COACHING FOR CHANGE AGENCY, MODEL EXPLORATION AND VALUE-BASED DEVELOPMENT

In this course on Transformational leadership, we will be looking at a very important aspect of this study and that is “Coaching for Change Agency, exploring some of the models developed in this field and how to apply them in coaching”.

Let us begin with a brief recap on what Transformational Leadership is before we go into the topic proper.

Transformational leadership can be defined as the leadership required to move an organization through major change. It involves creating and communicating a strong purpose-one that speaks in terms of outcomes. For this to be effective, leaders must lead based on true character-traits such as trust, honesty and integrity. Transformational leaders build effective relationships with employees throughout the organization, and encourage achievements.1(The Business case for Transformational Leadership; Steve Salisbury November 3,2017)

One may ask what is the relationship between transformational leadership and coaching for change agency. The answer is simply that transformational leadership is closely linked to coaching for change agency as both concepts focus on inspiring and motivating individuals to embrace change and achieve their full potentials. Transformational leadership plays a crucial role in coaching for change agency by creating a conducive environment for change, fostering motivation and commitment, and empowering individuals to embrace new possibilities and opportunities.

WHAT IS CHANGE

Change as a noun is defined as “an act or process through which something becomes different” and as a verb “make someone or something different, alter or modify.” Or, “replace something with something else, specially something of the same kind that is newer or better, substitute one thing for another” (Oxford English Dictionary)

Change is a broad concept. It is basically agreed that change is fairly constant, but we all know that Organizations, businesses and companies even countries undergo many changes over a period of time. Though change is all around us, we do not refer to all of it as social change. Social Change is very important to us especially here in Africa. In sociology, social change is seen as alterations that occur in the social structure and social relationship. The word “Change” denotes a difference in anything observed over a period of time. Social change, therefore, would mean observable differences in any social phenomena over any period. (2, Models of Social Change in African Society)

CAUSES OF CHANGE:

Throughout history, there have been numerous reasons for change in various strata of businesses, church, societies and countries. Here are some common causes of change:

* Cultural Shifts- Changes in societal norms, values and beliefs can influence organizations, churches and countries to adapt to new ways of thinking and operating
* Technology Advancements-Rapid advancements in technology can drive change by impacting communication, operations and services offered by churches, organizations, societies and countries.
* Economic Factors-Changes in global and local economies can lead to shifts in funding, resource allocation, and strategic priorities within the churches, organizations, societies and countries.
* Political Developments-Changes in political leadership, policies and governance structures can bring about significant changes in how churches, organizations, societies and countries.
* Demographic Trends-Shifting demographics, such as population growth, aging populations and migration patterns can necessitate changes in services, programs and outreach efforts of churches, societies, organizations and countries
* Environmental Pressures- Concerns about environmental sustainability and climate change can lead to changes in practices, policies and initiatives within.
* Social Movements- Movements advocating for social justice, equality and human rights can drive changes in policies, practices and attitudes.
* Globalization- Increased interconnectedness and interdependence among nations and cultures can prompt churches, organizations, societies and countries to adapt to global trends, influences and standards.
* Health Crisis- Public health crisis, such as pandemics or disease outbreaks, can necessitate changes in healthcare systems, emergency response protocols, and public health policies within churches, organizations, societies and countries.
* Technological Distractions-Disruptions caused by new technologies, such as automation, artificial intelligence and digital transformation can require churches, organizations, societies and countries to adapt their operations, workforce and services.

These are just some of the common causes of change in churches, organizations, societies and countries, highlighting the diverse factors that can drive transformation and evolution in various aspects of human society.

It is therefore necessary that to be able to make these changes there is a need to develop a strategy to manage the fallout from new procedures, policies or advances in technology, it is therefore imperative to appoint a change agent or change facilitator.2 (Indeed editorial team updated 1October2022)

In this article, we will be looking at who is a change agent, explain what they do and the skills and traits they need to be successful. Also how to coach them to develop the required skills. We will also explore how coaching for change agency can be applied to social change in African societies and explore the various models of social change in African Society.

