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MENTORS AND POLITICAL SURVIVAL

CASE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SURVIVAL IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The thesis of this paper is that mentoring and an awareness of group and faction dynamics is a critical component to survival in any political system. Specifically mentoring is essential in the adaptation and sustainability of new political forms within the context of existing traditional relational systems defined by family and tribal associations. Awareness of how people respond to change as factions possessing competing agendas is essential to maintaining the engagement of people as they needed to lead people through adaptive change.

I (Ray Wheeler) sometimes encounter student papers that impress me as having a significant value for other leaders in similar situations. This paper is one of those papers. The situation in Ethiopia is particularly challenging for political leaders who are faced with the plethora of challenges inherent in developing nations i.e., developing viable economic stability, exercising a workable constitution, developing infrastructure, working through ethnic tensions, developing sustainable agricultural production, facilitating secure national defense, maintaining international relations etc.

Like other students in this graduate program operated by Azusa Pacific University in Azusa, California, Ahmed is pursuing a master's degree in organizational leadership with the support of his government. The Ethiopian government is working hard to develop talent in the country faster than it is losing talent to both immigration and shortened life spans (the aids crisis is a contributing cause and a significant problem throughout the continent). Ethiopia is an ancient nation with some of the youngest leaders I have met. They are ambitious, proud, and diligent in pursuing the best for their people and committed to helping their nation pursue its global emergence utilizing the best practices available from western education and integration with the best aspects of their own cultural heritage. It is sometimes messy and always complex work which is what caught my attention in Ahmed's paper. His relationship to his mentor and the subplot that exists in the story of his mentor provides invaluable insights to leaders who (1) face the realities of organizational politics in any environment and (2) face very similar challenges because they are at work in developing nations like Ethiopia where challenging the status quo while essential to bring the changes needed for the greater good can be a life threatening exercise as well as possessing the potential for derailing one's career.

The story of the paper is Ahmed's; my part in the paper is evident in the outsider's commentary on history and the supplemental discussion around some of the academic and organizational issues to which Ahmed refers. You will notice throughout the paper words that appear in brackets []. These bracketed words identify specific mentoring functions that are explained in the body of the paper. This method of highlighting specific mentoring functions is a pedagogical tool to help students and readers reflect on the narrative that illustrates the concepts this paper seeks to explain.

This paper is divided into six parts. Section one describes my (Ahmed Surur Seyd) organizational context, my role, its size, my mentors and supervisors and the role they play in my professional development. Section two outlines the primary crucible events of my life and the lessons I got in each of them about me as a leader, about those who follow me, and about how I relate to my organization and organizations outside mine. Section three outlines my learning strategy including a description of why I lead; what peak performance looks like for me; and my learning styles. Section four describes my unique capabilities focusing in my adaptive capacity; engaging others through shared meaning; and integrity. It also deals with my strategy for growing my capacity. Section-five outlines my plan for reviewing and adjusting my learning strategy. The final section, section six is summary of major concepts of the paper.

SECTION I: THE BACKGROUND EXPERIENCE

The organization I (Ahmed Surur Seyd) am currently working for is administration of a town called Butajira that is found in the southern regional state of my country, Ethiopia. I am the second mayor of the city chartered in 2003. The former mayor had been on the position for about three years from May, 2003- April 2006. In his governing period I was cabinet member and head of one of the seven departments of the town administration (May 2003- May 2004). [Role model]

These seven departments were comprised of a total of 129 employees with educational status from diploma up to second degree in different fields of study. The administration is dedicated to enhancing the overall economic health of the city in a four pronged strategy that includes;

1. The generation of job opportunities
2. Creating a center of investment that includes keeping the cost of startup low and providing incentives to investors
3. Empowering the residents of the town toward a higher standard of living
4. The diversification of tax based revenues needed to support the costs of governing and administration.

But generating a sufficient level of investments in the town is not a simple task but one that take a great effort to agitate, communicate and convince investors of the possibilities. We sought not only investment from residents native to the town but also outside investors willing to invest their capital in the development projects we had identified.

MENTOR WHO MODELED FOCUS AND COMMITMENT IN CONFLICT

It was equally challenging to prepare land for development. We were not only faced with the task of building an infrastructure (roads and utilities) that previously did not exist but of also zoning prime land for development which meant the displacement of indigenous people living in shanty towns who had lived in these areas for years. Development clearly possesses a noble goal and the painful reality of change that places the cabinet and the mayor of the town in the position of engaging multiple stakeholders and their agendas in a delicate dance toward a common good. The mayor is necessarily on the front line of facilitating ways for all the stakeholders to be engaged in the process.

Having served as a department head under the first mayor I had the opportunity to know the challenges he faced and grasp the methods he was used to overcome them. Being on the forefront, the main challenge he faced was the baseless suspicion many of the cabinet members (all the seven department heads are cabinet members) that he might have taken bribes from investors as they jockeyed for the best locations or the best deals with the town. These suspicions were groundless in the first place because the site and amount of plot of land to be given to investors including the reference price is predefined by a lease committee in which four of the cabinet members participate. More than that the plots are given to the investors once they have won the open bid that is declared through electronic and published media. [Challenging Assignments]

Of course the ethnical disparity obvious in cabinet members who only focus on political advantage and personal gain made cabinet members look at each other as enemies and prefer defaming all the things others were doing without regard to the real good or the measurable bad being done. This exacerbated the pain of the residents who endured these political squabbles and their fruit but also impacted the mayor. I strongly believe, especially as a human being that when a person is trying to do his/her very best to serve others with genuine commitment, the pain he/she feels as a result of political mudslinging is much greater because response towards his/her effort is not only negative and a potential character/career assassination but also because it so greatly marginalizes the motive toward a common good leaders need to be effective. I know that the challenge inherent in this kind of political gamesmanship is one that outstanding leaders should overcome and jump over. However it is still surprising to me to see that when their negative effort against the mayor failed, these cabinet members who apparently hated the mayor tried to mobilize some of the residents including the employees of the administration to demonstrate against him. They were not successful. Seeing and sensing properly all his efforts and the challenges he was facing, my stance was to stand beside him and encourage him to continue in his effort. [Role Model]

In the discussions we (the mayor and I) had; I understood that he possessed the confidence that he could overcome the impact of these negative cabinet members by distinguishing himself and his character from them before the people by consistently exercising his best effort. What he stamped in my mind during our discussions was that unless a leader sets him or herself to pass through such challenges he/she will not have sustainable strength to withstand the storms inherent in leading in the face of multiple and sometimes mutually contradictory factions and agendas. [Counseling, friendship]

Placing results at the forefront of public perception is critical to maintaining the integrity of leadership. This is especially true of a leader in a developing town. In our situation we faced these challenges by working to ensure that investments in the city flourished and evidenced themselves in a new sense of status or pride in the town and tangibly improved infrastructures. Yet all that was accomplished still was not sufficient to offset the toll paid by the former mayor who surprised me by tendering his resignation and thereby thrusting me into the position he had once held. [Exposure and Visibility]

Truly speaking my rise in political stature was not a result of my direct ambition. It was rather made by the pressure of the residents on the body that had the power to assign the town cabinet members. I believe the reason the residents pressed for my appointment as mayor was result of my good effort in the department I had previously lead and my positive support for the former mayor.

The town cabinet had and still has a degree of bias in how the development of the town should be conducted which injects questionable ethical considerations. The cabinet exudes a superiority complex of kind inherent in those who see power not as a tool but an end to be wielded with autocratic abandon. Unfortunately the attitude of certain cabinet members is so negative that it damages public perception and slows but does not derail the speed at which we are working to raise the standard of living in our community. My own acceptance by the public, like that of the former mayor is much better than our immediate bosses.

It is apparent to me that my ability to lead in the face of these sometimes opaque agendas and regularly competing ambitions is in large degree a result of learning to lead by observing the experiences of the former mayor. [Role Model] From the time of my first introduction to public service as a department head during the tenure of the former mayor to my current role, the experience I gained in his administration is still the corner stone of my leadership in the town. I have been able to function at both a public and personal level despite the fact that the grievances raised by these negative cabinet members (though their number is minimized by now as of

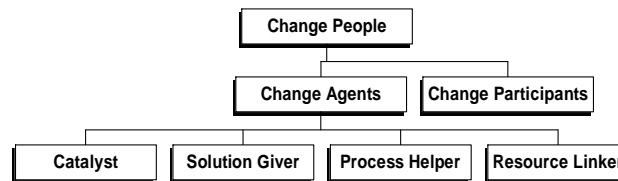
a new cabinet structure) and immediate bosses is even greater than that experienced by the former mayor. Undoubtedly the former mayor played a dominant role in my professional and leadership development being both a mentor and supervisor to me in skill functions and psychological functions. As mayor I live out the Ethiopian proverb “the camel is still going as the dogs are crying”, I have continued my effort to attract investment to the town and improve the lives of the residents despite past and present resistance and challenges. The parable for the non-Ethiopian reader indicates the self-serving nature of politicians who complain and bark at those who carry the burden of governance to those they serve rather than run undistracted toward self-aggrandizement.¹ [Role model, coaching, acceptance and confirmation, protection]

MENTORING AND A CHANGING CONTEXT

Ahmed introduces the subject of change in complex organizations. The lesson he learned from his mentor was to place results in front of the constituency as a means of keeping the end in mind. One of my (Ray Wheeler) mentors is fond of repeating this advice, “start with the end in mind.” When working on change projects in complex organizations there are two significant things to keep in mind. First, develop a clear bridging strategy that is a process by which the change is introduced and a clear definition of what the end or the future looks like. Bridging strategies define the desired outcome, describe the current condition then analyze the context to define the action alternative that will result in moving the organization to the desired outcome.

