

# Journal of Applied Christian Leadership

---

Volume 4 | Number 1

Article 1

---

2010

## Reconceptualizing Leadership Education

JACL Editors

Andrews University, [jacl@andrews.edu](mailto:jacl@andrews.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Editors, JACL (2010) "Reconceptualizing Leadership Education," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 4: No. 1, 4-7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol4/iss1/1>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Applied Christian Leadership by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).

## EDITORIAL

# RECONCEPTUALIZING LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

I still remember the phone call in 1992 that became the catalyst for my work in leadership development. The caller was Bruce Johnston, the executive leader of a multi-state conference of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) denomination in the Northwest of the United States. He had just returned from Russia, where he had led a team in support of local churches reaching out to their communities. Russia and other formerly communist countries in Europe had become an unprecedented opportunity for the Gospel in the wake of the fall of communism. This openness to the Gospel had some unintended consequences. There were simply not enough pastors and church leaders to take over all the newly planted churches.

Johnston, who had studied with Donald McGavran and Ralph Winter at Fuller Seminary, knew that the lack of dependable leaders in the new churches would make their efforts unsustainable if not addressed quickly. His plea was clear: Let's recruit faithful members and train them to serve as leaders of small groups. Then let's help them grow into leaders of ministries and churches. In other words, let's equip new members to become pastors while leading. It was an exciting proposal for a field-based program of leadership development. But could it be done effectively?

The idea of extending training to church leaders in the field without extracting them from the context of their ministry was not new. Denominations in many parts of the world had faced fast growth before, along with the concomitant need for developing new leaders. One response to that need had been successfully developed in Guatemala by Ralph Winter (1969) as Theological Education by Extension (TEE). It soon evolved into a movement that spread around

the world (Kinsler, 1978; Snook, 1992). One prominent educator who greatly influenced the spread of this movement was Ted Ward, a professor of education at the University of Michigan (Ward & Ward, 1970).

What made the concept so powerful was the idea to offer to existing leaders non-formal training that in some instances could also count toward a formal degree in pastoral leadership. Students received conceptual, attitude-shaping, and skill-building instruction (input) while immediately practicing their learning in their ministry context (in-ministry experience). They also received mentoring in the development of the spiritual life (spiritual formation) (Holland, 1978). When they met with their instructor they engaged in “dynamic reflection,” the interactive thinking process which helps learners to make insightful connections between the three learning components of the program (Clinton, 1984).

This approach combined elements of experiential learning (see Kolb, 1984) with programmed instruction to educate church leaders. While reaching thousands of leaders in developing countries, it ultimately struggled to gain acceptance in academic circles. There were several factors that ultimately led to its near-disappearance: inadequate self-study materials for programmed instruction, students who did not complete their assignments, a lack of teachers trained in the use of programmed learning materials, a lack of culturally appropriate materials and textbooks prepared by nationals, crosscultural tensions between students and teachers, a lack of theological preparation on the part of teachers, the extended time necessary to graduate, and the high subsidy necessary to maintain the program (Mulholland, 1976).

Faced with the overwhelmingly positive response in Russia, Johnston had started to talk to Edgar Elliston, an expert in leadership development at Fuller (Elliston, 1992; Elliston & Kauffman, 1993), to explore the possibility of using TEE concepts in Russia. In the process he was referred to me, a freshly baked Ph.D. graduate who had just completed his studies focusing on the effectiveness of pastors in Europe as leaders of church growth (Baumgartner, 1990). Soon I took a team of trainers to Russia, setting up a field-based training program for what we hoped would be potential candidates for the ministry. The program first concentrated on recruiting and training lay leaders (Type 1 leaders; see also Research for Action in this issue). The initial response was overwhelming and positive, but as we developed plans to move to actual pastoral training for those leaders who had shown faithfulness and the ability to multiply groups, we faced logistical problems that

eventually led the project to be taken over by the SDA Seminary in Zaoksky in 1993 (Stele, 1996).

This experience in Russia was fresh in my mind when I joined Andrews University, where a group of faculty members was experimenting with a new approach to leadership development. Not only did it incorporate Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning into its theoretical foundation, it did so on the Ph.D. level. But could this be done with academic integrity? I approached this program with the skeptical attitude of a typical academic trying to safeguard the quality of doctoral programs. Eventually I became a believer and joined the faculty of this program, convinced that it is a viable approach to Ph.D.-level leadership education. In this special issue we attempt to share some of the reasons why we think so.

First, Freed, Covrig, and Baumgartner, three faculty members of the Leadership Program, introduce the "theory of action" (Argyris & Schön, 1974) that underpins this highly successful program. Then David Ferguson, a member of the same department, shares why leadership needs to be taught at the college level. Rick Stiffney and Albert Reyes, two recent graduates of the program, show how their journey as leaders of complex Christian organizations has benefitted from the Ph.D. program. Finally, Mike Aufderhar, a doctoral candidate in the program, describes some remarkable changes in leadership attitudes and practices experienced by clergy participants in a Family Systems training program at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

In addition to the focus on the Andrews Leadership Program, we also commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1910 Mission Conference in Edinburgh by reviewing the extraordinary legacy of John Mott in an article by Gorden Doss. Given the fact that Christian leadership often has to be exercised across cultural barriers, we are starting a new section in this issue of JACL, *Global Lead*, focusing on the international competence of leaders. We expect the two *Global Lead* articles we offer to be only the beginning of a regular feature of the journal. We are grateful for Ann Gibson's reminder that we can't take for granted our Western ways of dealing with money matters when working in crosscultural settings, and we hope that Pat Gustin's sound practical advice on working with interpreters will keep our best efforts from being lost in translation.

This recognition of the intercultural dimensions of leadership is not a coincidence. The subscription department just informed me that JACL is blessed with a global readership that is 87 countries strong. This also means that JACL benefits from a rich diversity of insights as it contin-

ues to foster dialogue about what it means to be a Christian leader serving in various organizations and settings. I invite you to enter this dialogue with us.

## References

- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Baumgartner, E. W. (1990). *Towards a model of pastoral leadership for church growth in German-speaking Europe*. Doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA.
- Clinton, J. R. (1984). *Leadership training models*. Altadena, CA: Barnabas.
- Elliston, E. J. (1992). *Home grown leaders*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Elliston, E. J., & Kauffman, J. T. (1993). *Developing leaders for urban ministries*. New York: P. Lang.
- Holland, F. (1978). *Theological education in context and change*. Doctoral dissertation, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, CA.
- Kinsler, F. R. (1978). *The extension movement in theological education: A call to the renewal of the ministry*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experimental learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Mulholland, K. B. (1976). *Adventures in training the ministry: A Honduran case study in theological education by extension*. Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed.
- Snook, S. G. (1992). *Developing leaders through theological education by extension: Case studies from Africa*. Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center.
- Stele, G. I. (1996). *An analysis of growth in the Euro-Asia Division (1985-1995) leading to a strategy for developing home churches*. Doctoral dissertation, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.
- Ward, T., & Ward, M. (1970). *Programmed instruction for theological education by extension*. East Lansing, MI: Committee to Assist Missionary Education Overseas.
- Winter, R. D. (Ed.). (1969). *Theological education by extension*. South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.