

DEVELOPING GENERATIVE CHANGE LEADERS ACROSS SECTORS: AN EXPLORATION OF INTEGRAL APPROACHES

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Abstract. This paper summarizes the key findings, interpretations and questions that result from a nine-month exploratory study of the emerging field of ‘generative change agent development’ (GCAD). The study was based on interviews with observers of the field and program directors on five continents, as well as on analyses of websites, articles, and books. It benefits from the extensive experience that the research team gathered in decades of founding and leading diverse leadership networks as well as educational and training programs.

While keeping in mind the larger leadership development field, we focused our exploration on medium to long-term development programs for what we call ‘generative’ change leaders who work in and across the public, business and civil society sectors. Another key criterion is that these programs integrate the personal, interpersonal and systemic dimensions of change. And they do so in service of individual, organizational and societal transformation to effectively address humanity’s increasingly complex economic, political, social and environmental challenges.

Being generative in this context includes becoming more creative and compassionate, wiser and responsible for the whole, capable of transcending widely-accepted worldviews and behaviors that stand in the way of aligning ourselves with personal, social and environmental sustainability. Generative change leaders are willing and able to shift the inner and interpersonal perspective from which they operate. They also enable others to accept personal responsibility for changing their own attitudes and actions. And they help to transform the culture of their organizations and the larger systems in which they operate.

After a brief review of the objectives, context, and scope of the study, as well as of the forces affecting the field, this preliminary paper summarizes some of the core views on leadership development shared by the directors of selected programs, a number of common characteristics of these programs, and some of the questions and unmet needs that could be addressed by an ongoing community of learning and action. It concludes with a few next steps that we are undertaking to further develop the usefulness of the research, its translation into action, and the expansion of our network of interested program directors and facilitators in this emerging field.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the exploratory study—which started in the field in July 2007—were to: (1) globally search for innovative and successful education, training, and development programs for generative leaders, social entrepreneurs, and other change agents; (2) identify societal change agent development needs that are not currently addressed; and (3) identify program directors who would be interested in being connected through a learning and collaborative network.

The focus has been on programs for leaders who come from diverse sectors (private, public, and civil society) – as well as for “change process practitioners” (educators, facilitators, consultants, and coaches) – committed to bringing about a more humane, just, and sustainable world.

1.2 Context

The nine-month global study was co-led by Alain Gauthier, as Project Coordinator, and Thais Corral and Walter Link who are co-founders and co-chairs of the Global Leadership Network (GLN). GLN supports the continuation of this research process, following the publication of the collective book “Leadership is Global” (Link et al, 2006).

The Stewardship Group of the ‘Generative Change Agent Development’ project was composed of additional global leadership experts from four continents. An overview paper and a directory of selected programs will be available in September on the website of the Global Leadership Network (<http://globalleadershipnetwork.net/>).

1.3 Forces Affecting the Field

A number of enhancing and constraining forces are impacting the size and growth of the field of generative change leader development.

a. Enhancing forces

1. Growing emphasis on developing ‘human capital’, individual and collective creativity, and attracting and retaining talent across all sectors.
2. Adoption of the UN Global Compact’s principles for responsible management education by more 100 business schools world-wide by the end of 2008.
3. Growing number and influence of civil society organizations in many countries
4. Growing number and impact of social entrepreneurs, connected and supported by international networks (e.g. *Ashoka*, *Skoll*).
5. Growing emphasis on collaborative leadership and particularly on multi-sector partnerships as key vehicles for development.
6. Movement toward co-generational and international leadership networks.
7. Increasing virtual networking and educational possibilities.
8. Growing proportion of ‘cultural creatives’ and of ‘post-conventional’ leaders, particularly in younger generations
9. Beginning shift from a ‘domination’ to a ‘partnership paradigm’, especially with the growing influence of women.
10. Growing interest for meditation and other spiritual practices as a key to greater creativity and well-being in some organizations and domains such as health care.

b. Constraining forces

1. Emphasis on short-term performance improvement.
2. Increasing time pressures on leaders and other change agents (little time for reflection).
3. Majority of business schools emphasizing financial and quantitative approaches in last two decades.
4. Limited number and enrollment of existing programs that truly integrate all levels of change agent development work.
5. Limited number of change practitioners/educators capable of guiding generative change development and work.
6. Few generative leadership development programs available to or affordable by social entrepreneurs.
7. Few leadership development programs focused on the development of collective leadership and collective intelligence.
8. Increasing fragmentation of society and growing individualism and materialism.
9. Growing fundamentalism in some societies.
10. 'Domination paradigm' still firmly entrenched, particularly among middle-aged and older men.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of the survey was intentionally global, with an emphasis on exploring both the diversity of regional/cultural approaches and identifying potentially universal principles and practices. This approach is core to the Global Leadership Network, which attempts to counterbalance the fact that most internationally known and applied processes and programs, books and audio-visual materials originate from the US and a few countries in Western Europe. By contrast, little is known (except locally) about leading-edge programs on other continents.

