

# Anticipatory Leadership and Strategic Foresight: Five ‘Linked Literacies’

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## Abstract

*We live, as is so often said, in volatile, uncertain, complex, changing and ambiguous times. The world of the future will demand capacities that currently comprise mere options. There will be a need for new ways of thinking, planning, directing, communicating and managing; with a critical component common to them all—‘anticipatory leadership’. Quintessentially, such leadership relates to the future and is concerned with transforming the ‘mind-set’ of those engaged in policy formulation and plan implementation. Our concept-oriented paper seeks to identify five linking ‘anticipatory literacies’: Awareness; Authenticity; Audacity; Adaptability; and Action. It concludes with a call to the Professional Futures Community and the world’s leading Business Schools to collaborate in creating a ‘Grand Transformation’ in their collective mind-sets inspired by Anticipatory Leadership through Strategic Foresight.*

**Keywords:** Strategic foresight, anticipatory leadership, futures, linked literacies

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## Introduction

Leadership has become a global obsession. We perceive and participate during a period popularly portrayed as ‘extraordinary times’. Times of danger and opportunity. Individuals, organizations, communities and countries must continuously adapt to new realities just to survive. Constantly, there is the call for ‘leadership’ to tackle this challenge. Definitions and descriptions of leadership and leaders abound. Our own favoured portrait of a leader is of someone who gets others to see and understand his or her vision with their own eyes, echoing the age old adage of Lao Tzu:

“The wicked leader is he whom the people revile. The good leader is he whom the people revere. The great leader is he of whom the people say ‘we did it ourselves’” (Palmer, 1996, p.36).

We are clear about one thing, however, that it is not simply about personality. Leaders come in all forms, with differing styles, attitudes, attributes, values, strengths and weaknesses. Leadership is not mystical or mysterious, and has little to do with charisma or other exotic temperament traits. Leadership is best defined, for us, by its relationship with, and difference to, ‘management’. Leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of conduct and governance. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile world. One is not necessarily better than the other or a replacement for it. Though we would contend that many organizations today seem to be over-managed and under-led.

The inherent difference between management and leadership is that management is about coping with ‘complexity’, whilst leadership, by contrast, is about coping with ‘change’. As John Kotter explained in his formative text “What Leaders Really Do” (1999, p.51):

“They don’t make plans: they don’t solve problems; they don’t even organize people. What leaders really do is prepare organizations for change and help them cope as they struggle through it.”

Quintessentially, therefore, leadership is about anticipating the future. And yet, so little in the literature, or the learning, relating to leaders and leadership looks at the concepts, methods and techniques of “futures studies” -- a professional field fast coming to the fore. In seeking to redress this missing dimension, what follows is a personal reflection upon five “linking literacies” that seem to connect the domain of anticipatory leadership with the discipline of strategic futures, and, hopefully, heighten the understanding of both.

## A new leadership

Conjecture concerning the nature and significance of leadership has long engaged those caring about command and control in communities of all kinds. There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are critics of the concept; mostly characterising it according to their own perspectives and predilections. An excellent and enduring broad survey of the theory and practice of leadership in formal organisations, within which this work rests, can be studied elsewhere (Yukl, 2012).

The argument presently runs that the challenge of leadership is greater now than it has ever been, for, when we wake up in the morning and look in the mirror, we see staring back at us one of the many endangered species on this planet (Hawkins, 2010). Much has been said and written about the need for a new leadership, and several common themes can be discerned.

- The collaborative nature of the new leadership.
- An emphasis on sincere, genuine, transparent values-based leadership.
- The need for robust governance.
- Greater appreciation of risk, complexity and systems thinking.
- A new perspective that ‘anticipation’ can inform creative leadership.

Increasingly, moreover, it is becoming clear that leadership does not reside in individuals, for leadership is always a relational phenomenon which, at a minimum, requires a leader, followers and a shared endeavour.

