Rethinking education for leadership

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Abstract:
We are currently witnessing a crisis of confidence in leadership in all sorts of public institutions. Educationalists are uniquely placed to explore new understandings and demonstrate new practices of leadership. The aim of this paper is to explore the possibility of educating future leaders through the intentional exercise of personal character strengths, in the hope that this may contribute to new understandings and practices of leadership.

Leadership is often treated and exercised as an external assertion of authority, as the manipulation of people or groups as objects, 'out there'. Leaders, in what I shall call this old paradigm of leadership, externalise their energies, directing them over the lives of others. But recent scholarship on leadership offers a very different picture, amounting to what we could call a new paradigm, of what leadership might look like in the future. The underlying questions I want to raise in this paper are: First, can we teach for leadership using the idea of character strengths? Second, is there evidence of a new paradigm for leadership in which leadership will be understood, and exercised, differently? This would be a model of leadership not beholden to the old rules and expectations, but a leadership fit for change, which does not hide behind office or rank. This gives rise to a third question: would a more compassionate model of leadership subvert leadership itself, so that it no longer functions as leadership? Friedrich Nietzsche famously considered Christianity a religion for slaves; would a compassionate leadership be leadership for 'doormats'? The purpose here is not to ask about leadership in education, or leadership for educational change - there is already a large body of research devoted to this. Instead, my interest is in whether there can be an education for leadership; whether and how education might prepare students for leadership. If leadership skills can be taught, it is this new paradigm that should inform our teaching - but with the caveat, so long as this does not deprive leadership of its assertiveness, its own characteristic element of strength. Could it be that the most powerful words a leader can say 'I don't know; what do *you* think?'

Let me begin with two short workshop exercises that I gave to participants at a recent conference for educators. These drew explicitly on participants' knowledge of their own character strengths as measured by the Values-in-Action (VIA) Institute questionnaire, an instrument developed by Martin Seligman and others to enable self-assessment of one's own character strengths. I asked participants to reflect on their own stories and share them in small groups.

Leadership in teaching:

> Scenario 1. Think of a time in class when things went so well you knew you were in exactly the right job. Discuss *which of your own character strengths you used* in this situation.
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> Scenario 2. Think of a time in class when things went so badly you despaired of your own ability to teach. I do *not* want you to discuss what you should have done, or what strength you should have used, but *what liability or shadow side of one of your own strengths* did you allow to get 'out of control' in that situation.

Leadership in organisation:

> Scenario 3. Think of an occasion when you took action that made you feel like a leader, in the best sense, of acting for the common good. Discuss *which of your own*

character strengths you used in this situation. If your top characteristic is in fact *leadership*, then ask yourself whether your leadership style is transactional or transformative, and how it might benefit from the character strengths of others.

Scenario 4. Think of a time when you felt such a total failure as a leader that you wished you had acted more like you think a leader should act. Again, I do *not* want you to discuss what you think you should have done, or what strength you should have used, but rather *what liability or shadow side of one of your own strengths* did you allow to get 'out of control' in that situation.

My aim in running these exercises was for participants to reflect on their perhaps previously unconscious use of character strengths, in either balanced (or controlled) or unbalanced (or excessive) ways. So as not to exempt myself from the critical self-scrutiny in which I was asking the workshop participants to engage, I also told them two stories of 'success' and two of 'failure' in my own leadership experience. The first two are incidents in the classroom - because teaching is an 'influence relationship'[1] and thus an exercise of leadership; the second two are incidents in organisational leadership.

Leadership in teaching:

1. Success in teaching. At the time of the marriage equality plebiscite in 2017, I was asked in a year 7 Religious Education class what I thought about the issue. My response was: 'Well let's talk about it; what do *you* think?' This led to about twenty minutes of very animated open conversation, involving the majority of students, and without me revealing my own decision as to how I'd vote (though the students probably could have worked this out without too much trouble).

2. Failure in teaching. Student presentations of critical exegesis of passages from Mark's Gospel in a year 10 Texts and Traditions class elicited some very good presentations; but one student was simply not prepared. I said: 'Well, just tell us what the passage is about, and we can have a conversation about it.' But it turned out the student hadn't even read the passage, and she quickly dissolved into tears. This was obviously not the response I was hoping for. Embarrassingly, the class was being observed by a pre-service teacher.

