Developing Leadership in Local Government – a new approach for a new generation of leaders

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Context

The modernising system of Irish local government needs transformational leadership to embed and continue the process of change under the major government initiative detailed in "Better Local Government: A Programme for Change" (BLG) launched in 1996. This radical reform programme sought to enhance local democracy and community leadership; to provide services more effectively and more efficiently; and to improve responsiveness to citizens and users of local authority services through the internal restructuring of local authority organisations and the establishment of new co-ordinating structures such as County and City Development Boards; Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees.

In the context of this change programme entering its consolidation phase, the City and County Managers Association (CCMA) recognised a need to create a new generation of leaders with the vision, innovation and drive to build the local government of the future. In 2003, a sub-group representing these managers, in partnership with the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), set about designing a national leadership development intervention to identify and accelerate the development of high potential executives at middle management level as part of a system-wide succession planning strategy. At central government level, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), pledged support for the programme in terms of funding for three cohorts of twenty-four for the period 2004 to 2007. This financial support along with the personal commitment of Minister Roche and senior departmental officials to the initiative was important in terms of validating the process and emphasising the need for strategic and team leadership within the system.

Access to the programme is by way of a nomination process followed by a national competition and is open to those executives who have already demonstrated a significant track record in innovation and leadership. County and City Managers were invited to identify and nominate up to two executives that they believed had the potential to rise to the most senior levels in local government. Following completion of an in-depth competency based application form and the short-listing process, candidates are asked to attend both group and individual interviews with a selection panel representing the CCMA, LGMSB and the IPA. Interviews focus on candidates' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills along with their commitment and openness to personal learning and development. Twenty-four candidates from local authorities around the country were offered places for the 2004-5 pilot programme.

The rationale for the programme was underscored by the findings of a major study undertaken by the IPA in 2003. This tracked progress on the implementation of BLG

from 1996 and noted some outstanding challenges to be faced especially in the area of the leadership and co-ordination role of local government in securing improved public services. In addition to this new and more proactive role in local development, the study suggested that the engagement of several key groups was required to move the modernisation agenda forward. This had been relatively limited for elected members, sectoral interest representatives on Strategic Policy Committees, and the outdoor workers so that there is a need for all levels of leadership to build their commitment to the reforms. Furthermore, there was a need for local authorities to share good practice and to learn from their diverse experiences in a structured way as a basis for consolidating the gains made during the initial phases of modernisation.
The development of more support and network structures was also recommended as an enabler of change.

The design and development of the leadership intervention was based on three key data sources and considerations: firstly, the study of local government reform (2003) and the future leadership requirements identified to move it forward; secondly, parallel developments in the wider Irish public sector (also going through significant modernisation) and in the public sector internationally, and thirdly, best practice in leadership development globally. The programme involves major investment in human capital that aims to help participants "up their game" as leaders and open their minds to new ways of being and thinking in a learning environment of both support and challenge. In addition, the programme is structured to build the social capital of the local government system nationally in order to support the reform process and to begin to tackle some of the emerging adaptive challenges arising from Ireland's rapid economic growth and changing demographics.

The programme design is modular, spanning a ten-month period with twenty-six contact days and other inter-modular individual and group assignment work. This intensive and highly customised programme is delivered on a residential basis at various regional centres and incorporates an overseas benchmarking visit; business driven action learning in regionally based teams; one to one executive coaching; 360-degree diagnostics; peer learning sets; outdoor team building challenges; expert inputs and site visits. The programme culminates in an end-of-year conference planned and organised by the participants on commercial basis to showcase and disseminate their action learning research and innovations.

The various components of the programme design and delivery are described in greater detail below along with an analysis of participant evaluations and the findings emerging from them. Robert Fulmer in his article, *The Evolving Paradigm of Leadership Development*, attempts "to provide pilgrims in the new world of leadership development with a map showing the topography leadership development has travelled in the past several decades, as well as the pathways currently under construction by pioneers in the practice of organisational learning" (p. 69, 1997). We will borrow his "map" as a framework for this case study and figure below presents an overview of the six major shifts that Fulmer has identified taking place in the field of leadership development in terms of where we have been, where we are at present, and where best practices are headed.

