Trends and Perspectives in Management and Leadership Development

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Abstract: In this article I review recent trends in management and leadership development in the UK, arguing that much of the current growth is driven by financial, political and market pressures, to the relative neglect of philosophical and pedagogical perspectives on the nature and purpose of management, leadership and education within contemporary society. Whilst there is a general shift from formalised programmes towards flexible, experiential and customised provision, it seems that insufficient attention remains directed towards individual and organisational needs and requirements. Thus, for example, the majority of provision remains focused on the development of 'leaders' rather than the contextually embedded and collective processes of 'leadership'. Management and leadership are presented as distinct rather than integrated and complementary activities/processes and limited consideration is given to the impact of contextual factors on individual and organisational performance. The article concludes with a series of questions/issues for individuals and organisations to consider when investing in leadership and/or management development.

The contemporary context of management and leadership development

Management and executive education is big business, with approximately $50 billion spent per year on leadership development alone.[i] In a 2003 survey the *Financial Times* found leading European companies to be spending on average £3,336 per participant per year on executive education; 42% of respondents had a corporate university, with a further 12% looking to establish one over the next couple of years, and of the topics offered, leadership, followed by general management, were the most common.[ii]

Within UK Higher Education, the number of business schools has increased from two in the mid-1960s to more than 100 in the mid-1990s[iii] and in the years between 1996-97 and 2004-05 the number of students of Business and Administrative studies rose by 35% (from 222,321 to 299,310) with the greatest rate of change for post-graduate students (up by 60%).[iv]

What has driven such a shift? Certainly, as many academics have argued, there has been an attempt to emulate the success of American business schools, but there has also been a range of other factors at work. Since the 1980s British government policy has consistently promoted the importance of management capability, provoking employers to take management development seriously. Declining public-funding has encouraged universities to seek alternative income streams, and various supply-side pressure groups have promoted public awareness that business education is a 'good thing'. From the demand-side, there is evidence that organisations are increasingly valuing (and recruiting) students with business and management qualifications and students are seeing this as a desirable career route.

From an employer perspective the imperative to enhance management and leadership capability arises from the changing nature of work, especially the need to cope with increased competition and "more or less continuous upheavals in their organisations"[v], demanding

increased intellectual flexibility and alertness as well as relevant skills, abilities, knowledge and self-awareness.

Despite the plethora of management and leadership development now available and the increasing level of demand, however, there remains a significant question as to the extent to which current provision meets the needs of organisations. Taylor et al.[vi] conclude that "the global challenges now occurring demand approaches to leadership education that are profoundly different from those that have served well in the past".

Changing conceptions of the nature of management and leadership, along with challenges to traditional approaches to their development, are driving a number of trends in management and leadership education. Williams[vii] identifies a particular increase in demand for post-graduate and short course or executive education within university provision. Hirsh and Carter[viii] identify an increasing modularisation and flexibility within all types of formal training programmes, an increasing demand and provision of informal and personal development (including mentoring, coaching, 360 degree feedback, project working, learning sets and team facilitation) and a shift from managed career structures to more open internal job markets. Central to many of these trends is a shift towards more flexible, experiential and informal approaches, tailored to the requirements of individuals and organisations. Such a shift requires the reversal of many traditional educational priorities: from theory to practice, parts to systems, states and roles to processes, knowledge to learning, individual knowledge to partnerships, and detached analysis to reflexive[ix] understanding. A representation of how this impacts upon programme structure and content is displayed in Table 1.

Key Trends	From	To
The Programme	• Prescribed course • Standard • Theoretical	• Study programme & real issues • Customised • Theory in context
The Time-frame	• One-off event	• A journey with ongoing support
The Mode	• Lecturing/ listening • Conceptual	• Participatory, interactive & applied • Experiential & conceptual
The Focus	• Individuals	• Individuals within a group, for a purpose
The Consultant	• Supplier	• Partner, co-designer, facilitator, & coach

Table 1 – *Changing trends in leadership development*[x]

Underlying these changes are a number of transforming concepts about the purpose of management and leadership development. There are, of course, the practical concerns of creating more effective managers and leaders, enhancing the competitiveness of organisations and providing programmes that people will pay for, but associated with these are changing philosophical perspectives on the role of management and leadership within organisations and how best to develop them.

