

14 Responsible Inclusive Leadership

A Whole System Collective Process Outcome

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There are a number of distinctive aspects to 21st-century workplaces that call for different ways of leading. This chapter highlights four of these aspects that necessitate responsible and inclusive leadership practice.

First, workplaces operate in contexts characterized by high levels of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). This VUCA world leads to decreased levels of knowing, predictability, and certainty and calls for adaptive and innovative capabilities in organizations (Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2015).

Second, there is a trend toward the democratization of workplaces, involving less hierarchical structures and more networked systems. In these workplaces, leadership is more distributed and decision-making is pushed toward lower levels in the organizational structures (Jackson & Parry, 2018).

Third, the dominant implicit leadership mental model in most workplaces is changing from the great man leadership model—a view of leaders as usually men who heroically take charge and decide on everything in autocratic, directive, and controlling ways of leading—to more networked, shared, and relational ways of leading, in which empowerment and equal partnerships are valued and leadership is co-created (Booyesen, 2014). The view that leadership resides in a single person or in an elite group is losing traction. In its place, the notion that leadership resides in the collective—in both formal leaders and followers—and should be dispersed throughout the organizational system is gaining traction (Denis et al., 2015).

Last, general disillusionment with the rise of irresponsible and destructive leadership has given way to a counter-narrative that questions the ethical nature of leadership and asks the critical question, “leadership for what?” (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 102). This counter-narrative calls for more responsible and sustainable leadership, with a focus on the triple bottom line (profit, people, and the planet) (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018).

These four changes—(1) our VUCA world, (2) the democratization of workplaces, (3) relational and shared leadership, and (4) responsible leadership—call for a different way of leading, one that is responsible and inclusive and is based on inclusive democratic workplaces, social justice, and fairness for all involved.

In the rest of this chapter I unpack the reasons why a combination of responsible and inclusive leadership is particularly suitable and a good fit for our current workplaces, first by discussing my view of what *responsible inclusive leadership* is and what makes it good leadership practice. Second, I discuss the relational, emergent, and collective nature of responsible inclusive leadership practice. Finally, I provide a practical framework and examples to illustrate how responsible inclusive leadership is produced in joint collective relational practice dispersed throughout the whole organizational system.

Responsible Inclusive Leadership as Good Practice

When “I” is replaced with “we” even illness becomes wellness—

Malcom X

In previous work (Booyesen, 2014) I surmised that inclusive workplaces are based on collaborative, pluralistic, co-constructed, and coevolving value frames that rely on mutual respect, equal contribution, and valuing of difference, which is different than exclusive workplaces where conformity to pre-established mainstream ways of doing is expected. In that chapter I argued that inclusive leadership removes impediments that cause marginalization and exclusion and extends our thinking beyond assimilation strategies and organizational demography toward empowerment and participation of all. I also pointed out that inclusive leadership involves particular skills and competencies for relational practice, collaboration, creating inclusive work cultures, partnerships, consensus building, and true engagement. I concluded that inclusive leadership is good practice, and that in truly inclusive workplaces all people will feel valued, respected, and recognized. I defined inclusive leadership as:

respectful relational practice, that enables individuals and collectives to be fully part of the whole, directed, aligned, and committed toward shared outcomes, for the common good of all, while retaining a sense of authenticity and uniqueness.

(Booyesen, 2014, p. 306)

Somewhat similar to my definition of inclusive leadership, responsible leadership can be defined “as a relational and ethical phenomenon, which occurs in social processes of interaction with those who affect or

are affected by leadership and have a stake in the purpose and vision of the leadership relationship” (Maak & Pless, 2006, p. 103).

Over the past 10 to 15 years, we have seen discussions around the concepts of responsibility and leadership expand from social responsibility (leaders being responsible mainly for shareholder wealth), to corporate social responsibility (CSR) (focusing on ethical, economic, and legal aspects of sustainable organizational practices), to responsible leadership (as defined in the previous paragraph), and finally to global responsible leadership (focusing on a multitude of local and global domains of sustainable organizational practices) (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018).

