

Leadership Capacity for Turnaround

Leadership is about *motivating* people, diverse people, to work together to get results never before obtained. It involves stimulating and tapping into energies hitherto dormant: “Leadership is not about making clever decisions and doing bigger deals, least of all for personal gain. It is about energizing other people to make good decisions and do other things. In other words, it is about helping release the positive energy that exists naturally within people. Effective leadership inspires more than empowers; it connects more than controls; it demonstrates more than it decides. It does all this by engaging—itself above all and consequently others” (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 143).

In this chapter, we capture the essence of turnaround leadership. We will see that it is about listening, linking, and leading (in that order) and about modeling, teaching, and learning. These new leadership qualities are identified in our Learning Leaders study (Scott et al., 2008). They are corroborated in the best research on leadership, and they have been exemplified over the years by leaders who create processes that reconcile seemingly impossible divisions, thereby creating new higher grounds of unity and prosperity.

The world of the academic leader, as we have seen, is wickedly challenging. There is a wide range of external change forces that continuously shift and bear down on our leaders. And then there

are the many local change forces that can help or hinder necessary action. It is a world where change is inevitable, where the unexpected is to be expected, where leveraging talent to get action is critical, and where academic cultures, different traditions, and corporate goals can collide. What is important to understand is that, in this world, leadership cannot just come from the top. Everyone is a leader of change in their own area of expertise. It is a world where—if those who will implement a desired change do not see its relevance, desirability, and feasibility and if they are not clear on what they must do differently and are not helped to learn it—there is no change, only window dressing and plans with no implementation.

It is a world where, as a central or local leader, being able to regulate one's emotions—to remain calm when the unexpected happens or when confronted with passive aggression, to tolerate ambiguity, and to be undefensive and willing to listen and learn—is critical. It is world where being committed to the core purpose of beneficial student outcomes and being action-oriented and responsive while being able to make a hard decision counts. And it is a world where being able to empathize with others, work with diversity, listen, influence, get to the core of the issue, set priorities, diagnose what is going on, and design uniquely suited solutions with those who are to implement them also counts.

These are the factors, as we shall see, repeatedly identified in the Learning Leaders study (Scott et al., 2008) as crucial for effective turnaround leadership in universities and reinforced in workshops around the world. Yes, we must understand how to manage a budget, know how the university's HR processes work, and understand what makes for a sound learning program and how to engage students in productive learning. These competencies are necessary, but they are not sufficient for effective turnaround. Turnaround requires capabilities like those above, capabilities that bring together a distinct profile of emotional intelligence and cognitive ability.

Turnaround Leaders Listen, Link, and Lead

When change is in the air, when the unexpected inevitably happens, when conflict occurs, effective turnaround leaders in universities listen first, then link together what is learned and, only when this is done, do they lead. And they do this in partnership with those who will make the desired change work, always building on what is working elsewhere and in light of evidence of successful implementation and impact.

Listen

Turnaround leaders reach out to those who will make a desired change work with a well-argued, evidence-based case on why action in this area is necessary. Whenever possible, they listen with a “menu” of what has been done elsewhere (both within and beyond their university) to successfully address the focus area for improvement or strategic change that is on the table. This process of listening with a menu is important as it gives the process discipline and builds on a key factor for engaging staff—a reason to get involved and an indication that “fellow travelers” elsewhere have been able to make changes like this work.

Turnaround leaders actively invite people to identify within this framework of “steered engagement” what they believe is the most relevant, desirable, and feasible way to proceed. Their listening is authentic; that is, they really want to know what the people who will implement the change think will make it work best. They actively listen in order to identify, link, and distill the elements of a workable and productive plan of action, always testing this against what has worked elsewhere and in their own experience. They look for evidence that what staff (and students) are proposing is likely to be achievable and the most likely to best resolve the problem at hand. They understand that listening with discipline can help build motivation to own the problem and act, that it can also

build a better solution than what they alone could design (many minds are better than one), and that it will build a plan of action that is not only relevant, understood, and owned but feasible.

Listening does not mean listening only to people who agree with you. It is just as important to listen to resisters. These people will always identify the road blocks that need to be addressed, and the very act of listening to them helps decrease their potential to become alienated and undermine implementation. If you listen carefully, resisters often have positive ideas.

Listening requires the ability to take one's ego out of the situation, to empathize, to tolerate ambiguity, and to take in ideas that don't align with yours. It also requires commitment and the cognitive skill to bring together a range of disparate ideas, to see the key issue and a way forward, and the ability to look not only at the technical dimensions of a turnaround situation but the human ones.

Link

Based on what they discover, on their diagnosis of the situation and their testing of the various options proposed for relevance, desirability, support, and feasibility, turnaround leaders make a decision on what is likely to work best. Then they check this with those who will implement the plan, by inviting them, against evidence, to make suggestions about what to add, drop, change, or highlight in the draft plan of action.

This work is not long-winded. The motto is, as we said in Chapter 4, ready, fire, aim; not ready, aim, aim, aim. Leaders check the emerging plan of action against their university's key turnaround agenda checkpoints like those identified in Chapter 3 and the key change management ones set out in Chapter 4, adjusting as they go.