FIGURE 1: CHANGE AGENTS CATEGORIZED

- Change agents are characterized in one of four different kinds of activities:



Second, know who the change participants are and anticipate their agendas and responses in order to systematically move them to ownership of common problems and disallow the denial that blames politicians for all evil.

The challenge in knowing change participants rests in trying to understand their relationship networks and their own significant agendas. Keep in mind that an individual’s apparent agenda and values may not be the motivating force in their response to change initiatives. It is more important to know the change participant’s loyalty networks and their emotional or professional indebtedness both of which may lead them to respond to change in a way that undercuts or contradicts their personally held values. This is especially true in the political arena where

¹ For additional reading on the political struggle and the history of the “cursed cohort” (barking or crying dogs) see <http://www.hebrezema.com/belog.html/115>.

complex issues involving multiple constituencies require that the leader anticipate opportunities to forward their agenda's by working with others in the moment and by exercising the situational awareness needed to identify fifth column participants. A **fifth column** is a group of people who clandestinely undermine a larger group from within, to the aid of an external interest or enemy. The ability to keep one's own agenda in mind while simultaneously helping others to build one's own political capital is a necessary component of public policy and governance. The challenge is to have the kind of self awareness and accountability needed to ensure that one does not violate legal standards or ethical convictions in the process of political compromise.

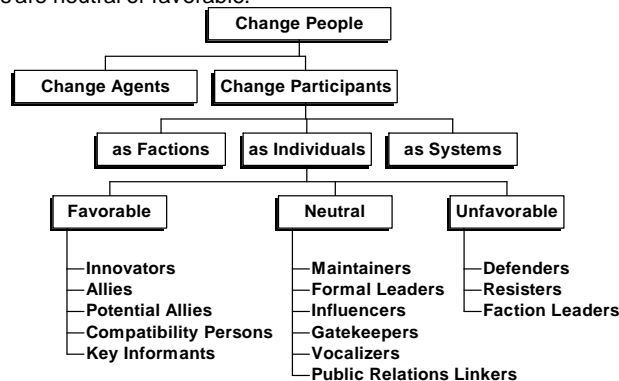
RELATIONSHIPS – DEFINING THE PARTICIPANTS

Understanding how a change may impact an organization requires that the leader initiating change possess an understanding of the roles individuals adopt in their social/organizational setting. There are two basic ways people engage change. Individuals may respond to change as change agents themselves or in a more passive role of change participant. These two groups are illustrated and defined below. Use this information to construct a change participant's matrix at the end of this section. A change participant's matrix helps a leader assess the strategies and the people needed successfully initiate change throughout an organization.

In identifying change participants it is important to note that participants may form groups that either oppose or enhance change. Figure 2 illustrates the roles individuals play. These roles may change in dynamic when individuals either form factions or systems in their response. A faction is an ad hoc group of individuals who share a common set of values usually in reaction to a proposed change or existing system that may become a fifth column aligned with other outside interests. A system is a preexisting pattern of relationships and reactions to external stimuli that define the way a group will act in a given situation. For the leader initiating change it is important to realize that individual behavior cannot be extrapolated predictably when the individual becomes part of a faction or a system. This means that an individual who privately supports a change may publicly resist the same change for an unexpected reason. It is imperative to understand the nature of the relationship between change participants in order to attempt a guess about whether they will consistently support a proposed change.

FIGURE 2: CHANGE PARTICIPANTS CATEGORIZED

- Learn to identify and lead people according to their position relative to the change being attempted. Note: the larger number of change participants are neutral or favorable.



When a leader considers how individuals or factions and systems may respond to a proposed change it is important to test perspective. The concept of organizational frames (the way we view organizations) provides a basis for challenging one's assumptions and working toward a systemic awareness of the situation. Ahmed identifies various participants in change in both the story of his mentor's experience and in his own experience of being "drafted" to political activism and responsibility

SYSTEMIC AWARENESS

Effective leaders exercise a systemic awareness working within organizations. By systemic awareness I mean how the situation, context, history, power structures, formal and informal relationships impact the outcomes of specific initiatives. Systemic awareness is the result of a leader observing and understanding the larger organizational dynamics in which he or she is operating. As Ahmed's story unfolds he develops an increasingly more sophisticated awareness of the systemic issues that provide the backdrop to his experience.

The backdrop to a leader's experience is the organizational dynamics that can be perceived through four different points of reference. The failure to utilize all four frames of reference leads to blind spots that miss subtle underlying forces in how the organization operates. The question that disturbed the researchers who defined the concept of organizational frames was how the brightest of organizational leaders end up doing the dumbest things.² Their conclusion was not that leaders lapsed into periods of idiocy but rather they were in reality clueless to specific dynamics that made up their organizational environment. The source of cluelessness is found in how leaders view and define reality.³

My (Ray Wheeler) research indicates that even in apparently successful organizations dynamic leaders operate with substantial blind spots that render behaviors that contradict the very outcomes they are working to produce. Bolman and Deal contend that isolated or singular frames of reference are ineffective in bringing measurable improvement to organizations. They cite a variety of studies and discoveries made between 1989 and 2002 that point to managerial ineptitude as the primary cause for company or organizational foundering. Leaders can be caught in their own "psychic prisons" that prevent them from "...seeing old problems in a new light or finding more promising ways to work on perennial challenges."⁴ In integrating major schools of organizational thought into four perspectives Bolman and Deal reveal easily identified holes that create these "psychic prisons". One of the benefits to having a variety of internal and external mentors especially in the political realm is that mentors accelerate the exposure of "psychic prisons" that can give opportunity to the leader's distracters or enemies to leverage the leader's ouster.

Leaders face the challenge of (1) recognizing or admitting the existence of multiple frames; (2) learning how to utilize multiple frames in the pressure of the daily grind and (3) remembering that personal behaviors are not predictable based on knowing individuals but in seeing those individuals in the context of the situation. Simply put

² Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2003), 12.

³ Peter F. Drucker, "The Theory of Business" in Harvard Business Review (October 1994), 95-104. In this article Drucker also makes the case for the importance of testing reality and continuously challenging one's frame of reference. By application I see the significance of both reflections on eschatological hope and congregational feedback as dynamics that allow a leader to critically reflect on how reality is perceived.

⁴ Bolman and Deal, 7.

the use of a multiple frame assessment makes it easier to know what the leader is up against and what they can do about it. It is another way of viewing the organization as a system. Every tool or frame of reference possesses distinctive strengths and limitations. Hence knowing how to use each of the four frames makes the difference between finding the reality of how an organization makes decisions or responds to external and internal stimuli or living in a fantasy that ends in disaster. Bolman and Deal's frames are categorized as: structural, human resource, political and symbolic.⁵

The structural frame (the organization's polity or management structure) categorizes thinking that emphasizes formal roles, structural fit with the environment, managing by rules, policies and hierarchies. The metaphor that drives this perspective sees organizations as machines that are procedurally driven. Organizations that are children of the industrial revolution tend to emphasize this frame.⁶ The concerns of the structural frame primarily focus on meeting specific goals and objectives. Problems are addressed by reviewing gaps in structural efficiency (i.e., flow of information, command and control systems) and initiating restructuring. Ahmed recognizes and describes the family and tribal structures that apparently impacted the situations he describes. Yet he also began to recognize that this frame did not fully explain the group dynamics he experienced.

The human resources frame emphasizes individual's needs and feelings, skills and limitations. It seeks to tailor organizations to people or to recognize that organizations cannot adequately meet their strategic and tactical objectives without ensuring a stable workforce and growth in human talent. Recruiting, succession planning, benefit management, talent assessment, talent development, labor law and employment law compliance are all typical functions of this frame. Frequently the idea of being a family is used as a metaphor for this perspective. The leadership challenge of this frame is how to align the organization and human needs. Leaders are seen as those who empower others. In Ethiopia the formal idea of human resources (civil service requirements and ethics) has emerged more strongly in the last few years and this is also an evident force in Ahmed's experience.

The symbolic frame describes organizations as cultures propelled by rituals, ceremonies, and stories. The organization's stories, symbolism, ceremonies and heroes all reinforce the desired values and beliefs. The leadership challenge of this frame is how to create faith and meaning in light of the organization's charter and mission. Leaders are seen as inspirational motivators. This is the frame that gives teeth to exchanges of power. The leader who is unaware of the symbols that create meaning in an organization or define value in an organization will most likely lose their careers for a failure to appreciate the power exchanges involved in relationships around them.

The political frame views organizations as arenas in which different interest groups compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is everywhere so bargaining, negotiation, coercion, compromise and coalitions are normal. The common metaphor ascribed to the political frame is that the organization is a jungle filled with threats and

⁵ Bolman and Deal, 16.

