

Transformative Leadership: Its Evolution and Impact

JOAN BARSTOW HERNANDEZ

Abstract

The ideas behind the conceptual framework and eighteen capabilities of Núr University's Transformative Leadership Program were developed in the 1990s as a Bahá'í-inspired approach to leadership that could be used in academic settings or in projects of social action involving the general public. Since then, this program has been used in approximately sixty projects or workshops in forty countries in North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, generating a significant impact regardless of culture. Both the conceptual framework, which consists of six elements, and the capabilities are closely related to a method of transformative learning, which enhances the power of its focus.

Résumé

Durant les années 1990, l'Université Núr a établi un programme de leadership transformatif. Les idées sous-tendant le cadre conceptuel de ce programme et les dix-huit compétences à acquérir émanaient d'une démarche d'inspiration bahá'íe en matière de leadership qui peut servir tout autant dans un cadre universitaire que dans des projets d'action sociale engageant la population en général. Ce programme a par la suite été utilisé dans une soixantaine de projets ou d'ateliers qui se sont déroulés dans quarante pays d'Amérique

du Nord et du Sud, d'Europe, d'Afrique et d'Asie, lesquels ont eu un impact important quelles que soient les différences culturelles. Tant le cadre conceptuel, qui compte six éléments, que les compétences à acquérir sont liés de près à une méthode d'apprentissage transformatif, qui en renforce la portée.

Resumen

Las ideas detrás del marco conceptual y las dieciocho capacidades del Programa de Liderazgo Transformativo de la Universidad Núr fueron desarrolladas en los 1990s como un acercamiento de inspiración bahá'í hacia el liderazgo el cual podría ser usado en escenarios académicos o en proyectos de acción social involucrando al público en general. Desde entonces, este programa ha sido utilizado en aproximadamente sesenta proyectos o talleres en cuarenta países en Norte y Sur América, Europa, África y Asia, generando un impacto significativo independientemente de la cultura. Ambos el marco conceptual, el cual consiste en seis elementos, y las capacidades, están íntimamente relacionadas al método de aprendizaje transformativo, lo cual realza el poder de su enfoque.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

Different approaches to transformative leadership have been proposed since 1978 when James McGregor Burns first introduced the phrase "transforming leadership" in his descriptive research on political leaders to refer to a type of leadership in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of

morale and motivation” (20). Bernard M. Bass extended Burns’ ideas in 1985 in his book *Leadership and Performance*, highlighting the psychological mechanisms influencing transformational leadership and exploring the ways in which a leader can influence his subordinates.

However, there is no evidence that these approaches to transformational leadership influenced the approach developed by Núr University in Bolivia. Although Núr’s Transformative Leadership Program defines the purpose of leadership as “personal and social transformation,” it emphasizes the fact that all members of a group can exercise leadership, rather than focusing on how the leader can influence other group members, as Burns did.

The first element of the conceptual framework presented by Núr is “servant-oriented leadership,” similar to Robert Greenleaf’s *Servant Leadership*. The framework is also aligned with Stephen Covey’s *Principle-Centered Leadership*, in that it emphasizes guiding our lives by principles. In fact, it includes a number of quotes from Covey to support the ideas presented. Another important influence was the emphasis on the *development of capabilities* that characterizes the programs of FUNDAEC¹ in Colombia. Finally,

1 FUNDAEC (Foundation for the Application and Teaching of the Sciences) is located in Cali, Colombia. Since the 1980s, FUNDAEC has contributed to the field of alternative education, focusing on the development of capabilities. It is best known

the Spanish title of the book by Eloy Anello and myself, *Liderazgo Moral* (*Moral Leadership*) which was later adopted to refer to the program, was inspired by the following statement made by the World Health Organization in 1988: “The strategy to achieve health for all (implies) the generation of moral leadership, which is generally lacking in many societies” (7).

The concepts included in Transformative Leadership are Bahá’í-inspired, being consciously developed in coherence with the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh. However, they are not presented as Bahá’í concepts, as they were formulated for a public that knows nothing of the Bahá’í Faith. Although some quotes are included from Bahá’í sources, most are from well-known secular authors whose thinking aligns with Bahá’í principles.

Núr presents Transformative Leadership as “a program of transformative learning that contributes to a better practice of leadership, administration and the development of the human and institutional capabilities required by individuals, organizations and societies in continual progress” (Kepner 6). As such, it can be incorporated in both academic programs and social actions projects.

The fundamental concepts on which Moral/Transformative Leadership is based were first formulated

for its SAT (Tutorial Learning System) program that provides alternative education in rural communities where government-funded high schools do not exist.

in a meeting of outstanding Bahá'í educators, including Dr. Farzam Arb-ab, Mr. Paul Lample, Dr. Eloy Anello, Ms. Lori McLaughlin Nogouchi, and others, sponsored by Herzen State Pedagogical University in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1992 (Anello, Hernandez and Khadem xv). After the fall of Communism, with its externally imposed code of conduct, educators in the Soviet Union had become aware of the need for a framework of moral education capable of integrating moral issues with academic topics. The meeting resulted in a document that briefly describes four elements of a conceptual framework of moral leadership and provides a list of fifteen capabilities.

Even before this meeting, Dr. Anello—one of the founders of Núr University—was giving workshops on community leadership, as part of a project called “Strengthening Non-Governmental Organizations and Training in Public Health,” carried out by Núr with financing from Project Hope.² He had also developed a passion for working with rural school teachers, as his work in public health had convinced him that when the school teachers in rural communities support a program, they serve as a catalyst, leading to the program’s success in that community.

However, at that time universities in

Bolivia could not offer academic programs to teachers, who completed a three-year program in separate teachers’ colleges. For further specialization, they took courses in the Higher Institute for Rural Education (ISER). One of the workshops that Dr. Anello gave in the project for strengthening NGOs was attended by Mr. Jordan Segovia, the rector of ISER. Consultation between Anello and Segovia led to the idea of offering an expanded version of the project to rural school teachers as an academic program. Núr University would write the twelve books needed in the three-semester course and would train fifteen instructors from ISER, plus thirty-five tutors that ISER would hire; in turn, the instructors and tutors would deliver the program to 460 rural school teachers (*Final Evaluation* 102, 105).

Dr. Anello invited Ms. Joan Hernandez to serve as coordinator of the program and to work closely with him in developing the books and training the teachers. The first book in the program was *Moral Leadership*. In writing the book, Anello and Hernandez expanded on the implications of the four elements of the conceptual framework developed in St. Petersburg and added a fifth element, transcendence, explaining that “we experience transcendence when we detach ourselves from the limitations of current reality and connect with a higher power, or to those eternal values and principles to which we are committed” (Anello et al. 112). As a result of their ongoing consultation, they also increased the

² Project Hope was founded in 1958 as a global health and humanitarian relief organization that is committed to transforming lives and uplifting communities by empowering health care workers.

number of capabilities to eighteen, brainstorming about the implications of each capability and developing a chapter that explores each one.

The first edition of *Liderazgo Moral*, published in 1993, presents the five elements of the conceptual framework, a summary of the eighteen capabilities, and chapters on five of the capabilities. The authors decided to include the chapters on the remaining thirteen capabilities in other books of the series, relating each capability to relevant technical capabilities. For example, the capability of elaborating a principle-based shared vision became a chapter in the book on *Planificación Estratégica (Strategic Planning)* and the capabilities of consultation, encouraging others, and transforming dominating relations became chapters in the book on *Participación Comunitaria (Community Participation)*. As a result, the concepts of moral leadership were reinforced continually during the three-semester course, helping the participants more deeply identify with them.

