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Worldly leadership: challenging the hegemony of Western business education

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Abstract

Purpose – Leadership theories that inform business education have largely been rooted in Western conceptions of leadership. The purpose of this paper is to report on research that seeks to uncover and reflect on how leadership wisdoms originating beyond the Western world can support the radical transformation of global business education toward a more responsible and sustainable template. It argues that indigenous and Eastern ideologies will be needed if we are to change educational mindsets and challenge the obsolete model of Western business school education.

Design/methodology/approach – In total, 45 in-depth interviews with leaders from indigenous and non-Western cultures were conducted in order to gain deep insights into how their leadership identities, values and behaviours have been shaped by their societies and the oral wisdoms in their cultures. The author also draws on interviews and observations of 26 executives participating in a class of the International Masters Programme in Practicing Management. The findings from each study were combined to propose how these might challenge and inform a future business school curricula that challenge its orthodoxy of "shareholder value above all else".

Findings – The research identified a number of embedded leadership wisdoms currently overlooked in the current model of business education. Based within a deep-rooted ethic of responsibility, conviction, stewardship and sustainability and reflecting a cosmopolitan mindset, the critical knowledge and values embedded in indigenous communities, transmitted orally across many generations, provides a challenge to Western business schools to embed the knowledge found within those societies and communities toward a more sustainable response to the crisis of our planet. Responsibility, humanity, benevolence, trusteeship, contribution, honesty and conviction are some of the core "wisdoms" uncovered in the research that can inform and frame a radical rethink of the norms of business school curricula.

Originality/value – The current model of business education preserves the status quo of twenty-first century capitalism. As globalisation advances, leaders appear to be powerless to act against a dominant ideology that reveres shareholder value above all else. The research builds on De Woot's critique of the shareholder value paradigm to suggest that a new form of business education based on leadership wisdoms in indigenous and oral cultures, and ancient texts has much to contribute to radical mindset change in business education.

Keywords Worldly leadership, Responsible leadership, Business education, Hegemony, Sustainability, National cultures, Business studies

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

> The separateness we thought we were creating melts into the unending dance of co-adaptation and change as we become ever more aware of those from whom we cannot separate (Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers, 1996).

Business schools shape the identities, behaviours, assumptions and values of the leaders of today's most powerful business, political and public institutions both in the Western

world and in many other parts of the globe, and there is no doubt that their potential for shaping a more responsible and sustainable world is pivotal (Khurana, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Middlebrooks *et al.*, 2009). This paper asks how a "worldly leadership" lens (Turnbull, 2008, 2009) might support the transformation of the present managerialist curriculum dominated by an "investor capitalist" perspective to a more sustainable, responsible and moral capitalism. We draw on evidence from three research projects: the first, focusing on the leadership for sustainability beliefs and practices of NGO and community leaders in Africa and Asia; the second, a qualitative study of Indian business leaders on their leadership identities and role models; and finally, our research with 26 executives participating in two cohorts of the International Masters Programme in Practicing Management. By analysing and then comparing the thematic and narrative evidence found within the interviews conducted for each of these three case studies, we build persuasive evidence to argue that the challenge of shifting the "purpose" of business education toward the creation of a more responsible and sustainable curriculum can be addressed by encouraging a "worldly" mindset.

Khurana (2007) traces the ideological transformation in the role and purpose of business schools since their inception a century and a quarter ago. He argues that business schools today have abandoned their original mission of professionalizing management for greater social purpose, replacing these professional ideals with the narrow managerialist logic of "investor capitalism". This "market logic" emphasises professional "knowledge" rather than ideals, he suggests, and ultimately completely subverts the original logic of professionalism that had aimed to transmit important social norms and values. Solbrekke and Karseth (2006) concur, arguing too that the Durkheimian "collectivity orientation" found in the classical notion of professionalism is now threatened by individualistic aspirations that have created the dominant narrative of "self-realisation" in higher education. This marks a shift from what he calls "social trustee professionalism" to "expert professionalism" (Brint, 1994).

Business schools today privilege analytical detachment over experience-based insight. The increasing number of corporate scandals and "outsized executive pay" that are the result can be attributed to the business schools' belief in the logic that managers need to be incentivised to act in the best interests of shareholders. In short, despite the destabilizing effects of the global economic crisis, mainstream business education is arguably still dominated by a narrow interpretation of capitalism that privileges the creation of shareholder value over the sustainability of the planet, and emphasises individualism over collective responsibility (Khurana, 2007).

Mintzberg (2004) has argued persuasively that this dominant individualistic model of business education has contributed to the creation "a society of meanness". The MBA and other associated business programmes have often been seen as perpetuating this culture of greed in today's society. Mintzberg attacks the current economic model unequivocally pronouncing that: "Shareholder value is an anti-social dogma that has no place in a democratic society. Period. It breeds a society of exploitation – of people as well as institutions" (p. 154).

