Rethinking Leadership For Large-Scale Change Insights From Research & Practice

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Changing the Conversation about Leadership (in 60 minutes!)

Key Questions:

1. In your experience, when you think of a great leader what comes to mind?
2. Have you ever been part of a great team? What made it great?

Core Concepts:

☑ Beyond Easy Answers: Adaptive Problems & Solutions
☑ Beyond the Hero: Modern Leadership Theory 101
“The most common leadership failure stems from trying to apply technical solutions to adaptive challenges.” – Heifetz

**Technical Problems**
- Easy to identify and define
- Clear solution (tried & tested)
- Solved by expertise or authority (by fiat)
- Requires small changes within clear boundaries
- People are natural receptivity to technical solutions

**Adaptive Challenges**
- Both the problem, as well as the solution(s), are difficult to define and require the insight of multiple actors
- Solution requires the insight of those closest to the problem
- Expertise and authority aren’t enough to get it done
- Raise hard trade-offs and require careful consideration of values as well as facts.
- People are naturally unsettled by adaptive challenges because of the inherent uncertainty
Shared and Distributed Leadership Theory

Centralized Teams

Adaptive Teams

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Domains of Shared Leadership

1. Meaningfully Participative Decision Making
   a) included before, not after decisions are made
   b) expertise of faculty & staff built into process

2. Genuine 2-Way Communication
   a) creating space for disagreement
   b) multiple channels for listening

3. Authentically Distributed Power & Leadership
   a) frontline faculty & staff included in design and lead implementation
   b) feedback loops prioritize perspectives of those on the ground.


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Lessons from Elsewhere: Considering Teams, Rethinking Leadership

What Resonates? What Doesn’t? What Can We Learn?

1. Extreme doggedness & focus
2. Testing the limits of the rules
3. A willingness to do thankless jobs in the shadows
4. A low-key, practical and democratic communication style
5. Motivates others with passionate nonverbal displays
6. Strong convictions and the courage to stand apart
7. Ironclad emotional control
Which elements are most important?

Which are easiest and hardest to cultivate in self and others?

What’s missing?

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Thank you!

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