Lead

A good leader, like a good teacher, actively involves those who will make the desired change work. The team knows that things won't

work out exactly as planned, and the turnaround leader makes it clear that this is okay, that they are going to learn by doing. So, whenever possible, they try out the agreed plan under controlled conditions, monitor the results, learn what works, and change what doesn't. There is no defensiveness in this process. Everyone is willing to face aspects that don't pan out as anticipated, to figure out why, and to identify what might work better. They understand that students can be invaluable partners in this process.

So *lead* means acting in partnership through a rising spiral of learning by doing; it means trying the change under controlled conditions, evaluating its implementation and impact, retaining what works, and refining what doesn't until it is ready for scale-up. *Lead* means make sure that those who will act on the agreed plan are clear on what their role is, on how they will know if the change is working well, and how any shortcomings will be addressed. Just as students like clear expectations around learning, action, and assessment, so too do staff. Everyone likes to have some upfront, negotiated clarity on how the quality of what they have in mind will be judged and what tactics will be adopted to address any emerging shortcomings.

As the process of leading implementation unfolds, it is critical to distinguish between making judgments about the quality of inputs (such as the quality of the plan and making sure the right human and material resources are in place) and judgments about the quality of the outcomes (such as evidence that the desired change is working in practice and evidence that it is having a positive effect on the capabilities of those intended to benefit).

Turnaround Leaders Model, Teach, and Learn

We have found that turnaround leaders take on three critical roles. They intentionally model the change-capable culture they want their institution to develop; they teach their staff how best to implement a desired change; and they take on the role of learner, seeing what does and doesn't work in their area of responsibility, and they

self-monitor their performance on the capabilities that distinguish effective leaders in universities, always seeking to improve in any areas found wanting.

Leader as Model

We have already argued that learning is a change process in which we develop the capabilities for productive and successful performance (Chapter 3), and that change is a learning process (Chapter 4). We have emphasized that the total experience can help or hinder learning for both staff, as they seek to implement a desired change, and students, as they learn and prepare for assessment. For students and staff the environment has, therefore, to be change-capable, focused, and aligned. That is, it has to help people learn from each other and from experience, and it has to be sufficiently efficient and unbureaucratic to give them room to learn.

What we found in our Learning Leaders study has been confirmed in workshops around the world. The ideal way to change a culture is for a critical mass of key leaders—centrally and locally—to intentionally model in their daily behaviors the attributes and capabilities they want the university to develop. People—our staff, friends, and, indeed, our own children—are influenced just as much by what we do as what we say. The listen, link, and lead strategy is a good example of what we are talking about.

Leader as Teacher

If change for staff and students is a complex learning and unlearning process, not an event; and if staff like to learn exactly how students like to learn (Chapter 3), then there is an important role for turnaround leaders in helping staff identify the gaps in their expertise necessary to deliver a desired change and then to fill them through a wide range of informal as well as formal learning strategies.

This work has links to the importance of leaders working together to build a change-capable culture, especially one where there are

opportunities for peers to share successful practices in the areas of change being pursued. It also has direct links to shaping the development plans and performance reviews for staff and involves leaders in making sure that what is in these plans aligns with the key change priorities for their units. Finally, turnaround leaders work with centers of learning and teaching to make sure that their programs (both formal and informal) align with their staff's key change and learning needs.

Leader as Learner

We pursue this issue in more detail in Chapter 6 because it is critical to implementing the turnaround agenda. Leaders can't be left to their own devices to learn only by trial and error. We need to help them learn and build up their capabilities with focus, using a validated leadership framework for making sense of experience and to do so just-in-time and just-for-me. Just as students learn best through active learning, through experiencing the key dilemmas of real-world practice, through trying solutions and evaluating the results; just as students learn effectively through having just-in-time access to successful performers further down the same learning path, so too do our leaders.

Leaders who model a willingness to face and learn from their errors, who are interested in identifying where they can improve, and who strategically use networks with people in similar roles elsewhere to identify solutions to their personal improvement priorities simultaneously help build a dimension of a change-capable university culture we profiled in Chapter 4—a learning organization.

And, as we shall see in Chapter 6, universities need to more directly apply the learning designs and methods found to engage and retain their students in productive learning. In turn, learning programs for leaders must help these leaders learn by doing so that they can design learning experiences for other leaders and for their students.

Same Profile, Different Levels

What is surprising to us in all this research is how the profile of the change-capable graduate matches that of the effective teacher, the successful turnaround leader in a university, and leaders in other fields, including turnaround political leaders. What is equally surprising to us is how closely this profile characterizes change-capable cultures—both within higher education and beyond.

All leaders are able to self-regulate when things go wrong and be decisive and committed (a well-developed personal capability). All can empathize and influence (a well-developed interpersonal capability). All are able to diagnose, determine what is going on in a situation, get to the core of the issue, identify and trace out the consequences of potentially relevant courses of action, set priorities, determine what might work best with those who are to implement the chosen solution, and operate flexibly and responsively as implementation proceeds. These parallels concentrate the agenda for change-capable cultures and their leaders.

