THE ESSENCE OF LEADERSHIP

A position paper on leadership and its implications on leadership development
"LEADERSHIP IS ONE OF THE MOST OBSERVED AND LEAST UNDERSTOOD PHENOMENA ON THE EARTH."

(Burns, 1978, p.2).
We encounter the word ‘leadership’ daily, and undoubtedly, people place a lot of emphasis on the impact of leadership. One of the Singapore Public Service’s principles of governance that guides our policies declares that ‘leadership is key’. It is a pillar in Singapore’s governance strategy. ILOD believes it is key because it is the main component that releases the potential of other components that are important to good governance and organisational effectiveness. Leadership has a multiplier effect in the Public Service. Leadership influences strategy, people and processes, and leadership practices create ripple effects through the organisation.

As the Institute of Leadership & Organisation Development (ILOD), our mission is to provide leadership assessment, leadership development and leadership research services with the aim of developing a pipeline of talent that is inspired to lead and drive change within the Public Service. To do this effectively, we have come to a point where we feel a need to articulate what we believe leadership to be. Having a point of view does not exclude other approaches to leadership or leadership development, but it serves as a foundational platform that anchors our formulation and design of leadership assessment and development interventions. As a leadership development institution, we must regularly examine our assumptions and strive to find the very best methodology with the best possibility of successfully increasing leadership capacity in the Singapore Public Service. A point of view allows us to do just that – it forms the datum against which we can test our activities and thinking.

At the same time, ILOD sees itself as a place where we can, in some way, push the thinking of leadership in the Public Service. How we see leadership is important, because our view of leadership will affect our practice of it. Burns, in 1978, with the intention of raising the bar of leadership practice, stated that “we know far too little about leadership... we fail to grasp the essence of leadership that is relevant to the modern age”. We believe that in the last 30 years since, the study of leadership has moved on and the field has expanded in its understanding of leadership. In consolidating and articulating what we have come to know, ILOD hopes that such an explicit framing of what leadership is would help us, as a Public Service, deepen our practice of leadership in a way that is relevant to our current day.

This paper is written to express what we believe leadership is and should be about in today's context, and what this implies for leadership development.
Views of leadership are inevitably shaped by context, and much of the thinking about leadership in the past century had been shaped by the industrial era. Leadership theories and practice were forged within that paradigm. Within that paradigm, where work and business were organised around hierarchies, leaders were equated with managers. In essence, leadership was seen as good management (Rost, 1991, Ciulla, 1995). Much of these leadership conceptualisations were developed around the idea that organisational goals should be rationally derived and activities should be centrally structured to achieve those goals (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). Within this framework, leaders were generally equated to those holding positions of authority with formal responsibility over followers. DeRue (2011) reported that “most leadership theories and empirical research are grounded in a context of supervisor–subordinate relationships whereby the supervisor is conceived of as the leader and the subordinate as the follower”. Certainly, the main schools of leadership - trait theories of leadership (where efforts were made to identify characteristics that determined leaders and leadership effectiveness); behavioural and situational theories of leadership (where theorists sought to categorise effective leadership behaviours and match them to various managerial contexts), and visionary/charismatic leadership models (that emphasise heroic top-down leadership) - were all mainly grounded in a bureaucratic framework more relevant to the industrial paradigm. They sought to uncover what makes the positional leader effective and successful.

However, as we experience more of the realities of the knowledge economy, there is a growing realisation that effective leadership does not necessarily reside in the leader or even in actions done by the leader, but as a result of the interactions between people (Lichtenstein, et al, 2006). Peter Drucker (1998) wrote that “as we advance deeper into the knowledge economy, the basic assumptions underlying much of what is taught and practiced in the name of management are hopelessly out of date... most of our assumptions about business, technology and organisation are at least 50 years old. They have outlived their time... we are preaching, teaching and practicing policies that are increasingly at odds with reality and therefore counterproductive”. The world that we live in has become increasingly complex and challenging. In this knowledge economy, the rapid production of knowledge and innovation is critical to an organisation’s survival (Hitt, 1998). The leadership paradigm of the industrial era can no longer service today’s organisation well. In the past, when issues may be complicated but not complex, it was still feasible for positional managers to make decisions, take full control of organisations, and set the direction while others follow. In a knowledge economy, power, in the sense of potency or legitimacy to act, is becoming more diffused. In the modern day connected world, where everything is connected to everything, change happens at incredible rates and in unpredictable ways. In the current age, it is impossible for a single group of persons to hold all the knowledge and understanding necessary to lead an organisation. The leadership paradigm that is relevant for today’s context needs to be one that induces leadership that is interactive and dynamic through which adaptive outcomes emerge (Uhl-Bien, et al, 2007).

