

## **Leadership, Learning and Negotiation in A Social Psychology of Organizing**

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce some key themes in a social psychology of organizing, and to show how they relate to recent research linking talk about leadership to talk about communities of practice. Our general approach is one form of social constructionism and attempts to show how a social psychology of organizing is social *because it shows that talk about people and talk about contexts cannot be separated*. We take the view that this is because the relationship between people and contexts is one of mutual creation: so that people create contexts and contexts create people. Furthermore, we suppose that both contexts and persons are created, maintained, and changed in practise (praxis), particularly in conversation, and that most of the relevant conversations are best described as a form of negotiation. Leaders enter into this 'mutual construction' process because they have been assigned and/or earned the responsibility to encourage certain kinds of conversations – those that contribute to the construction and maintenance of 'cultures of productivity' (to borrow a term from Akin & Hopelain, 1986). More generally, we define (analytically) leadership acts as those that make a special contribution to the continuing (re)construction of such 'cultures'.

These views are part of our response to both 'new leadership' research (House and Singh, 1987) and what preceded it. To see why such a response is needed it is sufficient to reflect on the large number of commentaries that say, despite years of research on leadership, little progress has been made, and the main research programmes are 'degenerating' (in Lakatos' sense). This is not the

place for us to draw out a detailed critique of the history of leadership research, although we have entered into aspects of this debate elsewhere (e.g. Hosking & Morley, 1988; Hosking & Morley, 1991). Let us say, despite the risk of oversimplification, that too much research on leadership has sought to identify those characteristics that leaders bring as inputs to situations and thereby allow them to influence the output of 'followers' (see Hosking & Morley, 1991, Chapter 9). The inputs were conceived as personality traits (such as dominance) or as interaction styles (such as Initiating Structure and Consideration), and much effort was devoted to finding the ideal profile. When it became clear that there was no such ideal profile, heroic attempts were made to find contingency models, saying what kind of profile was needed in what kinds of circumstances. The best known attempts have been those of Fiedler (1967) and Hersey & Blanchard (1969).

Despite some robust defences (e.g. Fiedler & House, 1988) this sort of research and theory can be said to rely on increasingly ad hoc defences against three main sorts of criticism:

- (1) *If there is an ideal style (e.g. high Initiating Structure and high Consideration), it is one that most people cannot sustain, so identifying such a style has little practical value (Morley & Hosking, 1985).*
- (2) *There does not seem to be any such ideal style. Leadership style conceived in this way does not seem to be a key input with respect to high performing groups (e.g. Vaill, 1982). And, perhaps most importantly,*
- (3) *there is something fundamentally misguided about this whole approach (e.g. Hosking & Morley, 1991).*

We shall try to say briefly, what we think is most misguided, from our own personal points of view (and let us admit freely that some of our views will be controversial). What we shall try to do, explicitly, is to draw out some of the

themes in a more general critique that we have emphasized and that others have not. That is to say, if we have had a distinctive part in any debate about 'new leadership' it has been because, first, we have a general view about the nature of a social psychology of organising (e.g. Hosking & Morley, 1991; Morley, 1992) and that, second, we have applied this general view to the study of leadership in particular (e.g. Hosking, 1997, 2001).

### **A Social Psychology of Organizing**

Let us then consider further the view that there is something misguided about the whole of the 'traditional' approach to leadership. Our most radical criticism would be that traditional research is misguided because it uses inappropriate models of persons, processes, and contexts, and of the relationships between them.

Another way of putting this is to say that traditional theories entirely fail to appreciate the necessity for people to:

- Make sense of people and things, tasks and events, by placing them in the framework of existing reality constructions, and to use those frameworks to construct appropriate action, meaning action that may be justified in terms of the norms of appropriate reference groups.
- Recognise that the most important features of contexts are social relations in which other people voice multiple value-ations including commitments to particular reality constructions.
- Engage in disputation and initiate changes acceptable to other members of appropriate reference groups. In these ways participants may
- Contribute to the ongoing construction of 'cultures of productivity'.

Let us begin by considering each of these points in more detail.

