

Activating Leaders from Information to Impact

(Culmination Paper)

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Throughout life there are people whose influence and guidance make a difference and encourage others to step into their full potential. As a result, leadership development cultivates a culture that facilitates a space for people to step into the fullness of both their identity and capacity as a leader. The Masters in Leadership program at Azusa Pacific University is one of those spaces that has made a generational impact where personal and professional leadership development is a focused pursuit that continues to lead people toward an exponential increase in information, transformation, and formation. By engaging in learning through various classes, libraries of information increases, connects with the heart, and transforms lives which triggers both personal and professional formation. At the culmination of the program leaders are activated, and this paper will articulate how leaders' definition of leadership is transformed by influential meta-competencies, theories, and perspectives that lead to the impactful development of leaders through the implementation of job crafting.

Transformed Definition of Leadership

For many people, leadership is often defined as a position of authority and power with the ability to establish change and cooperation to accomplish tasks. Over the years, that conventional definition of leadership was regularly challenged and transformed over time as human behavior and performance was studied in order to better understand organizational culture (Natemeyer, 2011). Northouse (2016), defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 6). Leaders are considered strong role models for followers carrying “high standards of moral and ethical conduct and can be counted on to do the right thing” (Northouse, 2016, p. 167). Rather than being filled with egocentric power, leaders are committed to service and transformation through leadership development.

There is often a discrepancy between missional clarity and leadership development due to creative incoherence as well as a lack of clarity and strategy that has led to this imbalance of dichotomy (Lemler, 2010, p. 89). According to Lemler (2010), “mission requires leadership to serve and shape it, and leadership requires mission for focus and integrity” (p. 89). Overall, leaders who live out their True North align others around a shared purpose or vision by empowering others to lead authentically (Craig, George, & Snook, 2015). As a leader, their mission is to believe in people and invite them into a better story. By allowing their True North to guide them to encourage, empower, equip, and ekballo (send) leaders into various spheres of society both locally and globally.

Influence of Meta-Competencies of Leadership

Every leader committed to wholeness has the potential to affect their entire organization through their spirituality and faith that empowers their emotional, social, and academic wellbeing. One of the first meta-competencies are spirituality and faith, which is defined by being created in the image of God, a deep calling of a person’s holistic identity waiting to be lived out and exposed to the world. Every individual has a unique story and personality waiting to be embraced and encouraged to be fully expressed. In a world full of discouragement, people often scale back and do not live into the fullness of who God has called them to be. Therefore, because of their commitment to the cornerstones of Christian leadership and because of the example of Jesus Christ, leaders are dedicated to their own unique principles of leadership that have the authentic influence to attract and lead their followers directly to the character of God.

In addition, the meta-competencies emotional and social intelligence is a commitment to an ongoing awareness and arrangement of priorities and perspectives on a journey of seeking wholeness. Discovering wholeness requires balance, harmony, and awareness to shine and align

all areas of life such as thoughts, feelings, choice, body, social, and soul (Gilbert, 2016). Through a greater awareness of wholeness, a person's life begins to deconstruct and reshape due to a conviction and willingness to illuminate areas of deep chaos waiting to be restored to fullness. Transforming these areas spark the journey of greater discovery that uncovers the importance of wholeness. Transformational wholeness starts with developing emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize and understand emotions internally and externally while managing both behaviors and relationships (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Through four emotional intelligence skills paired under personal and social competence, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, leaders are able to effectively manage themselves and the people they lead (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Social intelligence is the outward expression of emotional intelligence managed ethically and dedicate to service. According to Newton (2013), professionals claim knowledge of an art, dedication to service to clients, dedication to service to the public, professional creed or code of ethics, and intention to make a living at what they do. Ethical boundaries are "clear, concrete limits placed on your actions, consistent with your core values" and are the expression of healthy social intelligence (Craig et al., 2015, p. 94). Seeking to live according to ethical boundaries increases both self-awareness and discipline that safeguards leaders from acting against their values and leadership principles.

Lastly, academic inquiry is the meta-competency committed to ongoing learning where confidence is built through the spirituality of education. In search for truth, each individual is led into a new life that is guided by literature, practice, and a community of faith (Palmer, 1983). Ethical education creates the capacity for connectedness and development of critical thinking and tolerance of ambiguity, which are tools for disengagement in order to live productively and at peace in a complex world (Palmer, 1983). Education is made up of a dance between teaching and

learning with educators and learners where there are exceptional presentation and design.

Overall, the philosophy of a leader's wholeness will determine the alignment of the leader others see, the leader they really are, and the leader God wants them to be (Gilbert, 2016). Any incongruence spiritually will display a fragmented emotional, social, and academic response in leadership, which will affect entire organizations due to their misalignment of wholeness.

Influence of Theories and Perspectives of Leadership

With the acquisition of knowledge, various theories and perspectives challenge leaders' learning and development as they engage with information that transforms their outlook and informs their leadership formation. On a journey of self-discovery, they find themselves applying theories and practicing them while they regularly apply the relevancy of their learning to their current working environment. Resulting in several projects, papers, and presentations curated and cultivated to apply immediate change that informs the ongoing retention of information for practical and tangible results. Throughout the program, leadership capacity is expanded through a process of deep change that transitions through leader member exchange in correlation with servant leadership that empowers dynamic learning environments and inspires leading change.