Leadership in organisation:

3. Success in organisation. In the mid-nineties I was involved in compiling a book on ecological theology, a relatively new research area at the time. A group of colleagues had each agreed to write a chapter, and then subject our chapters to critical review among ourselves. One contributor, who wasn't present for the editorial meeting, had submitted a very poor quality piece of writing and we all agreed that even with a complete re-write it just couldn't be salvaged. But who was going to tell him the bad news? After we'd all looked at each other for what seemed like about ten minutes (it was probably only 30 or 40 seconds), I thought 'ok; *I'll* tell him!' So I went to the end of the room where the phone was (none of us had mobile phones back then) and rang him to say we wouldn't be including his chapter. He was very upset and angry, and I was the one to get the earful of just how angry and upset. But I knew somebody had to take the lead on this, and that it had to be me.

4. Failure in organisation. Some year ago I was appointed to a role of coordinating the work of three denominational theological colleges (Anglican, Catholic, and Uniting

[1] Patrick Duignan, *Leadership: Influencing, relationships and authentic presence*, Occasional Paper 107 (Melbourne: Centre for Strategic Education, 2008), p. 1.

Church). Within a week of starting the job, one of the college principals (in the presence of the other members of the leadership team, none of whom objected) imposed a couple of surprising obstacles to my work, one being that I was not to go ahead with the one-to-one meetings I'd planned to have with members teaching staff - at least not in *his* college. This effectively changed my role in relation to his faculty from one of leadership to one of administration. But I failed to challenge him on the matter.

I also gave a self-analysis of my own performance in these four situations: I will come to this later.

Why we need to rethink education for leadership

There has been the manifest failure of leadership as practised in churches and other religious organisations, as revealed by the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.[2] There are also the failures of leadership in our political system in Australia, and - most recently - in the leadership of the major banks, so the leadership crisis in religious institutions may be symptomatic of a deeper malaise. We are currently witnessing a crisis of confidence in leadership in all sorts of public institutions, both here and abroad. We are also living in a time of unprecedented though largely hidden global crisis, or rather a constellation of crises, described uncomfortably, but to my mind persuasively, by Slavoj Žižek.[3] Sound, wise leadership will be required in the future more than ever. Can we help prepare our students for their future leadership roles? And what sort of leadership should we be preparing them for? There is little point in attempting to prepare young people for leadership if the leadership paradigm itself is broken. Educationalists are uniquely placed to question the reasons for the current crises, and to propose new understandings and new practices of leadership to meet the challenges entailed. The aim of my part of the workshop was to raise the possibility of a new paradigm in leadership, and the education of future leaders in accordance with this new paradigm - though with the caveat mentioned earlier. The exercises explored the conscious exercise of personal character strengths in leadership by teachers, both in and out of the classroom.

A recent book by Steven Ogden offers a powerful critique of the practice of leadership in the Anglican Church of Australia.[4] The problem lies in what the author calls the 'epistemic hubris' embedded in this particular ecclesiastical culture, i.e. the implicit claim on the part of leaders to know more than they actually do, simply on the basis of the office they hold. The book represents an honest examination and a heartfelt call for what amounts to a new type of leadership, but is less strong on indicating the nature of such an alternative. That is a part of what I am interested in exploring. The process of renewal proposed will go further and deeper than mere structural change in institutions: it will involve a renewed formation of the subjectivity of potential leaders. It will require, in other words, a shift in leadership paradigm that will take time to bear fruit. Although Ogden's book focusses on a particular institution in this country, I suggest the rethinking of leadership needed is broader than simply this institution. The learning that needs to be encouraged is transferrable across the prevailing culture of leadership in general. It also points to the need for a new leadership paradigm to develop, or better, to be encouraged to emerge among our students for the new millennium.

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[2] https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au (accessed 19 March 2018);
Neil Ormerod, 'Royal Commission has been a major crisis for the Catholic church leadership', *Sydney Morning Herald,* 10/2/2018, at: https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/royal-commission-has-been-a-major-crisis-for-the-catholic-church-leadership-20180208-h0vrz7.html (accessed 26 March 2018).
[3] žižek, Slavoj, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2011).
[4] Ogden Steven G (2017), *The Church, Authority and Foucault: Imagining the Church as an Open Space of Freedom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017). See also my review in *Pacifica* 30 (1), pp. 103-104.

