

How serious games can develop social and emotional intelligence capabilities to enable authentic transformational leadership

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Project description:

As complexity of today's global changing environment and disruption continue to grow, it is becoming harder to define one "right way" to lead organisations towards continuous adaptation while pursuing business ethics. Moreover, as globalisation intensifies, leaders need to integrate-coordinate geographically dispersed operations and multicultural people. It seems that there is not "one-size-fits-all" approach, and what worked yesterday could fail tomorrow (Johansen and Euchner, 2013). However, authentic transformational leadership is believed to be essential to leading the change in uncertain environmental and in today's fluid global markets (George, 2007; 2016) allowing for ethical decision-making, guided by moral values and passion, while inspiring people through two-way effective-communication (Kalshoven et al., 2011; Walumbwa and Schaubroeck 2009), improved value-based diffused leadership leading to create a supportive learning environment (Garvin, Edmonson, and Gino, 2008), as well as being phronetic to foster practical wisdom in others (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 2011). This kind of leadership has been also recognised to be an effective predictor of job satisfaction, employee commitment, moral identity and voice behavior (Brown et al. 2005; Brown and Trevino 2006). Successful global leaders master a set holistic-competences including global mindset (Cohen, 2010), cultural intelligence, intercultural competence, system-skills, and interpersonal-skills/traits (Mendenhall et al., 2013) enhancing the ability to clearly express a shared vision-ethical values and dealing with cross-cultures/markets.

However, according to scholars, the essence of authentic leadership is emotional and social intelligence (Goleman, 1998; 2004; Goleman and Senge, 2014; George, 2016) leading to increase the core organisational learning competencies proposed by Senge (2006) in fostering aspiration, developing reflective conversation and understanding complexity allowing for the company's continuous evolution. In contrast to IQ, which basically does not change in one's adult lifetime, emotional intelligence can be developed. The first and most important step on this journey is gaining self-awareness through self-reflection, multiple-feedback and emotional interactive sessions (Kets de Vries and Korotov, 2007). On the other hand, poor leadership or the lack of this crucial organizational competence can adversely affect the bottom line and foster employee disengagement, counterproductive work behaviors when an employee feels mismanaged (Friedman, 2014) and, ultimately, turnover.

The need to develop effective authentic leaders is clear. However, many of today's leadership development programs fall short on tailoring curriculum to meet today's learners (Scott-Jackson et al., 2016). Moreover, it must be considered that while classroom environments can be an effective learning channel, they can hardly replicate, customize, and scale.

Research continues to suggest that adults learn best via experiences, where the experience provides the foundation for learning and reflection activities. Leadership development programs must be highly transformative and aimed at changing attitudes and behaviors (Caligiuri and Di Santo, 2001) through a dynamic context and a consistent process where self-exploration, experimentation, interaction with others, challenging taken-for-granted assumptions, and also meaning of what deep learning is about are key. Moreover, simulating realistic scenarios and environments that give learners the opportunity to practice skills, interacting with others in an immersive and safe learning environment while having fun, thus

increasing motivation, practice and feedback are crucial (Charsky, 2010) to improve transformative learning.

Now an innovative, fresh approach is emerging that offers hope. With the development of Information and Communications Technologies innovative organisation learning opportunities can be created in a controlled and safe environment (Petit dit Dariel et al., 2013) also for leadership development programs. In this context, recent advances in immersive learning technologies or “serious gaming,” such as game-based and simulation-based environments, can help enhance leadership development and mitigate the costs of poor leadership. Serious gaming include simulation, learning and game and can be considered as an excellent vehicle for improving organizational learning capabilities, such as leadership. Through immersive interactive learning environments giving instant feedback while stimulating reflection and enabling both active cognitive and affective educational material processing leading to effective sustainable organization learning (Wouters et al., 2013), serious games become relevant also in driving the firm innovation while offering enhanced opportunities for learning compared to traditional instruction methods. Furthermore, research suggests that employees are entering leadership positions earlier in their careers than in the past (Cappelli and Hamori, 2005), resulting in a lot of error with mishaps and derailment due to a lack of experience (Capretta, Clark and Das, 2008). In this context, considering that new generations have been educated and are seduced by technology (Protopsaltis et al., 2014) using them in their daily interactions, serious games can become a leading source of organizational learning competences development. This PhD studentship will investigate on the role of serious games, using virtual reality to improve immersive learning, in developing leadership core capabilities, in the travel and leisure-health or wellness sector.

Drawing on a range of empirical research methods and critical theories, this studentship will investigate how serious games can develop social and emotional intelligence to enable the development of more authentic transformation leaders able to foster a safe learning environment and a culture of learning which shapes the organisation’s continuous evolution.

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