Our world is one where these two realities co-exist. In large organisations such as the Singapore Public Service, hierarchies and bureaucracies are needed, and yet operating in today’s media-connected, globalised and complex world requires us to practise a leadership that enables an organisation to be more adaptive in response to shifting environments.

We need to recognise the ways leadership can be framed, and understand the nuances between these framings, in order to best formulate leadership practices that suit our current context.
WHAT DEFINES LEADERSHIP?

We do not start out seeking to put together a definition for leadership. There are many definitions for leadership and leadership theorists have commented that “there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (Stogdill, 1974). However, we do seek to understand the common threads that cut across these conceptions of leadership. Recent leadership thinkers believe that even though there are myriad of definitions of leadership, under that diversity lies a unifying substructure that is beyond question within the field of study (Drath, McCauley, Palus, Van Velsor, O’Connor & McGuire, 2008). We want to understand what defines leadership, as in what it essentially constitutes. We would also like to push the boundaries of how we commonly understand leadership and arrive at a point of view about leadership that would enable us, as a Public Service, to enhance the way we lead in today’s context.

From our review of leadership studies, we believe that we need to view leadership from three perspectives in order to fully appreciate its essence:

1. The process of leadership – when can we say that leadership is happening?

2. The effects of leadership – when can we say that leadership is effective?

3. The intention and outcomes of leadership – when can we say that leadership is good?
Influence is probably the universal theme that integrates most of current day leadership definitions (Bolden, 2004, Northhouse, 2004, Yukl, 2002). Rost (1991) wrote that “if there are few other unifying elements to our collective thought about leadership, the notion of leadership as influence is one that clearly stands out”. Scanning how scholars and practitioners have defined leadership, Yukl, (2002) concludes that “most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation”.

While acts of influence are undertaken by people, the ‘influencer’ and the ‘one being influenced’ are not fixed; the process of influence is not static or uni-dimensional. It is a process of mutual and reciprocal influence. This process is leadership. “Scholars commonly define leadership as a social process of mutual and reciprocal influence in service of accomplishing a collective goal (Bass & Bass, 2008; Yukl, 2010)” (DeRue, 2011).
The process of influencing is based on personal power. Influence can be defined as the process of using persuasion to have an impact on other people in a relationship (Bell, 1975). The ability to influence others is essentially linked to the power one has to persuade, and persuasive ‘power’ refers to the means that one possesses to potentially influence others. Although we commonly associate ‘power’ with the ability to exert force or authority, in the context of influencing, its meaning extends beyond this. Apart from position, authority and coercive potential, examples of power resources include referent power (i.e., followers’ identification with the leader), expertise, reputation, credibility, personality, relational abilities, and so on (Rost 1991, 1964; French & Raven, 1968). In fact, the sole use of positional authority and coercion to move others is antithetical to influence relationships and is outside the process of influence in that it forces someone to do something against the person’s will. It is different from leadership. Thus, the ability to lead others requires that one has the personal power to influence that goes beyond the sole use of authority and position, and the skill to deploy that power.

The process of leadership is relational and dynamic. The people involved in this influence relationship are leaders and followers. Bennis (2007) notes that “in its simplest form [leadership] is a tripod—a leader or leaders, followers, and a common goal they want to achieve”. The terms ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ are not role-labels, but merely descriptive terms in that relationship of influence. Leaders are not equated with managers (or position/office holders) and followers are not equated with subordinates. If leadership is a process, rather than a description of a hierarchical relationship, then the influence dynamics are multi-directional. The interactions are vertical, horizontal, diagonal and circular (Rost, 1991). This means that different people may lead at different times, based on their power of influence. Thus, there will be circumstances when leadership occurs when a subordinate in an organisational context influences the manager based on his expertise and relational capabilities. In a way, the term ‘follower’ implies passivity, however, in reality, followers are not passive, they are active players in the influence process – it is not a case where leaders act and followers react. The dynamics of the process is leadership (Wagemen, 2007, Rost 1991). Leadership is thus not something that a leader does to followers, leadership is what a leader and a follower do together. It is a dynamic process.

