shifts translate into capabilities. In other words, what are the future proof capabilities for universities in general and your own university that we can extract from this discussion?

5.1 Shift One: The Awareness Shift

In Abraham Kaplan's [38] ground-breaking 1964 book on methodology for behavioural sciences he recites the following classic story:

Late one night, a policeman sees a drunk man on his hands and knees searching for something under a streetlight and asks him what he has lost. He says he lost a coin. The policeman helps him search for the coin for some time and after no luck, asks, "Are you sure you lost the coin here?". The drunkard replies, "No, I lost it in the park over there". The surprised policeman then asked him why then is he searching here, to which the drunkard replies, "This is where the light is."

Various versions of this humorous story referred to as *The streetlight effect*, or the *drunkard's search principle*, has been told for many years across different cultures. The story illustrates a type of observational bias playing out when people only search for something where it is easiest to look, or where we are used to looking, rather than where the answer most likely could be found. This error has limited the progress of science repeatedly.

In their White Paper *Leadership beyond competencies* (2014), Ruderman, Clerkin, and Connolly [39] state that in the field of leadership development, our streetlight has shone on behavioural competencies and skills as the standard for all leadership development. But, leadership encompasses much more than visible

behaviours—what happens in the mind or the "inner theatre"[9] of the leader as described by Kets de Vries is just as important for effective leadership [40].

"As a field, we have long considered the mind a "black box"— an unknown and unknowable area—and so, like in the streetlight story, we have looked elsewhere". They suggest that in order to increase their effectiveness and impact, it is time that leaders expand the light to include the mind—calling attention to the dynamics of a leader's internal landscape—and its interplay with their behaviour. Leaders need to shift their awareness from external forces to forces that are less visible such as their physiological, emotional, and mental processes in order to increase the efficacy of their leadership. This is much more than an attitude or even a mindset, but an inner capability (cognitive, psychological and emotional). As such, it must be developed from the inside out—from the level of individual consciousness out and through the level of interpersonal engagement and relationship. And then—and only then— further outward into the institutional territory [41]. Only by developing your inner leadership—your capacity to transcend your own inner uncertainty, insecurities, hesitance, and emotional triggers and to act, instead, from a place of intention, pur- pose and vision—will you be able to develop in your outer leadership—your ability to readily adopt the skills, practices and thinking needed to catalyse more efficiency and higher performance in the human systems around you.

In the current volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous world, the term "transformation" has become universal in the organisational change literature. The nature of the current complexity often leaves leaders feeling "in over their heads" recognising all too well that the nature of the complexity, uncertainty and ambi- guity—both around them and within them—is beyond their capacity to act with insight, foresight, and grace. This necessitates a broadening of our understanding of the word "transformation"—from a process that applies primarily to the external environment of institutional structures, systems and processes, to include the consciousness from which those very structures, processes, systems and institutions originate—the inner world of the individual leader. This will imply that all us who think of ourselves as transformational leaders, must first catalyse transformation within ourselves before we can hope to catalyse transformation in the people and systems around us.

The well-known psychiatrist Dan Siegel[10] calls this awareness "mindsight"—the ability to observe our internal mental processes unfold, "the capacity to perceive the mind in yourself and others" [42] (Siegel, 2010, p. x). According to Siegel, mindsight is different from the well-known practice of self-reflection in the sense that it is a metacognitive practice that allows us see the internal workings of our

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[9] Manfred Kets de Vries [40] describes our "inner theatre" as our unique mixture of motivational needs and fears which determines our character and contributes to the triangle of our mental life—a tightly interlocked triangle consisting of cognition, affect, and behaviour. We all have an "inner theatre" which is filled with our early childhood experiences with people who have influenced, for better or worse, our response patterns as adults. Though we are generally unaware of it, we often relate to others as we once did to early caretakers or significant others. These early relational themes translate into consistent behav- ioural patterns of relating as adults and contribute to our unique personality style—that develops over time. How we anticipate that others will react to us, and how we in turn react to others is determined by this "basic script" for relating that we developed as coping mechanism in early childhood. As adults, we take these fundamental needs or fears into the context of our workplace relationships. Unfortunately, the life-scripts drawn up in childhood often cause us to behave inappropriately in adult situations—to the detriment of our effectiveness in relationships and in leadership.