The course had a tremendous impact on the lives and capabilities of the teachers who participated. Recently, one of the tutors recalled how his participation in the program contributed to lasting transformation in different areas of his life:

Moral leadership has helped me to understand the essential nobility of the human being. To see my students as beings with an essential nobility and latent potential

has helped me to focus . . . not only on academic contents, but also on developing their values and latent potential, identifying their potential and tending to it

Personally, the aspect of moral leadership which most helped me was the capability of contributing to the establishment of justice Something that motivated and helped me was to deeply understand the implications of gender equity. We can't speak of social justice, or of justice at any level, if we don't begin at home. This was an insight, a complicated process for me, as I was born and grew up in the Gran Chaco of Bolivia, a region characterized by deep-seated machismo, in which it is considered a sin, a crime, for a man to go into the kitchen to lend a hand with something, or to help his wife with the laundry. Committing myself to this process implied practicing these activities, which obviously was complicated for me and surprising to my family. (Kerr)

The transformative quality of the program quickly led to its replication, both in Bolivia and throughout Latin America. Plan International³ sponsored a second program with teachers in the department of Tarija, Bolivia.

3 Plan International is an international development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls.

And thanks to changes in Bolivian law, Núr University was authorized to offer the program directly to teachers as part of a bachelor's degree in education, with programs in three areas of the country. Núr also began incorporating moral leadership in other projects, such as Leadership in Small Businesses and Feminine Leadership in Health (Núr University 2–3).

The program gained prestige throughout Latin America as Dr. Anello, in his role as Continental Counselor,⁴ organized ten-day workshops for Auxiliary Board Members, both in South America and Central America. Furthermore, a module on moral leadership was included in the program of PRODES, a master's program focused on training Bahá'ís in social and economic development, offered in a number of countries throughout Latin America.

As a result, the book *Liderazgo Moral*, and to a lesser degree, the full community development program, became known throughout the Bahá'í world in Latin America, and more and more initiatives sprang up in different countries. In 1996 Núr trained an

organization in the Department of Rioja, Argentina, that then administered the full community development program with 325 teachers in the Department (Menking 1). And with financing from the World Bank, Núr offered the program at a master's level to 1,000 teachers in Ecuador in 1998–1999, incorporating facilitators from a number of countries in Latin America. Cornell Menking, who evaluated the program as his doctoral thesis two and a half years after it finished, when summarizing his in-depth interviews with ten participants, concludes:

All ten, without a doubt, found it stimulating and spoke highly of both the personal and professional challenges it presented. They appreciated how the program, and its facilitators, asked them to exercise their minds and not simply regurgitate ideas, as they accused their more traditional Ecuadorian educators of doing. They found the intellectual ideas behind the conceptual framework for moral leadership worthwhile, and continued—to varying degrees—to use the terminology and concepts two and half years later.

. . . Some of the more important concepts had faded from the participants' vocabulary and lives . . . Much more important to the participants, it seems, was the lingering effect on their personal lives, in particular via the personal mental models . . .

Most of them spoke of a radical

4 The Continental Boards of Counselors are a part of the administrative order of the Bahá'í Faith and are responsible for overseeing the protection and propagation of the Faith. There are eighty-one Counselors in the world, organized in five Continental Boards. Every Board names a number of Auxiliary Board Members in each country to aid in carrying out its responsibilities.

change in their relationships with their families and/or co-workers and said that it impacted their relationships with others and improved them. Generally speaking, what these participants felt changed them was a new understanding of human potential, a more positive outlook. (Menking 123–24)

One of the interviewees spoke of how the process of questioning mental models had affected him:

[The program] makes you reason, makes you think and meditate so much about the traditional mental models you've had and it makes you look to adopt a new mental model and different conceptual frameworks, too. That's why I said if I would have studied that book and analyzed it when I was eighteen or nineteen, I would have been totally different. (Menking 84)

Menking also relates his experience with one of the teachers who was replicating a module of the program in a community, an essential part of the methodology:

Obviously, I was very impressed with Pavel's dedication to the PLE [Educational Leadership Program] and its concepts, but he truly exhibited a medley of these capabilities over that weekend. First of all, the simple fact that

he was replicating the workshop in the same spirit that it calls for demonstrated moral leadership. He showed little regard for his own personal comfort (for example, he gave me and the American professor I was traveling with the best room in the hostel and stayed in the common room with the others), was working in a difficult and impoverished area of great need, etc. Specifically, I watched him facilitate empowering educational activities, watched him encourage people, watched him consult and promote unity in diversity, watched him work humbly, systematically, joyously, and watched him work with perseverance in pursuit of his goals. He demonstrated his understanding of the concepts, his possession of the skills, and the personal attitudes and qualities to carry out the capabilities the program promotes. (Menking 90)

Bahá'ís from other parts of the world became aware of the program, and a provisional translation of *Moral Leadership* into English was distributed electronically. Over a number of years, a workshop was given prior to the Bahá'í Conference on Social and Economic Development in Orlando, Florida. By 1998, the Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute (Stratford, Canada) had integrated the conceptual framework of moral leadership into its program, with special emphasis on the capabilities (Naylor 9). Outside of

the Americas, workshops were given in Germany (2001), Kosovo (2003), Namibia (2003), and other countries.

As a result, Bahá'ís in many countries started incorporating moral leadership into programs in which they were involved. Recently, at the 2018 International Bahá'í Convention⁵ Ms. Hernandez struck up a conversation with a Bahá'í who had attended the workshop in Germany who commented on how she had used in Macedonia what she had learned about moral leadership, while a friend from Paraguay commented that the Bahá'ís there had used the material extensively with teachers.

Moral leadership began to be used in different fields, not just with teachers. Núr's own use of the program expanded, developing materials for a program in Youth Leadership, which was carried out in lower-class neighborhoods in both Santa Cruz and La Paz, Bolivia. A nationwide program for youth in Kosovo also incorporated concepts from the materials.

In the field of public health, Dr. May Khadem, co-founder and executive director of Health for Humanity,⁶

⁵ Every five years, members from over 160 national administrative bodies of the Bahá'í Faith attend a convention in Haifa, Israel, in order to elect the members of the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í community.

⁶ Health for Humanity is dedicated to providing training for health professionals in the developing world through

asked for Dr. Anello's assistance in incorporating Núr's leadership training into its health development initiatives in Albania, Cameroon, and Mongolia. Over the course of six years—with the help of John Kepner⁷ and Charles Howard,⁸ the program was adapted for the public health sector and the manual translated into the languages of Albania and Mongolia, where it has been used extensively. A former Minister of Health in Mongolia was so impressed by the program that she later commented to Dr. Khadem:

I remember how bad the conditions used to be and now the eye department is a modern department with high quality services. However, it is not just the technical improvement that is noticeable. There is something else I have not seen before. The doctors treat the patients differently. . . .

partnerships with health care institutions, focusing especially on eye care and preventing river blindness.

⁷ Núr's director of the project of Community Development in Tarija, Bolivia; of Educational Leadership in Ecuador; and of a project in Community Leadership in Brazil, all of which used the Transformative Leadership framework and the other modules on Community Development.

⁸ With John Kepner, Charles Howard was the co-facilitator of the two-year project of Community Leadership with youth and women in the outskirts of São Luís de Maranhão, Brazil, which used the twelve modules translated into Portuguese.

The ophthalmologists at Hospital #3 changed. . . . They have a very good relationship with the patients and with each other and have now become a model department, not only for the hospital, but for all of Mongolia. I want to see this spread. (Khadem)

After Dr. Khadem moved to China and began to work with Vision in Practice,⁹ she also used the book there and had it translated into Chinese. In 2008 and 2009, Dr. Khadem and Dr. Anello offered elements of the program to personnel from Ministries of Health through the World Health Organization's Good Governance for Medicines programme.

On another front, the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education in Iran had heard of the work and invited Ms. Hernandez to give a master's level course on "Curriculum Development for Moral Education" to psychology students. In this online course, Ms. Hernandez included not only the conceptual framework of moral leadership, but also the eighteen capabilities and the methodology of transformative training. To date, Ms. Hernandez has given this course three times.

