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**Author:** Dr T. Coetzee (Free State University)

**Series Editor:** Prof F. Vreÿ (SIGLA)

### **The nuts and bolts of governance leadership**

#### **Background**

Leadership questions are not new and it has been researched for some time, but dissatisfaction persists with the leadership styles and behaviour of many leaders. Furthermore, older definitions of leadership tend to privilege power and position, as well as the idea that a leader exercises control and power over others. Within governance, we need to constantly re-think the role and aims as well as purpose of leadership amidst fast and deep changing settings. COVID19 as an existential threat with severe longer-term repercussions can well become the catalyst for changes in leadership styles. So the question is: How valid is the following definition of leadership? Leadership is the process of [directing the behaviour](#) of others towards the accomplishment of organization's goals. Should we not be moving in a direction of a value-based principle in leadership called [transformational leadership](#)? It is now more crucial than ever that we investigate the governance approach to leadership and identify the character of good leadership.

#### **Discussion**

Leadership is necessary in the working of a network, but often displays no common authority structure. There are no specific rules for the participants to follow, but they must cooperate and identify the different roles that each member plays. Within the governance framework, the leader cannot impose his/her vision on the organisation because there will be a number of individual visions and members of organisations that may be leaders in their own right. Within the governance framework, leadership is regarded as a process and must be shared amongst all the participants and will be informal. Leadership in an organisation will also change from one individual to the next depending on the situation and the task within the organisation. Therefore, there is no permanent power or position. This means that the role of the leader is fluid and preferably not dominating or one of imposition, but rather based on engagement with individuals and groups. The leader cannot use only consensus or compromise for collaboration, but must bring different individuals with diverse [skills](#), strengths and capacity to cooperate and work together to reach their goal. Leaders must therefore treat all people as [ends in themselves](#) and not mere means to an end, but strive to unlock the human side of people to bring about a [positive](#), optimistic and enthusiastic environment. Individual goals must be brought in line with those of other participants to address the problems in the organisation. Leaders have to use the value of diversity and individualism to build and serve common

interests. They must therefore encourage members to take the necessary actions for the benefit of the organization and not prioritise their own interest. This will bring better and more creative solutions and actions to the fore.

Leaders are challenged with problems which they may not have anticipated. Leaders must work across structures, levels of government, sectors, and cultural boundaries and transcend organisational confines to solve diverse problems. The response of leaders to a crisis is important and this is demonstrated by astute, as well as ambiguous leadership responses to the [2020 COVID-19 outbreak](#). Within governance, leadership problems must be dealt with by building capacity. The leader must provide support, guidance, knowledge and use of resources to his/her employees. This will be done against the background of governance principles such as transparency, accountability and responsibility. Leaders must not only lead recovery from challenges or problems, but also master the art to build capacity and resilience to overcome future challenges.

Transformational leadership links up with a leader's behaviour and his/her personal values. The behaviour of the leader will therefore influence the beliefs and interests of his/her colleagues. We need to understand personal values in the leadership processes as a driver that shapes leadership behaviour over time. This [value-based principle](#) is called transformational leadership. Transformational leadership refers to behaviour that pursues the organizational vision, not own interests. In its pursuit leaders use their personal values to serve the common good of their organizations. Transformational leaders motivate people to look at the best possible actions for the organization. They support the team to sacrifice self-interest in favour of the common good, and motivate members in organizations to act and [perform far beyond what is expected](#) of them as the collective outcome is more important than the interest of the individual. Transformational leaders are able to change and move away from the status quo. They point their organizations in a new direction that fosters improved results under normal as well as crisis conditions.

## Conclusions

The traditional way of viewing leadership is fast becoming less applicable. We need, and are in many situations forced to think anew and differently about the concept of leadership and how it is practiced. A culture of transformational leadership within governance leadership is one pathway out of a potential leadership *cul-de-sac*. We need to ensure that the value and success of transformation and governance leadership are established and made known while encouraging leaders to practice it. Only then will it bring about a common goal, innovation, cooperation and change. It may not be easy to change our thinking and practices of leadership, but it is necessary to engage with governance and transformational leadership to respond to fast changing and dangerous environments. Here the verdict out on how well leaders at all levels have responded to preventing and containing the effects of COVID-19 and mastered the art of pointing their countries towards new and better governance pathways.

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### Further reading:

1. Bovaird, T. & Loeffler, E. (eds). 2016. Public Management and Governance. Routledge.
  2. Bevir, M. (ed). 2011. The Sage Handbook of Governance. Sage Publications.
  3. Du Plessis, M. Charismatic and Transformational Leadership in Van Zyl, E. (ed). 2009. Leadership in the African context. Juta.
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Dr Tania Coetzee is Senior Lecturer in Governance and Political Transformation, University of the Free State.  
E-mail – [CoetzeeT@ufs.co.za](mailto:CoetzeeT@ufs.co.za)