## 1. Interpreting Events

Research on leadership has had little to say about those cognitive processes whereby people make sense of issues, amplify their interpretations, and mobilize them in the ongoing construction<sup>1</sup> of intelligent social action<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, the image promoted by cognitive psychology has been that the human mind is a device that is:

exquisitely tailored to make sense of the world. Give it the slightest clue and off it goes, providing explanation, rationalisation, understanding (Norman, 1988, p.2; also see Hosking & Morley, 1991, p.20)

However, it is important that this image is supplemented by, or possibly subordinated to, one in which interpretation depends on a 'persistent framework of institutions and customs' (Bartlett, 1932, p.255). At that time Bartlett was concerned with the *constructive* nature of memory. Later, he began to explore the connections between memory and thinking. If memory was constructive, so was thinking, and his research led him to the conclusion that each kind of thinking was 'an extension of evidence, in line with evidence and in such a manner as to fill up gaps in the evidence' (Bartlett, 1958, p.20). What Bartlett added to his earlier work was a much greater appreciation of the constraints placed by *social interactions* (conversations) and social conventions (norms) on what counted as evidence, on what counted as legitimate inference, and on what counted as filling gaps in the evidence. This is part of what we had in mind when we said that contexts and persons are created, maintained, and changed in conversations.

With hindsight we may distinguish two aspects to Bartlett's work, and they are both important. Bartlett's first insight was that cognitive processes function to extend evidence, in line with evidence, and to fill gaps in evidence, so that what

is said is acceptable to an ordinary member of a reference group. In a similar spirit Hosking & Morley (1991, p.26) suggested that our:

... evaluative beliefs are much more affected by the context in which they are to be expressed than we would ordinarily suppose. Thus, making sense of the world is social rather than solitary. What we learn, and how we express that learning, is very much affected by those we meet, where we meet them, and by our relationships with them.

Another way of putting this is to say that different kinds of conversations or narratives work to instantiate different kinds of 'cognitive tuning',<sup>3</sup> so that what we say, and how we say it, is tuned to the demands of 'projects' or 'life-tasks' as they unfold in our dealings with different people. Lave and Wenger's (1991) talk of "situated learning" as participation in "communities of practice" expresses closely related lines of argument.

Bartlett's second insight was that different kinds of thinking are guided by different kinds of conversation and by different norms, but that they are all 'fundamentally cooperative, social, and [can not] proceed far without the stimulus of outside contacts' (Bartlett, 1958, p. 123).<sup>4</sup> He was not the first person to make this kind of point, but his own work, and that of others, notably Asch (1952), influenced subsequent writers to take seriously the message that minds are social rather than individual because they are based on the discursive practices of particular social groups (Harré, 1979; Billig, 1989; Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1991; Hosking & Morley, 1991; Harré & Gillett, 1994; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Orr, 1990, Valsinger & Van der Veer, 2000).

We have tried to combine these two insights by saying that people may sometimes engage in very limited kinds of conversation, and therefore become too confident that they understand the world, and what they are able to do in it.

However, many tasks require 'actively open-minded thinking' (Baron, 1988), 'vigilant information processing' (Janis & Mann, 1977), or 'rational analysis for a problematic world'<sup>5</sup> (Rosenhead, 1989). Behind these different terminologies is a recognition that intelligent social action consists in following rules of good thinking; that good thinking should be free from bias; and that 'ambiguities and differences between observers' should be considered as 'essential aspects in the evaluative task' (Linstone, 1984, p.36). Leaders have a primary responsibility for ensuring that such conversations take place.<sup>6</sup> They do so because relational processes feature multiple reality constructions and shifting influence. Skilful leadership processes promote systematic methods that, in turn, promote actively open minded thinking and a "culture of productivity" (Akin & Hopelain, 1986).

## **2. Contexts are Social Because They Are Relational Settings**

The most important aspects of contexts are other people and their narratives or local-cultural constructions. This said, one might expect research on leadership to be integrated into the social psychology of groups. However, when this has happened, research on leadership has been integrated into a (North American) paradigm of experimental social psychology that has tended to ignore differences in valuations and influence: to the extent that most researchers would be perfectly willing to define groups in terms of people who *share certain values*.