The Learning Leaders Study

The central role of leadership within a university is to frame the expectations of key actors to create the organizational settings in which knowledge can be grown, shared, and applied as a strategic resource. In this context, knowledge has a broad meaning, encompassing not just discipline knowledge but also knowledge specific to the organization in areas such as planning, workforce effectiveness, learning quality, productivity improvement, and change management, which must be developed and institutionalized within a strong community of practice model.

To do this, we review the findings of one of the largest studies of university learning and teaching leaders recently undertaken across the world, locate these findings within the broader leadership literature, and draw out the key implications for university leaders and

their institutions (Scott et al., 2008). Once we understand what hundreds of academic leaders from across the world in the same role do to tackle challenges, how they leverage satisfactions and judge their performance, along with working to develop the capabilities which count most, university leadership becomes not just more manageable but exhilarating. With such knowledge we can, indeed, turn the tables on change. The research was undertaken through a partnership between the University of Western Sydney and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). It builds on a parallel study of effective leadership in education undertaken in 2003 (Scott, 2003) and applies a refined version of two conceptual frameworks tested in that study, one concerning leadership capability and the other concerning learning leadership.

The aims of the study were to:

- Profile university learning and teaching leaders in their roles as provost (deputy vice chancellor) and pro vice chancellor, dean and associate dean, head of school, department chair, head of program, learning and teaching director, and innovation team leader.
- Clarify what leadership actually means in the context of each role.
- Illuminate the daily realities, influences, challenges, and the most and least satisfying aspects of each role in order to give an insider's view of what life as an academic leader is currently like.
- Identify the key criteria which respondents in different roles use to judge the effectiveness of their performance.
- Identify the capabilities they see as being most important for effective performance in their role.

- Identify what forms of formal and informal support and learning are of most or least assistance in developing these capabilities.
- Determine where there are similarities and differences between the roles examined.
- Compare the findings with the existing literature on higher education leadership and those from parallel studies in other educational contexts.

The study involved an extensive literature review, feedback from agencies like the UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, analysis of a detailed online survey with more than 500 learning and teaching leaders, and one-on-one discussions with a subsample of these in 20 Australian universities covering all the leadership roles identified above. The findings were reviewed subsequently for their veracity and implications in a series of workshops with an additional 600 experienced academics and key senior players across Australia and internationally by higher education leaders in South Africa, Canada, the U.S., and New Zealand.

The Insider's Experience of Academic Leadership

One useful way to capture the insider's view of academic leadership in universities is to ask experienced leaders in different roles to identify an analogy for their work (Scott et al., 2008, p. 50). The most common of the 513 leadership analogies generated by the Learning Leaders study are presented in Table 5.1, sorted by role.

These analogies all indicate that the role of academic leader requires one to be able to negotiate not only constantly shifting external forces but also local ones; that leading is a complex, constantly changing, relatively uncertain, and highly human endeavor; that not everything can be preplanned or expected to turn out exactly in the way intended; that leadership is a team, not a solo

Table 5.1. Academic leaders' analogies

| Most common across roles | |
|---|--|
| Herding cats | |
| Juggling | |
| Senior leaders such as provost and dean | |
| Being a gardener | |
| Conducting an orchestra/directing a play | |
| Keeping a flotilla heading in the same direction | |
| Being the captain of a sailing ship | |
| Coaching a successful sporting team | |
| Climbing a mountain together | |
| Plumbing a building—essential but no one sees it | |
| Being a diplomat | |
| Middle-level leaders such as head of department | |
| Wearing multiple hats at the same time | |
| Working with a dysfunctional family | |
| Being the meat in the sandwich | |
| Getting butterflies to fly in formation | |
| Wading through a quagmire of bureaucracy | |
| Having a Ferrari with no money for fuel | |
| Trying to nail jelly to the ceiling while trying to put out spot fires with my feet | |
| Trying to drive a nail into a wall of blancmange—little resistance but no result | |
| Academic development directors and others who must lead through influence | |
| Being the older sibling in a large family | |
| Being the minister of a church where only the converted come | |
| Matchmaking | |
| Bartending | |

(Continued)

Table 5.1. Academic leaders' analogies (Continued)**Junior leaders such as head of program**

Being a small fish in a large cloudy pond
 Being a salmon trying to swim upstream
 Rowing without an oar
 Sailing a leaky ship—faulty bilge pump
 Pushing a pea uphill with my nose
 Riding a bicycle on a tightrope
 Being a one-armed paper hanger working in a gale

Others

Being in groundhog day
 Living in a medieval castle
 Being a Rubik's cube
 Being in an Escher painting

effort; that culture (the way we do things around here) counts; that turnaround leadership can be frustrated by overly bureaucratic and unresponsive systems or by passive resistance; that, as the orchestra conductor analogy suggests, successful learning and teaching programs require both a sound plan (score) and people with the skills and ability to work productively together to deliver it in a harmonious and productive way (musicians).

