Leadership development in South African higher education: The heart of the matter

O. Zuber-Skerritt
Curriculum and Development Support
Tshwane University of Technology
Pretoria, South Africa
e-mail: ortrun@mac.com

Abstract
An extensive literature on leadership theories and models concerns large organizations in industry and has been developed mostly by outside researchers with expertise in conducting large surveys on and interviews with ‘subjects’ in leadership positions. Recently, such theories have been adopted or adapted to higher education in South Africa. These theories and their derived guidelines for practice in higher education present some interesting ideas but have rarely been of practical, transformational value and benefit to academic leadership development (ALD).

This article aims to take an alternative approach to ALD that can be developed actively from ‘inside out’ by the participants themselves through reflection on their own character and values (the heart of the matter), rather than through application of theory ‘from the outside in’. Thus, the research and development discussed in this article are for and with people as ‘participants’ in the research, rather than on people as ‘subjects’ in the research. In this way, the article contributes to a new paradigm and model of self-developed leadership in higher education in the light of Covey’s (1992) ‘principle-centred leadership’ and Maxwell’s (1999, 2000) ‘indispensable qualities of a leader’ and the action learning concept of ‘failing forward’, that is, turning mistakes into stepping stones for success.

INTRODUCTION
Higher Education in South Africa (HE in SA) is at a watershed of radical change and development. These changes are characterized by restructuring and institutional mergers similar to those under way in the last two decades in western developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the UK. However, the situation of higher education in post-apartheid South Africa is in many respects unique due to the nation’s distinctive historical, cultural and socio-economic circumstances, as several articles in this special journal issue explain. This article argues that what
is needed in this time of radical change is a new paradigm of learning, teaching, research (development and supervision), knowledge management and leadership in higher education.

Internationally, the need for change in learning, teaching, academic staff development and leadership in higher education has long been recognized. This change moves from the rigid disciplinary and hierarchical structures characteristic of the traditional mode of knowledge production, use and application to a more interdisciplinary, problem-solving, client/learner-centred, practice-oriented approach to research and development (R&D) that is more society/community-relevant.

These changes from the traditional to the new paradigm in higher education are crucial in developing countries such as those in Africa where R&D have to be fast, innovative and pro-active, rather than reactive, to solve long-standing poverty and consequent social and health problems. However, professionals and practitioners in their particular fields find it hard to act effectively and efficiently, because they often lack the ‘know-how’; their life experience has not equipped them with this capacity.

In order to effect practical transformational change we need new methodologies, models and frameworks that can be learnt, experienced, applied or self-developed in complex and sustainable life and work situations. We also need supportive environments that allow risk, experimentation, learning from mistakes, trial and error, and that encourage creative, innovative thinking.

In the international literature, some of these new practical theories are called ‘reflective practice’, ‘illuminative evaluation’, ‘appreciative inquiry’, ‘action learning’ and various types of ‘action research’, especially participatory, critical or emancipatory, rather than merely technical and practical action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986).

Leaders in higher education today need to understand the shift in knowledge structures and the changing framework of learning and teaching, especially with the transformational change under way in South African society. For mutual understanding of terms, the article first defines the fundamental concepts of learning, teaching, knowledge management and leadership within the new paradigm in higher education. This will be followed by review of the international literature and examples from the author’s own practice of professional and leadership development.

**Learning** in the twenty-first century must mean more than an accumulation of knowledge because with the development of technology, information via the Internet is available instantly through digital devices such as mobile phones, blackberries or micro computers. Memorizing has become obsolete. Instead learning must be the ability to problem solve and think creatively, analytically, in patterns and systems. It needs to be holistic and integrate auditory, visual and kinesthetic styles of learning. It is learning through questioning insight, discussion, left and right-brain activity. This means not only listening to lectures and reading written materials, but seeing and drawing pictures, diagrams, mind maps, and developing concepts and their connections and relationships. Holistic, dialectical thinking can be learnt in context, contradictions and processes of change.
Teaching therefore cannot be the transmission of information and content, but the enabling and facilitating of holistic learning. Teachers in Germany have referred to the claim by Heraclitus (sixth century BC), Lernen heisst nicht, ein Fass zu füllen, sondern eine Flamme anzuzünden: learning does not mean to fill a barrel, but to ignite a flame. Teachers need to enhance students’ creative problem-solving skills by turning off their left brain that imposes preconceptions of the world and thus allow them to use their right brain to see the world as it is for them and to develop other capabilities such as generic, transferable and life-long skills. Teachers need to be role models of holistic thinking and to motivate student learning through innovative, creative activities and action learning processes. They are process managers rather than instructors.

**Action learning** (AL) means learning from and with each other in small groups or ‘sets’ from action and concrete experience in the workplace and critical reflection on this experience, as well as taking action as a result of this learning. It is a process by which groups of people address actual workplace issues or major real-life problems in complex situations and conditions.

