

Catchment management agencies as crucibles in which to develop responsible leaders in South Africa

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Abstract

During the past 17 years in South Africa, far-reaching policy, legislation and institutional changes in water-related governance have occurred. Responsible leaders have ensured that a paradigm of integrated water resource management (IWRM) is firmly entrenched in the above policy, legislation and institutional arrangements. IWRM in turn demands a level of interaction between individuals, disciplines and organisations such that multi-sector, multi-level stakeholders can collectively, timeously, wisely and cost-effectively visit the consequences of their proposed, present and past actions. Such social learning processes demand leadership and the ongoing development of leaders at all levels. This paper is structured around the propositions for leadership development in the field outlined by Scharmer (2009a). The principal aim of the paper is to reveal the extent to which the multi-sector catchment management agency (CMA) phenomenon is an ideal crucible for leadership development in the field. It is argued that the complex adaptive system that embodies the water realm needs to be engaged by developing complex adaptive systems of governance and that the CMAs have the potential to meet this requirement. Furthermore, it is argued that processes to achieve this required leadership are also ideal for developing leadership. At a time when worldwide developments in communication and computer technology have spawned an exponential growth in successful endeavours related to self-organising around common challenges, the CMA provides a unique and nourishing context for self-organising that simultaneously connects to South Africa's water governance mainstream of policies, laws, institutions and administrative procedures.

Keywords: leadership, integrated water resources management, self-organising, complex adaptive management