Expanding on this, we would like to make two points:

Foster (1989) stated: “The idea that leadership occurs within a community suggests that ultimately leadership resides in the community itself... Leadership, then, is not a function of position but rather represents a conjunction of ideas where leadership is shared and transferred between leaders and followers, each only a temporary designation. Indeed, history will identify an individual as the leader, but in reality the job is one in which various members of the community contribute. Leaders and followers become interchangeable.”
The Facilitative Effects of Leadership – Direction, Alignment and Commitment

It needs to be stated that not all processes of influence is leadership. For instance, a selling process is an influence process but it is not necessarily leadership. Drath et al. (2008) proposes that a leadership process has to result in three essential effects. Effective leadership – as a process of influence – has to result in the following effects:

1. **Direction** – where there is a level of collective agreement of goals, aims, and mission. Having a shared sense of direction means that people see the value of the direction and have a shared understanding of what the goals and aims entail.

2. **Alignment** – where there is a collective lining up of resources, knowledge and work. This refers to the organisation and coordination of knowledge and work in a way where there is a level of coherence of work activities.

3. **Commitment** – where there is a willingness of individuals to subsume their own efforts and interests within the collective effort and interests. In this situation, the group achieves a level of mutual commitment and members allow others to make demands on their time and energy.

In the same way that the process of influence is dynamic and adaptive, attaining a sense of shared direction, alignment and mutual commitment (DAC) is not a one-time effort. It is ever-changing and there needs to be a constant adaptation to the requirements of the context. Drath, et al. (2008) notes that “leadership must aim at not just producing DAC, but continually re-creating, reframing and developing DAC”.

Another way of seeing it is that leadership, as a process, provides the **meaning, structure and value** necessary for purposeful action (Heron, 1999; Little, 2010) – **meaning** related to purposeful end states that create a sense of direction; **structure** that mobilises resources in a way that creates alignment and synchronisation; and the **valuing** of people and ideas that creates commitment and resonance. Thus, leadership as a process of influence, does not necessarily mean the persuasion of others to a particular viewpoint, but a facilitative one that creates a platform for collaborative action.
The Intention and Outcomes of Leadership

Leadership also has something to do with the good and the bad. We know good leadership when we see it, experience it, receive it and are affected by it. In the same way, the opposite is true – we can recognise bad leadership.

ILOD believes that leadership cannot be ethically or morally agnostic. It is imperative for leadership to have a moral angle. While the question of ‘what is leadership’ is essentially a descriptive one, the question of ‘what is good leadership’ is a normative one – it seeks to uncover what leadership ought to be.

Merely seeing leadership as a process of influence that leads to several effects, without making a statement about the qualitative nature of the effect or outcome, would be tantamount to taking a morally neutral view of leadership. We would have described what is effective leadership, not what is good leadership. However, as Bennis (2007) puts it, “leadership is always, in some sense, a matter of values”. In talking about leadership, we must ask ourselves, “Leadership for what purpose?” This is important because of what leadership is – influence; it is a multiplier. This means that “in leadership we see morality magnified” (Ciulla, 2004). In addition, because leadership is relational, and because leadership relations have to do with properties such as power, influence, authority, vision, obligation and responsibility, leadership is intrinsically linked to morality. This means that as much as morality is about issues of “right and wrong, or good and evil in relation to the actions, volitions, or character of human beings” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1991), leadership has also something to do with these issues.
We see two key aspects defining the moral aspect of leadership. In simple terms, they relate to the ‘rightness’ of a leadership process and its outcomes. In other words, it is about the morality of means and ends. Without being absolutely prescriptive about what ‘rightness’ constitutes, first, we see the leadership process as being characterised by sincerity in how influence is exercised, and by the service attitude behind it. Second, we see that leadership needs to be transformative in terms of its outcomes – meaning that it brings about real change in attitudes, norms, institutions, services and goods that fill our daily lives.

**Leadership sincerity and other-centeredness.** We expect that an expression of leadership influence be built upon authentic power characterised by genuineness and truth. The use of knowledge, inquiry, dialogue, and charisma, for example, are all legitimate influence bases, but deceptiveness, manipulation, or hypocrisy will certainly erode the integrity of leadership. Needless to say, coercion and intimidation cannot be classified as justifiable leadership behaviours. In terms of attitude, certainly we cannot expect good leadership to be one that is in service of the self. Good leadership should be centred on the service to others. Therefore, one of the underlying characteristics of good leadership is the attitude of service – service to the team, the organisation, community and nation. According to Rude (2003), leadership characterised by service is about “distancing oneself from using power, influence and position to serve self, and instead gravitating to a position where these instruments are used to empower, enable and encourage those who are within one’s circle of influence”.