As part of the course, the students read *Transformative Leadership* and other complementary materials. In

2015 some students became so enthusiastic about the concepts contained in the book that they asked permission to translate it into Persian so that it could be incorporated into the core curriculum of the undergraduate program. As a result, approximately 400 undergraduate students are presently studying a course using this text.

An integral part of the conceptual framework of Transformative Leadership is that it "is not final, nor definitive, but evolving" through an ongoing process of consultation-action-reflection as different people and organizations work with it" (Anello et al. 123). In that spirit, the Spanish version of the book has been updated four times, including the addition of a sixth element to the framework—A Conviction of the Essential Nobility of the Human Being.

In January 2009, Dr. Anello invited Dr. Khadem to come to Bolivia to work with him and Ms. Hernandez on incorporating into the book some concepts on which they had worked. Alas, Dr. Anello's cancer prevented this meeting; but before his untimely death in October 2009, he shared with Ms. Hernandez the work that he had done with Dr. Khadem, so that she could incorporate the material into the 4th edition in Spanish, published in 2010. This edition also included for the first time the chapter on "Mental Models of Human Nature and Society," which was developed with the help of Peter Newton from Ecuador, who had served in the master's program there and had worked for years on the topic of Culture for Peace.

9 Vision in Practice works with doctors in China to design high-quality, ethical, high-volume, low-cost, barrier-free models of eye care delivery in small communities.

In early 2011, Dr. Khadem contacted Ms. Hernandez to share a dream in which Dr. Anello had appeared to her, instructing her to work with Ms. Hernandez to publish the book in English. Thus began a three-year collaboration that led to the publication in 2014 of *Transformative Leadership: Developing the Hidden Dimension*.

More recently, the book has come to the attention of Bahá'ís in the United States. Personnel at the National Bahá'í Center wrote, asking how they could deepen in transformative leadership in addition to reading the book. As a result, Ms. Hernandez and Dr. Khadem developed a companion workbook: *Transformative Leadership: Mastering the Hidden Dimension*, containing numerous exercises and applications, which groups can use when studying the book together. Ms. Hernandez also developed an online course available to the general public (<https://transformative-leaders.teachable.com/p/transformative-leadership>) so that those interested in delving into transformative leadership on their own or applying it in their organizations can deepen their understanding and interact with others who are in the same process. Finally, Ms. Hernandez gave a training session for personnel at the US Bahá'í National Center in July 2018. After the training, Helen Butler, Training and Development Coordinator at the US Bahá'í National Center, e-mailed Ms. Hernandez the following feedback:

Staff who went through the training found it to be one of the

best trainings they had taken. Of particular importance was how it aligned with Bahá'í principles and how it identified and responded to the needs to foster unity, meet goals and build capacity. As we continue to share the model, we eagerly look forward to our entire staff engaging in building the necessary skills and capabilities to support fuller and richer participation in organizational life. (Butler)

In January 2017, Jessica Kerr, founder of Cultivating Capacities, a non-profit grassroots support organization, contacted Ms. Hernandez seeking training and materials to serve in community-building spaces in Colorado. A workshop was organized in June 2017 and offered to community members, with a special emphasis on educators and students. To aid Cultivating Capacities and other interested organizations in their work with youth and junior youth,¹⁰ providing young people with tools to offer a positive response to problems they face, such as prejudice, racism, gender inequity, and bullying, in 2018 Ms. Hernandez prepared *Transformative Leadership for Youth*, in which summarized explanations of each major concept in the

10 The term *junior youth* refers to adolescents between the ages of eleven and fourteen years old. The Bahá'í community promotes the formation of junior youth groups guided by an animator, who mentors them.

Transformative Leadership book are complemented by guides for discussion or activities. Using this material, Cultivating Capacities is continuing its efforts to integrate transformative leadership into schools and youth organizations in Northern Colorado. Most recently, in partnership with Intercultural Community Builders,¹¹ Kerr has entered into an agreement with a school in Fort Collins to give weekly two-hour seminars during two months to interested students, who are responding enthusiastically. She is also consulting with some members of the Colorado Department of Education about the possibility of offering training to teachers in interested school districts.

Even though the concepts and/or capabilities of Transformative Leadership have been incorporated in approximately sixty projects in forty countries (Kepner 8), to date knowledge of this approach to leadership has spread mostly through personal contact. To facilitate interaction among those interested in the approach, a webpage is currently being developed to provide ongoing information about the basic concepts and different activities and projects related to Transformative Leadership.

¹¹ Intercultural Community Builders provides workshops and consulting services for youth and adults to teach intercultural competency skills that promote understanding and acceptance of individual cultural differences.

THE CONTENTS OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

Transformative leadership is closely linked to transformative learning, which includes the following elements:

- **Establishing context**
 - The twin processes of integration and disintegration that characterize the time in which we live and are moving us toward a planetary society
 - Primary group functions that enable all to exercise leadership
 1. *Fulfilling the purpose or goals of the group, team, or organization*
 2. *Strengthening unity among the members of the group*
 3. *Developing the capabilities of the members of the team, or organization, through training and accompaniment*
- **Questioning prevalent mental models**
 - Human Nature
 - Society
 - Leadership
- **Adopting a new conceptual framework**
 - Service-oriented leadership
 - The purpose of leadership: personal and social transformation
 - The moral responsibility to investigate and apply truth
 - A conviction of the essential nobility of human beings
 - Transcendence
 - The development of capabilities

- **Developing relevant capabilities**
 - Capabilities that contribute to personal transformation
 1. *Rectitude of conduct*
 2. *Self-discipline*
 3. *Learning from reflection on action*
 4. *Self-evaluation*
 5. *Systemic thinking*
 6. *Initiative*
 7. *Perseverance*
 - Capabilities that enhance human relations
 1. *Imbuing thoughts and actions with love*
 2. *Giving encouragement*
 3. *Using consultation in decision-making*
 4. *Constructing unity in diversity*
 - Capabilities that contribute to social transformation
 1. *Establishing justice*
 2. *Transforming dominating relationships*
 3. *Empowering education*
 4. *Formulating a shared principle-based vision*
 5. *Understanding historical perspective*
 6. *Transforming institutions*
 - An integrative capability: being a loving, responsible member of a family
- **Participating in a learning community**

living, which is characterized by the twin processes of disintegration and integration¹² and in which mankind, according to the Bahá'í teachings, is progressing toward greater maturity and a planetary society.

We also distinguish between having a formal position as a leader and exercising leadership, emphasizing that everyone can exercise leadership. Since leadership is exercised in a group, we identify three primary group functions:

- Fulfilling the purpose or goals of the group, team, or organization
- Strengthening unity among the members of the group, because “no power can exist except through unity” (Bahá'u'lláh, in *Compilation* 93). Anyone who has participated in a team or organization plagued by disunity can attest to the detrimental effect it has on achievement.
- Developing the capabilities of the members of the team, or organization, through training and accompaniment, so

12 In *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Shoghi Effendi explains that mankind is passing simultaneously through a process of disintegration, in which time-honored social institutions are breaking down or losing their influence, and a process of integration, contributing to the gradual formation of a more just, united global social order.

ESTABLISHING CONTEXT

We begin by examining the context of the historical period in which we are

that an increasing number of members can carry out ever more complex activities, empowering the organization as a whole.

All those who contribute to one of these group functions are exercising leadership because they are contributing to the progress and effectiveness of the group.

QUESTIONING PREVALENT MENTAL MODELS

If we have a cup that is full of water and we try to pour coffee into it, not much coffee will stay in the cup. If we want a good cup of coffee, first we must empty the cup, then pour in the coffee.

When people have longstanding ideas about something, we need to help them question those ideas before presenting them with new ones if we want the new ideas to have a lasting influence. Before offering the conceptual framework of transformative leadership, we question mental models in three areas that could hinder full acceptance and integration of the framework in participants' ways of thinking and acting.

Human Nature

As the Universal House of Justice explains in *The Promise of World Peace*: "a paralyzing contradiction has developed in human affairs. On the one hand, people of all nations proclaim not only their readiness but their

longing for peace and harmony On the other, uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive" (2).

