Section C. *Should* Not Become a Profession

8

Against Professionalizing Leadership: The Roles of Self-Formation and Practical Wisdom in Leadership

Kenneth Mølbjerg Jørgensen and Marita Svane

Introduction

The idea of turning leadership into a profession is appealing. Closer consideration, however, questions whether this idea is appropriate. Leadership education is a research and teaching discipline, which is rich, multi-voiced, and complex. It is interdisciplinary and nurtured by many different disciplines: philosophy, sociology, psychology, economy, engineering, pedagogy, learning, gender studies, ethics, religion, and spirituality. The leadership discipline is hence a heterogeneous, contradictory, and paradoxical field of discursive forces. It is vibrant and dynamic. We may compare leadership discourse with Deleuze and Guattari's metaphor of the *rhizome*. Accordingly, there are no linear or singular lines of development but many different lines that are related to one another but that do not

K. M. Jørgensen (✉) • M. Svane
Department of Business and Management, Aalborg University,
Aalborg, Denmark

143

form a unitary path. They note that there is no mother tongue, only power takeovers by dominant languages (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, p. 6). This reflects the complexity of the subject matter. It is a result that many different people, from many different disciplines and places, are engaged in leadership. Furthermore, leadership discourse evolves around practical problems, which differ in their temporal, spatial, and material locations.

Within this complex, multi-voiced space, students of leadership have to start finding their way towards becoming practitioners. We propose two interconnected terms that characterize their journey: *self-formation* and *practical wisdom*. Together they constitute a holistic notion of being, which perceives the formation of the self as relational engagement with the world and includes practical wisdom—that is, situated sensitivity and awareness of how to act and relate properly to others and to oneself (Eisner 2002). Practical wisdom is derived from Aristotle's knowledge framework, which also comprises rational knowledge (episteme) and skills (technê). Rather than seeing practical wisdom as a separate type of knowledge from episteme and technê, we suggest that the three types are entangled and condition one another. The complex pool of knowledge that is divided into these three main knowledge types can be seen as many fragments of discourse that need to be put together in the shaping of a possible future (Boje et al. 2016). Practical wisdom entails a holistic notion of being in which mind, heart, soul, hand, community, and the world are interconnected. It is suggested that educating for self-formation and practical wisdom requires a practice-based educational program as well as a free space to explore, experiment, and create. It involves engagement, involvement, and self-directed learning.

Thus, we argue against professionalizing leadership. Any attempt to monopolize leadership—to seize the power of leadership language—conflicts with this freedom to explore and engage in a self-directed way. In other words, we are afraid that professionalization implies monopolization and centralization, whereby the power to construct leadership will ultimately end up in the hands of powerful universities. Furthermore, leadership thrives on creativity and transformation, which fit badly with standardized learning goals, curricula, and pedagogy. This development does not improve the quality of leadership education. Rather, there is the obvious risk that it will become more traditional and mono-voiced.

Our position, opposing the professionalization of leadership, is grounded in two concepts that we suggest are essential for leadership education: *self-formation* and *practical wisdom*. Symptomatic for our argument, such concepts will probably be even more marginalized by professionalization. They have always been on the borderline of what is commonly accepted in leadership studies. In these studies such concepts are considered inferior to evidence-based rational, universal, and epistemic instrumental knowledge. Leadership can, however, be seen as *the performance of practical wisdom.*

The chapter is structured in the following way. First, we explore the notion of leadership and self-formation. This is followed by a discussion of practical wisdom as well as technical and epistemic knowledge in relation to the notion of leadership and self-formation. Third, we discuss leadership education as a process of dialogical self-formation informed in particular by practical wisdom. This discussion allows us to identify the key principles of practice- and dialogical-based leadership education supporting leadership self-formation and wisdom. Finally, we present our conclusions on the discussions.

What Is Leadership?