⁶ Henry Mintzberg, *Structure in Fives: Designing Effective Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993), 153. This assessment is based on the way Bolman and Deal categorize Mintzberg's work. However, within Mintzberg's schema mission and para-church organizations more frequently reflect what Mintzberg calls an "Adhocracy" in their early development i.e., a structure based on mutual adjustment as the prime coordinating mechanism that utilizes selective decentralization and relies upon the support staff as a clearing house of information and nerve center for communication.

unexplored dangers. In the context of national or regional governance every leader working in the political sphere needs to recognize five critical assumptions:⁷

- Political decisions are based on coalitions of diverse individuals and mixed interest groups
- Differences among coalition members run deep and include the core aspects of worldview e.g., values, assumptions and allegiances (beliefs) that make up their perception of reality and define their interests.
- Major decisions almost always involved allocating resources that are scarce.
- The fact that scarce resources and enduring differences are involved makes conflict central to one's position and reinforces power as the most important asset.
- Policy and decisions involve bargaining, negotiation and posturing for advantage among competing stakeholders; this can lead to muddying ethical and legal lines.

Exercising awareness of political alliances and networks within the organization or political system is critical to survival and success. How can the emerging or new leader identify alliances and networks before he or she ends up on the wrong side of the power alliance or the wrong side of their own ethical standards while possibly succeeding at gaining acceptance? I suggest a leader begin by identifying the key players and their role in the organization.

Every organization has change agents and change participants. The participants may be categorized in three ways; those who are favorable, those who are neutral and those who are unfavorable. Keep in mind however, that because of the nature of politics the position of participants relative to any issue may change and will not be consistent from issue to issue or even within the same issue depending upon the shape any particular alliance takes. Still, framing the organizational roles people take up relative to change helps the leader recognize the amount of work it will take to initiate any new process or alteration in how things "are done around here." This process however must also include recognizing the nuances of how people may respond based on (1) their dominant leadership style; (2) their behavior under stress and (3) their alliances and reactions with those alliances to other leadership styles. For work on this I refer the reader to Sarah Sumner (2006).⁸

To understand how things get done and to anticipate the help or hindrance a leader might face in attempting to implement change it becomes imperative to define the roles people play and employ unique strategies for relating to each of these roles. Leaders raise the potential for successful change in direct correlation to the degree of awareness they exercise in how people relate to change. In the discussion below four types of roles are defined and then ramified in their position relative to change. The four roles are: catalysts, solution givers, process helpers and resource linkers. As will be seen in Tables that follow these basic roles morph into unique approaches to change depending on whether or not the change is viewed favorably or unfavorably.

Catalysts. A Catalyst is a person of change who initiates the change process by expressing dissatisfaction with the status quo and actively stimulating discontent in others as well. Connect this individual to other change catalyst and help them win the favor of the influencers and potential allies and compatibility persons.

⁷ Bolman and Deal, 186.

⁸ Sarah Sumner, Leadership Above the Line (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006).

TABLE 1: CHANGE PARTICIPANTS – FAVORABLE

Role	Definition	How to Relate
Innovators	A person who is most likely to adopt a new idea and experiment with it before his/her colleagues do. This person is usually change oriented rather than status quo oriented.	Innovators will adopt change but may not support it if it is questioned in a political power play. They are not necessarily a verbal support. Use them to model the change for others and to gain a record of success for the change.
Allies	A person who silently or vocally already shares the concerns of the change agent. They may form part of the initiating set later.	Allies are helpful, but protect them from negative influences. They too may not verbally support your change position if they are attacked or even queried by power people.
Potential Allies	A person who, with some effort at recruiting, will be able to see the concerns of the change agent, and who is likely to join with the change agent.	Potential allies are the ones who will offer support in groups. Again don't expect them to handle conflict well if it arises in a change process. As a group they will support change.
Compatibility Persons	One who can work easily with the change agent without causing fuss or strain in the process. This characteristic may overlap several other types or may be entirely unique.	See potential allies.
Key Informants	A person who has access to strategic information and gives it to the change agent in time for him/her to use it advantageously. Key informants can be neutral or even unfavorable. But most of them usually come to the aid of the change agent.	Listen well to these individuals. They often offer you insight into what is really going on in the work place.

Solution Giver. A solution giver is a person of change who clearly sees the situation in the present and the future and forms and communicates a plan that could work to solve the system's current problems. Help this person process what needs to be done, use their creativity in developing or identifying solutions as a way to put into concrete terms and processes what the catalyst often only knows intuitively.

Process Helper. A process helper is a person of change with overall perspective on the system and its needs and of change processes in general who thus focuses on the entire change process for the client's benefit and facilitates change at every stage. Find the person who is ready to help. Use them by asking for their help and asking them what they can do to help you reach the objective you want to aim at.

Resource Linker. The resource linker is a change agent who keeps the process of change going by matching needs and resources, which are material, financial, educational and personal, at any stage of the process but particularly

in the diagnosis, search for solutions, and application stages. Allow this individual to pull others together. Do this by making the case for what you see as possible and letting them tell you what resources might be available to help. Often this individual knows people outside the organization who can make a big difference inside in terms of resources.

In the situation Ahmed describe above, his mentor intuitively identified the presence of change participants and change agents in the conflict he faced as mayor. His confidence rested on this intuitive awareness while he faced opposition by those who took the posture of unfavorable change participants. In the instance Ahmed relates this intuition of what roles people would play and the relative power they possessed lead to a successful change project. Leaning on intuition is effective but it carries the pitfall of unchallenged assumptions on the part of the leader that may result in misreading the true nature of the change participants involved in the organization or government body.

TABLE 2: CHANGE PARTICIPANTS – NEUTRAL

Role	Definition	How to Relate
Maintainers	A person who is committed to maintain the proper functioning of the present system. This type of person is not normally for change since it interrupts the system they are currently maintaining. But these are important people to recruit favorably toward the change since they are people who are good at sticking with something, applying it systematically and consciously working with it to make the system operate with it. They are status quo people who want the system to work. Once your changes are in, it is these kinds of people who will make them work in the system.	Support the maintainer’s concerns. Show them that you are not going to “throw them under the bus” just for novelty sake. Once you have affirmed their concerns help them think through why a change may be needed and show them how you will “freeze” the change once it is initiated i.e., stop it from undoing the entire organization, who them how it will synthesize with their core values and systems where ever possible.
Formal Leaders	Those who are within a structural chain of command; they hold roles that are recognized as decision making roles by the client system. They exercise position power. These types of people can be all the way across the continuum in terms of innovative to defenders of the system. Usually the longer a person has been in a position the less likely they will be open to change.	Always remember this truism – it is not the person who is the most creative, the most accurate or the most insightful who will ultimately win in a political contest should relationships degenerate to a contest. It is the person with the most power who will win. Build the power of consensus and respect and alliance as well as fact.

Table 2: Continued

Influencers	Those respected people who are considered key people because others turn to them for counsel, information, or approval. They may or may not be in the formal leadership structure. In either case, they are important to the change for if they see it as positive many of the otherwise neutral change participants will be swayed and move toward the favorable side. These people are sometimes called opinion leaders or legitimizes.	Work on winning these people as soon as possible. Know who they are and enjoy their company. Let them know what you want to do incrementally so they can absorb it and begin to talk about it to others. Their relationships are always networked inside and outside the organization so they can be tremendously helpful in change and in survival. Call on them for help when you need it.
Gatekeepers	Persons whose position gives them strategic access to information and its flow as well as resources; these are often unrecognized by outsiders or even insiders because frequently they do not have power positions. The ability to deny access to information is often a key to the power of this role.	Identify these people early on and make friends with them. When you need a favor to gain access to a power broker or resource, these are the people who can connect you. They can be irritating because of their ability to restrict access to resources, information and power so be careful to avoid expressing or inferring ill-will toward them. If this is done they will mark you as a person to undermine.
Vocalizers	Those people who will speak up about their feelings/ideas concerning the situation—can be for or against. Often articulate people who in a public meeting can move the emotions of people. Frequently, they can damage a change situation due to their rhetorical ability (what they are saying doesn't have to be true—once people's affective domain is against something it is difficult to correct it).	If you find a negative vocalizer go find the influencers and public relations linkers that are feeding them information and work to correct the perception there. Unless you have greater rhetorical skills and the backing of supporters to face off against a vocalizer then they can make your life miserable.
Public Relations Linkers	A person who has access to publicity and media and can create or influence the public image. Like the vocalizer, the negative aspect of this role can kill a situation.	When this is positive it helps "tip" momentum your direction. ⁹

⁹ Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000). Gladwell has a great discussion on how change can work he identifies the participants who accelerate change in his chapter on the law of the few and calls them connectors, mavens (one who accumulates knowledge) and salesmen. Gladwell's book is a great resource for leaders who want to initiate a change process.

As seen in Table 2, there will be participants who begin a change process as neutral observers. Neutral participants however do not remain sidelined in a change process. They represent a swing vote in the political arena that if not nurtured may find opposition to change is beneficial to other agendas they carry. Again, in Ahmed’s story above, his mentor also had an intuitive awareness that neutral participants would eventually galvanize around the changes he was attempting to make. It is important at this point to remember a proverbial statement regarding change as it will come up further on this paper. It is not the person who is right or correct or morally solid who necessarily wins change. It is the person with power. The question for the leader is how to connect power in its various forms with what is right or morally consistent to avoid sliding into tyranny, injustice, lack of ethical reflection or pure abuse. The use of power by any leader should necessarily possess an ethical foundation to avoid the frog in the kettle syndrome that undermines leadership values.