## **Wisdom, consciousness and time orientation**

Significantly, and perceptively, it has been suggested that the three key components of effective leadership are ‘wisdom’, ‘intelligence’ and ‘creativity’, working together, or ‘synthesized’, (WICS), as a developing expertise (Sternberg, 2003). This WICS model of organisational leadership demonstrates ‘wisdom’ as the ability to use one’s successful intelligence, creativity and knowledge toward a common good by balancing one’s own (intrapersonal) interests, other peoples (interpersonal) interests, and larger (extra-personal) interests, over the short and long terms, through the infusion of values, in order to shape, and select environments (*ibid*). In this context, learning organisations seeking sustainable competitive advantage, do well by regularly reflecting on three basic questions:

- Where do we come from?
- What are we doing here?
- Where are we going?

Thus, to improve the condition of those for whom they are responsible, accomplished leaders will constantly have to learn to link the past, the present and the future. Shaping the future, with vision and courage, moreover, calls for ‘conscious leadership’ (Renesch, 2014); recognising that we are dealing with an incredibly complex set of global systems where everything is connected to everything else, and small events can have big consequences. Echoing Einstein’s familiar dictum that we cannot solve our problems with the same level of consciousness we used in creating them.

The most effective leaders understand and recognise the differences in the way people feel and think about time and deploy them accordingly in constructive ways. Literally, time matters, and good leaders have good timing. Consequently, it has been argued that a unique ‘temporal alignment’ drives and attunes each leader, varying in respect of time, situation and personality (Thoms, 2004). Successful leaders are said to have an awareness of their own temporal alignment, and find ways to adapt to changing circumstances as they occur (*ibid*). Throughout time, interest has frequently been focused on the ability of leaders to “envision” the future, as does this paper, but leadership is also about persistence, maintenance, resilience and stability (Thoms, P. & D. Greenberger, 1995). Truly transformational leaders, however, have to be highly oriented towards the future, for, familiarly: “The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.” (Winston Churchill, Harvard University, 1943)

## **A new futures mindset**

We are entering a period of what Peter Senge (2008) calls ‘necessary revolution’ where organisations around the world will have to change from the dead-end ‘business-as-usual’ tactics to transformative strategies that are essential for creating a flourishing, sustainable and responsible environment – natural, built and business. This necessary revolution demands a fundamental shift of mind – a ‘metanoia’ as

the Greeks described it – whereby organisations operate with a conviction that they can imagine and shape their own destiny. In developing this new mindset, we have been hugely influenced by Howard Gardner’s **Five Minds for the Future** (2007) in which he explains that the cognitive abilities that command a premium in the years ahead will embrace the following:

- (i) the **disciplinary** mind – a mastery of major schools of thought (mathematics, philosophy, economics) and at least one professional craft;
- (ii) the **synthesizing** mind – ability to integrate ideas from different disciplines or spheres into a coherent whole and to communicate that integration to others;
- (iii) the **creating** mind – capacity to uncover and clarify new problems, questions and phenomena;
- (iv) the **respectful** mind – awareness of, and an appreciation for difference among human beings; and,
- (v) the **ethical** mind – fulfilment of one’s responsibilities as a worker and as a citizen.

Armed with these well-honed capabilities we should all be better equipped to deal with what might be expected in the future – as well as what cannot be anticipated. Certainly, without this transformational mindset, those engaged in the leadership of change will be at the mercy of forces they cannot understand.

## Disquisition

Improving the conscious use of the future in the present demands the discipline of anticipation (Miller, Poli & Rossel, 2013). From the conducting of some 50 to 60 Strategic Foresight exercises, and the design and delivery of many leadership programmes, we have developed the concept of five ‘anticipatory literacies’ linking leadership with futures.

### Literacy one: “Awareness”

The Socratic enjoinder “Know Thyself!” is where both leadership and foresight begin. Identifying and understanding strengths, weaknesses, behaviours, limitations and aspirations – individually or collectively – is fundamental to effective policy formulation and planning performance. It is a paradox that good leaders with powerful vision are acknowledged in spite of their flaws; while bad leaders are recognised because of their faults.