The first question is: what is leadership? In the dominant leadership discourse, leaders are considered to be very different from managers, who are good administrators and capable of budgeting, structuring jobs, staffing jobs, and measuring performances (Kotter 1990). Management is about doing things right: following the rules, guidelines, and procedures, and executing them to perfection. Leaders, in contrast, are persons who do the right thing (Drucker 1974). They take organizations into the future and they develop vision, engagement and motivation. Becoming a leader is a hard and emotional process. Hill (2003, p. x) argues that it entails three essential learning processes: (1) learning technical, human, and conceptual competences, (2) changing one's mind, and (3) changing oneself. While management concerns technical and economic administration, leadership concerns people management. It requires both dialogical capabilities to work with others and capabilities to work with the self.

Consequently, the leader is represented as a "Great Man" (Spector 2016). It is an image of the leader that resembles what Foucault calls *pastoral power*, which, according to him, is a dominant image of power in Western societies. It has four characteristics: (1) it is a form of power of which the ultimate aim is to ensure salvation in the next world; (2) it is not only a form of power that commands; it must be prepared to sacrifice itself for the life and salvation of the flock; (3) it is a form of power that looks after not only the community but each individual throughout her entire life; and (4) it is a form of power that cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, and without causing them to reveal their innermost secrets (Foucault 2000, p. 333). Maybe this comparison is unfair and inaccurate, but it takes the point to the limit in terms of how highly leadership is valued today. The leader is represented as a great father or mother, who shows and helps his or her followers (the employees) along the right path in the organization.

The theoretical vocabulary and toolbox taught in many business classes today contain many elements that are consistent with leadership as pastoral power and hence for creating followership. The discourse on leadership reproduces the idea of a hierarchical leader–follower relationship, in which leaders lead and employees follow. It is manifested in a theoretical understanding of organizations as hierarchical structures in which leaders are at the top or in the center. Even many of the "softer" tools that are part of leadership education today reproduce— often unconsciously— this leader–follower relationship. These tools acknowledge the need for dialogue, communication, and learning but in a way in which the organization's goals and strategies are seen as the highest context.

These tools are used for submission to and the internalization of corporate values. Edwards (2008) calls them confessional practices. These include, among others, personnel counseling, group dynamics technologies, psychological techniques for self-examination, and psycho-therapy (Ibarra-Colado et al. 2006, p. 49). They are premised on the belief of knowing oneself as self-awareness, and this knowledge is achieved by turning inwards towards a true or real self (Townley 1995, pp. 274–5). They are used with the purpose of improving oneself in the name of the company. This comparison may again seem to be rough and unfair, since

these tools have produced many valuable contributions. We wish, however, to point out the inherent dangers. They entail a narrow and rather normative conception of self: the subject must talk in a particular way, must relate to others in a particular way, is expected to work on the self in a particular way, and is expected to learn and be flexible. She or he also has to accept being categorized by personality profiling as well as being continuously measured and evaluated.

As a contrast to the pastoral conception of leadership, we suggest instead that leadership is about nurturing common human traits: cultivating the self at the same time as learning about organizations and management. This includes understanding how one can engage with organizations and the world in proper, creative, and answerable ways. To lead—to perform practical wisdom—is linked to the alternative to self-awareness that Foucault also traced, namely self-formation. It operates with other assumptions, namely that leadership takes place in the midst of many different people with different motives and intentions. It entails human plurality (Arendt 1998, p. 7) and acknowledges difference as a resource. Self-formation is self-mastery and implies the care of activity and the details and routines of what one does, thinks, and feels (Townley 1995, p. 275). Further, it sees the self as being formed through active engagement with others, whereby action is judged on one's performance with others. Self-formation is about finding the good life. Self-mastery implies that we are all leaders and masters of our life. As such, education—including leadership education—is about self-formation and nurturing practical wisdom. Self-formation requires freedom, because freedom is the ontological condition of ethics, which on the other hand is the concrete form that ethics takes when it is informed by reflection (Foucault 1997, p. 284).