We critically analyze the deep-seated belief that human beings are selfish and aggressive by nature, clarifying misconceptions and presenting the alternative view that the advances of mankind through the millennia have been due to our ability to cooperate.

We also explore other mental models of human nature, such as determinism and fatalism, which lead to the abdication of personal responsibility, and conclude by presenting the concept that human beings have a dual nature: "In man there are two natures; his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks* 60). Following the lower nature *does* lead toward selfishness and aggression, while turning toward the higher nature leads to love, understanding, compassion, and peace. Because we are endowed with free will, we can each choose the nature that we wish to cultivate.

Society

Modern society is organized around competition. The economy, the legal system, politics, education, mass media, athletic events—all are usually based on competition. There are winners and losers; people consciously or

unconsciously consider others as opponents they have to beat.

People frequently defend this model by asserting that competition enhances performance and leads to excellence. However, “trying to do well and trying to beat others are two different things” (Kohn 55). According to the philosopher John McMurdy, who has investigated and compared the consequences of competition and cooperative learning in schools: “The pursuit of victory works to reduce the chance for excellence It tends to distract our attention from excellence of performance by rendering it subservient to emerging victorious” (qtd. in Kohn 56).

Furthermore, to the degree that it motivates anyone, competition only motivates those who have a chance of winning, while it discourages those who don’t. Numerous investigations have shown that the most productive form of work is cooperative, followed by independent work. Competition is the least productive. The more complicated the task, the better the results that come from cooperation compared to competition, because it is less likely that one person has all the necessary knowledge and skills to do it well (Kohn 46–50).

Leadership

The term *leader* often calls to mind a top-down style of leadership in one of its variations. There are differences between authoritarian, paternalistic, know-it-all, and manipulative leadership; however, in all these styles, the

leader has the final word. When examined in the light of the three group functions, we discover that:

- These styles of leadership only seem effective when the tasks to be performed are relatively simple and routine. They do not motivate members’ initiative and creativity.
- They do not promote true unity, although paternalistic leadership may generate superficial unity if the members are grateful that the leader does all the work for them.
- None of these styles of leadership cultivates the capabilities of the other members of the group.

When faced with this analysis, some adduce that the solution is democratic leadership. Two positive, distinctive elements of democratic leadership are elections and participatory decision-making, but when these are carried out in an environment of competition they leave a lot to be desired. We therefore distinguish between *partisan democracy* and *deliberative democracy* (Karlberg 112). Deliberative democracy uses consultation in decision-making, which raises the quality of participatory decision-making. It can also include practices such as *elections without candidature* (Anello and Hernandez, *Participación Comunitaria* 176–78), which overcome many of the present-day problems related to elections and electioneering.

However, true leadership implies even more than consultative decision-making. It also demands the development of capabilities such as self-evaluation, learning from reflection on experience, effectively encouraging others, constructing unity in diversity, formulating a shared, principle-based vision, and many more.

Transformative leadership explores the nature of eighteen of these capabilities—some related to personal transformation; others, to bettering relationships; and still others, to the transformation of organizations and society at large.

ADOPTING A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of transformative leadership incorporates six elements that serve as a foundation for the application of the capabilities. These are:

- Service-oriented leadership
- The purpose of leadership: personal and social transformation
- The moral responsibility to investigate and apply truth
- A conviction of the essential nobility of human beings
- Transcendence
- The development of capabilities

Service-Oriented Leadership

Unlike dominant models of leadership that are motivated by a desire

for power, transformative leadership is motivated by a spirit of service. Transformative leadership seeks to serve others, rather than control them.

A spirit of service is born of love and of the recognition of our true position in life as a unique creation, with the corresponding mission of using our particular talents, capabilities, position, and economic means to better society and the lives of those around us. When we recognize that the highest position to which we can aspire is that of service and we strive to fill our acts of service with unselfish love, we become channels through which spirit flows, uniting hearts and contributing to the progress of an ever-advancing civilization.

Service is distinct from paternalism, which does for others what they can and should do for themselves. Nor should it be confused with subservience, which is characterized by self-deprecation and the desire for approval.

The most worthwhile services are those that help others develop their potential and strengthen ties of unity and friendship while contributing to the achievement of a meritorious vision.

When we act with a spirit of service, we strive to exercise *invisible leadership*. An analogy for this aspect of leadership is the wind that propels a sailboat: essential as it is, it cannot be seen. Invisible leadership does not aspire to reward or recognition; rather, upon achieving a goal, the leader turns to the others involved and

joyfully celebrates what the group has accomplished.

Service brings its own rewards. Two of the most important are the development of our own capabilities and a deep sense of inner joy.

The Purpose of Leadership: Personal and Social Transformation

Everything that exists has a purpose. Minerals, plants, and animals instinctively fulfill their purpose. Only we, as human beings, have the liberty to investigate and then consciously choose to live in accordance with our purpose.

As Bahá'ís, we are aware that human beings have a triple purpose:

- 1) To know and love God
- 2) To develop virtues and perfections (personal transformation)
- 3) To contribute to a civilization in continual progress (social transformation)

We nurture the knowledge and love of God through prayer and by reading and meditating on the Baha'i

Writings or other Holy Books. This practice serves as a source of energy and motivation that impels us to carry out the other two purposes.

Transformative leadership focuses on the dual purposes of personal and social transformation. We participate in personal transformation when we develop qualities and capabilities that enable us to better serve others. We participate in social transformation when we use our capabilities to contribute to the construction of a more just, united society, beginning with the groups, or organizations, in which we are currently involved, starting with the family.

Personal and social transformation go hand in hand—neither one is effective without the other. It is impossible to construct a just, unified society if as individuals we do not practice justice, unity, and other qualities in our daily lives, wholeheartedly participating in a process of personal transformation.

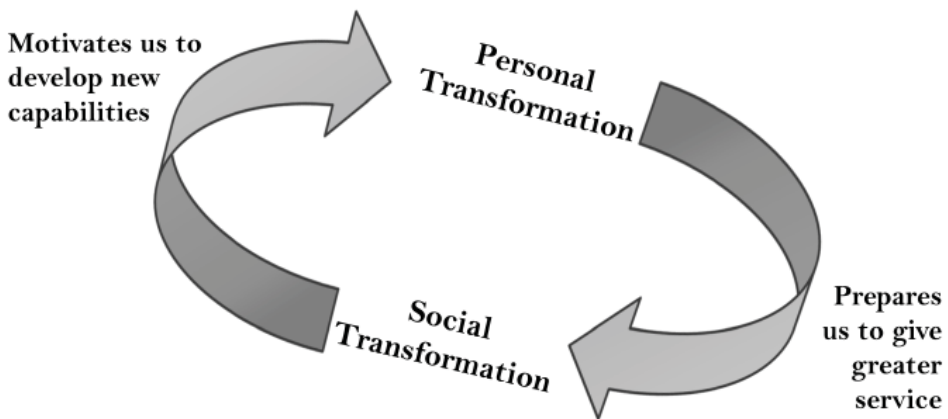


Figure 1: The Virtuous Cycle

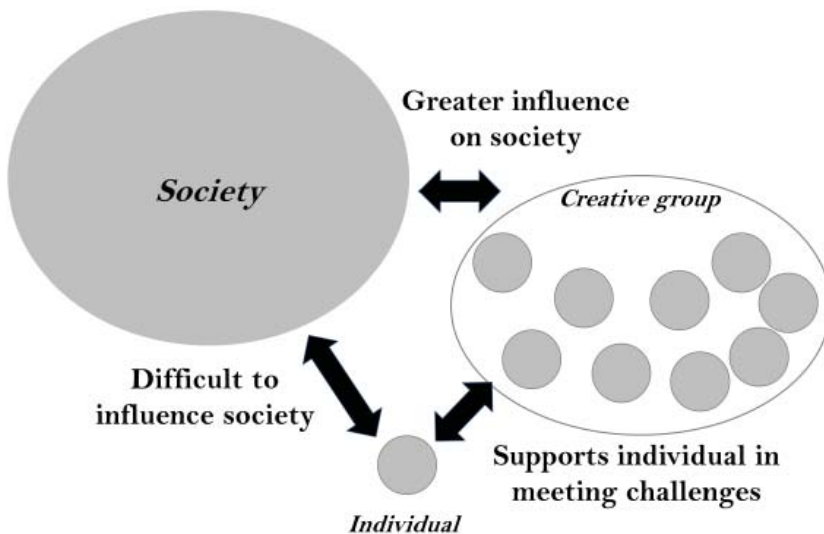
However, personal transformation alone is not enough to resolve the problems of the world. We need a shared vision of the desired society that we are striving to build and an agreement on the basic principles that will guide the functioning of that society—principles such as universal education, the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty, equal rights and opportunities for men and women, an appreciation of unity in diversity, decision-making focused on justice and the well-being of all, and others. Then, we need to practice those principles as we work to transform our vision into reality.