Mole makes a distinction between the notions of management training, education and development.[xi] The focus of *training*, he argues, is the employee's present job; the focus of *education* is the employee's future job; and the focus of *development* is the organisation. Whilst some of the more traditional modes of provision, especially formal management programmes aimed at disseminating skills and knowledge, tend to adopt a training approach it is clear that the current trend is more towards education and development: "development programmes prepare individuals to move in the new directions that organisational change may require".[xii]

A similar distinction is made by Bush and Glover[xiii] in their review of leadership development, where three contrasting models of leadership development are identified. These include the 'scientific' (managerial/technicist) that depends on training to meet clearly defined targets; the 'humanist' (empowerment/persuasive) which is more people-focussed and emphasises strategically planned transformational interaction; and the 'pragmatic' (rational/reactive), which is project-focussed with an emphasis on the immediate needs of individuals and groups.

It is possible to identify relative merits and weaknesses of each of these approaches and an associated series of development activities, yet each also represents a significant philosophical perspective on the nature of management and leadership in organisations. Holman[xiv] cites four recurring themes in debates about the purpose, nature and value of Higher Education (as identified by Barnett[xv]); and adds a fifth relevant to the understanding of management education in particular:

1. *Epistemological*: reflecting assumptions on the nature of knowledge pursued;
2. *Pedagogical*: referring to the nature of the learning process, the intended outcomes and the teaching methods;
3. *Organisational*: regarding the management and organisation of education;
4. *Social*: reflecting the perceived role of education in society; and
5. *Management*: referring to conceptions on the nature of management practice.

Given the diversity of views on each of these themes it is unsurprising that a range of qualitatively different approaches to management and leadership development have evolved. On the basis of his review Holman identifies four contemporary models of management education (see Table 2) but concludes that academic liberalism and experiential vocationalism are somewhat wanting as approaches to the development of practicing managers (the former due to its over-reliance on theory and the latter for its over-reliance on action). He proposes, instead, that experiential liberalism and experiential/critical approaches are most likely to create managers capable of meeting the future needs of organisations and society. Their experiential pedagogies go a long way to promoting learning and development because of the way in which they build upon 'natural' learning at work and the ability to address the complexity and non-mechanistic nature of actual management practice.

Academic liberalism	Assumes that management education should be primarily concerned with the pursuit of objective knowledge about management. It thus seeks to disseminate generic principles and theories that can be applied in a relatively scientific and rational manner. From this perspective the aim of management development should be to create the 'management scientist', capable of analysis and the application of theoretical principles. Primary teaching methods would include lectures, seminars, case studies and experimentation.
Experiential liberalism	Shares many of the same assumptions as academic liberalism but argues for a more practical approach, grounded in managerial experience rather than theory. The principle aim of this approach is to create the '*reflective practitioner*' equipped with appropriate practical skills and knowledge and the ability to adapt to and learn from the situation. Primary teaching methods would include group work, action learning and self development.
Experiential vocationalism	Arises from economic and organisational concerns to argue that the main role of management education is to provide managers with the relevant skills and knowledge required by organisations. The principle of this approach is to create the '*competent manager*' equipped with the necessary interpersonal and technical competencies required by organisations. Primary teaching methods would include competence based approaches such as the National Occupational Standards in Management and Leadership (MSC, 2004).
Experiential/ critical	Seeks to "emancipate managers *and* other employees in the organisation from oppression and alienation" (Holman, 2000: 208). To this extent, it shares much in common with experiential liberalism although it demands a more critical level of reflection that enables people to become reflexive about their own knowledge and actions and to formulate practical, non-instrumental and emancipative forms of action. The principle of this approach is, therefore, to create the '*critical practitioner*' able to challenge and develop new modes of action. Primary teaching methods would include approaches incorporating critical action learning and critical reflection.

Table 2 – *Contemporary Models of Management Education*[xvi]

In the context of this debate on the nature and purpose of management and leadership education it is perhaps unsurprising that we are seeing a trend from traditional formal programmes towards more flexible, experiential initiatives, but there are also a number of other trends, such as those identified by Weindling.[xvii] In particular, it is noted that remarkably few programmes are underpinned with explicit theories of management and leadership practice and/or the educational processes associated with their development; and, despite

widespread recognition of the value of systematic needs analysis, this remains largely absent in practice.

Hirsh and Carter[xviii] identify three significant tensions facing providers of management education. Firstly, alongside the modularisation of formal programmes into 'bite size chunks' there is increasing pressure to provide holistic programmes applicable to leaders and managers at all levels of the organisation. Secondly, the increase in personalised learning such as coaching and 360 degree appraisal poses serious resourcing challenges due to the increased time required for tailoring and supporting provision. And thirdly, with the shift away from traditional career structures and lifetime employment, managers are receiving little support for long-term career planning.

