

Academic Leadership and Governance of Higher Education – Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

The issue of servant-leadership as ascribed to Robert K. Greenleaf, which was articulated as a new paradigm in leadership, is a profound exemplar that holds the key to a different perspective to human relations. This paradigm holds the leader to high ethical standard that previously was NOT emphasized in leadership. Dr. Kim examines the issue of servant-leadership and came to the conclusion that foresight is a critical element, a nexus in the ethic of leadership, which was penned in 'Foresight as the Central Ethic of Leadership'. The monograph is twenty-two pages, with definition of servant leadership from the perspective of Greenleaf, goals and mission from The Robert Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. .

Kim begins the monograph with a fascination with Robert Greenleaf's essay on 'The Servant as Leader'. The author writes, "...[Greenleaf's work is] a constant reminder of the high standards a leader must set for him/herself if one is to worthy of people's full commitment"(Kim, 2002, p. 1). It can be deduced from Kim's perspective that leadership is simply not about the influence of people as it is about the high ethic standard of the leader in the quest to lead. While ethical principles or standards are necessary for a leader, Kim, using a quotation for Robert Greenleaf from 'The Servant as Leader' writes, "The failure (or refusal) of a leader to foresee may be viewed as an ethical failure; because a serious ethical compromise today (when the usual judgement on ethical inadequacy is made) is sometimes the result of a failure to make the effort at an earlier date to foresee today's events and take the right actions when there was freedom for initiative to act" in

Kim, 2002, p. 1). Clearly Robert Greenleaf's perspective provides Kim with an identification of foresight being the central ethic of leadership. Undoubtedly both Robert Greenleaf and Daniel Kim believe that the issue of right and wrong of leadership, the ethic of leadership, is foresight. Simply put, a leader who does not have foresight to chart a path for the social development of his/her constituents has lead them astray, resulting in ethical failure (p. 2). The author argues that such a strong admonition by Robert Greenleaf brought him to a deeper analysis of the foresight role of a leader.

From a simple admonition, Kim begins to unravel the phenomenon of foresight for leadership and it led to the examination of investments in stock in the stock market. He recognizes that while an investment in Dow 30 an the Stock Market may be a 'limited investment strategy', "...how many options do you have for picking eight stocks out of a universe of only thirty stocks?"(p. 2). He went on to say that the odds of selection was even greater by suggesting the likelihood of choosing the correct lottery number from '5.7 million different combinations'(Kim, 2002, p. 2). Kim notes that people experience these difficult situations, daily, and that they must practice foresight and not be daunted by the reality of the situation.

Kim, then, progresses into a discussion on the disparity between forecasting and predicting (p. 3). He notes that the form is "...about being able to perceive the significance and nature of events before they have occurred"(p. 2); while predicting is stating a fact based on information. This can be made vivid by examining this statement by Kim, "To understand the difference between forecasts and predictions, de Geus offers the following illustration. If it rains in the

foothills of the Himalayas, we cannot forecast exactly when the rivers will swell and flood the valleys, but we can predict with certainty that the flooding will occur”(Kim, 2002, p. 3), which offers a perspective of where Kim wants us to visualize in the leadership discourse.

Having outlined a disparity between forecasting and predicting, Kim follows into another such critique, this time for helping and meddling. To aid with the disparity between both concepts, Kim uses a perspective forwarded by Dr. Demings. He notes that helping is “...changing the underlying structure that determine the capability of the system”(p. 5) and any other involvement is meddling.

Given that Kim was focusing on foresight which is an element of ethic of leadership; he, then, brings the discussion to ethical failure alive.

Ethical failure is simple not having foresight as a leader to have a vision of certain occurrence, which by neglect will harm the followers (p. 7). Hence, Kim warns against personal conform and limitations to foresee futuristic events by cultivating a capacity to foresight such events. “And, when we begin to see things nobody yet sees, we must have the capacity to stay centered even if that awareness is not well-received by others or make us feel uncomfortable” Kim says (p. 7) and this captures comprehensively the depth of importance for foresight in the right or wrong of leadership. To broaden one’s depth of understanding of the world and things, Kim admonishes people to try by way of a diagram (Figure 1, Kim, 2002, p. 9). The diagram, Figure 1, presents different levels of perspective and action that can be taken by people, and that the highest level is visionary and generative mode.

	Leves of Perspective	Action Mode
	Vision	Generative
	Mental Model	Reflective
	Systemic Structures	Creative
	Patterns of Behavior	Adaptive
	Events	Reactive

Figure1. Levels of Perspective and Action Mode (Kim, 2002, p. 9)

Kim (2002) writes, “By moving up to the vision level and taking generative actions that reconnect us to our sense of purpose and to vision we deeply care about, we have the desire and impetus to resolve differences in our mental models “(p. 11). When people, leaders, at the visionary level and generative action mode, are moved by a deep passion for something, it fashions a conceptual map or compass that stair foresight, retards complacency and ignites more drive in seeking to attain the vision (Kim, 2002, p. 11). He refers to this as a higher leverage, which every leader seek to be and this is captured in Figure 2 (below).

