

# Developing Generative Change Leaders Across Sectors: An Exploration of Integral Approaches

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**Abstract.** This paper summarizes the key findings of a nine-month global exploratory study of vanguard development programs for generative change leaders who work across the public, business and civil sectors. These programs effectively integrate personal, interpersonal and systemic dimensions of change, in service of both organizational and societal transformation. Generative in this context is synonymous with creative, as well as socially and environmentally responsible. Generative change leaders are able to shift the inner and interpersonal perspective from which they operate, and enable people to accept responsibility for changing their own attitude and behavior. After a brief review of the objectives, context, and scope of the study, the paper outlines the views on leadership development shared by the directors of vanguard programs, common characteristics of these programs, and some of the unmet needs that could be addressed by a learning community. This summary concludes with some next steps to discuss, enrich, and deepen these initial findings and questions with practitioners engaged in this emerging field.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Objectives of the global study

The objectives of the exploratory study – which started in July 2007 – were to: (1) globally search for the best generative education, training, and development programs for leaders, social entrepreneurs, and other change agents, (2) identify societal change agent development needs that are not currently addressed, and (3) connect program directors through a learning and collaborative network. The focus has been on programs for leaders who work across the private, public, and civil society sectors – 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 of the Study

The nine-month global study was co-led by Alain Gauthier, Thais Corral and Walter Link, with the support of the Generative Change Community, formerly the Generative Dialogue Project [1]. The Stewardship Group of the ‘Generative Change Agent Development’ project was composed of global leadership experts from four continents. A working paper and a directory of selected programs will be available in May on the website of the Global Leadership Network (GLN), which supports the continuation of this field research process [2], following the publication of the collective book “Leadership is Global” [3].

### 1.3 Scope of the Study

The programs we looked at ranged: from long programs (four months up to two years) to shorter programs (one to several weeks); from MBA, Executive MBA and PhD programs to programs designed for social change agents; from programs for industrialized countries to programs geared to the needs of developing countries; from programs hosted by well-know universities or business schools to independent programs; 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.

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 6 months long to facilitate meaningful transformative outcomes.
6. Post-program evaluation results are available.

## 1. KEY FINDINGS

Through literature review, website analysis, and individual interviews of field observers and program directors, we have identified a first list of twenty-five programs in the world that meet these criteria. They focus on developing leaders and leadership development practitioners across sectors through an integrally-informed approach – which is both inside-out and outside-in. The designers put equal emphasis on the ‘interior’ dimension of experience (intention, worldview, values, vision and culture) and on its ‘exterior’ or visible dimensions (behaviors, structures and processes), and how they interact for change to be both

deep and sustainable. They also pay attention to the dynamic relationship between individual and collective transformation [4].

We have found that these programs share some views on leadership development as well as a number of characteristics, and that their directors could benefit from joining a learning network.

### **1.1 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. 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.

3. Combining a variety of developmental models, methods and tools from 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.

#### **1.1 Common characteristics**

These integral leadership development programs also share a number of characteristics:

1. An overall length of six months to two years.
2. A combination of short intensive retreats and months of fieldwork, with periodic individual coaching and/or mentoring by people who know the program well.
3. Cohorts ranging from 15 to 25 people, to allow both large group dialogue and individual coaching by faculty members.
4. Attentive selection of candidates to ensure both good fit and good timing, with the help of 'alumni' who become nominators and/or mentors.
5. Emphasis on a multiplicity of approaches vs. one school of thought (e.g. U-process, 5 learning disciplines, Ken Wilber's AQAL).

6. Simultaneous emphasis on inner work, small group interaction, organizational initiatives, and societal change.

7. Peer learning and community building among participants occurring through intensive retreats, co-consulting or learning teams with a coach, joint research and other action-learning projects, and mutual support during and after fieldwork.

8. Strong commitment to values and corresponding behavior patterns throughout the program.

9. Innovative components such as journaling, nature solo retreats, provocative films, poetry reading/writing, drawing and other artistic expressions, learning journeys, improvisation, circle rituals.

10. Evolving design and program activities 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.

### **1.3 Benefits From an Integral Learning Community**

The directors and designers of integral development programs could benefit from joining a learning network that would span this whole emerging field (i.e. North and South, MBA and Executive MBA programs, Corporate Executive Education, and social change agent development programs). 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:

1. How can program length be reduced to make it more accessible to busy social entrepreneurs and other fully employed candidates?
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 complemented with intact group work/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 a year or so?
6. 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?

7. How to promote a more integral leadership education in mainstream business schools and corporate programs?

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

## **2. NEXT STEPS**

We plan to present, discuss and deepen the key findings and questions of this exploratory study at several leadership conferences, starting with the SoL Global Forum in April. We wish to interact with participants who have a strong interest and experience in the integral leadership development field, and invite them to dialogue on some of the questions raised and the unmet needs in the field. The intended outcomes of these sessions will be to:

1. Refine and build on the characteristics and learning practices that are shared by some of the most generative co-leadership development programs around the world.
2. Become more aware of the degree of personal maturity and of the competencies required to design and facilitate such capability-building programs.
3. 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.
4. Inspire existing educational institutions to modify or expand their curriculum in order to enhance change leaders' integral ability to address global challenges.

## **REFERENCES**

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