### Leadership

Self-awareness is where leadership development starts. Few commanding figures fail for lack of IQ, but many founder for lack of emotional intelligence (EQ). Psychologist Daniel Goleman first popularised the concept of EQ almost twenty years ago (Goleman, 1995) when he defined it as a set of competencies that comprise:

- **Self-awareness**; reading emotions and recognising their impact.
- **Self-management**; controlling emotions and adapting to change.
- **Social awareness**; understanding others’ emotions and comprehending social

network.

- **Relationship management**; inspiring, influencing, and developing others while managing conflict.

How does one achieve and maintain greater self-awareness? Answers from prominent persons participating in our projects to this question included the following.

- 1 Constantly **reflect** on your values, attitudes, conduct and reactions to gain an external view of yourself.
- 2 Solicit genuine **feedback** from people with whom you work.
- 3 Take full **responsibility** for your own actions – don’t blame others.
- 4 Be **realistic** – neither overly self-critical nor naively hopeful.
- 5 Examine your **assumptions** and interrogate the extent to which they determine your endeavours and relationships.
- 6 Nurture a small trusted group of **confidants** with whom you can be completely open and sharing.
- 7 Meet interesting and **remarkable people** on a regular basis.
- 8 Have a **clear purpose** in all you do.
- 9 Develop the skill of **asking good questions** and listening without justifying or judging.
- 10 Recognise when your strengths are **played-out** and new fortes fostered.

Above all, however, it is about mapping the right “mindset” to address change and make a difference. A new “metanoia”

## **Futures**

Someone once said that: “Familiar things happen, and mankind does not bother about them. It requires a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis of the obvious” (Alfred Lord Whitehead, 1925, p.5).

Somewhat obviously perhaps, futures studies helps heighten awareness in leadership by:

- Taking a **long-view**, backwards as well as forwards, learning from mistakes alongside preparing for successes (Schwarz, 2011).
- Exploring the **driving forces of change** by “Horizon Scanning” using such homologous techniques as STEEP, PESTLE or DEGEST.
- Delving deeply to **broader understanding** of concepts, issues, strategies and realities through approaches like Causal Layered Analysis, Backcasting, Cross Impact Analysis and Futures Wheels.
- Evaluating **risk and uncertainty** by Disrupter Analysis to gain a better appreciation of policy options and the consequences of different decisions.
- Preparing individuals and communities for the **unpredictability** of future change and alternative prospects by means of storytelling, scenario thinking and gaming simulation.

## Lessons

A few of the epithets coined by participants during our projects when invited were:

- “There isn’t always an answer”
- “Leading for the future is not necessarily rational”
- “A good leader is a good servant.”
- “The best leaders are the best learners”
- “Live life as a leadership laboratory”
- “See yourself as a system”
- “Broaden your bandwidth”
- “Need to create the next ‘you’”

Organisational change, nevertheless, is inseparable from individual change and many collective change efforts falter because individuals neglect the need to change themselves. Leo Tolstoy (1900) famously wrote: “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.”

## Literacy two: “Authenticity”

“Be Yourself!” has to be the next entreaty to aspiring leaders. Throughout our work it has become clear, unsurprisingly, that followers want to be led by a personality, not a position holder or a principal bureaucrat. What organisations of all kinds need are authentic leaders – who know what they are, where the organisation needs to go and how to convince followers to help take them there.

## Leadership

It has been argued that great leaders essentially act as “authentic chameleons” consistently displaying their true selves throughout the changes of contexts that require them to play a variety of roles (Goffee & Jones, 2006). From the futures leadership workshops we have conducted the following themes emerged.

- **Creating and Conserving Core Values.** These are the essential and enduring tenets of an organisation, commonly comprising such principles as commitment, integrity, courage, discipline, respect and loyalty. Also telling the truth!
- **Pursuing a Purpose Persistently.** The mission of an organisation and motivation of its members often become eclipsed by everyday tasks, problems, exigencies and even crises. Conserving a capacity for connecting the maelstrom of the moment with the paramount purpose for the future is a vital quality of leadership.
- **Maintaining Confidence and “Good Cheer”.** Confidence in others, and in oneself, is clearly a crucial element of leadership. Trust, delegation and devolved responsibility being conventional keynotes. Cheerfulness, however, is frequently underrated – for no one follows a pessimist. Humour, a positive outlook and even a sense of “fun” can be hugely beneficial to an organisation’s morale – especially in circumstances that are adverse, uncertain or frustrating (St George, 2012)
- **Cultivating Relationships and Communication.** The proficiency to motivate, perhaps more than any other attribute, is close to the heart of the

popular conception of leadership – the capability to move people to action, to communicate persuasively, and to strengthen the conviction of others (Gardner, 2004).