[10] Prof. Dan Siegal is a renowned neuroscientist and psychotherapist, Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA Medical School and co-director of the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center, and executive director of the Mindsight Institute. He founded the field of "Interpersonal Neurobiology."

own minds in the present moment. Siegel is of the opinion that this ability to focus internally on our mind (and the minds of others) is a prerequisite for responding with emotional and social intelligence and fundamental to personal growth and transformation. It helps us to become aware of our internal mental and emotional processes or default patterns without it overwhelming us or being blown out of proportion. It is the inner capacity of individuals to sense acutely and to respond gracefully, in the midst of complexity and ambiguity. It enables us to shift out of our autopilot of habitual responses and beyond the reactive emotional patterns we often get trapped in. This awareness allows leaders to "hit the pause button" and to choose a more intentional and appropriate response in the face of emotionally charged or intellectually complex situations. In this way leaders can learn to both observe, as well as shape and shift, how they think, feel, and behave. This increased awareness promotes emotional regulation and mitigates impulsivity and reactivity while simultaneously sharping the leader's understanding of others' emotions and behaviours—skills both necessary and invaluable to leading self and others effectively. In this process we learn to use our self-awareness and inner will to realise our deepest resources and self-leading and self-mastery potential. When we become more self-aware we become more integrated and self-directed individuals taking action based on our values and purpose—becoming more responsive and less reactive.

5.1.1 Becoming our own best friends

By internal "tuning in" and paying attention to our mind's intention in a non-judgemental and nonreactive way by self-observation, we become "our own best friends" as described by Siegal. To make this shift from outer to inner awareness, we need to shine light on disciplines not traditionally associated with leadership development, such as neuroscience, contemplative practices, and positive psychology. For example, an increased awareness of our neurological circuitry can help leaders better understand their own and others' behaviours. At its heart, effective leadership development rests on self-awareness and research in the field of neuroscience can helped us improve our understanding of how our internal systems interact to process information and influence behaviour. For example, understanding how the brain processes pleasure and pain can help us to understand how we subconsciously motivate much of how we navigate the world—with huge implications for leaders and institutions.

5.2 Shift Two: The Identity Shift

The second shift is labelled as an Identity shift. This shifts require that leaders disrupt their identities. In their book: *How HE leaders derail* (2018) Patrick Sanaghan and Jillian Lohndorf [43] state that in HE, there is a prevalent myth that the smartest person should be the leader. They talk about the "peril of smartship" and state it as follows:
"We rely more heavily on 'smartship' than leadership. This is a tendency we see in organizations across all industries, but we are especially prone to it in higher education because of the unique weight we assign to hierarchy and tradition".
However, there is a deep humility needed in leaders as a way of facilitating the creativity of employees, especially in an industry changing as rapidly as higher education. The skills that brought us to where we are, does not really fit this complexity. It requires new approaches, new mindsets and new skills. Humility and the willingness to admit mistakes may be two of the most important qualities for a leader in HE. This will require a shift from a performance mindset—that draws on

our current knowledge about one's competence—to a learning mindset, fueled by curiosity. A performance mindset is based on our need for favourable judgements—and the avoidance of negative judgements [44].[11] In very simple terms, it means a shift from providing answers to asking questions. What this shift is suggesting is a mindset of experimentation, discovery, partnership, and abundance-thinking. However, it will require that leaders embrace the discomfort of not having the answers and experience the liberation that comes from knowing you do not need to have the answers.

Most of the revolutionary inventions and noteworthy discoveries throughout history are the result of curiosity. Albert Einstein once memorably claimed, "I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious". In *The Businesss Case for Curiosity* [45], a recent issue of the Harvard Business Review, Professor Francesca Gino explains how new research indicates that curiosity is more important than ever to leadership and performance. "When our curiosity is triggered, we think more deeply and rationally about decisions and come up with more creative solutions." Curiosity, humility, and the willingness to admit error go hand-in-hand since you must be humble enough to know you do not have all the answers *and* confident enough to admit it. Traits exhibited by arrogant leaders are exactly the traits we *do not* need if institutions are going to confront the complex challenges facing them. Prof. David Schmittlein, at the MIT Sloan School of Management also advocates the business case for curiosity and states that "great leadership teams in the new economy have a deep and restless curiosity".