**Action research** (AR) similarly is a cyclical iterative process of action and reflection on and in action. There is no separation between, but integration of theory and practice, R&D. The aims are to improve or change work practices through collaborative inquiry following a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

The main difference between action learning and action research is the same as that between learning and research generally. Both include learning, searching, problem solving, inquiry and reflection on action. However, action research is more systematic, rigorous, scrutinizable, verifiable, always made public (e.g., in publications, oral or written reports) and represented by a certain methodology and rigorous research methods of collecting, analyzing and verifying data.

**Knowledge management** (KM) has been defined by the Brint Institute as follows (www.brint.com/km/viewed on 1 March 2007):

Essentially, knowledge management embodies organizational processes that seek synergistic combination of data and information processing capacity of information technologies, and the creative and innovative capacity of human beings... The newly empowered humans will live in a world of immense choices resulting from the ongoing evolution of knowledge work and knowledge enterprise. Being cognizant of these choices may perhaps liberate them from the vestigial shackles of the old world of business to achieve performance, success and fulfilment. (Author’s emphasis)

Most R&D activities in knowledge management have focused on ‘hard’ methodologies, particularly using IT (Information Technology). However, a central problem in theory and practice has been how to develop in an organization the ‘creative and innovative capacities of human beings’ (see Brint above). Zuber-Skerritt (2005) has developed a ‘soft methodology’ model that offers ways to access these creative and innovative capacities of human beings, and to develop a type of soft, implicit or tacit know-how called ‘personal knowledge’, as explained in ‘Core values and beliefs in an ALAR culture’ below.
Leadership has been defined by numerous scholars for many decades from trait theories and behavioural theories, followed by contingency theories to transactional and transformational theories. For the purpose of this article, leadership is defined as the ability to influence others towards the achievement of common goals that contribute to a worthwhile purpose, such as professional, organizational and leadership development and improvement of practice in higher education. This process requires leadership attributes, such as knowledge, skills, character, beliefs and values. Leadership in the new paradigm is principle-centred, collaborative and self-developed leadership in partnership with others.

First, the article addresses the question: ‘What is leadership in higher education in the new paradigm of collaborative partnership?’, discussing works published in the international literature that seem most appropriate for academic leadership development in South African higher education in this time of accelerated change. Second, the core values are identified in an action learning culture and are compared with African values, as identified by Smiles (2006). Third, selected examples of major change programs through action learning and action research in Australian and South African universities are briefly outlined, followed by reflections on the conditions that are likely to lead to successful and unsuccessful programs. Fourth, a model of Academic Leadership Development (ALD) is presented that may have wider application beyond higher education.

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

It is impossible to include a comprehensive literature review on leadership within the boundaries of a journal article. An overview of the voluminous research literature on leadership with examples of effective leadership in action and skill development guidelines is provided by Dubrin and Dalgish (2003) who present the view that leadership effectiveness depends on four sets of variables: leader characteristics and traits, leader behaviour and style, group member characteristics, and the internal and external environment.

The aims of this article are (1) to identify the main principles of leadership in organizations, and the indispensable characteristics of respected leaders in general; and (2) to discuss the three levels of leadership in higher education in particular: the institutional level, the professional developers’ level, and the individual academic staff development level.

General principles and characteristics of leadership with application for higher education

Here the focus is on the work of Covey (1992), Maxwell (1995, 1999, 2000), and Newman (2007) to explain the conceptual framework for leadership in the 21st century that has application for higher education and is relevant to South Africa in the post-
apartheid period. The most important of Covey’s (1992, 14) basic principles of effective leadership can be summarized in the sentence that he quotes from renowned Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu, ‘Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime’.

Covey (1992, 18--19) introduces a new paradigm based on natural laws and governing principles. He explains why we need to become principle-centred and how we attain this quality.

Principles are not invented by us or by society; they are the laws of the universe that pertain to human relationships and human organizations. They are part of the human condition, consciousness, and conscience. To the degree people recognize and live in harmony with such principles as fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty, and trust, they move toward either survival and stability on the one hand or disintegration and destruction on the other (p. 18).

Principles are self-evident, self-validating natural laws. They don’t change or shift. . . . they have proven effective throughout centuries of human history. . . . They are not easy, quick-fix solutions to personal and interpersonal problems. Rather, they are foundational principles that when applied consistently become behavioral habits enabling fundamental transformations of individuals, relationships, and organizations. . . Principles, unlike values, are objective and external. They operate in obedience to natural laws, regardless of conditions. Values are subjective and internal (p. 19).

Values are influenced by many factors, especially people’s cultural and family backgrounds, the environment they live in at a particular time, and the role they play in society. So values may change; they are like spectacles or windows through which we see the world, but when we align our personal values with foundational principles, we are liberated from old perceptions or paradigms. The ability to take off the spectacles, to analyze how well our values, perceptions, beliefs and behaviour align with universal principles, to discover discrepancies (our prejudice, ignorance or error) and then make adjustments and realignments, gives us permanency and rich internal power. This ability is true empowerment and wisdom, the essential characteristics of leadership.