The frog in the kettle syndrome describes change that occurs unnoticed in a leader’s life. It is change in values or perspective evolving so slowly that it is not noticed until a fatal decision is made and the faulty assumptions are thereby revealed. Like a cold blooded amphibian stuck in a kettle of cool water if the heat is raised imperceptibly a frog will not leave the water but will boil to death as its metabolism slowly adjusts to the changing water temperature.

TABLE 3: CHANGE PARTICIPANTS – UNFAVORABLE

Role	Definition	How to Relate
Defenders	A person who likes the situation the way it is and doesn’t want it to change. These are often critics of innovation. They may also tend to defend the system the way it is and resist change because they have vested interests and will lose something if the system is changed. These people often see themselves as needed to preserve and guard the integrity of the institution including already existing norms, values, practices and tradition.	Identify their fears and the core values they are defending. Then, using their values (where you can agree with those values) helps them see the real fears that are the result of not changing. This kind of conversation happens in increments over time to give yourself plenty of time and use a lot of probing questions as a way to understand their values and their fears.
Resisters	People who by personality and nature are usually against any innovation of change.	Love them, they won’t go with you. But if they stick around they will ultimately defend you as a hero.
Faction Leaders	Usually a leader of an informal group which has a common vested interest (usually personal welfare, perceived power, positions or future positions).	Identify them and the level to which they have networked into the influences and power brokers. They will probably leave if your change is successful. If they can be won to your cause it will be because you share a mutual problem. Use negotiation skills to get at their real objectives and negotiate a shared solution.

Of all the change resisters I (Ray Wheeler) have seen in action the faction leaders are typically the ones that give leaders the most difficulty and the greatest surprise. They are not always publicly vocal, however, their ability to mobilize others around their opinion or vested interest has the potential to build enough opposing momentum to torpedo any change.

Now that the roles have been defined the next step in understanding the systemic context of the potential change depends on identifying the people who act in these roles. Utilize a change participants matrix. A change participants matrix is an exercise in identifying the potential responses of people to change. Who will work for the change? Who will work against it? Why? In the context of this paper start by identifying how your behavior is perceived by others. Will they see you as a change agent or participant? What role are you most comfortable working in as a manager or leader?

Now list all the people in your organization across the horizontal axis and the various change participants along the vertical axis (see Chart 1 below). Mark the cross-points of the matrix to indicate how that individual may act or react as that particular change participant. Realize that people often operate in several roles. Evaluate the participants for a specific change thrust.

CHART 1: PARTICIPANTS IN A REDESIGNED INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM AT ICFG

Individual Change Participants	BJ	LK	DR	LP	AM	BW	HR	AL	JR	GJ
Catalyst	■			■				■	■	■
Process Helper	■		■				■			
Solution Giver							■			
Resource Linker							■	■		
Innovator	■				■			■	■	■
Ally	■				■		■		■	■
Potential Ally		■	■	■						
Compatibility Person		■	■				■		■	■
Key Informant		■			■		■			
Maintainer		■	■				■			
Formal Leader	■									
Influential	■			■			■		■	■
Gatekeeper									■	
Vocalizer	■								■	
Public Relation Linker	■		■	■			■	■	■	■
Defender		■								
Resister		■	■							
Faction Leader				■						

RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS

Once the participants have been identified it is important to determine the relationship between the change agents and the changes participants to include favorable, neutral, or unfavorable toward the change in order to suggest possibilities to move toward favorable, and general suggestions to improve the relationships.

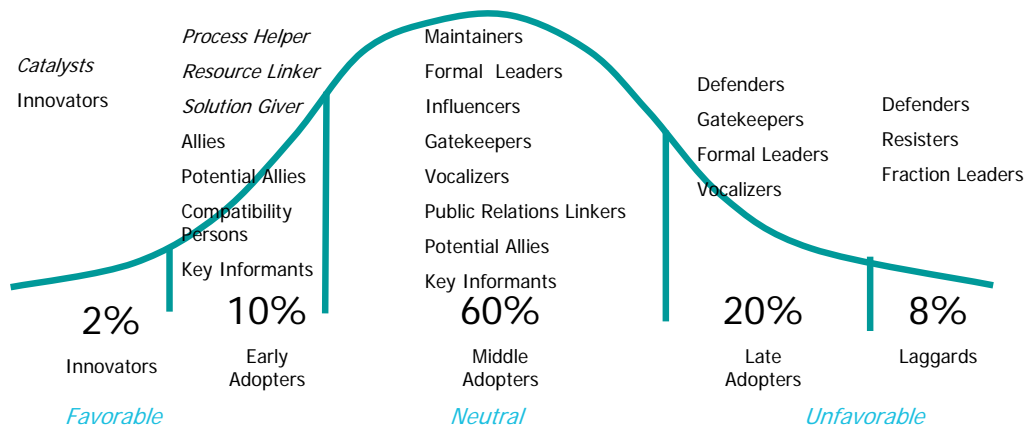
Do this in a narrative format. Note: remember to look for the neutral and unfavorable people who may block change. Be certain to include them on the matrix and in the relationships analysis. When analyzing the relationships also remember to classify groups of people along two axes 1) factions and 2) system groups. Factions as well as formal groups wield power that can either help or hinder change.

- **Faction:** an informal association of individuals within a larger group or organization who band together for some common purpose. This informal association can work either for you or against you as a leader. Identifying who they are and how they relate to you is important.
- **System groups:** represent formally defined groups within the organization (system) which as a unit may wield power and oppose or promote change. To accomplish your objectives you have to know and win this group.

ROLES IN VIEW OF ADOPTION PATTERNS

When assessing the change participants it is also helpful to consider the rate at which various participants will adjust to change. Figure 1 below outlines how people tend to respond to change.

FIGURE 1: ROLES OF ADOPTION



Roles will appear at different positions in the adoption process.

When you look at the participants in the change project you are considering, evaluate where they may fall in the adoption process.

The time it takes to implement your change project is impacted by the adoption rate of the participants.

CONCLUSION ON UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE ROLES

How does the concept of understanding the people roles of change apply to the leader's survival? Once the roles people play have been identified a much greater chance of avoiding offending someone needed to accomplish alliances and specific tasks is possible. For example, gate keepers are extremely important and may have the ability to block your access to important decision makers and/or resources. This is one reason mentors are so vital namely they may be able to open pathways to change or relationship the mentee has not yet seen or nurtured.

Remember that all these roles are informal. This means that they emerge as a group work together not as a result of a formal organizational chart. Influences may work for you or against you. In a negative sense they may undermine your ability to lead by rallying opposition to your presence or by undermining your credibility as happened to Ahmed's former mayor/mentor. On the positive side, when you identify the influencer pull them close to you. Influence them and use this non-formal system of communication to enhance the objectives you are trying to meet.

MENTOR WHO MODELED INTEGRITY AND COURAGE

The most influential person who has played and still plays a significant role in my (Ahmed Surur Seyd) development as an individual outside my work environment is Mr. Yehun Yalfal.¹⁰ I know Mr. Yalfal very well. His character has been forged in personal tragedy. His parents sacrificed their own well being (even their food) to send him to school a reality that weighed heavily on him as a young boy. This weight was made more miserable when parents died within a year of each other when he was 10 years old. After his parents death he fortunately got a chance to be taken as a home servant by a government employee who had some contact with his parents prior to their death and to our home town Butajira. Here being very obedient to his boss for all intent and purposes as an indentured servant, he served his employer and his family very well. Taking his obedience and good service into consideration, his boss allowed him to join school at age 12. He then finished his elementary school (grade 1-8) with remarkable rank (1-3). But as time went, he had faced his second serious challenge. The children of his boss couldn't take him as part of the family and they lobbied their father to push him to leave. Mr. Yalfal's home life became more and more insufferable until he was forced to leave that home. [Role Model , Friendship,& Acceptance/Confirmation]

He was obliged then to continue his high school session while supporting himself. Surprisingly, keeping his elementary school pace, he completed his high school session with great distinction scoring straight A's and joined the university. After he graduated from Addis Ababa University in 1990 in Political Science he joined Regional Bureau of Information where he served as information expert. There performing his duties in excellence he attracted the attention of his bosses and after three year service he was appointed head of the bureau.

His life experienced forged a character that epitomizes a commitment to truthfulness (reporting of data even when the data contradicts strongly held assumptions), open dialogue of issues and tolerance of diversity. He is highly influential in all his life endeavors and wherever he works he stands for truth with considerable communicative

¹⁰ A pseudonym has been used to avoid exposing the subjects of this paper to undue scrutiny.

approach and tolerance. In a developing situation where personal aggrandizement via corruption and familial versus qualification based appointments are common, a focus on the virtues of truthfulness and equal opportunity often represent a serious challenge to the status quo. His commitment to truth is secure enough that he has consistently demonstrated a willingness to face any sacrifice in rejecting actions that contradict the good of the whole as defined by truth, communication and tolerance. [Challenging Assignments, Role Model]

In relation to this I remember that he experienced two serious public challenges to his own core values and faced the pain that came with his unbending convictions. The first one happened in his third year in the leadership position in the regional government information bureau. During an annual performance review of the bureau commissioned by the then president of the regional government a mistake committed by an employee of the bureau had drawn the attention of the participants. Mr. Yalfal identified the underlying problem the employee created on the goodwill of the bureau and tried to take appropriate measures with the person and to discuss the matter with the then president. He presented his findings in a speech before the annual assembly. Upon hearing the dialogue between Mr. Yalfal and the president and observing the genuinely expressed commitment of Mr. Yalfal, almost all of the participants of the meeting applauded his speech again and again. [Acceptance and Confirmation]

However, instead of being on the side of truth by giving attention to government and organizational principles and disciplines, the then regional president was offended by the appreciation from the audience for to the head of the bureau. The only reason the regional president waffled in his stance was that the guilty person was husband of his sister. Anyway, the meeting concluded without any valuable decision and the regional president called the head of the bureau to his office and ordered him to drop the attention he was giving to the problem and the guilty man without taking any remedial or corrective measures.