The legitimacy of business schools is, therefore, increasingly called into question. De Woot (2009) has been one of the most compelling voices to argue that the current dominant market ideology of the firm has contributed to a crisis of ethics in today's economic world. He argues that if we focus our attention narrowly on breaches of integrity and trust within the rules that preserve the status quo of twenty-first

century capitalism, we will make little progress. Hence, De Woot posits that a dominant ideology that reveres wealth creation, free trade, profit and financial orthodoxy, over global sustainability and social justice is unsustainable. He calls for a refocusing of society toward building an ethic of conviction towards the type of society we aspire to, combined with an ethic of responsibility that challenges the instrumental logic that dominates society today. De Woot's overarching proposition is that a firm or society must change its entire culture by "permanent collective questioning" (p. 127) if it wants to become responsible and transform its behaviour. In a postscript to his book, De Woot makes a comment that "good leadership is required at every level" (p. 189) for such ethics to develop.

This focus on a return to "social leadership" that was previously the deep aspiration of business schools has been echoed elsewhere. Mendonca and Kanungo (2007, p. 8) also call urgently for "moral leadership in organizations and in society". The present education system is based on "economic imperialism" and the "cult of self-worship", they argue, marketing education as an economic investment that is promoted on the basis of its ability to generate higher salaries. As such it is a flawed model that will be unable to address the crisis of sustainability we face across the planet. The problem is summarised below:

- Business school ideology is based on an "investor capitalism" that underemphasises the leadership challenges of environmental sustainability that are increasingly dominating the global agenda.
- Business schools are predominantly educating individuals to "selfishly" compete in the job market but defaulting on their duty to educate global citizens.
- Business school curricula are based largely on a Western business knowledge base developed for twentieth century business assumptions, and virtually ignore the leadership wisdoms and knowledge found in other societies.

However, many business schools are ill-equipped to rise to this challenge. Overspecialization in business schools has led the majority of academics to focus on issues that blind them to the broader perspective, and there are few academic incentives to produce research that influences society for the better (Ludescher and Mahsud, 2010). Furthermore, few schools have a firm knowledge base around leadership, and the shift by business schools to a leadership focus in the 1990s was difficult for them (Khurana, p. 353). Leadership for environmental sustainability is still less understood (Redecop, 2010), and there is little doubt, therefore, that the role of business schools and their ability to respond to our global crises is now coming under sharp scrutiny.

A call for responsible leadership education

The challenge of moral capitalism is to tip the balance of wealth creation toward humanity's more noble possibilities and away from the dynamics of more brutish behavior (Young, 2010, Executive Director of the Caux Round Table cauxroundtable.org).

Khurana (p. 353) has suggested that:

[. . .] the time seems ripe for reopening the question of what exactly the business school is for, what functions we as a society want it to perform, and how well it is performing them (p. 5).

Organisations such as the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (established by the UN Global Compact and European Foundation for Management Development) have called for a partnership of business schools and businesses to work toward more responsible and ethical leadership. Furthermore, an increasing number of business leaders are also now integrating the concepts of service and sustainability into their leadership development curricula, and endeavouring to enact through example what has been coined "moral capitalism". (Schwarz, 2010, ILA keynote speech). Moral capitalism, as outlined by Schwarz, is a movement to reframe the purpose of business. This contrasts with the tokenism of many "defensive CSR" programmes (Parkin, 2010), which have failed to achieve real change, and are often seen as an adjunct to corporate marketing and branding agendas.

Two competing discourses can often be found within business schools, creating a tension between faculty who support market-based economies and those who believe that capitalism promotes economic injustice (Carrithers and Peterson, 2006). This disconnect leads students to feel trapped into choosing one position or the other, and finding themselves unable to link the two sides of the debate. The ensuing "harm" and confusion for students has been criticised by business leaders such a Schwarz who believe that moral capitalism can offer a way to combine responsibility with performance (ILA keynote address, 2010). Carrithers and Peterson are also convinced that a solution can be found, and that it lies in a pedagogy that brings contrasting academic disciplines together in interdisciplinary and constructive debate about the vices and virtues of the market and the ethical and economic issues that are at stake. Few business schools have yet accepted this challenge.

