

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TRANSFORMING BELIEFS – A MALAYSIAN CASE STUDY**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

“To tear down a factory or to revolt against a government or to avoid repair of a motor cycle because it is a system, is to attack effects rather than causes; and as long as the attack is up on effects only, no change is possible. The true system, the real system, is our present construction of systematic thought itself, rationality itself, and if a factory is torn down but the rationality, which produces it, is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory. If a revolution destroys a systematic government, but the systematic patterns of thought that produced that Government are left intact, then those patterns will repeat themselves in the succeeding government” (Pirsig, 1974, p.88)

For change to be lasting and transformational it has to be from within. As long as the focus is on ‘effect’, the issues continue to remain. When the focus turns towards causes, the issues may vanish. Time is then not a factor. Not only is working at the ‘cause’ level an established fact in all sciences, it is true of social sciences too.

The paper presented here is based on a study conducted on 30 Top management Leaders of a leading organization in Malaysia. Using a process of ‘Values clarification’ as intervention, the Leaders were taken through phased workshops that enabled them to identify and effect a change at the causal level i.e., at their beliefs level. The paper presents an overview of the process and the shifts identified by the participants in their beliefs towards various dimensions of life.

### **CURRENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE AND NEED FOR A VALUES CLARIFICATION PROCESS:**

“As the level of business consciousness enhances it will no longer be the survival of the fittest, but the survival of the wisest” (Sampath.J M, 2000).

Leadership development has been a long journey. It has spanned through the phases of skills development, technology interventions, attitude changes etc. The current understanding provides a very clear distinction between the past Transactional Leadership Style-works of Bass (1985) and his associates (Avolio, Waldman and Yammarino, 1991; Bass 1998; Bass and Avolio, 1994) in the area of transformational leadership styles; and on visionary or charismatic leadership theories (the works of Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Sashkin, 1988a) that have brought leadership development to focus with renewed vigour.

The corporate scandals of the past few years have seriously questioned the role of ‘leadership’. It has left the world with an understanding that it is not important to merely develop leadership competencies, but to allow them to mature to be able to use those competencies for purposes of larger well-being.

“It is important to know what I am capable of. It is even more important to know what I am using my capabilities for” (Sampath, 2003).

The business scenario today is moving from the knowledge-era to the consciousness-era. This makes the transactional dimension of leadership development less important. With the speed of change being the buzzword in the psyche of every leader, it calls for transformational shifts as the result of leadership development processes. Therefore, this paper aims at addressing the making of Transformational Leaders.

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS:**

As the organizations of future seem to be increasingly networked, independent and culturally diverse, they require a transformational style that brings together their creativity, imagination and best efforts (Cascio, 1995, p.930). Transformational leadership has emerged as the leadership style most capable of succeeding and therefore surviving well into this century (Van Seters and Field, 1990, p.37)

A transformational leader therefore has to have the following qualities:

- Ability to empower followers to do what is best for the organization
- Be a strong role model with high values
- Listen to all viewpoints to develop a spirit of cooperation
- Create a vision, using people in the organization
- Act as a change agent within the organization by setting an example of how to initiate and implement change.
- Help the organization by helping others contribute to the organization. (Northouse, 2001)

Bass, (1985) says Superior performance is possible only by transforming followers' Values, attitudes and motives from a lower to a higher plane of arousal and maturity.

Hickman (1993) agrees that true transformational leaders identify the core Values and unifying purposes of the organization and its members, liberate their human potential, and foster plural leadership and effective satisfied followers.

The common characteristics of Transformational Leaders, referred to as the four “I’s are (Bass, 1985; Avolio, Waldman and Yammarino, 1991)

1. Idealized influence – where the leader live high standards of moral and ethical conduct, who are held in high personal regard, and who engender loyalty from followers.
2. Inspirational Motivation – where the Leaders move with a strong vision for the future based on values and ideals.
3. Intellectual Stimulation – where the Leaders challenge norms, encourage divergent thinking and push followers to develop innovative strategies.
4. Individual Consideration – where Leaders recognize the unique growth and developmental needs of followers as well as coaching followers and consulting with them.

On one hand the above characteristics demand Leaders to be constant learners, with a keen focus on vision and living examples of the values they proffer, while on the other, these Leaders should be able to understand and develop their followers with a wisdom that emerges from life. To walk the talk they need to be continuously evolving. Evolution does not take place without continuous change and this change should be at a deeper level for it to be consistent. This means an ongoing process of values clarification.