We can therefore see that there are a wide range of factors influencing the current range and types of management and leadership development provision in this country. Some of these are practical concerns arising from the historical development of management education in the UK and the challenges facing organisations, whilst others are more conceptual – what are our assumptions on the purpose of education, the nature of management and leadership, and the relative importance placed on the individual versus the collective? None of these issues are easily resolved, but without an awareness of the fundamental concerns and underlying assumptions it will be difficult to select an effective approach to leadership development.

Leadership and management development: similarities and differences

In the discussion so far the terms 'management' and 'leadership' development have been used largely interchangeably as there is a significant degree of overlap. But what exactly is leadership (as opposed to management) development and how can individuals and organisations get the most out of it?

Day[xix] proposes that leadership development is distinct from management development in the extent to which it involves preparing people for roles and situations beyond their current experience.[xx] Management development, he argues, equips managers with the knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance performance on known tasks through the application of proven solutions, whilst leadership development is defined as "orientated towards building capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges". He continues by making a distinction between leader and leadership development, whereby *leader development* is about developing individuals in leadership roles, whilst *leadership development* takes a more relational view of leadership as a process involving everyone within the organisation. To this extent, Day views leadership development as being fundamentally concerned with the development of collective organisational capacity.

This distinction is useful in encouraging us to consider what it is that we wish to achieve through executive development, even if Day's concept of leadership development may be somewhat idealistic in practice. 'Leader development' is an investment in human capital to enhance intrapersonal competence for selected individuals, whereas 'leadership development' is an investment in social capital to develop interpersonal networks and cooperation within organisations and other social systems. According to Day, both are

important although traditionally development programmes have tended to focus exclusively on the former.

Even when considering leadership development in this broader context, however, it remains difficult to specify what exactly constitutes leadership development, as opposed to any other form of development. Campbell et al. argue that the current diversity of perspectives on leadership development is misleading as it may encourage practitioners and researchers to suggest that, firstly, leadership development constitutes *any* understanding that develops individual(s), and secondly that *all* development activities are equally useful/effective.[xxi]

Like Day, in their review, Campbell and his colleagues identify that the field of leadership development is dominated by individualistic approaches to development. Such approaches focus on developing five principle categories:

1. intrapersonal attributes;
2. interpersonal qualities;
3. cognitive abilities;
4. communication skills; and
5. task-specific skills.

At the *intrapersonal* level it could be argued that "there is no difference between becoming an effective leader and becoming a fully integrated human being",[xxii] and thus Campbell et al. conclude that "there is little reason to label this *leadership* development, except in the broad sense that the developing individuals hold leadership positions".[xxiii] The *interpersonal* level fits more closely with Day's conception of 'leadership development', viewing leadership as a social influence process and the goal of development to enhance inter-personal competence in order to obtain the trust, respect and commitment of others. The additional three categories (cognitive, communication and task-specific skills) are a range of personal capabilities that help enhance an individual's inter-personal influence. In each case a challenge remains as to how to differentiate the types of skills required by 'leaders' as opposed to 'managers' and/or 'followers' and the response remains largely dependent on your theoretical and philosophical views on the nature of leadership.

Campbell and colleagues take Katz and Kahn's[xxiv] notion of leadership as 'incremental influence' as the foundation for their conception of leadership development. Thus, the aim of leadership development is to enhance "inter-personal influence over and above the influence that stems from a person's positional authority or legitimate power".[xxv] From this perspective, the most effective leadership development methods are likely to be those that develop core influencing skills including values that can serve as a 'moral compass', problem-defining and problem-solving skills, task facilitation skills, and communication and motivational skills.

In our own experience of developing people in leadership positions at the Centre for Leadership Studies we tend to take the view that it is important to develop all of these skills within a contextual appreciation of the cultural and organisational environment. When considering leadership development, rather than management development, the primary emphasis is on enabling people to think beyond the apparent restrictions of their current role

and to develop the critical capabilities to move between operational and strategic modes as required – to balance an attention for detail with an understanding of the bigger picture.

To this extent, leadership development may well incorporate elements of more typical management and self-development programmes (including time management, project management, delegation, self-awareness, etc.) but with the objective of creating a reflexive space in which the leader/manager can critically reflect upon current practice and experience. There is no reason to consider, therefore, that leadership development should only be offered to senior managers and, indeed, there would be good reason to encourage this kind of development throughout the organisation to enhance collective as well as individual capacity. The nature of the required intervention, however, is likely to vary depending on the job role and current level of experience of the participants.

Approaches to leadership development

With the multitude of ways in which leadership and leadership development can be conceived and the many purposes they serve, it is not surprising that a wide array of development approaches and techniques have evolved.