Covey’s (1992, 21--22) model of principle-centred living and leadership identifies four fundamental dimensions or internal sources of human strength: security, guidance, power and wisdom. However, if we focus on alternative life centres, such as work, pleasure, friends, enemies, church, self, spouse, family, money, possessions etc., we are weakened and disoriented. For example, if we are focused on what Covey calls the social mirror, we allow others to guide and control us. If we lack guidance, we tend to follow trends instead of pursuing and achieving our own goals. If we lack security and self-esteem, we tend to depend on others emotionally. If we lack wisdom, we tend to repeat mistakes. If we lack power, we react to external conditions and internal moods. Thus Covey (1992, 22) maintains that principle-centred living and leadership provide:
1. security to not be threatened by change, comparisons, or criticism;
2. guidance to discover our mission, define our roles, and write our scripts and goals;
3. wisdom to learn from our mistakes and seek continuous improvement; and
4. power to communicate and cooperate, even under conditions of stress and fatigue.

In summary,

1. Security relates to our sense of worth, identity, emotional anchorage, self-esteem and personal strength.
2. Guidance means our direction in life influenced by the standards, principles or criteria that determine our decisions and actions. On a continuum, low guidance tends to manifest itself as physical addiction and emotional dependencies centred on selfish or social life styles. Medium guidance represents the development of the social conscience centred on human traditions and relationships. High guidance means spiritual conscience and guidance from inspiring sources centred on true principles.
3. Wisdom is a sense of balance, a holistic and integrated perspective on life, an understanding of how the various principles apply and relate to each other.
4. Power is the capacity to act and accomplish something; the courage and energy to make choices and decisions.

Covey (1992, 23) maintains that:

These four factors – security, guidance, wisdom and power – are interdependent. Security and well-founded guidance bring true wisdom, and wisdom becomes the spark or catalyst to release and direct power. When these four factors are harmonized, they create the great force of a noble personality, a balanced character, a beautifully integrated individual.

Covey (1992, 24--25) uses the same model for organizations. As with individuals, principle-centred companies enjoy a greater degree of security, guidance, wisdom, and power. . . . Alternate organizational centres – profit, supplier, employee, owner, customer, program, policy, competition, image, and technology – are flawed compared with a principle-centred paradigm. . . . Real empowerment comes from having both the principles and the practices understood and applied at all levels of the organization. . . . If we only teach practical skills and techniques without principles, people become dependent on us or others for further direction and they can’t cope with changed conditions and different practices in the future (p. 24) . . . The challenge is to be a light, not a judge; to be a model, not a critic (p. 25).

How can principle-centred leadership be developed so that it is collaborative and distributed? Maxwell (1995) suggests that leaders can help others reach their full potential by developing the leaders around them. His main message is:
You can’t do it alone. If you really want to be a leader, you must develop other leaders around you. You must establish a team. You must find a way to get your vision seen, implemented, and contributed to by others. The leader sees the big picture, but he (sic) needs other leaders to help make his picture reality. (Book cover)

This notion resonates with Taylor and De Lourdes Machado’s (2006: 155) notion of distributed leadership in higher education:
The higher education enterprise must shed its defense of the status quo and develop a far more adaptive, proactive and flexible approach to strategic management. It must also recognize that the growing complexity of the institution necessitates that the leadership delegates more responsibilities and empowers more individuals. This in turn means leadership must recognize the need to employ the best and brightest minds possible and to accept the realization that no one individual can be the final authority on every aspect of institutional operations. Any number of people within an organization can be found that possess a strategic perspective. The complexities of today’s HEI [higher education institutions] demand that the designated leader call upon these individuals to contribute to the collective process of distributed leadership.

However, the question remains: What are the characteristics of effective leaders in complex institutions today? Maxwell (1999) identified 21 indispensable qualities found in great leaders that need to be developed from inside the person. Nine of these leadership qualities have been chosen for their relevance to the present discussion and these are summarized here for the reader’s consideration:

Character inspires confidence and determines who you are as a person (a piece of the rock, ethical, truthful).

- **Charisma** is other-mindedness, that is being ‘more concerned about making others feel good about themselves than you are making them feel good about you’ (p. 8).
- **Commitment** starts in the heart and is tested by action and improvement or development of abilities (not just dreaming and talking).
- **Communication** is the skill to share knowledge and ideas in a clear and simple way, and to motivate others to act on them. Without communication skills ‘you travel alone’ (p.23).
- **Competence** is know-how and performance at the highest level, which is recognized by others who then want to follow.
- **Courage** is demonstrated through taking risks, overcoming fears, making things right (not just smoothing them over), and inspiring commitment from others. ‘One person with courage is a majority’ (p. 37).
- **Discernment** means identifying the heart of the matter in a complex situation and trusting your intuition. ‘Smart leaders believe only half of what they hear. Discerning leaders know which half to believe’ (p. 44).
- **Focus** needs to be sharp, concentrated and prioritized. Advice: Focus 70 per cent on your strengths, 25 per cent on new things, and 5 per cent on your weaknesses and compensate them by delegating jobs to others.
• *Vision* is the most important characteristic of a leader. It comes from inside the person – from passion, not position. True vision is far-reaching and meets other people’s needs. It attracts, challenges and unites people and gives value to them.