### **VALUES CLARIFICATION AS A PROCESS FOR DEEP CHANGE:**

A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence (Rokeach, 1973 p.5). Values refer to the cherished end-state, and the awareness of actions that direct human endeavor to reach it (Yuktananda Swami, 1989, p.2)

A value is a type of belief, centrally located within one's total belief system, about how one ought or ought not to behave, or about some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining. Values are thus abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific object or situation, representing persons beliefs about modes of conduct and ideal terminal modes (Rokeach, 1968). Values play a role in a cognitive hierarchy theory with tiers consisting of values, value orientations, attitudes, normative beliefs and behaviors (Vaske et al, 2001; Rokeach, 1973). Values may also be defined as a person's internalized belief about how he or she should or ought to behave. (Ravlin, 1995; Meglino and Ravlin, 1998). The works of Lovejoy (1950); Roubiczek, P (1969); Baier and Rescher, (1969); Lasswell (1948); Kollberg (1969) and others indicate that values play a key role in understanding behavior. The importance of values and the subject has been debated across a wide array of disciplines (Rokeach, 1973). Some of the studies have led to theory formation that values are seen as more foundational, less context – specific.

The studies of the author have shown that values are actually constructs that are not stable and that are constantly subject to change (Sampath, 1999). He defines values as the “beliefs I hold within myself that governs my behavior in any given situation” (Sampath, 1999). Values can be expected to change as the environment changes. (Braithwaite and Blamey, 1998).

If there has to be a change at the core level, it has to be about the ‘Beliefs’ that guide the behavior through preferences. A value is a belief upon which a man acts by preference (Allport, 1961). The following parable gives the essence of this discussion.

“According to an ancient Indian fable a mouse was in constant distress because of its fear of the cat. A magician took pity on it and turned it into a cat. But then it was scared of the dog. So the magician turned it into a panther whereupon it was full of fear of the hunter. At this point the magician gave up. He turned it into a mouse again saying, “Nothing I do for you is going to be of any help because you have the heart of a mouse”<sup>2</sup>. (Discovery p.67)

## BELIEFS AND ITS FORMATION:

The popular understanding of belief is that it is the acceptance of facts, statements and sets of circumstances, as truths. It is a firmly held conviction, strong enough to affect attitudes and values, because a belief represents, in one's own view, a fundamental truth. 'Believing is an ego activity which confers the status of psychic reality on to existing mental productions (Phantasies)'. (Britton, 1995 p.20)

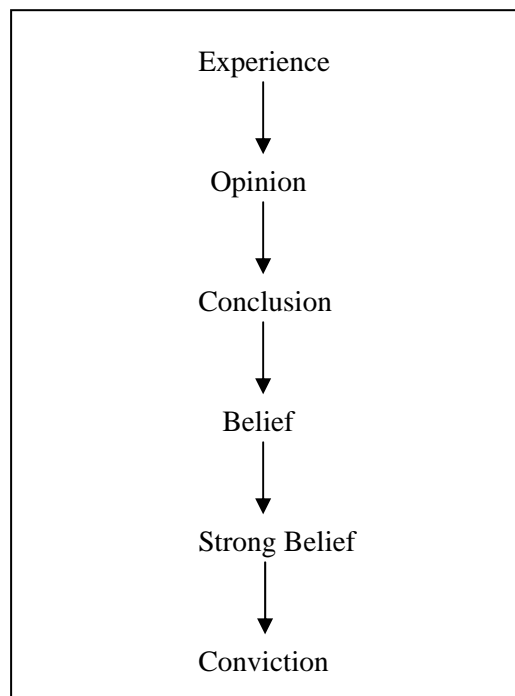
With regard to belief formation, there has been more than 300 year-old-controversy between Descartes (1641/1984; 1644/1984) and Spinoza (1677/1982) (Gerard, 1997). Descartes declares that believing is a two-step process

- To comprehend some proposition about the world
- Check this against other information about the subject matter of the proposition

On the basis of this comparison, we decide to accept or reject the proposition. Spinoza states that we believe a proposition till it is confronted by information that disconfirms it or reconfirms it. But, initially, believing what we comprehend is automatic (Gerard, 1997) If this is true then, it makes it even more important that we take a second look at the conclusions before they become beliefs.

Britton (1995) gave a three-step process – percept leading to belief, then to knowledge. But evidences so far support the Spinoza point of view than the others (Gerard, 1997).

Based on the Spinoza theory the author proposes through his research a linear model for formation of belief (Sampath, 1999).



Every experience leaves several implications in the form of learning. The individual learns at least a couple of things. When a similar event occurs again, it is viewed from the point of the previous experience. That leaves behind opinions linked to the event and the characters involved in the event.