Mr. Yalfal refused to drop the issue by asserting he could not tolerate the ongoing violation of the rules and principles and goodwill of the organization. The president continued his campaign for his family member with Mr. Yalfal warning him measures would be taken on him unless he bowed to the president's wishes. Mr. Yalfal asked the president to give him time to think on the issue and later gave the president a letter of resignation. Upon hearing of his resignation and the reason for it the people of Awassa (capital city of southern region) including others who were well aware of the issue had made it a hot agenda against the state. While on the one hand he was paying the price of being out of job and salary for about six months, on the other hand he gained trust among the society even from the cabinet members of the regional government though they couldn't stop the president from his rough and wrong measure. Initially Mr. Yalfal had only obtained personal mental satisfaction. Six months after his layoff, a serious political performance evaluation meeting was held by the regional cabinet members where the issue of the dismissal of Mr. Yalfal was hotly discussed. The meeting resulted in a decision to return Mr. Yalfal to the position he had previously held.

A year and a half later Mr. Yalfal was appointed to his second leadership position, he was given a mission by head minister of the federal ministry of the country. After he finished his assignment successfully before the time limit he was given, he was asked to present and defend his work in a meeting led by the minister himself. Behind the scenes however the minister had received biased information regarding Mr. Yalfal's performance. This seemed to fuel the minister's superiority complex and lead to the minister's public condemnation of Mr. Yalfal's report. The minister suggested that Mr. Yalfal had overstepped his authority. Mr. Yalfal was confident enough in his work that he tried to put the realities more clearly and was able to control the attention of the audience so that almost all of them clearly identified the real issue of discussion though the minister continued his objection to Mr. Yalfal.

Understanding the inclination of the minister towards bias rather than data Mr. Yalfal forwarded his last conclusion that he was ready to leave the position rather than buckle to incomplete data or political spin on the data. He was in fact not only to leave his position but to also leave his state membership.

It is important to realize that it is uncommon in our country for one to express his self confidence towards an issue especially in front of federal appointee (here it is still normal to bow to the opinion of an employer or supervisor even if they are wrong, without a single attempt to challenge or correct faulty data or strongly held opinion particularly of a minister level leadership role). It was very surprising for the audience to see and hear such words and stance of Mr. Yalfal. After two weeks he left his position of his own accord. He became a hot issue in the capital of the region for the second time. Because of the growing popularity of Mr. Yalfal, the minister by passed hearing and following the agendas of the various personalities involved and investigated the works of Mr. Yalfal using other means. The minister then concluded that the work of Mr. Yalfal had completed met the criteria of his appointment, was within his sphere of authority and was clearly reliable.

As a result of this investigation the minister sent a message to the regional state requesting that they bring Mr. Yalfal back to state membership. When a regional cabinet member asked Mr. Yalfal for membership, Mr. Yalfal replied to the cabinet member that he couldn't accept the membership unless he was officially exonerated of all stated and implied misconduct. It was only after being called by the new regional president, who convincingly outlined the political failure the state might face if it did not retain men and women of the caliber of Mr. Yalfal that Mr. Yalfal accepted the membership and is currently the manager of the regional communication media agency. In his current organization because of his past track records and ongoing commitment, employees have made themselves fully engaged in the vision and mission of their organization and thus their organizational performance is gaining an enviable reputation throughout the region. Mr. Yalfal's commitment to truth and principle combined with his commitment to accomplish his responsibilities with excellence make him one of a very few of the most influential personalities I know. He occupies an honored place in my heart and plays a considerable role in my development both as an individual and as a professional who developing as a leader. [Friend, Role Model]

I understood from the case studies I offer here on Mr. Yalfal that being in power and being a leader are not the same. Pride, overconfidence and failure to listen in a leadership position properly results in destructive decisions. Equally as invaluable I have learned that it is only as a person makes oneself ready to confront the realities of their situation and to accomplish assignments and tasks with excellence and character that they truly grow as a leader.

COMMENT ON MENTORING FUNCTIONS

Ahmed's recognition of the influence of his mentor on his own decisions and actions is a powerful illustration of the impact of being a mentor. The word "mentor" is too often used monolithically and my (Ray Wheeler) concern in such a use is that it fails to recognize the various roles played by those we call mentors who shape our values, hone our skills and test our leadership mettle so that in the heat of the real task we stand some chance of surviving the critique of our successes and failures. We illustrated the pluralism evident in the use of the word "mentor" by bracketing specific functions Ahmed's mentors contributed to his development.

So what is a mentor? A mentor is an individual, sometimes in a hierarchical relationship to another (though not necessarily so) who possesses the ability to see potential in another person, tolerate mistakes, emotional immaturity, lack of self-awareness etcetera to see that potential develop by providing one or more relational functions in the individual's life.

Mentoring used as a deliberate informal training mechanism presents the potential of impacting employees (mentees) in both their career and personal lives. This holistic approach recognizes that workplace performance and behavior does not occur in a vacuum. College students in the United States surveyed in July of 2001 ranked balancing work and personal life as the most significant value to career decisions.¹¹ Is the inclusion of personal life in a discussion of career development appropriate? Perhaps the more pointed question is whether career development can be separated from personal life? Kathy Kram's research of mentoring relationships at work revealed that,

Among the studies completed, a set of functions converges. These functions can be summarized in two broad categories. Career functions are those aspects of the relationship that enhance learning the ropes and preparing for advancement in the organization. Psychosocial functions are those aspects of a relationship that enhance a sense of competence, clarity in identity, and effectiveness in a professional role.¹²

Table 4 below identifies what career and psychosocial mentoring functions often look like. When defining mentoring it is helpful to take a holistic approach especially in working with employees who are entering the workforce or just starting their career pursuits by helping in the adjustment to both the demands of the job and the challenges of individual development. Ahmed's experience with his mentor reflects several of the mentoring functions outlined in Table 4.

TABLE 4: TWELVE MENTORING FUNCTIONS

Career Functions	Psychosocial functions
• Coaching	• Discipline
• Training	• Role Modeling
• Sponsorship	• Acceptance and confirmation
• Protection	• Counseling
• Exposure and Visibility	• Friendship
• Challenging Assignments	• Spiritual guide

It is appropriate to ask what bearing Kram's work has on an international context since her study was limited in scope to the United States. This specific question is answered in part in Ahmed's specific illustrations that personal values and public persona in his mentors was more unified than some leaders in the west may be comfortable with. Hofstede (2001) provides insight into this inquiry in his work in identifying the nature of power distance and individualism/collectivism contrasted in various cultural systems. In short Kram's observations of the existence of

¹¹ Nan Hallock, "Customer Service Industry Incentives, Bonuses and Employee Retention." A White Paper. (Chicago, IL: International Customer Service Association, 2001). Available at: www.icsa@sba.com.

¹² Kathy Kram. *Mentoring at Work* (New York, NY: University Press of America, 1988), 22.

psychosocial functions are not contradicted but may be affirmed even more strongly in collectivist cultures. We see in both Kram and Ahmed's experience that the twelve mentoring functions address the multifaceted realities of work and professional life. As you survey the list in Table 4, what functions could you see yourself operating in as you relate to the people who work around you? How are these functions defined?

Coaching – a process of developing emerging talent through the use of questions, feedback, intuition and correction. Coaching is especially useful in providing insight to informal and political processes.

Training – imparting process and technical knowledge. Training (informal) is useful in accelerating the acquisition and appreciation of proprietary knowledge.

Sponsorship – skill in recognizing and sponsoring emerging talent. Sponsorship is useful in identifying talent that may otherwise be missed or marginalized and thus lost to the competition.

Protection – reduction of unnecessary risk or criticism.

Exposure and visibility – actively preparing future talent for greater responsibility and authority. This is useful for coordinating the development of talent across functional lines.

Challenging assignments – developing technical, governance or managerial skills in incrementally increasing complexity under the eye of an experienced source of feedback. This function is critical to avoiding the mishaps and pitfalls of unleashing inexperienced talent to new responsibilities.

Discipline – helping employees learn the habits of success attitudinally, in time management and in skill acquisition (practice).

Role modeling – demonstrating the values that make work a successful endeavor this includes personal values (the basis of decision making and ethics) and job values i.e., identifying what tasks are important to success.

Acceptance and confirmation – providing a safe environment in which emerging talent can exercise levels of self-differentiation i.e., creativity, decision making and management style.

Counseling – advice on personal issues. This is not clinical counseling but an interpersonal exchange of life experience that provides perspective and focus.

