How to broaden your perspective on leadership?

The principles of The Alpine Leadership Program
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The Alpine Leadership Program:

- Helps leaders to search for answers to their personal learning questions;
- Formulate specific, clear and challenging, but realistic goals;
- Movement is good for the body, as well as for the mind, and therefore inspires learning;
- Define your 'future identity';
- Reflecting on one's identity, together with a partner, as well as by oneself;
- The Alpine Leadership Program builds on the highly regarded and innovative program Etappe Engelberg. A program that will take place for the 12th time in 2017.

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Introduction

With our Alpine Leadership Program (ALP) we at BeteoR aim to help leaders to search for answers to their personal learning questions. The ALP is based on several principles. In this white paper we will outline the program and the evidence for the effectiveness of these principles. We will do so from a scientific point of view.

Leadership can be defined as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.” (Yukl, 2006). This is a complex task, which comes with many challenges. To be able to embody this role in a continuously changing environment, leaders need to be able to adapt: every new challenge comes with new learning questions. Many of these questions can be answered on a practical level. However, other questions require a deeper analysis, on a more fundamental level. Examples are questions such as: How may I better enable my team to connect with one another? How may I connect with and use the collective intelligence and wisdom in the group and team? How may I better connect with myself and learn and develop the things that I need to work on when those things are often in my own ‘blind spot’? These questions are often triggered by changes in one’s self or one’s environment. In effect answering these questions involves learning about yourself and your environment.

Answering these questions is an important part of future proof leadership development: “A leadership development approach is oriented toward building capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges (i.e., development).” (Day, 2000, p. 582).

Leader development and leadership development

The focus in this program is on leadership development as opposed to leader development, although this does depend on what one's learning question is. Concerning leader development, "...the emphasis typically is on individual-based knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with formal leadership roles. These acquired capabilities enable people to think and act in new ways (Coleman, 1988)." On the other hand, "the primary emphasis in leadership development is on building and using interpersonal competence." (Day, 2000, p. 585).

Summary of Differences between Leader Development and Leadership Development

	Development Target	
Comparison Dimension	*Leader*	*Leadership*
Capital Type	Human	Social
Leadership Model	Individual	Relational
	Personal Power	Commitments
	Knowledge	Mutual Respect
	Trustworthiness	Trust
Competence Base	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
Skills	Self-awareness	Social awareness
	Emotional awareness	Empathy
	Self confidence	Service orientation
	Accurate self image	Political awareness
	Self-regulation	Social Skils
	Self-control	Building bonds
	Trustworthiness	Team orientation
	Personal responsibility	Change catalyst
	Adaptability	Conflict management
	Self motivation	
	Initiative	
	Commitment	
	Optimism	

Note. Reprinted from Day (2000).

The program

Intake

In advance of the program, we conduct a thorough intake procedure with each participant individually. We do this to be able to anticipate the individual needs of participants and to help them to set a clear goal for themselves. During the intake, the main topic of discussion is the personal motivation of participants. By gaining insight into what participants aim to achieve and what they need to achieve the goal, we formulate a clear learning question together. This is an important step in the program. By formulating a specific, clear, and challenging, but realistic goal the motivation to achieve the goal is stimulated. On the other hand, vague, general, and easy goals are detrimental to motivation and need to be avoided. Goal-setting theory assumes that it is important that goals are open, set by the individuals themselves, and are consistent with the goals of the organization in which one has a leadership role (Locke & Latham, 1990). During as well as after the program the learning question will be a point of reference to reflect on feedback from the mentors as well as from other participants and is used to achieve goal attainment. The exact aims of participants are up to them. Topics can widely vary, but the context is better suited for leadership development as opposed to leader development (see table above).

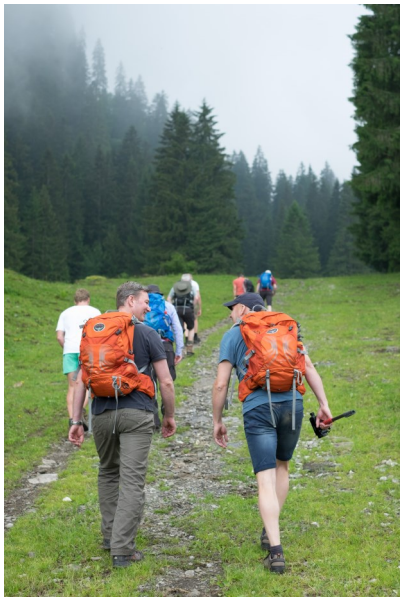
During the intake we will also discuss the Pecha Kucha. A Pecha Kucha is a presentation containing 20 slides which will be displayed for 20 seconds each and will be used to introduce oneself to the group during the ALP. The Pecha Kucha is a fun way to keep presentations short and interesting without compromising on content (e.g., Beyer & Lazicki, 2013; Klentzin, Paladino, Johnston, Devine, 2010).