When the events recur or views are shared, based on stored opinions, conclusions are drawn. These conclusions become beliefs over a period of time. This belief becomes conviction.

The speed of movement through the linear chain is dependent on the perceived intensity of the implication of the event. Deeper the learning in the form of belief or conviction the higher is the intensity required to change. It is much easier to change an opinion than a belief.

In an individual there are as many conclusions, beliefs and convictions as there are learning from the events. Therefore the individuals many times function in an auto pilot mode operating with pre-set choices. These choices in the form of beliefs need to be revisited to make fresh choices. Any change may not be deep and consistent enough to leave the individual free to make a new choice, unless it is changed at the belief level. Further, the same event can give different experiences to different people. The learning, conclusions, beliefs are therefore different for different individuals though the life context may be similar. An understanding of this provides an opportunity for individuals to revisit the beliefs and make fresh choices.

## **CHANGE IN BELIEFS – AN EXPERIENTIAL STUDY:**

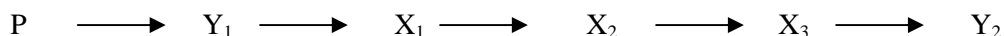
### **The Philosophy**

The study was process-based and the intervention was developed based on the following philosophy.

1. Values are the 'beliefs' I hold within myself that govern my behavior in any given context.
2. While some of the beliefs are known to me, others remain unknown. Understanding the known beliefs and gaining clarity on the implication of the beliefs in real life gives me a better understanding of my behavior.
3. Discovering unknown beliefs and their implications on my behavior would provide new insights into my behavior.
4. Having gained insights into behavior, I am provided with a possibility of making a fresh choice based on the implications created by those beliefs.
5. Any change thus effected at the belief level is deep and lasting.
6. Similarly, being aware of my dysfunctional behavior, I can overcome the same by identifying and working on the beliefs, which lead to those behaviors.
7. The beliefs I hold are 'within' me and therefore only I am responsible for them.

### **Research Design:**

The Research was conducted using pre-post true experimental research design (Rubin and Babbie, 2001). The beliefs held by the Leaders were recorded before and after the intervention to identify the changes they had made that were more functional for them. The design can be illustrated as follows:



- P = Participants
- Y<sub>1</sub> = Pre-test of Value Profile
- X<sub>1</sub> = Value Clarification workshop
- X<sub>2</sub> = One to One coaching based on Value Profile
- X<sub>3</sub> = Learning for nurturing excellence workshop
- Y<sub>2</sub> = Post-test of Value Profile
- Significance of Change = the difference between Y<sub>1</sub> and Y<sub>2</sub>

### **Sampling:**

The intervention, which covered 32 participants in two batches, was undertaken in one of the leading manufacturing organizations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Leaders were from the top management and were also functional heads in the organization.

### **Process Design:**

The focus of the intervention, conducted in four phases, was to create enlightened Leaders.

- Phase-1 was a three-day residential workshop based on clarification of vision and values. The Leaders were given a methodology to formulate, clarify and understand their own vision and values. They also worked on identifying the imbalances in their value profile and the dysfunctional areas. The main focus was to impart a methodology to identify their beliefs that cause dysfunctional behavior and go through a process of clarification about the implications from the existence of those beliefs. Phase-2 was conducted immediately after Phase-1.
- Phase-2 was a one-to-one intense coaching session based on their value profiles. The value profile brought forth the imbalances in Achievement Orientation, Sociability Orientation, Leadership Orientation, Learning Orientation and Integrity Orientation. The Leaders, during the coaching session, also worked on development plans on the beliefs they had identified.
- Phase-3 was conducted after four to six months from the completion of phase - 2. Phase-3 focused on the ability to learn to learn to nurture continuous excellence. The Leaders worked on understanding mindful learning and the impact of their changed beliefs.
- Phase-4 was review and presentation of the changes that the Leaders had made in the one-year since the completion of Phase-3.

### **Tools used for evaluation:**

Two tools were used for evaluating the pre and post intervention.

1. **Value Profile Instrument**<sup>1</sup>: The instrument was developed in 1992 and has been used with over 20,000 individuals by Dr. J M Sampath. The tool with 30 items on a nine-point scale was used on five critical dimensions, namely: Freedom (Achievement Orientation), Relationship (Sociability Orientation), Power and Influence (Leadership Orientation), Learning (Learning Orientation) and

Honesty (Integrity Orientation). The reliability scores of the instrument and the subscales are given below.

