(Digital) Leadership

24 October 2022
18th European Computer Science Summit, Hamburg

Schahram Dustdar
dsg.tuwien.ac.at
Transformation Trajectory Megatrends

1. Transformation of divided scientific disciplines into clusters -> Future structure & dynamics of universities

2. End of geographical rootedness of universities -> Future of Work

3. Novel business models for implementation of flexible (possibly regional or global) collaboration structures of universities
Some Leadership challenges in Academia

1. **Limited money** available -> tenure-track staff competing for limited resources -> VC mindset
2. **Being first** matters -> challenge for teamwork
3. **Metrics for comparison** -> anxiety, anger, frustration, inferiority/superiority complex, etc.
4. **Does the system reward and encourage toxic people?** -> promotion path not really existing
5. **Reviewing system for grants a lottery?** -> emotional stress
6. **University culture (top-leadership) flows top-down and potentially poisons research groups** through implemented policies, processes, and **excessive hiring of administrative staff** [1]
7. **Centralization of “support“ departments vs decentralized knowledgable staff in research groups**

[1] Benjamin Ginsberg. The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters
A new operating system for leaders

Ego System
“It’s About Me”

Top Down Control, Command, Independent Silos, Territoriality, Power Struggles, Self-Interest, Withholding Information, Blaming

Eco System
“It’s About Us”

Influence, Conversation, Aligned Agility, Partnership, Mutual Empowerment, Mutual Support, Joint Knowledge, Mutual Accountability

OXFORD LEADERSHIP
Ecosystems - metaphor for academic environments

**Complex system** with networked dependencies and intrinsic adaptive behavior – has:

1. **Robustness & Resilience mechanisms**: achieving stability in the presence of disruption

2. **Measures of health**: diversity, population trends, other key indicators

3. **Built-in coherence**

4. **Entropy-resistence (Syntropy)**
Culture of Collaboration & Learning

• reinforce a **collaborative value** within own research group

• everyone is **encouraged to collaborate**, but not compete

• in this **environment**, it is harder for the ego to run wild

• liberated from the **stress of competition**, they can focus on research and be more productive
High Performance Culture

“If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.”

KPI = Key Performance Indicators

The New Leadership

KPI

Keep people interested
Keep people informed
Keep people involved
Keep people inspired
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>Motivates people towards a vision</td>
<td>&quot;Come with me&quot;</td>
<td>Self-confidence, empathy, change catalyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Developing people for the future</td>
<td>&quot;Try this&quot;</td>
<td>Developing others, self awareness, empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
<td>Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds</td>
<td>&quot;People come first&quot;</td>
<td>Empathy, building relationships, communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Forges consensus through participation</td>
<td>&quot;What do you think?&quot;</td>
<td>Collaboration, team leadership, communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacesetting</td>
<td>Sets high standards for performance</td>
<td>&quot;Do as I do now!&quot;</td>
<td>Conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commanding</td>
<td>Demands immediate compliance</td>
<td>&quot;Do what I tell you&quot;</td>
<td>Drive to achieve, initiative, self-control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on *Primal Leadership* by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee
Leadership styles needs to adapt to phases
"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

A person who feels appreciated will always do more than what is expected.
Leadership & Listening

Leaders who don’t listen will eventually be surrounded by people who have nothing to say.

-Andy Stanley
Studies show what we eat influences our mood, behavior, and academic performance. Whole foods, rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, good fats, and phytonutrients, can make kids less aggressive and improve behavior and grades.

If you see a leader going kind when the going gets tough, you've got the right leader.
Leadership & meetings and respecting time

“My God . . . those meetings really could all have been e-mails.”
Life-cycle (in Academia)

• 21-34 years: *Who am I, What can I become?*

• 35-42 years: Family, Career, establish oneself

• 43-49 years: Is that all important? *Who am I becoming?* Change? Making more conscious decisions

• 50-65 years: Consciousness (humble and grounded), maturity, “re-birth”

• 65+ years: Mentoring, becoming role model, giving back
Hiring the right people?
Hiring the right people?

“Do not tolerate brilliant jerks. The cost to teamwork is too high.”

Reed Hastings
CEO Netflix

Just because you fit in

Doesn't mean you belong there
Change is possible /1
Change is possible /2

Don't tell me you can't.

Paralympian, Juan José Méndez

"If you don't like where you are, change it. You're not a tree."

Jim Rohn
Academic Ego – the dirty dozen

1. stop reading and learning from other’s research
2. stop seeking input from colleagues and students
3. can’t tolerate criticism of own research, or take scientific criticism as personal attacks
4. stop citing others and make papers mostly about our own work
5. no longer take the time to meet students and junior colleagues who want advice
6. attend conferences only when we have a speaking role; or sulk when a meeting is held in our area of expertise and we are not invited
7. write negative peer reviews as a principle or tend to reject manuscripts as editor, when own work is not cited
8. expect all own grants to get funded and all manuscripts to get accepted; if they don’t, we tend to appeal reject decisions
9. expect to be a first or senior author on all papers
10. sulk when we are overlooked for awards and prizes
11. offer expert opinions on all topics, even topics we have little expertise in
12. are unable to retire from academia at the appropriate time (i.e. cannot quit when we are ahead); and/or not able to recruit and mentor junior colleagues to take over after us
Conclusion: Strategies against Academic Ego

1. Find a way to always remain a **curious student**
2. Find a **larger purpose** and work towards that
3. Build and work in a team where **collaboration**, not competition, is the **culture**
4. Find **mentors and colleagues** who can critique own work and keep us grounded and sober
5. Look for **role models** that we can observe and learn from
6. Remain **humble and grounded**
Thanks for your attention

Schahram Dustdar
Distributed Systems Group
TU Wien, Austria
dsg.tuwien.ac.at