

A vision for social work leadership: Critical conceptual elements

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Content of presentation

Social work leadership in the context of

- Ecological systems thinking
- People: creating culture
- Ethics, expressed through
 - Authenticity, servant leadership, spirituality, personal and professional integrity
- Indigenous thinking and complex adaptive approaches
- Tensions between ethics, organisational imperatives and the worker

Ecological systems thinking applied to social work leadership: Four strands

Leadership as people-related: Creating culture
Management as related to 'things:' e.g. organisational structure

Leadership in the context of

- Welfare policy
- International business
- Public sector management
- New public management

Emergent research-based model of New Zealand social work leadership

Leadership in the context of

- Social work ethics, identity and standards

IFSW/IASSW
USA/UK/Australia/ Aotearoa NZ

Leadership in the context of

- Indigenous leadership thinking
- Connections with biological complexity thinking

Leadership and systems thinking

Systems thinking needs 'systemic questions'

(Attwood, Pedler, Pritchard, & Wilkinson, 2003)

- 'How can I best use my position to assist *us* all to make sense of what is going on, so that *together we* can contribute to sustainable change?'
- 'How do I lead this organisation [or team] so that *we* can make the best possible contribution to the *improvement and wellbeing of those we serve*?'

Questions not prescriptions are needed:
but what questions?

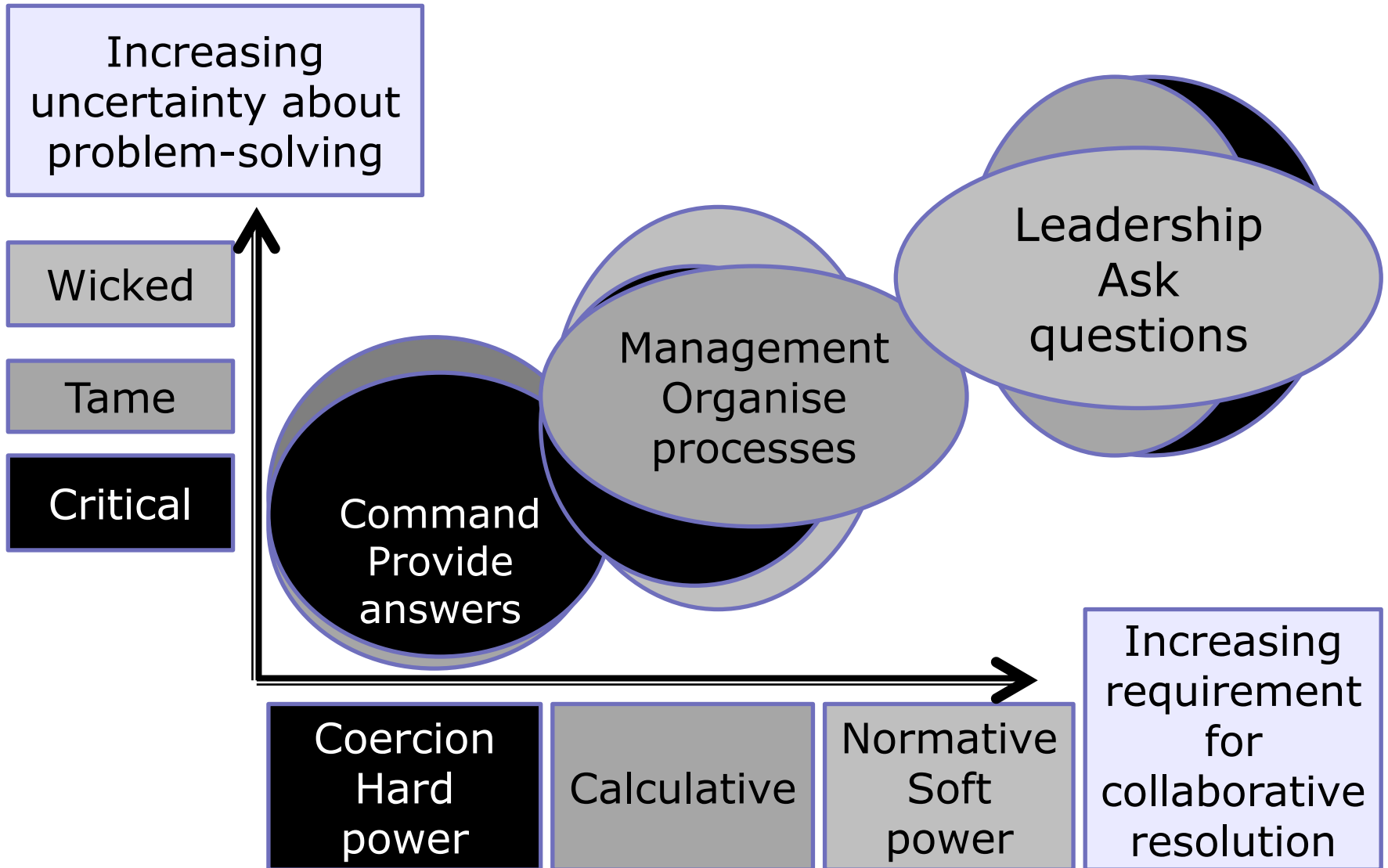
Leadership as socially constructed by problem definition: Creating culture

