

Adaptive Leadership

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Getting to know each other

Tell us a story about someone whose exercise of leadership you admire and why?

1. What comes out in all these stories?
2. What of that (leadership style) do you have in yourself?
3. What does leadership mean to you?

Leadership

Leadership is process of change agents mobilizing ideas, people, and resources to make progress in attaining complex shared objectives.

Leadership is difficult because It is about the distribution of loss

Understand resistance you are getting: it is not because people are not getting it, but because they don't like it. What people resist is not change per se, but loss.

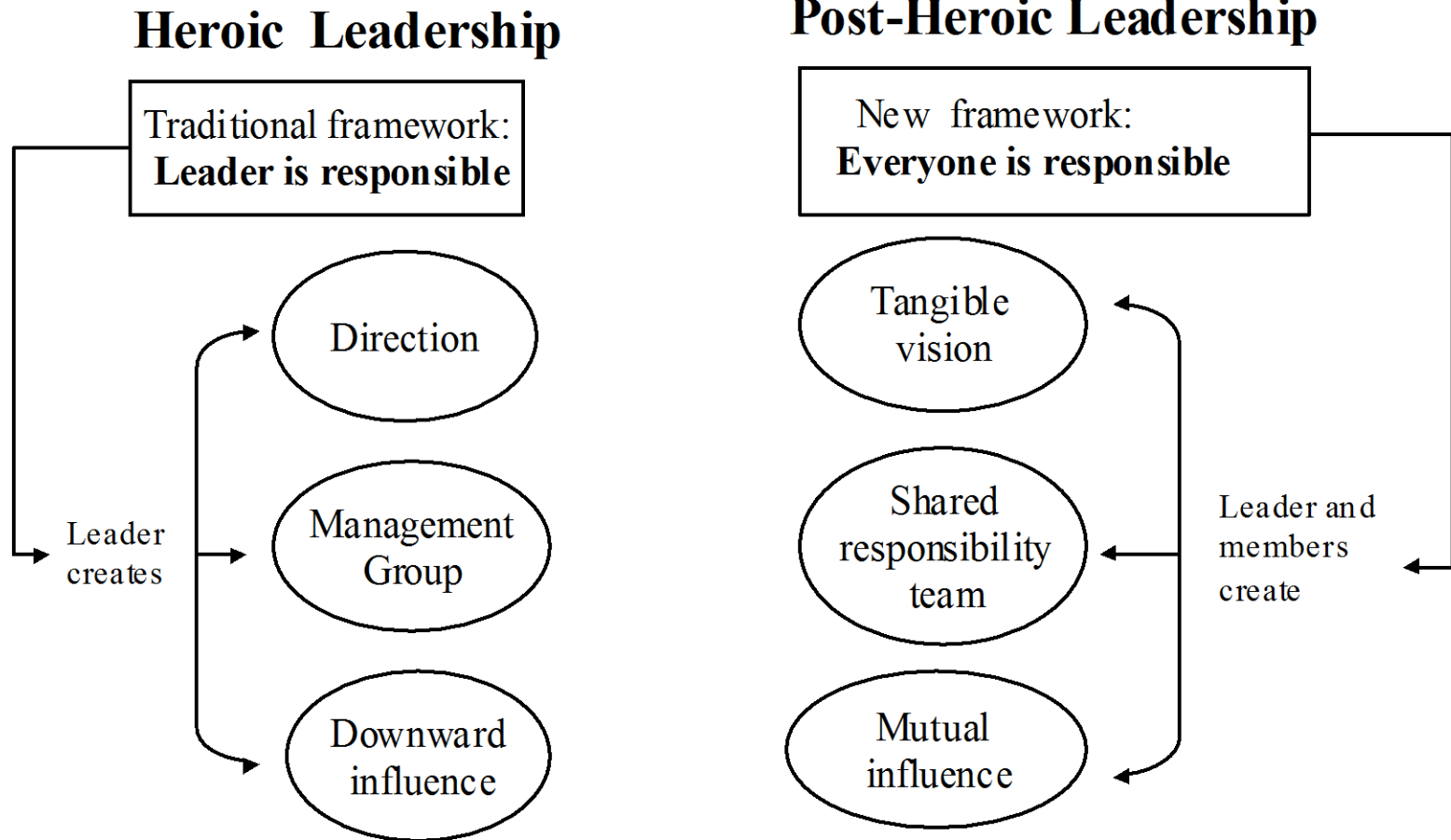
When change involves real or potential loss, people hold on to what they have and resist the change. We suggest that the common factor generating adaptive failure is resistance to loss.