The intake will finish with several reminders regarding practicalities to ensure sufficient preparations.

Walking through nature

Most of the days of the program will be structured in similar fashion. Before the daily walks we will come together as a group. This so called “check-in” is used to introduce the theme of the day, set goals, and reflect. A moment of silence is in place to meditate, or, if preferred, just to ponder. By clearing the mind, we prepare for the task ahead. Several studies indicate numerous positive effects of meditation on mood and cognitive performance, even when conducted for brief moments (Zeidan, Johnson, Gordon, & Goolkasian, 2010; Walsh & Shapiro, 2006; Goyal et al. 2014).

At the root of the ALP is the notion that movement is good for the body, as well as for the mind, and therefore inspires learning. As the name of the program implies, participants will walk through the Alps, the Swiss Alps of Engelberg to precise. In the words of John Muir (Fox 1981), “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.” According to research from the past decades, people are indeed right to visit the mountains. Several studies indicate restorative effects of natural environments (Kjellgren & Buhrkall, 2010; Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008). For example, a study by Hartig, Mang and Evans (1991) found that compared to a non-wilderness vacation or staying at home, a vacation in a natural environment offers a stronger restorative experience. A recent study also demonstrated that experiencing nature produces benefits for affect and cognition (Bratman, Daily, Levy, & Gross, 2015; Bratman, Hamilton, Hahn, Daily, & Gross, 2015; Velarde, Fry, & Tveit, 2007). It is not only being in nature which has a positive effect, walking has beneficial effect by itself too (Keinänen, M, 2016). Walking has a positive influence on (divergent) creative thinking (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014), attention and memory (Labonté-LeMoyne et al., 2016). The mechanisms underlying the increase in cognitive functioning have yet to be fully untangled, but it appears that increased blood flow, and the accompanying improved oxygen transportation play an important role.



In short: the vitalizing and cognitive function promoting effect of walking through nature creates the conditions for the brain to participate in deep thought about one’s learning questions.

During the walks, we primarily focus on an assignment which will be introduced at the beginning of each day, we will do so from the second day of the program. During the walks the mentors will be in the background, but ask clarifying questions and give advice if desired.

To keep the mind clear as well as to reward the body with some well-deserved relaxation after a long walk, we encourage everyone to enjoy the wellness facilities at the hotel. Distractions such as checking work-related mail are discouraged for the same reason.

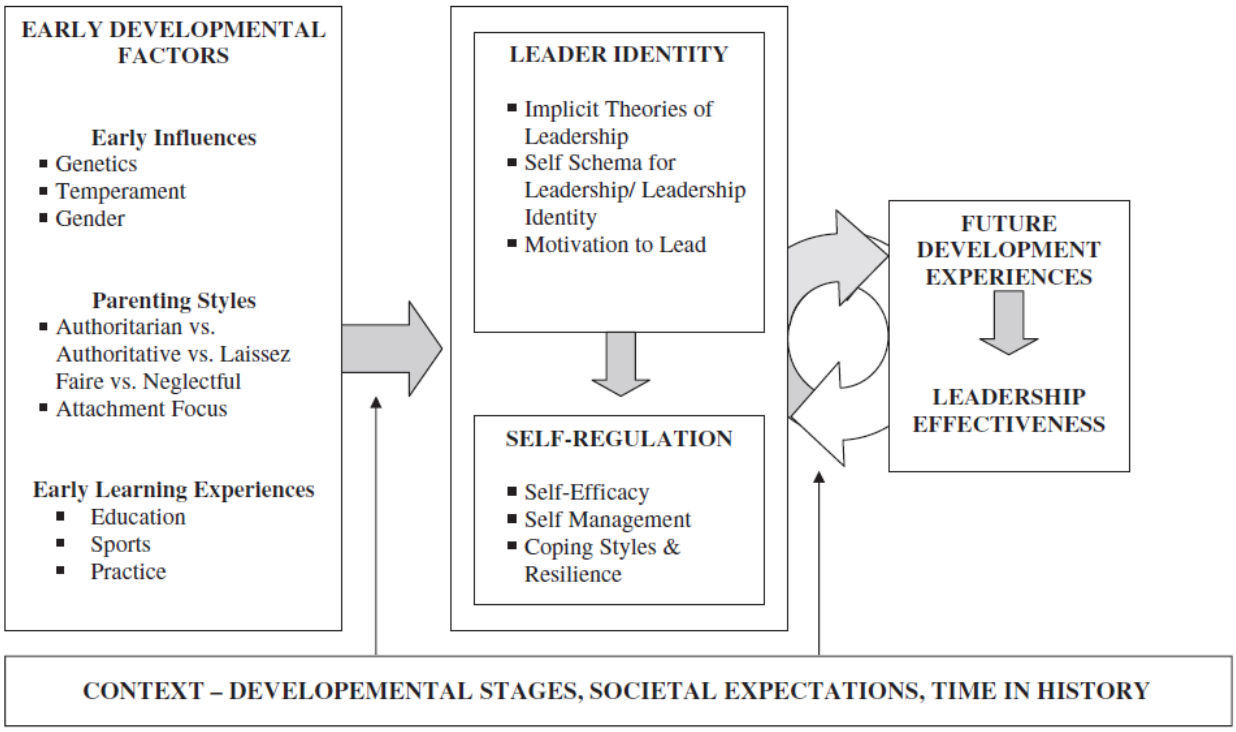
Every day we conduct a process evaluation to facilitate our own learning and improve the quality of the subsequent days. Amongst other topics, we will discuss the walks, the conversations, the assignment, and the general room for improvement.