These shifts resulted in broadening the focus of responsible leadership from agent views, which see managers as agents of shareholders securing maximum profits—“doing well” for the shareholders (aligned with a social responsible view)—to converging views, which see managers as reconciling making maximum profit for shareholders with other stakeholder considerations—“doing well” (for shareholders) by also “doing good” (for stakeholders, including the community, more aligned with CSR). The next turn in focus was toward normative stakeholder views that focused on relational and ethical considerations of a broader stakeholder base including employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and shareholders and of the triple bottom line: doing well by doing good and avoiding harm for all stakeholders in the community: responsible leadership (Maak & Pless, 2006). The current focus is on multi-domain stakeholder views in global responsible leadership. This is aligned with a transnational CSR approach that includes ethical and triple-bottom-line responsibility and sustainability both in a local and global context: “creating sustainable enterprises that not only reconcile economic, environmental, and social bottom lines, but enhances all of them at the same time” (Stahl et al., 2018, p. 9).

This broader base of inclusion of contributors essentially speaks to inclusive practices. In my view, the intersection between inclusive leadership and responsible leadership indeed lies on the normative stakeholder level (doing well by doing good and avoiding harm for all stakeholders in the community) that broadens agency and inclusion.

Inclusion functions on a micro level inside the organization, encompassing individuals (internal micro), groups (internal meso), and organizational processes (internal macro level). Inclusion also operates on a larger external macro level outside the organization, involving other stakeholders, communities, societies, nations, and the planet (Ferdman, 2014).

Responsible leadership—with its focus on broad-based inclusion of stakeholders, on justice and fairness, and on relational practice and ethical aspects—can be seen as an expansion of inclusive leadership. While there is substantial overlap between these perspectives (both emphasize inclusion, justice, fairness, and the common good of all), the difference lies in the emphasis on the *levels* of inclusion.

I would argue that inclusive leadership generally foregrounds the internal organizational level (micro, meso, and macro) and relational practices, with some emphasis on the immediate external macro level, while responsible leadership generally foregrounds a broader stakeholder external view and ethical practices, with some emphasis on the internal organizational level. For example, inclusive leadership tends to emphasize inclusion of individuals and collectives on cross-functional and internal organizational levels with a focus on obtaining organizational goals, while responsible leadership tends to emphasize a broader base of inclusion, by focusing on collaboration between organizations and the communities they serve, between private and public enterprises, and a more active role of the citizenry towards triple-bottom-line sustainability (also see Figure 14.1).

That is why I propose the combined terminology of *responsible inclusive leadership*, leadership that equally emphasizes the internal organizational and the external macro levels of inclusion on the one hand, and relational, ethical, and sustainable practices on the other hand.

In the next section I illustrate how responsible inclusive leadership is relational, emergent, and collective in nature.

The Relational, Emergent, and Collective Nature of Responsible Inclusive Leadership Practice

There is tension in leadership theory between leader- or entity-focused theories, which are mostly psychological, and relational and collective theories, which are mainly sociological (Jackson & Parry, 2018). The more dominant entity-based theories explain individual, group, and organizational performance outcomes primarily by identifying and examining specific leader behaviors, like traits and styles, and shared assumptions. The general assumption of these theories is that leaders will be successful if they have certain traits and understand and adapt to shared values and follower expectations.

The basic assumption of relational theories is that both leadership and contexts are products of social interactions between all involved; leadership is relational and socially constructed by the collective. Relational-based perspectives focus on how reciprocal social interactions between everyone in the (organizational) system emerge and evolve, and are co-constructed and sustained in interpersonal, group, and collective relationships and collaboration. From this view, effective leadership is not within the control of any individual. Instead, leadership happens and is the product of social interaction of all individuals in a specific context (which is also co-constructed, fluid, and emergent). From a relational-based perspective, leadership resides in interactions and is a function of interactions (Uhl-Bien, 2006). It is collective in nature and functions in

