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LEARNING, CHANGING, AND DOING: A MODEL FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN RELIGIOUS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

SKIP BELL

Abstract: Religious and non-profit organizations seek people who continually experience learning and growth within their work. Such persons will not stop at doing their jobs well; they develop as leaders who in turn create positive transformation within their group. The purpose of this article is to define a transformational leadership development process integrating learning, changing, and doing as the preferred model in the life of a religious or non-profit organization. The outcome will be persons who grow as leaders, experience meaning in their service, and contribute significant organizational change.

Transformation, learning, changing, and doing should be defined in the context of this leadership development model. By transformation I mean deep enduring change. New capacity, vision, energy, and potential are created and realized. While the idea of leaders acting within an organization to promote change is common, consensus is less available regarding the possibility of persons experiencing deep change in the process of doing their work and in turn contributing newness to their organization. The opportunity for that transformation is what I am advocating.

Learning in this context refers to processes of thinking and creatively leading persons and by extension organizations to new attitudes, orientation, and fundamental change. Plans, products, and results are subsequent outcomes emerging from the deep change

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true learning generates. True learning becomes synonymous with transformation.

Changing as a term applied to transformational organizational leadership development poses a challenge. It requires shifting focus from strategy or product, reflecting instead on people who themselves have experienced deep change while engaged in the organization and therefore offer a certain quality of creative and adaptive work. In the context of religious and non-profit organizations the counsel of researcher Jim Collins in *Good to Great*¹ encouraging us to get the right people on the bus invites reflection. Collins writes with business environments in mind, researching companies displaying unusual success in their sector. While he asserts that the contribution of people throughout the organization drives the success of these unusual companies, not the charisma of the CEO, he also advocates the role of the CEO in gathering the right people into the company. His counsel is problematic for religious and non-profit organizations. Religious and non-profit leaders generally work with people who have responded from their heart to a membership or altruistic calling. Apart from some paid staff, the body of work is often done by people not vulnerable to hiring or firing. Therefore, changing consistently means transformation of the people already aboard, not replacing them.

Doing in this context means that experience delivers wisdom and that work marked by critical thinking and feedback is inseparably woven with leadership development. The nature of relationality in work is critical to this understanding. Kyriakidou and Ozbilgin contribute evidence in the fourteen chapters of their edited book to assert that work within organizations is rooted in relationality and defined through the messy micro-relationships in an organizational community, not

¹ Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001).

by individuals in isolation.² They assert that organizations are modified continually by the relationships going on as work is done. It follows then that the purpose of leadership development is not to train a person to perform a specific task in a certain way (competency), but to create within the person capacity to find within the work itself shared with a relational community potential for learning and growth. Leadership development must be experienced within the continuing relationships of a relational community engaged in doing common work together.

I will argue that our primary need is not leadership programs focused on training—teaching people in the religious or non-profit organization how to do things. Religious and non-profit organizations, like for-profit organizations, need a model for transformational leadership development that integrates learning, changing, and doing into the on-going experience of their members.

This model challenges the leadership development theory and practice of our seminaries and other institutions forming persons for leadership. While it is beyond the scope of this work to prescribe the nature and structure of seminary field education, it is self-evident that this model requires integration of theoretical learning within the context of field experience.

I will first address the limitations of skill training as leadership development within the work context, then propose a three dimensional transformational leadership model applicable to religious and non-profit organizations, and finally prescribe the application of the model through eight replicable conditions.

Training for Skills Contrasted to Development

Leadership is a dynamic relational process. It functions primarily in response to the nature of the

² Olympia Kyriakidou and Mustafa F. Ozbilgin, *Relational Perspectives in Educational Studies: A Research Companion* (Cheltenham, Glos, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2006), 36-38.

people involved, and secondly to the skills they demonstrate. Leadership can be learned, if true learning is understood, but not in the same manner as skills are acquired.

Training is the acquisition of skills to perform a job to agreed standards. It improves human performance. The tools of training are instruction, demonstration, practice, and evaluation.

In contrast, development has as its aim to empower people to acquire new viewpoints, horizons, or technologies. It enables people to proactively move an organization to new expectations while building motivation to excel in present expectations. The tools of development are defined in the language of process: true learning, reflection, relationship, and feedback.