The author forwards a profound but simple statement which reads, “Unfortunately, vision has become such an over-used words that it has lost its meaning in many organizations”(Kim, 2002, p. 12). Despite such a claim, he argues that idle dream, vision, vision statement and corporate objectives are critical issues in human’s existence. He notes that idle dreams are supposed to remain idle, which is why Kim writes “As leaders, we should encourage all of our people to devote some of their time to day-

dream because this is the fertile soil from which visions are likely to sprout”(p. 13).

Kim also makes a distinction between vision and coporate objectives. “Vision are clear and compelling pictures of the future that people truly care about bringing into reality” Kim opines (Kim, 2002, p. 14). Hence, it is for this very reason why vision has this emotional depth, full, and provides an energy or desire to meet certain objectives (p. 14). Simply put, when a vision is had by a person, she/he is moved into action by this emotional ethos. Organization objectives, on the other hand, is a statement of measurable goals outlined by a business, which is oftentime outside of goals and objectives of people (p. 14). The issue of vision, objectives and dreams will materialize, if the individual makes or does not make a certain choice (p. 15).

It is the choice of the individual to follow a certain pathway that will materialize a vision. He puts it this way, “It is the conscious choice to bring something into reality that transforms an idle dream into a vision that has the power to tap people’s energy and commitment” (p. 15).

Having outlined the issue of choice, Kim uses Robert Fritz’s hierarachical model of choice to examine how choices are made and different strategies and tactics are employed (Table 1). “Without the clarity of primary choices to guide them, there is no common basis for making the secondary choices.

When they get stuck, rather than going down a level and clarifying, the tendency is to move up a level and try to make tertiary choice (which

may come easier because the stakes are lower)” (Kim, 2002, p. 16). The issue is people are continuous engaged into activities that result in certain choices, and “...very few have an idea how their activities are connected to a broad strategy or a common vision, let along a sense of purpose” (Kim, 2002, p. 16) which speaks to the hierachy of choices and how they are determined.

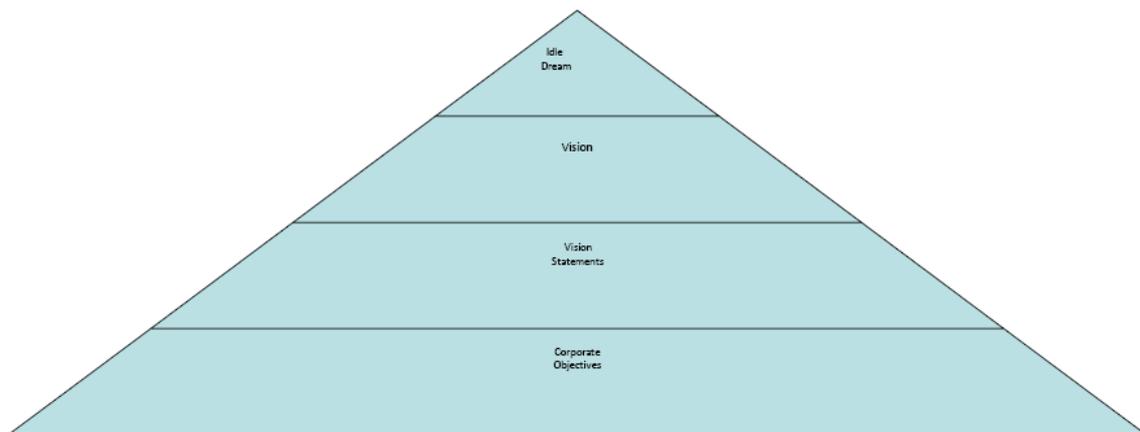


Figure2. The Four Faces of Vision (Kim, 2002, p. 13)

Table1. Hierarchy of Choice

Relevant Questions	Type of Choice	Area of Focus
Who, what, when, Where, why, how?	OTHER CHOICES	Activities
WHICH?	TERTIARY CHOICE	Tactics
HOW?	SECONDARY CHOICE	Strategy
WHAT?	PRIMARY CHOICE	Vision
WHY?	FUNDAMENTAL CHOICE	Purpose
WHO?	CORE VALUES	Identity

“Having said all of the above, why do we care about exercising foresight in the first place?” Kim asked (Kim, 2002, p. 19). The answer to this question is simply because of Robert Greenleaf’s concept of ethical failure. A part of the answer to this question is charting a certain path for ‘our’children. Kim warns against lambasting in our challenges and in the process misses the real issue, a legacy for future generations (p. 20). He summarizes the danger of not leaving a legacy for future generations this way, “...one day sometime in the future, people are going to look back and say to us, ‘You fool, somebody stole our children’s future!’”(p. 20) and this is the reason for

foresight and good foresight to create ethical prosperity and NOT failure. As a result, Kim forwards the idea that people answer the call of service to humanity, servant-leadership. Because, “Answering the call will require us to rediscover who we are as individuals and connecting with the highest aspirations in ourselves and our organizations”(Kim, 2002, p. 20) and this rationale for all having insight as it is the key for unlocking a legacy for future generations.

In concluding, it is a worthy monograph to read and make for a christmas, birthday or any special event gifts.

REFERENCES

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