To speak about leadership paradigms is to refer to the notion of paradigm change developed by Thomas Kuhn, especially in relation to the emergence of early modern science.[5] A new paradigm is a new way of understanding an observed phenomenon that explains the phenomenon better than older explanations. Kuhn argues that an older paradigm may have worked in the past, but it is found to work less and less well as new information becomes available. Even then an older paradigm may not be replaced immediately, but only gains acceptance with gradual generational change. Older generations like to cling to their older explanations. The literature on leadership is too vast a territory to consider in a short article, so I take as my co-ordinates the coverage of leadership in Peterson and Seligman (a key resource in the conference mentioned above), plus two occasional papers, by Duignan and Power, published almost ten years apart by the Centre for Strategic Education in Melbourne.

Patrick Duignan defines leadership as an 'influence relationship' in which 'effective leaders generate fields of influence through their authentic presence in multiple purposeful relationships'.[6] Leadership occurs when 'one group member modifies the motivations or competencies of another'.[7] Here we can already see some implications for education, which is all about modifying motivations and competencies. But Duignan's main emphasis is on 'presence through authentic relationship'[8] with others, that is, presence not simply as physical presence (though this is an essential prerequisite), and not simply as the 'content of our lives', but 'the complex combination of unique mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual endowments that each individual contributes to a group's dynamics' forming 'a gift of mutual presence within a group that creates morally uplifting and inspiring fields of conscious influence'.[9] This understanding of leadership is contrasted to the externalised leadership mentioned above: 'The attempts of the ego to use the present moment for our own ends';[10] 'powerful currents of end-to-end superficial activities and vain attempts to manage (read "control") crises and conflict (which) ...too often skate across the surface of personal reflection and authentic relationships'; and the 'focus immediately on the other(s) as the one(s) needing to be changed'.[11] All these phenomena are features of what I call the old paradigm of leadership. The new leadership paradigm starts with self-awareness and the willingness to share one's authentic self with others.

The second CSE paper is by Paul Power, in which the author sets out to explain what he sees as the 'five essentials' of leadership.[12] Power starts with 'positive self-image', which 'requires a level of emotional self-awareness to read and react to the cues in the environment, and accurate self-assessment of our strengths and shortcomings....'.[13] Here we see a drive towards a similar framework as Duignan's 'authentic presence' - and a reference to strengths. Power's second essential, 'self-control', underlines this. But it is the third and fourth essentials that build on this foundation: 'socialised power' and 'sustained dialogue'. Socialised power is transformational influence 'directed toward the service of collective interests, where leaders acknowledge the need to understand and show respect for their followers, attempting to motivate them through reason and emotional appeal'.[14] This

[5] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1957).
[6] Duignan, p. 1.
[7] Duignan, p. 2.
[8] Duignan, p. 5.
[9] Duignan, p. 8.
[10] Duignan, p. 4.
[11] Duignan, p. 7.
[12] Paul G. Power, *Leadership in Education: The five essentials*, Occasional Paper 153 (Melbourne: Centre for Strategic Education, 2017).
[13] Power, p. 4.
[14] Power, p. 6.

is contrasted to 'personalised or self-aggrandising abuse of power'; it is also the direct opposite of Ogden's 'epistemic hubris'. Sustained dialogue refers to the essential role of 'getting out and about to meet their team and the rest of the staff', not, significantly, as a friend, but as a senior colleague who is there to 'encourage, mentor and support', i.e. self-consciously as the leader. The final essential is 'strategic intent', that is 'planning, goal-setting, prioritising and strategising'.[15] Its opposite is micro-managing. It forms the basis for, but is not to be confused with, ongoing operational implementation. Like Duignan, Power is highlighting a way of exercising leadership different from and fundamentally quite critical of many existing practices. A recent opinion piece by the London-based journalist Linda Blair agrees in offering a similar summary: emotional intelligence is also needed, involving self-awareness, self-regulation, social skill, and 'most important - a great leader must possess empathy'.[16]

There is one further idea I would like to put into the mix here, the idea of 'thought leadership'. In saying this I want to modify the more conventional notion of thought leadership, which is taken, like a number of other concepts regularly used in educational management, from industry. One definition of a 'thought leader' is:

> ... an individual or firm that prospects, clients, referral sources, intermediaries and even competitors recognize as one of the foremost authorities in selected areas of specialization, resulting in its being the go-to individual or organization for said expertise. A thought leader is an individual or firm that significantly profits from being recognized as such.[17]

I would remove this idea from its original industrial and commercial provenance, however, and widen the definition of thought leadership so it is understood as drawing on dispositions as well as formulating ideas, and as using emotional intelligence to anticipate changes in environment. It is most definitely not about thought control; in fact, this sort of thought leadership would be the opposite of control with its rationalised, operational leadership style, its tendency to 'epistemic hubris'. So 'thought leadership' is helpful as an idea so long as it includes not just the shaping and positing of new ideas for the purpose of profit, but more importantly of inner dispositions, attitudes, and emotional states, for the purpose of the common good. It is significant that business leaders themselves are now looking for a new paradigm. The findings of other current Royal Commission, the one into banking, are instructive as examples multiple failures of leadership, and of a leadership style that has revealed a lack of personal character strengths.[18] Where is compassion for customers, or honesty, or personal integrity? The need to go beyond a purely operational or instrumental definition of thought leadership highlights the limitations of applying conceptual models of management uncritically to educational and not-for-profit settings. But more than this, a new paradigm by nature transgresses currently or formerly accepted rules and procedures.

Why character strengths may help to rethink leadership

Leadership roles require the making of decisions that affect others, and this requires - as most leaders in the old paradigm acknowledge - thinking and acting ethically. Jonathon Haidt has recently pointed out that the formulators of both the major modern schools of western ethics, Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant, were 'high systematisers' and 'low

[15] Power, p. 7.
[16] Linda Blair, 'Empathy a quality of great leaders', in *The Age*, 4 April 2018, p. 19.
[17] Russ Alan Prince and Bruce Rogers, 'What is a Thought Leader?' at https://www.forbes.com/sites/russprince/2012/03/16/what-is-a-thought-leader/#5d1e31807da0 (2012, accessed 15 March 2018).
[18] https://financialservices.royalcommission.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx (accessed 2 May 2018).

empathisers';[19] arguably they were, as teachers are inclined to put it, 'on the spectrum'. The result was that both simplified ethics to a single overarching formula (for Kant, deontology or in other words, beneficial rules; for Bentham, utilitarianism or in other words beneficial consequences). For our purposes, the theoretical absence of empathy as a key element must at least set off warning lights about an undue reliance on either deontology or utilitarianism. Fortunately for us, we have an alternative tradition in ethics, viz. virtue ethics, upon which Peterson and Seligman quite consciously draw.[20] This is a tradition that largely disappeared from view from the early 18th to the late 20th centuries, with even the word 'virtue' being co-opted by both deontology and utilitarianism for their own purposes. This is just one of several reasons I prefer the terminology of 'character strengths' to that of 'virtues'. Another is the gendered connotations of 'virtue'. But virtue ethics, or - as I would prefer - character strengths ethics, has started to re-emerge more recently, with Alasdair MacIntyre's study, first published in 1981, being a major impetus.[21]

Here I draw on Martin Seligman's notion of positive psychology and character strengths. The exercises above are built on Seligman's insight that the way we think and speak of our own successes and failures plays a role in determining future success or failure.[22] Peterson and Seligman list leadership as a character strength, and survey the extensive literature on leadership. They distinguishing between transactional and transformative leaders, though this distinction is set out more explicitly on their VIA website, mentioned earlier, which describes leadership as being 'a social phenomenon that can be distinguished into two areas: practice (defining, establishing, identifying or translating direction); and personal quality (the motivation and capacity to seek out, attain and carry out leader roles).' The authors go on to distinguish between 'two types of leaders: transactional leaders (this type of leader clarifies responsibilities, expectations, and the tasks to be accomplished); [and] transformational leaders (this type of leader motivates followers to perform at an extremely high level, fostering a climate of trust and commitment to the organization and its goals)'. Peterson and Seligman thus distinguish between practice and personal quality, a distinction that relates to the typical actions of leaders and their inner motivations, respectively. They also distinguish between two types of leader, or two different styles of leadership, with different motivations and therefore different outcomes. My reading of this distinction is that transactional leadership conserves the current paradigm, pointing out where it needs correcting at times, while transformative leadership calls in question some or all elements of the current paradigm. My concern here is with leadership skills, so in other words the practice of leadership, because skills can be taught and learnt. My interest is in motivations in so far as these can be encouraged, and indeed inspired, in others.