The distinction between skill training and development is not meant to depreciate skill training. An effective leadership development model in a religious or non-profit organization will incorporate skill training. In the development context, training provides not only a means to perform to expectation, but to free a person for creative expansion.

Development can be a frustrating concept because it involves some vagueness. Responding to others, changing deeply held beliefs, overcoming biases, and growing as a person imply changing attitudes. Attitudes are commonly viewed as summary evaluations along a dimension ranging from positive to negative. Attitudes are latent constructs and are not observable in themselves. That is, we infer that people have attitudes by what they say or do. What they actually say or do are the behaviors we observe.

Leadership development empowers people to self-identify their behaviors and related attitudes (helping and hindering) through true learning, reflection, relationship, and feedback. Personal and subsequent organizational transformation occurs when individuals understand their attitudes, designs specific interventions for their behaviors, and ultimately experience newly created attitudes through practice of those interventions.

The First Dimension: Learning

Learning, changing, and doing should properly be approached as integrated components of a single system, each contributing to the other and dependent on the other. Learning is the initiating point for such a system. Knowing precedes change in being and subsequent new practices. It is my belief that an organization does not experience deep change without significant learning among its members. A leadership development process must address learning on two levels—theological and theoretical.

Theological Learning

Theological learning is essential in a transformational leadership development system. If a starting point in a cyclical formation system is imagined, this is it. Theological learning contributes at least two elements to the leadership development paradigm: 1) it roots leadership development in universal experiences that have capacity to both transcend and transform people and culture, and 2) it provides understanding of the nature of leadership. Consider first its effect on the issue of culture.

By culture I mean, in the context of this work, the underlying developed habits and styles of a community. We are commonly shaped, formed, even led by the culture in which we move, think, and act. It follows then that leadership in religious and non-profit organizations is shaped by cultural influences.

Making theological learning more complex is the reality that a theology of leadership emerging from sacred text and faith tradition of a people transcends their immediate culture. Henri Nouwen, a Catholic priest and applied theologian, describes the authenticity of his Christian leadership experience beyond his culture. “The leader of the future,” Nouwen states, “will be the one who dares to claim his irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation that allows him or her to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying all the

glitter of success and to bring the light of Jesus there.”³ Theological learning means that persons of faith in religious and non-profit leadership roles must extricate themselves from the dominance of time and culture as they approach their vocation.

In another perspective, however, cultural vulnerability is essential to leadership. Consider what Christian missiologist David Bosch characterizes as the post-enlightenment Western view of cultural superiority. Christian mission activity, Bosch asserts, developed language assigning darkness, suspicion, and ignorance to non-Western cultures, frequently becoming propaganda for Western ways of life. Against such realities, integration of theology within and by a culture may modify a very human tendency toward dominance, Bosch suggests.⁴ Bosch and other missiologists remind us of the need to respect culture.

It is equally important to think critically about culture. On the surface culture may appear neutral in relationship to theology. However, culture emerges out of our worldview—the way we think and form beliefs. People of faith think and form beliefs out of reflection on a divine pattern in submission to the teaching and leading of God. In short, theology changes our worldview and ultimately the way we go about leadership apart from the present culture.

Can theological learning that transcends culture be experienced in the context of work? If so, persons must to some degree go about meaning making through their own experiences without spiritual guides interpreting for them. Stackhouse takes the position that any people can have some prospect of knowing something reliable about God, truth, and justice in a sufficient enough degree to recognize it in views and practices. In fact, we are

³ H. J. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 22.

⁴ D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 291-292.

constantly judging what is and what is not divine, true, and just. Stackhouse argues that sacred text and spiritual thought provide basic authority for individuals to do that work in any culture when theological reflection is properly approached.⁵

Consider next the effect of theological learning on understanding the nature of leadership. It is beyond the scope of this work to provide an exhaustive theology of leadership. I will note, however, the ground available for that work. One aspect for reflection is the nature of the Christian church, a gathering that is informing regarding the nature of community for differing faith traditions as well. Christian scripture defines the church as a body of ministering members. The emphasis is on a relational community, not a hierarchal structure. The Greek word *ἐκκλησία*, translated as *church*, is from the Hebrew קהילה, meaning a meeting of the people summoned together. In Acts 8:1 the church in Jerusalem is referred to as *ἐκκλησία*. The people of Israel, led through the desert by Moses, are called *ἐκκλησία* in Acts 7:38. All believers are called, *κλησις*, and gifted for ministry (Eph. 4:1; Rom. 1:1, 6; 1 Cor. 12:4-5). So the Christian church is by nature a called-out relational community. In other faith traditions as well, theological learning roots our human experience in relational community.