Let’s start with who is a “Change Agent?” A change agent is anyone who has the expertise and experience to guide and organize the organization or a country through a period of transition.

Change agents are focused on making changes within systems. These can include changes in organization between leaders and their teams, between different teams, between team members, or changes within an individual.(written by Canada Coach Academy July 24, 2020)

And what do we mean when we talk about “Change Agency?” Change agency refers to the ability of individuals or groups to initiate and drive change within their communities, organizations or societies. When discussing change agency, it is important to consider the role it plays in facilitating and promoting the social change.

Change agents, who have the skills, knowledge and motivation to drive change, can be key drivers of social change. By leveraging their influence, change agents can advocate for and implement changes that address social issues, promote inclusivity, and foster positive transformation within communities. They often work to challenge existing norms, address inequality, and advocate for social justice.

In the context of change agency, social change can be discussed extensively by exploring how change agents identify social issues, engage stakeholders, develop strategies and mobilize resources to address challenges and create sustainable change. Additionally, understanding the impact of change agents on fostering social cohesion, promoting equity and advancing community development can shed light on the role of change agency in driving broader social change.

By examining case studies, empirical research and theoretical frameworks related to change agency and social change, one can gain insights into how individuals and organizations can effectively leverage their agency to catalyse positive social transformations. Furthermore, exploring the challenges, opportunities and ethical considerations associated with change agency in the context of social change can provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in driving meaningful social shifts.

Coaching for change agency is a powerful tool for individuals and organizations seeking to create positive change and growth. Because no one lives in a vacuum, coaches are, essentially always coaching and creating changes within some type of “System” whether that is a team, an organization or a person. (Canada coaching Academy) Hence, change agency refers to the ability of individuals to create, motivate and support change within themselves, their teams and their organizations. Coaching for change agency provides a structured approach to supporting individuals in developing the skills, mindset and resources needed to drive change effectively. Coaches are change agents because they affect change by creating an environment where people can be heard. ( Canada Coach academy)

One model that is often used in coaching for change agency is the Change Agent Model. This model identifies key characteristics and competencies that change agents must possess in order to be successful. According to this model, effective change agents are able to identify opportunities for change, mobilize support for their ideas, navigate resistance and challenges, and sustain momentum throughout the change process. By developing these skills through coaching, individuals can become more effective change agents within their organizations.

Another model that is relevant to coaching for change agency is the value-based development Model. This model emphasizes the importance of aligning personal values with organizational values in order to drive change and create a positive impact. By helping individuals to clarify their values, identify their strengths and weaknesses and understand how these factors influence their ability to lead change, coaching can help individuals to develop a strong sense of purpose and direction in their change efforts.

One key aspect of coaching for change agency is the focus on values and ethics. Studies have shown that individuals who are driven by a sense of purpose and a strong ethical compass are more likely to be successful in driving sustainable change within their organizations. By aligning coaching efforts with value-based development, coaches can help individuals to tap into their core values and beliefs as a source of motivation and inspiration for creating positive change.

One relevant paper that explores the value-based development model in coaching is “The impact of values in clients’ personal development coaching” by Davis et al (2020). This study examines how values influence client’s experiences and outcomes in coaching, highlighting the importance of aligning values with goals and actions for meaningful change.

Another paper that provides insights on how coaching for change agency can use the value-based development model is, “Values and the coaching relationship: A phenomenological study” by Cox et al (2019). This research investigates the role of values in the coaching relationship and explores how coaches can effectively incorporate value-based approaches to facilitate change and growth in clients.

Overall, the value-based development model offers a comprehensive framework for coaching for change agency to help clients make sustainable changes by aligning their values with goals and actions. By focusing on values, coaches can support clients in creating meaningful and transformative changes that leads to personal and professional fulfilment.

In a study by Grant, Wyness, Torkelson and Hughes (2019), the authors explore the role of coaching in building change agency within organizations. They found that coaching can help individuals to develop a sense of personal agency and confidence in their ability to drive change. By providing individuals with the skills and support they need to navigate complex change processes, coaching can help to create a culture of change agency within organizations.

