



Universidad  
Carlos III de Madrid  
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## Future Leaders in Higher Education Administration: the skills required

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## University of the future

- Higher education institutions will need to fundamentally transform their business models to survive, according to an [industry wide study of Australia's higher education sector](#), from 2012.
- The study included interviews with more than 40 leaders from public universities, private universities, policy makers and sector representative groups.





## Change will be driven by five trends

- Democratization of knowledge and access
- Contestability of markets and funding
- Digital technologies
- Global mobility
- Integration with industry







# How universities will be forced to adapt

- **Breadth of programs** – Universities will need to consider whether they can continue to maintain a competitive position – domestically and Internationally – across a broad range of programs, or whether to concentrate resources on a smaller range of programs
- **Target customers** – Universities will need to have a clear strategy and execution around target student segments
- **Channels to market** – Universities will need to rethink the role of digital channels and third party partnerships in recruiting students and delivering teaching and research programs
- **Back office** – University asset bases and administrations will need to be significantly more flexible and open than they are today





## How to be more flexible and open?

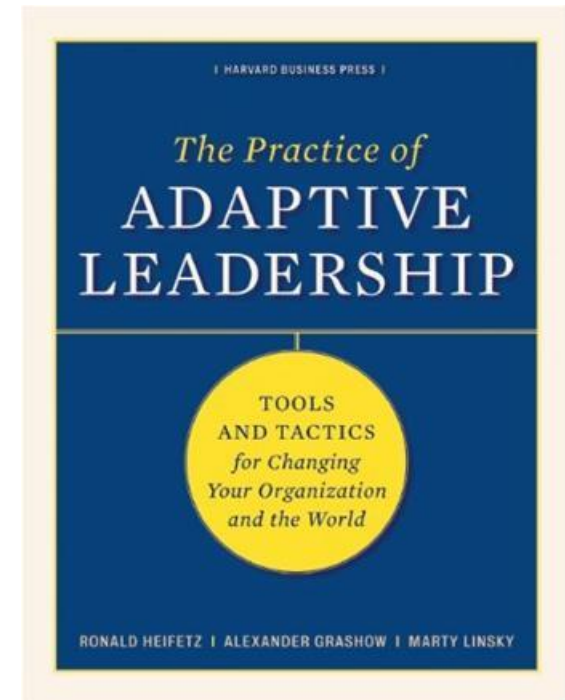


*Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. If you put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. If you put water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crash*



# Adaptive Leadership

- Ron Heifetz, founder of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School, has pioneered the concept of adaptive leadership





# Adaptive Leadership

- Moving an organization or system through multi-dimensional change requires numerous facets of the organization to change simultaneously. People and stakeholders must internalize the changes, shedding old practices, accepting new ones, and developing new capacities.
- Adaptive leaders “exercise leadership” by guiding and pacing people through both the discomfort and opportunities of transformational change
- Adaptive leadership is ideally suited to drive creative approaches in a complex environment.
- Adaptive leaders are well-positioned to create cultural norms, tangible plans, and expectations in which continuous improvement and transformative change will occur
- Adaptive leaders set up and use systematic mechanisms for monitoring progress, impacts, and lessons learned, creating a “learning organization” to drive outcomes.



## Multiple Levels of a Change Process

- One's own leadership role
- Leadership within the organization (the team of leaders within the organization)
- Organization's culture regarding change
- The approach to the organization's work (service delivery, continuous improvement, and outcomes)
- Engagement of staff







# Adaptive Leadership. Fundamental Elements

*The following elements are fundamentals for adaptive leadership and offer a framework to measure your strengths and identify areas to develop further*

- Knowledge of the organization
- Forecast the future
- Breaking down barriers
- Being disruptive
- Being agile to get to the goal
- Empowering the organization
- Ability to sense and respond





# Knowledge of the organization

Adaptive leaders know their organizations as ecosystems bound together by a common purpose, but steeped in difference. They understand that their organizations include stakeholder groups that overlap, but that each group has its own unique characteristics. As such, moving people toward a common center means understanding existing competences and attitudes



## *Reflective Thinking Question*

*How well do you and your organization's leaders know your organization, for example, in terms of similarities and differences between individuals and group, staff attitudes (toward innovation, clients partner organizations, management, each other); organizational climate and organization strengths and gaps?*



## Forecast the future



Adaptive leaders get ahead of change before it happens because they take a long view of all impacts. This approach includes a willingness to consider longer term strategies for change, despite the short political cycle, and an evolutionary rather than a short-term results orientation.

