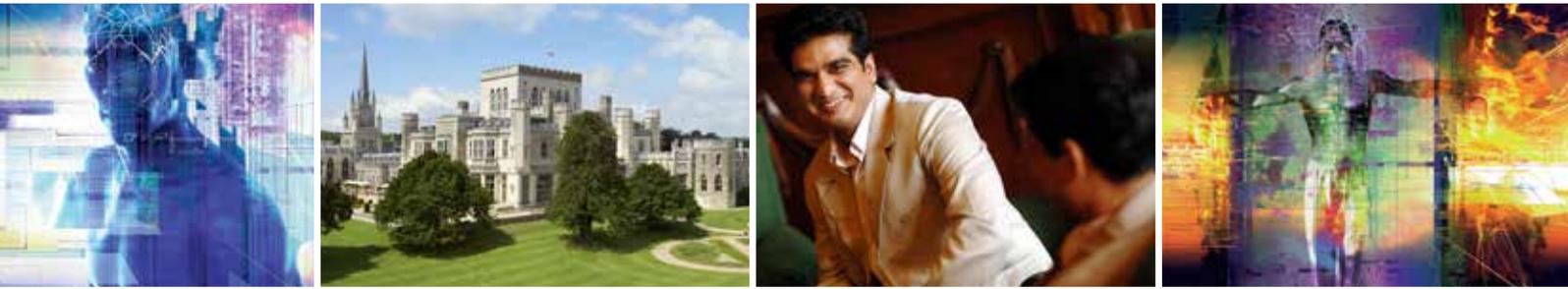


Full paper  
submission deadline  
is 10th October

**CRED3:**

# Scientific Advances in Developing Leaders for Today's Complex Environment



## CRED3: The 3rd Ashridge Centre for Research in Executive Development Conference

Ashridge Business School, Ashridge, Berkhamsted, HP4 1NS, UK  
From 2pm Thursday 11th December to 1pm Saturday 13th December 2014

### CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR PAPERS

#### Confirmed Keynote Speakers:

Dr Michael Butler, Director DBA Programmes,  
Aston University and co-founder of OCN,  
Organisational Cognitive Neuroscience

Professor Paul Brown, formerly Visiting  
Professor in Organisational Neuroscience,  
London South Bank University, currently  
Senior Adviser, Vietnam Veterans of America  
Foundation, and Consulting Clinical and  
Organisational Psychologist

John McGuire, Senior Faculty, Centre for  
Creative Leadership

#### Conference Chairs:

Lee Waller, Director, Centre for Research  
in Executive Development,  
Ashridge Business School

Dr Patricia Hind, Director, Centre for Research  
in Executive Development,  
Ashridge Business School

Professor Carla Millar, Fellow,  
Ashridge Business School

The business environment is growing ever more complex, and the demands placed on executives to deal with this complexity are growing in equal measure. Leadership development practitioners need to find new and innovative ways to develop leaders who can prosper in this environment. This conference will explore how an understanding of the science behind the process and experience of learning can advance this task by focusing on the cognitive and neurological processes involved in learning, the social psychology of the classroom, the developmental stages of cognitive maturity, and the impact of personality on the experience of learning.



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## How has our environment changed?

In the past decade the nature of work has become increasingly complex. Technological advances, widespread globalisation, and increased diversity have resulted in a highly competitive climate which is fast moving and ever changing (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Working across geographies, functions and cultures presents today's leaders with greater challenges than ever before (Hogan, 2010).

A survey of chief executives identified that CEOs believe they now have to operate in a substantially more volatile, uncertain and complex world (IBM, 2010). Their businesses must deal with 'increasingly interconnected economies, enterprises, societies and governments'. 79% of these CEO's shared the view that they will face even greater complexity in the future, and reported serious doubts about their abilities to manage the challenges and opportunities arising from such rapidly escalating complexity.

## What does this change require from our leaders?

To cope with this changing environment, future leaders need to engage in more strategic and systems thinking, work more collaboratively, and be better able to manage and lead through ambiguity and change (CCL, 2011). EDA (2011) found that critical thinking and the ability to recognise assumptions, evaluate alternatives, and draw valid conclusions was considered the number one priority for executives.

The complexity of this modern environment also means that individual leaders alone will struggle to tackle and resolve today's challenges, and as such there is a required move towards more collaborative leadership; a bringing together of different stakeholders to learn from and with each other, and build and manage partnerships both within and across organisations (EDA, 2009).

## What does this mean for leadership development?

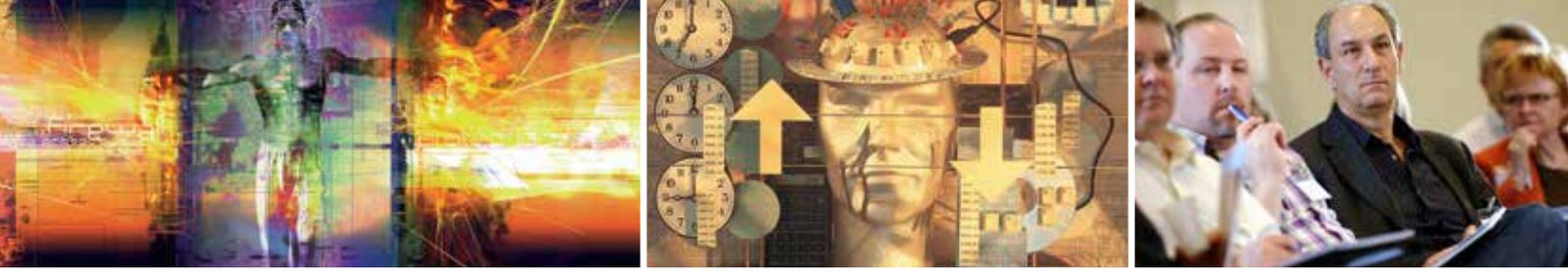
Today's complex environment requires continuous improvements in the quality of

leadership, and the onus is on leadership development practitioners to improve leaders' capabilities to "engage with the complex, dynamic, chaotic and highly subjective, interactional environments of contemporary organisational life" (Sutherland, 2013), by creating new and innovative ways of developing leaders.