In Maxwell’s book published one year later (Maxwell 2000), his aim is to help people maximize their personal and leadership potential by facing the prospect of failure and changing their attitude about failure, through showing how to turn mistakes into stepping stones for success and achievement. He maintains that the key to success is people’s perception of and response to failure, rather than family background, wealth, opportunity, high morals or the absence of hardship. In Table 1 he juxtaposes the two main approaches to dealing with negative experiences.

### Table 1: Approaches to negative experiences *(Maxwell 2000, 8)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failing Backward</th>
<th>Failing Forward</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blaming others</td>
<td>Taking responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeating the same mistakes</td>
<td>Learning from each mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting never to fail again</td>
<td>Knowing failure is a part of progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expecting to continually fail</td>
<td>Maintaining a positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting tradition blindly</td>
<td>Challenging outdated assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being limited by past mistakes</td>
<td>Taking new risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking I am a failure</td>
<td>Believing something didn’t work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitting</td>
<td>Persevering</td>
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Failing forward is akin to the philosophy of action learning and applies to all levels of leadership development.

Duke (2002) and Fraser (1999) both argue for a strong strategic leadership role at the three levels of university: (1) management, (2) professional developers and their unit leaders, and (3) academic staff development.

**Leadership in higher education at the institutional level**

Bargh et al. (2000), Duke (2000), and Taylor and Machado (2006) provide a good historical summary of leadership approaches in higher education. Duke (2002, 66) argues from a senior management perspective that the management characteristics of a university as a learning organization are ‘delegation, trust, valuing of local expertise down the line, nurturing teams and giving credit’. He maintains that staff development ‘will support learning on the job and in teams through work. It will provide mentoring, formal training and reflective evaluative review and planning (away day type activities) which allow learning and tacit knowledge to be identified, shared and extended in pursuit of the university’s objectives’ (p. 118).
The author’s experience as an academic staff developer in Australia, South Africa and elsewhere supports the notion of visionary and strategic leadership in higher education integrating the three essential ingredients of vision, focus and implementation skills (Neumann and Neumann 2000). The author believes that all people in universities can be, or develop as, leaders, whether students, lecturers, professors, researchers, or administrators. She recognizes that leadership development is most effective if it is shared, participatory and collaborative – in line with the basic concepts of learning and teaching; action learning and action research (ALAR); knowledge management and leadership, as defined above.

What is the difference between leadership and management? There is general agreement in the literature that leadership refers to a process of guiding people and influencing decisions; and that management involves administration and implementation of organizational policies and decisions.

Taylor and De Lourdes Machado (2006) provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on leadership, management and strategic planning generally, and with reference to higher education institutions (HEI). Of particular interest is their position that leadership and management are two totally different, yet discrete and autonomous entities, and that they need to be addressed as intimately intertwined aspects of the overall effective functioning of a higher education institution. They argue that ‘simplified and flexible planning processes, implemented through the complementary roles of leaders and managers with necessary planning expertise, may provide the most productive higher education environment for advancement and progress’ (2006, 138--139).

Key elements of successful planning identified by these authors are (2006, 151):

Leadership
- Vision
- Environmental scanning
- Communication
- Participation
- Flexibility and simplicity.

This is also our experience and approach in our ALAR programs in Australia and South Africa discussed in ‘Examples of major residential leadership development programs’ below.

Taylor and de Lourdes Machado (2006, 156) conclude that ‘The time has come in Europe and elsewhere for formal professional development experiences to be created that will prepare aspiring leaders for the challenges they will face’. Examples of such professional leadership development programs are presented in ‘Examples of major residential leadership development programs’ below. But whose role and responsibility is it to conduct such programs and determine their content?

Blackmore and Blackwell (2006, 373) argue that the current trend to professionalize the faculty role of teaching, research and administration in higher education necessitates...
the professionalization of the academic developer’s role, for this role ‘can and should assist faculty in managing their work in an integrated way’.

Leadership in higher education at the professional development level

The formation of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Leadership Foundation in the UK (Department for Education and Skills 2003) and the establishment of the National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHe) in Australia (Nelson 2003) are examples of attempts to professionalize academic activity. These attempts combine ‘top-down’ initiatives with ‘bottom-up’ development. A genuine ‘bottom-up’ example is the ‘Staff and Educational Development Association’ (SEDA) in the UK.