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Shift One - Participants: From passive listeners to active learners

In the past, programme participants were viewed as "empty vessels" waiting to be filled with new knowledge presented by wise experts. This model developed over time to allow participants engage in case discussions; debate recommendations and make class presentations on their group-work assignments. However, frequently these cases and assignments bore little direct relationship to the participants' world of work. In the new world, participants listen occasionally to presenters; interact often in simulated exercises to test their skills and understanding and frequently, spend a significant portion of time demonstrating their ability to apply concepts to real challenges (Fulmer, 1997).

Like so many aspects of life, leadership development usually rewards those in direct relationship to their own effort and commitment. The design of the *Leadership in Local Government Programme* (LLGP) ensures the active engagement of all participants and encourages them to take personal responsibility for their learning. This learning process begins in advance of the formal start of the programme. Participants are required to undertake pre-course work that will be used to form the agenda for their peer learning sets, and arrange to meet with their line manager to discuss their participation in the programme and to agree some learning goals. Participants are then invited to an orientation day where they learn about the programme and have an opportunity to clarify their own expectations and to begin to network with their fellow participants. The building of a strong network as a basis to support peer learning and to develop a community of practice is a key aspect of the programme and endures beyond the intervention itself.

An important feature of this orientation day is to introduce two key components of the programme – the 360-degree diagnostic tool and the business driven action learning (BDAL) projects. The diagnostic tool used is the Leadership Effectiveness Analysis (LEA) instrument developed by Management Research Group (MRG), an international firm that specialises in individual and organisational development. The instrument seeks to measure observable behaviours that are amenable to development rather than personality traits that are notoriously difficult to change. The feedback report provides in-depth data over twenty-two behaviours, e.g. innovative, strategic, consensual, persuasive, and from four different perspectives – self, boss, peers and reports. The LEA data and the associated model of leadership provide the backbone of the programme and form a focus for each participant's personal development plan that they prepare in consultation with their executive coach. At the orientation day, the instrument and process are explained and examples of anonymous reports are shown and discussed along with the criteria of selecting "others". Participants are required to have completed the LEA diagnostic in advance of the first module when it forms a key thread of the learning.

Throughout all the modules, the active engagement of participants is ensured through the use of multiple learning methods as recommended by Conger (1992). Adult learning theory suggests that individuals differ in their learning styles and that learning occurs at several levels. For instance, it helps to have an intellectual or conceptual understanding of the roles and activities of "leadership" as it contrasts with "management". At the same time, there are behavioural skills that the learner can acquire through actual practice and experimentation. Personalised feedback as

referred to earlier is useful to target the learner's attention and awareness. Learning that also taps into the psychological and emotional needs of the learner may also be necessary to stimulate interest in personal growth. Our blended programme design reflects on-going opportunities for participants to develop conceptual awareness (e.g. policy frameworks; leadership models; forms of local government); feedback (e.g. LEA; Belbin Team Roles; Myers Briggs Type Indicator; feedback from programme faculty and from fellow participants); skill building (e.g. facilitation and presentation skills; team-working; problem solving; advocacy) and personal growth (e.g. executive coaching; mentoring; personal development planning; outward bound). In terms of their active involvement, one participant commented in their evaluation: "For me the programme is lifting the lid on the 'Pandora's Box' of leadership and local government and helping me to understand, question and explore its role and my role for the future."