The freedom to experiment and reflect on one's activities together with others is—along with new affordances for action—perhaps the most important and dearest possession of education. Frequently, however, education is also used and framed as a disciplinary field for shaping particular subjects according to fixed ideas about what the future will bring. This futuristic vision often entails standardized learning goals, accreditation standards, and standard curricula and assessment procedures, and it often materializes under a professionalization narrative. The

play between these two forces—formalization and freedom—is a manifestation of one of the central dilemmas of education. How much should be formalized and structured? How much should be left for freedom, creativity, and experimentation? Put differently: how much formalization and structure is needed for freedom, creativity and experimentation to flourish? Thus, it is not a choice between one and the other. It is a question of finding an appropriate balance of a structured learning space that at the same time can work as a *space of appearance* (Arendt 1998, p. 198). For Arendt, this space is where people can appear as unique subjects with their own motives, interests, and intentions. Thus, it is a space that is structured but also a space where free women and men can meet, co-create, and shape the future. A space of appearance entails the principle that education does not educate for a fixed, imagined, and planned future but that it should enable people to create their own future (Todd 2009). Self-formation involves making one's unique appearance in the world as a unique and different human being. It requires motivation, commitment, engagement, and an interest in exploring, learning, collaborating and communicating.

The traditional understanding of leadership puts too much emphasis on the leader as a person and on his/her personality attributes. It reproduces an idea of a great hero (Spector 2016, pp. 18–19). Instead we argue that leadership is an approach to the world that any member of the organization may display and exhibit through her or his actions. Leadership is a craft, a skillful or an artful performance that takes place with others. Performance denotes the active shaping of, and intervening in, reality. In organizations this performance can comprise multiple interacting practices and involves both discursive (beliefs, ideas, knowledge, and so on) and material (techniques, systems, artefacts, and so on) affordances (Mol 1999, pp. 74–5). Leadership is thus collective and relational.

To lead is to perform practical wisdom. This resides in practical know-how, feelings and senses. It entails the development of wise action, judgment, and decision making, stimulating curiosity and engagement, growing dialogical capabilities, and nourishing historical and practical sensitivity towards complex organizational problems. We are worried that these dimensions of leadership will be under-prioritized if leadership is turned into a profession. Professionalization means developing a com-

mon, explicit knowledge base. This conflicts with the ideas concerning self-formation, which is conditioned on freedom. Secondly, practical wisdom—or for that sake any other ethical approach to leadership—has never been part of the recognized vocabulary of leadership education. Instead, the dominant approaches to leadership have been founded on episteme and technê, understood as the practical application of episteme. Practical wisdom differs essentially from these knowledge types. Practical wisdom, episteme, and technê are unfolded and related to leadership formation in the next section.

Leadership Implications of Practical Wisdom, Episteme and Technê

In describing practical wisdom, we use the classical distinction that Aristotle (2009) makes between phronesis (practical wisdom), technê, and episteme. This knowledge framework has experienced a renaissance in management literature. Attention has been directed towards the way in which phronetic practical wisdom differs from other ways of learning and knowing, as well as how it matters to leadership formation. The attention to practical wisdom is also due to an increasing interest in ethical leadership. While the instrumental and rational learning processes are related to technê and episteme, the dialogical and self-formative processes of learning are primarily associated with practical wisdom. Following Nonaka et al. (2014), who also draw on Aristotle, we advocate a distinction between phronetic wisdom on one hand and technically oriented knowledge on the other. Both ways of knowing matter to professional leadership formation, but they imply different ways of learning in practice. Furthermore, episteme presents a third way of knowing and learning, which additionally has implications in regard to the professionalization of leadership.