**Positive transformative outcomes.** In 1978, Burns proposed that leadership needs to be transformative, in that leadership happens when “one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (1978, p. 20). Thus, transforming leadership, as conceived of by Burns (1978), is an “ethical, moral enterprise, through which the integrity of the organisation would be maintained and enhanced’. Effectively, he proposed that the term ‘leaders’ should only be reserved for those whose authority rests on a moral position and whose influence has the effect of raising the moral awareness of followers. Burns also stressed that leadership was a process of mutual transformation, a dynamic reciprocal process in which both leaders and followers were influenced by one another and that the nature of the influence was essentially ethical. “Divorced from ethics, leadership is reduced to management and politics to mere technique” (Burns, 1978). Therefore, leadership emerges in the service of the wants, needs, or aspirations of others, and results in beneficial social change.

While this sounds lofty, and it is tempting to think of leadership in terms of exceptional individuals and outstanding actions, most leadership is about everyday leadership. We believe that this can be evidenced in the mundane. Transformational action can be found in the creation of meaningful work, conducive workplaces or a developmental performance appraisal - as much as it may be evidenced in the efforts of re-working the Public Service to deliver greater public value through greater engagement.
RE-FRAMING LEADERSHIP FOR TODAY

We have made several defining statements about leadership:

- It is an influence process – whereby the dynamic persuasive interaction between leaders and followers results in leadership happening. They do leadership together.
- This process has the facilitative effect of creating shared direction, alignment of efforts and a level of mutual commitment.
- This process stems from an intention for good and an attitude to serve, and ultimately results in positive transformation.

Reframing leadership in this way allows us to expand our notions of leadership beyond that of positional leadership and leadership as embodied by a limited group of gifted individuals. If leadership is in essence a process of influence, then it follows that leadership (the process) is really separate from positions and it expands beyond those that hold positions. Therefore “the exercise of leadership stands above and beyond positional authority, or in other words, depends upon the authority that people find in themselves, and that derives from their integrity, their capability and their commitment to the common good” (Little, 2010). Holding a formal leadership position does not necessarily mean that a person exercises leadership. Conversely, one does not have to be in some position of leadership to exercise good leadership.
Seeing leadership this way gives rise to the possibility of greater and more rapid adaptation. Because the leading-following process is not entirely constrained by formal structures, the direction of influence is adaptive— influence can move downwards, upwards, or side-wards— according to group needs. In the structural leadership paradigm, order is achieved from the imposition of an overall plan by a central authority. However, when leadership happens as an influence process, order is obtained when satisfactory outcomes are attained as a result of inter-personal interaction. As individuals struggle with and influence each other over conflicting needs, goals, ideas or perspectives, it results in movements of ideas, worldviews, paradigms, technologies and cooperative efforts. It results in adaptive alignment (Plowman et al., 2004). Thus, “as group needs change, the pattern of leading–following interactions and the resulting leadership structures can evolve in ways that enable groups to adapt and remain viable in dynamic contexts” (DeRue, 2011).

There is a growing awareness that the expression of this form of leadership is crucial to the effective functioning and survival of organisations in today’s context. In our current reality, which is marked by complexity and fast-paced change, there will be an increasing number of situations where positional leaders will not have ‘sufficient and relevant information to make highly effective decisions’ (Pearce and Conger, 2003). An organisation would be more adaptive, responsive and effective to the extent that it is able to foster and harness leadership as it emerges through the social exchange of its constituents. In other words, it practises a shared form of leadership, that is collective in nature and distributed throughout the organisation, and where knowledge and wisdom is drawn from the collective rather than the individual leader. In this way, an organisation becomes leaderful (Raelin, 2005). Petrie (2011) writes that today’s ‘adaptive challenges call for collaboration between various stakeholders who each hold a different aspect of the reality and many of whom must themselves adapt and grow if the problem is to be solved. These collectives, who often cross geographies, reporting lines, and organisations, need to collaboratively share information, create plans, influence each other, and make decisions... (it is) the end of an era dominated by individual leaders, and the beginning of another which embraces networks of leadership’.
THE ROLE OF POSITIONAL LEADERSHIP

What are the roles of positional leaders then? If the potential to lead is in everyone, and anyone can exercise influence, then where is the place for positional leaders?