Over the course of the program, leaders gain a continual understanding that an organization is made up of a sum of individuals. In order to function at full capacity and potential, members "must continually choose between deep change or slow death" (Quinn, 1996, p. xiii). According to Robert E. Quinn (1996), the author of *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*, deep change is discontinuous of the past and is generally irreversible existing of patterns of action and involves taking risks. Such change is centered around the interactions between leaders and follower known as Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX), which is informed by three dynamic phases in leadership: the stranger phase, acquaintance phase, and

mature partnership phase (Northouse, 2016). There are so many leadership styles and theories that empower organizations, and they must be interpreted, expressed and understood as the stewardship of power. In the book, *The Case of Servant Leadership* by, Kent M. Keith (2012) servant leadership contrasts the power model and proposes that “a servant-leader can gain power without seeking it. People trust servant-leaders, and give them power because they know that servant-leaders use power to benefit everyone” (p. 26). Every leader has to make a conscious decision to claim and take power or be entrusted with power that they can delegate to others. As a leader freely entrusted to others, their authentic character intentionally builds trust through encouragement and humility by taking a posture of patience while receiving power as a gift. The responsibility of an educator is to create a space for transformation where motivation inspires learning that makes a difference and empowers people to step into their full potential. In the book, *To Know as We Are Known*, Palmer (1983) states, “To teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced” (p. 88). Through dialogue education consisting of listening to learners, observing their context, and designing teaching and learning, Vella’s (2008) seven step design and learning tasks enable learners to connect new knowledge to previously learned content that activates principles into practice to impact various spheres of society.

Those spheres of society have the potential to transform when leaders are committed to lead change from a place of deep change where servant leadership fosters healthy leader member exchanges with a posture of humility driven by continual learning. However, at the forefront of engaging that change is an eight-step process developed by Kotter (2012), the author of *Leading Change*, which is “a method designed to alter strategies, reengineer processes, or improve quality must address these barriers and address them well” (p. 22). These change initiatives require transformative leadership, which exists when the leader is attentive to the overall needs and

motives of their followers by empowering them with the opportunity and motivate them to achieve their full potential. (Northouse, 2016, p. 162). In conclusion, leaders committed to being change catalysts can help serve organizations who are often wrestling with the incongruence between missional clarity and leadership development.

Impact of Learning for the Development of Leaders

Overall the Masters in Leadership program can best be described by Thomas Merton who states, “the purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world — not to impose a prefabricated definition of the world, still less an arbitrary definition of the individual himself” (as cited in Palmer, 1983, p. 12). Confidence is built through the spirituality of education in search for truth and truth’s search within each individual who is led into a new life guided by literature, practice, and a community of faith (Palmer, 1983). Through the guidance and wisdom of several influential role models, leaders discover their authentic selves in the depths of who they are and how they are able to make a unique contribution by leading out from their real best selves.

Holistically, the five competencies, principled decision maker, change catalyst, inspiring developer, responsible influencer, and strategic mobilizer, were a driving force of formation as faculty, alumni, and cohort throughout the program modeled them through their own personal and organizational transformation. Through Dr. Wu’s passion for advancing the research of a social vision of Shalom by mentoring and developing programs of reconciliation, Dr. Gilbert's heartbeat for agapao style leadership, Dr. Whyte’s unrelenting authentic leadership that call the best out of people committed to global engagement, and Dr. Barron’s ability to initiate change through systems derived from painting a picture of a strategic vision, generations of leaders have been impacted to leave their own legacy. The inspiration of alumni empowers leaders to seek

excellence and diligence in their own unique personal leadership, craft, and calling while inspiring them to integrate their learning into their daily lives. Finally, leadership cohorts journey together as they are inspired by Dr. Lemaster, leadership development expert and professor, who challenges the leaders of the future who “align values, empower, collaborate, and serve” (Lemaster, 2016). Through these influential role models, leaders are able to gain wisdom that leads to personal transformation and ongoing formation as they continue to apply what they have learned to their lives as a leader.

Through the Real Best Self exercise, leaders realize that they are at their best when they are changing the world through discipleship, building systems and implementing strategies, and encouraging people and empowering destinies. Unveiled through interviews, the Real Best Self exercise helps leaders identify moments of their greatest contribution, success, and joy resulting in the discovery of who they are at their best. Also, through the lens of various assessments and exercises such as MBTI, Gallup Strengths, Stand Out, Core Values, and more, leaders establish a series of “I AM Statements” that informs who they are vocationally and their maximum contribution professionally. Vocationally, the discernment of a personal vocation is an ongoing and lifelong process of learning to live the truth of whose we are, not by confusing our calling with our career, but by constantly being reminded of who we are called to be (Benner, 2004, p. 98). With libraries of theories, principles, and practices that are empowered by the three meta-competencies, the impact of learning has had a formational impact on the way leaders develop on a journey of discovering their authentic self and how they will leave an impact in the world. Leadership is the call to continuously and generously activate leaders from information to impact to life transformation that in turn leads to the formation of entire organizations and cultures.

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