Seligman's work on character strengths has been received quite critically in some quarters, including the argument that he offers a superficially optimistic 'positive' outlook on life, but I think he has in general successfully answered his critics.[23] Seligman's primary interest is in studying and developing resilience; i.e. the ability to confront and overcome the inevitable adversities that come with life. For this reason I think his work is particularly suited to facing the leadership crises of our times. He is also well aware of the shadow sides of character

[19] Jonathon Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 137.
[20] Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp. 33-55; 413-428.
[21] Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, 3rd edition (London: Duckworth, 2017).
[22] Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism: how to change your mind and your life* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 2011).
[23] Martin Seligman, *The Hope Circuit: A Psychologist's Journey for Helplessness to Optimism* (Sydney: Penguin, 2018), pp. 266-277.

strengths, in which one strength can be taken to excess and so outweigh other important strengths. The one caution I still have about Peterson and Seligman's endeavour is their attempt to provide a universally applicable set of character strengths. MacIntyre has shown that virtues are highly conditioned by culture. However, so long as we view Peterson and Seligman's 24-character strength list as essentially functional, and not invest it with too much ontological weight, I think it can be a very useful instrument for examining our own leadership styles and beginning the task of teaching leadership to others.

Leadership has often treated and exercised as an external assertion of power. What I want to suggest, developing an idea implicit in Peterson and Seligman, is that the leadership we need in the future is leadership understood as the encouragement of dispositions, attitudes and emotional states ('thought leadership' in the wider sense proposed above), for the good of others, and that this is different from the old paradigm in two ways: First, it allows for an emergence of these things - it draws out these character strengths in those who are led. It is therefore educative (in the sense of *e-ducare*, to draw out). Secondly, it starts with the leaders being very well acquainted with their own inner character strengths, including the shadow sides of these strengths, and consciously and intentionally drawing on these strengths. It requires what Linda Blair has called self-awareness. Further, because we are dealing here quite explicitly with character *strengths*, we are pre-empting any suggestion that empathy or self-awareness or compassion or any of the other personal qualities mentioned are weaknesses. A new paradigm leader is not a permissive 'doormat' leader - which would in fact be no leader at all. In case this understanding of leadership be dismissed as unrealistic or utopian, let me remind you at this point of my remarks above: there is a crisis of confidence in leadership as currently practised; something needs to change in the model we have accepted for too long. But my third question still remains: would a self-aware, authentic presence style of leadership function to subvert leadership itself? I will return to this question.

Assessing my own leadership successes and failures

The workshop exercises, mentioned at the beginning, that I asked participants to undertake attempted to engage them with the first and second of my underlying questions: First, can we teach for leadership using character strengths, and how might leadership be taught? Second, is there a new paradigm for leadership; can leadership be understood, and exercised, differently? The exercises attempted this by asking participants to consider and share: (a) their own personal character strengths in teaching (both overwhelmingly well and embarrassingly badly); and (b) their own practice or observation of leadership in governance (both well and badly). I asked them to look within themselves, at their own inner lives and motivations, and to question their own understandings and practices of leadership in the classroom and in organisational management. My hope was that the exercises would lead participants to draw their own conclusions on my two underlying questions. My hope is that our rethinking of leadership skills may be a foundation for greater self-awareness on the part of leaders, and therefore more effective leadership.

I did, however, also think it was only fair to reveal the conclusions I had come to through the process of devising these exercises and reflecting on my own examples. So as not to exempt myself from this process, I felt I needed to reveal how I interpret the four stories I told at the outset, from my own experience, in the light of my own personal character strengths. I see this as a small example of autoethnography, a relatively new research method that makes use of the first-person narrative of the researcher, and in which 'the affective potential of the topic and of the writing itself are foregrounded'.[24] This is the methodological reason for my writing so freely about several of my own experiences.

[24] Susanne Gannon, 'Autoethnography, in Education, Cultures, and Ethnicities, Research and Assessment Methods' at:

Story 1 (a success in teaching): My actions here are the easiest of the four for me to explain in terms of my personal character strengths. My second highest strength, according the VIA survey, is honesty, and this means I also respect honesty. An honest, topical question was raised in class, and my natural response was, and is, to take it seriously and allow it to be discussed freely and openly.