It is important to recognise the reality of formal positional leadership, that is, leadership is exercised by persons in positions of authority. Organisations need coordination and most organisations are structured in a way to plan and focus efforts, control costs and allocate resources in order to achieve goals (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Positional leadership authority is needed to provide such management functions. However, the use of positional leadership authority can also hinder the manifestation of non-positional leadership (the sort of emergent leadership described previously). Thus the role of positional leaders should not be limited to aligning individuals’ functions and work to organisational goals, but should also expand to include the responsibility to create the context and conditions for leadership to emerge (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Structural leadership needs to work in sync with emergent forms of leadership.

Positional leaders, by virtue of the functions they hold, play a critical role in providing the platform for the emergence of leadership from group processes and interactions. To do this effectively, positional leadership needs to play several roles.

1. First, they need to play an enabling role. This is done by being deliberate in efforts to create conditions that enable shared leadership to take place. In today’s organisations, shared leadership does not occur naturally and the default is for people to look to those in positions of authority for leadership. Therefore, the positional leader has to be intentional and conscientious about what he/she promotes and reinforces through his/her words and behaviours. The positional leader also enables shared leadership through the design of teams and through paying attention to team processes.

2. Second, the positional leader needs to pay special attention to the intersections between hierarchy and informal leadership. In an organisation where shared leadership happens, it is inevitable that this leadership gets entangled with formal management structures and processes. Thus a second role of the position leader is to ensure that the boundaries are managed and these two functions are aligned.

3. Third, positional leaders can also facilitate the capability of groups to manifest good shared leadership by taking a developmental stance with individuals and teams, ensuring that teams are coached to engaged in an influence process, and that efforts are constantly calibrated towards clear purpose. Focusing on development also ensures that learning takes place amidst activity and that leadership remains adaptive.

4. Finally, positional leadership can play the important role of ensuring that the practice of leadership is underpinned by a strong moral compass to ensure that the flexible and adaptive nature of collective leadership is balanced by the rootedness of values.
These roles are elaborated in the following paragraphs:

1. Enabling Leadership

Positional leaders have the responsibility to play an enabling leadership function. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007), sees this function as the deliberate creation of the conditions that give space for leadership, as a process, to emerge. To do this, positional leaders need to focus their attention on fostering an autonomy of individuals and groups and decreasing their perceived dependency on positional leaders and hierarchy. They also need to foster greater interaction and interdependency within groups or teams, and between groups, the organisation and its context.

Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) proposes that positional leaders can do this most effectively by paying attention to team design and processes:

- **Team Design and Structure** - Positional leaders are largely responsible for the design (and re-design) of the team – including the development of team purpose, structure, protocols, expectations, roles, norms and culture. Thus, they have a large influence on how conducive the internal team environment is for shared leadership to emerge. A key role they therefore play is the creation of the organisational and structural conditions that facilitate the emergence of informal leadership in appropriate situations. A major part of structuring a team for collective leadership is the facilitation of a shared overall purpose (Pearce, 2004). This is key because a purpose that is clear and owned by all increases the willingness of the team to share in leadership responsibilities and actions (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007). Structural rules might also be formulated to create interaction and interdependency, for example, Microsoft requires programmer teams to periodically run their code against other programmers and resolve incompatibilities together, thus creating adaptability and innovation while ensuring coordinated action (Uhl-Bien et al., 2008).

- **Team Processes** - Positional leaders also need to be mindful of the team processes and make efforts to encourage a culture that allows leadership emergence to happen. Carson et al. (2007), and also Wageman (2001), found that by focusing on encouraging and reinforcing leadership actions among team members, positional leaders foster a sense of self-competence and inter-dependence among team members. An environment where there is emotional-psychological support between team members and a mutual valuing of individual strengths allows for safe debate and mutual influence to take place. By deliberately not exercising hierarchical power in problem-solving and decision-making, positional leaders allow for greater ‘voice’ to emerge. ‘Voice’ connotes participation and input and is associated with higher levels of social influence in organisations (Carson et al., 2007).
2. Boundary Leadership

In a 2011 issue of the Harvard Business Review, Gary Hamel wrote about a 400 employee, US$700 million-in-yearly-revenue, organisation – Morning Star – that has no positional leaders or titles. In this unique company that is a global market leader, no one has a boss, everyone negotiates responsibilities with each other and people lead themselves. However, it is very rare for any organisation not to have any management and bureaucratic functions such as planning and coordination, budget control, or resource allocation. These functions and actions generally come within the scope of responsibilities of positional leaders. These management (and mostly top-down) functions interact dynamically with informal leadership and may facilitate or oppose one another – they act in ‘entanglement’ (Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007). Positional leaders need to deliberately and clearly manage this entanglement in order to allow management functions and process leadership to align and function in tandem with each other, so that process leadership can ‘augment the strategic needs’ of formal managerial structures. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) also highlight several ways that positional leadership can help keep formal and informal leadership processes working in alignment to increase organisational effectiveness, as opposed to working against each other:

- Positional leaders can ensure that the policies, plans, and decisions of formal leadership structures accommodate the needs of informal leadership processes.
- Positional leaders can also make sure that resources, such as money, supplies, physical space and especially, information, support informal leadership functions.
- Positional leaders can facilitate the transfer of outputs generated by informal leadership into the formal management processes – to champion ideas and outputs generated by informal leadership processes.