### *Reflective Thinking Question*

*To what extent do you and your organization's leaders track societal trends (for example, in budgets, demographics, politics, economics, and technology) and organizational trends (for example, staff performance and stability, client outcomes,) and reflect on their potential future impact on the organization?  
If you do not track trends, why not?*



# Breaking down barriers

Adaptive leaders are not turf oriented. They focus less on championing an organization's place in the larger institution than on championing across the institution



## ***Reflective Thinking Questions***

*How well do you and your organization's leaders collaborate with peers in other divisions within your agency and other public or private agencies that affect your organization's operations and clients? To what extent do you (and/or your senior leaders) champion collective strategies toward improved outcomes for your clients and work to break down turf divisions and build common purpose?*





## Being disruptive



Adaptive leaders privilege outcomes-focused goals and principles above all else, even if they require major changes to organizational norms and sacred cows. Disruption is also as much about building new competences as it is about effectively letting go to old ones

### *Reflective Thinking Question*

*To what extent do you and your organization's leaders shake up the organization when needed? What are some examples when leadership changed long standing processes or policies or made key staff changes to pave the way for new ways of working? What drove those changes? Were you "proactive" or "reactive" in those examples? Can you think of a time when leadership helped your organization develop new competences and let go of old ones that no longer served the interests of the organization?*



# Being agile to get to the goal

**Adaptive leaders adjust mid-course if new information is revealed or if economic, technological, or social changes occur that require a different approach**



## ***Reflective Thinking Questions***

*How able are you and your organization's leaders to adjust mid-course when new information is revealed or when economic, technological, or social changes occur that require a different approach? What are some specific examples? What inhibits your organizational adjustments?*



# Empowering the organization

**Adaptive leaders focus on empowering and flattening the organization to deemphasize hierarchy and silos. They engage staff at all organizational levels in collaborative, cross-functional diagnoses of problems and solution identification. These leaders also foster other voices of leadership from all levels of the organization because they can seed change and motivate others**



## *Reflective Thinking Questions*

*How effectively do you and your organization's leaders ensure that mid- and longer-term changes get planned and implemented effectively? How does leadership secure staff, client, and external stakeholders buy-in for change? How does leadership empower staff at all levels, clients, and external stakeholders to co-create changes? To what extent does leadership ensure that plans get adjusted based on lessons learned during implementation? How effective is the communication of the mid- and longer-term changes to staff, customers and stakeholders?*

## Ability to sense and respond



**Adaptive leaders hold true to their understanding of other people and of themselves. They consider deeper impacts of gains and losses, and perform self-checks, realizing they may have their own barriers to work through to reach desired outcomes**