Leader Identity

Defining one's (social) identity plays an important part in all the assignments. Identity can be seen as the cornerstone of the ALP. This focus on identity is based on the theory on leadership development by Lord and Hall (2005) , amongst others. Lord and Hall focus on identity for several reasons:

> *"Identity is a central focus because it (a) provides an important structure around which relevant knowledge can be organized; (b) is a source of motivational and directional forces that determine the extent to which the leader voluntarily puts himself or herself in developmental situations; and (c) may provide access to personal material (i.e., stories, core values, etc.) that can be used to understand and motivate subordinates. Our model suggests that as leaders progress from novice to expert, they become increasingly capable of flexibly drawing on internal resources such as identities, values, and mental representations of subordinates and situations." (p. 592).*

The structure the ALP is inspired by the life span approach to leadership development by Murphy and Johnson (2011). The focus of their model is on how early developmental factors shape leader identity and leader self-regulation, which has consequences for future development experiences and leadership effectiveness, depending on contextual factors (see Murphy and Johnson, 2011 for an in-depth explanation of their model).



Note. Reprinted from (Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

Gaining insight into these factors facilitates answering one's learning questions. However, most of the time a learning question is not limited to the past, and we therefore also make a leap to the concept of "future identity".

As argued by Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo (2010):

> "identities are not only historical constructions, nor are they limited to the social negotiation of current roles; identities are also projections about the future (Lachman, 2004). An important component of the self-concept is a person's possible selves, the images one has about who one might become, would like to become or fears becoming in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves play a key role in identity change because images of future selves act as attention screens and motivational devices, shaping one's interpretations of, and responses to, unfolding opportunities or constraints, and serving as incentives for future behavior (Markus & Nurius, 1986: 955-56). We argue that possible selves are a critical part of leader development because they provide a structure around which relevant knowledge can be organized and provide the motivation to seek out developmental situations (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Eccles, Nohria & Berkley, 1992; Lord & Hall, 2005)." (p. 5)

We will reflect about one's identity, together with a partner as well as by oneself. Construing life stories or autobiographical narratives is argued and proven to be an effective method for leadership development, because it improves self-knowledge, self-awareness, clarity about one's self concept, and person-role merger (Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005; Janson, 2008). Research by Ligon, Hunter and Mumford (2008) illustrates that high performing leaders often rely on experiences from the past to make sense of things. We partially base this part of the program on the narrative process that Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers described with the 'U-Curve' in *Presence* (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2005).

All of the things discussed above result in the day by day program at the following page.

Day by day program

Day 1

Day 1 is used to get to know each other and to share learning goals. We take great care in creating a safe environment in which sharing is stimulated but not demanded. Sharing one's goals and background enables others to give feedback in the learning process and is therefore of great importance.

Day 2

How does my environment look? And my organization?
What is my role within my organization? What is expected of me?
What is happening at the moment in my industry? What does this mean for my company? And what does this mean for what is required of me?

Day 3

What is leadership to me? What does leadership mean to me?
What are and have been the key moments and critical (influential) people in my life?
What events, experiences and people / relationships have shaped:

- Who I am?
- Who I am as a leader?
- What my motivation is to lead?

Day 4

Who do I want to be as a leader?
Which "possible selves" do I envisage in order to be more effective, grow as person, and to have more enjoyment?
How would such a 'possible self' help me and others with the issues in my organization?
Do I want to and how can I change my 'self-narrative', the story about myself and my leadership?
What are appealing future leader identities for me?
How can I achieve optimal role-merger?
What are my obstructive and conducive beliefs and what course do I have in mind to achieve my goals?

Day 5

Integrate the preceding in a life story
Evaluate what has been achieved
Set clear goals for the future

Contact

If you have questions about the whitepaper feel free to contact dr. Emile Jeuken. He is available by e-mail: emile.jeuken@beteor.nl, or call our office: +31(0) 40 24 64 900.

If you have questions about The Alpine Leadership Program, please contact one of our facilitators: Andrew Hall, Diem Wolff, Henk van der Tas, and Sjoerd Molenaar. You can contact them by calling our office: +31(0) 40 24 64 900.

More information about the Alpine Leadership Program: www.beteor.nl/en/alp.

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