

Developing Leaders

Executive Education in Practice

World Economic Forum

Roderick Millar investigates the Global Leadership Fellows Program

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Regina Eckert and Jennifer Deal on attitude and talent

Jennifer B. Kahnweiler looks at Introverted Leaders - the ideal mentors for millennials

NeuroLeadership

Paul Brown and Brenda Hales examine what brain science tells us about leaders



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Global Leaders for Tomorrow

World Economic Forum: Global Leadership Fellows Program

“More leaders have been made by accident, circumstance, sheer grit or will, than have been made by all the leadership courses put together. Leadership courses can only teach skills. They can’t teach character or vision, and indeed they don’t even try. Developing character and vision is the way leaders invent themselves.”

Warren Bennis ‘On Becoming a Leader’

By Roderick Millar

All projects are restricted by resource limitations that restrain their design and operation. For many leadership development programs the main limitation may be financial. However, when large organizations introduce such programs for their top executives and ‘high-potentials,’ budget restrictions are often not the main barrier. Time is. Freeing up participants long enough for meaningful learning experiences, and arranging a schedule that works with the calendar of potential attendees, key faculty, and other top leaders, is often a challenge – as is ensuring that the quality and commitment of participants is uniformly high.

With these program limitations in mind, it is exciting to discover a program where these restrictions do not apply; where program time, access to world-renowned thought-leaders and participant quality are all at a level that most leadership development directors can only dream of.

The World Economic Forum (Forum) is best known for its all-star, glittering one-week summit held in January each year in Davos, Switzerland, where world leaders from politics, commerce and NGO’s rub shoulders with each other, network and exchange ideas – principally for improving global society, be that financial systems, economic growth, health for all, environmental systems or social development. These are five of the key themes the Forum focuses on during the Davos week – and for the other 51 weeks of the year when their high calibre staff remain focused on the Forum mission statement of being “committed to improving the state of the world”, by monitoring long-term risks, building networks, relationships, long-term scenarios and solutions with influential organizations around the globe.

The Forum is a well-funded organization, supported by its 1000 corporate members, predominantly businesses with a turnover of over \$5 billion. This allows it some unusually attractive benefits for a non-profit organization: primarily it is its access to the top management of their corporate members, people who have great insight and influence; this network also attracts senior politicians from around the globe and leaders from other sectors who need to work with these corporations to get projects implemented. This combination of access to global influencers in both the corporate and political spheres allied to project work that has a beneficial social impact on major global themes enables the Forum to attract young executives of a very high calibre to join them as managers on three-year contracts. The Forum gets over 2500 applicants for around 20 places available each year so they have the luxury of being able to select candidates that fit their requirements very closely.

A program where time, access to world-renowned thought-leaders and participant quality are all at a level most leadership development directors can only dream of



The work at the Forum that is made available to these high-potential leaders comes with an additional and unique bonus – their day jobs are fully integrated with a very-high level leadership program, the Global Leadership Fellows Program (GLFP). The GLFP is unusual in many aspects. It is three-years in duration, considerably longer than other executive development programs and longer too than any MBA program the fellows may have already completed. It is fully integrated into their work roles, so the knowledge and skills they gather during the academic modules is woven into their work, and their work experiences in turn feed into the learning process. Moreover, with the stream of world leaders passing through the Forum's doors in Switzerland, the opportunity to interact and learn from them is unparalleled. What is more, as Juraj Ondrejko, Associate Director for the GLFP, says “the program is very broad in its remit. It creates leaders for a whole range of sectors, public, private and NGOs and across lots of different industries and specialisations. We are not just developing leaders for the Forum but leaders who can make a difference now and in the future outside the Forum.”



