

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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On Leadership

"If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading."

Lao-Tzu

The Nature of Leadership

- Leadership is not an independent phenomena, as it arises in regards to challenges in life circumstances that require a response that would provide a beneficial way forward
- Leadership in this context is action taken that establishes purpose and direction
- Not all leadership action taken results in good outcomes as it is quite possible to mishandle leadership challenges i.e. the intent to lead does not *per se* ensure the proficiency of leadership

The Nature of Leadership

- Leadership, despite its perils, is a fundamental catalytic ingredient in enabling advances in any sector
- Leadership is often thought of in terms of individual leadership, whereas in most instances nothing of significance can take place without a sizable and sustained measure of collective leadership
- Leadership can be cultivated where it is lacking and it can be fortified where it is insufficient or weak

On Leadership

“The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.”

Albert Einstein

The Nature of International Leadership

- International leadership is typically an expression of the alliances within and outside specific countries towards matters of common interest and priority
- Though such leadership is formally expressed through the medium of international organisations, its strength rests in the often informal alliances and networks that are sought and nurtured behind the scenes
- Different countries may have quite distinct leadership capacities and accomplishments due to their specific history, but the benefits of these accomplishments often extend from domestic leadership to helpful contributions beyond their specific borders

The Nature of International Leadership

There are many ways that shared leadership can take on a collective role and impact beyond simply people being in contact internationally and can include:

- Generating and sharing innovations
- Solving problems effectively in one jurisdiction sets a precedent or benchmark for others
- Mentoring and consultation between experienced leaders and less experienced ones
- Fielding study visits to learn firsthand what has been achieved and how
- Developing consensus and share analyses
- Exposure to thinking and approaches that may not be present in all jurisdictions

The Nature of International Leadership

- Sharing data, research, evaluation etcetera that may be pertinent to a specific leadership challenge
- Generating outcomes that are “leading edge” through collaborating across jurisdictions
- Sharing strategic leadership development strategies and practices
- Highlighting and affirming key values and principles that have proven to be of value
- Creating occasions to examine and analyse shared challenges in depth across multiple jurisdictions
- Creating shared literature and similar resources pertinent to common leadership challenges

Some Examples Of International Leadership Challenges and Opportunities

- What follows are a number of typical *leadership challenges* that have been addressed well in at least some jurisdictions and where practice and outcomes have improved such that many examples of beneficial progress exist and can serve as inspiring and instructive examples that demonstrate “proof of concept”
- This in turn potentially creates opportunities to build upon what has been achieved and extend and share the learning, competencies and thinking generated to benefit others

Example One: Affirming The Voice of People with Disabilities and Their Families

- Highlighting their voices, stories and thinking in multiple fora
- Linking such leaders with each other
- Challenging the practices and attitudes that result in the voices of others becoming more important and dominant than theirs
- Ensuring that in all public events it is considered best practice to have their voices play an authentically prominent role
- Formally recognising the contributions of people with disabilities and their families

On Leadership

“Many people are good at talking about what they are doing, but in fact do little. Others do a lot but don't talk about it; they are the ones who make a community live.”

Jean Vanier

Example Two: Ensuring Long Term Independent Advocacy as a Counterweight to Unhelpful Vested Interests

- Highlighting the dysfunctionality of many vested interests and the need for powerful offsetting safeguards such as independent advocacy
- Making the case for “conflict of interest free” resources needed to support independent advocacy
- Routinely include independent advocates (both formal and informal) as counterweights to other interests in the system in public discussions
- Capitalising on the vision, values and experience of advocates

Example Three: Creating The Regularised Means By Which People Can Be Supported to “Imagine Better”

- Generating an appetite to discover “better” comes before resolving what is “better”
- Multiple opportunities to broaden vision serve as an underlying catalyst and source of renewal for people who might take the lead in creating better
- Being exposed to beneficial examples encourages further adoption of the practices and thinking involved
- “Imagining better” opportunities are an antidote to stagnation, resignation and discouragement and thus serve as a

Example Four: Investing In Intentional Leadership Development Targeted To Specific Groups

- Many different kinds of leadership are needed and having regularised investments in the people interested in playing diverse leadership roles ensures a greater likelihood of their eventual impact
- Opportunities to equip oneself for the demands involved in specific leadership challenges increases the likelihood of positive impact
- Ideally, leadership development should be ongoing such that leaders continue to grow

Example Five: Expanding The Numbers of People With Disabilities In Satisfying Open Employment

- Despite many excellent examples of widespread socially inclusive employment and employment rates, many people remain unnecessarily under and unemployed
- Many people are hugely uninformed about how surprisingly successful leading edge employment initiatives have been
- Employment is a long term and incremental challenge and strategies to support its expansion can be intentionally strategic and sustained such that the numbers employed continues to expand

Example Six: Enabling People To Create A “Home of One’s Own”