Maak and Pless (2006a, b) propose that the simultaneous roles of a responsible leader are servant, steward, architect, change agent, coach as well as storyteller', and in addition to ethical intelligence, they cite relational intelligence (Pless and Maak, 2005) as an essential element in responsible leadership. Their work focuses on both the distinguishing features of individual leaders as well as the relational aspects of the leadership process. These many faces of leadership are rarely addressed by today's business school curriculum. Further, Maak and Pless (2009) have recently focused on leaders as world citizens, drawing on Held's (2005) cosmopolitan principles of equal worth and dignity; active agency as a self-reflective and self-determining leader; personal responsibility and accountability; stakeholder engagement and dialogue; deliberation on global fairness and justice; inclusiveness and subsidiarity, creating a decent life, human capabilities; sustainability and stewardship. Maak and Pless (2009) note that of the 100 largest economies in the world, 51 are now global corporations and only 49 are countries. They propose a renewed emphasis on cosmopolitanism, a concept attributable to the Stoics in ancient Greece who saw themselves as citizens of the world, a perspective that is likely to be increasingly important for twenty-first century leadership.

Those advocating a cosmopolitan worldview in the modern world argue that in a globalised world with its associated global crises and risks, "the creation of a dense network of transnational interdependencies" (Beck, 2008, p. 793) is needed to reflect the interrelatedness and interdependence of people across the globe. Whilst many MBA programmes focus on economic partnerships, mergers and alliances it is arguable that the curriculum should go further. Multi-stakeholder initiatives can offer an alternative channel for the democratic governance of the global economy by civil society.

However, they themselves can be problematic, and marginalize the interests of local groups in developing countries (Bendell, 2005) so it is incumbent on responsible leaders to recognise these tensions.

Solbrekke and Karseth (2006) argues for a move away from the utilitarian ethos in higher education toward moral and societal responsibility. He advocates that it is the responsibility of higher education and business to create learning spaces where such dilemmas of responsibility can be revisited regularly, and that one of the key missions of higher education is to foster civic engagement and to educate for leadership, as well as for leading positions in society.

Sustainability and the business school curriculum

In a recent survey of AMBA accredited schools (Durham Business School and Association of MBAs, 2009) corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, risk management and business ethics were found to be key areas of increased attention for today's business students compared with the previous MBA alumni surveyed. Current priority areas for business schools were also found to be sustainability, pedagogy and leadership. This suggests that business schools may now be starting to recognise this significant societal shift. Similarly, in a survey of the *Financial Times* top 50 global business schools (Christensen *et al.*, 2007) to identify the place of ethics, CSR and sustainability as elements of the curriculum, the majority said that they included at least one of these topics, and one-third responded that they now included all three topics in their MBA curriculum. Despite this shift, however, less than a third of MBA students in a recent Net Impact/The Aspen Institute (2009) thought that corporations are working for the betterment of society, and 90 per cent blamed a focus on short-term business results as one of the contributing factors to the global economic crisis. About 88 per cent believed that business should play a role in addressing social and environmental issues.

These surveys send a clear message to business educators, and build on the seminal work of Tilbury and colleagues (Tilbury, 1999, 2004; Tilbury *et al.*, 2005a, b) raising the question of how business practice, education and sustainability can be addressed through the curriculum. Whilst Carrithers and Peterson (2006) have offered one solution – to increase interdisciplinary debate, Tilbury *et al.* (2005a, b) found multiple drivers to help initiate such changes. Their research with seven Australian business schools found that the drivers for change toward sustainability included building internal mechanisms such as faculty support and senior management buy-in, as well as external drivers such as winning support from business, creating the demand for a sustainability focus from organizations, and greater student recognition of the importance of sustainability skills.

A recent special issue of *Academy of Management Learning & Education* (Starik *et al.*, 2010) illustrates the complexity and diversity of research into sustainability education, as well as the continuing challenges faced by universities wishing to build sustainability into their curricula. The focus of the articles in this special issue range from an emphasis on the structure and process of the curriculum, such as Rusinko (2010), for example, who proposes a matrix for how far to extend existing programme based structures as well as how far to cross disciplines, to the more embedded knowledge management perspective of Benn and Martin (2010) who propose that the shift in sustainability education can potentially be understood and addressed

through a focus on social and organisational learning theories. Benn and Martin draw on a case study of a Chinese University to illustrate how it has developed a shared knowledge of sustainability theory and practice through embedding the university within its community, thus spanning multiple communities of practice. They argue that such an approach might support our understanding of progress in a new way. Audebrand (2010), in the same issue, suggests that one of the key barriers to the progress toward sustainability in education has been the dominant and recurring root metaphor of business as "war". This metaphor can, they suggest, be replaced by a number of alternative metaphors for sustainability already in use, such as such as the earth as container, home, or garden, each of which could be woven into the classroom discussions and learning activities. Metaphor could thus become a powerful instrument for attitudinal and behavioural curriculum change.