These two types of transformation form a virtuous circle as the development of capabilities and the dynamic force of our example increase our ability to contribute to social transformation. Our efforts to promote social transformation, in turn, motivate us to develop new capabilities and qualities.

Transformation is further enhanced when we form part of a *creative group* of people who share our vision. The support of other group members gives us strength and ideas with which to face the many challenges we encounter as we strive to implement our ideals. Likewise, working together we can carry out projects that are much more complex and significant than what we could achieve individually.

The structure of a creative group can vary greatly: from a formal organization, to a department or office in a larger organization, to an informal group of two or three friends who meet regularly to share their initiatives and challenges. What distinguishes a creative group is the mutual support for one another's process of personal transformation and the joint effort to contribute to social transformation.

Figure 2: The Role of a Creative Group in Personal and Social Transformation



The Moral Responsibility to Investigate and Apply Truth

Transformative leadership defines the fundamental moral responsibility as a commitment to truth, focusing on two aspects of this commitment:

1. the investigation of truth and wholehearted acceptance of the truths that our investigation leads us to recognize
2. the application of those truths in the processes of personal and social transformation in which we are involved.

Some argue that truth does not exist or that it is relative, or different, for each person. Our understanding is that truth refers to an objective reality, which does exist. What is relative is our understanding of truth, which is never complete. We can always increase our understanding of truth, or reality.

This concept of truth allows us to avoid the extremes of *dogmatism*, which insists that a certain understanding is the only truth, and *relativism*, which affirms that everyone has their own truth and all are equally valid. When we acknowledge that our understanding of the truth of any topic or situation is partial, we recognize the need to investigate in order to broaden our understanding. We continue to learn through reading, studying, listening to others and taking action, then reflecting with a posture of learning on the new ideas we have encountered.

When we investigate truth, we neither stubbornly insist on our own

opinions, nor blindly accept the ideas of others. Once we conclude that something is true—or once we have bettered our understanding of a certain truth—we then reflect on how we can apply that truth in the processes of personal and social transformation.

We need to apply this fundamental commitment to truth to our understanding of physical, emotional, social, and spiritual reality. In the physical world, the investigation of truth leads to the advance of science. In the emotional sphere, it leads to deeper self-understanding and better relationships with others. In the social sphere, it leads to a clearer diagnosis of problems and to making more effective decisions based on justice. The investigation of spiritual truth leads to a commitment to principles that then guide our actions. It also leads us to be open to what we can learn from religions and philosophies that are different from our own, cultivating a humble posture of learning.

In planning or problem-solving, we need to investigate both *contingent truth*, the situation that exists, and *ideal truth*, a principle-based vision of what we would like to achieve in the future. Then, we can see with greater clarity the steps needed to progress toward that vision from where we are.

One way of doing this is by:

1. Listing the facts that we know and others that we may need to investigate before making a decision.
2. Identifying principles related to the situation.

3. Defining our vision of the ideal situation, taking into account the principles we have identified.
4. Formulating the first steps to take toward a solution.

A Conviction of the Essential Nobility of Human Beings

Human beings have a lower nature that expresses itself through negative emotions, such as hatred, jealousy, and envy. However, focusing on only our lower nature leads to an erroneous concept of human beings, because we also possess a higher nature.

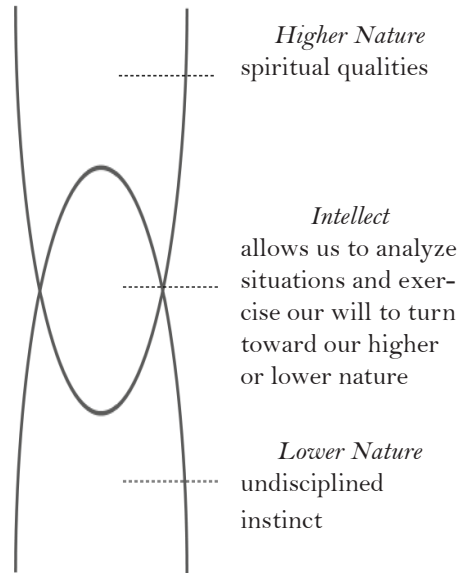
The affirmation that man was created in the *image of God* refers to the potential that each person has to develop moral qualities, such as kindness, generosity, truthfulness, upright conduct, justice, detachment, forgiveness, and many more. This view of human nature is reinforced by humanistic psychology, which emphasizes the potential of each person to grow through participating in a relationship characterized by acceptance, empathy, and authenticity.

We can allow our thoughts and feelings to be consumed by our lower nature and be carried away by our instincts. Or we can choose to exercise our free will and turn toward our higher nature, seeking to guide our actions by the moral principles to which we are committed. This effort contributes to the gradual process of personal transformation.

In every decision we make and every action we take, we have the opportunity to choose between following

our lower nature or our higher nature.

When we look at others, focusing on their qualities and their higher nature, we help them develop these qualities and their inherent nobility. As the philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe recognized: "When we take people . . . merely as they are, we make them worse; when we treat them as if they were what they should be, we improve them as far as they can be improved."



Transcendence

The process of transformation is not easy. All too often, our egotistical desires, personal interests, or bad habits hamper our efforts to practice the truths, or principles, we have accepted. We know what we should do but at times find it hard to carry out. Likewise, when we work to promote social transformation, we encounter many frustrations. At times, others are irresponsible

or do not do what they said they would. The community may be apathetic and consider that it is impossible to better a situation. Others may oppose our ideas or even criticize us.

When we encounter these or other problems, which come both from our lower nature and from society at large, we need to practice transcendence, connecting with God or universal principles that help us take a step back from the immediate situation and see the bigger picture.

Before practicing transcendence, we are like players during a sports event, who are only aware of what is going on nearby. When we practice transcendence, we become like knowledgeable fans watching the event from the stands, from where there is a view of everything that is happening on the playing field.

In brief, transcendence helps us detach from a situation and focus on what is truly important. It helps us remember our vision so that we don't feel overwhelmed when we encounter problems, inspiring us to persevere without becoming discouraged or quitting. If we do not know what to do, it can serve as a source of guidance. If we are tempted to act in a way that is not in agreement with principles, it gives us strength to follow their direction.

Some ways to achieve transcendence include:

- Prayer or meditation
- Reflection on the vision and principles to which we are committed

- Communing with nature
- Listening to music
- Creating or appreciating art
- Conversing with a friend who has greater maturity than we do

Transcending a problem is not the same as trying to forget it or escape from it. When we try to escape a problem, we may forget it momentarily, but it is there waiting for us when we return. When we transcend a problem, we remain aware of it but see it from a different perspective that enables us to take constructive action.

The Development of Capabilities

In the past, the concept of a moral person was that of a person who avoided sinful actions, someone who went along with the *status quo* and did not rock the boat. Passive morality was the norm. Today, faced with the problems that confront the world and the need for social transformation, we need a more active morality. Rather than limiting moral behavior to our personal and family life, we need to be actively involved in the processes of personal and social transformation.