This is defensible neither in theory nor in practice (e.g. Sarason, 1972). We have stressed that the potential for conflicts of value (or valuation<sup>7</sup>) is inherent in the *ongoing (re)creation* of social settings. If groups share values about ends and about means that is a collective achievement; it is not something constitutive of groups. Further it is an achievement constructed in power relations. In other words, *politics is essential to an understanding of the activities of organizing* – or the creation of settings. A group, relations between groups or, more generally

'organising', is constructed in conversations - in multiple narratives that voice different knowledge claims and commitments - in the activities of people engaged in different projects or life-tasks.

We think that it is important to think of social contexts as 'relational settings' in the sense we have outlined (Hosking & Morley, 1991; Hosking & Bass, 2001). We suggest that there are two main consequences of this. The first is the operation of the principle of 'cognitive tuning' identified above. The second is that we may think of organizing as a series of projects (perhaps life tasks) and related identities, linked in various ways. Typically, to carry out such projects we need help from other people, either to complete the projects to standard, or to complete them at all. We have argued that project work of this kind proceeds through a series of negotiations, most explicitly in Morley & Hosking (1986) and Hosking & Morley (1988, 1991). Again, related lines of theorising can be found using the language of "communities of practice" although, in our view, the politics of relations within and between communities has been relatively neglected<sup>8</sup>.

### **3. Disputation, Negotiation, and Change**

Hosking & Morley (1991) set out four theses:

1. Negotiation begins when someone acts to change the status quo – including narrating the possibility of change.
2. Continuing negotiations will involve simplification and partiality.
3. The process of negotiation may be divided into stages of decision-making.
4. Each stage poses cognitive and political problems.

The first thesis is simply an attempt to find some non-arbitrary way of saying when negotiation in relation to some project begins, so that analysis is possible.

The second thesis has three main aspects: namely, that people have limited capacity to process information; that social actions are inherently ambiguous and have to be made sense of; and that constructions (narratives) are partisan - meaning that they are made from particular points of view; and passed on to others in summary form (Dunsire, 1978; Hosking & Morley, 1991; Morley & Ormerod, 1996).

The third thesis treats negotiations as historical narratives to be decomposed into open-ended stages. The historical element comes in because when people negotiate contracts their major concern is one of accounting. They have to find a convincing (to some referent person[s] or group[s]) rationale, making sense of what is happening now, in relation to what has happened in the past, and to what is likely to happen in the future (Hosking & Morley, 1991; Morley, 1992). The stage element came from the decision-making sequence identified by Snyder & Diesing (1977) in their study of *Conflict Among Nations*. . However, there is nothing sacrosanct about their stages. . Others have chosen other descriptions to suit particular purposes (e.g. Friend, 1989). However, whatever descriptions are chosen it seems to us that particular narratives are chosen in relation to particular projects and, once agreed, constrain commitments to particular policies (or lines of action).

Our final thesis is thus that each stage of this 'structure in process' involves cognitive and political aspects (strictly, cognitive-social on the one hand, and social- political on the other). The '*cognitive*' aspects arise because people have to organize their intellectual activity and think clearly about the issues. The '*political*' aspects arise because people dispute what count as issues, what count as a sensible lines of development, what count as effective policies, and what count as a realistic attempts to implement those policies (Hosking & Morley, 1991, p.7). Both cognitive and political processes are central to leadership when viewed as a certain sort of relational process - as we will shortly outline.

One of the main jobs of a social psychology of organizing is to show how to appreciate the cognitive and political processes through which people create and support various kinds of setting - variously called cultures, rhetorical contexts, formative contexts, or 'communities of practice'. Some say that the process of organizing creates orders of value in which different people have different commitments to particular descriptions and to particular actions in particular contexts. Broadly speaking, political actions arise when people think differently and want to act differently. The possibilities for thinking differently arise because social actions are inherently ambiguous, are described from particular points of view, and cannot be completely described (Dunsire, 1978; Hosking & Morley, 1991; Morley & Ormerod, 1996). But, once they are described, different descriptions differently constrain how the process will 'go on'. (Conversely, once a person is committed to a particular policy, that commitment will mean that certain descriptions are likely to be applied to that policy rather than others).