Redecop's (2010) important book, *Leadership for Environmental Sustainability*, does not address the curriculum *per se*. However, it does provide a number of important pointers for our understanding of connecting business practice, education and sustainability. The authors focus on the importance of understanding time, culture and context in order to drive sustainability (Redecop, 2010); and the importance of adaptive learning through understanding the critical principles of interdependence, open systems, and cycling of resources, including leadership talent (Wielkiewicz and Stelzner, 2010). Eco-leadership is also a focus of one of the chapters (Western, 2010) focusing on an understanding of the importance of taking a holistic, systemic, ethical stance; the reciprocal relationship between leadership and the environment; the interconnected nature of the planet at micro-local and macro-global levels; and the importance of finding more democratised ways of organizing that challenge the underlying logic and power relations of late capitalism. Further, the book draws on Heifetz's adaptive leadership ideas to reflect on ways to generate new cultural norms that enable people to meet adaptive challenges, realities, and pressures and to build adaptive capacity. The question that urgently emerges from these ideas, however, is how to embed this understanding of the complexity and process orientation of leadership for sustainability into a curriculum that embraces an opposing individualistic ideology with a short-term focus derived on shareholder value?

The "worldly leadership" project and its role in connecting business practice, education, and sustainability

The critique of business education discussed thus far focuses largely on the US and the UK business school model that continues to dominate the globe today, far beyond the countries of its origins. The leadership theories that inform this model of business education have been shown to be largely rooted in Western conceptions of leadership. However, following calls for a more cosmopolitan mindset, we launched an inquiry into leadership wisdoms originating beyond the Anglo-American world, and how they might support the radical transformation of global business education toward a more globally responsible and sustainable template. It is rare for business school programmes to draw substantially on ancient wisdoms and the alternative cosmologies found in the disciplines of philosophy, theology and anthropology. However, in the following sections we demonstrate that it is these disciplines that may have most to offer for educating today's business leaders to become global citizens.

Our starting point for this research was to initiate a research project into indigenous and ancient leadership wisdoms in partnership with indigenous researchers across the globe, often already engaged in local studies of their own indigenous leadership. Our early findings led us to the subsequent view that indigenous and Asian ideologies will be needed if we are to change educational mindsets for sustainable business, challenge the obsolete model of Western business school education, and refocus business schools on developing an ethic of responsible leadership.

We have used the phrase "worldly leadership" to differentiate our research from mainstream global leadership research which itself reflects the individualistic shareholder capitalism perspective, since it focuses largely on how to do business "overseas" and better understand one's global competitors (Mendenhall *et al.*, 2008). Mintzberg (2004) has noted that worldliness and the "worldly mindset" contrasts with the global mindset. A global mindset "sees the world from a distance that encourages homogenization of behaviour [...] A closer look, however, reveals something quite different: this globe is made up of all kinds of worlds" (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 304). The worldly mindset, therefore, is not globalization repackaged, but something quite different, that results in the emergence of new conceptions of the leadership process. For Gosling and Mintzberg (2003, p. 58), "worldly" is about deep understanding of "particular responses to specific conditions", "a plurality of worldviews" and the "patchwork" that makes up the world. Instead of the homogenisation that occurs as a result of stepping back to examine globalisation from a distance, "worldly leadership" is about close observation and deep local understanding in order to build networked and ethically shaped connectivity and action in the world. It is "worldly leadership" that will arguably transform the business education curriculum for the modern world.

Morrell and Anderson (2006) contrast ancient writings on leadership in which ethics and values feature strongly and dialogue is a key feature, with today's leadership literature, which avoids discussing purpose and ethics. They argue that little attempt has been made to analyse leadership in context, nor to understand the network of social relations in which leadership is embedded. Pointing to Plato's Theaetetus, they posit that in Socrates' dialectic we find a model for scrutiny, radical thinking, ethical reflection and problem finding that is no longer found in contemporary leadership texts.

The study of such textual wisdoms is an important part of our "worldly leadership" project. Our research has sought to study the leadership wisdoms found within a number of Asian texts, such as the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita* (Rocka, 2006) by seeking indigenous scholarship of these texts and their influence from within the cultures of their origins (Kumar and Sankaran, 2007; Rarick and Nickerson, 2008; Sekhar, 2001; Sinha, 2000); or Confucius's The Analects and Daoism (Chen and Lee, 2008) Calvin Redecop (2010) identifies the importance today of learning from the many cosmologies of traditional and indigenous societies which hold a deep respect for spiritual and sacred forms of existence and lead a balanced coexistence in harmony with the cosmos. He notes that indigenous and Asian religious traditions promote a sense of harmony between humans and nature that has been sidelined in today's business discourse. An example of this, he suggests, is Gandhi's teaching which is both cosmic and individual, universal and yet pragmatic, spiritual but rooted in time and place, enabling us to conceive of the possibility of blending ancient wisdoms with modern pragmatism.