Friendship – a longer term and more casual or contextual exchange than counseling that provides a consistent sounding board and perspective.

Spiritual Guide – providing an evaluation of meaning and purpose that also offers ethical/moral guidance in decisions.

Notice that the functions include career and psychosocial factors (that is job and personal issues). On the one hand it is obvious that a mentor will not be all things to all people. Mentoring is unique to the professional experience, management style and interpersonal relationship skills of the mentor. A mentor cannot function in all twelve mentoring functions at the same time. What does this mean? It means an individual seeking a mentor can expect to possess a variety of mentoring relationships over time each serving a different function in his or her life and developmental process. Ideally these mentoring relationships enjoy a full constellation of age and life experience. Mentors may be peers (people similar in age and life experience) or older more experienced

individuals. Kram's research demonstrates that in the professional context it may be best to seek out a variety of mentors. She notes,

Given the limitations of mentor relationships, the fact that they are relatively unavailable to most individuals in organizations, and their potential destructiveness in certain situations, it is risky to rely on one individual for all developmental functions. Relationships with peers can also offer developmental functions, and individuals should develop a relationship constellation that consists of several relationships, each of which provides some career and/or psychosocial functions.¹³

The risk identified by Kram is amplified in a political environment where it may be incumbent upon successful leaders to maintain a wide variety of mentoring relationships some of which derive from a mix of political positions and affiliations. Keep this information in mind as you read the rest of Ahmed's experience. What functions did his mentor meet in his life and what functions does it appear Ahmed will have in the lives of those he mentors? Does Ahmed describe more than one mentor?

SECTION II: MY PRIMARY CRUCIBLE LIFE EVENTS

Leadership and learning are inextricably linked as are relationship and experience in helping a leader process crucible experiences. Ahmed's story about his mentor and his own experience illustrates the power of crucible events when emerging or established leaders do the work necessary to reflect and learn from experience. Crucible events serve as a dividing line or a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity. Such an experience forever heightens a leaders' alertness to the power of learning, relationships and experience. Crucible experiences are critical to lessons about adapting and growing, about discovering new ways to engage or enroll others in a shared pursuit, and about recognizing the right thing to do and summoning the courage to do it.

SIGNIFICANT CRUCIBLE EVENTS IN MY LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

While I (Ahmed Surur Seyd) was working in a town called Ambo as a physics teacher, I received an official letter from my home district administration in 1995 that asked me to be head of office of education. However, because that call was based on ethnic sentiment (the government was attempting to exercise a greater level of diversity and equal rights) I wasn't interested. While I did not immediately accept the position I became convinced through the persuasion of my friends that such an opportunity may not come again and that my refusal could have been interpreted as a political objection to the ruling government. If my refusal had been thusly misconstrued I may have suffered ongoing political strife or marginalization throughout my career. I did not serve for more than a year for reasons/problems related to my own development as a leader. [Friendship/Peers; Acceptance and Confirmation]

In the first place I didn't create any readiness in my mind to answer the question why I wanted to lead. I had simply assumed a position as only an opportunity to achieve my personal advantage rather than taking it as a leadership

¹³ Kram, 200

responsibility for which I needed to possess an aspiration and motive that contributed to the organization I was asked to lead. The major stakeholders of the organization were students and teachers found in different schools of the district. To them there were many things that needed improvement. They needed capable and committed leadership which I could have provided. I simply hating the ethnic label I felt constrained to by the ruling government.

I had secured my own transfer opportunity from my former work place where I had the opportunity to develop as a leader but had little respect for the leaders from whom I could have learned much. I left everything and led the organization halfheartedly and see now that there were many opportunities to develop as a leader and that in fulfilling the expectations of these stakeholders to considerable level and playing the ethnic politics of the ruling party in productive way I may have accelerated my growth as a leader. Instead as a result of my less adaptive capacity to adjust myself to a new atmosphere, to involve myself in a change process; and my ignorance of the real agenda of the people in the organization (who shared critical concerns that may have been addressed if they were fully engaged and encouraged) I failed to generate a shared vision. I did not have integrity at that point in my development to work with value conflicts in a constructive way. Thus I was made to leave my position after year duration for the minimal performance. [Challenging Assignment]

Since that time I have evaluated my leadership by looking the way other leaders lead their organizations and communicate their stakeholders and staff. I have read on leadership and now have the agitation that comes with greater self awareness in light of previous blind spots. The lessons learned are still fresh to my mind, eye, and ear. [Role model]

I am comforted by the fact that many authors note that the most valuable learning results from gained experience. I am now more honest with myself about my aspiration, beliefs, and desires so that I possess a better understanding what motivates me by and large and how I learn best. Therefore I will be clear about what I want, clear about where I am, and able to identify obstacles along my way that must be overcome in order to be effective as a leader not just a body in a position.

As a result I see that my lack of self awareness negatively impacted those around me. I feel that I have wasted the initiatives and potential of my employees to benefit the organization by blocking the way they played their role. Had I been a better leader I could have developed their abilities. I am transparent about my shortcomings as a leader for two reasons: such transparency is a function of learning and it is a function of modeling effective leadership behavior. Others may learn much from my failure. [Role model, possible Spiritual guide]

This new self-awareness and personality I developed in my leadership style from this crucible event and practically implemented was that I came back to the position I originally left after a ten year absence and employed the lessons I had learned. In many ways I have compensated for all the wrong doings I did in working there previously and now exercise a tremendously positive role in the organization. The entire process was a crucible event that changed my perspective, enhanced my skill acquisition, sensitized me to the people issues of leadership and alerted me to the necessity of being a life-long learner. Clearly crucible experiences make persons more effective if they are ready to learn from them.

I strongly believe that if organizations of any kind are to generate and encourage high performing employees with long tenures they should adopt an experience-based approach to leadership development in which employees are equipped so that they can mine their experience continuously and intensively. Experience is their best teacher if

leaders learn their most meaningful and important leadership lessons by recognizing and leveraging crucible periods in their growth.

The second crucible event in my life occurred in my current leadership role last year. As I mentioned above I have learned from Mr. Yalfal's life experience to be principled. A situation arose in the town I serve as mayor where minority town resident groups insisting the state to change the name of the town so that it includes their tribe name. Changing the name of the town may not seem like a significant issue or at all problematic. But in my town it created a significant social crisis provoking two different tribes of the town to war. Because of the conflict up to 220 people were thrown to jail for not less than year and a number of government employees had been forced to lose their job. [Role Model, Discipline]

To settle the conflict up to nine different strategies were employed but none of them was effective. It is important to remember that I am in a family of the largest tribe of the town. I faced a considerable dilemma. On the one hand I knew that the zonal administration to which I am directly responsible had deep interest in changing the name of the town in favor of the minority tribe as a commitment to the constitution's endorsement of equality. I was under great suspicion on the zonal level as it was feared I had become an agitator as a member of my tribe to have a strong stance against the issue. However, my personal stance was to ensure that everything be done as per the law and encouraged people to be patient as the law plays the right role especially in light of the animated responses to the issue seen in my tribe family members and many members of my tribe as a system. They inferred that I was using tolerance as a means of only saving my position and insisted that I directly oppose the case and leave my position.

On the other side of the issues it appeared that the zonal administration was feeding very biased information to the regional state or at least was manipulating the implementation of the constitution to ensure a new name for the city and that the regional state itself was against the change. The constitution favors the position of my tribe. Truly speaking on my part I wouldn't have any objection if the name of the town was changed in the way all the residents of the town made clear was their desire. However, the wrong and forceful way the zonal administration was going about the process pushed me to compromise my leadership principles. But resisting all the challenges with different pains I chose to be principled and insisted that everything be done according to the constitution. After nine rounds forceful campaigning, in every round the zonal and the regional states condemned me and the cabinet member who shared my view, the federal state sent a delegate to hear the grievance and to examine the case. It was then the situation of the town was changed completely. Every provocational activity ceased. Finally the investigation lead the federal delegate to concluded that I had all along acted in an acceptable and appreciable way. Further it was observed that had it not been for my principled stance the provocation for war would have erupted with great loss and damage.

On the other hand it was discovered that some members of the minority groups had been pushing some of the influential zonal cabinet members through various means to force the change to be implemented wrongly. Five of them were forced to leave their position including three cabinet patronages in my town administration two of them were jailed. It was conclusively declared that the naming issue is not a state issue and that it is only when the residents of the town have agreed to change the name of the town that the case can be treated. I am the winner but still face apparently irreconcilable challenges!

As a leader I have learned that a commitment to and value for integrity helps a leader have the courage to act on their convictions and principles. I am sure many of my followers have learned and been encouraged by my leadership attitude. When I bring the case up outside my organization it appears that many organizations in which

organizational principles and laws are being violated at the expense of organizational trust. Hence both inside and outside the organization the rights of many are denied and desecrated.

SECTION III: MY LEARNING STRATEGY

In leadership the real work begins with deep reflection on why one wants to lead and to what end that requires him/her to be honest with himself or herself about his/her aspirations, beliefs, and desires from them the real motivation springs.