Feedback from participants during the first five day residential module reflects how challenging they find the intensity of the experience especially, the level of group interaction; the variety of learning experiences; the change of pace back and forth between action and reflection; and the level of feedback from multiple perspectives. In some senses, we attempt to simulate "the swamp" as Daloz-Parks (2005) describes the messy world of leadership and to try to move our participants off "the hard, high ground" where leadership and leadership development experiences are considered more predictable and stable. At this stage of the programme, there can be an amount of "storming" by participants as they "push-back" on the faculty to reduce the intensity and challenge of the learning experience and to provide more direction and structure. This is a key phase of group development and requires skill and experience on the part of the facilitators to "hold steady" (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002), and to provide the correct amount of support and challenge to participants. Varied learning activities are included in the programme such as outdoor team rope exercises; African drumming; mountain climbing and poetry writing. These are a source of fun but also serve to challenge, stimulate and bond participants into networks.

Shift Two – Programme Design: From unique event to never-ending process

Historically, most organisations saw executive development as a one- or two-time event over a career. Over time, this approach was extended to support executives during key career transitions. Today, the pace of change and competition has caused the stakes for learning to increase significantly. Just as professionals in other disciplines must commit to a lifelong, often self-directed, development process, so too must the local government executive who aims to fulfil a leadership role.

Within the LLGP, the process of lifelong learning and development is actively promoted and participants are helped to develop tools to facilitate this process. These tools include personal development planning; eliciting feedback from others; building strong professional networks and communities of practice; and, sourcing expert and comparative research. An important aspect of their development is the mentoring relationship they are encouraged to form at the outset of the programme. They are given guidelines on the role of the mentor and how to select one, and participants then consider their own career goals and choose a mentor best suited to meet these. Although some participants have looked further afield, most mentors have had experience with local government and have been selected on the basis of their wisdom

and knowledge of the "inside track" of a system that can, at times, be highly politicised.

The network that develops among the alumni has also emerged as a powerful learning tool as the local government system in Ireland is typically weak at sharing best practice and knowledge. Participants from the first two programmes frequently cite access to networks – fellow participants; various faculty and experts; local government practitioners - as a major advantage to being selected for the programme. In the words of a participant: "The programme is a unique and challenging forum. The peer network has inspired and motivated me and given me a strong foundation on which to build by future in local government". The coaching component also sets the scene for lifelong learning and encourages the participant to plan one's career and learning beyond the horizon of the programme.

Research on the transfer of learning from training shows that information learned under distributed periods of training is generally retained longer than in a one-time programme (Naylor and Briggs, 1963). In addition, feedback-oriented programmes that span multiple periods appear to move participants from awareness to an enhanced probability of effecting change in their behaviours and perspectives (Young and Dixon, 1996). Our case study exemplifies this idea of spreading learning out over an extended period and providing opportunities at pivotal stages to reflect on and revisit key learning.

The formal aspect of our programme, from participant selection to the final conference to showcase the BDAL research, spans a twelve month period and includes pre-course work; an orientation day; four residential modules of five days duration each in locations in Ireland; a five day benchmarking visit overseas; meetings with mentors and coaches; inter-modular assignments relating to their personal development; a minimum of 100 hours of individual effort on the BDAL research and the participation in various sub-groups with leadership challenges such as the organisation of participant led workshops. This very intensive and feedback-rich learning environment helps to develop the competencies of transformational leadership required to sustain the modernisation process and to take it to the next level. In the words of a participant: "The programme is individually demanding and collectively challenging" and within this paradigm real development occurs at a personal and group level.

Shift Three – Purpose: From knowledge to action

In less complex times, it was believed that each discrete stage of a person's career required specific types of new knowledge and that, consequently, the purpose of leadership development was to provide that knowledge in advance of when it was required.. However, contemporary pressures are pushing the application of knowledge towards the solution of actual organisational problems in which managers can see the impact of their decisions in real-time.

