

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this chapter is to present the conclusions, the limitations of the study, and to make recommendations relating to the research for future reference.

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

This section sets out the conclusions drawn from both the review of literature as well as the empirical study.

6.1.1 Literature review

The literature review sought to explore the systems psychodynamic perspective on leadership as well as to gain insight into change and how it is managed. The following represents the conclusions drawn from this review of literature.

Although leadership is defined as a function of the individual's personal predispositions, the role of the leader is a conscious and unconscious behavioural boundary that is shaped by a force field of other people's actions and reactions, both conscious and unconscious. The leader manages boundaries and thus manages the containment of anxieties. Managing boundaries entail managing the pragmatic task, time and space boundaries, as well as the psychological boundaries, which may violate the former boundaries. Managing boundaries is part of managing conflict and failure to manage either could threaten the group. Paradoxically, it is the leader who often in representing the group has to cross the boundary and in so doing ruptures the original group boundaries and creates the anxiety. This is exacerbated because the leader crosses the boundary with authority given from senior ranks and not from the group that the leader is representing. During change, when boundaries are constantly crossed and challenged, the leader spends more time managing the boundaries and their role is inextricably linked to the role of change agent. Success or failure of change efforts is contingent on the organisations' ability to

adapt to change. An organisations' capacity to adapt is a function of the individuals' capacity to adapt to change, making the leader's adaptability crucial in change efforts. The leader undermines efforts for effective change management when he allows his personal agenda to take precedence over the interests of the collective or when he is resistant to the change.

Change is anxiety provoking and evokes a variety of responses, from resistance to manipulation of the leader, to primitive defenses from all parties. The change management process, led by the leader, has to take cognisance of all these factors, ensuring that both the conscious and unconscious motivations of the individual members are acknowledged. Social defenses enable the individual to cope with their anxiety and prevent the intrusion of primitive processes. Ironically, change inevitably dismantles these social defenses and renders members unable to cope with anxiety, causing them to revert to splitting, denial, and projective identification in an attempt to cope. Tying change to the primary task and ensuring that change effort will in fact assure improved performance, without neglecting the impact of the basic assumption group functioning, is crucial. Change efforts manifest along a continuum from primitive (paranoid-schizoid position) to sophisticated (depressive position), and these efforts navigate along this continuum dependent on the level of insight those leading the change have into their own mode of operating.

The five leadership styles (paranoid, schizoid, depressive, compulsive and histrionic) appear to be an extension of Freud's typology of leadership types (erotic, obsessional and narcissistic). Though clear descriptions of the leadership styles exist, an unconscious collusion between the leader and the led highlighting the relationship between the leader and basic assumption groups, enable deepened insight into these styles. From the integration of literature one could conclude that the organisation and culture associated with the paranoid leadership style is one of centralised power and a basic assumption mentality of 'fight-flight' (baF). Furthermore, that the histrionic leadership style is associated with a culture of dependency (thus, baD group becomes operant), wherein the leader is the catalyst for the morale of the group. Within the baD group mentality the

leader has to be the 'messiah' and feels 'heavy' and resistant to change. In addition, the schizoid leadership style is associated intra-group and inter-group splitting which results in a baP group mentality and thus a culture of conflict in an organisation which is cut-off from external realities. Following the same integrative logic, it was concluded that the depressive leadership style is associated with the we-ness basic assumption mentality wherein the individual sublimates the self, passively to the group and in so doing experiences wholeness. The culture is also passive and lacking in initiative, with low levels of motivation and resistance to change. The compulsive leadership style, on the other hand, aligns to the me-ness mentality; wherein the central concern is for the individual. The individual denies external realities, focuses on his internal world only, making the tacit assumption that the group does not exist. Therefore interactions with the group are impersonal, narcissistic, and somewhat schizoid. The culture becomes one of submissiveness, insecurity and a lack of creativity, wherein the leader's status is taken from the hierarchy. The compulsive leader insists on rules being adhered to and is dominating within a culture which is insular and inward focussed. Determining an explicit link between the five leadership styles and the basic assumption groups is crucial as leaders are only followed as long as they fulfil the basic assumption tasks of the group. This is especially important during times of conflict and anxiety when the basic assumptions group mentality can overtake and displace the work-group mentality resulting in dysfunctional work patterns and relationships.