Hence, coaching for change agency is a valuable tool for individuals and organizations seeking to drive positive change and growth. By using models such as the Change Agent Model and the Value-Based Development, coaches can help individuals to develop the skills, mindset and resources needed to become effective change agents. By focusing on values and ethics, coaches can help individuals to tap into their core values and beliefs as a source of motivation for creating sustainable change. In doing so, coaching can play a critical role in building a culture of change agency within organizations. (Grant, A. Wyness, L. Torkelson, E,& Hughes, J (2019): building change agency through coaching: A case study. Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practices,12(1),97-112.

In the area of Social Change in African Society, models developed in western countries are not the only useful theories. African people from several centuries ago have been developing theories and we continue to do so now. Most of them are found in our oral literature. It is also important to note that no single theory or factor can explain the origin, direction, manner or consequences in a specific manner. Change is such a complex process, that it is difficult to explain its causes, limits and consequences in a definitive specific manner.

We will explore two or three different models of social change in Africa which will help coaches of Change Agency effect the appropriate change required for success.

AFRICAN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (ASD) MODEL

This model focuses on addressing social issues such as poverty, inequality and unemployment through community-driven development initiatives. It deals with social problems from a structural angle. Kaseke (2001) said social development seeks to ensure that individuals have access to resources necessary for meeting basic needs and in conditions that do not undermine their self-esteem. The pursuit of social justice and egalitarian ideals is at the core of the social development model. The starting point for the social development model is that the modernization approach has failed to transform developing countries including Africa. The benefits of economic development have not trickled down to most of the people. Instead, wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few people while the majority live in absolute poverty. A Social development model sees the role of practitioners and citizens as that facilitating social change and ultimately enabling individual realise their potential (Kaseke,2001).

DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WORK MODEL

This model emphasizes empowering individuals and communities to create sustainable solutions to social problems. Unlike social development , development social work involves both social and economic development. There are a few characteristics and intentions of developmental approaches, but we will just mention some here:

* Improving poor people’s productive capacity to address poverty.
* Ensures access to means of production, particularly land, including introducing land reforms,
* Focuses on maximizing people’s form of production. e.g., farming, mining, fishing, trading, processing and others
* Adequate funding for rural programmes and rural workers.
* Create and supports policies that support people to realize their full potentials.
* Disagrees with western modernisation’s view that poverty and underdevelopment results from the setup of African communities, lifestyles, cultures and methods.
* Focuses at both micro or local (families, villages and communities) and macro or large-scale (district, provincial and national) levels.
* Disagrees with the view economic growth is the answer to poverty, in fact, economic growth with no human face is the facilitators of inequality.

There are much more characteristics to this particular model but we will leave it at these for the meantime.

The third model we will look at is the PAULO FREIRE’S THEORY OF EDUCATION AND DECOLONIZATION promotes critical-thinking and consciousness raising to challenging systems of oppression and create social change.

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher contributed ideas that are significant to addressing social change through education, teaching, training, learning, and practice and more generally to decolonize the mind of an African. This theory argues that social change can take place when people are given access to:

* Emancipatory learning: This learning should empower students, people or communities to challenge, overturn and liberate them from oppression and colonialism.
* Transformative Learning that liberates African people rather than domesticating learning that makes them robots and lack critical thinking.
* Conscientizing education which should make people aware of their oppression, leading to acting against oppression.
* Critical pedagogy, learning, reflection, understanding and awareness which are all important and can lead to emancipation and liberation.
* Teaching and learning that involves respectful dialogue, and acknowledgement of the humanity of each other.
* Educators who do not treat students as empty vessels (its dehumanizing) that they fill with the knowledge but rather learn together at the same pace (the banking concept of teaching, where students are fed with knowledge to digest later, is wrong)
* Just systems that recognizes the dignity of people, and not to dehumanize them.
* A space where liberation can occur; where those facing injustice must use their own language to define their world and the injustice they face.
* To revolutionary and transformative leaders, who use dialogue with people to develop a common understanding of their injustice, and plan actions together.