3. Developmental Leadership

Carson, et al. (2007) found that the supportive coaching behaviours demonstrated by positional leaders are crucial in facilitating the development of shared leadership in teams and organisations. Through coaching, positional leaders can help team members gain a sense of self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities to engage in leadership. Thus, an important function of positional leadership is to support team leadership by helping team members gain clarity on how to best manage their work and processes in a way that aligns with the team’s purpose, and not to direct or ‘lead’ the team. Through coaching, positional leaders can also help others discover their personal strengths that they can use in the process of influence, thus helping others discover their leadership potential.

Apart from providing coaching leadership, positional leaders can also focus on ensuring that learning takes place as tasks and activities take place. Revans (1982) observed that organisations were poor at adapting to changes in their environment because they had no collectivised way of learning from their experiences, relying as they did on a handful of people to do all the scanning and thinking. Allowing shared leadership to emerge ensures that everyone engages in sensemaking and thinking. However, individual and collective learning does not take place automatically and positional leaders can play a crucial part in making sure that people make deliberate learning pauses.
4. Ethical Leadership

Moral and ethical behaviour is the responsibility of everyone and every person who influences others. Burns’ (1978) exhortation is that real leadership has to raise “the levels of motivation and morality” and to maintain and enhance the integrity of the organisation. However, by virtue of the offices they hold, positional leaders have the formal obligation of exercising and promoting ethical leadership – in themselves and in others. Two reasons underlie this responsibility:

- First, positional leaders have access to formal structures, systems and sources of authority and thus have a broader base to act – to enhance or erode organisational morality.

- Second, formal power and status enhance a person’s salience, making it more likely that others will pay attention to the person’s modelled behaviour and emphases (Brown & Trevino, 2006).

Therefore, we see positional leaders as having the responsibility of *activating a consciousness of the morality* within the leadership process. This refers to a formal leader’s proactive efforts to influence the ethical practices of others by making ‘ethics an explicit part of their leadership agenda, by communicating an ethics and values message, by visibly and intentionally role modeling ethical behavior, and by using the reward system (rewards and discipline) to hold followers accountable for ethical conduct’ (Brown & Trevino, 2006).
Viewing leadership as primarily positional and dependent on the ‘leader’ meant that the primary focus of leadership development was on individual leaders. The emphasis was on the continual expansion of the individual’s knowledge and skills that are deemed necessary to solve organisational problems. However, as we reframe leadership, there is a need to review how we develop the capacity of an individual to lead, and consider how to build the capacity of the Singapore Public Service, as a whole, to exercise collective leadership.

Day (2000) makes the distinction between leader development and leadership development. Leader development is about developing individuals in leadership roles, while leadership development is concerned with the development of collective organisational capacity to manifest leadership. Leader development builds the intrapersonal competence for selected individuals, and leadership development focuses on creating interpersonal networks, infrastructure, cooperation that enables leadership emergence. While the two are distinct, they are inextricably linked – positional leaders affect organisational leadership capacity.

In a recent white paper by the Centre for Creative Leadership, Petrie (2011) noted several organisational factors that develop a leadership that is spread throughout a network of people, including:

- Open flows of information
- Flexible hierarchies
- Distributed resources
- Distributed decision-making
- Loosening up of centralised controls

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
Developing Positional Leaders

Apart from interventions at the organisational level, a strong focus needs to be placed on the development of positional leaders. Positional leaders have the formal power needed in an organisation to change systems and processes, and have an enormous influence on organisational culture. Therefore the development of positional leaders is a key strategy in the enhancement of collective leadership capacity in an organisation (Pierce, 2004).

From their research, Day et al. (2009) write that the “greater ‘distribution of leadership’ outside of those in formally established roles usually depends on quite intentional intervention on the part of those in formal leadership roles”.