In one way or another, the leadership styles depicted all show a tendency toward self-interest and self-serving behaviours. Over-extended narcissistic tendencies seem to be at the core of inappropriate leadership behaviour. Becoming aware of this tendency (gaining insight) and then being willing to suspend self-interest is the key to creating functional and constructive leader-subordinate relationships and this enables effective group and organisational functioning.

6.1.2 Empirical qualitative study

In this study it was established that the different leadership styles all show a heightened level of reaction on the interpersonal dimension, indicating that the responses to change manifest most dramatically in the way in which the leader relates to his team.

The conclusions drawn with regards the five leadership styles are set forth below. To maintain consistency with the manner in which findings were reported, these conclusions are also presented in terms of the cognitive, affective, motivational, and interpersonal dimensions.

In response to change the paranoid leadership style indicates impaired cognitive functioning. This leader is rigid in his thinking, confused and unable to distinguish real from fantasy. The affective dimension gravitates from suspicion to hostility and he becomes frigid. Self-preservation is the key motivation. However, because of his rigid cognitive style which leads to a lack of creativity in dealing with change, his efforts are rendered ineffective. He treats everyone as the enemy, including the team. More importantly he tends to exaggerate the enemy 'out-there' in order to mobilise the team into fighting the 'enemy', and thus diverting their focus to addressing his agenda. He treats his interpersonal relationships as a means to an end – these exist to serve his own purposes. Paradoxically, though he seeks reassurance and self-preservation, his hostility result in hostile responses that leave him feeling less assured and less protected. He becomes his own worst enemy.

It is evident that those with a schizoid leadership style maintain a sense of cognitive stability by ignoring any interference or attempts to alter their cognition. This leader will avoid anything that challenges his cognitions by hiding his thoughts. In response to change he shifts from being emotionally detached to being avoidant, absent and completely disconnected from the world around him. His affective response confirms his typical cognitive stance – that the world is hostile. Change brings out his fear of being de-throned. His withdrawal and lack of involvement as well as his directionless

behaviour becomes a complete abdication of responsibility when he is faced with change. Paradoxically it is his own behaviour (the abdication and ineffectiveness) that ultimately threatens to realise his fear of being de-throned, but would ironically confirm his belief about the world being hostile. Though he is typically withdrawn and aloof, but when faced with change he creates splits in the team, isolating members from others and thus engendering dependence on him. His own sense of isolation and insecurity is projected onto members, and these are introjected.

In the depressive leadership style, change surfaces paranoid thoughts and this leader's response to change is to shut down and to avoid thinking about it, either by denying it or by delaying thinking about it. Changes result in him experiencing heightened feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and ultimately powerlessness. This powerlessness results in greater amounts of self-anger, self-guilt, and self-flogging. In addition, a tendency to become manic in response to change is evident, resulting in compulsive behaviour to cover or recover from feelings of self-loathing. However the activity involves doing what will not have real influence. His depressive state is agitated into a passive-aggressive state when faced with change. His anger becomes hostility, which is typically turned inward, but when faced with change is turned towards others. His passive-aggressiveness is also demonstrated in the way in which he competes with others, holding them back so that he can stay ahead. By not acknowledging the strengths of the team, he creates a timid group-image. This is another form of passive-aggressiveness; keeping them 'small'. Although he typically displays a need to idealise others, when faced with change, the need to idealise is displaced by a passive-aggressive hostility and competitiveness towards others. He expects his team to take initiative, when ironically he has created a climate of passivity and futility. The findings reveal that when he is threatened by change he seeks to be cared for and protected by the team. It is ironic therefore that he creates a team that is unable to look after him.