Ondrejko highlights the fact that at the end of the three year contract only about half of the fellows stay-on at the Forum. The others go on to use their newly-acquired skills in senior roles in other influential organizations. Recent alumni have become Strategy Directors at Sanofi-Aventis and Anglo-American for example, while others go to policy roles in government. Ondrejko says the program's broad scope allows it to develop leaders that can adapt and innovate in these roles. He also points out that while in most organizations the departure of high-potential and expensively developed talent after a leadership program ends would be seen in negative terms, the Forum considers it an investment. Its reach, influence and impact increase by having alumni in other organizations." Many people fail to see the opportunity in building their alumni network – but look at McKinsey which in many respects has founded its consulting influence on having ex-McKinsey consultants in leading positions around the globe. It is the same here – the fellows go on to important roles that benefit society and keep their links back to the Forum. Everyone wins. "This is part of the reason that makes the GLFP so different. The content of the program is both tied with participants' everyday work and designed like an open program at a business school, with no single final agenda but a broader purpose that its benefits be applied for improving the state of the world.

Stephen Langton, Director of Deloitte's Centre for Strategic Leadership and an associate faculty of the program has described the program as "unique, an outstanding program, for me the best I have seen." So with the luxury of time, access, high calibre participants and a broad impact agenda, things not available to most organizations, what does the Forum GLF program look like?

The program started in 2005 and was, as the program's Dean, Gilbert Probst explains, a return to the Forum's training roots. When Klaus Schwab founded what was then the European Management Forum in 1971 it was to enable European businesses to catch up with US management practices. The GLFP was founded on a broadening of this principle and Schwab and Probst, who respectively were and are still business professors at the University of Geneva, were keen to draw on the best available thinking and practice globally that they could find. Probst stresses that "the last thing we wanted to do was create another MBA program – the GLFP is a finishing school for leaders after they have completed their studies."

Gilbert Probst has developed the program with a close eye on developmental psychologist Robert Kegan's 'Adult Development /Stages of Maturity Theory' (see diagram) where an increasing level of self-awareness and systemic awareness is achieved at each additional stage. The fifth level is only reached by a small minority of people, but enables those that do to observe, encourage and enable their teams to reach successful outcomes not only for themselves and their organizations, but also for the broader systems in which they are embedded. The Forum is conducting a study of the fellows to see how the program facilitates progress through these stages, and whether it is possible to accelerate it.

Participants are closely monitored as they progress through the GLFP. Alongside the assessment of their stage of development in Kegan's levels of mental complexity, participants take a variety of tests at the outset of the program, including the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) that scores individuals on four emotional aptitudes: perceiving, facilitating, understanding and managing emotions. As they continue through the program their systems thinking abilities are monitored through the HBDI (Herrman Brain Dominance Instrument) assessment while at Wharton, and INSEAD conducts its GELI (Global Executive Leadership Inventory) assessment developed by Manfred Kets de Vries to evaluate twelve primary leadership abilities. More standard assessments include the MBTI, 360° feedback and annual performance reviews. These complement a wealth of feedback from their managers as well as external and peer coaches.

At the end of the third year Egon Zehnder International, the global executive search and leadership specialist, conducts their proprietary executive assessment of each fellow to appraise their individual strengths and competencies which are drawn upon in collaboration with the fellow to decide where they would best flourish after the program ends. These assessments amount to an enormous amount of data collected on each individual over the three-year program that the Forum is using to underpin some research on the ability of leadership programs to accelerate developmental learning.

But while there is a distinct conceptual foundation to the program, and the Forum supports rigorous research to assess its impact and advance knowledge in leadership development theory and practice, the GLFP is far from a scientific experiment. As the Warren Bennis quote at the head of this piece indicates, real leadership growth is a factor of character and vision and this ultimately can only be developed through experience, which is



itself factored by time. The three-year program is carefully balanced around the 70:20:10 learning ratio, with the bulk of the learning being experiential, and only 10% being academic interventions, albeit in some of the world's best classrooms. The GLFP not only offers an incomparable series of leadership experiences, it also facilitates their translation into long lasting learning through coaching, mentoring and reflective opportunities.