It is the proposition of this conference that these innovations can be advanced through a better understanding of the science behind the process and experience of executive development: the social psychology of the classroom; the developmental stages of cognitive maturity; the impact of personality on the experience of learning; and the cognitive and neurological processes involved in learning.

Similar advancements are already being made in the study of organisational behaviour, such as the emerging fields of neuromarketing which attempts to understand the biology of consumer behaviour (Butler, 2008), and organizational cognitive neuroscience (OCN) which is concerned with the interaction of our underlying brain systems and our cognitive processes in determining behaviour within organisations (Lee, Senior & Butler, 2012). OCN researchers contend that it is not possible to understand behaviour within organisations without understanding the social psychology, cognitive processes, and ultimately neurological systems which underlie these behaviours, and call for a symbiotic approach to the study of organisational phenomenon (Senior, Lee & Butler, 2011).

So what does an understanding of these underlying processes imply for leadership development? Waldeman, Balthazard, & Peterson (2011) offer some interesting thoughts in this regard, and in agreement with Senior, et al. (2011) they argue that a collaboration between neuroscience, behavioural and management expertise is necessary to apply this research to leadership development. One question they pose is whether, by identifying the neurological basis of for example, inspirational or visionary leadership, can we then develop strategies to train the brain for better performance? Similarly, can an understanding of the biology of consumer behaviour help illuminate the processes by which the learner responds to being taught?



Further implications for leadership development can be inferred from the neurological understanding of the malleability of our brains, and the impact that experience and learning new skills has on the way our brains work (Yin, et al., 2009), as well as the knowledge that recurring activity strengthens neural connections and leads to 'secondary repertoires' which support behaviours in organisations (Elderman, 1993). Such insights have important implications for the 'trainability', rather than inherent nature, of effective leadership. Neuroscience, and specifically the theory of fight or flight, also helps us understand the impact of our sympathetic nervous system response to stressful situations on our ability to perform during and learn from those situations (Kassam, 2009), which has implications for the use of challenging experiential interventions in leadership development programmes. Other neuroscience research also suggests that perceived reward may be related to improved learning (Howard-Jones, et al., 2011), which again has implications for the incorporation of reward or elements of competition into the design of development initiatives.

Developmental psychology offers similar insights, through for example, the understanding that cognitive development does not stop in early adulthood, and that we continue through stages of mental development throughout our adult lives. With each developmental step, we are able to make better sense of our world, adapt faster, identify patterns, arrive at more complex solutions, and are better able to deal with change (McGuire and Rhodes, 2009). Are there opportunities for executive education to accelerate this vertical development?

Finally, if as suggested above, these changing requirements also herald a move towards more collaborative leadership, what lessons can we draw from social psychology that may inform the development of initiatives that move away from instructor based learning and provide opportunities for social learning through peer-to-peer networks, mentoring, and collaborative online forums?

Through this conference we intend to offer a platform to academics to present and discuss their research with their peers,

exploring how the behavioural sciences can inform our understanding of the process and experience of learning. In addition we will bring together academics, HR managers and leadership development practitioners to link the academic research to the practice of executive development, to explore how this research can improve the effectiveness of learning to meet the challenges facing today's leaders.

To this end, conceptual, empirical or practice based submissions are welcome on any of the following topics, or any others relevant to the theme of the conference:

- Exploring the cognition behind learning to improve the way we teach
- The neurological underpinnings and social processes of executive education
- Exploiting the neuroplasticity of our brains to enhance our capacity to learn
- Engaging motivation for reward to improve the effectiveness of learning
- Applying an understanding of the biology of consumer behaviour to the classroom
- Moving beyond competence development
- Methods and processes to accelerate vertical development
- The social psychology of the classroom experience
- The impact of personality on learning and interaction in the classroom
- Understanding the psychobiology and neurology of learning
- Incorporating experiential learning into programmes and workplace learning
- The collaborative nature of leadership and implications for development
- Lessons business schools can learn from our complex and turbulent environment

Papers should include recommendations for implementation in practice.

Within the conference programme academic tracks will be complemented by a track of workshops in which academics will also be able to interact with practitioners regarding the impact of their work on the practice of executive development.

# The deadline for conference papers full manuscript submission is **10th October 2014**

## Review Process and Submission

- All manuscripts will be double – blind reviewed
- Manuscripts (4000 – 5000 words) should be submitted as an email word attachment, including 'CRED3' in the subject line, to **helen.lockett@ashridge.org.uk** by **10th October 2014**

### Paper details:

1. First page; manuscript title and names, institutional affiliation and contact information for each of the authors
2. Second page; manuscript title and brief (maximum 100 words) biography of each of the authors
3. Third page; manuscript title and brief (maximum 400 words) abstract of the paper

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