- **Advancing ‘Centred Leadership’.** This concept has five dimensions: **meaning**, or finding your strengths and putting them to work in the service of a purpose that inspires you; **positive framing**, or adopting a more constructive way to view your world and convert even difficult situations into opportunities; **connecting**, or building a stronger sense of community and belonging; **engaging**, or pursuing opportunities disguised by risk; and **energising**, or practicing ways to sustain your vigour on a long leadership journey. (McKinsey, 2013)

There is a plenitude of other watchwords related to authentic leadership – trust, virtue, humility, credibility, magnanimity, fairness and the like – but, in our view, timeless leadership is always about character.

## Futures

To promote authenticity and originality in leadership practice, the futures field proffers a range of tools and techniques. Listed below are some that have been employed in our work.

- **“Blue Ocean” Thinking.** Following the precepts of Renée Mauborgne and W. Chan Kim (2005) we would always commence a strategic foresight exercise with a “Blue Ocean” workshop structured around the profile, position, performance and prospects of the particular client organisation. Reassuringly, perhaps, their thinking has progressed in tandem with ours over recent years towards the concept of “Blue Ocean Leadership” focussing more on the necessary actions of leaders, not their behaviours; and concentrating on distributive responsibility throughout the organisation rather than at the top.
- **Strategic Conversations.** It is almost inconceivable to orchestrate a serious foresighting exercise without conducting a set of strategic conversations with principal players within and without the organisation concerned. The Futures Academy has evolved its own format, refreshed and refined for each project, (Ratcliffe, 2002), but took as a starting point the Shell Seven Questions approach developed several decades ago.
- **Futures Wheels.** A graphic visualisation of direct and indirect future consequences of a given change, trend or proposal invented by Jerome C Glenn over 40 years ago (Glenn, J&T, Gordon, 2012). Offering a futures-conscious perspective, and highly user-friendly in group brainstorming, it has stood the test of time.
- **Ethnographic Futures Frameworks.** Growing in popularity across the professional futurist community is an approach branded as VERGE which focuses on the impacts of change rather than the drivers. Instead of STEEP (social, technological, economic, environmental, political), VERGE considers the clustering of scanning data from the categories of “Define, Relate, Connect, Create, Consume”.

## Lessons

Three noteworthy outcomes have emerged in connection with “authenticity in leadership” and “futures thinking”. All perhaps predictable – but nonetheless heartening. First, appreciable differences occur between cultures. Second, the “wisdom of crowds” process is truly powerful. Third, there is huge “buy-in” from followers to leaders. Furthermore, it’s invariably “fun”!

## Literacy three: “Audacity”

“Show Yourself!” is another urgent invocation to aspiring leaders taking people into a new territory and wishing to create, champion and embed a desire for transformational change. It calls for the “Vision Thing” and requires considerable audacity. The future is shaped by the quality of leadership, and that quality is enhanced, in good part, by the daring and valour of that leadership and their vision.

## Leadership

From a spell as Professor of Strategic Foresight at the Henley Business School helping to establish leadership programmes for the professions of the Built Environment, one of the authors gained an understanding of the cardinal commitments of audacious leaders. (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). These can be summarised as follows.

- **Challenging the Process.** Search out challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate and improve. Experiment, take risks, and learn from the accompanying mistakes.
- **Inspiring Shared Vision.** Envision an uplifting and ennobling future. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes and dreams.
- **Enabling others to Act.** Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust. Strengthen people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support.
- **Modelling the Way.** Set the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values. Achieve small wins that advance consistent progress and forge commitment.
- **Encouraging the Heart.** Recognise individual contribution to the success of every project. Celebrate team accomplishments regularly.