Story 2 (a failure in teaching). My highest character strength in the VIA listing is appreciation of beauty and excellence, and that can mean I become impatient with what I perceive to be mediocrity or laziness. Each character strength has its shadow side; each comes with corresponding liabilities and costs, as Peterson and Seligman point out. I possibly also remembered times when I myself had come to an appointment unprepared, and was expressing retrospective annoyance at myself for those occasions. In this particular situation I think I also acted out of the character strengths of fairness and judgement (numbers 7 and 8 on my list), with fairness in this case being exercised on behalf of those class members who *had* put effort into being ready to make their presentations.

Story 3 (a success in organisational leadership): I am inclined to attribute my action in this case once again to appreciation, involving impatience both with substandard work and also, I have to admit, with the with the polite hesitations of my colleagues on this occasion. I was committed to ensuring our joint publication would be of a highest standard of academic rigour that our little working group could achieve. Also, once again a sense of fairness and judgement both played a role in my decision to take responsibility for voicing the opinion of the group.

Story 4 (a failure in organisational leadership): In relation to this incident I note with interest that Seligman sees a quite different set of character strengths being required for leadership on the one hand and administration on the other.[25] The incident is something that I find quite difficult to avoid attributing to a negative or a deficit on my part, a deficit of bravery in this case. Bravery is near the bottom of my VIA list, so I take some comfort in Leonard Cohen's line: 'I said that I was curious; didn't say that I was brave'. But I'm going to make the effort to see my action as an excess of one or more of my positive character strengths. The college principal's remark placed a ban on my exercise of one (or perhaps two) of the key dimensions of leadership: Duignan's 'authentic presence'; and Power's 'socialised power' and 'sustained dialogue'. Although this happened long before I'd read either Duignan or Power, and I may not have been able at the time to articulate this theoretically, I had observed enough expert leadership to know that meetings with staff and other stake-holders would be the right place to start. Samuel Rocha writes about the difference between knowing *about* something and knowing the thing *in itself*. We can know about the geometry of a hockey slap-shot into goal, to adapt Rocha's example, but that is not the same as having the feeling, borne of long practice, for the hockey stick, the weight of the ball, the dampness of the pitch on the day, and the proximity of opposition defenders.[26] These things are about knowing the game, not simply knowing *about* the game. Speaking with stakeholders in my new job would have been my way of getting the feel of the ball, the stick, the pitch, and above all, the play. But it was considered 'inappropriate'. Because the other leadership team members had not objected (I learnt later there had been internal political reasons for their silence), I took this to mean the speaker was voicing the agreed consensus of the leadership team. In any case I had undertaken, as a matter of principle, to treat all three colleges equally. This restriction on speaking to staff was not to be the only leadership

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http://education.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-71 on ethnography (2017, accessed 13 March 2018).

[25] Seligman, Hope Circuit, p. 247.

[26] Samuel D. Rocha, *Folk Phenomenology: Education, Study, and the Human Person* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2015), p. 29.

frustration in that particular workplace. But why didn't I confront the college principal, who I now realise felt somewhat threatened by my desire to talk to members of his staff; why I didn't assert my own leadership? Thinking of my character strengths, my initial hesitation to challenge the restriction on speaking was caused not simply by a deficit of bravery, but just as much, and more so, by an excess of gratitude (number 6 on my list), because the leadership team had just given me a job, and fairness (number 7), in that I had already undertaken to treat all three colleges and their staff equally and without favouritism. A putative deficit of bravery was in fact an excess of prudence (number 11 in my list): I didn't want to alienate my new employers at the outset, and my preference is always to give myself time to think through the implications of what another person says to me.

I should add that there are counter-examples I could give to each of the stories I told at the start. There have been many times I have tried to open up discussion of a current news event in class, only to find the issue caught the interest of only two or three students. There have been times when (gently) prompting a student to take responsibility for presenting in class despite lack of preparation has led to stimulating discussion, and the student discovering she knew more than she realised. With regard to organisational leadership, there was another occasion when I was co-editing a book and, out of misplaced deference to my co-editor, allowed a chapter through that should never have been published. And in my role at the theological colleges consortium, there were occasions when I did manage to be less prudent and challenge the opinions and decisions of members of the leadership group.