- Irrespective of one’s level of disability, it is potentially feasible today for all people with disabilities to eventually have a genuine “home of one’s own”
- A “home of one’s own” is a quite different reality from having an individualised residential service placement
- People with disabilities who do obtain a “home of their own” quite decidedly have no interest in returning to conventional residential services

Example Seven: Creating The Places In One's Community Where One Belongs and Has Membership

- Social isolation has long been recognised as a profound limitation on a person's life opportunities
- It is possible to gradually resolve this isolation by intentionally establishing new opportunities for people to find places where they belong
- The answer to such questions can only be determined "one person at a time" and one opportunity an exploration at a time.
- If attempted often enough, expanding the places one belongs simply becomes how one lives

Example Eight: Creating “Natural Supports” and Intentional Personal Networks

- The experience of relying solely on paid supports has tended to give people more “clienthood” than a satisfying life in the community
- Yet, much has been learned and developed about mobilising “natural support” in various forms, including intentional personal networks
- It would now seem quite feasible that the benefits of natural supports and personal networks be made available to considerably greater numbers

Example Nine: Self Direction, Service User Cooperatives and Personal Empowerment In One's Life

- The reality of personal disempowerment is widespread in the lives of many people with disabilities both in their everyday lives and in relation to services
- Fortunately, many pathways to personal empowerment have been pioneered and can be brought to scale such that many more people can potentially benefit if such a commitment is pursued
- This cannot be done overnight, but it can certainly be done over time if there is a will to persevere

Example Ten: Ethical, Values Based and Effective Uses of Adaptive Technologies

- Our capacity to mobilise advanced technology to enrich the lives of people with disabilities is now higher than at any point in history
- It is notable that we are only using a small percentage of the potential uses of available technology, yet many effective examples exist that demonstrate that there is considerably more scope to benefit countless more people.
- Fortunately, we can learn this technology, find ways to enable it to address people's needs and continue to evolve it further and for greater numbers.

Example Eleven: Liberating People from Congregate and Custodial Service Models To Individualised Life Opportunities

- It is no longer unusual to see people with disabilities to obtain very personalised lifestyle and forms of support.
- It is also now common enough to see people liberated from congregate service models via personalised lifestyles and supports
- Given that people with disabilities rarely wish to return to such settings when they get an opportunity to leave, it is clear that we must accelerate this process so both that greater numbers can benefit from such liberation and can further evolve their lifestyles and supports for many years to come.

Example Twelve: Supporting Person's Considered "Difficult to Serve" To Get Enriched Lives and Effective Supports

- Often, people described as "difficult to serve" are only "difficult" if served in the wrong model
- If one becomes more proficient in tailoring the support and lifestyle model to be a more optimal fit in meeting a person's needs, they will begin to flourish
- Being supported incorrectly often shows up as the person becoming distressed but the causes of this may not be recognised as being due to unhelpful practices

On Leadership

"Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny."

Mahatma Gandhi

Some Considerations Concerning Leadership Development And Application

- We have pioneered many advances that are relatively unknown and subsequently unavailable to the majority of people
- Even though many of these advances are technically feasible, they are not benefiting sizable numbers of people with disabilities i.e. they are not being taken up and applied to greater numbers in organised ways
- Many of our existing leaders are failing to persuasively educate others about advances in the sector such that momentum towards their adoption is quite limited

Some Considerations Concerning Leadership Development And Application

- Many existing leaders actively resist and suppress many of the people and groups seeking to expand access to advances
- Due to demographics, a substantial percentage of existing leaders will have departed the sector within the next decade
- In the wake of this generational change of leadership, strategic investments in the next generation of leaders, particularly millennials could be the catalyst for the wider adoption of already pioneered advances in the sector

Some Considerations Concerning Leadership Development And Application

- At the same time, if there is not a more conscious preservation of the learning around how today's advances were created, there will be much lessened capacity to evolve these further and expand their benefits to greater numbers
- Such a circumstance of “failure to lead” could signal the end of this unusually progressive era and set the stage for a significant decline and regression
- Consequently, what is done in the way of leadership development in this next decade will necessarily determine whether we gain or lose ground

Some Considerations Concerning Leadership Development And Application

- This question of enabling the next generation of leadership could be usefully impacted by international alliances, particularly if what arises is a consensus about how to best engage the challenges given what has already been accomplished with conscious leadership investments
- The International Initiative On Disability Leadership could contribute to the overall challenge, but it has not as yet scoped out what it sees as its conceivable strategic contribution

Some Considerations Concerning Leadership Development And Application

- It would be useful for work to be undertaken between now and the next international gathering of IIDL/IIMHL in Stockholm, Sweden in 2018 on a generational change leadership development proposal that might provide some guidance on how this challenge could be impacted.
- Thus, the time between now and then could be both a challenge and an opportunity for IIDL to make a well considered contribution to decisive generational leadership change

On Leadership

"If we work in marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds and instill into them just principles, we are then engraving upon tablets which no time will efface, but will brighten and brighten to all eternity"

Daniel Webster