However, many current positional leaders have developed their leadership practice within the industrial-economy paradigm of leadership. As a result, as much as they have been effective in leading hierarchy-based organisation by being skilled in management, they are not as equipped to facilitate the emergence of collective leadership needed for today’s knowledge-economy workplace. In line with this, a recent ILOD study of our public service leadership competencies (Goh & Goh, 2011) found that public servants perceive a need to shift from leadership capabilities that have a strong management and accountability focus (results orientation) to ones that balance results with change orientation; and from leadership that emphasise authority (stature and one-way communication) to leadership that is focused on engaging and enabling.

To enable positional leaders to be more effective at building the collective leadership capacity of an organisation, we see several focal areas for leader development:

1 Expanding Leadership Understanding

First, there needs to be an expansion of leadership understanding. Our worldviews and assumptions have a strong (conscious or unconscious) influence on our actions and behaviours, and how positional leaders manage others is undoubtedly affected by their view of leadership. Positional leaders need to have the lenses to view leadership in its various forms and to differentiate their hierarchical leadership influence from informal leadership processes. Only when they can see the possibility of a leadership that emerges from collective influence, and the potential for such a leadership to deal more effectively with a complex knowledge-based world, will they be able to enable and engage with shared leadership in the organisation. It is not easy for leaders to challenge their own assumptions of leadership. This is especially true as shifts not only need to happen in the cognitive realm, but accepting this emotionally is also important. Often, such shifts involve issues about one’s own sense of identity, relevance and competence.
Building Capacity to Influence, Engage and to Follow

The more positional leaders depend on hierarchical power to manage teams and individuals, the lesser will be the possibility of shared leadership. To avoid this, positional leaders need to be attuned to their own strengths and be able to activate their various power-bases to influence, and to fully engage in the process without reference (explicit or non-explicit) to hierarchy. This requires positional leaders to develop a greater level of self-awareness – awareness of their own strengths upon which they can build their influence, and awareness of their own limitations, and when it is timely for them to submit to the strengths of others.

As leadership requires that both ‘leader’ and ‘follower’ do leadership together, it is important that positional leaders who desire to be engaged fully in the leadership process learn to do ‘followership’. If people have developed their leadership based upon the assumption that they need to carry the sole responsibility for solutions, making the decisions and setting the direction, then they would have developed leadership habits that would usually place them in a stance where they are ‘telling’ or, at best, ‘selling’, rather than inquiring or submitting. In a way, positional leaders need to develop the ability to give up control. But, as much as there are attitudinal shifts to be made, some key skills are also required to be practised - positional leaders need to learn the skills of facilitating dialogue, appreciative inquiry and engaged listening.

Enhancing Ability to Coach and Facilitate Learning

As the focus of positional leadership shifts from directing others to facilitating leadership in others and ensuring organisational learning, then positional leaders need to develop the ability to coach and facilitate learning. In order to spot and bring to the surface the leadership potential in others, it would be important for positional leadership to cultivate a coaching mindset and build a set of coaching-related skills. To effectively develop the leadership potential in others, the positional leader needs to be able, through dialogue, to help others gain clarity of goals and discover solutions, while placing a strong emphasis on learning. This requires positional leaders to develop skills of rapport and building, purposeful questioning, and a good awareness of self and others. Positional leaders also need to cultivate the ability to help teams probe beneath the surface of results and tasks, reflect on the process, and harvest lessons that would enhance future organisational effectiveness. Once again, this requires positional leaders to build skills related to facilitation, inquiry and questioning.
An understanding of organisations, teams and organisational culture is an important base for positional leaders to have in order to exercise enabling leadership. Being able to see clearly how structure affects behaviours, how team dynamics evolve, and how team culture is shaped, for example, would allow positional leaders to better design, structure and influence teams. A better grasp of the science of organisational development, and being able to perceptively recognise the 'softer' aspects of organisational functioning, helps leaders be more conscious of how to shape their own initiatives and behaviours in a way that encourages collective leadership expression. As collective leadership in organisations is strongly determined by organisational culture, it would be important for positional leaders to understand what influences an organisation’s culture and what levers can be used to influence the type of culture an organisation develops.