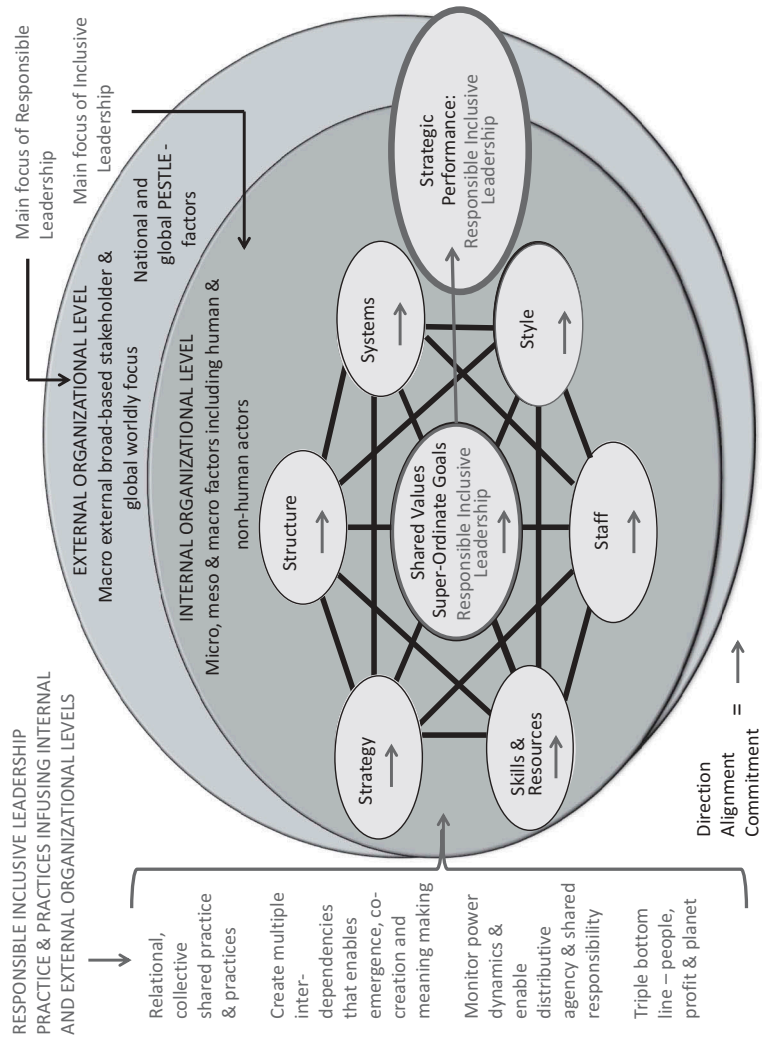


Figure 14.1 A whole-systems framework for responsible inclusive leadership practice.

the plural, not only in positional leadership or an elite few (Denis et al., 2015), and it is a way-of-being in the world that emphasizes speaking “with” others rather than “to” others, or “living well with others” (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011, p. 1439).

Table 14.1 captures the key differences between more traditional less inclusive entity-based practices of leadership and more inclusive relational-based views that can be applied in practice.

Table 14.1 Differences between traditional entity-based and inclusive relational-based leadership practice (source: adapted from Booysen, 2014, pp. 304–305,¹ in Ferdman and Deane, 2014)

<i>Traditional Entity-Based Leadership</i>	<i>Inclusive Relational-Based Leadership</i>
Focus of the leader:	Focus of leader practices:
• Entity (individual reality) perspective, subject–object understanding of leadership—human capital focus. • Leader centered—focus on follower–leader exchanges of the leadership process. • Focus on me, us, and them. • Focus on difference, similarity, and common ground. • Orient to outcomes and business processes.	• Relationships (multiple reality) perspective of leadership—understanding throughout organization—social capital focus. • Relational context and process centered—focus on various forms of relationships and networks of reciprocal social interactions—social constructions made in a process. • Focus on we and all. • Value and pursue diversity and multiple viewpoints. • Orient to outcomes, social processes, context, and business processes.
The use of power:	The use of power:
• Power is seen as a commodity, a leadership tool, concentrated in certain individuals. • Forceful and controlling. • Smooth things over. • Hierarchical and positional.	• Power is seen as distributed throughout the system—focus on mutual enabling practices, i.e., collaboration, power sharing, and empowerment. • Thoughtful, reflective, transparent, participating, and inclusive. • Co-create courageous expectations. • Networked and “in place.”
Decision-making processes:	Decision-making processes:
• Direct, tell, and sell. • Give marching orders. • Make decisions.	• Elicit and facilitate, create space for dialogue. • Set boundaries and frame the intention.

(Continued)

Table 14.1 (Cont.)