As we have said, we think it important to show how to appreciate these cognitive-social-political processes and, in particular, important seriously to explore negotiation as part of the story, joining this line of talk with talk about how such processes may be performed more or less skilfully. In our view, any talk of 'communities of practice' should not over-estimate communality, agreement, and talk of 'what is' at the expense of multiplicity, disagreement, and what might be. This includes disputation over what counts as knowledge, what counts as maintenance of the community, what counts as change, and what to commit to – if only for a while.

All of this implies that, broadly speaking, *organising is about commitments and how those commitments are created, mobilized, maintained, and changed.* Because of the distinction between two kinds of commitments - to descriptions and to lines of action – approaches of this kind are often called language-action

perspectives (see Fikes, 1982; Winograd & Flores, 1986; Hosking & Morley, 1991; Morley & Ormerod, 1996). We believe that some sort of language-action perspective may be used to summarize much of what we have to say about a social psychology of organizing and about the role of leadership in those processes.

#### **4. Constructing Cultures of Productivity**

We shall argue that skilful leadership processes promote a “culture of productivity”. This is defined by relationships in which participants experience the emerging processes as legible, coherent, and open-ended. Participants feel the processes to be ‘legible’ when equivocality is reduced in recognisable and agreeable ways. Processes are ‘coherent’ when participants experience an integrated structure throughout the process, and processes are ‘open-ended’ inasmuch as relationships are flexible i.e., they can create and accommodate change (see Hosking and Morley, 1991). This sort of structure in process supports learning, as for example, argued by Lave and Wenger in their talk of situated learning and “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave and Wenger, 1991). We have chosen to emphasize leadership and *skilful processes*. This is rather different from e.g., ‘fixing’ particular participants as masters or apprentices and different from fixing and putting out of question what counts as skilful performance. We suggest that participants are likely to differ in the extent to which they see themselves and others consistently to influence the legibility, coherence, and openness of their culture. Further, participants are likely to see each other as achieving influence in different ways – ways that are more or less acceptable in that culture or community. Finally, some – or indeed all<sup>9</sup> – participants may come to be perceived as making contributions that consistently achieve acceptable influence, and come to be expected to do so. Contributions

of this kind we refer to as leadership; those who make such contributions we call leaders (Hosking and Morley, 1991).

### **Leadership in a Social Psychology of Organizing**

Within this general framework we can identify four major lines of development with respect to theory and research on leadership. We have made serious attempts to link talk about leadership processes to talk about:

- Cognitive and political skills.
- Disputation and change (by treating the skills of leadership as cognate with the skills of negotiation).
- Task-analysis, and the cognitive and political dilemmas in those tasks.
- Social constructionism, organisational learning and the management of organizational learning.

In each case a central part of the point of the enterprise has been to give due emphasis to intelligent social action and to leaders as exercising particular responsibility for its promotion. We shall consider each of these lines of research in turn, although, as we shall see, and as we might expect, they are heavily interdependent.

#### **1. The Cognitive and Political Skills of Leadership**

We have advocated the view that skilful leadership serves to promote social orders in which certain kinds of change are seen collectively to make sense. In other words, we suppose that leadership plays a central part in promoting processes whereby disputation converges on to positions that everyone can live

with<sup>10</sup> - because everyone can see that the *process* is transparent, and because everyone can see that the *process* makes sense.<sup>11</sup>