There is a responsibility of the positional leader to ensure the expressed leadership is “morally purposeful” (Burns, 1978), that all players are ‘raised up through levels of morality’ as opposed to a downward spiral. As positional leaders ‘let go’ and enable leadership to emerge from the interactive dynamics between individuals, they have to maintain a keen eye on the ‘goodness’ of both process and outcomes. This requires positional leaders to develop a sensitivity to the potential moral implications of daily actions, which requires them to see leadership as a fully ethical task and frame actions in ethical terms (Freeman and Stewart, 2006). It is not possible for any programme to develop the morality of any positional leader. However, opportunities can be created for people to reflect and engage more with their own values and their sense of right and goodness in leadership, and to gain a deeper consciousness of their own purpose behind their leadership. Positional leaders should regularly grapple with the effects of their behaviours on others and themselves, and seek to clarify the ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ of their influence and the values that drive their practice.
Cultivating a Level of Mindfulness in Leadership Practice

Mindfulness is basically being very aware and conscious of the factors in the moment – of self, of others and situations. It is a state in which an individual deliberately focuses attention on present (internal and external) experiences, in an open, non-judgmental way while regulating his/her personal assumptions and preconceptions. To best fan the emergence of collective leadership, positional leaders need to cultivate a level of mindfulness in their leadership practice. There are several reasons for this: Positional leaders need to be mindful of their own presence in a team and how their position affects their influence, and how they can engage at a level that does not invoke position power. They have to be very aware of the demands of each work situation and of the form of leadership which is most needed by that situation. They need to be keenly conscious of their own actions and behaviours and how they affect the type of team culture being formed. They also need to be mindful of their own ego needs and how they influence their exercise of power. Finally, they have to be very attentive to the implications of each leadership interaction, their outcomes, and to the general moral state of the team.

The capacity to increase one's self-awareness emerges as a central quality to many of the capabilities listed above. Leadership development needs to be very deliberate in building the capacity of positional leaders to habitually seek feedback and engage in continual reflection. This practice creates the space and inputs needed for positional leaders to enhance their self-awareness and cultivate their ability to build mindfulness.
“THE IDEA THAT LEADERSHIP OCCURS WITHIN A COMMUNITY SUGGESTS THAT ULTIMATELY LEADERSHIP RESIDES IN THE COMMUNITY ITSELF.

(Foster, 1980).
Surveying 686 managers across the Civil Service, a recent ILOD study on Public Service leadership competencies uncovered factors driving the greater demands put on Public Service leadership – change, complexity and social trends seem to be the main drivers for the anticipated changes in competencies important as people look towards the future (Goh & Goh, 2011). With growing complexity, increasing rates of change, higher public expectations, a changing society’s needs, and the altering nature of the workforce, Singapore Public Service managers anticipate that more will be required from leadership in future. In particular, leadership practice needs to be better at:

- **Leadership and Engagement**: Inspiring and promoting a vision, motivating others towards higher performance, influencing to bring out the best in people, creating positive attitudes and organisational commitment.
- **Leading Change**: Facilitating organisational change and transformation, introducing and creating needed change, translating vision into reality, generating new ideas and seizing opportunities.
- **Developing People**: Coaching, developing, and encouraging growth, tracking progress and the development of people, managing performance.

It is unlikely that such a leadership practice will be achievable if leadership responsibility rests only on a handful of people. There needs to be a fundamental shift in our framing of leadership in order to see the shared direction, alignment and commitment that people expect to see.
In 2012, a working committee with the mandate of redefining how the Singapore Public Service delivers public value presented its recommendations. The committee highlighted the several factors that define the context we operate in: an increasingly sophisticated and vocal public, a complex operating environment and an evolving public service workforce. They suggested a new mode of governance that will transform how the Public Service delivers public value. This is characterised by empathetic policy making that has its ear to the ground, engaged governance that is connected with citizens, a networked government that works across boundaries in a web of diverse relationships, and a dynamic Public Service that is integrated and adaptive.

This macro endeavour of Public Service transformation towards a more adaptive Service in today’s complex environment needs to be built upon the micro interactions and behaviours of leadership. The paradigm of leadership needs to shift away from a positional or individuals-based leadership to one that is shared, distributed and collective. In addition, this reframing of what leadership is needs to be widespread. If positional leaders embrace and enable this, a greater emergence of shared leadership will be experienced across the Service.

Concluding Remarks

We have made the argument for the need for shared leadership to be more pervasive in the Singapore Public Service. While this has been emphasised, it needs to be recognised that leadership needs to take a variety of forms that coexist alongside one another. There will not and should not be one ‘right way’ of leading but an appropriate blend of individual and shared influence (Bolden, 2011). Bolden, et al. (2011) stresses that ‘the question, therefore, is not one of vertical versus shared leadership, but rather how can we develop an appropriate mix for the situation and task?”
REFERENCES