Practical wisdom is used as a translation of phronesis to emphasize that this form of knowledge is grounded in praxis and related to our actions and doings. Practical wisdom is about things being done. Aristotle (2009) distinguishes practical wisdom from technê because technê is about things being made. Wisdom is related to phronesis, understood as a good

action. According to Aristotle, practical wisdom "is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man" (Aristotle 2009, p. 1140b). The good action has itself as its end, which means that the good and wise are immanent in action. Practical wisdom secures what is good through wise actions. It is not enough to deliberate and reason about what is good and wise to do. To be practically wise implies acting. Wisdom happens (Kirkeby 2009, p. 98). Practical wisdom is thus associated with practical knowledge and ethics.

As practical wisdom serves the greater good, it transgresses the interests of the individual. Practical wisdom thus addresses the capacity of the human being to guide and develop her- or himself ethically (Kirkeby 2009, p. 70): to become wise in judgments, decisions and actions for the sake of the good life for the individual and the community. Consequently, practical wisdom can be reduced neither to a personal trait nor to a cultural trait of a specific cultural form of life. As Kirkeby (2009, p. 70) states, practical wisdom implies a relational capacity that is developed in relation to the being of the other person. Hence, practical wisdom involves the free space for growing the capacity to co-receive and co-create. Phronesis is thus linked to both dialogical learning and self-formation.

Technê differs from practical wisdom because technê has an end other than itself in being purpose and goal-oriented. In producing and making things, technê addresses the capacity to create, make, and produce things (Aristotle 2009, pp. 1140a and b). Technê thus comprises technical competences. These may relate to the application of epistemic knowledge, but they can also relate to the knowledge and creativeness of craftsmanship.

Differing from practical knowledge, Aristotle's concept of episteme addresses the knowledge that is learnt and taught as universal truth (Aristotle 2009, pp. 1139b 25). Episteme is therefore concerned with scientific and theoretical knowledge, which is assumed to be universal, general and abstract, as well as written, documented, and empirically verified (Chia and Rasche 2015, p. 37). Teaching thus starts from what is already known and implies a much more deductive and analytical way of learning (Aristotle 2009, p. 1139b). For that reason episteme is related to expert knowledge and rational knowledge.

Technê and episteme combined express the instrumental and rational ways of knowing and learning. The practical application manifests in codifiable techniques or practical instructions that are made available through explicit and linguistic explication, making the knowledge accessible and teachable (Chia and Rasche 2015, p. 37). Because the end is separated from the activity of making in technê, epistemic and technical knowledge operates with the distinctions between means and end, behavior and intentions, and producer and product. In combination, episteme and technê may thus enhance the instrumentalization of practices (Chia and Rasche 2015, p. 37) and of human beings, as well as the life of the organization and its surrounding world.

In the contemporary capitalist world, with its focus on performance, production, consumption, proficiency and efficiency, rational and instrumental competences, skills, and knowledge are considered to be valuable. The rational and instrumental approach conceives of the world as controllable, predictable, planned and designed. It offers technical, hands-on, and codified recipes to solve organizational problems and gives straight answers. It is easier to sell and is therefore more likely to be favored by the professionalization of leadership. Professionalization will thus imply that it will become even more a matter of developing theoretical expert knowledge, competences, and skills for analyzing, designing, and planning as well as for optimizing, organizing, and strategizing. In the worst-case scenario, professionalization will imply that a leadership program that emphasizes practical wisdom will no longer be recognized as a leadership program.

Consequently, we are opposed to the professionalization of leadership. It risks destroying the simultaneous development that is taking place along with the increasing rationalization and instrumentalization of knowledge. This development is an increasing call for ethics and wisdom (Nonaka et al. 2014, p. 370). As practical wisdom in action seeks no other outcome than its own self-realization (Chia and Rasche 2015, p. 37), ethical judgment is actualized in the moment of the action and not *after* the act. Retrospective judgment of the act already performed does not direct us beyond the outcome and performative consequences of the act (Shotter and Tsoukas 2014, p. 379).