Can we teach for leadership using character strengths? How is leadership to be taught?

The emergence of 'life coaching' suggests that there is a perception in the wider community that leadership can be taught. Clearly, specific leadership skills of the sort posited by Paul Power can be presented to students through explicit teaching and role plays. In addition, Lea Waters, proposes that character strengths can be applied in parenting, and children can be brought up to understand and make use of their own character strengths.[27] If this is correct, and I think it is, there is no reason why this cannot be done in the classroom and enabled through wise educational management. We make use of our own strengths in teaching, and if we as teachers can identify our own strengths and how we make use of them, we should be able to help our students identify theirs. This is a matter of developing greater self-awareness. Waters offers a helpful guide to this in her advocacy of identifying and developing strengths through the trilogy of performance, energy, and high use. Her suggestion to parents, and it can apply just as well to teachers, is look for what a child or student enjoys doing, does frequently and well, and from which s/he derives energy. That is the best possible indicator of the child's character strengths, even without doing the VIA questionnaire. Waters' chapter 9 is all about nuancing, or adjusting the child's strengths, so as not to overuse or misuse them, but to use them effectively, acknowledging that strengths can grow. If they can grow, they can be taught, or perhaps better, drawn out and enabled to emerge in the child.

Mariano Sigman argues for the need to build on what the learner knows already; and that this may involve unlearning of what had been previously learnt, thus erasing hindrances to new learning.[28] This is particularly relevant to the process of paradigm change, in which the assumptions of the old paradigm have to be set aside to allow the new to win acceptance. The unlearning here, in the teaching of leadership through character strengths, may be the unlearning of habitual responses of self-blame or of attributing failures, or what appear to be

[27] Lea Waters, *The Strength Switch* (Sydney: Ebury, 2017).
[28] Mariano Sigman, *The Secret Life of the Mind* (London: William Collins, 2017), pp. 176; 217.

failures, to weakness or deficit. And before that, it may mean the unlearning of older externalised leadership practices.

Is there a new paradigm for leadership? Can leadership be understood, done, and taught differently?

Even in asking this question I'm already suggesting there is a new paradigm and, if Thomas Kuhn is correct, we just need to find it and articulate it. Seligman gives us a clue in his distinction between transactional and transformative models leadership, in which - on my reading - the former checks and corrects weaknesses, while the latter has the ability to point to a new model that will look for and work with strengths. But caution has to be applied here, for two reasons. First, transformation may take an organisation in the wrong direction - it has to be undertaken thoughtfully, by which I mean with the aid of the thought leadership discussed above. Second, Seligman seems to equate transformative leadership with charismatic leadership, and charismatic leadership can also be problematic in its own ways. Leadership itself has to be transformed if it is to become transformative. But what is the nature of this transformed leadership?

I propose that character strengths may be the way to articulate it. If we accept that leadership as a disposition can be coaxed to emerge and encouraged to grow, we also need to ensure that we are not simply encouraging an old leadership paradigm. We do not want to teach or endorse an older paradigm of leadership if a better one is available. In fact there is a new paradigm. This new paradigm lies implicit within some of the recent theorising about leadership (e.g. the CSE studies by Duignan and Power) with their emphases on authentic presence, socialised power and continual dialogue. I suggest our task as educationalists is to articulate this new approach by teaching character strengths; to model it in our own leadership roles and responsibilities, and to encourage its emergence in the students for whom we hold responsibility.

There are two additions to this proposal, however, that emerge from MacIntyre's treatment of the virtues. One is that every virtue, or character strength, is understood in a culturally conditioned way. The proposal here is to make use of the catalogue of character strengths to enable learners to test and explore their own leadership possibilities. We do not have to treat the Peterson and Seligman list as either definitive or unambiguous. The second addition is MacIntyre's important distinction between an internal and an external 'good'. I have already said that leadership is exercised, or should be exercised, for the common good, or the good of others. MacIntyre argues that the good can be pursued either externally, in competition with others, in which there will be winners and losers; or internally, in competition with oneself, to excel at developing an ability or skill, or achieving a 'personal best'. These 'internal' goods are the results of practice (Waters' key elements of performance, energy and high use) and they give personal satisfaction, but they do not necessarily lead to the conventional trappings of success: wealth, power, and acclaim. Those things are 'external goods', and they are conventionally the rewards of leadership. The possession of external goods always means a corresponding deficit of these things by someone else: there are winners and losers. Internal goods, by contrast, are developed for one's own satisfaction, but not at the expense of others - and, paradoxically perhaps, they also contribute to the common good.[29] Both types of good can contribute to the common good, for transactional leadership is needed, typically in organisations and institutions. But leadership in organisations and institutions is more easily corrupted by the lure of external goods. The implications are twofold. First, the development of internal goods, which by their own nature serve the common good, needs to be seen as a type of leadership. Second, leaders of organisations need, as Linda Blair puts it, to be particularly self-aware.