Therefore, in a sense, the very elements that make academia strong also make it vulnerable. In higher education, enormous emphasis is placed on smartship or individual intellectual achievement and credentials. "Being right" and having the answers matters—a great deal. Although well meaning, giving people answers as to how to solve problems based on your experience instead of asking powerful questions tends to keep people small and dependent. "You cannot expect people to seriously consider your idea without accepting the possibility that they will challenge it. Accepting that process of engagement as the terrain of leadership liberates you personally."[12]

Making this shift sounds simple, but it is really hard because it requires from leaders to stop trying to prove how smart they are and rather be the person in the room who can facilitate deep thinking and help all the best ideas come out. This shift could be quite challenging for academic leaders. It is also an important part of the shift from being an *academic* to being and *academic leader*. It is a shift that many do not make, or only achieve in part. The thing about these changes is that they are horribly uncomfortable for anyone who has been promoted into management due to their "smartship" or "expertise" and whose identity is built around their individual academic achievements. So, you can imagine—when you shift

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[11] According to Ames [44] two major goal orientations are at play in any achievement situation: mastery or "task-oriented goal orientation" and performance or "ego-involvement goal orientation". Alternative labels are 'learning goal orientation' and 'performance goal orientation' respectively. The main distinction between these two types of goal orientations is whether learning is valued as a means to reach some external goals or primarily as an end in itself. More specifically, people with mastery-oriented goals focus upon the task, and prefer situations where they can expand their skills and knowledge and mostly assess their success by using "self-referenced standards" such as "Have I learned? Have I improved?" On the other hand, people with a "performance or ego" goal orientation focus upon the self, and prefer situations where they can demonstrate their competence and abilities and compare it with those of others. These students usually assess their success using interpersonal norms, such as "Did I do better than others? Do others think that I am smart?"

[12] See Heifetz [46].

from providing answers to asking questions, your performance mindset—based on your need to get favourable judgements and avoid negative judgements—will be challenged. The question in your mind will be: Will I still be perceived as competent?

In the VUCA world, leaders who set a tone with a mindset of experimentation, curiosity and humility will signal to their teams that they are not preoccupied with creating an image of the leader-as-hero but are committed to developing a remarkable community of leaders at every level in their institutions. Thereby, they will drive home the narrative that co-creating the future through a collective leadership capability is the strongest route to institutional performance in times of disruption.

5.3 Shift Three: The Mindset Shift

"Organizations unintentionally encourage people to choose to maintain what they have, to be cautious and dependent"[13].

The essence of this shift I have labelled the mindset shift, is about the transformation of the word power that we have witnessed over the last couple of years. In their notable study of power conducted in 1959, social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven categorised power as coming from five separate and distinct sources [48]. Legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, referent power and expert power—information power was added later in 1965. But, these all have focused on the LEADER's sources of power and has largely ignored the rest of the organisation. In the VUCA world, this one-directional view of power has become outdated because leadership is about EMpowerment—and in that sense the directionality of the word is wrong. Old-style top-down authoritative leadership will not be enough to lead universities into the future. In their book *How HE leaders derail*, Patrick Sanaghan and Jillian Lohndorf [49], state that the pace of change is too fast and the challenges too complex to be figured out by one individual, irrespective of how smart, experienced or qualified you are. They also mention that the risk aversion that is endemic in many institutions of higher education, throttles empowerment—based on an entrepreneurial, learning culture—stifling it before it can really grow. Unfortunately, according to their research, arrogant and micromanaging leaders (two of the most important causes they have identified for derailment of leaders in HE) often thrive and retain their positions because they operate as "guardians of the status quo". This kind of shift in power is accompanied by a significant change of the centrality of leaders in our universities—a kind of phenomenon we can call UNBOSSING the university and forming an entrepreneurial contract with people, where every staff member accepts ownership for the success of the university as if it was their own. The path to empowerment is to shift from traditional patriarchal, autocratic organisational management and toxic political games where managers believe they have to control people and situations to an entrepreneurial cycle. Empowerment is based on the belief that the most trustworthy source of authority comes from within people. The role of leadership is to help people trust their own instincts, to realise that they are responsible for all of their actions—irrespective of the institutional culture or external environment—and that the local of control for their actions is internal. There is a lot a talk in HE about decolonising the curriculum, however, we also need to decolonise leadership. There is nothing more colonial than to lead people in a way that says: 'I know and you don't'.