Timeless truths, possibly, for as Proverbs 29:18 perceptively proclaims: “... Where there is no vision, the people perish”.

## Futures

In a world characterised by turbulence, diversity, confusion, dilemma and vacillation, traditional leadership skills and tools are not enough. Here, the futures field furnishes a concept, methodology and toolkit of techniques to support and sustain audacious leadership. Familiarly, they include the following.

- **Visioning.** A vision is an image of the preferred future which is attractive, appealing and even compelling. It should be bold, unique and ambitious, yet plausible – the best we can be or do – as well as motivating and energising to those concerned (Bishop & Hines, 2012).



- **Scenarios.** The significance of scenario thinking lies in its ability to help overcome reasoning limitations by developing multiple futures which are each plausible, different, challenging and internally consistent. Within the concept of futures and the methodology of foresight, it is the paramount technique employed by The Futures Academy over the past 20 years. In the context of getting others to see your preferred vision through their own eyes, it is, in our view, unparalleled (Ratcliffe, 2003).
- **Weak Signals.** Real change, invariable, starts on the periphery. Weak signals are advanced, noisy and socially situated indicators of variation in trends and systems that alert policy makers to possible transformations and the need for anticipatory action. Most recently the notion has been developed further by Elina Hiltunen (2008) into “the future Sign”.
- **Wild Cards.** These are low-probability and high-impact events which could constitute significant turning points in the evolution of a trend, the development of a system or the preparation of a plan. An extensive taxonomy was compiled by John Petersen in his book “Out of the Blue” (1997), and the concept popularised by Nassim Taleb’s bestseller *The Black Swan* (2007). Unfailingly, they evoke audacious thinking and demand a bold response!
- **Hidden Influences.** A tool used to assist leadership teams identify those people within an organisation, or individuals affecting a policy formulation process, likely to catalyse – or sabotage – organisational change efforts. The long established French technique of “concertation” has similar aims and aspects.

We also employ “Thought Provocateurs” extensively in much of our strategic foresight work to encourage leadership teams to think creatively at the outset.

## Lesson

In facing what has been described as “The biggest wake-up call in history” (Slaughter, 2010), we would argue that the educational institutions where futures leaders are trained must radically be recalibrated and transformed dramatically. Not only must those leaders be notable for their holistic thinking, global perspectives, international experience, multilingual capabilities, technological familiarity, entrepreneurial mindset, creativity and ability to deal productively with complexity and chaos (Roos, 2014) – but also, they must be futures-oriented, foresightful and audacious.

## Literacy four: “Adaptability”

The old scouting maxim “Be Prepared!” could never have been more apposite than now to organisations facing the constant turmoil of modern times. Individuals, agencies, communities, cities, corporations, countries, continents – indeed, humanity itself – must continuously adapt to survive.

We face a world where myriad challenges are materialising in a systemically complex web of interconnecting forces, at an exponentially accelerating rate, so that no “expert” leader can possibly understand the whole pattern, let alone know how to address it.

## Leadership

In our series of studies on “The Future of Work” produced for Johnson Controls (Ratcliffe et al, 2007, 2008, 2009) we became agreeably aware of a bold new alternative model to that of traditional leadership called “Adaptive Leadership”, first mapped by Ron Heifetz in his seminal book *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (1994), and successively developed, with colleagues, since (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009).

Put very simply, if not simplistically, the concept and practice of adaptive leadership comprises the following stages:

- **Purpose and Possibility.** In first recognising adaptive challenges and developing adaptive capacity there is a need to understand the “illusion of the broken system”, distinguish technical from adaptive issues, distinguish leadership from authority, experiment and take smart risks, learn to live with disequilibrium, and always connect to purpose. It is also important not to do it alone, sometimes resist the leap to action and even discover the joy of hard choices.
- **Diagnose the System.** The single most important skill, and most undervalued capacity for exercising adaptive leadership is diagnosis. Above all, this needs distance – what Heifetz describes as “getting on the balcony” above the “dance floor” (*op cit*).
- **Mobilise the System.** Creative interventions will be necessary in the form of questions, process ideas, fresh frameworks, single change initiatives as well as a strategic sequence of efforts that engage different individuals and sub-groups in different ways at different points in time. Chiefly, generate a diversity of interpretations, orchestrate conflict and build an adaptive culture.
- **See Yourself as a System.** Knowing you own “default settings” – the way you interpret and respond to unfolding events around you – is essential in order to gain greater latitude and freedom to react in new and useful ways.
- **Deploy Yourself.** Here, there is a bit of a paradox, for, on the one hand, an adaptive leader is trying to lead on behalf of something they believe in that is beyond individual interest; while, on the other, so as to be most effective, they need to pay close attention to how they manage, use, gratify and deploy themselves. This is often more a matter of will than of skill.

