Leadership Context

UPON Inspiring Leaders

Children's Services

A self-contained organisation

- clear boundaries
- single chain of command
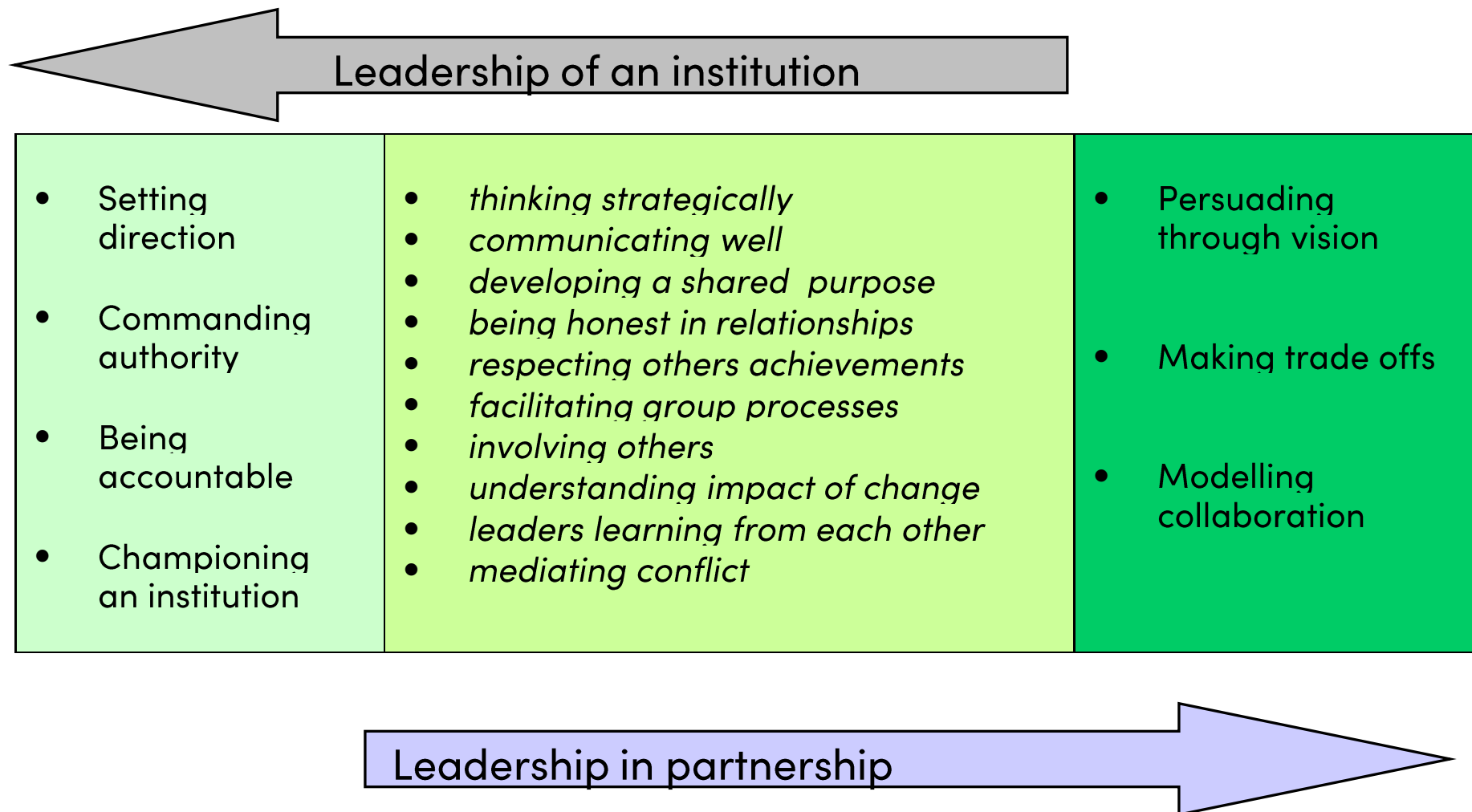- unambiguous sense of purpose
- and a unified professional culture
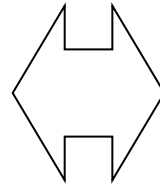
A partnership

- overlapping boundaries
- shared leadership
- multiple objectives
- a variety of professional cultures

Better together for children...

Leadership of an institution

- Setting direction
- Commanding authority
- Being accountable
- Championing an institution

- *thinking strategically*
- *communicating well*
- *developing a shared purpose*
- *being honest in relationships*
- *respecting others achievements*
- *facilitating group processes*
- *involving others*
- *understanding impact of change*
- *leaders learning from each other*
- *mediating conflict*

- Persuading through vision
- Making trade offs
- Modelling collaboration

Leadership in partnership

Tame

- Problems as puzzles
- Complicated rather than complex
- Resolvable – have technical solutions
- Management problems
- Requires management
- Examples:
  - introduction of new systems
  - completion of review

Critical

- 'Self-evident' crisis
- Immediate and real threat
- Requires immediate action
- Legitimises coercion for public good
- Requires commander/ direction
- Examples:
  - Safeguarding intervention
 - Civil emergencies

Wicked

- Either novel or recalcitrant
- Complex rather than complicated
- Multi-faceted – requires collaboration
- No right or wrong solutions
- Coping rather than solving
- Inevitably uncertain & ambiguous
- Requires resourceful leadership to maximise potential capacity

Activity

Of those challenges which you are currently facing, which are Tame, and which are Wicked?