To be effective in these efforts for transformation, we need to develop the capabilities of transformative leadership. Each capability consists of a combination of concepts, skills, attitudes, and qualities. For example, concepts implicit in developing the capability of consultation include the following: the purpose of consultation is to make decisions that contribute to the common good, the integration of

diverse viewpoints leads to a deeper understanding of truth, consultation contributes to justice, and there are fundamental norms for participating in consultation and personal qualities that contribute to better consultation. Skills include creating a safe environment for people to express their thoughts fully, listening with empathy, and summarizing ideas. Attitudes include curiosity, appreciation, and openness to new ideas. And qualities include truthfulness and courtesy.

As soon as we understand the concepts related to a particular capability, we can begin to practice it. Our success will depend both on the degree to which we have understood the concepts and the extent to which we have developed the relevant skills, attitudes, and qualities, all of which take time to evolve. Even when we have a good understanding of the concepts and have tried our best to practice a capability during a period of time, we need to continue striving, without becoming complacent. There is always room for improving skills, attitudes, and qualities.

The effort to practice a new capability launches a process of transformation in our lives. Gradually, through continual effort and ongoing self-evaluation of the results, we deepen our understanding of the concepts and develop the skills, qualities, and attitudes necessary to better implement each capability.

Some of the capabilities of transformative leadership, such as *upright conduct*, have an implicit moral

dimension. Other capabilities, such as *initiative*, although vital for effective action and leadership, could be used for either moral or immoral ends. We ensure the right use of these capabilities by practicing them within the context of the other elements of the conceptual framework of transformative leadership.

DEVELOPING RELEVANT CAPABILITIES

It is not enough to familiarize ourselves with the conceptual framework of transformative leadership. We need to develop the capabilities to apply it. Because transformative leadership focuses on eighteen different capabilities, we have grouped them into three categories in order to remember them more easily. These are:

- Capabilities that contribute to personal transformation
- Capabilities that enhance human relations
- Capabilities that contribute to social transformation

The categorization of the capabilities is somewhat arbitrary, as it could be argued that a particular capability could be in a category other than the one where we have placed it. For example, *learning from reflection on action* can be done by both individuals and groups. Similarly, *constructing unity in diversity* both enhances relationships and contributes to the transformation of society. As explained, the purpose of the categorization is simply to serve as an aid to memory. The overview that follows mentions a few salient aspects of each capability.

Capabilities that Contribute to Personal Transformation

Rectitude of Conduct

We hold ourselves to a high standard of conduct, consciously applying moral principles in our lives and acting with integrity. We also take responsibility for solving problems in which we are involved, rather than blaming others or attributing issues to bad luck. In doing so, we apply the steps we learned in the *investigation and application of truth*: ascertaining the facts, identifying relevant principles, visualizing the desired end situation, and formulating steps that will lead to that result.

By developing and applying the capability, we become trustworthy. Others learn that they can count on us and that we will always strive to do what is right.

Self-Discipline

We recognize that success in any endeavor requires self-discipline, as does living a life with rectitude of conduct. Two keys to self-discipline are establishing good habits and associating with people who share our ideals. We can also follow Stephen Covey's advice to practice daily self-renewal by engaging in activities that strengthen the four dimensions of life:

- physically: exercising to keep our bodies in shape
- intellectually: reading, writing, engaging in creative problem solving and continually learning

- emotionally: cultivating patience, empathy, responsibility and other qualities
- spiritually: praying and meditating (Covey 38).

Although at first self-discipline may seem difficult, in time we discover the deep, lasting happiness that is born from a combination of self-control, the development of qualities and capabilities, and the attainment of significant achievements in life.

Learning from Reflection on Action

We perform many actions out of habit. Even when the results are negative, we often continue doing the same thing in the same way, simply hoping that it will turn out better next time. We do not realize that, as the expression goes, insanity *is* doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results. Reflecting on our experiences allows us to learn from them and to gradually develop more effective ways of acting.

Through reflection, we can identify the consequences of our actions and the advantages and disadvantages of acting as we did. We can evaluate if the way we acted facilitates the development of our capabilities and the capabilities of others and if it contributes to a just, united society. We may consider if the action has led to the end that we desire and if it has generated problems that we want to try to avoid in the future. Then we identify what we want to do the next time we are in a similar situation. Having

thought beforehand of how we want to act or respond, we are more likely to carry it out.

Self-Evaluation

Knowledge of ourselves is the foundation for transformation. After identifying our talents, we can further develop and strengthen them, then use them in service to society.

We can also strive to improve in those areas in which we are weak. If we discover moral weaknesses, we need to detach ourselves from ego and from the excuses we commonly make for ourselves. Striving to develop the quality that can replace the weakness is one of the best ways to overcome it. Rather than resolving to *stop lying*, for example, it is more effective to make a special effort to *tell the truth* under all circumstances.

In our process of evaluation, rather than comparing ourselves to others, we compare ourselves to the highest criteria that we know. This helps us remain humble and continually strive to progress.

Systemic Thinking

Systemic thinking aspires to see the whole and the relations between the parts that make up the whole. It contrasts with linear thinking, which considers each part in isolation and focuses on simplistic relations of cause and effect. Rather than focusing on *isolated events*, systemic thinking looks for *patterns* of which the events form a part. It then tries to identify the *systemic structure* that generates

those patterns and to resolve problems at that level.

Rather than responding to symptoms with quick fixes, which are usually short-lived, systemic thinking takes the time to work with underlying causes. Becoming familiar with common systemic structures, such as those presented by Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline*, can help us to develop this capability.

Initiative

There are two types of initiatives. A *routine initiative* consists of voluntarily carrying out a known activity or process in which there are usually clear steps to follow to accomplish the task. In contrast, a *creative initiative* involves new ideas or ways of acting. There is no clear path to follow. Because they are different from what is customarily done, creative initiatives are often met with initial resistance, in spite of the value they may offer. However, both types of initiative are necessary and valuable.

An initiative can be broken down into seven phases: intention, purpose, concrete planning, commitment, permission, opportune timing, and execution. At times we pass through the phases rapidly and somewhat unconsciously, especially with routine initiatives. But when an initiative gets bogged down, knowledge of the phases allows us to analyze where we are in the process, see with greater clarity the next step, and carry the initiative through to conclusion.

Perseverance

Carrying an initiative through to completion demands effort during an ongoing period of time, patience to face and overcome difficulties, and a commitment to persevere in spite of unexpected problems that arise in the process.

We are more likely to persevere when the goal we are working toward is aligned with noble principles and even more so when those principles are among our most cherished values.

Careful planning that includes a balanced distribution of resources and effort, the practice of transcendence, and considering problems as tests or learning situations all contribute to perseverance.

Capabilities that Enhance Interpersonal Relationships

Imbuing Thoughts and Actions with Love

Love is much more than a pleasant emotion that we sometimes are lucky enough to experience. Love is a capability that we can develop. Psychologist Erich Fromm indicates that “love is the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love,” entailing *knowledge* of the other person, *respect* for him and his way of being, *responsibility* in the relationship and *care* for the loved one (Fromm 20–21).

Increasing our capability to love begins with our thoughts, focusing on the essential nobility of ourselves and others and identifying things they have done for which we are grateful,

characteristics that we admire, or simply their potential. We communicate love both non-verbally—through smiles, hugs, and mentally beaming feelings of love toward others—and verbally, expressing our feelings of affection, gratitude, and appreciation. We also communicate love through our actions: listening attentively without multitasking, participating with others in events or activities they enjoy, or helping them with their tasks.

It is also important to become aware of the love language that each person most appreciates: words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, gifts, or physical touch (Chapman 35).