Within the programme, the Business Driven Action Learning project has proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of the programme for participants in terms of changing their way of thinking; managing the group dynamics and managing their

time. The group is divided into four teams on a regional basis to facilitate meeting logistics and is assigned a tutor as a resource person and process facilitator. The tutor's role is largely non-directive and the group is encouraged to be self-managing. The issues that the teams grapple with are significant and crosscutting within the system of local government as a whole and are proposed by the CCMA and the DoEHLG, the programme sponsors. In this way there is linkage between the programme content and strategic issues actually facing local authorities. The BDAL process focuses on developing and testing innovative responses to these issues. The teams are encouraged to take an "outside-in" perspective, looking at the challenge from varied perspectives and borrowing good practice from other sectors and other countries where appropriate.

Dissemination of the findings takes place at a Conference organised and marketed by the group as a whole. This requires creativity, negotiation and persuasion on the part of participants and is viewed as part of the development of their transformational leadership skills. The aim is to ensure that the most senior representatives of the system such as County and City Managers; departmental policy makers; Directors of Services within local authorities, and even Government Ministers are in attendance and that their fresh research is presented to these key decision-makers. To date both participant groups have exhibited great entrepreneurship with the Conference attracting over 100 delegates of the most senior ranks at each one and showed exceptional negotiating skills in securing top keynote speakers on a pro bono basis and the best deals on venues and catering.

Examples of strategic issues given the BDAL "treatment" include: making community consultation and participation in local democracy more meaningful and effective; using the newly introduced national service indicators for local authorities to make fair and useful comparisons for benchmarking purposes; creating benchmark clubs for output; accessibility and community measures; and enhancing both the level and citizen-responsiveness of e-government at the local level.

Executive coaching is another approach the programme uses to connect knowledge with action. Each participant is assigned an experienced executive coach to support them with making the behavioural changes required to make them a more effective transformational leader. The introductory meeting is scheduled for either the first or second module and its focus is the LEA 360-degree feedback. The coach helps the participant make sense of the feedback by highlighting important patterns and identifying two behaviours that they will work to change throughout the programme. These two behaviours should be current blind spots and if improved, should be capable of enhancing their leadership effectiveness. Participants have two further sessions with their coach; usually conducted by telephone. In these sessions, participants can discuss and assess their "learning journey" in relation to specific management challenges or their own career prospects and choices.

Shift Four - Period Focus: From past tense to future perfect

The case method has had a tremendous impact on business education because of its real world orientation. Despite many useful aspects of the case method, the system is limited insofar as the case is an historical document – it reflects what could have been

done given a set of circumstances that existed in the past. Today companies now seek to know about current best practice, and future prospects and likely trends. A few organisations now use "future oriented cases" or scenarios as a means of shifting the focus from the present to the future. Organisations also use them as a way of exploring the assumptions that underpin their views about the future.

In our programme, while we recognise that there are indeed valuable lessons to be learned from the past, considerable time is spent encouraging participants to anticipate future scenarios that will impact the delivery of local government services in Ireland. The local government system could have been criticised for being reactive and inward looking in the past. Its leadership must now plan for the future and envision quality environments in which communities can work, live and play. Ireland's rapid economic development has created a whole new agenda for local government in terms of spatial planning; environmental protection; traffic management; affordable housing and ethnic diversity. Participants are asked to identify and write up a current leadership dilemma facing them in advance of the programme – many of these dilemmas relate to the adaptive challenges brought about by rapid economic growth and the pressures they place on current services. These dilemmas are analysed and discussed in small groups called "Learning Sets" that meet for up to three hours during each module. The membership of the set is constant and strict rules of confidentiality apply to their discussions to ensure a full and free exchange of views. The purpose of the group is to provide peer problem-solving and to encourage the "owner" of each dilemma to think outside the box and to look at the real case from multiple and fresh perspectives.

Shift Five – Players: from limited roles to general partners

In a more predictable world, the major players in the field of leadership and executive development were specialists and academics, proficient in their own roles and subject areas. They tended to develop topic segments that could be inserted in a variety of programme contexts from a type of *a la carte* topic menu. The main suppliers of leadership development tended to be university business schools; consulting firms and in-house training and development departments, sometimes established as a corporate university. Each of these suppliers operated within their own domains and brought their own particular approach to the process of leadership development. In the new paradigm, individuals with a blend of skills will build partnerships that enhance both organisational learning and personal development. There is a growing trend now towards collaboration, co-design and customisation on the part of client organisations planning to provide leadership development.