The leader who has a compulsive leadership style becomes even more pedantic when faced with change. He avoids dealing with complexities and emotions, and rather attempts to reduce these aspects into some structure. While he typically does not display

emotion, when faced with change he feels sad and angry. However he will still avoid dealing with the emotions of others. He wants to control and fix everything, including the change, which inevitably sets him up for failure. In an effort to fix everything he expends excessive energy to no effect, and this leads to burnout. In times of change, he becomes overly rigid and even sadistic. The group is disempowered by his stifling and controlling behaviour towards them. He controls the internal environment compulsively, but fails to be cognisant of external conditions. Since being aware of the external environment, managing the boundary and regulating the interaction between internal and external environments is a key leadership function, failure to do this has major negative consequences for the team. His desire for control creates interpersonal relationships that threaten to overthrow him – paradoxically leaving him without any control.

In the histrionic leadership style, the leader, whether he is confronted with change or not, has restricted cognitive functioning. His thoughts are restricted to focussing primarily on himself and his own emotions. He becomes even more self-centred and selfish when confronted with change. He lacks empathy and when threatened he would exploit others to satisfy his own needs. The lack of genuine concern for others is further highlighted by this study in that change evokes feelings of envy for those who cope with change, and it also creates actions (such as spreading the panic) to prohibit others from coping with change. During change he has a more intense need for attention from others. If he does not get this, he will discredit them. Thus, his narcissism takes on a sadistic nature in interpersonal relationships that do not serve his purpose. In other words, he over-idealises those who serve his purpose and devalues those who fail to serve his purpose. The alternating between over-idealisation and devaluation is thus a function of what serves his agenda. Being prone to ‘playing the victim’, change represents to him an opportunity to attract attention and sympathy from others.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, all five leadership styles seem inclined to functioning within the paranoid-schizoid position. The depressive leadership style is prone to idealisation, the paranoid leadership style has distorted perceptions and is suspicious, while the histrionic is prone to grandiosity, the schizoid leadership style

creates splits, and the compulsive is rigid and inflexible in his thinking. These tendencies are related to the primitive processes applied to cope with anxiety when operating in the paranoid-schizoid position. Although more effective change efforts are associated with the depressive position, wherein people are reflective and collaborate meaningfully about concerns beyond self-preservation, maintaining this depressive position is difficult because people tend to revert to primitive processes when threatened by change. The depressive position is not a static state but rather a deliberate endeavour. It entails having the capacity to recognise when one has reverted to primitive modes of operating and to recover from these reactions that determines the success of change efforts. Therefore, for any of the five leadership styles to shift from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position, requires awareness and insight. It is not possible to draw conclusions about which of the leadership styles would be most successful in dealing with change at this stage. In order to do this one would have to determine which leadership style is more prone to reflection and thus the depressive position. Furthermore, it could be that shifting along the continuum from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position is a choice, much as Freud suggested mental health is a choice; a choice to release one's self from self-imposed prisons.

A predominance of any of the five leadership styles creates a dysfunctional dynamic in the team with regards to its capacity to deal with change. The team's focus is diverted from the primary task to dealing with the covert dynamic in the team, and they delay or avoid implementing the change. However, behaviour is motivated by protection or survival, regardless of the leadership style. Ultimately the leader and the team recognise that their survival and protection is contingent on dealing with the change, and therefore change is implemented.

Even though the responses to change vary across the different leadership styles, it becomes evident that the leader's interpersonal behaviour, especially with his team, is intensified to cover himself (protectiveness) or to recover from the effects of change. For the leader, the team thus represents itself as a means through which he is able to cope with the change and to safeguard himself. The team becomes the leader's social defense.

However, this social defense is dynamic with cognition, affect, and motivations of its own.

6.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study are outlined below.

The measurement instrument, the focus group, comprised of a select, but small, group of psychologists. The size of the group therefore represents some limitations with regards to the scope of the experience and knowledge that was being drawn from for this study. Furthermore, a significant criticism to which this research is vulnerable is that no attempt was made to compare the input made by the focus group with that of other practising psychologists within the systems psychodynamic field of practice. Due to this lack of data triangulation (Huysamen, 1994) there is no way of ascertaining whether or not the findings are comprehensive enough for the determination of the hypotheses. Furthermore, the study did not provide for evaluation of the content analysis by a different group of practising industrial psychologists. Had this been done it would have further validated the findings as presented.