McClelland and his team indentified a widely accepted and usable assessment of individual motivations in relation to why a person seeks out, or accepts, the burden of leadership which is defined as the combination of three social motives; achievement, affiliation, and power.¹⁴

I (Ahmed Surur Seyd) am very eager to address the rights of the needy, town residents to which I am Mayor. I am driven to provide innovative ideas and to perform these ideas and our existing ones to the fullest extent the law allows and satisfy state requirements. This is a challenging objective especially in my current leadership situation that badly needs deep readiness to take risks. I am achievement motivated and power motivated as is evidenced in my strong focus on the mission to which my organization is established to fulfill. Therefore I lead because I feel a personal obligation to take responsibility, to make things happen, to create the conditions under which legal rights of town residents are respected and enable them to lead better lives in the things that really matter them.

To me peak performance consists of the following:

- A. As a person: I am a teacher and aim to be an international professor in leadership after ten years getting Ph.D. in organizational leadership
- B. At work: I am a leader with the ability to transform crucible experiences into lessons that make me personally more effective and more importantly, result in improved performance on the part of the organization I lead engaging others in shared meaning and understanding how others learn best.
- C. As a leader: I am a servant leader serving people heartedly without expecting any cost.
- D. At home: I am a husband to my lovely wife and a devoted father to my three children giving all myself to both.

Individuals have their own learning styles in which they develop strength and orientation. According to Kolb there are four basic learning styles: converging, assimilating, diverging, and accommodating.¹⁵ Because I tend to directly involve myself in solving problems, insisting on the implementation of the law, firmly making fast decisions and being logical and reasoning deductively, I categorize myself as one whose primary learning style is converging.

¹⁴ Robert J. Thomas, Crucibles of Leadership: How to Learn from Experience to become a Great Leader, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2008), 101-02.

¹⁵ Ibid. 107.

SECTION IV: SELF ASSESSMENT AS AN OUTSTANDING LEADER

One of the things that escape the attention of many of the leaders I (Ray Wheeler) work with is the failure to engage in a habit of self assessment. That leaders work without an awareness of how their behavior impacts those around them is a set up to misunderstanding at best and the reinforcement of fifth column opposition at worst. Ahmed utilized an assessment provided by Warren Bennis and Robert J. Thomas. Bennis and Thomas identify three qualities that distinguish outstanding leaders from others that must be renewed continuously as the circumstances leaders face change (this is especially important since circumstances change constantly in the leadership context). The three qualities are: (a) adaptive capacity that is the ability to learn-about oneself, about the world around him/her, about what it takes to adjust to, and to make change; (b) encouraging others through shared meaning which is teaching, in turn, listening and being an interactive leader, one who can enlist as well as command, and one who is capable of mobilizing the best in people through shared vision; and (c) integrity that is about knowing what he/she stand for-possessing a strong moral compass- and having the courage of convictions.

In light of this I (Ahmed Surur Seyd) recognized that I needed this assessment to help me broaden my mastery of the skill sets that effective leaders practice and to plan my future leadership direction.

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

Self-assessment A.¹⁶ When I evaluate myself in relation to the adaptive capacity test, I scored only 39 on a scale of 50 which suggests that I have some skill in that aspect but need to work on the aspects in which I am weak especially in relation to new technologies. I have not adapted quickly to new technologies in my work this is true. I will make my run fast to fill my gaps taking some corrective measures in how I view and learn to use new technologies.

ENGAGING OTHERS

Self-assessment B. In engaging others I scored 38 on a scale of 50 which shows I am not that much strong in my skill set in this area. I see engaging others as a strength even it is below the score I achieved in relation to adaptive capacity. So here again I have to make considerable effort to improve my ability to be engaging by leveraging those aspects of my personality that can be considered positive. Concerning this I believe that it must not be surprising that my current leadership situation is not far from the image the test reflected. In the early days of my leadership position as mayor in the town I developed negative feeling towards some of the cabinet members who I perceived as negative. In reality they were not inherently pessimistic toward me, I was not involving them in what I was intending to do. This contributed to an antagonistic stance towards me in light of my unenthusiastic feeling towards them.

But soon, awaking from my sleep, I emotionally grasped the consequence of my behavior by feeling isolated and I automatically called and invited them for a discussion. Being very touched by my apology they gave me their heart fully in relation to both our organizational and personal lives. Thus, had it not been for their cooperation, because the opposition of other cabinet members (refer to the ethnic tensions sited earlier) I could have done nothing in my role. Whatever activity I plan, I first take their breath and they give me their unreserved advice and we work to

¹⁶ For information on the assessments referred to here see: Thomas, 118-20.

arrive at a consensus, engage other stakeholders and work the solution. I have learned a lot about engaging others and our bond is still strong but some of the cabinet members that are part of the organization are still left out. This is the result of leadership failure but this can be corrected shortly through open discussion bearing in mind the benefit my friends and I received from our recent experience.

INTEGRITY

Self-assessment C. When I evaluate myself in relation to the integrity test, I scored 42 on a scale of 50. Integrity is strength. Of course I know that I am consistent with my opinions and as I mentioned above from the lesson I learned from Mr. Yalfal. I am principled towards truth and logic and feel deep sense of guilt for my wrong doings. My values in relation to my leadership are responsiveness, commitment, respecting laws, results, concern, transparency, truth, and service to others.

From the assessments it is clear to me that I have many things to improve in relation to my leadership especially towards my adaptive capacity and engaging others so that I can create a lasting team spirit, clear communication especially with my bosses and my cabinet members though my current working condition is challenging.

TABLE 5: GROWTH GOALS ACADEMIC AND ADAPTIVE

Required Activities	Goals to attain	Start Date	Frequency
Do course assignments in time	Complete my first MA Program developing my leadership competencies	Within the first three months	-
Jot out my past core leadership accomplishments	Learn from my weaknesses & strengths	Immediately	Every quarter year
Read documents that deal with history of leaders who effectively transform their crucible experiences into lessons	Develop my leadership Competencies	Immediately	All times
Receive modern skill trainings on:- communication, team building, conflict, participatory planning and implementation, & problem solving etc	Improve my adaptive & engaging capacity	Within the first three months	Yearly
Communicate with my mentors	Develop my l/ship competencies	Immediately	Monthly
Communicate and discuss leadership issues with leaders around me from whom I expect good lessons	Make progress in my adaptability & engaging followers capacity	Immediately	Monthly
Facilitate mini-forum in which leadership performances are discussed with my subordinates	Improved adaptability & assure smooth communication	Within the first three months	Monthly

My plan for growth leverages my present experiences to address my leadership gaps in order to make my ongoing and future leadership competencies effective and thus fulfill the expectations I have set for myself and that others have of me.

SECTION V: GROWTH GOALS AND LEARNING PLAN

Ahmed demonstrated unusually high levels of transparency in his self assessment. This clarity and openness in self assessment positions him to a higher degree of success simply because he exhibits less defensive reasoning (resistance to feedback). I encourage the reader to look carefully at Ahmed's plan in the tables below and observe that he not only seeks to synthesize experience and input (formal, informal and non-formal) but has given himself very clear deadlines by which to measure his success or failure in meeting his goal. The benefit to the deadline is that he will produce measurable actions or activities as he calls them and know whether or not he is being honest with himself and those around him.

TABLE 6: GROWTH GOALS PERSONAL

Required Activities	Goals to attain	Start Date	Frequency
Read directions rules and regulations of my work	Be knowledgeable about my l/ship responsibilities	Immediately	Always
Facilitate staff meeting	Pick out leadership limitations & take curative measures	Within the first three months	Quarter year
Make mini after-action reviews	Improve my adaptive capacity	As necessary	Daily
Assign a friend of mine to follow my actions at work place	Know some of my leadership gaps	Within the first month	Every three days
Watch videos of effective leaders and ineffective leaders	Understand my leadership status and fill my gaps if any	Within the first month	Every two weeks
Make bird-watching and videotape myself at work place	Find out and work on my leadership weaknesses	Within the first month	Monthly
Make myself open to learning	Improved adaptive and engaging ability	Immediately	All times
Grasp attractive story telling techniques	Draw people's attention while telling stories	Within the first month	Yearly
Organize my crucible experiences well and collect that of effective leaders'	Facilitate way to improve my engaging ability	Within the first month	Every six months
Sum up my commitments	Fill my integrity gaps	Immediately	Weekly

TABLE 7: GROWTH GOALS: DEVELOPMENTAL

Required Activities	Goals to attain	Term frame	Frequency
Be honest	Earn trust and respect	Immediately	Always
Tell crucible stories of my own and other people's and/or effective leaders	Improve engaging ability drawing people's mind	Immediately	As necessary
Listen and feel people properly while communicating	Get peoples' passion thus improve engaging ability	Immediately	Always
Build a community and be there	Get report of origin & history of communities	Within the first month	Weekly
List and rehearse my core values attentively and clear them to people	Make the values part of my body and soul	Within the first month	Always
Make my core values clear to people	Get trust from people	Immediately	Always
Create personal board of cabinets	Get wisdom & support to accelerate my progress	Within the first month	-
Develop positive energy usage scenario having positive rituals	Assure full engagement	Within the first month	Always
Manage physical, mental & spiritual energy	Improved engaging ability	Immediately	Always
Cultivate a dynamic balance b/n energy expenditure & renewal	High performance in the service of engagement	Within the first month	Always
Say 'thank you'	Engage others	Immediately	As needed
Apologize frankly for mistakes I made	Earn Integrity	Immediately	As needed

DESCRIPTION OF MY (AHMED SURUR SEYD) LEARNING STRATEGY PLAN

Once again leadership may be actively sought or reluctantly accepted, but it is a behavior deeply rooted in, even inspired by, personal values. In relation to this below is my personal learning strategy (PLS).