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[13] See Block [47], p. 21.

This shift from power to EMpower also links with the shift from patriarchy to partnership that Peter Block refers to in his book *The empowered manager*[14]. The first version of this book—which validated the shift in control from top management to front line people who are closest to the work—was published in 1987 [47]. Although it had its moment in the sun in the early 90s, the topic of empowerment needs to be reintroduced in institutions of higher learning since it is highly relevant for our current context. Most of our institutions still emphasise a top-down, high control orientation. People are still viewed as just another "resource" or a form of "asset" whose "talent" needs to be carefully managed. We still believe that remuneration drives motivation and performance and that the institutional vision should come from the executive management. People are often told the institution values autonomy and initiative but then they are treated like children by management who believes their role is to control people. In the same line, we hear people constantly call for strong leadership and waiting for management to give direction and vision. According to Peter Block, this is an expression of their dependency—finding comfort in being led—implying that until something above me change, do not expect me to operate much differently.

The patriarchal mindset underlies the choice for safety, predictability and control and nurtures a dependent mentality. The cornerstone of the patriarchal mindset is the belief that the foundation to the organisation's success is the leader or leaders at the top—the more heroic they are, the better. In contrast, the partnership or empowerment approach offered as an alternative to patriarchy by Peter Block, is about placing choice, decision making and control close to and in the hands of the people who do the work. It is about balancing the power between the leaders and those around them. This requires a shift in leaders' thinking and a shift in mindset where a sense of partnership and purpose is cultivated among people at all levels in the institution. When people trust that they have more control over their work, they then become co-creators in defining the institution's vision and purpose. In fact, people need to realise that dependency is no longer the safer path and that there is nothing to wait for from above to create a faculty or department of your own choosing. How we choose to behave and respond at any point in time is either a move in an entrepreneurial or a patriarchal direction. As stated by Peter Block, a hierarchical power-oriented culture breeds hierarchical power-oriented people. The institution then becomes a breeding ground for toxic political playoffs and manipulative tactics driven by personal ambition. The choice for self-assertion and risk is the antidote for caution and maintaining what we have inherited. A university with empowered staff who take ownership is a university that is moving forward. Empowerment also creates a much more positive and fulfilling working environment for everyone, managers included. Empowerment is a sound strategy in the face of all the uncertainty and volatility that is swirling our institutions. "If we have found a way of doing our job that does not entail any risk, then the organization probably does not need us"[15]

Good relationships are based on partnership, not patriarchy. Patriarchy creates a parent–child relationship between management and workers. Empowerment has huge implications for followership and creates a more accountable culture. Partnership is built on empowerment, not dependency. The reason we find partnerships so challenging is that parenting—and its fiercer version, patriarchy—is so deeply etched in our muscle memory and armature that we are often are not even

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14 The Book: *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work* (2017) was the prescribed text book for TUT's LEAD programme in 2019. The theme of the LEAD programme in this year was *We are empowered*

15 See Block [47], p. 191.

aware of it. In the VUCA world, honesty and transparency is critical. However, the dilemma with patriarchy is that we know that children do not speak the truth to their parents. People do not speak truth in front of power. This difficulty it creates in approaching leaders with open and candid feedback can foster a "seduction of the leader"[16] dynamic—first introduced by Rodney Napier. An insidious dynamic that many senior managers fall victim to as they endeavour to lead their institutions where followers (for whatever reason) are hesitant to provide leaders with pertinent information and honest feedback about their ideas or impact. This in turn stalls quick action and decisive decision-making. However, as so eloquently mentioned by Peter Block, in partnership—not telling the truth is betrayal. Therefore, powerful leadership is not about being a good parent. Good and honest feedback is critical for leaders to become aware of their impact on people and their institutions. Leaders need to constantly and directly engage with their constituents and proactively seek candid unfiltered feedback and input. Without access to this information—honest and valid concerns, viewpoints, ideas and suggestions—leaders are at risk of being seduced into believing people are firmly behind them and that they are on the right track [50].

