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Leadership: Gordon Brown - Brown knows best?

"Simon Western, director of coaching at Lancaster University Management School, says leadership styles in the past century have fallen into four distinct 'discourses': the controller, therapist, messiah and eco leader.

"People talk about Brown as being a 'controller'," says Western. "This was an early modernist idea concerned with efficiency and rationality. Industrial leadership was very efficiency-driven. Each discourse has its value in different areas. As chancellor, this was very important to his (Brown's) role."

Western compares Blair's visionary qualities and his ability to capture the public mood to Brown's and says Blair's style fell into the 'messiah' category, a style of transformational leadership that rose to prominence in the 1980s, (see Top of the Range, p 32) when the US economy suffered, while Asia in contrast was enjoying a boom.

But he argues neither the controller nor the messiah 'discourses' best describe Brown's style of leadership. He prefers the term 'eco leader', and argues that latent signs of it were emerging even while he was chancellor. "People are now taking the eco leader style very seriously. Being a leader today is not just about charismatic vision. It's about taking all stakeholders with you on the big issues. You have to think globally and build a network of leadership. Brown has shown, more than anyone else, that he is an eco leader - a big picture thinker on debt relief, the environment and getting collaboration. The question is whether or not he can change as PM."

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