The formation of leadership is thus a matter of building the phronetic capacity to be prepared for new and challenging events and to be capable of judging, choosing, and acting wisely; As opposed to the technical, rational, and instrumental knowing and learning that separate the producer from the product and evaluate the product without reference to the producer (Nonaka et al. 2014), phronetic knowing centers on the ethical growth of the human being in relation to others. The action therefore cannot be separated from the agent who performs it, as "self is drawn into action" (Nonaka et al. 2014, pp. 268–9).

Furthermore, practical wisdom constitutes a practical, embodied, tacit, and unarticulated knowing. The learning and knowing grown through the experience of acting and doing in the world are internalized into the body as an embodied tacit knowing of how to do and how to act in new situations occurring in an infinite world of unforeseen and unexpected events and happenings. Practical wisdom thus entails an embodied capacity to cope with the unprepared and surprising and to act, judge, and choose wisely. Practical wisdom presupposes the cultivation of relational, ethical, and practical capacities of human beings in general, as well as the working out of the free space. We consider those features as key elements of becoming a leader, yet they have never formed a prominent part of leadership education and leadership studies. This is no surprise. Practical wisdom is tacit, embodied and situational and is therefore difficult to transmit. Its answer to organizational problems is "it depends." In a world that favors the commodification of knowledge and quick solutions, practical wisdom will always "limp behind." Professionalizing leadership will probably make the situation worse. It is, however, also in such a world that practical wisdom is needed more than ever. We will discuss the features of practical wisdom in the next section.

Dialogical Learning and Self-formation in Leadership Education

In our argumentation we will emphasize (1) the nature of *practice* and what practice can contribute to leadership education; (2) the importance of a *free space* for experimenting and exploring the world; and (3) the

importance of designing education as a *collective and dialogical learning process*. Our approach does not only imply an integrated approach, in which epistemic knowledge, technê, and phronesis are combined and integrated in a holistic way in education. The development of phronetic wisdom and the formation of the self are an iterative process, which includes a sense of history, space, art, craftsmanship, dialogue, communication, ethics, and the world.

The rational and instrumental form of knowledge addresses a type of knowledge that is transmittable, explicit, and articulated. This idea is embedded in most leadership educational programs today. Tools, instruments, models, and theories are assumed to be transferrable and transmittable, making it possible to apply "vertical learning and monological teaching." Such learning includes practical instructions, the adoption of codified techniques and procedures, and internalization of what is assumed to be the right and true understanding of scientifically based theories and knowledge. Teachers are, according to this view, in the business of disseminating information, and learning is seen as mechanical reproduction (Freire 1996; Jørgensen et al. 2012).

The competences associated with epistemic knowledge are important and necessary. However, they do not make people leaders. They are only tools that should be subordinate to technê—understood as art and craftsmanship—and phronesis. If these epistemic tools are misunderstood as the ultimate goal of leadership education, everything meaningful concerning leadership is lost. Furthermore, epistemic knowledge can be understood in a different way from universal and general knowledge. For us, the knowledge covered by episteme is part of the language and vocabulary of management and leadership (Pålshaugen 2001). They are part of practical experiences and as such are indispensable discursive affordances for exploring organizational life with the purpose of figuring out something new.

In this sense, epistemic knowledge is an ingrained part of technê and phronesis, which also means, however, that epistemic knowledge cannot be elevated to some superior position. Leadership is about passion, commitment, engagement, and exploration, which are what dialogical and self-formative learning addresses. This kind of learning descends to the particular concrete, chaotic, and complex events of the world. Thus,

practical wisdom is assumed to grow through learning based on our experiences of being in and coping with occurring and unforeseen events, giving rise to a sea of possibilities, tensions, and confusions, and unpredictability and surprises (Shotter and Tsoukas 2014). By being responsive to those situations that life throws at us, and by sensing a particular event in all its complexity and potentiality, practical wisdom grows as a relational "self-cultivating activity" (Chia and Holt 2006, p. 91).