There has been considerable controversy about the meanings of each of these phrases, and we think that it is important to consider some of them in more detail. So, when we say that leaders play a central part in promoting certain processes, we do not mean that all leadership is, in the current jargon, 'transformational'. We have more in common with those who suggest that leadership can be viewed as the 'management of meaning' (e.g. Smircich & Morgan, 1992), and that leaders have a central responsibility to organise this *process*. However, this can mean a number of things. In our view it does *not* mean that leaders must impose their visions on others or that they must be more skilful or more successful than their followers. Certainly, leaders may sometimes have to provide 'pictures' or 'frames' or 'visions' or 'principles' or 'scripts' for other people to follow, and people may sometimes rely on them to do so,<sup>12</sup> but it would be a gross mistake to think that they are the only people able to do these jobs (Hosking, 1997). If we have made any contributions to this literature they have tried to show, firstly, that leaders and followers are much more interchangeable than has been supposed; that leaders engage in trial arguments with themselves and others; and that one of the ways of examining what kind of context (discursive, formative, rhetorical) is involved is to investigate what kinds of input are appreciated, regardless of source (Hosking & Morley, 1988, 1991). Such investigations tell us whether leadership is principled or just self-serving.

Those who have concentrated on visionary aspects of leadership have also tended to forget that leaders cannot simply direct the actions of their 'followers'. Influence has to be acceptable. Part of what this can mean is that 'power over' may not be locally valued as a way of 'creating settings'. In addition, and as we have argued elsewhere (Hosking and Morley, 1991, p. 249):

“To build cultures of productivity, it is essential that differences are articulated through a process of actively open-minded thinking. To build such cultures, ways must be found to respect differences which must be preserved.”

We hope that this is part of what people have in mind when they repeat the ‘mantra’ that ‘leaders lead groups’. This is one reason why we have given such prominence to negotiation. It is in these respects that leaders are just like negotiators. If decisions are to ‘stick’ they will have to be acceptable to those they represent.

One implication of this is that leaders, considered as negotiators, face two kinds of problem. The first is how to describe change, or the possibility of change, and how to reach a working consensus over the description of these changes. The second is how to forge commitments based on these descriptions and to show that they make sense.

## **2. Leadership and the Skills of Negotiation**

Those psychologists who have talked about the skills of negotiation have emphasized the two aspects we have already identified. That is, they have divided skills into intellectual tasks (posing cognitive problems) and influence tasks (posing political problems). As noted earlier, we have tried to stress the social-relational aspects of these ‘tasks’.

We have linked talk about leadership both to limitations in cognitive capacity (constrained by the nature of our neural architecture) and to dispositions to engage in rational thinking. In the first case, we have urged that skilled negotiators help others to match their cognitive capacities to the demands of the tasks they face (along the lines outlined by Welford, 1980), mostly by keeping their messages simple and by slowing things down.<sup>13</sup> In the second case, we

have argued that leaders need to promote cultures dominated by what Baron (1988) has called actively open-minded thinking (Hosking & Morley, 1991). This means that leadership processes need to be principled in the sense that they encourage 'search that is thorough in proportion to the importance of the question' and 'fairness to other possibilities than the one we initially favour' (Baron, 1988, p.30). Others, such as Janis have called the process one of vigilant information processing (Janis & Mann, 1977; Janis, 1989).

We, like others, have urged that cognitive and political problems are very much interrelated. However, let us concentrate on political processes for the moment. Here, we have suggested that what leaders do is make particularly influential contributions to a process of change in which all participants negotiate and renegotiate the terms on which they will 'do business'. In such cases the point of the exercise is to establish what changes are possible, and at what cost. The outcome of the deliberations is a set of rules (narratives) defining the terms on which the parties will do business in the future. That is to say, leaders take a major role in a process by which they – and their 'followers' – 'rewrite social history'.

To explain the metaphor we need to explain the written history and the social history. The written history comes from formalized rules and relations such as those characteristic of organisation structure. One way to put this is to say that negotiations are conducted in the context of existing rules, and that the effect of negotiation is to change those rules. The social history comes from the fact that changes have to be explained to other people, accepted by them, and implemented by them. This is why the most important outcome of negotiation *is an agreed narrative about what has happened, and why, providing a rationale linking what is happening now to what has happened in the past and to what will happen in the future.* If such narratives are not acceptable they will not stick.