The most popular analogies “herding cats” and “juggling” highlight the challenges of working with diversity and with the different tribes that make up the modern university. When the analogies are analyzed by role, it becomes clear that one’s sense of efficacy shapes the type of analogy selected. It is also interesting to note a potential disconnect between the perceptions of the most senior leaders on how their organization and role operate and the perceptions of leaders lower down the hierarchy.

The implications of the analogies in Table 5.1 for organizational change in universities were discussed in detail at a series of national and international workshops. The main themes were:

- The local environment needs to be as efficient and focused as possible. Administrative processes need to be sharp, responsive, and demonstrably add value; there needs to be minimal duplication of effort; and meetings need to be well run and focused on action and delivering outcomes of clear benefit to students. In short, people need room to lead. As participants at one of the review workshops noted: "Wading through bureaucratic mud indicates the importance of sorting out the environment not just the people. Excessive bureaucracy and overly hierarchical approval processes indicate a lack of trust and an inability to sort out what really is of high risk and needs to be signed off at a number of levels and what can be made a local accountability. Responsiveness is key in the current environment and attending endless meetings or filling out templates without value-added is of no help."

- The way those local people who will actually implement a desired change and quality improvement in learning and teaching are involved needs considerable enhancement.

- There is a sense in the vast majority of analogies of people persevering, with moral purpose, in spite of all the frustrations.

- Analogies like "being in groundhog day" suggest the need for a more focused and clearly shared vision of where everyone is to head and that, as one respondent observed, "at present, the more things change the more they stay the same."

- The one-armed paper hanger and the jelly and blancmange analogies raised a critical issue for participants at the study's review workshops—how best to deal with a change averse culture (Chapter 2). These analogies, said participants, identify a unique challenge for leaders trying to engage university staff in the turnaround agenda—how to work with what a number called disengagement, white-anting, and passive resistance.

- Analogies like having to wear multiple hats indicate the need for clearer role focus.

- At one review meeting, it was noted that it is possible to see three ways in which the analogies vary: by role complexity and

authority, by clarity of role, and by the level of resources available to the individual.

What these leadership analogies reveal is that we need people who are able to cope with the challenges of inevitable change and the unexpected, who can remain calm when it happens, who can read what needs to be done, and who can leverage their team's insights and skills to address each challenging situation in a harmonious way. This finding was reinforced when we asked our leaders to identify the indicators they use to judge that they are performing their role effectively.

The Satisfaction and Challenges of Being an Academic Leader

What became clear in the ALTC study and in the subsequent national and international discussions of its results is that, predictably, every leadership role has its fair share of both satisfaction and challenge. What emerged is that the most effective leaders know how to optimize the satisfactions and deal with the challenges in an informed, proactive, productive, and efficient manner.

The 513 leaders identified a recurring set of satisfactions. Understanding this is important for leadership motivation and retention. They varied to some extent, depending on the role concerned, as follows.

- Provosts and deputy vice chancellors reported finding satisfaction in setting strategy and direction, making team-based change happen, and interacting with clever, motivated staff.
- Deans found satisfaction in developing a productive group of leaders, helping staff achieve goals, formulating strategy, and implementing efficient systems.
- Heads of schools or departments found satisfaction in setting the direction for their unit, being able to make

things happen, assisting the development of their staff, and managing resources effectively.

- Heads of programs found satisfaction in assisting students, teaching, implementing new curriculum successfully, and building staff morale and skills.
- Directors of learning and teaching centers found satisfaction in working across the university to make desired learning and teaching improvements happen, in policy and strategy development, in identifying problems and addressing them, and in developing and assisting people to implement new approaches to learning and teaching.

The integrating theme in these satisfactions concerns working reciprocally and productively with staff to achieve real change. They also generally align with the key effectiveness indicators which respondents identified for each role. In terms of the most common challenges faced in different roles:

- Provosts and deputy vice chancellors reported that their major challenges centered around dealing with archaic processes, too much travel, attending meetings without an outcome, organizational indecisiveness, performance management of staff, and having to work with change-averse cultures.
- Deans reported having to educate bureaucrats, handle "administrivia," attend an excessive number of ritualized meetings, manage resource cuts, and deal with staff performance problems.
- Heads of schools or departments reported having to deal with "clunky" university processes, a continuous stream of ad hoc requests and meetings with little relationship to core business outcomes; a lack of recognition, reward, and praise for their achievements; and

having to manage escalated complaints, staff performance problems, and budget constraints.

- Heads of programs reported having to deal with dysfunctional systems and bureaucratic processes which don't add value; difficult staff or staff inertia; and a wide range of complaints from students.
- Directors of learning and teaching centers reported having to lead through influence, work with unclear role expectations, engage uninterested staff, undertake continuous proposal writing, cope with continual restructures of their area, attend unproductive meetings, and promote the equal status of learning and teaching with research.

Delivering Turnaround Leadership—Identifying the Capabilities That Count

The ALTC study and subsequent reviews of its results around the world have confirmed that an academic leader's capability is most challenged when the unexpected happens, when a plan goes awry and, in the distinctive context of a university, when faced by a change-averse culture. When things are running smoothly, leadership capacity is untested. First a few words about the difference between competence and capability, as the two concepts are often conflated.