When discussing the most impactful elements of the program with past participants, the experiential events inevitably came to the fore. Each winter in the second year of the program, the cohort embarks on a five day expedition to a mountain hut in the Gemmi Pass, 2314m (7,600 ft) up in the Swiss Alps. Far from their everyday environments and immersed in a dramatic winter landscape, the fellows undertake – and reflect upon – a series of group activities of increasing complexity in a demanding and potentially hostile environment. Unlike most outdoor leadership programs, however, the purpose of the expedition is not to provide a startling backdrop for a retreat or to push participants to their physical and emotional boundaries. Its aim is providing a space for collective

reflection, learning and experimentation. The mountain environment is a vivid reminder of the beauty and fragility of natural resources leaders' decisions often impinge upon. But the real challenges occur within and between participants. Ramya Krishnaswamy, who joined the GLF in 2009 and is currently an Associate Director for Environmental Initiatives recalls the Alpine expedition as 'well out of my comfort zone; but the change of environment provided a good space to reflect on, explore and share critical points of life and core personal values with a small group of fellows and a coach'.



“We bring to the surface what leadership means to them as a community... those meanings inevitably shape who they become, how they relate, and how they lead”

The group of fellows were accompanied in this expedition by Gianpiero Petriglieri, an associate professor of Organizational Behaviour at INSEAD. Petriglieri, whose research examines the interface between leaders' activities and their identity, specializes in experiential leadership development. Together with colleagues Heather Cairns-Lee and Declan Fitzsimons, he designed a workshop that aimed to deepen participants' understanding of the overt and covert aspects of leadership, and to develop their capacity to exercise it effectively and responsibly. The three did not take up traditional faculty roles, but rather served as leadership consultants throughout the workshop. There were no lectures or slides. Events that unfolded during the mountain activities provided the primary learning material. Participant groups reflected upon them on an on-going basis with the consultants' assistance. At the end of the workshop, each consultant took the role of personal coach for their group's members, helping individuals explore the links between their experiences in the mountains and those back home, articulate their learning, and refine a plan for on-going development.

The Gemmi workshop is designed to provide what Petriglieri calls an 'identity workspace,' that is, a learning environment conducive to the development of both individual leaders and leadership communities. As he put it, "most leadership programs focus exclusively on the individual leader and his or her behaviour. They are veiled attempts to help participants get their way. The vector of influence, in these programs, moves from the leader out. This view of leadership is as appealing as it is simplistic and dangerous. Leaders are shapers as much as they are stewards. The communities in which leaders operate are not just 'context!' They can make or break leaders. History and every day experience show that leaders can be empowered by their followers as much as they can be driven insane. For this reason we put equal focus on influence and representation, on how leaders influence groups and how groups, in turn, influence leaders – consciously and unconsciously. We

IDENTITY WORKSPACES FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Over the last decade, researchers and practitioners have called for rethinking how leadership is developed and practiced. Traditional leadership programs, focused on the acquisition of conceptual knowledge and requisite skills, are limited in preparing leaders to face the turmoil, uncertainty and systemic challenges of the 21st century.

On the basis of a decade of research and practice with colleagues Jennifer Petriglieri and Jack Wood, INSEAD associate professor Gianpiero Petriglieri argues that conceptualizing leadership programs as 'identity workspaces' helps to meet the demand for leadership in ways that benefit individuals, organizations, and society.

Like the World Economic Forum, a number of global corporations have embraced their view and approach. Balancing theory and practice, experience and reflection, intellect and emotion, programs designed as identity workspaces combine the pursuit of predetermined learning objectives with the provision of a space where participants can set the learning agenda, individually and collectively. They personalize and contextualize participants' learning, inviting them to wrestle with the questions "What does leading mean to us?" and "Who am I as a leader?" Focusing on what leaders do, who they are, and on whose behalf they lead, identity workspaces deepen and accelerate the development of individual leaders, strengthen leadership communities mindful of (not subservient to) their organization's culture and aims, and foster responsible citizenship in society at large.

endeavour to explore how personal history and aspirations, as well as group and social pressures, influence the way participants think, feel and act in leader and follower roles. We also bring to the surface what leadership means to them as a community. This is crucial, as those meanings inevitably shape who they become, how they relate, and how they lead."