<i>Traditional Entity-Based Leadership</i>	<i>Inclusive Relational-Based Leadership</i>
Engage in directing and controlling.	- Create a process for engagement, decision-making, and leading as learning. - Engage in meaning making and opportunity creating, agency and partnerships.
The role of leadership:	The role (activity) of leadership:
- Leadership is seen as a formal role that drives organizational process. - Entity-based process of leading. - Positional, formal, and informal. - Input based.	- Leadership is seen as generated in social dynamics. - Collective consensual process of leading and enabling mutual commitment. - Community and collectives of leaders, and leaders in place, formal and informal. - Emergent and processual.
The role of the leader:	The role of leadership practices:
- Create and enforce rules and regulations. - Take control and solve problems. - Honoring responsibility and engagement. - Focus on similarity and common ground.	- Question dominant and normative practices. Focus on fairness, equity, civil dissent, distributed agency. - Create a holding space for followers to solve problems. - Honor relational responsibility and integrity, and mindful engagement. - Value and pursue diversity, multiple viewpoints, and mutuality.

In summary, relational leadership practice is a collective and distributive process. It focuses on we and all (based on social capital or relationships) and not only on me, us, or them (based on human capital or entities). Relational practice also links back to responsible leadership's broad-based multiple stakeholder view and a shared responsibility of living well with others, while doing no harm. Responsible inclusive leadership rests on relational practices as one of its main underpinnings: honoring collective relational responsibility, distributive agency, mindful engagement, and individual accountability.

Leadership involves both *practices* (workplace task activities, routines, and standard operating procedures to get the job done) and *practice* (coordinative effort) to keep the process of leadership and emergence going. In spite of the collective shared process, leadership may arise from

the actions or practices of individuals due to organizational structural conditions, positional placements, access to information and expertise, or proximity that will enable meaning making (Shotter, 2016; Simpson, 2016). This makes leadership the shared responsibility of the collective, and each and every individual in the collective (Ford, 2016). *This means that while leadership does not belong to anyone in particular, it is the shared responsibility of everyone in the system.*

Moreover, leadership does not only reside in the people; the whole organizational system is involved. The vision, mission, shared values, rules, conventions, technologies, procedures, and the artifacts of the organizational system are all embedded in the leadership process. It is a shape-shifting social phenomenon produced through collective relational practice distributed throughout the whole system (Ford, 2016).

Aligned with the above, the Center for Creative Leadership defined leadership as “a process by which people with shared values and work collectively create direction, alignment and commitment (DAC) utilizing all parts of the organizational systems, within a culture of collaboration and cooperation” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 636), thus tapping into the energy of the whole system to produce leadership.

Direction refers to widespread agreement in a collective on overall goals, aims, and mission (agreement on goals). *Alignment* refers to the organization and coordination of knowledge, work, systems, and processes in a collective (coordination of work). *Commitment* refers to the willingness of members of a collective to subsume their own interests and benefit within the collective interest and benefit (giving extra effort). People can intentionally engage and establish enabling practices in their organizations through direction, alignment, and commitment for emergence and leadership to happen (Boekhorst, 2015; Ford, 2016; Gotsis & Grimana, 2016; Hazy & Uhl-Bien, 2015).

The practice of leadership, then, does not reside in a person, nor is it dependent on any particular person to lead, mobilize, or take action on behalf of others; it is inherently relational, shared, distributed, collective, and co-created. Consequently, leadership can happen within teams, workgroups, task forces, divisions, communities, and whole organizations, stakeholders in the external macro context, across teams, levels, and functions, and organizations, and it can be formal (positional) and informal (in place).

From the above discussion leadership can be framed as a process outcome that exists and emerges in relational, collective, and distributed practice and practices in context, dispersed throughout the whole system (Raelin, 2016, p. 3).

The Production of Responsible Inclusive Leadership in the Whole Organizational System

Leadership does not take place in a vacuum, but rather in specific organizational contexts (systems) that are directed by vision, mission, shared values, and superordinate goals and that lead to strategic outcomes. Internal cross-functional organizational factors (or spheres of influence) that play a role in the leadership production process are strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills, or resources (Higgins, 2005, based on McKinsey's 7-S framework of strategy implementation). These internal organizational factors are used in tandem as levers in the leadership process to attain the organization's envisioned strategic outcomes, based on its shared values and superordinate goals. Therefore, if responsible inclusive leadership is a superordinate goal and shared value of an organization it should be embedded in and aligned with all its cross-functional organizational factors (see Figure 14.1 and Table 14.2).

Figure 14.1 presents a practice-based framework for understanding how responsible inclusive leadership can be produced by direction, alignment, and commitment throughout the organizational system and the context in which it operates. This framework conceptualizes responsible inclusive leadership as occurring on the micro, meso, and macro levels and highlights the different main foci of responsible and inclusive leadership.