In the context of the LLGP, a partnership approach has been adopted so that there are multiple perspectives and a range of expertise within the programme faculty. As the programme aims to develop the leadership capacity within the system as a whole, it is important that all the key players with responsibility for reform and modernisation and for talent management within local government in Ireland support this aim and the programme outcomes. The formation of the sub-group of representative interests – CCMA, LGSMB, DoEHLG and the Institute of Public Administration – has been essential to ensure that the intervention leaves a tangible legacy, beyond the individual learning and development of participants. The sub-group guides the

programme design and direction and offers practical help in terms of providing funding, mentors, speakers and site visits for the programme.

A diverse faculty with a wide range of expertise in terms of sectoral, functional and subject knowledge and skills in facilitation, coaching, action learning and application of feedback diagnostics is selected. The core faculty is drawn from the leadership development, education and research arms of the Institute and is amply supplemented by practitioners from local government with strong track records who are willing to share their own leadership challenges and insights; leading commentators on the Irish economy, political milieu and European Union; recognised leaders from the world of sports, politics, business and the Arts; elected councillors serving in local government and senior government representatives on policy matters. This rich diversity of presenters provides a rounded, stimulating and unique learning experience and allows for lively dialogue and group discussions.

A further dimension of our partnering approach is the overseas benchmarking module that exposes participants to other systems of local government and to best practice examples of local government services and governance arrangements overseas.. Our partners have included De Paul University in Chicago and the Irish Institute in Louvain, Belgium. The Louvain experience featured dialogue with EU policy makers including the EU Competition Commissioner; a meeting with MEPS in the European Parliament and visits to local authorities innovating in the area of social inclusion and housing provision. Learning highlights from Chicago included the mobile housing workshop and work shadowing assignments with a range of top officials at City Hall and with mayors in the Chicago neighbourhoods. These day-long assignments provided unique insights into both the systems and politics of local government in Illinois, their organisational cultures and HR practices, and the variety of leadership styles deployed. The mobile workshop allowed participants to view city regeneration projects first hand and to talk to community activists and neighbourhood volunteers. These visits serve to open participants' minds to new ways of designing and delivering services and to fundamentally question their own assumptions about the nature and role of local government in Ireland. One participant made the comment that "it was like having a crystal ball to see into the future of local government"

Shift Six – Presentations: from style to substance

In the past, presenters with an engaging and inspirational style tended to be valued highly by participants in their evaluations. While content has to be presented in an entertaining way that is both understood and well received, the value of relevant content has increased significantly. The challenge has shifted to being able to process rather than to present information. The most competent leadership developers are those who are able to elicit participant input in such a way as to help with the resolution of actual issues. Our programme recognises this shift and much of the learning takes place outside of a traditional classroom setting – in workplaces; in wilderness places; in stakeholders' offices; in community-based facilities; on boats - to name but some of the learning environments we have created with the generous co-operation of the many individuals and groups who contribute their time and experience to the programme. Participants value these opportunities to look out

beyond their county or city hall and to experience the real world of the communities they serve and to see it from others' perspectives.

Relevance of our programme learning is assured in a number of ways - through the use of action learning to allow participants to tackle real issues of strategic importance facing local government; through the use of learning sets to work on their own leadership dilemmas; through the use of in-depth feedback instruments and throughout interactions and dialogue with users; policy makers; politicians and stakeholders. Our programme, while based on the best practice trends in leadership development, is an example of a highly customised leadership development intervention specifically designed at national level and in partnership, to build leadership capacity to support the on-going reforms throughout local government.

