

# Quality Education News

Tel: 012-349-5006 ♦ Fax: 012-349-1232 ♦ [www.saqi.co.za](http://www.saqi.co.za)

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Dear Supporter of Quality Education



## Goodbyes rather than Good Riddances

There's a new phrase that might become part of the English language. It's a phrase being mentioned in leadership workshops and written about in newspapers. The phrase is used by the editor of *The Citizen* newspaper which is published in Johannesburg. The editor writes of a person "doing an Ardern." Broadly, it means that a person resigns from a job before being asked or hoped by others, to do so.

Earlier this year Jacinda Ardern stepped down as prime minister of New Zealand. When she became prime minister in 2017 at the age of 37, she was the youngest head of government anywhere in the world. Ardern won a second term of office but has now resigned.

During her premiership, Ardern proved to be a decisive leader. When the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, she listened to the advice of the medical experts. There was a massive vaccination drive and the country had a lockdown of visitors who hoped to visit the country. New Zealand had one of the world's lowest rates of Covid-related deaths.

Another example of Ardern's decisive leadership was her response to the 2019 Christchurch massacre of Muslim worshippers. There were 51 deaths and a further 40 wounded. Ardern identified with the grief-stricken and traumatised. She led the nation in giving support to the Muslim community. In an article in the *Daily Maverick*, Azubuike Ishiekwene described Ardern's leadership as, "... leadership embodying strength and sanity while pushing compassion and community, which she termed "pragmatic idealism."

Yet Ardern also had many enemies. They were to be found particularly amongst the anti-vaxers and those who hated her stringent new gun regulations. In 2021 alone there were 50 threats against her and even calls for her execution.

In announcing her resignation, Ardern told her fellow citizens:

*"I believe that leading a country is the most privileged job anyone could ever have, but also one of the more challenging. You cannot and should not do it unless you have a full tank, plus a bit in reserve for those unexpected challenges."*

Every teacher – like Ardern – is also a leader. A teacher leads young people. Being a teacher is also challenging and exhausting. The teacher needs a full tank to do the job. There are those times when a little extra fuel is needed to drive through those unplanned but inevitable rocky road experiences of school life.

It's not only food that has a "sell-by" date. Teachers also reach their "sell-by" dates. Teachers might become emotionally and physically exhausted. Reluctantly and slowly those teachers trudge through the daily demands. There's no more fuel left in the tank.

As teachers, we could benefit by having Ardern moments of introspection. With the ever-escalating demands made on teachers, we need to ensure that there's plenty of fuel. We need to be able to give high octane performances.

Should the former Eno-effervescence in our attitude towards teaching start to become flat, we should consider new options. It might even be the time to accept one's "sell-by" date.

The day will inevitably arrive when we leave or move on from our present position. What will folk be thinking at the farewell function? Will their thoughts be filled with fond Goodbyes rather than relieved Good Riddances?

Sincerely

Richard Hayward

### References

Editor, 2023. *SA leaders, do an Ardern ... and quit*. *The Citizen*, 20 January, page 12.

Ishiekwene, A. 2023. *If only Africa's leaders would follow Jacinda Ardern's example*. *Daily Maverick*, 4–10 February, page 11.



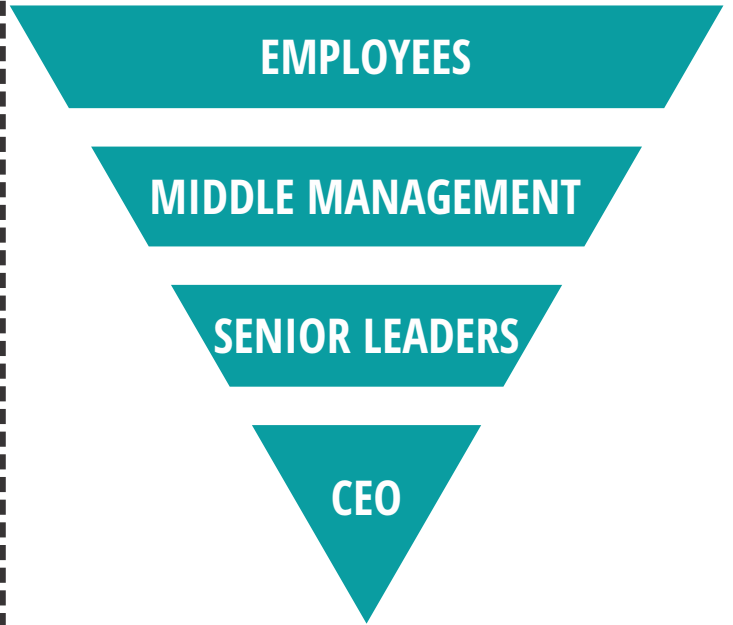
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# TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP



# SERVANT LEADERSHIP



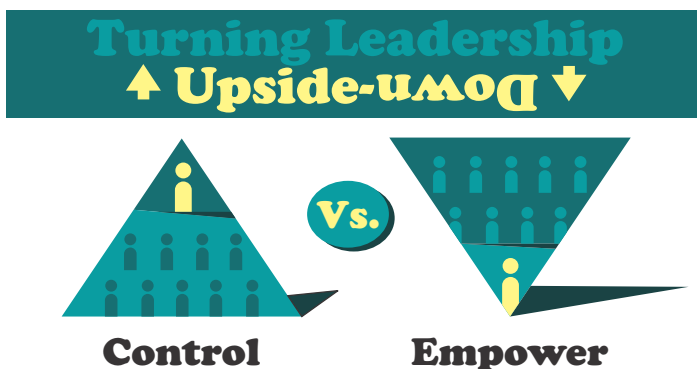
*We often imagine leaders to be those heading large corporations or taking soldiers through war, but the truth is you're a leader if you're a parent, a teacher or an older sibling.*

Polina Pompliano

## Invert the leadership pyramid

In a school it's not only the teachers who lead. Amongst the children themselves, there are leaders. Some children are class captains, counsellors and prefects. Add the sport and other extramural leaders. Yet whatever the ages of the leaders, quality leaders lead in similar ways.

In Polina Pompliano's book titled *Hidden genius*, she outlines principles that guide such leaders. She describes current and ancient approaches to sound leadership.



During the 1980s, the “servant leadership” concept became popular. The late Robert Greenleaf created this concept as an ideal for leaders. He maintained that such a leader views the role as being of service to others. Serve rather than be served.

In Greenleaf's theory, the person at the top of the organisational

pyramid doesn't have absolute control. In a school, for example, the principal shares the leadership with others. Empowerment is given to others.

By inverting the leadership pyramid, it doesn't mean that the leader gives away all control and power. The leader's role remains that of being a guide, a mentor and still having a firm hand “on the tiller”. The school sails on the right course under a set of ethical values. The servant leader encourages and supports other team members when they take on leadership roles.

“Flipping” the traditional power pyramid has positive results. Blind obedience based on the dictates of one or two leaders, stops. It's replaced by a culture of mutual respect. Everyone is welcome to make input. Trust grows. Creative ideas for growth and improvement cascade into the organisation. There's a happier work environment for everyone. The organisation belongs to **us** rather than to **them**.

### Reference

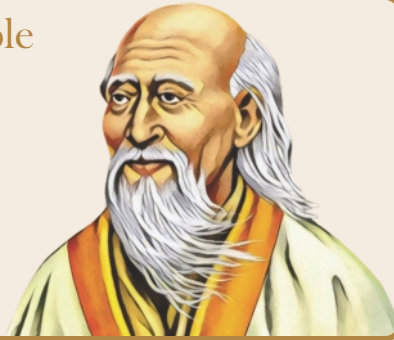
Pompliano, P M 2023. *Hidden genius*. Hampshire: Harriman House.



# Make the leadership invisible

A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.

- Lao Tzu



Leadership is a concept that has been discussed and dissected for millenia. A semi-legendary Chinese Taoist philosopher, Lao Tzu, lived in the sixth century BCE. Certain of his observations on leadership were recorded in a book titled *Tao te ching*. Here is his description of what he thought was the ideal leadership style:

*When the Master governs, the people*

*are hardly aware that he exists*

*Next best is the leader who is loved.*

*Next, one who is feared.*

*The worst is one who is despised.*

*If you don't trust the people,*

*you make them untrustworthy.*

*The Master doesn't talk, he acts.*

A wise leader does introspection. Lao Tzu observes, "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom."

Bernard Arnault is the CEO of LVMH (Loius Vuitton Moët Hennessy). His company is the world's leader of luxury products such as champagne, handbags and perfumes. As a leader, Arnault gives space to his staff to be their creative selves. He reduces rules to a minimum. Arnault believes that if you think and act like a typical manager around creative people, you'll kill their talent. He gets out of their way.

In a school it can be difficult for the leader to be physically invisible. There are too many trappings of office. Senior management team members often have their own offices. In the staff car park, bays might be reserved for certain staff members. Their names are emblazoned in bold print above the bays. At a tragi-comic level there are even those schools which have "thrones" or VIP chairs in the staffroom reserved for executive staff members. Sit in such chairs at your peril!

Those who strive to display an invisible leadership style, try to minimise those trappings of power. They don't want reserved bays for themselves in the car park. Yes, there's the need for leaders to have – if space allows – their own offices for administration and interview purposes. If there are such offices, there are follow-up questions. One such question asks: How does the furnishings in these offices compare to that found in other rooms at the school?