The early chapters of the Old Testament scripture lend understanding to the nature of leadership by asserting the communal nature of God expressed in the words “Let us make man in our image,” the relational nature expressed in “it is not good that man should live alone,” and the collaborative nature expressed in the delegation to Adam to name the animals. God’s intention for governance through highly relational family networks rather than centralized authority is instructive, as is the transition of the word *servant* from a term of dishonor to a designation of blessing. Howell, in his work on an Old Testament theology of leadership, offers two informing

⁵ Max Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmann, 1988), 9-26.

perspectives: 1) that the Old Testament scriptures transform the term for *slave* into a designation for one given the unparalleled honor of being called the servant of the Lord, and 2) that Isaiah's description of the coming Messiah as the suffering Servant demonstrates the attitude of self-sacrificial abandonment to the divine purposes of God exercised in the highest expressions of leadership.⁶

The New Testament expresses a theology of leadership through the life and words of Jesus. Jesus came to this world to demonstrate the character of God. In doing so, he demonstrated the highest form of leadership, the leadership provided by a servant—more to the point, a bondservant, one who presents himself to another in servitude.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even the death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:1-8; The NIV Bible)

Exegetes differ in their view of Philippians 2:1-11, and it is not the purpose of this work to examine their various positions. One view asserts that verses 6-8 refer to the pre-existence and the earthly life of Christ, and

⁶ D. N. Howell, *Servants of the Servant: a Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugenia, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 6-10.

illustrates the contribution of biblical theology to leadership understanding. Such a view of verse 6 suggests the text affirms Jesus took on the role of servant precisely because he was God. It is the essential nature of God to be a servant, not an exception to his nature.

God, in Christ, demonstrates this aspect of his character in sending Jesus to be our Guide and Model, as well as our Savior. This concept is expanded by the words of Jesus himself (Matt. 16:18-19, 18:18-20, 20:26-28, 23:11-12, 28:18-20; John 20:21-23). Further, Jesus explored a relational theology of leadership by his application of the term *friends* to those he personally mentored for church leadership (John 15: 13-15).

Leadership understanding is advanced by investigating how the New Testament in Christian scriptures describes the ministry of some providing order through service within the larger body of believers. Paul describes overseers, the bishops (1 Tim. 3:1). Congregations were to choose from among themselves persons for distinct ministry and confirm their ministry by the laying on of hands (Acts 6:5). Titus is encouraged to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). When the church needed to resolve issues in its life of mission, they counseled with the “apostles and elders concerning this issue” (Acts 15:2–6). Theological reflection provides understanding of leadership within universal truths that transform people and culture and inform the definition of leadership.

The direction of leadership development is significantly impacted by the model or theory of leadership upon which it is built. The options for a theoretical starting point are numerous. Bass and Stogdill describe twenty-two of the more familiar leadership models and theories.⁷ J. Robert Clinton offers an overview of five dominant leadership theories from a

⁷ B. M. Bass and R. M. Stogdill, *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1990), 37-52.

historical perspective.⁸ More recently, Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter provide an evaluation of leadership theories from biblical, historical, and contemporary perspectives reviewing leadership literature ranging from the Apostle Paul to Fred Fiedler to Stephen Covey. After, they concluded that any critique of leadership theories must be open to discovering truth wherever it is found, and yet maintain a keen sense of discernment to sort out what is true and false, fitting and inappropriate, abstract and practical, timely and outdated.⁹

How then can one define leadership? Is a clear understanding of what leadership actually is important to a leadership development program? I take the position that it is. Current research defines leadership with terms like relational, communal, adaptive, shared, process, and free association. In the context of this work, I approach leadership as a dynamic relational process in which people partner to achieve a common goal through service.

The variety in leadership theories gives rise to a similar variety of theories regarding leadership development. The work of McCauley, Moxley, and Van Velsor demonstrates current leadership development theory. Viewing leadership development from the perspective of the employing or educating organization, they advocate a comprehensive three-point model of leadership development that outlines the responsibilities of the organization to the emerging leader in his or her development process. They state that the organization is responsible to 1) provide assessment, challenge, and support to emerging leaders who are 2) being exposed to a variety of developmental experiences in 3) the relationships and activity of the organization.¹⁰

⁸ J. R. Clinton, *Leadership Emergence Theor.* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Resources, 1989).