[29] MacIntyre, p. 191.

Does compassionate leadership subvert leadership itself?

Does leadership of its own nature require the suspension of compassion, or would the exercise of compassion work to undermine leadership? This was the problem Nietzsche identified with Christian 'servant leadership', and it remains a problem. One early attempt to respond to it was sketched in outline by the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in the context of his resistance to the highly disordered understandings and practices of both strength and leadership during the Nazi dictatorship. Bonhoeffer speaks again and again of the need to speak not to weakness but to strength, not to the deficit of good but to its surplus.[30] This idea of identifying and speaking to strength also emerges, from a very different theoretical background and applied in a very different context, in the work of Peterson and Seligman.

It is possible to discern some threats to leadership, and not simply to my proposed new paradigm leadership, but to leadership as such. These threats are posed not by some rebellious underclass of those who are led, however, but by leaders themselves, when they feel themselves threatened in some way by other potential leaders, or when we as leaders fail to grasp that leadership may be a collaborative undertaking; that leadership may be a matter of new ideas and new ways of thinking ('I don't know; what do *you* think?'). Leadership may, it is true, be threatened by followers, but not so much by rebellious followers as by unquestioning followers who allow abuses of power to grow. It is this sort of conformism, now being brought to light, that has led to the crisis we now see in various public institutions. Leadership is saved, in these cases, by critical thinking and open sustained dialogue, and by leaders and followers alike not being so caught up in administration that accepted practices are never questioned. It is saved by self-awareness, and the other qualities alluded to by the likes of Duignan, Power and Blair.

Conclusion

The underlying idea I wanted to test was this. If we find we use our own character strengths in our leadership positions or roles, then first, we should be able to teach our students to use their own character strengths, and thereby prepare them more intentionally for effective leadership; and second, we can begin to develop a new leadership paradigm, based on strengths rather than the need to control and supplement weaknesses; instead of a deficit notion of leadership, a surplus notion of leadership that encourages and builds on the surpluses/ strengths of those led. I was also concerned to avoid any utopian notion of leadership that would fade into some sort of spectral non-leadership. My conclusion is that leadership can be taught, and that there is a new paradigm of leadership that is no less powerful than the old, and it is this, not the old paradigm, that must be the subject of this teaching.

I have to acknowledge that the two exercises I set for workshop participants do not and cannot conclusively demonstrate these hypotheses to be true. Ideas need to be demonstrated. That is where positive psychology with its hard-edged quantitative research methods could be used. Perhaps the best trial of the proposal in this paper would be an extended study in which a cohort of students were to be taught leadership skills with explicit reference to the VIA character strengths, and then tracked for their subsequent successes in their practice as leaders. There would presumably also need to be a control group who were not given this benefit. There may be one other way to test this idea. A close examination of the leadership styles and actions of undisputed leaders (I am thinking in the Australian context of the likes of John Monash or John Curtin) may reveal anticipations of the new paradigm I am proposing. The most the conference workshop could offer was to point in the direction of a possible new set of understandings and practices, with leadership no longer

[30] Bonhoeffer Dietrich, *Letters and papers from Prison, enlarged editi*on (London: SCM Press, 1959, 1971), pp. 205, 282, 327, 345-6, 384.

understood simply as power over, but as socialised power; and thought leadership understood not simply as cognition but including emotional intelligence and the disposition of the whole person. Is this proposal hopelessly utopian? No! In view of where the old leadership paradigm has taken us, a new paradigm is indispensable. But the new paradigm does not need to be invented. It is everywhere: in Linda Blair's piece in *The Age*, and the articles by Duignan and Power. It is not even all that new. It simply needs to be implemented. But before that it needs to be learnt, and taught.[31]

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