What then?

A key to leadership, then, is the diagnostic capacity to find out the kinds of losses at stake in a changing situation, from life and loved ones to jobs, wealth, status, relevance, community, loyalty, identity, and competence.

Heroic vs. post heroic leadership

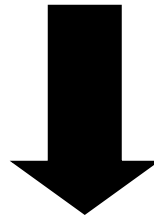
(Bradford & Cohen, 1998)



Authority

(Heifetz, 1994)

Conferred power to perform
a service



Authority is **given and can be taken away**

Authority is conferred as part of an
exchange

Formal and Informal Authority

Formal Authority: comes with various powers of the office and it is granted because the office holder promises to meet a set of explicit expectations (job descriptions, legislated mandates, etc.).

Informal Authority: rests on legitimacy and trust and comes with the power to influence attitude or behavior *beyond compliance*.

Trust: Predictability on values and skills

(Heifetz, 1994)

Authority Resources

Formal



Where you are?

Position.

Informal

What you do, and how you are perceived?

- Competence
- Reliability
- Trust
- Legitimacy
- Integrity

Technical Problems

The necessary knowledge about them already has been digested and put in the form of a **legitimized set of known organizational procedures** guiding **what to do** and role authorizations guiding **who** should do it.

(Heifetz, 1994)

Adaptive Challenges

No adequate response has yet been developed. They require **learning** to overcome the conflicts in values, or reduce the gap between the espoused values and reality.

They require changes in **values, attitudes or habits of behavior.**

(Heifetz, 1994)

Distinguishing Technical from Adaptive Challenges

	What's the Work?	<i>Who</i> does the work?
Technical	Apply current know-how	Authorities
Adaptive	Learn new ways	The people with the problem

(Heifetz and Linsky, 2002)

What's the difference?

The most common cause of failure in leadership is produced by treating adaptive challenges as if they were technical problems.

Technical Problems vs. Adaptive Challenges

Technical Problems	Adaptive Challenges
1. Easy to identify	1. Difficult to identify (easy to deny)
2. Often lend themselves to quick and easy (cut-and-dried) solutions	2. Require changes in values, beliefs, roles, relationships, & approaches to work. Implies learning.
3. Often can be solved by an authority or expert	3. People with the problem do the work of solving it
4. Require change in just one or a few places; often contained within organizational boundaries	4. Require change in numerous places; usually cross organizational boundaries
5. People are generally receptive to technical solutions	5. People often resist even acknowledging adaptive challenges
6. Solutions can often be implemented quickly – even by edict	6. “Solutions” require experiments and new discoveries; they can take a long time to implement and cannot be implemented by edict

Reflections

- The exercise of leadership is a voluntary activity.
- Thus, it's a time bound intervention: its episodic.
- It is oriented by the task of carrying out adaptive work.
- It implies asking questions more than providing answers
- It requires good questions and the willingness to sustain uncertainty.
- The heart of the strategy is to center people's attention in complex and difficult issues instead of in distractions.
- In light of the above, one can exercise leadership from any position.
- Its development requires a learning strategy

Parting Question

When you look at your work around UHC what are some of the key adaptive challenges you see?

"The true journey of discovery does not consist in searching for new territories but in having new eyes."

Marcel Proust

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