In all this, it is worth recalling the wise word of Yehudi Menuhin (1916-1999, as cited in Heifetz, 2009, p. 44): “The difference between a beginner and the master – is that the master practices a whole lot more.”

## Futures

It is perfectly possible to present the proposition that conceptually the futures field, along with the preeminent methodology of strategic foresight, is concerned primarily with bringing a forward-looking flexibility, or adaptability, into progressive policy making and enlightened leadership. Nevertheless, a few special strands that bind the patchwork quilt covering the domain of futures practice, not already introduced, are worthy of mention.

- **Storytelling.** One of the earliest modes of communication, it is conceivable that storytelling is actually hard-wired into our evolutionary mechanism.

Nevertheless, it lies at the heart of much futures thinking – especially, of course, scenarios. Telling stories, moreover, fires our imagination and makes us better prepared to adapt to surprises.

- **Gaming.** In similar vein, gaming, in all its manifestations, has an ancient lineage, and allows participants to play out roles, situations, strategies, tactics and outcomes. By chance, one of the authors first encountered the need for operational preparedness and tactical adaptability through war-gaming in the British Army. The experiences gained have lasted a lifetime.
- **Resilience.** Fast becoming a commonplace, if not a downright banality, in the field of City Futures where The Futures Academy extensively works, “resilience” is nonetheless a predominant feature of future planning objectives, for organisations of all kinds – as well as a desirable quality in their leadership teams.
- **Forward Engagement.** A relatively new concept, drawing heavily from the fields of Futures Studies and Complex Systems Research, “forward engagement” addresses the proposition that there has been a radical shift in the nature of the major problems governance at all levels faces. Principally applied, at the moment, to bringing the process of systematic thinking to boost the adaptive capacity of whole societies, it seems set to spread.
- **Systems Thinking.** It would be wrong not to single out “systems thinking” for special and separate mention, for it lies at the heart of all futures studies and is perhaps **the** paradigm of strategic foresight. Adaptive leadership, in fact, would be hollow and meaningless without a systems approach. Indeed, it is the lens through which enlightened anticipatory leaders should view their organisation, as well as the world in which it exists.

## Lesson

As organisations increasingly reach beyond borders, it is alarmingly apparent that global leadership across organisations in all sectors worldwide is seriously lacking. (Ghenmawat, 2012) Adaptability has new and challenging dimensions to explore and a global-leadership gap to be closed. We have found that multi-cultural foresight exercises provide entirely new perspectives and frames of mind among participants inducing a fresh form of cultural adaptability among prospective leaders.

But above all, as H.G. Wells (1945, p.71) advanced: “Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature’s inexorable imperative.”

## Literacy five: “Action”

“Now Do It!” – is the recurring exhortation that rings around the boardrooms and council chambers of the world. How leaders close the gaps between plans, actions and results is a ubiquitous and perennial problem we all face. In the very early days of The Futures Academy we found clients greatly enjoyed the process of foresight, but frequently found them asking, at the end of the day: “So what?”. Since then we have always finished by focussing on the question: “What next?”.

## Leadership

Generating activity is rarely a problem for leaders in most organisations – indeed, it is usually easy. This itself makes the real problem even harder to solve – namely, getting the right things done. The things that matter, the things that will have an impact, the things that an organisation is trying to achieve to ensure success. Legacy thinking all too often dominates decision making – and, as Stephen Bungay states in his excellent text *The Art of Action* (2011, p.14): “Being common sense does not always make something common practice.”