In a major European study Mabey and Ramirez[xxvi] ranked HR and Line Manager preferences for management development methods in European companies as follows:

1. internal skills programmes
2. external courses, seminars and conferences
3. mentoring/coaching
4. formal qualifications
5. in-company job-rotation
6. external assignments, placements and/or secondments
7. E-learning.

In all countries in the study there was a relatively low preference for on-the-job development (such as job rotation and assignments) and a strikingly low uptake of E-learning given the interest of providers in this form of delivery. Within the UK there is a higher than average use of qualifications-based development, despite the relatively low rating of this with regards to "what makes an effective manager".

Storey[xxvii] proposes that most training and development interventions offered in-house and by external training providers can be classified into four types:

1. *Learning about leadership and organisations*: primarily involves traditional classroom and workshop methods to present leadership theory and research.
2. *Self/team analysis and exploration of leadership styles*: a series of methods (including psychometrics, 360 degree feedback, coaching and sensitivity training) to raise awareness of self and others and how this impacts upon leadership styles.
3. *Experiential learning and simulation*: approaches that emphasise the importance of 'learning by doing', such as outward bound courses, action learning and role play.
4. *Top level strategy courses*: executive development courses designed for senior managers. Often associated with prestigious business schools and qualifications.

In addition to these types of courses/programmes, there is also a whole array of more informal leadership development activities conducted within organisations, including projects and secondments, seminars, career planning and mentoring.

Storey also highlights a tension within most leadership development initiatives:

> "There is a fundamental dilemma that haunts many leadership development events. Because leadership is perceived as fundamentally about 'doing' rather than 'knowing', there is an inherent bias towards activity-focussed and indeed briskly paced encounters… In consequence, there is little time for reflection or strategic thinking. These characteristics of leadership development events are self-evidently in tension with the kind of clear thinking supposedly required of top leaders."[xxviii]

If we now consider the relative popularity and use of different development approaches it remains clear that, despite the shift towards more flexible and tailored provision discussed earlier, large companies still use more formal than informal training. Furthermore, much of this remains in a traditional face-to-face mode rather than via e-learning, which tends to be used to support rather than replace traditional methods

With regards to personalised and tailored provision, coaching is particularly popular with organisations and managers but its extension to large numbers of individuals is limited by cost and the availability of high quality coaches. 360 degree feedback, like many approaches, is found to be most powerful when integrated within a comprehensive development programme and is significantly affected by the following three factors: a work context supportive of skills development, the belief of the participant that people can improve their skills, and a belief that they themselves are capable of improving and developing.

Mabey[xxix] found that successful companies use a variety of formal, informal and external approaches to development and Burgoyne et al.[xxx] conclude that:

> "The evidence on *how* management and leadership works is that it works in different ways in different situations. The practical implication of this is that to get the benefit of management and leadership development requires the design of appropriate approaches for specific situations rather than the adoption of a universal model of best practice."

Furthermore, Burgoyne and colleagues propose that the relative effectiveness of any development approach will be strongly influenced by the participants' past experience, personal character and preferred learning style. Other key factors include the organisational context, need for buy-in from participants, and the ethos of learning within the organisation.

Thus, the choice of development approach is not a simple one. For maximum effect, we need to carefully consider what it is that we seek to develop and how best this can be achieved. If, for example, we wish to develop a culture of shared, considerate and reflective leadership within our organisation, is it wise just to send individual 'leaders' on action-packed or highly prescriptive leadership training courses? Chia[xxxi] recounts a Japanese management development programme for high-potential leaders that takes a different approach – they were taken to a retreat in the mountains and encouraged to learn the art of tea pouring and

observing the movement of carp. Such a program sought to develop a sensitivity, creativity and imagination that could not be achieved through more traditional approaches.

It is also worth noting that the very process of leadership development serves many purposes beyond simply developing talent. Executive education can be an effective retention strategy that helps drive the motivation, enthusiasm and commitment of participants. It can serve as a reward, and can also help in teambuilding and engendering a sense of shared purpose. On the flipside, singling out certain individuals over others for involvement in leadership development can lead to unintended consequences such as disappointment, alienation and resistance. Little can be more demotivating than having a colleague or superior go off on all-expenses-paid trip only to come back and try to change everything and tell you how to do your job better!

Selecting a management and/or leadership development approach

With the plethora of development initiatives currently on offer and the wide range of providers, the practical issue of deciding which to go for can be confounding. From extensive experience of working with management and leadership development over many years and different contexts, Gosling and Mintzberg[xxxii] propose seven basic tenets upon which true management education should be built:

1. Management education should be restricted to practicing managers, selected on the basis of performance.
2. Management education and practice should be concurrent and integrated.
3. Management education should leverage work and life experience.
4. The key to learning is thoughtful reflection.
5. Management development should result in organisation development.
6. Management education must be an interactive process.
7. Every aspect of the education must facilitate learning.