The above associations are concerned with the whole role of academics, including teaching, research, knowledge transfer and civic engagement, leadership, management and administration, and with their relationships between these. It is important to retain this holistic conception in the face of increasing pressures on academics to achieve continuous excellence on all fronts. Leadership in academic staff development requires an understanding of all of these aspects of academic work and their interrelationships, if staff developers want to assist academics in their various roles, responsibilities and work activities. Staff developers also need to practice what they preach by living and modeling the approaches they wish academics to adopt.

Rowland (2003) rightly dismisses both non-theoretical ‘training to teach’ approaches and the arbitrary division between ‘theory’ generated by educational experts and ‘practice’ by teachers/practitioners who are expected to apply the theory. The position taken in this article is that participatory action research and evidence-based practice are more appropriate approaches to professionalism of academics, because academics can actively engage in the research and development of their own practice and link their roles with those of academic staff developers.

For example, Blackmore and Blackwell (2006, 385) suggest some effective approaches to academic leadership development:

. . . through personal support and shadowing. Reflection may be assisted through peer mentoring, coaching, co-facilitating events and activities, action learning sets and ‘critical friend’ support. There may be a need to embed informal processes within or around formal, in-context, ‘work-based learning’ qualifications, that embody the qualities outlined above, probably at the Master’s level.

On the other hand, Fraser (1999) found in a study of 71 Australian academic developers, including heads of units, that 63 per cent had a teaching qualification (although not all in higher education); 32 per cent did not originally plan to go into academic staff development, after gaining much experience in other areas; and most had moved into the field through a long interest in and talent for teaching. The study also showed that respondents allocated little time for their own personal and professional development. Instead, they said they gained their development through ‘the ways in which they
worked’, that is, through the social and informal nature of learning. Fraser (1999, 97) concludes that an accreditation scheme would need to recognize ‘the diverse career paths which people took to enter the field, the wide range of areas in which members work, and the subsequent diversity of professional development needs that members have’.

It therefore appears valid to ask: How credible are heads and members of a higher education and research development (HERD) unit or centre in the formal preparation of academic staff if they themselves have not participated in formal learning and professional development?

**Leadership in higher education in South Africa**

It would be difficult for the author and presumptuous of any outsider to evaluate the true situation, issues and concerns in South African institutions of higher education. Nevertheless it is evident from observation and the literature that conditions at this time are extremely challenging for leaders, managers and teachers, especially in the new universities where academics are under sudden pressure to conduct, publish and supervise research and to be ‘audited’.

Hopefully, South African leaders in higher education learn from their counterparts in other countries such as the UK and Australia, where human conditions and relationships have suffered through the over-bureaucratization of the Quality Assurance (QA) systems imposed by governments. For example, the author has just reviewed an anonymous article for an international refereed journal (Anonymous, In press) that reported on a study conducted in the UK with resonance for academics in South Africa, where a QA system has recently been introduced.

The article is important and compelling because it highlights and explains (1) the discrepancies between the rhetoric of the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the academics’ reality of quality in higher education; and (2) the problems of the bureaucratic system for academic staff who are directly affected in ways that are deleterious to their work performance, since this system contributes to their anxiety, work overload and loss of academic freedom and hence reduces academic efficiency and effectiveness and thus the very ‘quality’ the QAA is supposed to achieve.

There is no denying that QA is necessary, but it can give rise to many dangers and pitfalls as well as many advantages. There needs to be a shift in QA from the bureaucratic and accountability focus to transformational leadership development and vision setting for the institutions. Academics in South Africa need help and professional/leadership development to be prepared for their new roles and challenges in this rapidly changing society and globalizing world. The article in hand aims to help satisfy this need by offering a methodology, namely that of action learning and action research (ALAR), that can be used to develop, sustain and foster the human dimension of development and growth in academic leadership within the overall goals of effectiveness and efficiency, quality and productivity.
Seale et al. (2005) explain how this methodology has been useful to academics in South Africa because it is practical, achievable with regard to both research and development goals, collaborative and rewarding. Robinson and Meerkotter (2003) report on 15 years of action research for political and educational emancipation at the University of the Western Cape (South Africa), where an action research Master’s in Education program was introduced in 1987 during the intense political repression and social discrimination of the apartheid era. The authors identify two major dilemmas for action research and emancipatory education in the post-apartheid era: (1) a contradiction between the transformational language of outcomes-based education in the new curriculum and the technicist, instrumentalist and behaviouristic criterion-referenced approach; and (2) the relationship between action research and the enormous social problems related to poverty, unemployment and disease (tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS) that remain in the country.