Unfortunately, in our institutions many of the complaints people have are often around micromanagement and is controlling people. This is because one of the most difficult shifts for leaders to make to go from their own power to orchestrating the energy of others. **The idea of the leader as the conductor of an orchestra is a good metaphor here:**

When you listen to a piece of music—you hear the violin, you hear the clarinet—but do you hear the conductor? We know there is a conductor who orchestrates the whole performance but we do not *hear* the conductor. The following story about the famous conductor Herbert van Karajan is a good illustration of this shift. It is told that in his early years of conducting, Karajan was a very directive conductor giving very precise instructions to musicians about how to perform. However, toward the end of his life, he made a major shift and became very restrained in his gestures when he was conducting. During one of the rehearsals, one of his musicians felt very frustrated by this 'lack of direction' and asked him: "Maestro, with all due respect, when should I start playing my tune?" Karjan responded by saying to him: "when you feel it is the time." During the press conference, one of the journalists asked Karajan: "Maestro why don't you give precise instructions to the orchestra?" To which Karajan wisely responded "that would be the worst damage I could do to them because if I would give them precise instructions then musicians will not listen to one another". In letting go of his need for control he allowed his musicians to make decisions, and also sends the message that I am going to trust you that you will make the right decision about when you are going to play your tune.

Collective and systemic intelligence is driving the new paradigm for leadership. From 'heroic' to 'collective and collaborative' or distributed leadership. However, leadership is often a well-developed misconception and its worth mentioning an interesting article which was published in 1985 by Meindl, Ehrlich and Durkerich. The title of the paper was *The romance of leadership* [51]. In this article the authors discussed our fascination with leadership in our collective consciousness and asked a rhetorical question: Do we glorify leadership? Why are we susceptible to falling

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[16] "The seduction of the leader is a term that was first introduced by Dr. Rodney Napier. In short, it describes how (for various reasons) managers often do not receive important information and candid feedback about their impact or ideas because their subordinates or peers are hesitant to provide it to them. This reluctance to "speak truth to power" leaves the leader isolated and misinformed. Followers just go along to get along, which puts the leader—and, ultimately, the institution—at risk.

under the "spell" of leadership? Do we romanticise leaders and do we succumb to the charisma virus. Romanticism can shape conceptions not only of leaders, but also of followers, their agency and their (potential for) resistance to empowerment due to our tendency to over-attribute institutional successes and shortcomings to the leader. Seeing leaders as either charismatic heroes or charismatic villains—both viewpoints are illustrations of falling victim to the romance of leadership. According to the first camp, the leader deserves the credit for any positive outcome even when he had little to do with the achievement. The second group singles out every failure and attribute them to the leader—even when he might have played a minor role in the failure. This article puts forward a question which is very relevant for the times we find ourselves is:

Should we replace the romantic view of leadership with a view of leadership as a collective phenomenon that is shared among all members of an organisation and not the property of a single individual?

Current leadership thinking includes such notions as servant leadership, distributed leadership, authentic leadership, collaborative leadership, and humble or quiet leadership by Robert Greenleaf, David Rock, and Edgar Schein, among others. We need leaders who embrace the mindset of humility—who realise the need to tap into the collective power and capability of the whole university. Jim Collins, the author of the best-selling book *Good to Great* (2001) found in his research that most executives leading lucrative companies were introverted, humble, reserved and self-effacing. They demonstrated "indomitable will" but did not direct their drive and ambition toward their personal interest but toward the goals and purpose of the organisation [52].

Another question for us to reflect about is:

How many of our leaders have this mindset or need to make this mindset shift?

5.4 Shift Four: The Paradigm Shift

The 4IR is not only about technology but how the human experience can be incorporated into technology in order to create an inclusive, human-centred future. The founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, is renowned for saying that Facebook is as much about psychology and sociology as it is about technology [53]. Steve Jobs said, "It is in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough—it's technology married with the liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing" [54]. We now have scientific evidence—thanks to the groundbreaking research of the late Dr. David Hawkins—that emotions have measurable energy. This energy can either foster or negate actual cell life. As explained in his book *Power vs. Force* [55], Hawkins reveals how an individual's log level—the measurable level of energy in their magnetic field—increases when positive emotions experienced by the person increase.