Entering leaders' offices should not be to experience another world of palatial furniture and opulent curtains. When magnificent offices and parking bays are reserved for those at the top of the power pyramid of the school, it becomes incredibly difficult to "walk the talk" of true invisible leadership.

Humble invisible leadership means being acutely aware of the needs of others. Those leaders are the last in the lunch and teatime queues. In contrast, those in positions of power who relish the trappings, are at the front of the feeding troughs of benefits. The

invisible leader is intuitive. A single example is to be found in the staffroom. The staffroom is refurbished on the initiative of the school leadership before there's a need for a formal request or petition. Invisible leadership continually asks, "What can be done to make life better for others?"



Yes, invisible leadership is largely unseen. Yet that same leadership is imbued with compassion, empathy and kindness. Strangely though, such leadership is very visible.

## References

Heider, J 1991. *The tao of leadership*. Aldershot: Wildwood house.

Pompliano, P 2023. *Hidden genius*. Hampshire: Harrison House.







## What does one do after one's "sell-by" date?

When Jacinda Ardern announced that she would be stepping down as prime minister, interviewers asked her about future plans. She replied that she would now have the time to get married to her partner. Also, she would be able to help her daughter, Neve Te Aroha, start school later in the year. Ardern stated that she had no intention of leaving politics altogether. She wanted to remain a parliamentarian. Although certain items on her political shelf had reached their "sell-by" date, re new adventures awaited her.

Schools have voluntary and mandatory resignation dates. In South African public (state) schools, the two respective dates are 60 and 65. Research has shown that a person who retires at 65 still has another fifteen years of productivity ahead. To go in a new direction after retirement can add a new sparkle to one's life. There are new goals to follow; there are new experiences to enjoy.

History is brimful of names of those who've achieved great goals after traditional "sell-by" or retirement dates. Some cited by Tom Butler-Bowdon are:

- Louis Armstrong had his defining hit, *What a wonderful world* when he was 66;
- Nelson Mandela became President of South Africa when he was 76;
- Michaelangelo was doing frescoes in the Vatican until the age of 89;
- Roget first published *Roget's Thesaurus* when he was 73 and kept on editing it until he was 90;
- J R R Tolkien wrote his first book in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy when he was 62;
- Guiseppi Verdi wrote his arguably best opera, *Falstaff*, when he was 80;
- Christopher Wren who designed St Paul's Cathedral in London, retired when he was 89.

As the names above attest, some of the greatest achievements are left until last.

### Teachers have talents

In chats that I've had with teaching colleagues, a number have mentioned that they're not ready to retire at stipulated retirement dates. Yes, they might like to leave the hurly-burly stress of full-time classroom or school leadership. But conversely, they still have a great deal of energy. As one such teacher quipped to me at her farewell function, "There's still a lot more life in dem bones!"

If you're a teacher, reflect on the wide range of abilities that you've acquired through the years. Those abilities can be invaluable in new career

directions. If, for example, you've organised sports events and prize-giving ceremonies, you could become an events manager. If you've given staffroom workshops on topics such as conflict resolution and stress management, there are organisations that would value your knowledge and personal experiences. If you've been involved in school capital works projects, similar management skills are used in projects done outside education.

In your retirement you might like to still remain in education. Carry on coaching your favourite sport. Offer to be a referee or umpire. Carry on teaching but in a part-time capacity. Teach at a school a few days a week. Be a locum. Teach one-on-one. Be a tutor. New staff members - especially those going into leadership positions - need guidance. Be a mentor. Traumatized and troubled children as well as stressed teachers are to be found in almost every school. Be a counsellor. The ways to stay in education are endless.

Teachers are inclined to downplay their many talents. They have so much to give because they've experienced so much through the years. Teachers have endless talents.

### Reference

Butler-Bowdon, T 2011. *Never too late to be great*. London: Virgin Books.

## Learning has no "stop-by" date

SACE (South African Council for Educators) has a range of professional development activities. Included in their activities are twelve which are presented by SAQI. Their details as well as other workshops done by SAQI, are at [www.saqi.co.za](http://www.saqi.co.za) On the home page, click on "Quality in Education Programme".

The SAQI activities are done by Dr Richard Hayward who has decades of school leadership experience. His contact details are [rpdhayward@yahoo.com](mailto:rpdhayward@yahoo.com) and 011 888 3262.

The third edition of Richard Hayward's *Making quality education happen – a "how-to" guide for every teacher* is available from Amazon, Smashwords and Takealot. The book is available in e-book or paperback (colour or black-white) format.

This year SAQI celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. Huge congratulations go to all in the team! SAQI is planting the Quality seed in companies, individuals, organisations and schools across Southern Africa. The team at SAQI might be small in number yet it powerfully reflects the truth of an adage; From tiny seeds great trees grow.