Giving Encouragement

Most people have the potential to do much more with their lives and talents than they do. Encouragement motivates them to develop that potential. We can make a conscious effort to encourage others by focusing on their capabilities and potential. We try to “catch people doing something right” and then comment on what we like about what they did, how they did it, and the effort they made (Blanchard). It is important to state the comment as *our* response, to be *specific*, and to *emphasize the effort made* rather than attributing success to innate intelligence or capability. Some examples might be: “I appreciate the kindness and initiative you showed by inviting our new neighbor over for dinner.” Or: “I’m impressed by how hard you studied to do well on the test.”

If at times we feel that it is essential to correct someone, we can first comment on two qualities or characteristics we like, and then, rather than criticizing what the person is not doing right, give a suggestion of what might work better.

Using Consultation in Decision-Making

Transformative leadership involves group decision-making. However, making a decision in a group does not in itself imply consultation. The process must adhere to the characteristics of consultation. The aim of consultation is the *investigation of truth*, leading to *just decisions* that promote the *common good* and the *well-being of all*. When we listen attentively to others' opinions, trying to understand their point of view, we come to a more complete understanding of the reality of a situation and can make more just decisions.

For consultation to fulfill its purpose, the first requirement is unity and harmony among the group's members. The following guidelines help promote and maintain unity:

- Always speak courteously
- Encourage quiet members to share their ideas
- Never make fun of another person or disparage their ideas
- Do not stubbornly insist on a particular idea
- Do not get upset if other members do not support your ideas
- Once the group makes a

decision, accept and support it without criticism

The quality of consultation also depends on the degree to which each of the participants has developed qualities outlined by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, such as sincerity and purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment, modesty and humility, patience, and a spirit of service (*Selections* no. 43).

Consultation is a key capability in the practice of transformative leadership because without this capability, even those who have recognized the defects of vertical models of leadership often fall back into those modes because they don't know how to guide a group toward consensus.

Consultation also contributes to the capability of *establishing justice*. When justice is recognized as the "indispensable compass in collective decision making" and "the only means by which unity of thought and action can be achieved . . . a consultative climate is encouraged that permits options to be examined dispassionately and appropriate courses of action selected" (Bahá'í International Community sec. II).

Constructing Unity in Diversity

The principle of unity in diversity is the key to solving many social problems. It is the only way to avoid the extremes of *unity in uniformity*, in which one group tries to impose on others its values, customs, and ways of thinking, or *division in diversity*, in which different groups oppose one another and believe that the only way for each to

preserve its own customs and values is through separatism.

To learn from diversity, we need to cultivate attitudes such as openness to novelty and an appreciation for diverse ideas. When working with those different from ourselves, we begin by showing interest in their way of thinking and acting, then come to understand it and finally to appreciate it. In order to better coordinate and cooperate, we jointly identify principles related to the subject at hand, formulate a shared vision of what we wish to achieve, and then use consultation to explore the most just actions to take.

When only one person or a like-minded group makes a decision, it is easy for them to overlook ways in which that decision might affect others. In contrast, when unity in diversity is practiced and consultation involves diverse individuals who will be affected in different ways by a decision, all become aware of their viewpoints and are more likely to make just decisions.

Capabilities that Contribute to Social Transformation

Establishing Justice

Justice is the foundation of social order and a necessary requirement for unified action. Acting justly implies giving each person his due, taking into account both his work and his needs. In some contexts, it implies equality, as in equal pay for equal work. In others, it implies equity, giving differentiated treatment based on specific needs

or contributions.

Establishing social justice implies working for:

- The elimination of exploitation and the extremes of wealth and poverty
- A balance between individual rights and collective well-being
- Just authorities, chosen on the basis of capacity and merit, free from the influence of politics, kinship, friendship, or money
- An impartial application of the law, in which no one remains above the law

The establishment of social justice also implies freeing people from ignorance—ignorance of universal principles on which justice is based, ignorance of laws and institutions to which people can turn when treated unjustly, and ignorance of alternatives and skills that can be used to escape from an oppressive situation.

In striving to establish social justice, as individuals we need to exemplify justice in our daily lives and employ just methods in our struggle. At times we see great champions of social justice who use their positions for personal gain, are dishonest, show favoritism, discriminate against women or minorities, or misrepresent those they oppose. This lack of coherence between words and deeds frustrates the achievement of the very goal they proclaim. Rather, the creation of a just society begins with the practice of

justice as individuals, in our families and organizations.

To act with justice, we first strive to eliminate every trace of prejudice because prejudice clouds our vision and warps our judgment. We then seek to make decisions and take actions based on principles, detached from the opinions of others or our own personal or sectarian interests.

When we encounter injustice, we assume the responsibility of speaking up, no matter how uncomfortable it may be.

Transforming Dominating Relationships

If we want to transform dominating behavior, we need to begin by questioning the mental model that underlies domination, which includes ideas such as the following:

- Differences that exist between groups necessarily lead to conflict
- Domination of one person or group over others is inevitable
- It is acceptable to use power to impose one's will on another person or group

After becoming conscious of these ideas and questioning them, we can commit to a conceptual framework of relationships that is in agreement with principles such as the following:

- *Unity in diversity* contributes to greater well-being for all.
- *A shared vision, an agreement on principles*, and the practice of moral qualities—such as

truthfulness, honesty, justice, and courtesy—are the source of unity

- Differences that arise from diversity can be resolved through *consultation*

Once we internalize this conceptual framework, we can reflect on how to apply it coherently in our daily relations: in our family, with our friends, at the workplace, and in organizations to which we belong. We can begin by transforming relationships in which we have been dominating and then learn to stand up to and question others who are trying to dominate us.

Empowering Education

We plan educational sessions by first identifying what we want the students or participants to be capable of *doing* as a result of their study. By using the learning cycle with its four phases of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application, we generate participation and engage the interest of those who are studying. We go beyond theory, creating opportunities for them to practice what they are learning. If the subject matter requires it, we include exercises that aid in transforming mental models into coherent conceptual frameworks.

We also strive to establish an empowering relationship with the students, being open and friendly, communicating high expectations, and humbly showing respect for their ideas, while dedicating sufficient time to our own preparation of the class or workshop.

Formulating a Shared Principle-Based Vision

A shared vision contributes to unity of thought and aids in decision-making. It consists of the description of a *desired future* that is *challenging* but not impossible to attain and is based on *shared principles, ideals, and values*. The vision defines the ideal truth that will guide our steps in a specific field of endeavor. The success of any plan depends on vision.

By identifying certain principles and fundamental topics related to a subject area, then identifying what currently exists with regard to each one and how the group would like to see their institution with regard to each area in a certain number of years, a sizeable group can elaborate a shared vision.

Understanding Historical Perspective

An understanding of history aids in giving direction to our actions and projects. First comes the awareness that we live in a unique moment in human history. Over thousands of years, humanity has progressed through stages that correspond to its infancy and childhood, slowly developing institutions and the ability to live in harmony with ever larger and more diverse social groups. Now we find ourselves in the turbulent stage of adolescence, struggling toward maturity and a planetary society. This insight gives directions to our efforts.

Secondly, it is important to understand that in times of transition such as ours, a *creative minority* with a clear vision of the future can have an

effect disproportionate to its size. This gives us hope and patience to continue striving.

Transforming Institutions

It is important that institutions help their members apply many of the capabilities we have already mentioned: to give encouragement, to make decisions using consultation, to construct unity in diversity, to design empowering training programs, to exemplify justice, to formulate a principle-based vision, to learn from reflection on action, and to understand historical perspective.

Another important skill consists of matching people to the tasks for which they are best prepared and which they enjoy, inspiring each one with an understanding of the importance of her service.

Once a person is engaged in a particular task, appropriate accompaniment provides ongoing motivation. When a person does not have experience in a particular service, she needs and appreciates detailed, concrete guidance and accompaniment in carrying out certain activities. As she progresses, she thrives on appreciation. As her capacity grows, she can participate in decision-making and be delegated tasks with little need of accompaniment (Hersey et al. 160–61).