Our research has aimed to engage particularly with those involved in "emic" (studying a culture from the inside) research into leadership in non-Western societies, and to build a network of "worldly leadership" scholars, thereby avoiding as far as possible the trap of attempting to conduct non-Western leadership research through a Western leadership lens. A "worldly leadership" symposium was convened in 2009 in which 30 papers were presented primarily by indigenous scholars on a range of studies including insights into Maasai leadership wisdoms, senior women leaders in public administration in Libya; Arab leadership and its distinctive differences; and a variety of deep studies into leadership theory and practice in counties as widespread as China, Turkey, Iran, Germany, and Nigeria (Turnbull *et al.*, 2009). Two further leadership summits have since been held, bringing together business leaders, business school leaders and leaders of not for profit third sector organisations. One of the key focuses of the "worldly leadership" research has been the application of these different cultural lenses and perspectives to our current economic and ecological problems. Leadership "of and for the world", and the ethical dilemmas that frequently confront today's leaders, were recurrent themes of the symposium and summits, along with the wisdoms that ancient sacred and secular texts can offer to those seeking to act and lead for good, and in particular the next generation of leaders. In addition to the above, two pilot projects have been conducted in order to develop these ideas further.

The first project focused on leadership for sustainability. We conducted deep semi-structured interviews with NGO and community leaders in Africa and Asia. The questions focused on the nature of their leadership, how they have learned their leadership practices, their role models and teachers, their habits and expectations, the influence of their societal, family and religious beliefs on their leadership decisions, their relationship with followers, their ethical frames, and the leadership process as a whole. The interview design enabled them to tell their personal stories along with critical incidents that illustrated these stories.

The second project was a qualitative study of Indian business leaders conducted together with an Indian researcher. The research methodology was inductive and based on a grounded theoretical approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the leaders' workplaces with a view to eliciting the leaders' stories of their leadership journeys, their values and beliefs, as well as their role models and other influences. A total of 17 interviews were conducted with business leaders. Of these 12 were in India and five were first generation British Indian leaders. Our analysis of their stories aimed to discover how the leaders perceived their leadership identities, how these had evolved, how these are enacted in practice, and whether they implicitly or explicitly draw on specific leadership role models, legends or literatures, either from the west or the east (Turnbull *et al.*, 2009). Our interviews with leaders from indigenous and non-Western cultures have been conducted in order to gain deep insights into how their leadership identities, values and behaviours have been shaped by their societies and the oral wisdoms in their cultures. Replica studies in other cultures are ongoing with a study of Russian leadership identities almost complete.

Finally, our research has also drawn on interviews and observations of 26 executives participating in two cohorts of the International Masters Programme in Practicing Management.

The findings from each study have been combined to ask what we can learn from these largely non-Western leaders that might challenge and inform a future

business school curricula to challenge the orthodoxy of "shareholder value above all else". The process of analysis was as follows: each interview was analysed thematically and coded according to the overarching themes, narratives and discourses contained within it. The interviews conducted for each of the three projects were then analysed to identify any overarching themes to be found within each of these groups of interviews. Finally, a comparative analysis was undertaken with the purpose of understanding what can be learned from these different groups of leaders, how they differ but also what binds them together across the geographical, social and economic divides. In particular, we were interested in discourses and themes that may be deemed uncommon or low priority in mainstream business education.

Worldly leadership wisdoms for a new model of business education
Our research has identified a number of embedded leadership wisdoms currently overlooked in the current model of business education. Based within a deep-rooted ethic of responsibility, conviction, stewardship and sustainability and reflecting a cosmopolitan mindset (Held, 2005), the critical knowledge and values embedded in indigenous communities, transmitted orally across many generations, provides a challenge to western business schools to embed the knowledge found within those societies and communities toward a more sustainable response to the crisis of our planet. Responsibility, humanity, benevolence, trusteeship, contribution, honesty and conviction are some of the core "wisdoms" uncovered in our research and provide a compelling rationale for a radical rethink of the norms of business school curricula.

Leadership is a collective process – everybody shares a sense of responsibility for their community and for the wider world
The relational nature of leadership appears to be stronger and more intuitive in indigenous and Asian communities than in the so-called "developed world". This was a striking and recurring theme across all three groups of interviewees. For example, in Kenya's long history of surviving even the worst challenges dealt to them by political and climate upheaval, the Maasai people have demonstrated a deep understanding of leadership that dates back many years and is embedded in their traditions. One of our interviewees, Emmanuel, a young Maasai leader explained:

> Within all the community, everybody is trained to be a leader because everybody should be a leader in our community.

Emmanuel highlights respect as a core leadership principle:

> When you are a leader you should respect everybody, you should respect children, respect the whole community. So you should show respect to everybody; you don't go bullying people, you don't tell people do this, do this, commanding people, no. Instead you should have respect.

