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GROUNDHOG DAY: USING INTENSIVE SIMULATIONS TO DEVELOP HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY.

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**ABSTRACT**

In the movie ‘Groundhog Day’, TV weatherman Phil Connors has the feeling his life is on permanent repeat. Ultimately, his character chooses to develop new skills to transform his behaviour, and his life.

Greenhalgh (2008) alluded to the crisis gap in humanitarian leadership and the need for leadership behaviours, such as adaptability, to be developed across the sector. This presentation explores the notion of new skill development for humanitarian leaders to behave differently; transform their leadership practice; and, consequently, the systems they operate within.

Through the Graduate Certificate in Humanitarian Leadership (GCHL)*,* humanitarian leaders participate in an eight-month programme to develop their leadership practice. During two face-to-face modules, an intensive simulation is one of the principal learning mechanisms that enables this.

Simulations have a number of benefits. Ashford and DeRue (2012) describe them as a ‘mindful engagement experiential learning process’, comprising three parts:

1. Approach – students embrace learning and set goals
2. Action – students capitalise on their learning opportunities, seek feedback and are able to regulate their emotions
3. Reflection – students capture lessons of experience including cause and effect diagnosis, counterfactuals and lessons learned.

A study by Bell in 2018 discovered the value GCHL students place on this component of the programme with comments such as “*The simulation in Semarang was one of the best things I’ve ever been involved in*”, (Bell, 2018:11); and “[The simulation] *was a pressure cooker – intense – so you couldn’t fake it…It felt authentic*”, (Bell, 2018:11).

Heslin and Keating (2017) concurred that leadership learning is highly effective through challenging experiences. A key aspect of a student’s ability to learn lies within their mind-set; with a growth mind-set affording the greatest opportunity, rather than a fixed mind-set that can limit learning (Heslin and Keating, 2017).

The authors will expand upon these ideas during their session.

References

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Emma has 18 years of leadership development experience, in addition to working at Lancaster University she is visiting faculty at the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership. Her academic area is leadership. Her research interests are leadership learning, narrative identity and responsible leadership. Emma has taught in Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania.

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