An Integrative Capability: Being a Loving, Responsible Member of a Family

Because the family is the foundation of society, it is where we most need to

practice the capabilities of transformative leadership. Our families know us as we truly are—with all our virtues and defects. We cannot deceive them, pretending to have developed certain capabilities that, in truth, we only practice for brief periods of time in more superficial relationships. In the family we become aware of the degree to which we have truly developed a capability.

Our relationships with the members of our family form a pattern that we tend to repeat in society. If we practice consultation at home, the members of the family will tend to consult at work and in their relationships in society at large. If, on the contrary, some members dominate others, they will tend to repeat that behavior.

Family meetings serve to support the members in developing the capabilities. In a meeting, after each member has commented on a positive action that he or she has observed in each of the others during the week, we can share our understanding of a particular capability and consult on ideas about how to practice it in the family. In this way, children can begin to learn and practice the capabilities from an early age.

THE TRAINING METHODOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP

To some degree, the methodology is incorporated in the contents, which follow the sequence of establishing context, questioning prevalent mental models, adopting a new conceptual

framework, and developing relevant capabilities. However, the transformative effect of the program is not only due to its contents, but also to the training methodology used when the content is presented in a workshop, a series of workshops, a classroom, or an online course.

In these cases, an important aspect of the training methodology consists of defining a *performance objective* that indicates what participants will be able to *do* when they finish, as well as *learning objectives* that identify step by step what the participants need to *learn* during the workshop or course—taking into account relevant concepts, skills, attitudes, and/or qualities—so that by time they finish, they will be capable of carrying out the performance objective (Hernandez, *Designing* 18).

For each learning objective, the facilitator plans activities based on the learning cycle with its four phases of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application. The inclusion of activities focused on experience, reflection, and application ensure that the workshop is participative, while maintaining a focus on the topic being studied. The application activities also serve either to consolidate the understanding of the topic or to practice the skills needed to apply what is being learned. The application activity is usually closely related to the relevant learning objective.

Since consulting about the topics being studied helps consolidate learning, in programs that include a

number of workshops participants are organized into cooperative learning groups that respond to reading comprehension questions and carry out simple practices related to the material they are studying for the next workshop. In online courses, a similar effect is achieved through the use of forums.

Following the dictum that the best way to learn is to teach, a final aspect of the methodology, which helps consolidate transformation in long-term projects, involves assigning the students the task of replicating in a simpler form the workshops in which they have participated. To help them in this process, the facilitator may provide them with a workshop design indicating possible activities.

PARTICIPATING IN A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Transformative leadership has amply demonstrated its power to transform the lives of those who integrate the conceptual framework and capabilities into their way of thinking and acting. However, simply reading the book *Transformative Leadership* is not enough to automatically ensure this transformation. Interacting with the concepts, striving to develop the capabilities, and, most importantly, participating on an ongoing basis with others who are on the same path are vital.

When Transformative Leadership has been used as content in long-term projects, a learning community has been generated by forming creative learning groups among the

participants. These meet weekly to participate in application exercises and also plan and replicate the workshops they have received. In online courses, forums in which the participants post their answers to questions and comment on the responses of others help achieve this purpose.

More recently, as a greater number of individuals or small organizations have become interested in the contents, they have experimented with forming a learning community through meeting online with other participants or sharing their learning with others in the teams or departments in which they work, using the complementary workbook as a guide.

In our pursuit of transformative leadership, we are aspiring to a very high standard requiring a lifetime commitment as individuals. We are fortunate to have had inspiring examples of leadership in our recent history—individuals such as Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. However, at this critical time of increasing crises, we do not have the luxury of waiting for selfless charismatic leaders to arise and point the way to a better future. The needs of our age require that we each take up the challenge in our own spheres of influence and become those individuals who will commit to “being” the change the future demands of us, with the full recognition that pursuit of power

and self-interest will only perpetuate the tyranny of the past. It is an arduous journey we cannot afford to ignore.

How the future unfolds is hard to predict. However, it is undeniable that significant world-encompassing change is inevitable. We can facilitate the required transformation by becoming willing instruments for a better future, learning the path as we collaborate together. (Anello et al. 219)

WORKS CITED

- Abdu'l-Bahá. *Paris Talks*. 11th ed., UK Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972.
- _____. *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*. Bahá'í World Centre, 1982.
- Anello, Eloy, and Joan Hernandez. *Liderazgo Moral (Moral Leadership)*, 4th ed., Universidad Núr, 2010.
- _____. *Participación Comunitaria (Community Participation)*. Universidad Núr, 1993.
- _____. *Planificación Estratégica (Strategic Planning)*. Universidad Núr, 1994.
- Anello, Eloy, et al. *Transformative Leadership: Developing the Hidden Dimension*. Equity Harmony Press, 2014.
- Bahá'í International Community. *The Prosperity of Humankind*, <https://www.bic.org/statements/prosperity-humankind>.
- Bass, Bernard M. *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. Free Press, 1985.
- Blanchard, Ken. *Catch People Doing Something Right: Ken Blanchard on Empowerment*. Executive Excellence Pub., 1999.
- Burns, James M. *Leadership*. Harper and Row, 1978.
- Butler, Helen. "Video and Comment" Email received by Joan Barstow Hernandez, August 7, 2018.
- Chapman, Gary. *The Five Love Languages*. The Moody Press, 1992.
- _____. *The Compilation of Compilations*. Vol. 1, Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991.
- Covey, Stephen R. *Principle-Centered Leadership*. Simon & Schuster, 1992.
- Fromm, Erich. *The Art of Loving*. Open Road, 2013.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, vol. 2. The Harvard Classics Shelf of Fiction, vol. 14, P. F. Collier & Son, 1917. *Bartleby.com*, <https://www.bartleby.com/br/314.html>.
- Greenleaf, Robert. *Servant Leadership*. Paulist Press, 1978.
- Hernandez, Joan. *Designing Dynamic Learning Sessions*. Amazon, 2018.
- _____. *Transformative Leadership for Youth*. Amazon, 2018.
- _____. *Evaluación Final del Proyecto de: Capacitación de Maestros Rurales como Agentes de Desarrollo Comunitario (Final Evaluation of the Project of Training Rural Teachers as Agents of Community Development)*. Universidad Núr, 1996.

- Hernandez, Joan, and May Khadem. *Transformative Leadership: Mastering the Hidden Dimension—A Companion Study Guide*. Harmony Equity Press, 2017.
- Hersey, Paul, et al. *Management of Organizational Behavior*. Prentice Hall, 1982.
- Karlberg, Michael. *Beyond the Culture of Contest*. George Ronald, 2004.
- Kepner, John. “La Universidad Nur y el Liderazgo Moral” (“Núr University and Moral Leadership”), 2018. Personal archive.
- Kerr, Jessica. “Being the Change: The Impact and Application of Transformative Leadership.” *Prezi.com*, https://prezi.com/lffnozcsfsgk/being-the-change-the-impact-and-application-of-transformative-leadership/?utm_campaign=share&webgl=0&utm_medium=copy.
- Khadem, May. “Transformative Effect of TL” Email received by Joan Hernandez, 25 July 2018.
- Kohn, Alfie. *No Contest: The Case against Competition*. Rev. ed., Houghton Mifflin, 1992.
- Menking, Cornell. *Programa Liderazgo Educativo, Ecuador: A Qualitative Case Study of an Experiment in Transformational Leadership, Education and Community Development*. University of New Mexico, 2003.
- Núr University. “Historial de Proyectos, Asesoramientos Técnicos y Capacitaciones” (History of Projects, Technical Support and Training),” 2017. Personal archive.
- Senge, Peter. *The Fifth Discipline*. Crown Publishing Group, 2006.
- Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*. Bahá’í World Centre, 1985. *Bahá’í.org*, <http://www.bahai.org/documents/the-universal-house-of-justice/promise-world-peace>.
- World Health Organization. “Report on Technical Discussions: Recommendations and Main Conclusions.” Forty-First Assembly on World Health, Geneva, May 1988.