Although these are valid criticisms of this study, it could be argued that any additional input would also be limited by the experience and exposure of those providing the input. Furthermore, the manner in which the sample was drawn does, to some extent, mitigate these limitations. The participants chosen to be part of this study were selected based on their experience in the systems psychodynamic tradition and their organisational consulting exposure, and thus is thought to represent a broad base of empirical knowledge on the subject being investigated. The research design, which ensured validity and reliability of the focus group's definitions by establishing congruence with existing literature (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1991), is a further mitigation of these limitations.

Any individual brings to their interpretation their own psychodynamic issues that create a filter between data and interpretation (Bullen, 2003). Since this study is based on the experiences of a group of systems psychodynamic practitioners (psychologists), it essentially required that they, drawing on their experiences, make interpretations, which invariably are not free of their own psychodynamic issues. Cilliers and Koortzen (2000) pointed out that the assumption of the psychodynamic paradigm is that no event occurs in isolation. Thus a further limitation of this study is that it is based on the interpretations of the participants, therefore the findings of this study represents the interpretation of interpretations. Since the study, conducted within the systems psychodynamic paradigm, seeks to understand the response to change of the leadership styles, and this is best achieved by exploring the subjective reality.

A further criticism of the study relates to the ‘contamination’ that takes place as a matter of course in all focus group studies. Focus groups have been defined as planned discussions designed to obtain the perceptions on a defined topic by a group sharing and responding to views, experiences, feelings and perceptions in a non-threatening environment (Brewerton & Millward, 2004). The purpose of which, it has been noted, is to gain “information, perspectives and empirical field texts about a specific research topic, and its rationale is to provide a socially-oriented interaction, similar to a real life situation, where participants freely influence one another, build on one another’s responses and thus stimulate a collective and synergistically generated thought, feeling and experience” (Cilliers, 2005, p. 4). Thus, the design of the study was in fact to create a situation that would facilitate the building of responses to enrich the data.

Huysamen (1994) said that it is highly unlikely that any refinement of theories of human behaviour, data collection, and analytical procedures will ever enable the accurate prediction of human behaviour. This highlights yet another shortcoming of this study. Despite efforts to ensure data-richness, human behaviour remains unpredictable and open to randomness and free will. Furthermore, he (1994) highlighted the importance of proper training in content analysis, the purpose of which is to ensure inter-rater reliability. The researcher’s experience and training in this regard is limited, which

would naturally imply limitations with regards the interpretations and inferences made within this study. Therefore, the interpretations in this study are open to the criticism that they are amateurish and potentially inappropriate in many respects.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be made:

6.3.1 Leadership development

It is evident from the literature that organisational decline, especially during turbulent times, is often attributable to the leader's inability to adapt and respond appropriately to the demands of change. Excessive narcissistic drives create a block to healthy development (Czander, 1993), and therefore empowering the leader to emerge from this tendency is a crucial aspect of leadership development. It has been suggested by Freud that mental health is a choice: a choice to expand one's zone of discretion by better understanding the elusive (psychodynamic) processes and then finding a way to break out of the self-imposed prisons – the prisons of the individual's own neuroses (Czander, 1993). Therefore, it is recommended that leadership development include a process of insight enhancement through psychodynamic awareness programmes. It is through this insight that leaders will be able to move beyond the destructive paranoid-schizoid position towards the depressive position, and thus begin to embrace change with sophistication (insight).

Often teams use the leader to do different things during change (as has been reported) and the leader may become a 'puppet' for the team. It is thus suggested that, through leadership development and awareness, the leader will be enabled to do that with which he has been charged – to lead the group towards fulfilling their primary task.

Leadership development can also be achieved through coaching (Peltier, 2001). Increasing the awareness and gaining these insights can thus form the basis of a

meaningful coaching engagement, and can be therapeutic to those in leadership. As leaders, who operate at the boundaries (Rice, 1965), are susceptible to more stress and strain due to change, this therapeutic coaching approach could have multiple benefits to the leader and consequently for the organisation.