Martin, a Ghanaian leader of an NGO working with communities in Northern Ghana speaks of a process of developing leaders who can develop other leaders as being essential for sustaining leadership in a community:

> Leadership sustainability can only be achieved when there is shared leadership. So we identify the champions, and so each champion will have sub-champions [. . .] So at every turn it's almost like you have a – I don't know what word to use? [. . .] Yes, a cascade.

Stewardship is a key for sustainable practice in business and education needs to support this
Emmanuel demonstrates that in the Maasai, a sense of responsibility and stewardship
are purposefully developed from the earliest age:

> Okay, a child is given responsibility for taking care of the lambs, the goats, the sheep, so that
> the young child is shown how, I mean he's shown that he's responsible, you know, he should
> take care of the animals or the livestock.

In the Maasai, there is a long-term sense of building the leadership capacity of future
generations in order to ensure its continuity that is rarely articulated in Western
leadership narratives. The NGO and community leaders also tended to be very
engaged with the needs of future generations. One NGO leader said:

> [. . .] because sustainability is not just about maintaining for me, it is about continuity, no
> doubt about it, but it is also about thriving and continuity, and that's how I frame
> sustainability [. . .] of course meeting the needs of the present, but it is also about future
> generations thriving, you know, that's important.

Another NGO leader spoke of the need to move away from the focus on the individual
in order to focus on the longer term leadership:

> A longer term frame is not about yourself but about a movement in which different people
> will come and go, will take different shape or form, but it is the essence of how they respond to
> that issue, or how do you, you know, address that issue.

Duty to serve society

For many traditional Indian leaders, duty is associated with the values of the *Bhagavad
Gita*. Duty also appears as a key tenet of institutional thinking. Working hard is to act
as a role model for others, and to provide for future generations. It is not about material
wealth. This is illustrated in the statement below made by one Indian leader, which
was very typical of this leadership mindset:

> Results will come with God's blessing and with your hard effort. Because without your work
> you will not get the blessing of God. The blessing of God will come if you have serious
> sincerity and you are doing your work, then God's blessing will come.

Another Indian leader spoke of the importance of paying something back. His ideas are
cosmopolitan in nature as he sees his duties as being to the wider world as well as to
his immediate family and organization:

> Payback to society, payback to organisation, payback to family.

Multidirectional and catalytic leadership

The construct of leadership articulated by many of the leaders we have interviewed
was not about a dyadic leader-follower relationship, but much more processual,
multidirectional and fluid:

> [. . .] sustainability requires an approach that actually has the communities and people
> involved in one form or another owning it and those solutions.

> [. . .] stalactites and stalagmites have to meet in the middle, you know, so you've got to get it
> coming from both ends to meet.

The long-term sustainability of the leadership development process in one community project was articulated as a "viral process" in which all members of society have a leadership role to play, and leadership learning is an ongoing process:

> I look at it as being a movement that is long term with others participating and taking it forward, you know, and larger collective action.

> The underpinning is not about a leader and followers, it's just about everybody providing that leadership, because the more you have the more it will thrive and the more long term it will be and more sustainable than the action you're taking. So I think sustainable leadership is a lot to do with collaboration [. . .] I think that identifying those critical people you need, you know, sort of a viral approach to knowledge generation.

Conceptualising leadership as a process is not new. Laozi (sixth century BC) the father of Daoism, used water many times to explain the ideal form of leadership (Lee *et al.*, 2008 in Chen and Lee, 2008). His idea was that leadership is like water: water is altruistic because it supports life; water is modest and humble because it always takes the lowest ground; water is adaptable and flexible because it can stay in a container of any shape; water is transparent and clear.

Similarly, the African idea of Ubuntu, well understood in African society and African indigenous communities is a very "cosmopolitan" way of viewing the world. It challenges Western individualism and its associated emphasis on individual leadership. On Ubuntu, Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town has said:

> It is about the essence of being human, it is part of the gift that Africa will give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being able to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours.

The *Bhagavad Gita* also invokes self-sacrifice; being kind and compassionate; acting without pride; forgiving; acting with purity. (Rarick and Nickerson, 2008). This was explicitly followed in the minds of many of the traditional Indian leaders we interviewed:

> What I feel is what Lord Krishna says in our *Gita*: "Your job is to work without any expectations, with all humility, with sincerity and full concentration on your work. That is your job [. . .] And it is bound to come, but that is not your sphere, that is not your field; your field is do your work with all sincerity and never bother about the riches."

> I don't need any medals for what I'm doing because it's my conscience, I'm doing it with my conscience, so I don't need the recognition.