From our involvement with Business Schools, however, we have identified a number of critical factors.

- **Unified Action.** To a greater degree than ever the process of implementation involves more and more individuals, departments, sectors and agencies. There is a consequent need continually to involve, inform and inter-connect all those “stakeholders” engaged in a particular operation. A common concern, comprehension communication and commitment is critical.
- **The Discipline of Execution.** Three principles are proffered [*ibid*]:
  - (i) Decide what really matters
  - (ii) Get the message across
  - (iii) Give people space and support

Probably no surprise – but it is surprising the difference it makes when followed.

- **Leading “Clever” People.** In our knowledge economy success increasingly depends on smart ideas dreamed-up by smart people. These “clevers” as they have been described (Goffee & Jones, 2009) require special treatment to elicit the best solutions and actions.
  - (i) Tell them what to do – not how to do it.
  - (ii) Earn their respect with your expertise – not your job title.
  - (iii) Provide “organised space” for their creativity.
  - (iv) Sense their needs and keep them motivated.
  - (v) Shelter them from administrative and political distractions.
  - (vi) Connect them with clever peers.
  - (vii) Convince them your organisation can help them succeed.
- **Directed Opportunism.** This is a phrase coined by Bungay (op cit) to describe a loop system of constantly linking plans, actions and outcomes, replacing the more conventional linear approach. Nevertheless, the military stricture of not commanding more than is necessary, or planning beyond the circumstances you can foresee, is worth heeding in this context.
- **SMART Goals.** At the outset, in line with best practice, and applying popular management parlance, goals have to be SMART – specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-bound.
- **Closing the Gaps.** It is contended that there are three prime impediments to achieving dynamic action in leadership: the *knowledge gap* – the difference between what we would know in an ideal world and what we actually know; the *alignment gap* – the difference between what leaders want people to do and what they actually do; and the *effects gap* – the difference between what

we expect our actions to achieve and the actual results. The art of action in leadership is to close these gaps.

Always remember the salutary saying, however, that the intelligence of an organisation is never equal to the sum of the intelligence of the people within it. Linking futures thinking and foresight practice to leadership tries to redress this.

## Futures

So much work in the futures field is strong on visioning, scanning, mapping, forecasting and planning - but weak on execution, action and operation. The activities identified below form an integral part of how The Futures Academy attempts to help client organisations rectify this.

- **Backcasting.** This asks the fundamental question: “if we want to attain a certain goal, what actions must be taken to get there”, and portrays the basic premise we adopt for all our work of: “Imagine Ahead and Plan Backwards”. It is the counterintuitive to trend extrapolation, and we find it of great worth in areas of urban planning and resource management.
- **An Action Agenda.** Virtually all our studies conclude with an Action Agenda, and clients gain considerable confidence in the whole foresighting process depending upon the credence they find in it. The action agenda, however, is a statement of intentions rather than a commitment. It must not become a straitjacket. It should be revised often, because every success creates new opportunities – and so does every failure!
- **Embedding Foresight.** Almost certainly, the greatest challenge of all is to create a futures thinking and learning organisation infused with a foresight culture, supported by a suitable intelligence system. In our sphere of operation (the built environment), we would point to the Arup Group as an outstanding success story.
- **Risk Taking.** Real leaders genuinely care about their cause, visionary leaders moreover, are risk-takers. They are driven by an unbending sense of purpose – and it is this that impels them to take personal risks. In doing so, they often show their foibles and flaws – but they also portray passion and purpose. The actions of leaders – both in the decisions they take and the examples they set – invariably determine the success of an organisation. We would contend that assessing, testing and executing risk through a futures framework and a foresighting process reinforces the actions of anticipatory leadership.
- **Crisis and Disaster.** There is an embryonic interest in the use of futures thinking and strategic foresight in the related, but differing, fields of crisis and disaster leadership and management. Here, the accent is firmly on action-oriented reasoning to anticipate, prevent, prepare, contain, control, recover and reflect around such emergencies. The Futures Academy, for example, has recently been consulted about the redeployment of ex-servicemen to international aid agencies.