Consequently, leadership education should be about the exploration of the *practices* in which people are engaged. Exploration happens not through information but through "sharing experiences" (Benjamin 1999). This is a holistic and embodied learning process whereby people share important experiences with one another. It is embedded in the design of education as an explorative process of figuring out what the world is like, how others perceive the world, and what the world potentially could be like. The world—the assemblage of practices—needs to be an ingrained and important part of leadership education. Otherwise, dialogical and self-formative learning cannot work. The world is a very personal and interpersonal matter. When leadership students look people in the eyes, feel and sense them, work with them, and share their worries and concerns, they have the feeling that this is not just applying theory to practice. Integrating organizational practices and leadership education is thus not a matter of applying theory to practice. It is about practice itself. Understanding and solutions have to grow from that practice. Students have to work with and understand practices from within and learn how to twist, transform, reassemble, and revitalize the discursive and material affordances of practices. "Real-life" vibrant organizational spaces are as such an explorative ground for figuring out who one is, what one stands for, and what one wants to become.

Self-cultivation and self-formation differ from epistemic learning. Practical wisdom embraces our ethical and practical relation with others. We do not inhabit the social world through individual agency but find ourselves inseparable from it, embodied and embedded in the midst of things and others. Practical wisdom thus implies embodied and reflexive learning occurring through dialogical exchanges with others and with ourselves (inner dialogue). Practical wisdom constitutes an immanent and relational process of forming ethical leadership identity and leader-

ship practices. This leads to the second point in the argument for how leadership education can be designed to shape dialogical learning and self-formation: the importance of a *free space* for experimenting and exploring the world.

Education has the potential to be what Arendt (1998, p. 198) calls a space of appearance—a collective and relational space where people can appear to one another with their own voices, motivations, and interests. A space of appearance requires self-directed learning, that is, the freedom to frame, explore, and reflect on the world in a free space where students can thus bring something new to the stage. In practice-based leadership education, students are at the borderline between organizational practices and education. They are engaged in but not part of organizational practices. Furthermore, their performances are measured not by their contributions to organizational practices but in relation to how systematically they can reflect critically and work with these practices. It is a double position of being both inside and outside organizational practices at the same time.

This is an important argument against professionalizing leadership. Professionalization implies more or less strict boundaries for what can be considered inside and outside leadership. It conflicts directly with the idea of self-formation and the freedom to experiment with whatever is interesting. This includes, for example, philosophy, art, narratology, poetry, theater, music, filmmaking, neuroscience, and quantum physics. Setting boundaries for legitimate and illegitimate knowledge might destroy the adventurous exploration that leadership studies might be.

The space of appearance is also important in regard to the third point: the importance of designing education as a *collective and dialogical learning process*. A space of appearance is a collective and relational space and is thus a space that makes it possible to act collectively. This concerns the relational and ethical character of competently sensing the event and coping with its inherited social, material, and historical complexity. "Learning" practical wisdom cultivates the competences in sensing, experiencing, and understanding the complexity, uniqueness, and possibilities of the concrete event-shared-with-others. Acting is always acting together with others, and therefore practical wisdom entails the development of (1) dialogical resources enabling human beings to co-receive and co-create as a way of relating to the world, (2) sophisticated sensitivity in

embodied listening and sensing from within the relational event, and (3) co-reflexive questioning and inquiring into coping acts and interactions as well as their performative consequences. Apart from collaborating with practice, there also has to be a more systematic focus on shaping learning spaces that both facilitate and train dialogical resources, sensitivity, and reflexivity, all of which are hardly compatible with professionalizing leadership.

In regard to the first point, practical wisdom does not only imply being *practically* wise in judgment, choices, and doings. Being practically wise may be associated with reason and deliberation, but these cannot define practical wisdom (Aristotle 2009). Practical wisdom instead embraces a *practical ethical* dimension, which comprises deeds and virtuous acts and doings. These deeds and virtues are to be conceived as a transforming social identity anchored in responsive dialogical and self-formative learning. Being an active, responsive participant compels a person to commit to the dialogical preconditions by engaging her- or himself "…wholly and throughout his [sic] whole life: with his [sic] eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his [sic] whole body and deeds. He [sic] invests his [sic] entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium" (Bakhtin 1984, p. 293). Developing dialogical competences for facilitating a dialogical space and for entering into the dialogue as resourceful conversational participants constitutes crucial competence development in leadership formation and learning, which may be overlooked and set aside in the professionalization of leadership.