⁹ R. J. Banks and B. M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 93.

¹⁰ Cynthia McCauley, Russ Moxley, and Ellen Van Velsor, *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; Center for Creative Leadership, 1998): 4-17.

The Second Dimension: Changing

True learning produces transformation within a person. Within leadership development transformation is a change process launched when one begins to think, then thinks critically, and subsequently develops new behavioral patterns. Learning leads to changing. New behaviors are not the ultimate objective of a leadership development process; they reflect change within the person. It is the character of the person, and even the shared character of the organization, that provides the objective.

Thus the primary purpose of leadership development is not to train a person to perform work in a certain way; it is to transform the person. This view does not set aside the notion of competencies in leadership development. It means that competencies, rather than providing the objective, both contribute to and flow out of the change process. I am arguing that training for competencies is not at the heart of leadership development. Change is brought about by true learning at the level of theological and theoretical understanding.

I am not alone in this critique of the notion of competency-based leadership development. Grugulis asserts that competency thinking in education relegates persons to individual actors who perform in isolation within their community and are less able to create new behaviors and roles for their organization.¹¹ Loan-Clarke finds broad capacities to be creative and intuitive are the primary contributors to organizational health rather than skills for a particular competency.¹² Bolden and Gosling raise the troubling concern that competencies are formed from past or current procedures with a failed assumption they will serve well in the future and conclude that competencies do not provide a sufficiently rich and required foundation for the subtleties and complex

¹¹ Irena Grugulis, *Skill, Training, and Human Resource Development* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹² John Loan-Clarke, "Health-Care Professionals and Management Development," *Journal of Management in Medicine* 10(6) (1996): 24-35.

challenges required for future productivity.¹³ Carroll, Levy, and Richmond state:

To an extent, competencies by their very nature can only articulate that which is objective, technical, and tangible. It is perfectly legitimate to argue that management is predominately technocratic, functional, disembodied, objective and instrumental....Processes such as budgeting, operational planning, project management and compliance do meet the competency criteria, but little of the leadership realm could be coherently interpreted as pertinent to competency criteria. Consequently, the acceptance of competencies as a basis for leadership seems particularly problematic, inappropriate, and misplaced.¹⁴

A leadership development program within a religious or non-profit organization has as its objective change within its people. Organizations change. Organizations are the social outworking of one or more persons sharing common purpose. Organizational life is derived from the persons within. If organizations appear rigid it is because the persons within have ceased to evolve. When people change, their organizations eventually express those changes.

The Third Dimension: Doing

Emerging leaders learn how to learn while doing. Research in leadership development frequently affirms the value of experience in learning and change. I have cited four such sources below. I do not intend to critique their work, nor base the conditions for the model leadership development program that follow on their work. The research cited provides reference for further study, and supports the integration of doing within the model I propose.

¹³ R. Bolden and J. Gosling, "Leadership Competencies: Time to Change the Tune?" *Leadership* 2(2) (2006): 147-163.

¹⁴ B. Carroll, L. Levy, D. Richmond, "Leadership as practice: Challenging the Competency Paradigm" *Leadership* 4(4) (2007): 365.

The first is the work of Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy, who focus on the critical aspect of a leader's ability to learn from experience in their development of the spiral of experience model. They affirm the contribution of action-observation-reflection to change. The critical element, they assert, is the ability to accurately perceive experiences, analyze them, compare them with previous knowledge, and extract new knowledge from them. The ability to do so only comes with experience, thus the term "spiral of experience."¹⁵

The second is Kaagan, who contends that the most efficient and cost effective method of leadership development is to carefully structure opportunities for leaders to meet in peer groups in the work context and reflect on the actual experiences in their current roles as leaders.¹⁶ The third is Strangway, who identified five developmental factors in a study of Protestant pastors who scored exceptionally high as transformational leaders.¹⁷ Each of the five factors (drive to achieve, intentional learning, leadership as praxis, challenging leadership experiences, and shift of values) relates in some way to the responsibility of the leader to learn from experience accompanied by feedback from others.