Reasons for failure

Research indicates that ???% of all organizational changes fail.
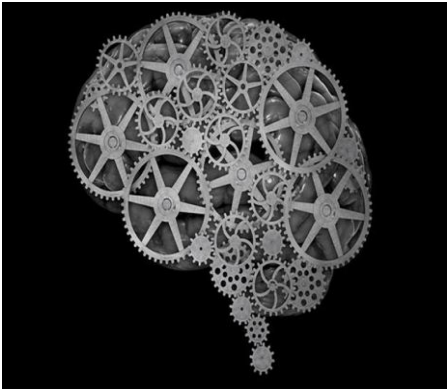
the most common cause of leadership failure is treating a complex (or adaptive) problem with a technical fix.

adaptive work diminishes the gap between the way things are and the way things need to be to create a better future

Technical and Adaptive Challenges

Technical

What's the work?
Applying current know how

Who does the work?
"Experts" who know how to do it

Adaptive

What's the work?
Learning new ways of being/acting

Who does the work?
The people with the problem

Adaptive Leadership

Beliefs behind Ron Heifetz' work

- Problems are embedded within complex systems.
- Much of human behaviour reflects an adaptation to their circumstances.
- People adapt more successfully by facing fears and painful circumstances and developing new attitudes and behaviours.
- Leaders must create the conditions in which people will persevere in addressing complex systemic issues.
- Leading change involves loss.

The Seven Principles for Leading Adaptive Work

Heifetz & Linsky

Get on the balcony

- A place from which to observe the patterns in the wider environment as well as what is over the horizon (prerequisite for the following six principles)

Identify the adaptive challenge

- A challenge for which there is no ready made technical answer
- A challenge which requires the gap between values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours to be addressed

Create the holding environment

- May be a physical space in which adaptive work can be done
- The relationship or wider social space in which adaptive work can be accomplished

Cook the conflict / regulate distress	Maintain disciplined attention	Give back the work
• Create the heat • Sequence & pace the work • Regulate the distress	• Work avoidance • Use conflict positively • Keep people focussed	• Resume responsibility • Use their knowledge • Support their efforts

Protect the voices of leadership from below

- Ensuring everyone's voice is heard is essential for willingness to experiment and learn
- Leaders have to provide cover to staff who point to the internal contradictions of the organisation

Heifetz, R A and Linsky M (2002) Leadership on the Line Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press.

Get on the Balcony

- Reflect on the action you are part of
- Get perspective, leave the dance
- Look at what you are doing as well as what the others are doing
- Unpick your emotions
- Look at authority figures for clues
- Listen to the song beneath the words
- Ask – what is really going on here?
- Step back in the midst of the action

How might you frame your (adaptive) leadership challenge?

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Create the holding environment

Staff who can think together develop:
- confidence to handle complex problems
- increased intelligence in making good decisions
- increased experimentation and risk-taking
- true recognition that "We're all in this together"
- better behaviours: compassion, forgiveness, generosity
- reduced stress, overwhelm and loneliness.

Margaret Wheatley

Regulate Distress– "Cook the Conflict"

- Conflict is a necessary part of change and needs to be surfaced
- The leadership challenge is to harness the energy while diminishing the destructive potential
- To be effective, leaders must be able to tolerate hostility
- Effective leaders regulate the temperature to keep others within a productive zone of distress

Reflections

- How do you personally react to conflict?

- What differences (acknowledged and unacknowledged) might be inhibiting progress in your area of work?

- How do/might you cook the conflict/regulate distress to release productive energy by:
  - Raising the heat?
  - Reducing the heat?

Maintain Disciplined Attention

- Work avoidance is a natural response to loss.
- A key leadership function is to identify patterns of work avoidance and champion the importance of "real work".
- Focus on perceived threats or sense of loss.
- Cultivate allies.

What are the signs that people are avoiding the real work?

Signs of Work Avoidance

Displacing Responsibility

- Blame other services
- People marginalise you – and you let them
- People making things personal that are systemic

Diverting Attention

- Making the problem too big, e.g. nothing can be done without more resources
- Trivialising the problem – it's all about the forms
- Avoiding the real problem
- Explaining that their problems are far more pressing than yours

Give Back the Work

- Resist the temptation always to provide the solution (even if you know what it is)
- Know where the work really does belong
- Consider how to give people the work back without them feeling abandoned
- Avoid holding on to work that should be someone else's (or resisting taking on work that really should be yours)
- Resist the temptation to take responsibility for resolving other's conflicts

Protect the Voice of Leadership from Below

Because they raise (sometimes uncomfortable) questions, highlight contradictions and, most importantly, provoke new thinking.

What are they really talking about?

Is there something you are missing?

What might they have to say about your leadership challenge?