### 3. Task-analysis, Decision-Making, and Dilemmas

Historically, it is quite remarkable how studies of leadership have tried to avoid any serious analysis of the nature of leadership tasks. But it is impossible to talk about skill, or strategy or tactics, without talking about goals, valuations, bias, and other cognate concepts. Such talk ought to follow from the detailed analyses of particular tasks, *even if made from particular points of view*. There has been little such analysis, and we think that this is one main reason why research on leadership has said little about skill, or strategy or tactics or about intelligent social action, and it is one main reason why leadership research has been denigrated in terms of its practical value (Hunt, Hosking, Schriesheim, & Stewart, 1984; Hosking & Morley, 1988, 1991).

Fortunately, some recent research has attempted to fill this void and, without attempting to be comprehensive, we shall select some prominent examples.

- Those working within the domain of planning and decision-making within public policy domains have attempted systematically to analyse what it would mean to carry out a rational analysis of alternative policies within those domains (Levin, 1976; Friend & Jessop, 1977; Friend & Hickling, 1987; Friend, 1989). Much of this research has been conducted within the framework of attempts to rethink the nature and effectiveness of operational research (Rosenhead, 1999; Morley & Ormerod, 1996).
- Some have attempted to link talk about planning, talk about decision-making, and talk about negotiation to talk about design (Clausing & Andrade, 1996; Hosking & Morley, 1991).
- Some have attempted explicitly to analyse the skills of negotiation in industrial or international or legal or other contexts (Morley, 1992).
- Others have tried to identify difficulties in managing relationships that may apply wherever there are questions of organizational trust within or between groups (Kotter, 1982; Hosking & Morley, 1988, 1991; Morley, 1992).

- Some have tried to explore what leadership might mean when local-cultural valuations support inclusive relations of equals and distributed leadership (e.g., Brown & Hosking, 1986; Hosking, 2001)
- Others still, have tried to explore problems of cognitive tuning, such as how to influence people without offending them, or how to make public politically sensitive information without provoking damaging responses (te Molder, 1999)

In each case the researchers have tried to identify dilemmas that have application beyond the immediate context of significance. Thus, Friend and his associates have set out an approach to planning under pressure in which dilemmas are linked to various kinds of uncertainty faced by decision-makers. In this framework, dilemmas about the nature, timing, and scope of cognitive and political problems come to the fore, as they apply to the core processes of shaping, designing, comparing, and choosing.<sup>14</sup> Pugh & Morley have outlined a stage-based approach to design (called 'Total Design') in which they identify dilemmas of commitment within each stage (so that making decisions too soon may be based on an incomplete analysis of intellectual problems, but that delaying decisions too long may be based on an incomplete analysis of political problems). Researchers who have analysed difficulties in managing relationships, have focused on those that implicate the role of the leader (e.g. dilemmas about democracy) and those concerned with the nature of organizational trust within and between groups (e.g. dilemmas about confidentiality). Finally, te Molder (1999) has attempted to explore the nature of various dilemmas posed by defensive reactions to the communication process.

We think that all of this adds up to a view that asserts that:

The way in which such dilemmas are handled, when working under real-time pressures, can have deep influences not only on the decisions reached, but also

on the way the decision process is steered through a labyrinth of possible organizational channels (Friend, 1989, p.123)

Groups that fail to negotiate an acceptable path through such dilemmas are not likely to be effective in the long run. Leadership that fails to understand the relationships between the different kinds of dilemma is likely to fail.

#### **4. Social Constructionism and Organizational Learning**

Less than fifty years ago psychology was dominated by the psychology of learning. Yet in Bechtel & Graham's (1998) *A Companion to Cognitive Science* the only chapter that includes 'learning' in its title is a chapter on 'Machine Learning'. Part of this shift has been an attempt to provide an integrated view of cognition in which talk about learning is integrated with talk about memory, perception, problem-solving, reasoning, and understanding, and other cognate concepts (as in Anderson, 1990). Another part of this shift has been an attempt to link talk about learning to technical issues in mathematics, computer science, and philosophy (as in Glymour, 1999). The former has been welcomed and the latter has not. One result has been that talk about learning has been more obviously geared to work in international relations (e.g. Jervis, 1970, 1976) and to organizations ("learning organisations" and "organisational learning") (e.g. Cohen & Sproull, 1996; Hosking & Bouwen, 2000) than it has been before. For our part, we would wish to welcome some developments in both fields.