**Table 1**

***Reliability Index of Value Profile Instrument***

Sl. No.	Tests Used	Reliability Index	
		Self	Others
1	Correlation between forms	0.8256	0.9163
2	Equal – length Spearman– Brown	0.9045	0.9563
3	Unequal - length Spearman– Brown	0.9045	0.9563
4	Guttman Split-half	0.9026	0.9554

**Table 2**

***Reliability Index of the Subscales***

Sl.No.	Subscales	Reliability Index	
		Alpha	Split-half
1	Achievement Orientation	0.9156	0.9161
2	Sociability Orientation	0.7606	0.8502
3	Leadership Orientation	0.8217	0.8090
4	Learning Orientation	0.8970	0.8457
5	Integrity Orientation	0.5575	0.7566

2. **Documentation of Beliefs:** The second method was to document the beliefs identified by the Leaders while working on some dysfunctional issues of their choice and documenting the changed beliefs and their implications one year after Phase-3. (Format given in **Appendix 1**)

The vision of the intervention was to,

- Create a learning environment to facilitate innovation
- Build fundamental leadership orientation that will nurture excellence
- Allow growth potential to get the best out of people

The aim was based on the hypothesis that the intervention would result in ‘developing a new generation leadership’ that would take the organization into the next league.

**Research Findings:**

The value profile was drawn for individual Leaders as well as the group. It gave data on leadership style, collaborative style and followership style. These were matched with the individuals self-perception.

The change in the value profile of pre-post data got by using the software SPSS 11.0 version, indicated the following results. Results were calculated for five areas of orientation in three styles. Though 30 Leaders were nominated data collection was completed only for 27 Leaders. The results presented in this paper relate to the 27 Leaders.

The following table indicates the numbers of Leaders whose Value profile indicate significant changes.

**Table-3**

*Changes in the Value Profile of the Leaders*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Leadership profile</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Collaborative profile</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Followership profile</b>	<b>%</b>
Achievement orientation	11	40.7	17	62.9	16	59.2	14	51.8
Sociability orientation	9	33.3	11	40.7	13	48.1	05	18.5
Leadership orientation	8	29.6	12	44.4	9	33.3	11	40.7
Learning orientation	15	55.5	16	59.2	22	81.4	12	48.1
Integrity orientation	8	29.6	14	51.8	10	37.0	19	33.3
Overall	17	62.96	18	66.66	22	81.48	21	77.77

Interestingly the table reveals that out of 27 Leaders who participated in the intervention, 81% have moved significantly in their collaborative profile and 77% in their followership profile. In behavioral dimensions, it is difficult to show quantitative changes. But value profile scores aid in this process. It has to be noted that the learning orientation in self, leadership and collaborative profile has gone through significant changes. On the average, over 60% have improved in their value profile. Over 55% of Leaders on an average have made changes in their profile with respect to Achievement Orientation. The difficulty seems to be in the Sociability Orientation in Followership profile. But 40% of them have changed in their leadership and collaborative profile. This indicates that there is a significant change in the relationship with their subordinates and colleagues.

Recalling the vision of the intervention, the findings reveal that significant progress was made in,

- Creating a learning environment (by improving learning profile)
- Building leadership to nurture excellence by higher integrity orientation and better relations with subordinates and colleagues;
- Allowing potential to grow by increased achievement orientation of the Leaders.

To add to the findings, the changed beliefs were documented. Leaders worked at individual levels as well as the group level to identify their beliefs. Higher level of attention was given to the dimensions that emerged as concern areas in the value profile.

Given below orientation-wise are the earlier beliefs and changed beliefs. It is interesting to note that while the earlier beliefs are similar in some areas, the changed beliefs indicate an increased variety of choices. This makes the Leaders more aware of the context, more versatile and more qualitatively responsive to the context.

***Issues in Achievement Orientation***

<b>Earlier belief – Before Intervention</b>	<b>Changed belief – After Intervention</b>
I should have the required competency to act on time	I have all the required competency to act now-training, practice and improve on delegation, time management, understand direction, knowledge, communication skills etc.
I should have the required competency to act on time.	I will take initiative to look at the details for any task given.
I should have the required competency to act on time.	I need to seek knowledge to act on time.
I need clear directions to do anything.	I seek a clear direction to do things.
We need clear directions to do anything.	I will ask for detailed information on any direction.
There is always a next time, I don't have to do it now. We need clear directions to do anything.	If I do it today, I might enjoy doing something else tomorrow.

