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## Leadership Development

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### **Abstract:**

*Effective leadership is not just a job; it is a complex interaction between a range of personal and professional qualities and experiences. At the heart of effective leadership is a model of learning that is rooted in personal reflection to enable and enhance understanding and so inform action. We all reflect all the time, at the end of a difficult meeting, driving home, reading the paper, at a conference when a chance comment triggers a chain of thought. However, this is often random and haphazard reflection, and while valuable, it does not permit sustained and fundamental questioning and analysis. Structured reflection is central to any approach to enhancing and sustaining personal and professional effectiveness: any expression of personal artistry or mastery, for example in the performing arts, the creative arts, in spiritual development or professional practice, has to be rooted in reflection.*

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### **Introduction:**

#### **Self-directed Learning:**

The crux of leadership development that works is self-directed learning: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be, or both. This requires first getting a strong image of your ideal self, as well as an accurate picture of your real self - who you are now. Such self-directed learning is most effective and sustainable when you understand the process of change – and the steps to achieve it as you go through it. Self-directed learning involves five discoveries, each representing a discontinuity. The goal, of course, is to use each discovery as a tool for making the changes needed to become an emotionally intelligent leader.

This kind of learning is recursive: the steps do not unfold in a smooth, orderly way, but rather follow a sequence, with each step demanding different amounts of time and effort. The results of practising new habits over time are that they become part

of your new real self.

Often, with changes in your habits, emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership styles, come changes in your aspirations and dreams, your ideal self. And so the cycle continues – a lifelong process of growth and adaptation.

#### **Stages of Discoveries:**

When you go through the discovery of uncovering an ideal vision of yourself, you feel motivated to develop your leadership abilities, that is, you see the person you want to be.

**The First Discovery** is akin to looking into a mirror to discover who you actually are now - how you act, how others view you and what your deep beliefs comprise.

**The Second Discovery** involves a plan of action that provides detailed guidance on what new things to try each day, building on your strengths and moving you closer to your ideal.

**The Third Discovery** comes in practising new leadership skills.

**The Fourth Discovery** may occur at any point in the process. It is that you need others to identify your ideal self or find your real self, to discover your strengths and gaps, to develop an agenda for the future and to experiment and practise.

### **Becoming an Authentic Leader:**

This discussion argues for a model of leadership development that is based on the following propositions.

- Leadership development is symbiotic with personal growth.
- Effective leadership is rooted in personal authenticity.
- Authenticity is the interaction of values, language and the capacity to act.
- Becoming authentic is an emergent process – complex interactions over time.
- Complex interactions involve deep and profound learning.

Leadership is increasingly defined in terms of abstract and complex qualities. The growing focus on learning-centred leadership and the interpersonal, moral and spiritual and futures orientation of leadership have led to increased complexity and elusiveness in defining the characteristics of leaders. To some extent this is a product of the increasing emphasis being placed on the difference between leadership and management. Management is increasingly being defined in terms of concrete and operational activities that are easy to define. We need to increase our ability to develop a more meaningful and effective vocabulary to facilitate dialogue around the process of leadership learning and development.

Such a vocabulary would help to address two fundamental problems in evaluating the success of leadership development. Firstly, there is the problem in

establishing a causal relationship between developmental activities and changes in the perceived leadership effectiveness of participants: the more complex the theme, the greater the number of potential intervening variables. The second issue relates to impact – the extent to which any developmental process actually leads to significant change that can be described and explained in terms of enhanced capacity and the achievement of desired results.

There are many ways of defining this concept of ‘being a person’ but the following elements would appear to be generic to most definitions:

A] Understanding self in relation to others, living and working through social relationships.

B] Growing through the multiple manifestations of loving and being loved, through family life and friendships (social, sexual and spiritual).

C] A sense of having the potential to achieve self-actualisation.

D] The ability to be creative.

E] The engagement with beauty in art and nature, from mindscapes, to landscapes.

However this is not a solitary process:

It also has a social dimension insofar as it brings with it a sense of belongingness and indebtedness to the wider social context that makes it possible. (Guignon, 2004, p.163) Becoming a leader is becoming a person and that, by definition, is a social process.

### **Conclusion:**

Leadership development therefore might be seen as the process of becoming personally authentic. Becoming authentic is not an event, it is a set of complex relationships and interactions – leadership learning might be seen as a recursive system in which: it is impossible to measure initial conditions with enough precision to determine causal relations accurately ... unpredictability, therefore is unavoidable.

Unlike linear systems, in which causes and effects are proportional, in recursive systems, complex feedback and feed-forward loops generate causes that can have disproportionate effects.

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