The outdoor activities were supported by Julie-Ann Clyma and Roger Payne, two internationally respected mountaineers who are also well-positioned to give insights into leading in harsh environments having worked with mountain development organizations such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

It is well understood that the process of surfacing and questioning deeply held assumptions, and transferring new ideas and concepts so that they become new habits is best done through practice combined with reflection. Learning on the job alone, however, only goes so far in fostering such learning. The pressure of getting work done can leave little time for reflection, limit experimentation, and limit the learning of even the most dedicated high-potentials. This is why leaders' development can be greatly enhanced by skilfully facilitated experiential engagements in a secluded, intensive and novel environment – where participants have enough distance from the habits and culture of their workplace, and can focus on examining and experimenting with their behaviour. The Gemmi Pass experience weaves together the unusual environment, the reflective space, and the memorable activities – all facilitated by the very best of academic thought-leadership and professional coaches. "The field of leadership development is obsessed with methods and activities, because methods can be patented, marketed and sold" Petriglieri added when asked what made the Gemmi experience truly unique, "but methods alone don't develop leaders. People do. It's the participants' commitment to learning, and the sensitivity and skills of the professionals who facilitate that learning, that make a difference. Not the mountain, the hut or the activities."

The purpose is to develop highly effective leaders, who have... greater awareness of themselves, their effect on others and on the challenges facing the world today and in the future

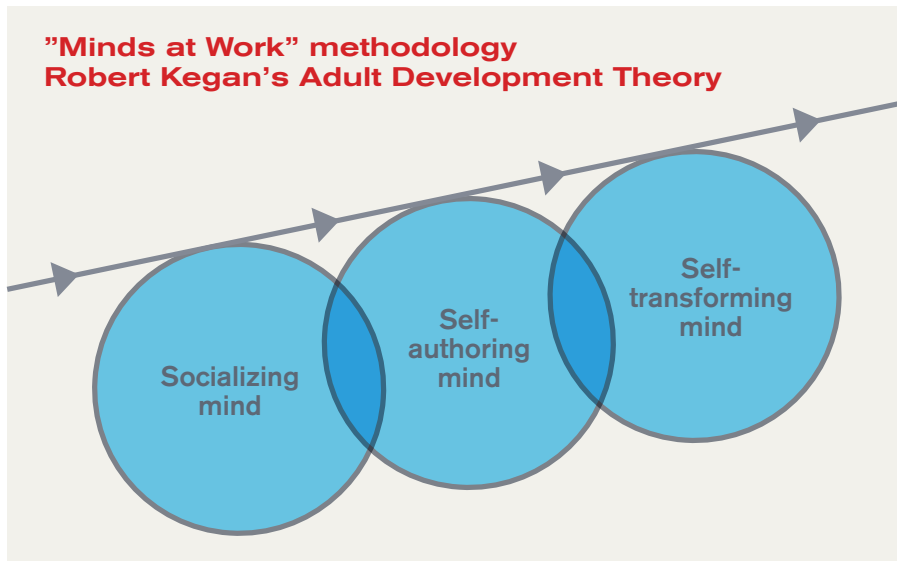


Clearly not all the GLF program takes place in such unusual surroundings. Today there are five schools involved with the program on a regular basis: Wharton, INSEAD, London Business School, the Columbia School of Arts and the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Participants spend one week a year at each school during the first two years of the program. Gilbert Probst also draws on a network of leading faculty and deans who deliver shorter sessions to the fellows through the program. "The faculty that we access such as Subramanian Rangan (Professor of Strategy and Management and Societal Progress at INSEAD), Herminia Ibarra (Professor of Leadership and Learning at INSEAD), Mike Useem (Professor of Management and Director, Center for Leadership and Change Management at Wharton), Julian Birkinshaw (Professor of Strategy and Entrepreneurship at LBS) and Carol Becker (Head of the Columbia School of Arts) have all challenged the program and shaped its development" observes Probst.

