



Leading as an Interpretive Practice

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- “Education is the ability to perceive the hidden connections between phenomena.”

Vaclav Havel



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS?

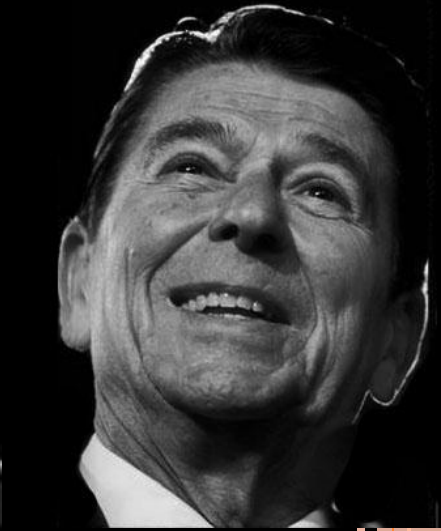
- studies of teachers with **extensive** records of effectiveness show that
- there are no common (and few prevalent) **practices**
- however, there are some strikingly similar **dispositions** – e.g.,
 - really “listen” to their students
 - actively engage in research and professional development
 - **high complexity**
 - **expansive consciousness**

Note that these 2 are *not* represented in *any* teaching quality standard document.



“LOW COMPLEXITY” PEOPLE TEND TO ...

- see the world in absolute, black-&-white terms
- lack (and perhaps avoid) diversity among peers and advisers
- be very rigid, ideologically
- focus on what they perceive as **the** reality



“HIGH COMPLEXITY” PEOPLE TEND TO ...

- seek out novel information across diverse categories
- change attitude more easily when presented with compelling evidence
- generate unusual (& often remote) views and actions
- integrate & relate complex patterns of many elements



WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT BECOMING 'HIGH COMPLEXITY'

- Certain activities help –
 - parenting,
 - teamsports (participating; coaching),
 - community organization/participation –
... *briefly*, social engagements that require ongoing **interpretation**, **negotiation**, and **adaptation**.
- Certain positionings help –
 - racial, gender, sexual minorities and/or oppressed groups –
... briefly, positionings that prompt awarenesses of **D**iscourses.
- It takes a long time in a new enterprise –
 - 10,000 hours of supported effort.
- *Deciding* to have an **expansive consciousness** really seems to matter.





HMM ...

... consciousness comes in different sizes?

ROBERT KEGAN'S (POST-PIAGETIAN) LIFE-STAGES:

Self-Authoring Consciousness

- some, but not many
- able to examine and mediate among various rule systems
- more expansive awareness of what's going on in the world
- tendency to focus on the implications for "us"
- self-guided, self-motivated, self-evaluative – takes personal responsibility.



Self-Transforming Consciousness

- hardly anyone
- the 'wise' in western culture
- others and objects aren't seen as separate; world is not seen in terms of polarities or clear-cut categories
- mindful participation in ongoing transformations replaces desire to cause specific changes.



AND SO ...?

- Experienced teachers are **much** more likely than the general population to manifest expansive levels of consciousness.
- Why?



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 - ... briefly, social engagements that require ongoing **interpretation, negotiation, and adaptation.**
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 - ... briefly, positionings that prompt awarenesses of **Discourses.**
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MOVING UP A LEVEL

Can we make a leap from the dispositions of **highly effective teachers** and the dispositions of **highly effective leaders**?

One popular belief about effective leaders:

highly effective = ability to prompt organizational change

which means ...



COMMONSENSE BELIEFS ABOUT EFFECTIVE LEADERS:

- have a vision
- caring and empathetic
- very strategic
- highly organized
- charismatic
- extroverts
- driven



BUT IS THIS REALLY TRUE?

- There are leaders who
 - do not have an obvious “vision”
 - are not identified as caring or empathetic
 - do not appear to be “strategic”
 - would not claim to be (or be seen to be) organized
 - are not charismatic
 - are not extroverted
 - are not “driven”

But they do demonstrate “**expanded consciousness**”
which means.....



HIGH COMPLEXITY LEADERS ...

- are “close readers” of the discourses that orient their organizations
- approach leadership with an ethnographic attitude
- are curious about how things work
- are interested in what others think
- know that large organizational changes will occur through many small, but connected, shifts in perception
- actively seek to create a “learning organization”



LEADERS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE *LEARNING* ORGANIZATIONS :

- function as the “**consciousness of the collective**” for the organization
- are able to **transform their own “consciousness”** as the organization continues to learn
- “vision” is informed by **interpretive capabilities** enhanced by **learned dispositions**