The emerging leader continues to learn from experience over the span of an entire lifetime. J. Robert Clinton identified predictable leadership development phases during the entire life of a Christian leader.¹⁸ He, with other researchers, describes three broad categories of experience in these phases, the first category is leadership development and includes every experience during one's lifetime which might enhance one's

¹⁵ Richard Hughes, Robert Ginnett, Gordon Curphy, *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience* (New York: Irwin/McGraw Hill, 1999), 79-82.

¹⁶ Stephen Kaagan, "Leadership Development: The Heart of the Matter," *The International Journal of Educational Management* 12(2) (1998): 74-83.

¹⁷ Merle Strangway, "The Development of Transformational Leadership in Pastors of Protestant Churches," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1999).

¹⁸ J. Robert Clinton, *Leadership Emergence Theory* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Resources, 1989).

leadership; the second is leadership education, which is any intentional intervention to foster leadership abilities; and the third is leadership training, which attempts to improve specific skills for a particular role or job.

A Leadership Development Model

Thus far I have described learning, changing, and doing as integrated dimensions of an ongoing transformational leadership development process creating organizational change. Following is a prescriptive application of those dimensions adaptable to religious and non-profit organizations. The application is a process in which these eight conditions are established and nurtured in order to support learning, changing, and doing. Due to the cyclical nature of such a system, I am avoiding suggesting that these are chronological steps.

Effective integration of this model means that leadership development becomes hard to distinguish from usual activity. The activity of leadership development is actually doing work, accomplishing and adapting, within a particular intentional environment, rather than a specific or distinctive set of programs. It is expressed in activities that produce features like positive cultural adaptation, the building of significance, and the building of esteem.

Organizations can intentionally foster the following process, and indeed, many healthy organizations demonstrate these conditions. These conditions must be integrated into the on-going life of the organization rather than seen as a particular distinct emphasis in a certain timeframe. In hierarchal organizations seeking renewal, the first two conditions should be recognized as reframing concepts that foster change and promote the entire change process only when shared by organizational leaders at a particular level.

Condition One: Rethinking Mission

Organizations seeking renewal typically attempt to clarify their mission. That process seems evident, and encourages activity targeting the specific product or

service the organization exists for. The payoff of renewal is seen as proportional to the ability of the organization to get its mission straight and focus on productive activity.

This model, however, redirects the attention given to mission. Rethinking mission means an organization identifies and embraces within its idea of mission being a creative relational network in which personal transformation of its members is sought. No longer is mission seen in terms of output or accomplishment alone; mission becomes developing people who learn, change, and do while pursuing the product or service.

In hierarchal organizations positional leaders at some level must experience this resolve. Views of organizational accountability prized by these positional leaders then extend to how a member is changing in important relationships and contributions as a citizen. Evaluation throughout the organization is subsequently weighted toward learning, changing, and doing practices.

Condition Two: Interrelatedness

Learning, changing, and doing are experienced as parts of a whole in this leadership development model. They are cyclical and internal within a system, not linear or imposed from outside the community. This condition can be described as interrelatedness. The point in a leadership development program is to respect, understand, and trust interrelatedness.

It is essential that persons who serve religious and non-profit organizations characterized by hierarchal structures both understand and nurture this reality. Learning, changing, and doing happen where people are in relationship with one another and working together in their primary community. That community fits somewhere in the larger organization, but does not draw leadership development for its people from the larger organization. However, every system is in relationship with a broader system. Though leadership development occurs in the setting of the work in a primary community;

counsel, assistance, and mentoring are drawn from the broader community when relationships are positive.

Learning, changing, and doing are interrelated dimensions that require intentionality from within the organization and constant renewal.

Condition Three: Theological Reflection

Significant theological reflection on the nature of leadership is mutually experienced in the ongoing life of a healthy religious or non-profit organization. I do not mean to limit theological reflection to use of inspired texts, though in some working communities that is appropriate and helpful. Relational processes of seeking meaning making in the context of work experience provide theological reflection as well.

The vehicle for such activity is highly relational group interaction among the members. I am suggesting these relationships be intentionally fostered. Highly relational groups should be created, and time for mutual reflection scheduled in the work context. For religious organizations, such a step seems logical. The nature of the organization provides permission to create interactive relationships for the purpose of seeking God. In non-religious organizations, such reflection seems to threaten contracts of privacy. In those circumstances, core leadership needs to interpret the aspects of theological reflection as meaning making beyond the study of specific inspired literature. Members who are personally inclined to seek meaning from inspired text can engage with those who approach life empowered by other philosophical foundations.