Competence

Competence is more associated with management, whereas capability is more associated with leadership. This generally aligns with our review of the literature, where the concept of being competent typically refers to someone who possesses the key skills and knowledge required to deliver the tasks that make up a specific job or are necessary to run a particular operation effectively. The following definitions are typical:

“Competencies are, in essence, definitions of expected performance that, taken as a whole, should provide users with the complete picture of the most valuable behaviors, values and tasks required for their organization’s success.” [Rankin, 2004]

“Competency means possessing the requisite capacities and knowledge base to undertake one’s agreed upon functions.” [Dauphin, 2005, p. 2]

Importantly, a sole focus on competency as the ability to perform set tasks to a specified standard fails to take into account the changing and uncertain nature of daily leadership practice or to emphasize the significance of an individual’s capacity to know when and when not to draw upon specific areas of skill or knowledge. As Duignan (2004) concluded in his study, the requisite is having the “dynamic capacity to respond to changing circumstances and to try to improve those circumstances” (p. 7). And this requires something more than competence; it requires what, in this book, we define as “capability”.

Capability

Capability is more associated with higher education leadership than management, with having the talent and capacity necessary to operate successfully to achieve continuous improvement and innovation. It entails attributes such as being able to work productively, calmly, persuasively, and deftly with diversity and uncertainty; a willingness to take responsibility and make hard decisions; a capacity to inspire others to action through sound decision making, integrity, and enthusiasm; an ability to diagnose and figure out what is really going on in a complex situation; and a capacity to see the big picture, to identify and set down what ultimately proves to have been a successful new direction, and to engage and support people in making it happen in a way that is both tactical and responsive. Capability involves, as one of our ALTC leaders pointed out, reading and

responding to a rapidly changing external environment. In this perspective, capability sets the limits for both the development of competencies and their appropriate deployment, and it entails having the emotional and cognitive capacity to figure out when and when not to draw upon specific competencies, along with the capacity to learn from experience.

This view has links to Ramsden's (1998) observation that what combines aspects of leading and managing in higher education is leaders' capacity to manage not only their own learning and change but that of others: "(This) is closely associated with the idea of helping people through change and providing a vision for the future . . . It reflects an established notion in the mainstream literature on management and leadership—that effective leaders act as educators who help others learn . . . By these means credible leaders 'turn followers into leaders' (Kouzes & Posner, 1993, p. 156)" (Ramsden, 1998, p. 100).

Brungardt (1998) claims that collaborative leadership works best in postsecondary and higher education because it models what effective teachers do to help students learn. This notion of leader as model aligns with Martin, Trigwell, Prosser, and Ramsden's (2003, pp. 257–258) findings in their study of the links between university subject coordinators' leadership and teachers' approach to teaching: ". . . we have shown that the more collaborative approaches to the leadership of teaching at the individual subject level are associated with more conceptual, change-oriented and student-focused approaches to teaching. Given that other research has shown that these more conceptual change and student-focused approaches to teaching are associated with deeper approaches to learning (Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999) this study would suggest that the way in which teachers experience the leadership of their departments is an important precursor to the quality of student learning processes and outcomes in their departments" (p. 2).

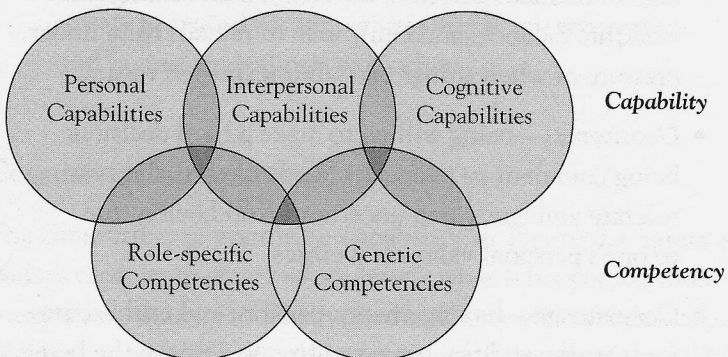
Thus, there are certain core capabilities and competencies common to turnaround leadership. We call this set of characteristics the leadership capability framework. Figure 5.1 identifies the concep-

tual framework for academic leadership capability, which guided the ALTC study and was tested, validated, and explained by it. It is directly based upon a framework already validated in studies of successful early career graduates in nine professions (Vescio, 2005) and in a detailed study of 322 effective school leaders (Scott, 2003) and is consistent with all of the literature reviewed above. It also has resonance with the graduate outcomes being sought by Sullivan and Rosin (2008) in the new agenda for higher education (Chapter 3).

Figure 5.1 identifies three overlapping aspects of leadership capability—personal, interpersonal, and cognitive. These domains are underpinned by two linked forms of skill and knowledge: generic competencies such as the ability to organize, run meetings, use IT, and understand how universities work; and role-specific competencies, in this case a high level of skill and understanding about learning and teaching in higher education.