- 'Problems, problems, problems' (Grint, 2005)
- Leadership actions as socially constructed by the problems and challenges that organisations face.
- 'Tame' problems are management issues
- 'Wicked' problems' are leadership issues
- 'Critical' problems are command issues



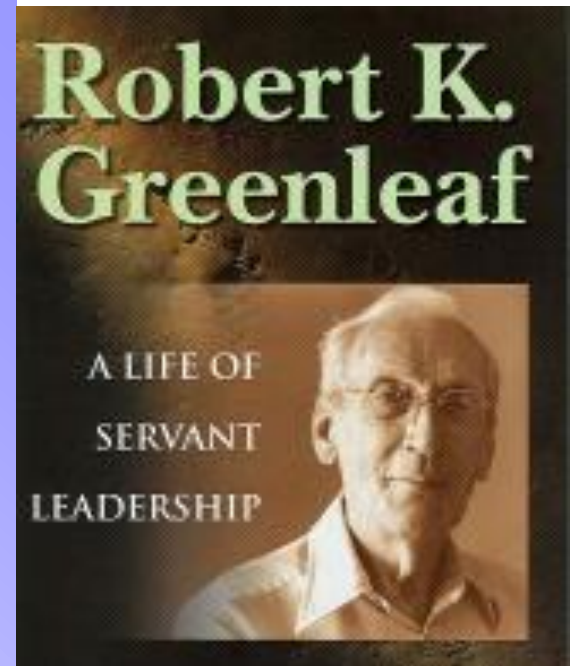
Assemblage
No. 15
(Wicked
Problems)

Grint (2005) Problems, power and authority



Leadership and social work ethics, standards and identity

- 'Norms of right action, good qualities of character and values ... enacted by social workers in their work.' (Banks, 2008)
- 'Personal integrity, professional integrity and the integrity of the helping professions' (Appleton, 2010)
- Ethical considerations and leadership: qualities such as authenticity, ethical values and servant leadership express ethical leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008; Luthans & Avolio, 2003)