Condition Four: Theoretical Learning

All members of an organization should be equipped to critically think about their assumptions regarding the nature of leadership. Theoretical foundations for leadership understanding form a foundation for this dimension of learning. Positional leaders too often approach learning on this level as their domain without realizing the value to members throughout the

organization. Transformational leadership development requires distribution of theoretical learning.

Theoretical learning in the work place can be accomplished by reading groups, annual workshops, and continuing education standards. These activities should be intentionally implemented and designed to foster theoretical learning regarding the nature of leadership.

Condition Five: Reflection on Leadership Practices

People experience their leadership, and the leadership activity of others, through specific essential leadership practices in their community including building shared vision, practicing solid integrity, challenging the status quo, empowering people, demonstrating abundance mentality, and relating to diversity. Attitudes are interpreted as these behaviors, or practices, are observed. Influence is exerted through the same behaviors.

The cyclical nature of leadership development needs emphasis again on this level. The heart of a person changes through theological and theoretical learning in the community. It follows that, as a person experiences change, essential leadership practices are shaped. What organizations often overlook is the power of leadership practice itself to support continued change. However, the capacity for practice of leadership to generate change within the heart of members of an organization is proportional to their accompanying reflection.

Reflection on leadership practice means identifying behaviors, analyzing, and critically thinking. Identification and understanding encouraged through self assessment, feedback groups, and reflection exercises should be encouraged in the context of work. Relationships in religious and non-profit organizations between peer leaders, managers, and positional leaders should foster conversation aside from evaluation regarding the practice of leadership.

Condition Six: Experiential Learning

The work itself provides a transforming opportunity within an organization. This condition is distinct from

reflection on leadership practices in that it approaches the value of what might otherwise be seen as ordinary work having nothing to do with leadership or its development. People have the capacity to find meaning and experience change as they go about mundane activity. Leadership development is happening as ordinary tasks are engaged.

Experiential learning in the context of ordinary tasks requires recognition of the value of work. Such a culture will produce self-directed reflection on just how work is done, how it may improve, and what it means to contribute through work. A culture of experiential learning is produced by affirming experimentation, valuing the learning failure provides, providing peer feedback systems, offering coaching, and performance reviews that emphasize the creativity taking place while doing the work itself.

Condition Seven: Training

Training is the acquisition of skills to perform a job to agreed standards, in contrast to development which has as its aim empowering people to acquire new viewpoints, horizons, or technologies. Training improves human performance in a certain task. The tools of training are instruction, demonstration, practice, and evaluation.

An effective leadership development model in a religious or non-profit organization will incorporate skill training. Skill training for a wide range of management and administrative skills such as strategic planning, conflict management, managing meetings, managing change, communication, financial administration, or human resource management should be provided in the context of work in an intentional and professional manner with affirmation given by endorsement or certification of the specific skills pursued.

Skill training when accompanied by the other conditions outlined in this model improves confidence, gives persons freedom to expand their contributions, and

thus empowers persons to contribute to organizational change.

Condition Eight: Feedback

Communication is vital in a leadership development process. The communication required is not limited to formal evaluation from positional leaders in the organizational structure. What is needed is a culture of listening to feedback from peers, supervisors, and supervisees as well as those served. People who grow as leaders seek feedback, and hear it in a myriad of ways.

Intentional and formal feedback is of course valuable. A 360-degree leadership assessment tool applied periodically is of great value. Annual performance reviews, when implemented carefully, can contribute to a system of helpful feedback. More helpful is the modeling and exercise of a relational environment in which work is freely discussed, views across hierarchal lines are sought and shared, and trust promotes free discussion of expectations.

Conclusion

Learning, changing, and doing are integrated and internal dimensions of an ongoing transformational leadership development process creating positive change for religious and non-profit organizations. The development process must be experienced within the social environment of the work of the organization and is ongoing. It is created by nurturing eight conditions: rethinking mission, interrelatedness, theological reflection, theoretical learning, reflection on leadership practices, experiential learning, training, and feedback. In hierarchal organizations, the role of supporting leadership development from one organizational level to another is to provide consultation and guidance in establishing the process.