We have touched on three models of social change that is appropriate for authentic social change to be felt in Africa. There are other models of social change like Theory of Dead Aid as an approach to Social Change; Decolonizing the mind Model of Social Change; and Human Factor (HF) Model of Social Change, we may have the opportunity to look into these other models at another time, but it important to note that social change with the application of indigenous model cannot occur if not driven by committed, transformed servant leaders who are visionaries and are dedicated to an ongoing development of transformational leadership. Also, of the utmost importance is that coaching for change agency can use these models to support individuals and communities in Africa to address social issues, empower marginalized groups, and work towards social justice.

Another major aspect of our syllabus is the Requirements of competence in intelligence for Change Agency.

The ability to drive successful organizational change requires more than just technical skills and knowledge; it also demands a high level of intelligence and competence in various areas. In the context of change agency, individuals need to possess a unique set of competencies to navigate complex challenges, inspire others and foster sustainable transformation.

Key requirements of competence in intelligence for change agency.

1. Emotional Intelligence- as defined by Goleman (1995) refers to the ability to recognize, understand and manage one’s own emotions as well as those of others. In the context of change agency, individuals with high emotional intelligence can effectively navigate resistance, build trust and inspire commitment among stakeholders. (Goleman 1995)
2. Critical thinking – Critical thinking involves the ability to analyze information, evaluate options and make informed decisions. Change agents with strong critical thinking skills can assess complex situations to drive change effectively. (Paul and Elder, 2008)
3. Strategic Decision-Making- Strategic Decision-Making is essential for change agents to identify opportunities, mitigate risks and align change initiatives with organizational goals. Individuals with competence in strategic decision-making can anticipate future trends, leverage resources effectively, and drive sustainable change outcomes (Mintzberg; Raisinghani & Theoret, 1995)
4. Adaptability and Resilience: Change agency often involves dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity and setbacks. Individuals need to demonstrate adaptability and resilience to navigate unpredictable challenges, learn from failures, and maintain momentum in the face of adversity (Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman 2007)

The final aspect of our course is on Virtues and Values for Professional and Personal development. Though we have mentioned it earlier when we talked about the Value-based development model.

Virtues and Values play a crucial role in shaping an individual’s character, guiding their decisions and influencing their personal and professional development. Understanding and embodying virtues such as integrity, empathy and ethical behaviour can lead to greater fulfilment, success and positive impact in both personal and professional contexts.

Key Virtues and Values for Professional and Personal Development:

1. Integrity: Integrity is the foundation of trust and credibility in personal and professional relationships. Individuals with a strong sense of integrity uphold moral principles, act with honesty and consistency, and demonstrate accountability for their actions. Maintaining integrity fosters respect, builds trust and contributes to a positive reputation (Covey, 1989)
2. Empathy: Empathy involves the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, showing compassion and consideration towards their perspectives and experiences. Cultivating empathy allows individuals to connect authentically, build meaningful relationships and enhance collaboration and teamwork in both personal and professional settings (Davis, 1994)
3. Ethical Decision-Making: Ethical decision-making entails making choices that align with moral values, principles and standards of conduct. Individuals who prioritize ethical considerations in their decision-making process uphold fairness, transparency and accountability, contributing to a culture of integrity and trust within organizations (GINI, 1998)

In conclusion, competence in intelligence is a fundamental requirement for change agency, enabling individuals to navigate complex change dynamics, lead with empathy and resilience, and drive sustainable transformation. By developing emotional intelligence, critical thinking, strategic decision-making and adaptability, change agents can enhance their effectiveness in initiating and managing change initiatives successfully.

Virtues and values serve as guiding principles for personal and professional growth, enabling individuals to navigate challenges, make ethical choices, and build meaningful relationships. By embracing virtues such as integrity, empathy and ethical decision-making, individuals can create a foundation for success, fulfilment, and positive impact in both their personal and professional careers.

Coaching for change agency has the potential to be a powerful tool for driving social change and development in African societies. Discussing social change within the realm of change agency offers a holistic perspective on how individuals and groups can become active agents of transformation within their communities and societies. By examining the interplay between change agency and social change, we can better appreciate the importance of empowering individuals to drive positive societal changes and contribute to building more inclusive, equitable and resilient societies.

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