Robinson and Meerkotter claim convincingly that this AR Master’s in Education program has been extremely successful for three reasons. (1) It made many participants aware of the conflict between democratic ideals for society and their own authoritarian practices on the one hand and a need to use AR for whole school improvement and development on the other. (2) The AR projects contributed to the field of action research in theory and application. (3) By the end of 2001, more than 70 masters and doctoral students had successfully completed their studies and AR projects, with many of them holding senior positions in the government and private sectors. The authors conclude that these graduates are in a key position to advance the central principles of action research at a policy-wide and systemic level (Robinson and Meerkotter 2003, 462). They go on to explain:

Even within a post-apartheid South Africa, where the emphasis is on system-wide educational change, we believe that action research can form an important base for teacher development. It is crucial that teachers evaluate and engage with the new policies that they are being asked to implement, for unless teachers understand and are committed to these new policies, they are in any case likely to fail. Action research encourages a sense of involvement and ownership, something which is crucial to the development of a changed education system. Emancipatory action research goes one step further, however, in that it encourages a critical review of the changes in the education system, linked to a vision of social justice. Critical review and progressive vision-building remain, we believe, the responsibility of all those involved in education and it is for this reason that we remain committed to the principles of emancipatory action research (pp. 463--464).

Based on our own experience in academic staff development and leadership development in South Africa, Fletcher and Zuber-Skerritt (forthcoming) reinforce these views and identify the key quality criteria for the success of such programs through action learning and action research (ALAR). These key quality criteria are:

- The facilitator’s expertise with regard to credibility and international reputation, in-depth knowledge in the field, facilitation and process management skills, and the quality of the program materials;
1. The facilitator’s use of adaptive planning after a needs analysis at the beginning of the program and after each module or session, using:
2. Responsive evaluation based on constant feedback from participants to enable the facilitator to act on it immediately;
3. Critical events that contributed to participants’ transformational learning and understanding of the new research paradigm;
4. Participants’ ability to recognize ways to apply the program’s content to their own professional and private lives; and
5. Their self-efficacy, enthusiasm and confidence in conducting action research after the program.

The next section addresses the question: What are the core values and beliefs that contribute to effective, collaborative leadership within an ALAR culture?

### CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS IN AN ALAR CULTURE

A typical example of an ALAR culture is the international Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) Association that has made its core values explicit (http://www.alarpm.org.au/aboutus/):
- Inclusion
- Collaboration
- Reflection
- Appreciation of diversity
- Questioning mindsets and paradigms.

Within this values framework, Zuber-Skerritt (2005) developed a model of core values and strategies for personal knowledge management that may serve as a practical guide for application in situations where personal knowledge can contribute usefully to problem solving and effective leadership and organizational management for the betterment of the organization and all individuals who comprise it.

The model includes seven core values and principles underpinning a successful ALAR culture and seven matching actions or strategies for personal knowledge management. Arranged as a table (Table 2), the values/principles are acronymed as ACTIONS; and the actions/strategies are acronymed into REFLECT. They are explained in detail in the original article, but here they are briefly outlined and reprinted in Table 2.

#### Table 2: Matching values and strategies (Zuber-Skerritt 2005, 60)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values/Principles</th>
<th>Actions/Strategies/Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advancement</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Effective use of methods and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Feedback from ‘critical friends’</td>
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</table>
Advancement and Reflection

Advancement of learning and knowledge is the primary goal of our ALAR programs as described in the next section, as well as improving something in our work practice, for example, learning and teaching, management and leadership, organizational learning and change, and so forth. Reflection on our actions is crucial for developing concepts, principles and theories, and for advancing our learning and knowledge in the field.

Collaboration and Effective use of processes and methods

The concepts of collaboration, team spirit and ‘symmetrical communication’ proceed from the understanding that difference is a positive quality. These concepts involve acceptance that everyone is unique and equal and has capacity to contribute as best they can to solving a problem, leading to systemic development and synergy of results. Synergy is ‘the value that comes when the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts’ (Kanter 1990, 58). Collaboration and teamwork in ALAR require effective use of emancipatory processes and methods of team building, leadership development and self-development.

Trust and Feedback

Mutual trust, honesty and respect can be achieved through various methods and instruments that lead to knowledge of oneself, including one’s strengths and limitations, and respect for others and their differences. In this environment of trust and respect, feedback from critical friends can be discussed openly with them and within the project team, enabling change and improvement immediately and continuously, rather than at the end of the project.

Imagination and Leadership development

Imagination, intuition and a vision for excellence are leadership qualities that need to be developed from the very beginning of the project, e.g. in or even before the Start-up Workshop, so that the project results are of the highest quality possible. Leadership development is based on multiple intelligences, IQ as well as EQ (Emotional Intelligence) and SQ (Spiritual Intelligence).

Openness and Exploration of new opportunities

Openness means making oneself open to new ways of seeing, questioning, learning, appreciating and valuing. When we are open to others and to ourselves, we can identify
and explore new opportunities and assess constructively the critique we receive from others. Openness allows us to admit our ignorance, failure or narrow mindedness, as well as our strengths and abilities, and to constructively use processes of self-reflection and reflection on and in action.