The overlapping nature of the framework indicates that all five dimensions are necessary for effective performance as an academic leader and that the five domains identified feed into and off each other. For example, as noted earlier, we have clear evidence in the ALTC study and in those that have preceded it that a leader's capability is not tested when things are running smoothly but when something goes wrong, when something unexpected happens or, in

Figure 5.1. Academic leadership capability framework



the unique context of higher education, when one is confronted by a change-averse or passive university culture.

Personal and Interpersonal Capabilities

At such times, it is important for leaders first to be able to manage their own emotional reactions to the uncertainty and discomfort, for example, not to overreact, to tolerate uncertainty, and to be able to remain calm. At the same time, as all key challenges of academic leadership have a human dimension, it is important to have a high level of interpersonal capability in order to better understand what is happening and sort out what might work best to resolve the situation.

The ALTC study produced and validated a set of personal and interpersonal capability items and scales that are important for effective turnaround leadership. They have considerable alignment with Goleman's (1998) concept of emotional intelligence.

Personal Capability

The components of personal capability identified as being most important for effective turnaround leadership are:

- *Self regulation*—the ability to defer judgment; an understanding of one's personal strengths and limitations; a willingness to admit to and learn from errors; being able to bounce back from adversity; maintaining a good work/life balance; and being able to remain calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn.
- *Decisiveness*—being willing to make a hard decision; being confident to take calculated risks; an ability to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty; and being true to one's personal values and ethics.
- *Commitment*—having energy, passion, and enthusiasm for learning and teaching; wanting to achieve the best

outcome possible; taking responsibility for program activities and outcomes; persevering when things are not working out as anticipated; and pitching in and undertaking menial tasks when needed.

Interpersonal Capability

The components of interpersonal capability that are most important for effective turnaround leadership are:

- *Influencing*—influencing people's behavior and decisions in effective ways; understanding how the different groups that make up one's university operate and affect different situations; working with very senior people within and beyond the university without being intimidated; motivating others to achieve positive outcomes; working constructively with people who are resisters or are over-enthusiastic; developing and using networks of colleagues to solve key workplace problems; and giving and receiving constructive feedback from work colleagues and others.
- *Empathizing*—empathizing and working productively with students and staff from a wide range of backgrounds; listening to different points of view before coming to a decision; developing and contributing positively to team-based programs; and being transparent and honest in dealings with others.

Cognitive Capability

The dimension of cognitive capability in Figure 5.1 refers to a leader's capacity to diagnose accurately what is happening when the unexpected occurs; to identify the human as well as technical, disciplinary, or administrative dimensions; to determine if the problem

is worth addressing in detail; and then having the ability to match an appropriate course of action to this diagnosis. Donald Schön explored how this form of contingent intelligence operates in a wide range of occupations in his 1983 book *The Reflective Practitioner*. "When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it as something already in his repertoire . . . It is to see the unfamiliar situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one . . . The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or—in Thomas Kuhn's phrase—an exemplar of the unfamiliar one . . . It is our capacity to see-as and do-as that allows us to have a feel for problems that don't fit existing rules" (Schön, 1983, pp. 138–40).

As we concluded in an earlier book *Change Matters* (Scott, 1999):

Only when (change leaders) have a better handle on what the problem might really be. . . (do) they set about designing a way of changing the situation. . . That is, they seek to "custom tailor" or *match* a plan of action that seems to best suit the unique requirements, limits and possibilities of the situation. In this way their response is "contingent" upon their reading of the situation. . . Then they act—that is they put their plan into action and assess the effects. . . In this way they ultimately come to understand the problem only by trying to change it. If their selected solutions don't work, they conclude that their interpretation of the problem was inaccurate and the spiral starts again. In this way research, learning, action and workplace improvement are constantly intermingled in the "spiral staircase" of continuous change. [pp. 122–123]

Ramsden's studies (1998) of effective leadership also identified similar cognitive attributes to those noted above. They include

through what is causing it and figure out how best to respond. It is in this way that the three top circles in Figure 5.1 are interlaced, that is, one component cannot function without the other two being present.

Key Competencies

Also integrated into this process is a leader's level of generic and role-specific skill and knowledge (the bottom circles in Figure 5.1). These areas of competence provide not only a scaffold for diagnosis but also a source for shaping the right response and delivering it in partnership with all the other players concerned.

- *Learning and teaching*—understanding how to develop an effective higher education learning program; having a high level of up-to-date knowledge of what engages university students in productive learning; understanding how to design and conduct an evaluation of a higher education learning program; understanding how to implement successfully a new higher education program; being on top of current developments in learning and teaching; and knowing how to identify and disseminate good learning practice.
- *University operations*—understanding the role of risk management and litigation; understanding how universities operate; understanding industrial relations and processes as they apply to higher education; being able to help one's staff learn how to deliver necessary changes successfully; an ability to chair a meeting effectively; and having sound administrative and resource management skills.
- *Self-organization skills*—managing one's own professional learning and development; using IT effectively

to communicate and perform key work functions; organizing one's work and manage time effectively; and making effective presentations to a range of different groups.