The Wharton faculty invest much time discussing and re-shaping the program with Probst and Ondrejko at the Forum as it progresses from year to year. Harbir Singh leads the Forum faculty input for the school, but Mike Useem and program director Diane Eynon also input ideas to keep the content and design relevant to evolving global challenges. While at Wharton the first year cohorts focus, under the leadership of Prof Useem, is 'Personal Influence and Persuasion' building on Useem's idea of 'leading up', where it is as important for leaders to be able to influence their peers and superiors as much as their followers. The second year cohort theme is 'Leading Social Impact', focusing on social innovation around issues such as 'Catastrophic Risk Management', 'Urban Globalisation' and 'Sustainability'. While much of the content for this is drawn from the thought-leaders at Wharton such as Harbir Singh and Peter Cappelli this year the fellows had an increased experiential engagement by meeting and exchanging experiences with the students at Summer Search, a national social enterprise program for low-income students giving them the opportunities and support they need to transform their lives, achieve their own potential, and create change as role models and everyday leaders.

Eynon describes the conversations that the two sides engaged in as a "very interactive and wonderful dialogue as they shared stories of their journeys and exchanged experiences. It was powerful to create an opportunity for the fellows to have exposure to the Wharton faculty and also the Philadelphia community." One group of fellows took time out after the program to go back to Summer Search to see if they could work with them further – a sign of true engagement and connection with the group.

The real strength of the program... carefully thought out design and mix of content and experience... that makes the program so effective and allows them to follow the Forum maxim and 'improve the state of the world'



The GLFP draws from the other schools it has long-term relationships with to deliver the cross-disciplinary breadth it requires. Amongst these the workshops from the Earth Institute faculty at Columbia University focus on the "Global Sustainability and Complexity" program which promotes innovative thinking about global issues. It takes a multifaceted approach to these issues through curriculum on climate science and risk, global public health, resource management, and alternative energy solutions from on-going research projects, and feature visits to campus research labs and meetings with representatives from government agencies and private sector stakeholders.

The purpose of the GLFP is to develop highly effective leaders, who have been exposed to a broad range of challenges and experiences so that they have built greater awareness of themselves, their effect on others and how they can bring their skills to bear effectively on the challenges facing the world today and in the future. The GLF program has the scope in terms of duration and breadth to allow these high-potential managers to understand themselves and their impact better and use the thought-leading insight and transformational experiences they have access to to adapt their behaviours to achieve high-impact results. However, the real strength of the program is not so much the raw ingredients, as enticing as they are individually, it is the carefully thought out design and mix of content and experience that Probst has developed that makes the program so effective and allows them to follow the Forum maxim and 'improve the state of the world'. As Nick Davis, Deputy Head of Strategic Risk Foresight at Forum, who completed the program in 2009 notes "the great value of the program is a bit serendipitous, it is taking advantage of the CEO's who come through the door, there are a lot of amazing opportunities but they are not necessarily all pre-planned. But supporting this serendipity is the academic foundation of the program. 70% of the learning is through osmosis and 30% through structured academics that...enable the opportunity to reflect and analyse. This is what Gilbert and Juraj do particularly well. It makes everyone very conscious of their own status of development. I am a lot more reflective now and that's the GLF program that has done that."

Despite much discussion about the need for leadership development in corporate and public organizations, and the considerable industry that surrounds it, this is the first authoritative periodical focused entirely on this area.

Developing Leaders looks at the critical confluence between the provision of executive education and the real everyday needs of organizations to strengthen their management teams, their corporate performance, and their leadership.

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