So a question to reflect about as leadership is: What Energy Are We Sending?

One of Hawkins's most remarkable findings was that when the log level was below 200, the cells actually started to die. This level below 200, is where the emotions of hate, shame, contempt, anxiety, regret, despair, blame, and humiliation reside. From a leadership perspective, what we can take from Hawkins's research is that it is key that leaders are able to regulate and manage their emotional state (one of the abilities of Emotional Intelligence or EQ), not just for their own emotional well-being and physical health but for the overall well-being of their staff. Leaders need to be able to self-regulate and manage their emotions and emotional impact on people in the face of uncertainty. At the same time they need to be able to support

others to deal with their own fears, anxiety and discomfort [56]. Unfortunately, for a long time, especially in universities we have focused mostly on the cognitive intelligence of our leaders. When asked how you *feel* about an issue, the answer often is: 'Who cares, we are here to get a job done, to be rational and logical. A university is not a place to talk about feelings.' In fact, one of the strongest forms of contempt is to say to someone: 'Let's not get into the touchy feely issues'. Both personally and collectively, we pay a high price for denying our own and other people's feelings and denying them the opportunity for self-expression. I have not come across a manager who is not looking for new ways to motivate and engage their staff, but denying people their self-expression and expecting them to exercise self-control (which is different from self-regulation. Expecting people to suppress their emotions is putting a damper on their level of motivation and energy. It also keeps managers from really understanding the impact of their actions on the internal motivation and energy of people and expecting them to 'toe the line'. Our current context asks for a rebalancing of the relationship between IQ and EQ. It requires a paradigm shift from viewing leadership as cognitive labour alone to viewing leadership as emotional labour which requires EQ and a high level of emotional maturity. The complexity of the problems we are faced with is pushing us to make this shift. Is it going to be replace IQ? No—of course we will still need smart leaders, but EQ has been consistently undervalued—I often hear managers say 'I don't do emotions' but in the era of artificial intelligence we can expect a higher premium on the emotional capabilities of leaders—without it you will not be able to tap into the energy of empowerment. Napoleon is famous for saying that leaders are merchants of hope. Leaders in universities can create this much-needed hope by speaking to the collective imagination, hopes, dreams and fears of their people and create a sense of purpose and meaning. However, to accomplish this, they need to develop their emotional intelligence, a process that begins with self-awareness. This is not new of course—it is what the Oracle at Dephi has been telling us all along: **Know Thyself**! [57].

Our emotions guide us by assigning value to things and informing us what is worth striving for in future. Our emotions often contain a wisdom the analytic brain cannot reach—they are not the opposite of reason; they are the foundation of reason [58]. Unfortunately, as stated by Prof. Theo Veldsman [59] "Too often leaders are intelligence giants but maturity dwarfs" with wide-ranging and detrimental consequences for both the leader and the institution.

An overemphasis of IQ at the expense of EQ creates the conditions for toxic leaders. In order to be effective leaders, we need to be driven to seek deep connections and relations with others. These leaders firmly believe that deep change happens through deepening trusting relationships. The World Economic Forum (WEF) now considers EQ an essential skill for the 4IR. In fact, anything that makes us human is becoming very precious. Technology will be able to replicate human intelligence but not human emotions. These straining days of the current COVID-19 pandemic have once again highlighted the significance of a leader's emotional intelligence. The uncertainty about the future, constant disruptions and changes to the academic programme, working from home, stress and anxiety, and getting used to new ways of teaching and communication are all testing us in different ways. You will not be able to deal with the uncertainty and the anxiety it creates both in yourself, your team and your students if you cannot deal with your own and others emotions—or as mentioned before—orchestrate the energy provided by emotions. To do this you will need a highly developed EQ, which will include the ability to step back from your self-protective impulsive, emotional reactions triggered by uncertainty and instead operate from a place of presence and inner calmness. The importance of self-awareness cannot be emphasised enough, since awareness gives us choices about our behaviour.