Findings and Conclusions

After the first year of operation, the programme outcomes were reviewed in-depth and an evaluation report presented to the sub-committee. Some changes to programme structure and delivery were implemented based on participant and faculty feedback. This included the introduction of the orientation day and the involvement of past participants with this; publishing the action learning research findings in trade journals for dissemination purposes; greater emphasis on the personal effectiveness aspects of the programme over the more lecture based sessions and more encouragement of participants out of their comfort zones; incorporation of some 'mini' team-based leadership tasks into the programme as groundwork and preparation for the major team challenge of planning the end of programme conference, and finally, the development of closer linkages and ownership between the BDAL projects and the sponsors in the system. These changes have worked well and it is part of the programme philosophy to be open to feedback and to up-date the programme on an on-going basis to ensure relevance and transfer of learning.

The in-depth evaluation survey of the first cohort of twenty-four participants taken at the mid-point and at the end of the programme provided useful data and food for thought regarding the challenges of providing multi-faceted and effective leadership development. Participants were asked their motivations for taking part in the programme – the highest number gave the development of management competencies as their main reason with career advancement given as the second highest reason. . It is worth reflecting on the differing expectations within a group such as this – people are attracted to the study of leadership for a mix of reasons and those who teach leadership need to respond to the whole swirling mix without compromising the essence of their programme. Ron Heifetz at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard identifies that roughly a third come looking for techniques – skills, tactics, a tool kit – the instruments of leadership, as he refers to them. They hope to learn how to guide and convince according to some yet-unknown formula (Daloz Parks,2005). Another third come to sort out career challenges and prospects. Which path should I take? Can I prevail? Do I have what it takes to move into a larger arena? The rest, are looking for validation of their competence and are searching for good company that will affirm their identity and their efforts; this group may express what others also feel. While those involved with the practice of leadership development acknowledge

and respond to these individual drivers, we need to stay focused on building capacity for the "adaptive work" associated with leadership and public sector reform.

In terms of the various programme components, the top four learning preferences were ranked as follows: 360-degree diagnostics; the benchmarking visit; coaching; learning sets. Mentoring and the BDAL were ranked lower as some participants had experienced disappointment with their mentors in terms of commitment and accessibility, and a couple of the BDAL teams had encountered difficult group dynamics at the start which coloured their overall view of the process. The IPA is exploring ways of optimising the mentoring component and recognises the need to develop structures to nurture the mentor and mentee relationships. There are plans to establish a formal panel of mentors and to develop a training pack and seminar for aspiring mentors. In the large number of cases where the mentor showed commitment, participants reported great benefits accruing from the relationship. In relation to the BDAL component, in the second year of the programme greater time was spent up-front developing productive group dynamics and this bore fruit in terms of how the teams worked together. However, the learning to be gained from working through group conflict and in overcoming dissention is a valuable aspect of the programme – a case of where the learning process mirrors the realities of transformational leadership and working life.

The end-of-programme survey, based on a five point Likert scale, reveals that the programme significantly changed participants' understanding of what leadership is (4.24 average); significantly changed their appreciation of the importance of leadership in modernising local government (4.76); opened up their eyes to opportunities they have to exercise leadership at their level of authority (4.18) and made them very aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and the steps they need to take to develop themselves as leaders (4.88). These findings suggest that at the level of building strong human capital, the programme has achieved its aims and ninety-two per cent of the participants confirmed that the programme met their development needs to "a very large extent". Comments from participants based on their own experience illustrate this growth and awareness quite powerfully:
 "Where once I was inclined to sit back I now have the confidence to show leadership and recognise the need to do so"
 "I need to challenge myself to tackle change at every opportunity"
"I have been more open with senior managers about the missed opportunities in their sections and they have responded favourably"
"This (exercising leadership at own level of authority) is probably the most important concept to come out of the programme".
"The confidence to seize opportunities is an area where I feel have developed".