**Non-positivist beliefs and Coaching**

Non-positivist assumptions and beliefs allow for the development of grounded theory, that is, theory based on data collected from multiple sources, including practitioners. These beliefs are often unconscious and unknown to us, but they can be made explicit to ourselves and others through coaching and asking probing questions. Important developmental strategies include modelling, demonstrating non-positivist thinking, and mentoring people in actual practice, pointing out discrepancies, logical inconsistencies and inappropriate use of language. In this way, leaders gradually develop a deeper understanding of epistemology (i.e. the origin and nature of knowledge), of the action research paradigm, and of their own values, beliefs and worldviews that are fundamental to personal knowledge.

**Success and Team results**

Leadership success is evident in the results of team projects. The intended outcomes of any leadership development program are to achieve success in project work as well as in the learning and development outcomes for individuals, teams and the organizations involved. Success is a likely outcome if participants are guided through the principles and actions discussed in 1 to 6 above.

To sum up, leaders may ask themselves values questions as prompted in the following anonymous acronym of ‘LIVE’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love</th>
<th>What do I love?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner gifts/talents</td>
<td>What are mine?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>What do I value most?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environments</td>
<td>What brings out the best in me?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This self-centred perspective of learning to live and lead may be developed further through an other-centred approach to learning and leadership, turning the acronym ‘LIVE’ into ‘LOVE’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Love</th>
<th>What do we love as a team?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inner gifts/talents</td>
<td>What are ours?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>What do we value most?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environments</td>
<td>What brings out the best in us?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These are the questions good academic leaders need to ask and discuss with their teams. Are these questions and the values discussed in this section also values meaningful to people in Africa in general and South Africa in particular? I was very interested in Smile’s (2006) paper on an African approach to higher education transformation, because the values he claims are dominant in African cultures, summarized in Table 3 below, are similar to those in an ALAR culture, but readers of this article are invited to make the connections themselves.

Table 3: African values (Smiles 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values/Principles</th>
<th>Actions/Strategies/Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrocentricity</td>
<td>Multi-cultural focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuntu = Humanness</td>
<td>Dignity, forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukama = Relationship</td>
<td>Interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masathane = People driven</td>
<td>Achieving socio-economic development for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communalism = Interdependence</td>
<td>Being human in a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batho-Pele = People first</td>
<td>Access, courtesy, openness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next section outlines some examples of ALAR programs on academic leadership development.

EXAMPLES OF MAJOR RESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Figure 1 is an overview of some of the effective programs the author designed and implemented with her associates.
These were action learning programs with action research team projects, funded by the Australian Government, residential – away from private and professional distractions – and in an exclusive environment conducive to discussion, intensive work and informal networking. The themes/concerns of these programs were in three categories.

The first theme was on postgraduate research and supervision for (a) women academics as affirmative action, because these women have been disadvantaged by the so-called glass ceiling; (b) newly amalgamated colleges of advanced education (like technikons in South Africa) that used to be teaching institutions and suddenly had to produce research and supervise Masters and Ph.D. theses; and (c) supervisors of students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Participants came from nine universities in Queensland and northern New South Wales. The results were published in manuals, video programs and books, for example, Zuber-Skerritt (1992, 1996), Zuber-Skerritt and Ryan (1996), Ryan and Zuber-Skerritt (1999).

The second theme was QUAL – Queensland University Action Learning – to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and management for (a) women executives, (b) academics teaching large classes (more than 1200 students), (c) departmental teams in the DEUE program – Departmental Excellence in University Education – and in the DEMIQ program – Departmental Excellence in Managing Institutional Quality. These QUAL programs were evaluated by Passfield (1996).

The third theme was on South African Higher Education for (a) many cohorts of university academics from all provinces in South Africa and surrounding countries, and (b) for women academics from six historically disadvantaged technikons (now universities of technology) in Gauteng, funded by the AusAID Links Project through IDP – the Australian Government’s International Development Program. A proposal for another leadership development program has been submitted to AusAID’s ISSS – the International Seminar Support Scheme – to alleviate poverty and improve education and health in six African countries. Results of the Links program were published by Speedy (2003).

On personal reflection, these programs have been successful because they were:
- Strategically and professionally planned, designed, implemented and evaluated
- Well resourced, national government-funded, and supported by top management in the respective universities
- Residential, away from the office and home distractions with opportunities for networking and informal discussions during coffee/meal breaks and after dinner
- Using our heart and head
- Producing tangible, deliverable outcomes (relationships and publications), that could be evaluated.

The reasons for our less successful programs (not included in the present discussion) were that there was a lack of resources and/or interest, not enough time, or no management support for:
• Start-up workshop (foundation program)
• Team building
• Creative future vision building by the team
• Discussion of values and worldviews
• Learning and reflection (only a focus on tasks and products)
• Collaboration (individual competition instead).

Through taking stock of, and reflecting on, all of the previous sections, we may now be able to develop a model of academic leadership based on a holistic, principle- and learner-centred approach to higher education.