6.3.2 Leadership and change

The unconscious is a source of both creativity and destructiveness (Krantz, 2005), and in order to create a generative organisational environment, the unconscious has to be recognised, allowed to emerge, and worked with. In times of change, creativity is critical to ensure adaptability (Peiperl, Micheal & Anand, 2002). However, the way to this creativity is through valuing both the subjective and objective, the irrational and the analytical, the unconscious as well as the conscious dimensions of experience, allowing it to emerge, and reflecting upon it. It is impossible to remove the impact of the unconscious in social systems – however recognising that its impact is potentially destructive and generative will facilitate opening up to the unconscious and embracing the development that is made possible through reflection and insight. According to Krantz (1998) increasingly the task of effective leadership is knowing how to help people confront the emotional aspects of change. The leader who is unable to confront his own emotional aspects will therefore be unable to help his team. Specifically those leaders with either a schizoid or compulsive leadership style, who are emotionally aloof and avoid dealing with emotions, will be unable to help their teams in this regard.

The need for adaptability during change has been highlighted. Adaptability is a function of learning (Kets de Vries, 1995). Learning comes about by tolerating the frustration of not knowing and of sustaining the unknown question in the face of pressure to gain closure with quick answers, thereby enabling learning through experience (Krantz, 1998). It is the leader who has to develop this capacity to delay gratification, and thus tolerate frustration and ambiguity, so that he may provide containment for others to also develop this capacity.

Thus, confronting and dealing with the emotional aspects of change as well as tolerating the ambiguity amidst change both requires reflection by the parties. According to Krantz (1998) learning organisations will not become a reality without a reflective space for parties. Any of the leadership styles would therefore gain twofold from ensuring and preserving reflective space: they would gain insight into their unconscious and they would also be creating a stronger, more mature team. According to Kets de Vries (1995) competence in leadership is largely dependent on the match between internal values and external realities; the bigger the gap between the conscious and unconscious, the more problematic the need for and exertion of power becomes. This simply reinforces the importance of gaining insight into both the internal and external realities, which requires reflection. This reflection may lead to development and a capacity to embrace the more sophisticated change efforts.

According to Krantz (1998) leaders are called upon to be a person again, representing the reality of the experiences of other people, and takes their own feelings and possibly their irrationalities into account. He continued by suggesting the post-modern face of leadership as being one in which the interior realm of the leader is more visible, and that self-awareness is the essential criteria for genuine authorisation and committed followership. Kets de Vries (2004) suggested that those leaders who accept the madness in themselves may be the healthiest leaders of all. This indicates that despite the leadership style and its accompanying destructive patterns, what matters is the leader's capacity for reflection, thought, and learning. These will enable breaking free from the primitive cycles, but this remains a choice on the part of the leader.

Change is pervasive, continuous, and unpredictable. The need to understand, both the change and the elements within the social system, is heightened during times of change. As Anton Chekhov wrote: "When a man does not understand a thing, he feels discord with himself: he seeks causes for his dissonance not in himself, as he should, but outside himself, and the result is war with something he does not understand" (Kets de Vries, 1995, p.xxiii). Therefore, learning through the experience is crucial because it creates the conditions to alleviate the discord conjured up by the change event.

In this study it was established that the responses of the different leadership styles to change manifests most dramatically in the way in which the leader relates to his team. It is therefore recommended that the leader-follower relationships be closely monitored during change and that mechanisms be set up that will assist in preserving these relationships. The dynamic that exists between the leader and his team is affected by change, and exacerbated when any of the five leadership styles are operant. In the paranoid leadership style, the most outstanding interpersonal feature evident during change is hostility and suspicion, while in the depressive leadership style it is passive-aggressiveness. In organisations where the schizoid leadership style is prevalent, interpersonal relationships are highly politicised due to the splits the leader creates in response to change, while where the compulsive leadership style is prevalent the team is stifled by the controlling tendency the leader has when threatened by change. In the histrionic style there is a lack of genuine concern for others and even a sadistic tendency to those who do not fulfil the leader's need for attention that emerges during change.