The framework in Figure 5.1 helps clarify how effective university leaders work with, learn from, and respond to changing circumstances. It allows that academic leadership is a highly contextualized phenomenon. It blends the competency and capability perspectives on leadership. It emphasizes that possessing a high level of skill and knowledge about how one's university operates or what makes for a productive approach to learning and teaching is necessary but is not sufficient for effective leadership in higher education. What is essential is the highly developed emotional intelligence and a contingent way of thinking that enables one to know when (and when not) to deploy (or add to) these competencies. It is in this way that Figure 5.1 shows how capability and competence, leadership and management are all necessary for effective turnaround leadership—the key priority in the operating context outlined in detail in Chapter 1.

Key Findings About Leadership Capability

In the ALTC study, the 513 leaders were asked to rank the 57 items that make up the above scales on their relative importance in the effective delivery of their role. The findings are discussed in detail in Scott et al. (2008, pp. 69–89). The overall findings have important implications for who we select as our university leaders and how we manage their performance evaluation and support. They highlight the capabilities such leaders will need to possess in order to deliver the turnaround agendas identified in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. The ALTC results show that:

No capability item attracted an importance rating of less than 3.9 out of 5 (1–low to 5–high).

Seven of the top ten items concerned emotional intelligence (personal or interpersonal), two concerned cognitive ability, and one concerned competence in time management.

Table 5.2 presents the 12 capability/competency items out of the 57 surveyed that ranked highest in importance by the leaders (their rank is indicated in brackets).

When a study of the ratings for specific aspects of capability was undertaken, a striking commonality from the most senior to the

Table 5.2. Top-Ranking Leadership Capabilities and Competencies

Emotional Intelligence (Personal)

- Being true to one's personal values and ethics (2)
- Remaining calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn (3)
- Understanding my personal strengths and limitations (5)
- Energy and passion for learning and teaching (7)
- Admitting to and learning from my errors (10)

Emotional Intelligence (Interpersonal)

- Being transparent and honest in dealings with others (1)
- Empathizing and working productively with staff and other key players from a wide range of backgrounds (4)

Intellectual

- Identifying from a mass of information the core issue or opportunity in any situation (8)
- Making sense of and learning from experience (9)
- Thinking creatively and laterally (11)
- Diagnosing the underlying causes of a problem and taking appropriate action to address it (12)

Skills and Knowledge

- Being able to organize my work and manage time effectively (6)
-

most junior leaders emerged. Irrespective of role, for example, aspects of emotional intelligence (personal and interpersonal) like those identified in Table 5.1 dominate, but always in combination with a contingent way of thinking and the appropriate use of a well-developed repertoire of relevant skills and knowledge. However, we also found that, as the scope, complexity, accountability, and seniority of the role grew, the more sophisticated, developed, and integrated all the dimensions of capability had to be.

We found that the focus of an academic leader's work influences the capabilities identified as being most important for effective leadership and that middle-level roles like head of school or department chair require a particularly powerful combination of capabilities because of the challenge of having to manage both up and down. We concluded that "the most demanding roles are indicated not only in the sorts of challenges identified, and the scope and level of accountability for the activities to be undertaken, but also in respondents' analogies. . . and their self identified effectiveness criteria" (Scott et al., 2008, p. 73).

Implications

The participants and reviewers of the ALTC project identified a number of potential ways in which the findings in this chapter might be implemented. Some concern what individual leaders might do and others concern what universities might do. The most common suggestions for individual leadership action are summarized below:

- Actively seek to implement the top 10 capabilities identified for each role—noting, in particular, the critical importance of emotional intelligence in achieving turnaround.
- When things go wrong, reflect using the capability framework and its specific scales and items to diagnose what might be causing the challenge. Then use this diagnosis to work with others in the same role to identify what they have done for development. Seek

feedback and try the approaches which others have found to work, evaluate the results, and, through this, learn by doing.

- Identify junior staff with leadership potential using the top 10 capabilities as a checklist and encourage them to take on leadership roles.

- Seek to consistently apply the listen, link, then lead strategy endorsed by so many effective leaders. Listening means reaching out to those who are to implement a desired change with a menu of potentially relevant solutions; seeking their input on the need, relevance, desirability, and feasibility of such a change; and asking them how, in their view, such a development might best be achieved. Link together these perspectives into an owned plan of action. And, lead by helping the staff to implement it. As one leader noted: "A leader's role is not unlike what teachers do in the classroom. Classroom management (teacher) is like organizational, team or staff management (leaders). Effective approaches to teaching and learning (the teacher) are like effective approaches to helping people learn to do agreed change and improve organizational outcomes (leader)."

- Consider the lessons identified by Julius, Baldrige, and Pfeffer (1999). They are all practical ways to implement the capabilities found to count most for turnaround leadership: operate with integrity, wisdom, and selflessness; build a team; concentrate your efforts; know when to engage conflict; learn the history of the issue; have a plan; use committees effectively; use the formal system; follow through to push the decision process; and be prepared to kill your own project when it has outlived its usefulness.