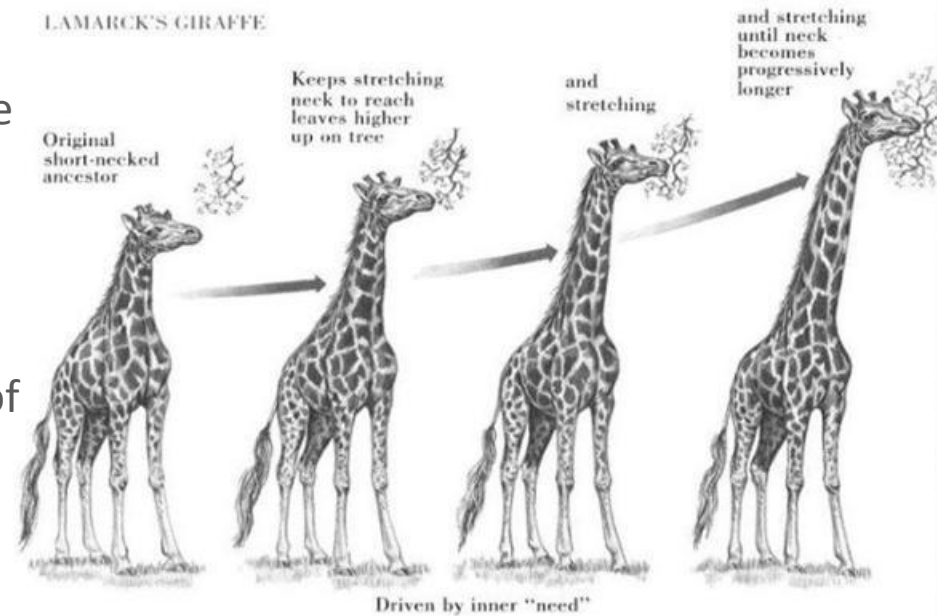
### ***Reflective Thinking Question***

*How sensitive are you and your organization's leaders to the deep impacts on staff, clients and external stakeholders of changes in the organization and environment? To what extent does leadership reflect on those impacts and make adjustments as needed to, for example, the pace and scope of change and the way they communicate about organizational changes? To what extent does leadership reflect on their own strengths and barriers, and work leverage their strengths and overcome their barriers?*



# Seven ways to Know if you are facing an Adaptive Challenge

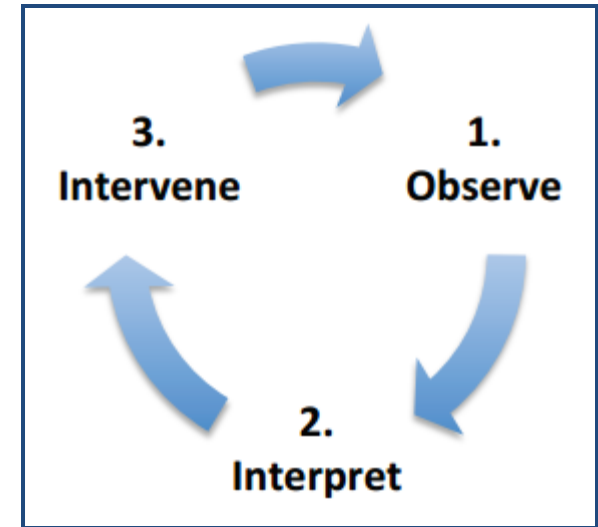
1. If the solution requires operating in a different way than you do now
2. If the problem AND the solution require learning
3. If the solution requires shifting the authority and responsibility to the people who are actually affected
4. If the solution requires some sacrifice of your pass ways of working or living
5. In the solution requires experimenting before you are sure of the answer
6. If the solution will take a long time
7. If the challenge connects to people's deeply held values



# The Process of Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive Leadership is an iterative process involving three key activities:

1. *Observing* events and patterns around you
2. *Interpreting* what you are observing – developing multiple hypotheses about what is really going on
3. *Designing* interventions based on the observations and interpretations to address the adaptive challenge you have identified



- Each of these activities builds on the ones that come before it
- The process overall is iterative: you repeatedly refine your observations, interpretations and interventions



## Leadership Tasks

- **Identify the Adaptive Challenge.** People often confuse technical problems with adaptative challenges
- **Think Politically.** Adaptive learning is inherently political
- **Orchestrate the conflict.** Competing perspectives can become a source of creativity rather than a source of destructive conflict
- **Discipline Attention.** People often avoid adaptive work by diverting attention away from the issues that generate frustration and conflict



## Leadership Tasks

- **Develop Responsibility.** Learning requires getting people to assume greater responsibility
- **Regulate Disequilibrium.** Too much disequilibrium overwhelms, not enough stagnates
- **Infuse the Work with Meaning.** People need to feel committed to the work they're doing