Without exception, innovation is a social process which requires creative abrasion and constructive dissent—processes that rely on low social friction (as a result of trust) but high intellectual friction (as a result of the diversity of viewpoints). Our ability to be innovative will depend on our ability to be able to tap into the strength of the diversity in our teams. But then again—a word of caution—diversity has huge implications for your leadership. While we all realise that diverse teams can accomplish more than any individual member, we also understand that you just cannot throw a bunch of people in a room and hope for the best. To be able to capitalise on the intended outcomes of diversity, institutions need to focus on fostering an inclusive work environment that are *appreciative* of differences. The role of leadership in generating such an inclusive climate is pivotal. Research has provided clear evidence that diverse teams who are not well lead perform worse than homogeneous teams. Therefore, we need to move beyond diversity to build a deeply inclusive culture for which we need leaders with a highly developed EQ [60].

5.4.1 Shift from fear to psychological safety

"You know the adage 'People resist change.' It is not really true. People are not stupid. People love change when they know it is a good thing. No one gives back a winning lottery ticket. What people resist is not change per se, but loss. When change involves real or potential loss, people hold on to what they have and resist the change."[17]

EQ will also enable us to make the critical climate shift in our institutions from fear to psychological safety. The first key principle is that: **The presence of fear in an organisation is the first sign of weak leadership**. Low levels of psychological safety create a culture of silence. A culture of silence is a dangerous culture in the VUCA world. The book *The fearless organization* [62] by Prof. Amy Edmonson[18] from Harvard Business School is one of the books we discussed in our LEAD Leadership Circles in our own university's leadership development programme. She defines psychological safety as the willingness to "show and employ one's whole self without fear of negative consequences to your self-image, status or career." Furthermore, it is "a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking." Psychological safety, therefore, is a social condition in which you feel that you are included, it is safe to learn and to contribute, and safe to challenge the status quo—all without fear of being punished in any way [63]. Leaders who are humble, authentic, and transparent infuse trust and psychological safety. In turn, psychological safety empowers people to perform to the best of their ability. For our universities to flourish in a world where innovation will differentiate institutions as successful or failing—hiring the smartest academics will not be enough. You must be able to create a climate where it is safe for them to take interpersonal risks and share not only their knowledge and ideas, but also their emotions and feelings. Eliminating fear can promote innovation by freeing people's energy for complex problem-solving and innovative thinking—instead of self-protection. Understanding the importance of psychological safety traces back to organisational change research in the early 1960s. In his book *Personal and Organizational Change through Group Methods* [64], MIT Professor Edgar Schein wrote about the need for psychological safety to help people cope with the uncertainty they experience at work. Schein later noted that psychological safety was vital for allowing people to

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[17] See Heifetz [61].

[18] Amy Edmondson is a management Professor at Harvard Business School and has done a tremendous amount of work in the area of psychological safety.

overcome defensiveness and "learning anxiety" when things go wrong and focus on achieving shared goals rather than on self-protection. Psychological safety is essential to producing high performance in a VUCA world. If you have an unsafe culture, you are blocking your team's ability to innovate. Sadly, most leaders are not even aware that they are doing it.

A question for reflection: which of these shifts are most needed in your university? Which of these shifts are most needed in your own leadership?

6. Shaping the future—Are we at a fork in the road?

"The changes are so profound that, from the perspective of human history, there has never been a time of greater promise or potential peril".[19]

According to Prof Klaus Schawab - founder and Executive Chairman of the WEF - and author of *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*, there has never been a time of greater promise, or greater peril. In particular, he makes an appeal to all leaders to:

"Together shape a future that works for all by putting people first, empowering them and constantly reminding ourselves that all of these new technologies are first and foremost tools made by people for people."

As I have attempted to lay out in this chapter, our current and future challenges demand that we take a different view about leadership and the kind of leaders our universities need. Intelligence or functional expertise does not equate to knowing how to lead. Leadership is a deeply human and interpersonal process. Becoming a better leader follows the same process as becoming a better person.

In his book—*The rise of the robots*—Martin Ford forecasts a future that will be terrifying in the absence of public debate and intervention. He systematically sketches the possibilities of artificial intelligence and illustrate the societal implications using a wealth of economic data. Therefore, summarising everything being said in this chapter, the final shift needed would be from leadership to *Stewardship*. Stewardship is the umbrella idea that holds the potential to achieve the fundamental change and reform we seek in the way we lead and govern our institutions. In his book *Stewardship: Choosing service over self-interest* [65] Peter Block defines stewardship as holding something in trust for another—as leaders, we are entrusted with the well-being of people—our students, our staff, our communities, the environment and the planet. Stewardship is a willingness to be accountable for the well-being of our institutions, because we hold our universities in trust for future generations. Stewardship is a willingness to act without needing to control those around us. Imagine how strong our universities would be if everyone were deeply committed and accountable for its success.