Given the large size of the leadership development field, we focused our study on the programs that met most of the following criteria:

1. The primary audiences of the program are leaders, social entrepreneurs, and change practitioners who work across sectors.
2. There is a substantial degree of integration among the personal, interpersonal, and systemic components of the program.
3. The design has some innovative features that differentiate it from traditional leadership development programs.
4. The profile and experience of the designers and facilitators of the program indicate a deep understanding and practice of the integration between personal, interpersonal and systemic change.
5. The curriculum is at least 4 months long to facilitate meaningful transformative outcomes.
6. Post-program evaluation results are available.

Through literature review, website analysis, and individual interviews of field observers and program directors, we have identified a preliminary list of 25 programs in the world that meet most of these criteria (see Appendix 1). The selected programs take place on five continents and cover a wide range along dimensions of leadership development: from four months to two years in length; from MBA, Executive MBA and PhD programs (hosted by

well-known universities) to independent programs designed for social change agents; from programs for industrialized countries to programs adapted to the needs of developing countries; from self-sustaining programs (based on tuition) to programs dependent on foundation grants; and from formal programs with a degree or certificate to organic ‘learning by doing’ approaches (see diagram in Appendix 2).

2. KEY FINDINGS

The selected programs focus on developing integral approaches that put equal emphasis on the ‘interior’ dimensions of both individual and collective development (intention, worldview, purpose, vision, values and cultural norms) and on its ‘exterior’ or visible dimensions (behaviors, organizational structures and processes), and how shifts or interventions in these domains must be coherent for change to be both deep and sustainable. They also pay attention to developmental levels in these dimensions, and to the dynamic relationship between individual and collective transformation (McIntosh, 2007).

These programs share certain views on leadership development as well as a number of characteristics, and their directors are pondering some questions and unmet needs.

2.1 Shared Views on Leadership Development

The program directors and designers tend to share the following views on leadership development:

1. Addressing humanity’s complex challenges (such as climate change, poverty, social inequity or HIV/AIDS) requires the skilled, creative and collaborative interventions of ‘post-heroic’ change leaders or ‘social artists’ at many levels and across boundaries. It also calls for new organizational forms such as ‘living networks’ where individual and collective leadership enables the emergence of collective intelligence.
2. Exercising leadership in cross-sector or multi-stakeholder contexts requires a higher level of both inner and interpersonal skills to deal effectively with the diversity of worldviews, values, assumptions, languages and experiences; developing leadership in such contexts will help accelerate the growth of leaders from any sector.
3. Developing this new type of co-leadership requires both a congruent mix of integral methodologies and leadership development professionals (facilitators, mentors, and coaches) who ‘walk their talk’ in addressing both ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ dimensions of change—from a post-conventional or more mature stage of development.
4. Combining a variety of developmental models, methods and tools which were primarily codified in the West —along with Eastern and local practices of inner and community development— is key to both effectiveness and cultural appropriateness; in the case of international programs, identifying and developing local facilitators and coaches ensures both local relevance and program sustainability.

2.2 Common Characteristics

Although the programs we surveyed occupy diverse leadership development ‘niches’, many of them share several characteristics:

1. Over a period of four months to two years, they alternate short intensive retreats and months of fieldwork, with periodic individual coaching and/or mentoring by people who know the program well.
2. Their cohorts range from 15 to 25 people, to allow both large group dialogue and individual coaching by faculty members.
3. An attentive selection of candidates ensures both good fit and good timing, with the help of ‘alumni’ who become nominators and/or mentors.
4. They emphasize action learning, offer multiple conceptual frameworks, approaches and practices as possible entry points, and combine inner work, peer learning, individual and team coaching, action-learning projects and community building.
5. There is a strong commitment to values and corresponding behavior patterns throughout the program.
6. Innovative learning processes include various forms of group and individual practices: self-reflection practices such as action inquiry, journaling, meditation, silent nature retreats; analysis of films and other artwork, artistic expression, body movements, improvisation; circle rituals and other forms of deep dialogue; peer shadowing, learning journeys, hands-on ‘prototyping’ and experimentation.
7. Design and program activities evolve over time, based on the evaluation of each retreat and of the overall program by faculty and participants, as well as on participants’ initiatives within the program.