***Issues in Sociability Orientation***

<b>Earlier belief – Before Intervention</b>	<b>Changed belief – After Intervention</b>
Letting them know my feelings will make them know my weakness.	Let them know my weakness so that they will help me.
If I share my feelings it can be used against me.	I must share my feelings for the betterment of others in the organization.
Work and personal life should not be mixed.	Experience gained in personal life can be used to enhance my work.
If I share my feelings I may end up hurting the other person.	I will share my feelings in the most diplomatic way.
If I let others know my feelings, it might be used against me.	If I let my feelings be known, others might understand me better.
You do your way I do my way.	You and I can do our way together.
Truth is painful.	Truth will lead to a solution.
If you tell the truth, you will get into trouble.	If you tell the truth you begin to solve the problem.

***Issues in Leadership Orientation***

<b>Earlier belief – Before Intervention</b>	<b>Changed belief – After Intervention</b>
If I take the lead, everything will fall on my head.	I will take the lead by making sure enough support is given for others to move in the same direction.
If I take the lead, everything will fall on my head.	If I take the lead I will learn more and become a better person.
Whatever I do, nothing is going to change.	If I start doing something will change.
If I ask my staff to do work they will make mistakes.	I will guide my staff to do their work.
If I empower my people, I will become powerless.	If I empower my people, they will find it easier later to empower their staff.
If I groom my staff, I no longer will be important.	If I groom my subordinate, I will have more time to do other projects.
If I give freedom, my staff take advantage.	If I give freedom I get more freedom.
If I depend on others they will become my boss.	I will give freedom to them, so that I can move to other more important tasks.
Freedom will create more problems.	Freedom with monitoring will bring good results and joy.

### *Issues in Learning Orientation*

<b>Earlier belief – Before Intervention</b>	<b>Changed belief – After Intervention</b>
I know everything already so there is no need to go into details.	By attending training, I become wiser and knowledgeable.
All programs are the same in different ways	I can always learn new things even in the same program.
Learning is expensive.	Learning makes me a very valuable person.
Training is different from real life.	I will apply whatever I learn in my training in my daily activity.
No need to put extra effort to learn.	The more I learn the more I will realize that there is a lot more that I did not know.
Somebody is responsible for my learning.	I am responsible for my learning; I must create a learning opportunity whenever possible in my life.
Training is a waste of time and money.	The time and money I have spent on training bears fruit.

### *Issues in Integrity Orientation*

<b>Earlier belief – Before Intervention</b>	<b>Changed belief – After Intervention</b>
Someone will speak for me.	I will speak up since I know all the details so that the information will not be manipulated.
Someone will speak for me.	I will talk for myself since I know more about my work.
If I talk I will get into trouble.	If I talk I will get others to understand me.
	I must talk with sincerity for people to respect my opinion.
My boss is always right.	A boss is just like any human being, mistake is inevitable. I must share my views, and take it in the right stride if they do not work.
If I speak I might hurt someone.	Truth will help us to share more harmoniously.
Your feelings are yours and not my concern.	Feelings are to be shared.
Truth is painful.	Truth will lead to a solution.

In addition to this, during the review program the participants shared the insights they obtained during the intervention that helped them to change. Some of the key insights were,

- Change is within me
- Life is nothing but a combination of all beliefs
- I am responsible for what I am and therefore, I should be responsible to my belief and its outcomes.
- I have to change for my own growth
- I realized that I have real power inside my own value.

The changed beliefs give the evidence for the improved value profile shown in Table-3. They closely relate to the vision of the intervention.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings clearly reveal that to bring a definite change in the behavior, specific beliefs that cause dysfunctional behavior need to be identified and reworked. Most of the beliefs are derivatives

of experience and therefore can be reworked to suit the context in hand. A deeper understanding of the context is an essential part of change in belief. Leadership development should focus on working at belief level to bring in deep change leading to transformations. The global context today needs transformational leaders who are self-focused and willing to evolve continuously.

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**Note:** 1 - Value Profile Instrument developed in 1998 and has gone through modifications. It has been used on over 20,000 people around the world. It is available with Arpitha Associates Pvt Ltd., 302, IInd Floor, Santoj Cottage, # 107, Surveyor Street, Basavanagudi, Bangalore-560 019. E-mail: sampathjm@vsnl.com

2 - From the book 'Discovery, an Instrument that can make you look deep within' 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published in 1998 by Insight Publishers, Bangalore, India

## APPENDIX - 1

### LEARNING TO WORK WITH CAUSE

*Pick up the area of concern in each orientation from your value profile and identify the effects and beliefs for the same.*

<b>State the Problem /Issue</b>
<b>In what context does the problem surface?</b>
<b>How does it affect the situation?</b>
<b>What are your beliefs?</b>
<b>What are your changed beliefs?</b>