It is both convenient and, we think, important, to consider some of the main issues that have emerged about learning in relation to 'constructionism' and 'social constructionism'. The former embraces all those who, like Piaget, Bruner, and others, have emphasized the active role that the mind plays in going beyond the information given - so that learning is a process by which knowledge is

constructed. Much of the discussion remains dominated by Piagetian theory, but all modern cognitive psychologists are constructionists in this sense. Despite this, few of them pay sufficient attention to those social processes that subject constructive processes to normative constraints. This brings us to *social* constructionism. One variant could be broadly described as expanding constructionism by giving much more prominence to both local and global principles of cognitive tuning. The former come from conversations, whether formal or informal, and the latter from institutional formulations of knowledge and epistemologies (McCormick & Paechter, 1999). Our own work is both constructionist and social constructionist – in the sense outlined.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of constructionism, we have emphasized that expertise within a given domain requires knowledge within that domain, and that much of that knowledge is tacit. It is not taught explicitly but learned, like craft knowledge, with experience of particular contexts or relational settings. In this respect our own framework is close to those that are usually described as neo-Piagetian (Demetriou, Shayer, & Efklides, 1992). However, we have also taken the view that domain specific learning requires systematic guidance in the form of ‘scaffolding’, and in this respect our position is closer to that of Vygotsky (see Wood, 1988). Connections can also be seen between our work and the more analytical and critical variants of the ‘communities of practice’ literature (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Orr, 1990). However, we have paid more attention than most to those systematic methods that attempt legibly and coherently to produce ‘structure in process’, particularly in the context of engineering product design, and in the context of operational research.

Putting this together, let us say that the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge is controversial<sup>16</sup>, but that we have emphasized the importance of explicit knowledge more than others. If we were to extend our previous treatments we would agree with Glaser’s (1999) statements that ‘the value of

practice can be increased, if we see it as something to be carefully designed' (p.97) so that:

teaching practice can make apparent the forms of student's thinking, in ways that can be observed, transmitted, discussed, reflected on, and moved toward more competent performance and dispositions for reasoning (Glaser, 1999, pp. 99-100)

Educational leaders, because they are leaders, have a primary responsibility to facilitate such practices.

We hope we have said enough to be clear that this does not mean that such leaders have to be more expert than others. However, they have to be sufficiently knowledgeable to be able to coordinate, and to encourage 'face to face confrontation and discussion of differences' (Hosking & Bass, 2001, p. 355). They have to be able to organize processes whereby such discussion is constructive rather than destructive, so that there is convergence on policies that all can understand and live with (Hosking & Morley, 1991; Clausing & Andrade, 1996).

## **Conclusions**

We have put forward a position on leadership that is both constructionist and social constructionist<sup>17</sup>. The constructionist elements come from consideration of the architecture of the mind and from a consideration of those active processes by which minds create reality. The social elements come from consideration of those principles by which our cognitions are 'tuned' because of interpersonal and institutional constraints. Psychologists have tended to promote the former at the expense of the latter. Sociologists have tended to promote the latter at the expense of the former. Some social psychologists, such as us, have tried to find

an appropriate balance between the two. For these and other reasons, we have tried to produce a social psychology that is informed by cognitive psychology (so that we are not criticising 'straw' people) but remains genuinely social (so that is not just cognitive psychology with some social 'factors' added).

The net effect of all of this is that leaders should participate in relational processes in ways that:

- link their own knowledge and experience intelligently to that of others.
- (help to) organize negotiations within ('internal') and between ('external') groups.
- deal with cognitive and political aspects of the core problems in their (individual and collective) decision-making tasks.
- focus on key dilemmas in their individual and collective tasks.

This line of argument could be said to upgrade the role of 'followers' and to downgrade that of 'leaders'. Leaders do have special responsibilities, but one is not to ignore the contributions of their followers.

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<sup>1</sup> We have deliberately used interchangeably the tools of "interpretation", "sense making", and "construction". In the present context, these language tools are to be understood, not as references to individual acts, but in relation to our argument that talk about people and talk about contexts cannot be separated.