"conscience" is a leadership quality that is rarely articulated in Western society, but one which is very strong in Indian leaders' discourses.

Our worldly leadership research has identified a number of leadership wisdoms currently overlooked in the current model of business education. Based within a deep-rooted ethic of responsibility, conviction, stewardship and sustainability and reflecting a cosmopolitan mindset (Held, 2005), the critical knowledge and values embedded in indigenous communities, transmitted orally across many generations, provides a challenge to Western business schools to embed the knowledge found within those societies and communities toward a more sustainable response to the crisis of our planet. Responsibility, humanity, benevolence, trusteeship, contribution, honesty

and conviction are some of the core "wisdoms" uncovered in our research that can inform and frame a radical rethink of the norms of business school curricula.

Managerial mindsets

As evidence that worldly leadership ideas can be successfully designed into a curriculum for contemporary business education we draw on the author's experiences as Cycle Director for two cohorts of the International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM). The programme is designed around five managerial mindsets (Mintzberg, 2004; Gosling and Mintzberg, 2003) – the reflective, analytical, worldly, collaborative and action mindsets. IMPM participants are drawn from all parts of the world, all sectors, including large corporations, entrepreneurs and NGOs. Each module is taught by a different business school to reflect not only its geographical location and context, but also its cultural perspectives, and much of the learning is about seeing management and leadership through these different lenses. The programme pedagogy is highly reflective and discursive throughout. A "50/50 rule" means that interaction between participants takes up as much module time as the input of faculty presenters. The organisations in each location host challenging work-based field visits for the group to learn to sense make within and across different cultures. Much of the learning is outside the classroom both during modules and between modules when reflective papers, "impact ventures" and managerial exchanges are undertaken – all with the express purpose of deepening insights and allowing the participants to apply the five mindsets authentically and practically to their own work contexts to bring about change. The programme includes a focus on collective global challenges, sustainability and ethical practice, as well as exploring alternative ways to conceptualise and address these issues from non-Western business perspectives.

Through a daily reflection process, that starts with the individual, moves on to table group discussion, and finally includes cross-table discussion across the whole cohort, participants learn to understand their own perceptions as seen from the perspectives of their own worlds but also to understand how others see the world. Thus, a table group might include, for example, a Nigerian Country manager of an NGO, a Japanese software engineer, a North American finance director, a Russian business leader; a Chinese global sales manager, a German airline cargo manager, a Korean corporation vice president, and an Indian entrepreneur.

One of the most enduring and "experiential" modules within the programme is the worldly mindset. Delivered in Bangalore, an Indian city that exemplifies many of the contrasting worlds within worlds that coexist in India, the module provides a deep immersion into these different worlds, and faculty who can help the leaders to interpret what they see, feel and experience through the multiple lenses and backgrounds of the participants, and applying a range of concepts that enable close up observation and interpretation of the paradoxes and contradictions that make up this society, along with a call to action.

The following outlines the design of this particular module and how it develops "worldly leadership" as defined above. The key themes of the module are: "how the world works", "people changing their world", "India taking on the world" and "alternative worlds and perspectives".

We will take each aspect of "worldly leadership" as discussed above and indicate how this is addressed in the module.

"Worldly" is about seeing all kinds of different worlds, and often worlds within worlds, from close up and taking action

The module commences with a city visit to expose participants to the many worlds that are both visible and hidden within the Indian city of Bangalore. From the Hindu temples set amongst the shiny new call centres; the affluent IT companies built alongside the slums; the City Hall declaring its engagement in God's work; the new retail malls displaying newly introduced Western brands beside the enormous flower and spice market with its striking colours; cows in the road weaving their way through traffic that is organized in its chaos.

The participants' responses to these contrasts and contradictions are wide ranging. Disbelief, fear, amusement, angst, confusion, sadness and joy are all emotions experienced, often simultaneously. Participants at this stage are often unable to articulate what they are feeling or learning. However, they recognize early on the profound learning that is taking place by engaging their emotions, despite their inability to articulate this. At the "reflections sessions" each morning that can last up to two hours, they have the opportunity to reflect deeply on these feelings, first alone, in groups and across the whole cohort.

Other experiences during the module which build from this powerful introduction include a visit to a highly successful internationally and fast growing software business followed by a visit to experience an Ayurvedic spa, within which both deeply spiritual and commercial worlds coexist; and an introduction to a large Ashram with a global reach which is both simple and sophisticated in its organisation. None of the participants are immune from feelings of confusion caused by these controversial and contradictory experiences. The rich debate that starts in the car, continues into the classroom, and later into the dining room is arguably one of the most sustainable and powerful forms of learning for worldly leadership. Debates about leadership ethics, integrity, action, sustainability, the common good are all sparked by these emotional immersions into these worlds within worlds.