# Designing effective interventions

- Get on the balcony
- Determine the Ripeness of the Issue in the System
- Ask, Who am I in this picture?
- Think hard about your framing
- Hold steady
- Analyze the factions that begin to emerge
- Keep the work at the center of People's Attention





# Get on the balcony

- Observe what is going on around you
- Stay diagnostic even as you take action
- Develop more than one interpretation
- Watch for patterns
- Reality test your interpretations when it is self-serving or close to your default

*Debrief with partners as often as you can to assess the information generated by your actions, and the interventions of others, in order to think through your next move*



# Determine the Ripeness of the Issue in the System

- How resilient and ready are people to tackle the issue?
- Is the urgency localized in one subgroup and not yet widespread across the larger organization?
- Or, on the other hand, are people avoiding the hard work of dealing with the adaptive challenge at hand because the pain of doing so has reached too-high levels of disequilibrium?
- Is the prevailing momentum to treat the situation as a technical problem or an adaptive challenge?

*Your answer to these questions will affect how you frame your intervention strategy and the timing of your actions*



## Ask, Who am I in this picture?

- How are you experienced by the various groups and subgroups?
- What role do you play in them?
- What perspectives on the adaptive issues do you embody for them?



*You will have to be less predictable than usual to get constructive attention and make progress on an adaptive issue*



## Think hard about your framing

Thoughtful framing means communicating your intervention in a way that enables group members to understand what you have in mind, why the intervention is important, and how they can help carry it out.

*A well-framed intervention strikes a chord in people, speaking to their hopes and fears. That is, it starts where they are, not where you are. And it inspires them to move forward*







## Hold steady

- When you have made an intervention, think of it as having a life of its own. The idea will make its way through the system, and people will need time to digest it, think about it, discuss it, and modify it. Let people work with your idea
- Listen closely to how various subgroups are responding to your ideas, so you can calibrate your next move
- Watch for the ways and the elements of it that are taking hold
- Watch for avoidance mechanisms, like an immediate rejection or silence.



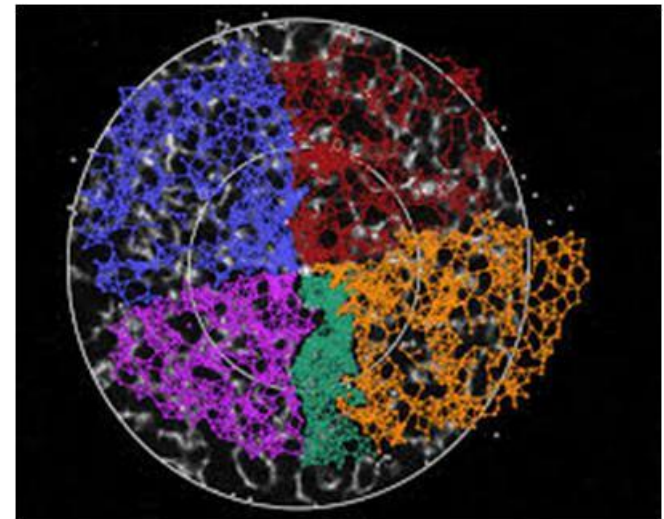
*Holding steady is a poised  
and listening response.  
People will appreciate, even  
if they never say so, the  
patience and respect it shows*



## Analyze the Factions that Begin to Emerge

- As people in your own close in group begin to discuss your intervention, pay attention to who seems engaged, who starts using your language or pieces of your idea as if it were their own.
- Listen for who resists the idea.
- Use these observations to help you see the contours of the factions that various people represent on the issue

*Faction mapping of your close-in group will give you valuable information about the ways the larger system of people will deal with the issue*





# Keep the Work at the Center of People's Attention

- Resistance to your intervention will have less to do with the merits of your idea and mostly to do with the fears of loss your idea generates
- You have to understand the impact of new directions on the Constituents behind the people in your working group, and how the pleasure or displeasure of those constituents is going to play out in the behavior of the person



*It falls to you, your allies,  
and others who lead in the  
organization to keep the  
work at the center*



**LEADERSHIP**  
*generates*  
**LEADERSHIP**