This framework highlights that leadership gets produced through direction, alignment, and commitment across all the internal cross-functional organizational factors or six spheres of influence (strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, and skills/resources) that are driven by its superordinate goals (Higgins, 2005).

The superordinate goals and shared values in Figure 14.1 drive the strategic performance of the organization. The strategic performance of the organization ultimately depends on the collective alignment of strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, and skills/resources with its shared goals. Consequently, if responsible inclusive leadership is valued and seen as a superordinate goal of the organization, all the other spheres of influence (strategy, structure, systems, style, staff, skills/resources) need to be deliberately aligned to enable responsible inclusive leadership practice (as shown in Figure 14.1). This means the leadership process includes not only collective human action, but also the internal processes, policies, procedures (operations), rituals, and artifacts (climate and culture) of the organization, as well as the external organizational context. Table 14.2 highlights examples of such enabling practices that can be institutionalized across the functional spheres of influence in the organization to produce responsible inclusive leadership.

Lastly, while responsible inclusive leadership is a collective organizational system-wide process, we still need to take a critical look at how

Table 14.2 Responsible inclusive leadership practices

<i>Cross-Functional Spheres of Influence</i>	<i>Gods</i>	<i>Responsible Inclusive Practices</i>
Strategy: How we do, what we do.	To do what we do in an inclusive and responsible way, valuing the collective.	Co-create a shared understanding of inclusive and responsible practice in organizational context and include it as a shared value and a super-ordinate goal. Treat inclusive and responsible practice as a strategic imperative to be mainstreamed across all functional areas. Hold everyone accountable to principles of responsible leadership, especially positional leaders, by, for instance, building it into their performance contracts.
Structure: How people and work are organized. Organization structures, roles, and responsibilities, how people are organized to work together, division of labor.	To optimize networking and enhance collaboration through enabling organizational structures to be sensitive to historical and political systemic hegemonic practices and counteract these through systems and policies.	Maximize role and task interdependencies to enhance cooperation and compromise. Create enabling decision making and reporting structures and distributed power-sharing possibilities in order for people to take up agency by creating flatter and flexible networked organization structures with permeable boundaries. Create fluid roles and responsibilities (aligned with mission clarity) to enhance shared responsibilities and organic job enrichment and enhancement. Fix responsibility to uphold responsible and inclusive practices, and hold everyone accountable. Create physical shared safe (third) spaces for dialogue and participation. Distribute work and responsibility fairly and equitably in a consultative manner, break down fault-lines and deliberately create maximum mix diverse work groups.

Systems: Systems, processes, and information that link people together.	To create a climate of inclusion in everyday practice. To build a culture of inclusion that is empowering and enabling in nature.	Socialize the expectation of respectful engagement, trust, sharing, honest giving and receiving of feedback, and civil dissent. Build values of responsible inclusive leadership into performance management systems, and management systems and processes to ensure a match between enacted and espoused values. Audit and diagnose processes for unequal power dynamics and exclusion and marginalization and instill corrective practices, for instance, work–life integration and effectiveness policies and practices, flexible work arrangements. Make sure there is free flow of information and equal access to information, and open communication that enables equal voice and choice for all.
Style: Leadership discourse, tools, concepts, implicit leadership models (also see Table 14.1).	To make responsible inclusive leadership a strategic key performance area and part of the performance appraisal process for everyone in the organization.	Monitor systems and processes and assess climate (atmosphere of respect, equity, fairness, safe environment for brave, authentic, and transparent dialogue to take place) and culture (practices, systems, and processes based on shared assumptions and values to enhance responsible practices and inclusion) for continuous improvement. Build high trust and quality relationships, be supportive and reflective, practice humility, “not knowing,” and curious inquiry, be willing to fail and support others who have failed, apologize when needed. Enact responsible inclusive leadership values, and be vocal about valuing difference, and keep others accountable to do the same, honor relational responsibility and integrity, and mindful engagement, and engage in power sharing, collaborative, participative, and enabling practices. Question dominant and normative practices, focus on fairness, equity, distributed agency, and voice and choice for all. Create holding environments for open dialogue and civil dissent.

(Continued)

Table 14.2 (Cont.)