There were mixed reactions in relation to three aspects firstly, as to whether participants had a greater understanding of the priorities for modernisation (3.88) as a result of the programme; secondly, as to the extent of implementation of any relevant learning within their organisations arising from the programme (3.24) and thirdly, as to the extent to which their line managers reinforced what they had learned on the programme through the discussion of learnings and setting action goals (2.82). A number of participants stated that implementation had only occurred when driven by them within their own department. As one participant put it: "Difficult to answer. (The) benefit of the programme is mainly for the individual and it's hard for the

individual to spread the word. As more people graduate, learning will be disseminated." The lack of a critical mass is a common problem associated with leadership programmes geared for high potentials, which by definition cannot be rolled out to the entire organisation. This creates challenges for the transfer of learning to the workplace; the dilemma is tied to the fact that work is essentially a collaborative experience. As Brown and Duguid (1991) have shown, an individual's learning at work is inseparable from the collective learning of the work group. Without the social support and pressure from the collective, new ideas and behaviours may receive neither sufficient reinforcement nor rewards to survive for long (Benjamin and Conger, 1999).

Some further evidence of this challenge emerged from our survey in relation to the BDAL projects specifically, and the extent to which senior managers were giving strong recognition to them and actively analysing the recommendations (2.82). This lower score was substantiated by comments from participants remarking that there was little active commitment to leveraging the learning from the projects at either a system or organisational level. The review of local government (IPA, 2003) found that "Pockets of good practice exist in different authorities, with some moving faster that others in some areas. But local authorities are not particularly good at sharing and learning from this diverse experience in a structured way. More effort is needed to encourage and facilitate learning across local authorities" (p. 16).

To build social capital in order to deliver more effective leadership capacity within the system, we need to continue to work in partnership to promote a "leadership ecology" (Dunoon, 2002, p.8) that will provide the infrastructure for deep change as part of the reform process. Developing and implementing a vision of excellence in public service, and promoting collaborative practices that achieve the vision, require that leadership be given as much emphasis as strategic management and business planning (IPA, 2000) and based on the experience of our LLGP, there is some evidence to suggest that there may be a disconnect between these enablers of change. Clearly participation in the sub-group and the high level of on-going support for the programme suggest that there is top-down commitment to leadership development and recognition of the importance of talent management within the system. This vision is not necessarily shared or understood by the middle-out level of senior line managers whose staff participates in the programme and whose priorities lie in the management of the pressurised day-to-day operations. The inclusion of the bottom-up voice is a further challenge within a traditionally hierarchical structure.

As part of our evaluation we compared the composite profile based on the LEA 360-degree feedback results for the first cohort of participants with the composite profile of a group of other local government executives who took part in other training programmes over much the same period. The comparison highlights some noteworthy differences. The high potential group, who went through a nomination process with rigorous selection and screening, displays stronger transformational leadership behaviours. The group of high potentials reported consistently higher scores on the LEA identified behaviours of *innovation; persuasion; excitement; feedback; management focus; outgoing; production and dominance*. They also reported higher scores on some of the more transactional leadership behaviours relating to *technical; tactical and control.* They showed lower levels of restraint which when coupled with the other "Developing Follower" cluster of behaviours (outgoing, excitement and

persuasion), shows that this group has greater skill in the winning hearts and minds dimensions of leadership. Their overall higher ratings in the "Achieving Results" cluster of behaviours (management focus, production, dominance) presents a picture of a cohort with drive and determination to lead on change (Wallis and McLoughlin, 2006). These early results are encouraging as they suggest that a new breed of executives with a more transformational approach to leadership is emerging in local government and have the imprimatur of the County and City Managers who nominated and invested in them. This augurs well for the shift in culture and values that is required to support reform and modernisation. The next step is to create the critical mass within local government

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Fig One: The Evolving Paradigm of Leadership Development

	Past	**Transition**	**Future**
Participants	Listener	Student	Learner
Programme Design	Event	Curriculum	Ongoing Process
Purpose	Knowledge	Wisdom	Action
Period	Past	Present	Future
Players	Specialists	Generalists	Partners
Presentations	Style	Content	Process/Outcome

(Fulmer, 1997)