Clearly the leader's response to change, lived out through interaction with the team, has to be mitigated. In the paranoid leadership style the response is moderated by closing the gap between the conscious and unconscious aspects within the system, and placing these into organisational perspective. This learning will improve the cognitive impairment, bring fantasy closer to reality, and put the 'enemy' into perspective – reassuring the leader that the team is safe, and simultaneously assuring the team that they are safe from him. Heightened awareness leads to learning and insight, which shifts the leader from the paranoid-schizoid position towards the depressive position. In the schizoid leadership style, isolation is a central theme: he isolates himself from the world and later creates splits to isolate members. The isolation is a protection against a hostile world and therefore mitigating the response to change requires learning about the world (the external realities) and matching it with internal realities. His underlying desire is for cognitive affirmation (what he thinks is right) – and therefore it is recommended that one starts with cognitive re-construction.

The passive-aggressiveness in the depressive leadership style can possibly be alleviated by recognising that this (covert) hostility comes from anger. Finding the source of the anger within requires introspection and reflection, from which comes learning and insight. This learning may then contribute to a greater sense of meaningfulness and hopefulness, which in turn can spill over in the team. Furthermore, finding solace within frees the team from the leader's expectation of being nurtured and allows them to re-focus their energies on the primary task.

The controlling tendency in the compulsive leadership style that leads to stifling the team may be diminished by structuring the change events in such a way that the leader and the team are assigned specific areas of responsibility. Boundary management, even though boundaries are fluid and permeable, is crucial during times of change. Since the compulsive leadership style retreats into structure, managing boundaries, both the pragmatic and the psychological ones, may reduce disorientation and contribute to creating some clarity about authority, tasks and identity. This may engender collaboration between the leader and his team. In the histrionic leadership style, developing empathy and the capacity for concern for others will have the effect of establishing a compact and constructive work climate.

The overwhelming congruence between the five leadership styles' response to change is the over-extended narcissistic drive – leaders become more focussed more on themselves. This perverts the legitimacy of leadership (Schuitema, 1994; 1998) and destroys the leadership compact (Kets de Vries, 2001). In varying ways, leaders with the different leadership styles, use their teams and interpersonal relations to reduce their own inner anxieties. In other words, leaders start using their teams as social defenses in the absence of other support structures. Deepening the levels of awareness of leaders (regardless of their particular leadership style) may reduce this destructive narcissism and start to rebuild the legitimacy required to establish the commitment necessary to mobilise members towards achievement of common goals. Furthermore, it will be necessary to develop social defenses that will help people achieve the psychological integration required to think, to work with their experiences and to link creatively with others

(Krantz, 1998), maintain themselves in a depressive position, and prevent the use of the team as a social defense.

The depressive position is the most conducive to change efforts as it is associated with reflection and learning. However Roberts (1994) pointed out that the depressive position is not attained once and for all. For learning and development to take place, one has to acknowledge and appreciate the paranoid-schizoid position, recognise the primitive responses and then embrace, through choice, a more constructive response. Development it seems is a result of alternating / oscillating between the two ends of this continuum, and not being fixated at the paranoid-schizoid position.

6.3.3 Future research

In the findings it became evident that styles and roles are not static, but rather dynamic – changing in response to the situation, it is recommended that future research in this area focus on establishing with more certainty whether or not:

- Leaders can take on different styles in different situations, and if so do leaders incline to certain groupings, e.g. compulsive-paranoid.
- The leadership styles can be categorised according to the primitive and sophisticated change efforts as described by Krantz (2005). He proposed that change efforts could be categorised in terms of the state of mental functioning identified by Klein (1940, 1946), i.e. paranoid-schizoid position and depressive position. It has been suggested that shifting position is a function of choice – future research could establish whether, through awareness and learning, the different leadership styles react differently along Krantz' (2005) hypothetical continuum from paranoid-schizoid to the depressive position. This future research would thus be a developmental study of how learning through experience and reflection impacts on the different leadership styles along the identified continuum of change efforts.

6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the conclusions that were drawn from the study in respect of both the literature review and the empirical study. From the literature review the conclusions drawn in terms of the impact of leadership within organisations from a systems psychodynamic perspective and in terms of the way in which change is managed, has been set forth. The conclusions presented from the empirical study outline the key findings relating to how the different leadership styles respond to change. The limitations of the study were identified and recommendations for leaders and industrial and organisational psychologists in dealing with change as well as for future research were made.

The aim of this chapter was to present the conclusions reached, to examine the limitations of the study, and to make recommendations for the future.