A MODEL OF ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Figure 2 illustrates the integration of the two sides of the brain: The head (rational thinking) and the heart (feelings, emotions)
• Knowledge management (KM) and process management (PM)
• Traditional learning/teaching and reflection through action learning/facilitation of learning
• Disciplinary and educational (expert) research and practitioners’ research into their own teaching practice through action research and evidence-based inquiry
• Hard and soft research methodologies, quantitative and qualitative research methods
• IQ and EQ.
Goleman (1998) convinced us that EQ – emotional intelligence – and skills are vital in leadership development for personal competence (self-awareness and self-management) and for social competence (social awareness and relationship management). Newman (2006) tells us how to develop these.

Newman (2007) calls today’s top executives ‘emotional capitalists’ and maintains that their effective leadership in the workplace is the by-product of emotions, such as self-confidence, optimism, independence, enthusiasm, feelings, beliefs and values. These emotions can be developed, managed and can boost personal and professional performance. They are valuable because they can create strong relationships. Newman advocates ‘partnership’ as the best model for leadership and inter-personal relationships with a collaborative approach and a willingness to distribute power so that everyone can contribute to a ‘win-win situation’.

Zuber-Skerritt (2006) developed a model of knowledge explication in an executive action learning program (SEAL), based on three basic concepts:

1. **Self-managed leadership** required in the 21st century for a fast changing, global world. Self-managed or self-organizing leadership (Knowles 2001) might benefit from knowledge of the research literature, such as the theories, examples and guidelines presented by Dubrin and Dalgish (2003). Yet an important additional requirement is the ability to use processes and methods of guiding and transforming organizations and their leaders, so that they are able to self-organize or self-manage when faced with sudden and totally new challenges or problems that have never been researched. Action learning, as practised in the SEAL Program, is one effective methodology, as Dotlich and Noel (1998) and others have demonstrated convincingly.

2. **Knowledge (re-)creation and explication** through the executives’ reflection on their practice and previously published work. Processes through which associates make their implicit knowledge explicit result in their development of ‘questioning insight’ and life-long learning. Methods include individual coaching, collegial interviews, reflection journals, action-learning set meetings, and model building.

3. **Learning Organization:** Executives acquire personal mastery of both the knowledge and skills they need to develop and sustain a learning organization (Senge 1990), not only as self-managed leaders themselves, but also as facilitators of processes that develop other leaders’ learning capability to become action learners, reflective practitioners, knowledge creators (not just ‘knowledge workers’) and self-organized managers and leaders.

In retrospect, this model of self-developed leadership through action learning is in line with Maxwell’s (2000) approach to ‘failing forward’ by learning from mistakes and from and with others. It is also aligned with Covey’s principle-centred leadership. In each case, learning and leadership is developed from the inside out.
CONCLUSIONS

The aims of this article have been to present an alternative approach to academic leadership development (ALD) that can be developed actively from ‘inside out’ by the participants in the ALD programs themselves through processes of action learning and action research (ALAR), and reflection on their own character and values, rather than through application of theory ‘from outside in’.

Although the author of this article has been informed and influenced by leadership theory and practice in the international literature, as well as by her own experience with designing, conducting and evaluating ALD programs, the participants in these programs did not undergo ‘training’, but ‘self-directed development’. The action research and development discussed in this article have been for and with leaders as ‘participants’, rather than traditional research on them as ‘subjects’ in the research.

The article has argued that in this time of rapid change in South African higher education, a new paradigm of learning, teaching, research, knowledge management and leadership is needed; and that academics need help and professional development to prepare them for their roles and new challenges. Therefore, the article has defined the elements in this new paradigm, identified the main principles and characteristics of leadership in general, and in higher education in particular with regard to leadership at the institutional, academic staff development unit, and individual staff development levels.

While the author is keenly aware of and sensitive towards the limitations of meaningful evaluation and her own capacity to provide meaningful advice to South Africans, the article discussed some of the more important issues of academic leadership development in South Africa, and presented a conceptual framework of leadership development, illustrated by examples from the literature and from the author’s practical experience. This framework attempts to avoid the ‘sickness’ in organizations evident as ‘rationalization’, QA/control, and over-bureaucratization. Instead it focuses on the (re-)humanization of higher education through democratic processes and collaborative strategies, such as action learning and participatory action research.

This article offers a new approach to leadership development in South African higher education within the ALAR paradigm. In developing academic leadership in higher education, the author’s model suggests that the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart; that we put emphasis on personal relationships and cross-cultural communication; and that we integrate heart and head in a holistic way, combine EQ and IQ, soft and hard research methodologies, process management (PM) and knowledge management (KM). Above all, we need to practice what we preach so that as effective leaders we serve as role models, mentors, coaches, co-learners, co-researchers and co-leaders.

It is hoped that this article will trigger discussion among leaders and aspiring leaders about how they might integrate the human dimension with the social and economic dimensions and goals of higher education in South Africa. In higher education in South Africa, as elsewhere, the human heart is the heart of the matter of leadership development.
NOTE

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