<sup>2</sup> Here we mean to talk of language as both one form of action, and as a tool for talking about and reflecting on action.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'cognitive tuning' is taken from Cohen [1961].

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<sup>4</sup> The particular quotation refers to Bartlett's views about scientific thinking, but we think that he would have been quite happy to generalize these remarks to other kinds of thinking (see Bartlett, 1958).

<sup>5</sup> Which *here* means a socially constructed world or worlds.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is worth asking, at this point, when do people stop thinking? When do they think a problem has been solved? The halting problem has been an important one for computer science, and perhaps there is an equally important halting problem in psychology. The answer may be slightly more complicated, but it is nonetheless revealing. If Hosking & Morley (1991) are correct, the 'stop rule' is that people will stop thinking when they have done enough 'to minimize doubts that the policies they have chosen will be certified by competent members of their reference groups. In some rhetorical contexts this may increase the likelihood of biased information processing... In other rhetorical contexts it may have the opposite effect, producing an increased commitment to interpretive practices based on systematic methods [that] promote actively-open-minded thinking' (Hosking & Morley, 1991, p.102).

<sup>7</sup> the language of 'value' has often been used in the context of a wider thought style that separates 'fact' and 'value' and treats the latter as an 'input from individual' (see our earlier discussion) that 'messes up' rational thinking. We use the term 'valuation' in the context of our social constructionist perspective – emphasising that social constructions of reality are necessarily imply some ordering of value.

<sup>8</sup> The issue of power was given more attention in the early literatures on communities of practice (COP's) but has been relatively neglected in later, more prescriptive and managerialist developments of the concept. The "critical", analytical emphasis of Lave & Wenger (1991) has been marginalized by treatments that e.g., take for granted a unitary and uncontested conception of hierarchy, what counts as 'mastery', who is expert and who novice, and the institutionalized conventions that help to legitimize and stabilize such realities and relations.

<sup>9</sup> Although in our experience this is both rare and difficult to do – even when participants are explicitly trying to construct such ways of going on in relation as, for example, in some social movement groups (see e.g., Brown & Hosking, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Chester Barnard provided the useful concept of "latitude of acceptance" to indicate that one does not have to accept in the sense of agree but only find e.g., some decision acceptable in the sense of falling within one's latitude of acceptance.

<sup>11</sup> This point has been elaborated by Morley in the context of engineering product design (Pugh & Morley [add dates]) and by Hosking in the context of organizational development (Hosking & Bass, 2001; Hosking, 2002)

<sup>12</sup> And they may acquire power by doing so.

<sup>13</sup> This sort of message is quite general. Some of the skills of negotiation are the skills of socially competent actors. It is not only negotiators who sometimes have to slow things down, and repeat what they have said, so that those in their audience are able to take in what they have to say: so do teachers.

<sup>14</sup> In our terminology, the core processes are identification (of issues), development (of possible lines of action), choice (between options), and implementation (of policies). We think that the similarities between the terminologies are much more important than the differences.

<sup>15</sup> Another variant, referred to by Steir (1991) as "second order constructionism", gives serious attention to what follows from recognising 'observers' (theorist-researchers) to be part of (rather than apart from) the social processes they study. This shifts the focus away from epistemology, collapses the distinction between ontology and epistemology, opens up new possibilities for research, and gives ethics a new prominence (see also Hosking, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, from one point of view the distinction is very problematic – explicit knowledge is just the visible 'tip of the iceberg' – reliant on tacit knowledge (we cannot say everything we know) see e.g., Dachler and Hosking, 1995.

<sup>17</sup> As we have remarked elsewhere, there are many social constructionisms. The version we have outlined here is but one. Elsewhere, Hosking has explored a version of social constructionism that 'starts' with construction processes and stays with talk of processes rather than persons – not least because talk of persons is so often misunderstood as necessarily individualistic! In addition, she has sought to develop a critical variant of social constructionism which (reflexively) includes the 'scientist'/narrator in her own narrative (see e.g. Hosking, 2000).