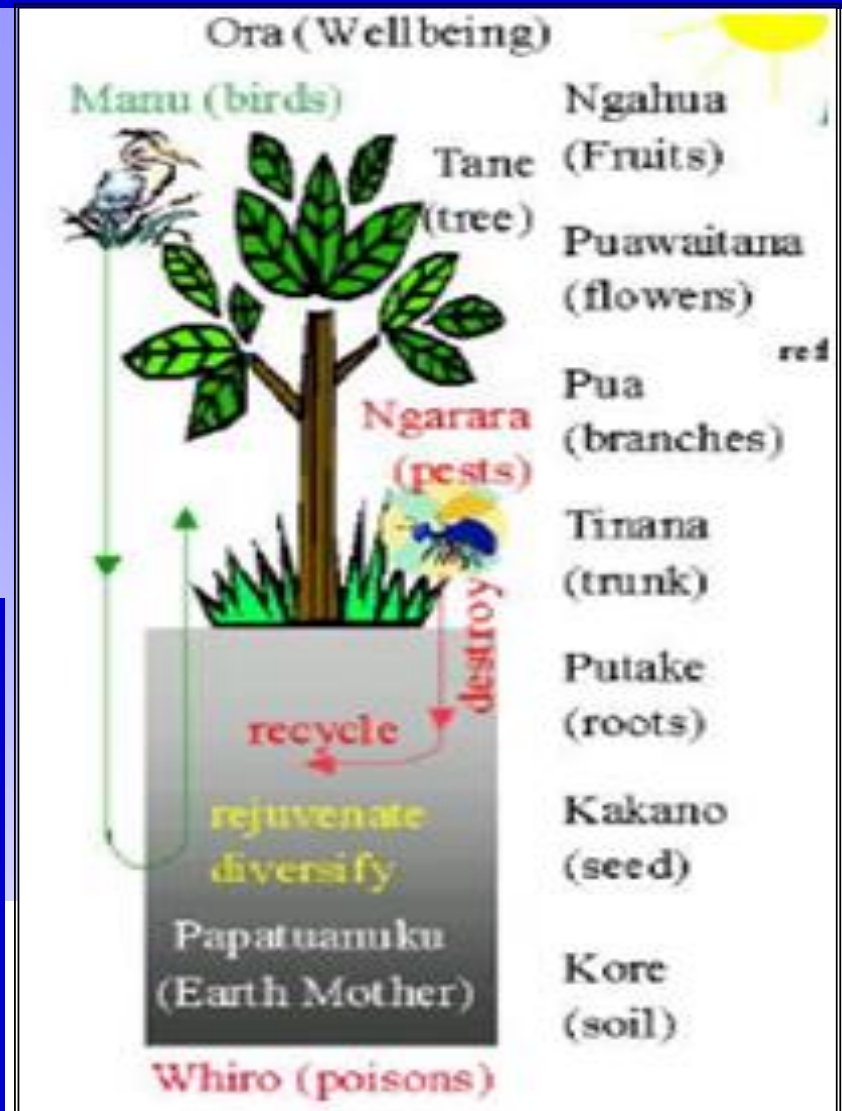


Peter Drucker said of Greenleaf: 'The wisest man I ever met'

Leadership, ethics and indigenous leadership approaches

The literature identifies indigenous leadership as collective, organic, holistic and spiritual (Calliou, 2005; Durie, 1998; Ivory, 2008)

New Zealand context:
Tipu Ake collective leadership as filtering agent for new ideas (Te Whaiti Nui-A-Toi, 2001)



Tensions between ethics, organisational imperatives and the worker

- Ethics and indigenous thinking vis-à-vis efficiency, performance and practice standardisation
- Managerial agenda meets professional ethics and the exercise of leadership
- A sense of powerlessness as 'power-over' leadership replaces 'power-with' leadership (Follett, 1995)
- Organisational demands for data may undercut ethics as underpinning everyday practice (ANZASW, 2008)

Tensions between ethics, organisational imperatives and the worker

- Are ethics a debating point or an integrative force for practice?
- Gray (2010) graphically depicts current social work practice as struggling to integrate those professional values in the context of powerful organisational 'prescriptive' imperatives
- How might we address these tensions?
- Pauline Leonard (2009) offers an integrative statement

Pauline Leonard's (2008, p.253, 255) 'journey' towards integrating personal and professional authenticity captures and connects essential ethical properties with a vision of social justice:

'As a human being, I am responsible to the community for the creation of a ***just, caring, equitable, democratic society***. Any aspects of my professional identity must be congruent with this aspect of my being ... I believe I tell the truth, as I know it, in striving for authenticity. Becoming authentic is a process, a journey, not an end in itself; it ... requires a continual examination of one's multiple identities within the context of the communities in which one lives, works and interacts (italics added).'

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