Secondly, developing sophisticated sensitivity towards the nuances of the event adds to and intertwines with the development of dialogical competence. Sensitivity is a derivation of the Latin word *sensibilis* and concerns our senses and our ability to make life sensible through our experiences and sensing of our surroundings (Cunliffe and Coupland 2011, pp. 67–9). There is a close relation between sensitivity and embodiment, which is conceived of as an emotional and sensed bodily experience. Thus, sensing the event is a matter of being capable not only of co-receiving the dialogical utterances through the spoken words but also of being embodied and responsive to the vibrating voices, facial expressions, and bodily gestures. The past experience-based learning and know-

ing from having been engaged in the events of the past are stored and internalized in embodied memory and operate as tacit knowledge of the body. In other words, they cannot be codified and assessed. Educators and students have to experiment and use their imagination to develop these abilities in a way that is hardly consistent with the professionalization of leadership.

Reflexivity constitutes the third essential resource in dialogical and self-formative learning. Reflexivity encompasses the dimension that connects tacit knowing and explicit knowledge (Cunliffe 2002, p. 35). The multi-voiced exchanges of worldviews, questions, doubts, and critical counter-arguments and alternative interpretations give rise to (self-) reflexive learning in terms of reflexive thinking of "the relations of acts to surroundings and to own identity" (Shotter and Tsoukas 2014, p. 379). Participating in reflexive learning dialogues contributes to the development of critical and responsive practitioners. Reflexivity differs from reflection, as the latter constitutes a process unfolding at a distance from the world in terms of reflecting on the world, events, performed acts, and performative consequences. Reflexivity constitutes "a living in"; that is, being reflexive in the moment of the act towards why and how we account for our experience in the way that we do to explore alternative understandings. Hence, reflexivity is to recognize the situatedness of the reflexive act and in mutual responsiveness to deconstruct, contest, evoke, evade, imagine, and confront constructions of realities (Cunliffe 2003, pp. 986, 989; Cunliffe and Coupland 2011, p. 69).

Through reflexive dialogue learning, we thus enter into the self-formative learning through which we develop a unique relational identity. Together with dialogical resources and sensitivity, reflexivity is hard to formalize and codify. All these abilities are similar in the sense that they require something different from what was always considered in mainstream leadership research and education. We cannot say anything certain about what promotes dialogical self-formation and practical wisdom, and no results can be guaranteed. Nevertheless, two elements are crucial: (1) an inspirational and supportive learning space and (2) the freedom to create and explore. Both these elements risk being jeopardized by the professionalization of leadership.

Conclusions

We have argued for leadership education based on self-formation and practical wisdom and have conceptualized what such leadership education may look like. It is a practice-based free space for experimenting and exploring the world and is characterized by collective and dialogical learning processes. These features have never been dominant parts of leadership education. Therefore, there is good reason to expect that they will play only a marginal and peripheral role if leadership is professionalized. The institutional forces that govern traditional leadership education are strong. The control and standardization of leadership language that threaten to take over leadership education as part of the professionalization of leadership are not attractive. Our position is supported by recent developments in Denmark. Here, higher education has undergone a process that has included accreditation, standardization, and more explicit learning goals, individual assessment, and measurement. Standardization of the curriculum has still to come—hopefully it never will. Professionalization understood in that sense standardizes, separates, and individualizes. It creates competition among students and linear learning paths that do not encourage experimentation. These have nothing to do with creating a collective, collaborative, and dialogical learning space. We warn against such professionalization of leadership education. It will instrumentalize leadership instead of creating leaders with practical wisdom.