Worldly leadership can be seen as aiming for unity and collaboration across borders through a shared humanity

The module is more about observing different worlds. It is also about the growing engagement of participants in worldly issues, impelling them to collaborate in their endeavours for good. "people changing their world" is seen as one of the most compelling themes of the worldly mindset module. A number of "social entrepreneurs" share their stories of leading social change, for example through giving disenfranchised groups a voice, and through persistence and political skill moving the seemingly immoveable Indian society to greater equity, involvement and empowerment. A third sector entrepreneur talks about her experiences of taking micro credit to the agricultural communities and using education to make a difference to wealth on the ground. These role models of "worldly leadership" provoke a strong and compelling stimulus for action amongst the participants.

Above all it is about shared power; dispersed and flexible networks,

Shared power is an element of Indian society that many take for granted. It is, however, often a concept that is alien to corporate business leaders, particularly those from Western cultures. A society of this magnitude cannot operate without the sharing

of power through its dispersed and entangled networks. The political process is multi-layered, and virtually impenetrable to the outsider. Social entrepreneurs with deep experience of this system explain how they tap into these shifting networks to mobilize power at the grassroots, and thus effect change. The power of the cohort spanning 14 nations, and a diverse range of sectors becomes sharply into sight throughout the module, often leading to decisions to collaborate in real time beyond the module, across the world and across sectors.

Stewardship, integrity, responsibility for the common good and an emphasis on a sustainable world

One of the most powerful and enduring learning experiences of the module is a field visit to one of ITC's "e-choupals" a highly innovative initiative to support and empower rural India to become more sustainable. ITC's solution was to put networked computers into agricultural villages, and select and train a leader in each village to use these, thus "enriching the farmer with knowledge; elevating him to a new order of empowerment". Engaging with the farmers involved in this project, along with the ITC managers and staff creates transformative learning for the IMPM leaders, who naturally begin to question their own and their organisations' stewardship role in leadership for sustainability and for the common good.

The qualities and ways of living required for this include: vision and inspiration; integrity, humility and wisdom; authenticity and courage; balance and responsibility

The qualities exemplified by many of the leaders who participate in the IMPM worldly mindset module including political leaders, business entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, and academics often exemplify the qualities of worldly leadership identified above. The module creates a "mirror" for these leaders to examine and reflect on their own ways of living, and to reflect on their organisations' engagement in the "worldly leadership" agenda.

It is clear that the IMPM model of business education is radically different from the conventional pedagogy since it draws on many leadership lenses and focuses on collective responsibility and sustainability through deep experiential learning in the field. However, changing business schools' mindsets, especially those for whom the old model of investor capitalism has bred success will be a slow process and require an interconnected and critical agenda, as well as a partnership of educators, business leaders and students to radically shift ideologies. Springett (2005) has proposed a critical approach to such education with a view to understanding the discourses of sustainability, and sustainable development, exposing the embedded assumptions, asymmetric power relations, and so-called truths that lie behind these discourses. She also proposes setting these ideologies and the relationship of humans with nature in their historic contexts, so that students are able to hold up a mirror to the world, engage in self-reflection, and challenge the existing managerial paradigm. The IMPM does just this, but also ensures that it does not leave students paralysed by such critique. A key part of the IMPM pedagogy is to move from reflection to action and to make real change happen at individual, organizational and societal levels.

The implications of worldly leadership for connecting business practice, education and sustainability through a new business school curriculum

The current model of business education preserves the status quo of twenty-first century capitalism. As globalisation advances, leaders appear to be powerless to act against a dominant ideology that reveres shareholder value above all else. Our research builds on De Woot's (2009) critique of the shareholder value paradigm and Khurana's (2007) reflections on the problems of business school ideology to suggest that a new form of business education based on leadership wisdoms in indigenous and oral cultures, and ancient texts has much to contribute to radical mindset change in business education. As Tilbury *et al.* (2005a, b) have suggested, change such as this will come from a number of joined up initiatives, and a desire by business schools and students to find solutions to how best to nurture a culture and ethic of responsibility and conviction to change mindsets toward a more responsible focus. The IMPM is a programme in which many of the principles of worldly leadership education are practised through a range of radically different pedagogies.

It is clear that to persuade a greater number of mainstream business schools to incorporate "worldly leadership" wisdoms into their curriculum, and relinquish "investor capitalism" in favour of "moral capitalism", will require additional compelling evidence of the transformational value of the leadership wisdoms found beyond the Western world. It is for this purpose that further research into transferable worldly leadership wisdoms will be needed. It is not our intention to idealise indigenous people and their traditions. However, we believe that the richness of these leadership wisdoms, and their value for developing an alternative leadership pedagogy for a more sustainable business curriculum should not be underestimated.

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