- Share the key findings from the ALTC study with colleagues and fellow leaders. Get the professional development unit to run a workshop on them and encourage the university or higher education system to replicate the study, thereby ensuring local relevance and that this is located within a broader, empirically tested framework.

- Make the link between graduate attributes and the key capabilities for leadership turnaround more explicit.

- Change your approach to those who are negative; listen to resisters, as they can provide a picture of the challenges that must be overcome to achieve successful implementation of a turnaround initiative and the act of listening to them is a positive act in its own right. Also actively compare notes with fellow leaders in the same role on how to most constructively handle difficult people. As one ALTC participant advised: Listen with greater tolerance to seemingly inconvenient suggestions.

- Confirm the validity of the position descriptions and the expectations given to one's reports.

- Alert staff to the fact that, when trying to implement a desired improvement, it is okay if things don't work out perfectly the first time through. Push, therefore, for a "why don't we" not a "why don't you" culture, emphasize that we "rise to great heights by a winding staircase," and make clear that we learn how to make change work by doing it.

- Actively model the capabilities that count, especially when things go wrong or when faced with passive resistance, knowing that this will help build a change-capable culture.

- Keep in mind that some leaders have to operate through influence, whereas others have more direct control because they have power over the distribution of resources; that is, some leaders have to use intrinsic motivators whereas others can use extrinsic ones.

- Realize how important it is to consistently communicate one's priorities and vision to staff. As one ALTC leader observed: "The cloudy pond"—is more the issue than the "bureaucratic mud". The mud is the sediment from the cloudy pond; the challenge is institutional indecision about teaching and learning.

In sum, keep in mind that, as a turnaround leader, one is a combination of teacher, model, and learner.

Additionally, a number of implications for universitywide action emerge. For example, the ALTC participants and reviewers emphasized that universities as a whole should:

- Critically review and validate position descriptions for all leadership roles against the findings in this chapter.
- Note the importance of leaders as models and builders of a change-capable culture of the type discussed in Chapter 4, and make targeted leaders accountable for this turnaround. Doing this is critical if we want to develop the sort of learning organization central to the successful implementation of the turnaround agenda identified in Chapter 3.

- Start the process of identifying future leaders now, using the findings of this chapter to focus the criteria that will be used.
- Ensure that professional learning for leaders focuses on the key areas for development in each role identified in this chapter; ensure that it models the flexible and responsive approaches to learning known to engage all adults and that this includes informal as well as formal elements.

- Focus, in particular, on key mediating roles like head of school, department chair, and head of program as it is these people who are the final arbiters of whether a turnaround change actually gets translated into daily practice by staff.

The emergence of President Barack Obama's leadership has helped to crystallize the turnaround leadership traits we have identified. As one conservative critic noted, Obama has "a first-class intellect and a first-class temperament" (in Hertzberg, 2008, p. 40), while Obama's rivals were consumed "with beating [the opposition] rather than unifying the country" (Lizza, 2008, p. 46). And, "this is a campaign where you need to respect other people's opinions" (Lizza, 2008, p. 50). Says another observer: "Obama has the capacity to inhabit different points of view" thereby having the "ability to negotiate among the sharply disparate perspectives of his fellow citizens" (Remnick, 2008, p. 79).

Confirming our point that turnaround leaders model and help others learn, Packer (2008) refers to Obama's philosophy of

“deliberative democracy”: “It denotes a conversation among adults who listen to one another, who attempt to persuade one another by means of argument and evidence, and who remain open to the possibility that they could be wrong” (p. 87). This is reminiscent of Pfeffer and Sutton’s (2006) marvelous definition of wisdom: the ability to act with knowledge while doubting what you know (p. 17). Similarly Packer warns that, at its weakest, post-partisanship (listening to all sides) could “amount to an aversion to fighting” (p. 87). But turnaround leadership is a fight, pursuing relentlessly the moral purpose of fulfilling and improving people’s lives. For turnaround leadership, the proof is in the pudding. Success will not occur through overpowering the opposition but rather by motivating and pressuring people to move to new heights.

A key aspect of this turnaround leadership is not trying to do everything yourself. It starts by building a team of learners who act as a guiding coalition through the consistent representation of the direction and the norms of conduct. As a newly appointed director of scheduling on Obama’s team found when displaying irritation in a conference call, and received the prompt feedback after the call, “this is a campaign where you need to respect people’s opinions and you can’t be a bitch” (Lizza, 2008, p. 30).

This guiding coalition, led by the chief executive, in turn engages ever-widening circles of leadership. The point is that system change requires thousands of leaders. The more these myriad of leaders listen, link, and lead, and model, teach, and learn, the deeper and more sustainable the impact. Leadership is *not* a lonely proposition. Turnaround leadership is as social as it gets.

Thankfully the rest of us do not face Barack Obama’s challenges. But, this is a difference in degree, not kind. Turnaround leadership in postsecondary institutions will require precisely the qualities we have been discussing in this chapter. Chapter 6 discusses how to look for and foster these qualities.