References

Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Aristotle. 2009. *The Nicomachean Ethics: Oxford World's Classics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 1999. "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, 83–107. London: Pimlico.

Boje, David M., Usha Haley, and Rohny Saylors. 2016. "Antenarratives of Organizational Change: The Microstoria of Burger King's Storytelling in Space, Time and Strategic Context." *Human Relations* 69(2):391–418.

Chia, Robert, and Robin Holt. 2006. "Strategy as Practical Coping: A Heideggerian Perspective." *Organization Studies* 27(5):635–55.

Chia, Robert, and Andreas Rasche. 2015. "Epistemological Alternatives for Researching Strategy-As-Practice: Building and Dwelling Worldviews." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Strategy as Practice*, edited by Damon Golsorkhi, Linda Rouleau, David Seidl, and Eero Vaara, 44–57. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cunliffe, Ann L. 2002. "Reflexive Dialogical Practice in Management Learning." *Management Learning* 33(1):35–61.

Cunliffe, Ann L. 2003. "Reflexive Inquiry in Organizational Research: Questions and Possibilities." *Human Relations* 56(8):983–1003.

Cunliffe, Ann L., and Chris Coupland. 2011. "From Hero to Villain to Hero: Making Experience Sensible Through Embodied Narrative Sensemaking." *Human Relations* 65(1):63–88.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. 2013. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Bloomsbury.

Drucker, Peter F. 1974. *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*. New York: Harper & Row.

Edwards, Richard. 2008. "Actively Seeking Subjects." In *Foucault and Lifelong Learning: Governing the Subject*, edited by Andreas Fejes and Katherine Nicoll, 21–33. London: Routledge.

Eisner, Elliot W. 2002. "From Episteme to Phronesis to Artistry in the Study and Improvement of Teaching." *Teacher and Teaching Education* 18:375–85.

Foucault, Michel. 1997. "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom." In *Michel Foucault: Ethics—Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 281–302. London: Allen Lane.

Foucault, Michel. 2000. "The Subject and Power." In *Michel Foucault—Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984 Volume 3*, edited by James D. Faubion, 326–48. London: Penguin.

Freire, Paolo. 1996. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.

Hill, Linda A. 2003. *Becoming a Manager: How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Ibarra-Colado, Eduardo, Stewart R. Clegg, Carl Rhodes, and Martin Kornberger. 2006. "The Ethics of Managerial Subjectivity." *Journal of Business Ethics* 64:45–55.

Jørgensen, Kenneth M., Anete M. Camille Strand, and Anja O. Thomassen. 2012. "Conceptual Bases of Problem-Based Learning." In *Global Perspectives on College and University Teaching*, edited by James Groccia, Mohammed A.T. Alsudairi, and William Buskist, 440–56. London: Sage.

Kirkeby, Ole F. 2009. "Phronesis as the Sense of the Event." *International Journal of Action Research* 5(1):68–113.

Kotter, John P. 1990. "What Leaders Really Do." *Harvard Business Review* 68(3):103–11.

Mol, Annemarie. 1999. "Ontological Politics: A Word and Some Questions." *Sociological Review* 47(1):74–85.

Nonaka, Ikujiro, Robert Chia, Robin Holt, and Vesa Peltokorpi. 2014. "Wisdom, Management and Organization." *Management Learning* 45(4):365–76.

Pålshaugen, Øjvind. 2001. *The End of Organization Theory?* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Shotter, John, and Haridimos Tsoukas. 2014. "Performing Phronesis: On the Way to Engaged Judgment." *Management Learning* 45(4):377–96.

Spector, Bert A. 2016. *Discourse on Leadership: A Critical Appraisal*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Todd, Sharon. 2009. *Toward an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Townley, Barbara. 1995. "'Know Thyself': Self-Awareness, Self-Formation and Managing." *Organization* 2(2):271–89.