The implications of these tenets are manifold both for those purchasing and participating in management and leadership development as well as those providing it. Of particular significance is the emphasis on the interplay between practice and reflection, individual and organisational development, and the provider and participant.

> "There is a certain quality of conversation that takes place in a well-managed classroom that is almost unique, where the fruits of experience, theory and reflection are brought together into a new understanding and commitment."[xxxiii]

This approach "points toward a new partnership between companies and business schools that would enhance the level and depth of conversations about the field of management and organisational development on both sides of the equation"[xxxiv]. Leadership development, particularly the opportunity to step back and reflect upon practice, should be built into all aspects of organisational functioning. Likewise, development does not just occur in the classroom – there are opportunities to learn from just about everything and, indeed, this richness and diversity of learning is pivotal to developing balanced, reflective, yet decisive leadership as and when required:

"Leadership is not taught and leadership is not learned. Leadership is learning."[xxxv]

So, what can we do to ensure that we get the most out of leadership development?

Well, firstly critically evaluate current conceptions of the nature of leadership and learning within your organisation. To a large extent you reap what you sow – if development and reward systems favour individual recognition over collective engagement then they are unlikely to result in a culture that encourages collaboration and shared leadership.

Next, think carefully about the development needs of both individuals and the organisation. Consider ways in which the impact of development can be evaluated from a range of perspectives; how benefits can be optimised both for individuals and the organisations they serve; and how development needs may change over time.

On the basis of these considerations, explore a range of development options from a number of providers. Enter into a discussion with providers to see how programmes could be tailored to your requirements; how they could maximise the benefits of experiential and reflective learning; and how the learning can be transferred and sustained within the workplace. Approaches that integrate a variety of learning methods are particularly effective, especially when combined with opportunities for receiving and discussing individual feedback.

Ensure that learning and development are recognised as essential and valued activities within your organisation and that everyone is encouraged and supported in their learning. The quality of management processes preceding and following development activities are a key predictor of impact and instrumental in ensuring that newly learned competencies are put into practice.

Review other organisational systems and processes, especially HR strategy, and how these interface with and support leadership and management development. Purcell et al.[xxxvi] found that the *manner* in which HR practices are implemented is a greater predictor of success than *which* practices are adopted. A sophisticated approach that enables one to go 'the extra mile' is most likely to be effective.

Identify and remove/limit personal barriers to learning and the exercise of leadership. Gill[xxxvii] identifies a range of psychological barriers to effective leadership, including low self-esteem, lack of self confidence, fear of failure or disapproval, cognitive 'constriction' and adverse consequences of stress. To overcome these he recommends a range of techniques, including desensitisation, reinforcement, psychological re-enactment, social skills development and group dynamics.

Consider the role and impact of organisational culture and context. What is the nature of the task? How experienced and able are employees? And what are appropriate ways of conceiving of performance? In many sectors, focussing on economic outcomes alone is wholly inappropriate. What drives people to work in healthcare, education or the military are quite different from one another, and from more commercially-orientated sectors. To engage, motivate and inspire people, goals and objectives must be couched in culturally appropriate values and language.

Take an appreciative rather than deficit approach to development. Build upon strengths that already exist and find ways of working with or around weaknesses. The key to effective leader development is not filling in gaps in competency, but nurturing a unique and genuine approach to leadership. Gosling and Murphy[xxxviii] talk of the importance of continuity in the change process. There may be a time and place for dramatic transformational change, but in the majority of cases a more subtle and considerate approach that builds upon existing individual and organisational capabilities is what is required.

And finally, take the long-term view to leadership and organisational development. In creating genuine and sustainable leadership within organisations there is no quick fix (despite what consultants may promise). A series of initiatives following the latest management fads is more likely to engender a climate of cynicism than engagement. 'Leadership' too, has suffered at the hands of faddism, with each guru stating their 7, 8, 9 or 10 principles more vociferously than the last. It pays to be selective and critical in what you sign up to and to consider how development activities fit within the longer-term life and career span of organisations and individuals.

Further reading

For further elaboration on the arguments in this article please see the following:

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Bolden, R. (ed.) (2005) *What is Leadership Development: Purpose and practice*. LSW Research Report, Centre for Leadership Studies, University of Exeter. URL: [www.leadership-studies.com/lsw/lswreports.htm]

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