

Chapter 5

Enabling Andragogical Leadership: Skillset, Toolset, Mindset, and Frame Conditions

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ABSTRACT

Andragogical leadership is a term yet to be coined. The evidence from four interviews with experts indicates that it might be a promising solution to grasp the fast and disruptive transformation processes companies are currently facing. Based on the research results, the author argues that andragogical leadership is a set of responsibilities that might at best be taken over by passionate experts in a shared leadership approach. The genuine implementation of andragogical leadership either requires or goes hand in hand with a transformation toward self-directedness, a participatory culture, and the democratization of an organization. Future research requires theoretical discussions and practical experiences contributed by experts from business studies, humanities, and psychology. The relevance of andragogical leadership and its potential to be a solution to urgent questions was proven within this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, companies across all industries are challenged by increasingly fast-changing business environments with digital transformation, shifts in demographics, and sustainability (resource scarcity/ climate change) being among its main drivers (Brown et al., 2018, pp. 3-6). For example, the *World Economic Forum* (WEF) (2020) predicts that by 2025 85 million jobs will be replaced by machines and that an estimated 40% of the workforce requires reskilling of up to six months. Regarding this, “94% of business leaders report that they expect employees to pick up new skills on the job” (WEF, 2020, p. 5). Kropp and McRae (2022) expect that also up to 65% of managerial tasks might be automated by 2025, too (para. 23). Considering both, the tasks of leaders will likely become more associate centered, e.g.,

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“managing their perception of their career trajectories” (Kropp & McRae, 2022, para. 25) or acting as “training coaches” (Kovács-Ondrejko et al., 2019, para. 38).

The tremendous impact of such *long-term trends* is certain, “but the speed at which they unfold can be hard to predict.” (Brown et al., 2018, p. 6) However, whilst these trends allow companies to plan and prepare accordingly (Brown et al., 2018, p. 38), the COVID-19 pandemic showed us the hard way that we are also living “in an environment that can shift from moment to moment” (Volini et al., 2021, p.4). A *short-term shock* happened. The WEF (2020) referred to this situation as a “double-disruption” scenario as the pandemic-induced *disruption* and economic contraction interweave e.g., with technology-driven transformation processes (p. 5). Hence, companies must be prepared for both *continuous* and *episodic* change, they should learn to *thrive on it*, and embrace it as a chance to develop sustainably (Volini et al., 2021, p. 4).

The required organizational development processes highly depend on the competence development of a company’s workforce, they are mutually constitutive (Meyer & Haunschild, 2017, pp. 1, 7). Organizations must build the human capital that allows them to not only react to change but to shape it in their favor. For this purpose, companies should offer structured re-/ upskilling and give associates the freedom to take initiative e.g., to run passion projects that allow them to grow in a self-governed way (Volini et al., 2021, p. 20). Thereby, crucial information about an associate’s “interests, passions, and capabilities that may otherwise remain hidden” (Volini et al., 2021, p. 20) can be revealed, too. This information could now be used to “redeploy workers against critical business priorities” (Volini et al., 2021, p. 20) as they occur. Moreover, workers will leave familiar paths as they follow their individual learning interests. In doing so, they nudge the organization to move, to get out of its comfort zone, to develop, and thereby to become more resilient to substantial change (Meyer & Haunschild, 2017, p. 7; Teine, 2022, p. 153). Having the freedom to be more self-governed in their development also requires the workers to continuously adapt in a way that they can even be thought of as entrepreneurs marketing their knowledge and competencies which *they* must reproduce goal-oriented, actively, and efficiently in a self-responsible way (Gonon, 2002, p. 327; Teine, 2022, p. 152). It is *them* ensuring that their capabilities are needed, bought, and used efficiently (Gonon, 2002, p. 327; Kovács-Ondrejko et al., 2019, para. 34). In this respect Kovács-Ondrejko et al. outline that “individuals who want to remain in demand in a changing job market must take responsibility for keeping their skills up to date and accept that job-related training is a career-long commitment.” (2019, para. 5)¹ This shift in responsibility is even further emphasized by the WEF’s Future of Jobs Report 2020: “The window of opportunity to reskill and upskill workers has become shorter in the newly constrained labor market. This applies to workers who are likely to stay in their roles as well as those who risk losing their roles due to rising recession-related unemployment and can no longer expect to retrain at work.” (WEF, 2020, p. 6)

Anyways, companies need qualified labor and thus, it lies within their responsibility to make their workforce future-proof (WEF, 2020, p. 6; Kovács-Ondrejko et al., 2019, para. 5). They “must promote upskilling and reskilling to help people prepare and to avoid a two-tiered workforce in which some workers are ready for change and others are not.” (Kovács-Ondrejko et al., 2019, para. 34) Therefore, companies should establish a leadership that promotes the formerly described processes, that nurtures a learning culture, and that does not shy away from harnessing digital technologies to e.g., carry out targeted upskilling programs or promote self-directed learning (Kovács-Ondrejko et al., 2019, para. 21, 37, 38). “Best-in-class companies encourage employees to adopt a continuous-growth mindset and to learn on the job, provide opportunities for people to take time off for learning, and have managers act as training coaches.” (Kovács-Ondrejko et al., 2019, para. 38) Hence, the importance of leadership for

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