Cross-Functional Spheres of Influence	Goals	Responsible Inclusive Practices
Staff: People, agents or actors, leaders, followers.	To recruit, appoint, and maintain diverse people who will thrive in responsible inclusive organizations.	Engage in community building by focusing on shared goals and aspirations, focus on collective creativity, mutual commitments, and shared responsibility. Take up the responsibility of being leaders in place and create space for others to do the same. Be a good, brave, and courageous citizen of the collective, speak up and call out exclusive practice through authentic respectful engagement and relational transparency, speak truth to power, be courageous “leaders” and “followers.” Advertise widely, use inclusive recruitment processes to ensure heterogeneity exists in the workplace. Set targets to deliberately include individuals from marginalized groups. Constitute heterogeneous selection panels representing diverse views and all stakeholders. Intentionally recruit, select, and appoint people who are triple-bottom-line driven and committed to principles of social justice, fairness, and inclusion. Make high levels or the potential to develop high levels of relational integrity (living well with everyone) a requirement for appointment. Socialize appointees into the ethos of responsible inclusive leadership practice, through buddy-ship, mentorship, role-modeling, coaching, and formal training and development. Continuously develop relational practice and responsible inclusive leadership capabilities across the organization on all levels through leadership development and training.

Skills/Resources: Dominant competencies and capabilities, skills technology, money.

To value a diverse set of skills, capabilities, competencies, and worldviews.

To allocate and distribute resources in a fair and equitable manner.

Focus on the importance and strengths of appreciating difference, different ways of knowing, and different worldviews.

Put systems and processes in place that ensure fair distribution of resource allocation, and that all have access to shared resources, for instance broad-based stakeholder input and shared decision-making on how resources should be allocated, distributed, and shared.

Incentivize responsible and inclusive practices, use resources to showcase individual and collective responsible and inclusive practices.

Provide resources for deliberate co-creation, emergence, and innovation.

power with others and agency might play out in organizational structures and cultures. Agency in this collective process is still governed by pre-established and existing rules based on the system's socio-historical-cultural-political context that results in power dynamics that create inequalities in the system (Schedlitzki & Edwards, 2014). Consequently, certain people and groups have *power to*, power to act on behalf of others, or *power over* others, where power can be used to punish, incentivize, marginalize, or empower others. Responsible inclusive leadership creates spaces where power is distributive and seen as *power with*, which emphasizes mutuality and co-creation (Ford, 2016). For example, creating flatter and flexible networked organization structures with permeable boundaries enables people to cooperate, collaborate, share, and co-create, because it breaks down silo behavior and opens up power-sharing opportunities, rather than concentrating power and decision-making in certain individuals who then have power over others.

To be more inclusive, we thus need to acknowledge that power dynamics also permeate participatory spaces, and can still marginalize disenfranchised groups while privileging dominant groups by accepting them as the norm. It is therefore crucial to continuously monitor that agency is distributed throughout the organization system to optimize its inclusive capacity. One way to do this, for example, is to deliberately break down fault lines in creating teams and departments with maximum-mix diverse work groups.

Conclusion

This chapter showed that responsible inclusive leadership is shared by the whole collective; it does not “belong” to anyone in particular, and it is distributed throughout all aspects of and co-created within the organizational system. This also means that—even though leadership does not belong to anyone in particular—it is the shared responsibility of everyone in the system!

I conclude with an initial definition of responsible inclusive leadership as

an emergent process of co-creative meaning-making through collaborative and respectful relational practice that enables individuals and collectives to be fully part of the whole through authentic voice and unique choice, and to be directed, aligned, and committed toward shared sustainable outcomes for the common good of all, including the planet.

I also leave the reader with the following question: are you tapping into the energy of the whole organization through responsible, inclusive, collaborative, and shared practice, empowering all, or are you still

practicing exclusive entity-based practices by trying to be in control, hold the answers, and do things autonomously?

To tap into the energy of the whole system in a responsible and inclusive manner, leaders need to cultivate high quality connections, question dominant and normative practices, and have a “both/and” perspective, rather than a binary “either/or” perspective. Leaders also need to frame leadership as a collective, shared, networked, interdependent process, and use metaphors such as Partnership of Equals, Confluence of Agendas, Communities of Practice, or Webs of Inclusion for the common good of all.

Note

- 1 Based on Anderson and Ackerman-Anderson (2001); Booysen (2001); Ferdman and Brody (1996); Heifetz, Linsky, and Alexander (2009); Komives and Wagner (2009); McCauley et al. (2010); Pless and Maak (2004); Riggio (2008); Uhl-Bien (2006); Wasserman et al. (2008).

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