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Presentation by Renate Waplinger, the role of the leadership personalities in implementing Eden

Eden Principle 10 says that wise leadership is the most important asset in changing the culture, for wise leadership, there is no substitute

What is wise leadership?

Ulf D. Posé is the president of the ethics committee of the German economic association, he is a publicist and journalist and he writes: *wisdom has fallen out of fashion, wisdom sounds like a word from a different era, everything today is about knowledge, so what can wisdom do in this context? It provides orientation in a more and more globalised world; therefore it has become more relevant again.*

So what is wisdom? Let's look at other sources of knowledge first. We have factual knowledge or informational knowledge: how big is the earth, how much does the Euro cost? When did the Romans reign?

We also have experiential knowledge: when I hold my finger to a flame, I get burned and I am likely not to do it again.

We have tacit or incorporated knowledge, we know how to butter a toast or to drive a car, how to open a water tap.

And then, there is life knowledge; this is where wisdom comes in. A wise counsel has nothing to do with advice, factual knowledge; in the old days wisdom was relegated to gods or religions. In the middle ages, wisdom was seen as the peak a human being could achieve. Being clever was fine, but being wise was the pinnacle of human development and often closely linked to religious leaders and other spiritual masters.

What can we learn from wisdom nowadays, in today's management context?

Today, as we know, practical and pragmatic knowledge is in the foreground, efficiency and speed are the goal. If we stop to cultivate wisdom we lose orientation, we tend to functionalise a human being and if he or she cannot do the job any longer, we get rid of her or him, they are discarded, and this, indeed, is the ruin of social interaction, social ties. Modern management confuses human beings with human objects, close and empathic encounters of human nature do not exist any longer. Human encounters acknowledge the other as a personal other who needs to be cherished in its uniqueness, not as means to achieve a goal.

Real wise leaders reintroduce wisdom into daily work, they do not necessarily follow organisational rules, and they follow their own inner calling and values and stay true to them.

For the Eden Alternative such personalities are needed, they show empathy, which is independent of sympathy or antipathy, they can feel what is going on inside the other person.

A leader has Ego strength, he or she can help others grow, and he or she does not give in to any whim or criticism. They act in order to be happy and satisfied in the aftermath of the decision and for life. They want to feel right, proud, and not guilty. He or she is not normative, but authentic.

A leadership personality respects the other person, they hire workers around them who are different, not the same, and so he or she can always expect honest feedback. Diversity is seen as enrichment.

- A leadership personality masters the art of productive thinking, creative thinking, often outside the box, mistakes are allowed and progress is questioned constructively. Leadership personalities possess wisdom and knowledge about humankind, the human condition. They think in alternatives and are not easily discouraged by backlashes or obstacles.

- They live a first hand life, not a second hand life; they spend time with valued people and build social capital. They practice tolerance and love, they assert that they want people to become what they are, and even he or she does not like it.

- Leadership personalities are persuasive, not in the way you can train in a rhetoric-seminar, it has to do with credibility, authenticity and honesty, sometimes humbleness.
- He takes people seriously and is a good listener. In critical debates he or she keeps in mind what drives people in reality, this way, unproductive conflicts can often be avoided and leading is made much easier.

- They are able to do through conflicts, but they can distinguish between conflicts that can be solved and others, which cannot.
- They possess unlimited trust of their workers and colleagues; this is the basis of a good organisational climate. On this basis, change can grow much more easily.
- Permanent learning and curiosity is a trait of a leadership personality, knowledge needs to be renewed, updated and expanded. They communicate open, not in codes, they never demean people in communication. They do not engage in power games, they do not intimidate their opposites.
- Leadership personalities can handle multioptional environments, they have their own identity and they have a strong value base upon they in turn base their decisions and their acts.
- They build identity in others, bonding, trust, they build a whole system, which is bound to last and to adapt to future developments and changes. They deal with resistance, overcome it, take the time necessary and never lose sight of the goals and visions; they never abandon their values. They are fully accountable for their actions and they see in every person they talk to an individual, a personality with her own history, goals and aspirations for happiness and wellbeing in life, a life full of hopes, dreams and expectations, a person who wants to grow.