In conclusion, steward leadership starts with wanting to the best FOR the world or the university, not only the best IN the world. It is the basic call for all of us to become more than we currently are. However, you can only be more if you, through purposeful action, help others and allow them to be *more than you*. But—you cannot be more if you do not know *how to be less* [66]. Our firm belief in the value of leadership is fundamental to most of our theories about organisational change and transformation. However, this universal and almost religious belief in individual leaders as the answer to transformation and change is precisely what slows the process of fundamentally redesigning institutions and reforming our leadership. Quoting the wisdom of Peter Block (1993:15) "Stewardship offers an alternative approach to reform that puts leadership in the background where it belongs" [67].

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[19] Klaus Schwab, WEF.

7. Chapter reflection: what are the leadership skills for the future?

Based on the shifts discussed in this chapter, the next question would be to ask how this translate into the future skills requirements for our leaders? A one-size-fits all approach will not work. To ensure relevance for our context we need to begin a robust conversation in our institutions with all our leaders around the following three questions:

7.1 What are the *eroding* skills?

What are the leadership behaviours that were considered effective in the past but are now considered outdated and even detrimental? Why?

For example, the time for top-down autocratic leadership is over, or should be anyway. This is not the leadership that is going to position our universities for the future.

7.2 What are the *enduring* skills?

What leadership attributes and behaviours have passed the test of time? They are those skills that are still important today, and will be important forever. Why?

For example, in the 4IR, aspects like integrity, trust, and emotional and social intelligence have become even more important. Without integrity, trust and compassion the advancements in technology can do lots of damage to our staff, students and society at large.

7.3 What are the *emerging* skills?

What are the behaviours that might have been regarded as unimportant before but are now considered highly relevant, significant and essential for a leader to be considered effective? Why?

7.4 Crafting a future-fit leadership development strategy

The next logical question to ask when designing a leadership development strategy would be: How can we cultivate the emerging behaviours, combine them with the enduring behaviours and proactively shed the eroding behaviours? However, future fit leadership development requires more than proposing a new list of competencies which leaders will need to acquire (also known as horizontal development)—as if it were just a matter of 'fixing' or 'servicing' our leaders—to transformational development gaining *greater capacity*. This implies expanding the mindsets or the mental models leaders engage when they are thinking—including their identity. It results in more sophisticated ways of thinking or what Hamman [68] refers to as "complexity of mind"—by developing leaders' cognitive and emotional maturity (also referred to as vertical development).[20] Nick Petrie from the Centre for Creative Leadership asserts that if we want to have a better understanding as to why some leaders are so effective, we first have to understand that leaders do not only think differently from each other—they also think from different developmental stages. He states that "most leaders already know what they should be doing. What they lack is the personal development to do so."

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[20] The process of horizontal and vertical development often occurs at the same time. However, it is helpful to make a distinction between the two since very often practitioners in the field of leadership development have little or no knowledge of vertical development.

Most leaders today find themselves in the arduous position where the complexity they deal with is overwhelming many leaders' capacity to cope and outpacing both their individual and collective development. For our institutions to thrive in the complicated VUCA world, we will need to develop leaders who can combine wisdom in choosing the right strategies (greater capacity) with the relevant experience and competencies to be able to execute them (competency acquisition). The current challenge however for most universities is that the leadership development interventions they embark on, are predominantly or even exclusively designed around a list of leadership behaviours or competencies. Therefore, we need a leadership development philosophy and practice framework that takes an alternative perspective—one in which we view mindset and culture not from the outside in, but from the inside out. It entails more than training a leader in skills or expanding their knowledge but about transforming the ways a leader thinks. This in turn will have an impact on what they do and how they behave. Only then will leaders be able to create and nurture an institutional culture where innovation can flourish. Leadership development practitioners should design interventions that address the identities, beliefs and mindsets that drives behaviour if they want to prepare leaders with the capabilities to lead successfully in a future that will be perpetually undergoing change.

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