## Lesson

It is worth recalling, in all the foregoing, that Napoleon once said that no successful battle ever followed its plan. Yet Napoleon planned his battles assiduously. Without an action plan forged within a futures mindset, a leader can become a prisoner of events.

## Propositum

A revolutionary transformation lies ahead. It will be an extraordinary time: the era of sustainability, and the era of responsibility. There will be new ways of thinking about things—more strategically, more systematically and more creatively; and new ways of behaving—more conscientiously, across disciplines and with fresh values and benefits through foresight. Our current reasoning concludes, therefore, with an invocation to use these ‘anticipatory literacies’ in tackling such emerging issues as:

- Fostering a ‘futures mindset’ for leadership in a pluralistic world.
- Developing anticipatory leadership and resilient strategy through foresight and scenarios.
- Comprehending and managing more perceptively risk, uncertainty and change.
- Introducing futures thinking and practice into leadership executive education.
- Bringing structure, rigour and discipline into management consultancy concerning long-term planning and organisational change.

Throughout all this, three megatrends can be discerned that are shaping the contemporary business landscape: Globalisation – Interdependence – and Disruption. Leaders, therefore, need to become increasingly ‘consequential’ by being more integrated, more interdisciplinary, and more oriented towards the bigger ‘system’ level of thinking. They will also have to develop new skills in the context of ‘collaboration’ and ‘co-creation’.

Thus, the world’s top Business Schools will themselves have to change. The past, and present, disproportionate focus on economic models of financial valuation, with scant regard to contingent externalities, must widen to embrace the concepts of business durability and sustainability. Aspiring students and potential employers are already beginning to demand a greater understanding of business prospects in a more resilient, international and technologically driven future. This requires a fundamental reform of the mission, content and curriculum. Simply adding token electives on such topics as ‘Values’, ‘Ethics’, ‘Innovation’ or ‘Systems’ does not suffice. Successfully designing, building and leading teams for a shared purpose in an interconnected world calls for greater insight into the future panorama within which business, and governance, opportunities will occur and organisations have to operate. This, naturally, is the field of Futures Studies and the methodology of Strategic Foresight.

Whilst the purpose of this paper is to propose the policy of synergising ‘leadership’ and ‘foresight’, implementation in practice clearly requires concerted action at a number of levels, and by a variety of agencies. The following initial steps seem evidently sensible and readily achievable.

- Closer formal collaboration, and more discerning discussion, between professional futurists and business schools through such means as: special joint events; greater cross-publication; added joint research ventures; and, the production of ‘best-practice’ case studies.
- The establishment of ‘Horizon Scanning’ activities at business schools – facilitated, perhaps, by an agency such as Shaping Tomorrow? But with the emphasis more on framing, sense-making and narrative, as scanning becomes more automated (EU FTA, 2014).
- A ‘Millennium Project’ style initiative aimed, for example, at producing: an annual “State of Future Leadership” report; Top Ten/Twenty Global Leadership Challenges; and, a set of “Scenarios for International Business”.
- The development of appropriate curricula at each conventional level: ‘core’ (futures thinking); ‘majors’ (strategic foresight methodology); and ‘electives’ (particular sector applications). The Association of Professional Futurists might be the fitting sponsor.
- A “Global Gathering” to explore, foster and promote the further fusion of futures and leadership – co-hosted, perhaps, by the World Futures Society and the Association of MBAs?

Assuredly, leadership today is profoundly different from what it was yesterday, and almost certainly what it will be tomorrow. Leaders across the board need to develop a greater capacity for strategic thinking in the face of change and complexity at a bigger scale, broadening their horizons and considering, from the inside out, more assiduously the “what-ifs”. The very crux of futures and foresight.

Arguably, therefore, the next five to ten years will be a period of massive transition for everyone, everywhere. The opportunity, therefore, for the world’s leading Business Schools, together with the global professional ‘Futures Community’, is simply enormous. Nothing short of a “Grand Transformation” is needed, engendered by enlightened Anticipatory Leadership through Strategic Foresight.

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again” (Thomas Paine, 1776, as cited in Philip, 1995, p.26).

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