In the first place, my motivation to lead is that I feel a personal obligation to take responsibility, to make things happen, to create conditions under which legal rights of town residents are respected and enable them to lead better lives eliminating the obstacles that hold them down. At peak performance I envision myself as a an international professor in leadership with a Ph.D. in organizational leadership (within 10 years from the time of this writing); at work I am a leader with the ability to transform crucible experiences into lessons that make me personally more effective and that, more importantly, result in improved performance on the part of the

organization I lead engaging others in shared meaning understanding how others learn and learn best well. As a leader I am a servant leader serving people heartedly without expecting extra remuneration. At home I am a husband to my lovely wife and a devoted father to my three children giving all myself to both.

TABLE 8: ADAPTIVE CAPACITY SELF ASSESSMENT

My score in the adaptive capacity self-assessment was 39.		
Ranking	Facets in need of work	Activities I can begin in the next 3/6 months
Lowest	Low awareness on new and necessary technologies	Receive training on needed new technologies, Make myself open to learning,
	Preserving through difficulties	Have scrutinized core values and code of ethics, Read a book that deals about leaders who use problems as an opportunity daily making myself ready to take risks, Communicate my mentors and other leaders around me to discuss leadership issues weekly,
	Low understanding about different aspects of my organization	Make research about my organization and become knowledgeable about it and then adequately plan and conduct concise, organized meeting. Communicate my mentors and other leaders around me to discuss leadership issues weekly,
Middle	Minimal performance as a leader	Set legacy & mission statement & smart goals, Make mini after-action reviews monthly, List my core values and clear them to people, say 'thank you', listen, lead by example, inspire & encourage team work, communicate clearly, Videotape myself at work place.
	Low ability in setting stretched goals	Improve my strategic thinking reading three relevant leadership books, communicate my mentors weekly
	Low concentrating ability in a fantasy	
High (Relative Strength)	Volunteering for difficult assignments	Boost my interest in cross-functional tasks, revise & take lesson from my crucible experiences, Read history of leaders who are effective in that aspect daily
	Decision making	
	Confronting reality	

When I look myself in that peak performance mirror, I know I have pieces, but I don't have the whole. Thus I have many things to preserve and add to and discard. Presently I only just received permission to enroll in the track of professional leadership. It will be a long run forward. At work place I am consumed with developing critical leadership competencies throughout our organization. As a leader undoubtedly I have many things to avoid and equally if not more leadership qualities to learn and develop. Bearing these all in my mind I am confident that I have things to do that have the potential to make high-impact moves (growth plan shown above in Tables 5-7) that will have a significant positive effect on my development as a leader. I have already experienced major leadership setbacks that by themselves are half way to my run as a leader. My setbacks highlight the need to be adaptive and

engaging abilities including integrity personally which I have already planned giving proper attention to the vital role my mentors play.

In relation to my motivations in my leadership, when I assessed myself using Ed Schein’s concept of “career anchors” the highest score I achieved is in the service/dedication column to which I strongly agree because I know that I am concerned with making difference to society, organization and the people I am serving. Thus it is compatible to what I said previously that I am achievement motivated with considerable influence of power because I strongly focus on the mission to which my organization is established to fulfill.

TABLE 9: ENGAGING OTHERS SELF ASSESSMENT

My score in the Engaging others through shared meaning self-assessment was 38.		
Ranking	Facets in need of work	Activities I can begin in the next 3/6 months
Lowest	(In relation to dissenting opinions)-Absence of unity in my cabinet members	Organize a meeting that leads to honest dialogue and action,
	(In relation to career advice)-Rejection of my ideas in cabinet meetings and loosing opportunities in going up in my career.	Assign a friend of mine to follow my actions at work place, Create personal board of cabinets
	(In relation to employees’ career) Less employees’ dissatisfaction at work	Open discussion with employees, develop transparent incentive mechanism involving them
Middle	(In relation to practicing empathy) Less concern for organizational performances by stakeholders	Facilitate meeting and present my ideas to key stakeholders, assess their level of agreement & points of resistance then refine my ideas, Build a community.
	(In relation to communicating goals) Employees’ low participation /performance in achieving organizational mission	Facilitate ways by which employees have their says in relation to the organization, Communicate clearly & honestly being consistent, Say ‘thank you’, Have maintenance & performance check-ups monthly.
	(In relation to getting “buy-in” ideas) Inconsistent support from town residents and other stakeholders	Facilitate meeting and present my ideas to key stakeholders, assess their level of agreement & points of resistance then refine my ideas. Build a community.
	(In relation to storytelling) Less attention of audiences towards my critical issues	Organize my crucible experiences well and collect that of effective leaders’ and tell them to audiences in public meetings after grasping attractive story telling technique
High (Relative Strength)	(In relation to emotionality) No word and physical quarrel with people	Promote discussion round a table

According to my experience and as I explained above in section II, I assume as I better learn from challenges rather than snapping back and thus learn best while performing. Using Kolb model I am most likely to learn important things by directly involving myself in solving problems insisting the implementation of the law firmly making fast decision being logical and reasoning deductively- using problems as opportunities. I also found parts of my learning approach described in the converging learning style. Furthermore, as I want to get things done, be practical, Inspire and encourage others without being afraid of taking risks I also see the accommodating style as my adjacent learning style. On the other hand though I don't oppose any of Kolb's basic learning styles, I know that I have left much work in relation to assimilating learning style.

TABLE 10: INTEGRITY SELF ASSESSMENT

My score in the integrity self- assessment was 41.		
Ranking	Facets in need of work	Activities I can begin in the next 3/6 months
Lowest	(As to being open to be proved wrong) There are valuable guys but I pushed back	Say sorry for the guys openly for the mistakes I made
	.(In relation to deep sense of guilty) Some valuable guys are far away from me	Apologize and take responsibility for at least two mistakes I and my staff made
	(In relation to giving up the lead) Some complain in my overact as a leader	Frankly express regret for that & make ways easy for others to grow as leader and to substitute me
Middle	(As to following through commitments) Many meeting participants do not show enough initiation in putting decisions on to ground	Sum up commitments each participant has made and make sure that each knows that I will hold them accountable for fulfilling the commitments they have made
	(As to be taken as honest) Some people are hold back from their contribution	Sum up my commitments and public it appropriately and analyses feedbacks
High (Relative Strength)	(As to being available to others) I am punctual to office hours including weekends and thus considerable no. of clients have opportunity to contact me	Strengthen and sustain my hobby reading relevant leadership books and contacting with my mentors
	(As to being conscience with the majority) Once agreed I accomplish and order things to be done accordingly	Strengthen and sustain my hobby reading relevant leadership books and contacting with my mentors
	(As to believing in myself)-I have the courage to express my stance towards any issue openly.	Strengthen and sustain my hobby reading relevant leadership books and contacting with my mentors
	(In relation to being consistent with my principle) I am known for it	Strengthen and sustain my hobby reading relevant leadership books and contacting with my mentors

SECTION VI: SUMMARY

Ahmed's story and analysis of his experience offers some critical insights to leaders in all fields but particularly in the political arena. Success is not an accident. It begins with a well designed plan. One can and will achieve more in the next year than he/she has in the past ten with a disciplined personal learning strategy plan. In developing a personal learning strategy, being clear about how I (Ahmed Surur Seyd) learn and how I learn best is essential for clarity that allows me to leverage the resources available to me. Equally important I see that possessing the skills and working to master them collectively give me the means to combine them to create effects that are truly outstanding.

Most organizations spend a tremendous amount of money providing not only a definition of what constitutes the core competencies of a leader but also the training that is necessary in order to be effective leader. Those are the technical elements of leadership that need to be mobilized. The learning process that is engaged in this mobilization includes mentors, assignments, and unpredictable moments of success or adversity through which individuals can learn tremendous things about themselves as leaders and about the world around them. Thus through my personal learning strategy and plan for growth implementation that are very compatible and complement to each other, I am sure my future leadership effectiveness will increase with the full permission of our great Lord. [Spiritual Guide]

The critical components of a leader's success then depend on:

- the degree to which they are willing to honestly assess their developmental need;
- the degree to which they work to reflect on past experience and extricate leadership lessons from that experience;
- the leader's adaptive ability to take both successes and setbacks alike as learning opportunities;
- the quality of the mentors the leader seeks out;
- the clarity of the leader's internal moral commitments and the interplay of those commitments with their decision making process in public policy;
- a lifelong pursuit of learning as a formal, informal and non-formal exercise; and
- the recognition that their success is built on the shoulders of others contribution – leaders must possess a vision for the larger good.

It is our hope in publishing this paper that Ahmed's experience and insights may serve as an example for other leaders who in the face of difficult odds find the supportive mentors they need to endure the difficulties inherent in political life. Learning as both a formal and non-formal process is not a limited but a life-long endeavor for any leader. But in political life the nurture of a learning posture is critical to establishing a long-term impact where the unexpected consequences of legislation and policy often outlive the initiators. While the future is not the purview of human understanding, humility and teachability are, historically speaking; the greatest assurance a leader has that their legacy will be regarded favorably by those who inherit its outcomes.