2.3 Questions and Unmet Needs

Interviews with directors, designers, and observers of integral development programs surfaced a number of questions and unmet needs:

1. How can program length or time demands be reduced to make it more accessible to busy leaders, while devoting enough time to supported practices that enable transformation?
2. How to scale up programs that currently have cohorts of only 15-25 participants?
3. If the program is designed to mostly attract individual participants, how could it be supplemented with group capacity development within their organization?
4. How to build a community of practice among various cohorts of ‘graduates’, especially when the program serves a specific region or community, in order to reach a critical mass of change agents?
5. How to better evaluate the program’s impact on participants and their organization/community beyond self-evaluation at the end of the program, and after one or two years?
6. How to promote a more integral leadership education in mainstream business schools and corporate programs?
7. How to increase the number of programs that attract emerging or confirmed leaders from multiple sectors?
8. How to develop instructors, facilitators and coaches capable of guiding participants in the development and integration of inner practices in their professional life?
9. How can programs be made accessible to leaders who do not have a higher education, speak only a local language or dialect, and/or want to relate what is advocated in the program to their faith or their indigenous practices?

10. What new funding models are needed to make programs financially accessible to all potential participants while keeping them viable over the years?

The directors and designers of integral development programs could benefit from joining a global learning network that would cross the current boundaries of this emerging field. They could be inspired by the diversity of methods already used by their colleagues, and possibly collaborate in addressing some of the questions and unmet needs in the field.

3. NEXT STEPS

We are in the process of presenting, discussing, and deepening the key findings and questions of this exploratory study at several international leadership conferences, including the Society for Organizational Learning Global Forum, the Integral Theory in Action Conference at John F. Kennedy University, the European Academy for Business and Society Colloquium, and the International Leadership Association Annual Meeting.

We seek dialogue and interactions with individuals who have a strong interest and experience in this emerging leadership development field. The intended outcomes of these contacts and sessions are to:

1. Connect with other change practitioners and program developers who share similar interests and might want to learn from each other and collaborate in the future.
2. Identify, refine, and build on the characteristics and learning practices that are being used by the most innovative leadership development programs around the world.
3. Become more aware of the degree of personal maturity and of the competencies required to design and facilitate such capability-building programs.
4. Inspire existing educational institutions to modify or expand their curriculum in order to enhance change leaders' integral ability to address humanity's complex global and local challenges.

REFERENCES

Link, W., Corral, T., Gerzon M. (2006). Leadership is Global – Co-Creating a More Humane and Sustainable World, Global Leadership Network.

McIntosh, S. (2007) Integral Consciousness and the Future of Evolution, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco.

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Appendix 1
Preliminary List of Programs Surveyed
in the Global GCAD Exploratory Study

Hosting Institution	Country	Name of Program
African Leadership Academy	South Africa	African Leadership Academy
Art of Hosting	Worldwide	Learning the Art of Hosting
Asian Institute of Management	Philippines	Bridging Leadership Fellows
University of Bath	UK	Action Research and Sustainability MSc in Responsibility and Business
Boston College	USA	Leadership for Change
California Institute of Integral	USA	MA in Transformative Leadership Studies (CIIS)
University of Cape Town GSB	South Africa	Emerging Leaders Program
Erasmus University (RSM)	The Netherlands	MSc in Global Business and Stakeholder Management
Global Leaders Academy	NL, UK	Global Leadership Academy Program
Harvard University-JFK School	USA	Exercising Leadership: Mobilizing Group Resources
Integral Africa	Sierra Leone	Transformative Leadership and Change
McKinsey and Company	World-wide	Facilitator Development Program
Naropa University	USA	Authentic Leadership
Notre Dame University	USA	Notre Dame Executive MBA
Oxford University	UK	Social Entrepreneurship MBA
Pacific Integral	USA	Generating Transformative Change
Presencing Institute & Leadership Center	USA	Emerging Leaders for Innovation MIT Across Sectors (ELIAS)
Rockwood Leadership Program	USA	Leading from the Inside Out
Saybrook Graduate School	USA	Organizational Systems Program
SHIFT Foundation	Australia	Global Leadership Program
SIOO - Inter-university Center	The Netherlands	Executive Change Management
UNDP HIV/AIDS Group	World-wide	Leadership For Results
University for Peace Sustainable	Costa Rica	MA in Natural Resources and Development
Wageningen International	The Netherlands	Multi-Stakeholder Processes

Appendix 2

POSITION OF SELECTED PROGRAMS ALONG DIMENSIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FIELD

