

Generating Hope through Participative Leadership: What does it mean? How does it work?

An overview of the immense literature on leadership shows us that the theories and praxis tools are changing relatively fast. If we go back in history, we would find approaches already in Ancient Greek. For example, Plato in "Res publica" or Plutarch in "Lives" asked what qualities distinguish a leader from other people. This theory line on highlighting the specific traits of leaders continues until today. It is reestablished in "trait theory" (from Carlyle and Galton to Zaccaro) as a viable approach to the study of leadership.

Alternatively, theories found in the 1950's posited that individuals could be useful in certain situations, but not in others. The behavioral and style theories (McClelland, Lewin, etc.), on the one hand, worked out a behavior taxonomy and on the other the typical three styles: Authoritarian, Democratic and Laissez-Faire. Situational and Contingency Theories (Fiedler, Vroom, etc.) are aware that acting as a leader, is in large part dependent upon characteristics of the situations in which he functions. Integrated psychological theories address the limitations of the older theories and introduce, as a new element, the need for leaders to develop their leadership presence. Further, they are connected with Servant Leadership and Authentic Leadership.

We can experience integrated leadership through the concept of Participating or Participative Leadership. Initially, it was practiced and reflected in the Theme-Centered-Interaction by the Jewish woman, Ruth C. Cohn. As a German-Jewish, educated in psychoanalysis, she had to flee, first from Germany, and then from Switzerland to the States. Besides the classic psychoanalysis, Cohn, a refugee successfully organized groups of black and white parents, teachers and pupils to overcome segregation in New York during the 1950's. Overlapping with the Pedagogy of Liberation (P. Freire), she tried to find out "Generative Themes" of the grassroots and to work with them in a way that could prevent violence. Until today in this "Art of Leading" (<http://www.ruth-cohn-institute.org>) the Participation of the Leader/Facilitator of a Learning Group plays a substantial role and is trained in a long learning process.

The variety, which is presented in the worldwide movement of TCI, shows how people in different roles can benefit of Participating Leadership: Teachers, Pastors etc. (Religious) Educators, especially in school, are mostly fixed in their teaching role. They ask: How can I submit the content in an attractive methodical setting? So the traditional teacher is competent in educational and systematic aspects. Their role as a facilitator/leader of a group of learners is sometimes overlooked.

In this workshop, we shall headline the role of a leader/facilitator in different (learning) groups and organisations. Leadership is a common task which works nearly everywhere: In the family, in Kindergarten, at School, at University, in Churches and Religions, in Politics, Economy, etc. Nearly everyone is involved in leadership challenges. So I can ask myself:

- *What is the field in which I am experiencing the strongest challenges of leadership?*
- *What is my particular role in this area?*

Participating Leadership means that the facilitator is involved in the learning process not only as an instructor and expert in the subject, but as the facilitator. Participating Leadership is the most sensitive kind of leadership. It requires extensive training to balance the different roles of a leader and a participant. In the workshop, we shall experience three ways of leading a group which we primarily use in the context of churches and religions: "leading above",

“leading within” and Participating Leadership (see Hilberath/Scharer/Haslinger 2000). *Self-experience with these types are possible by sculpting.*

As an international certificated trainer of the Ruth C. Cohn Institute, I have been involved in the theory and practice of TCI for more than 30 years. I educated hundreds of students in leadership. I guided a lot of practitioners in different fields to develop their particular style of leading. To do this, it is necessary to be aware of "my inner group" of emotions, wishes, fears, ideas, etc. They are sitting like on chairs. So Ruth Cohn postulates to be “your own chairperson” if you are facilitating groups or organizations. For this, the clarification of the three “I’s” of Transaction Analysis is helpful: *The “Childhood I”, the “Parents I” and the “mature Adult I”. The childhood I says “I want”, the parents I says “I should” and the mature adult I says “I will”, as in, what our will drives us toward. This will be a tool that we apply in our workshop.*

During the last years, I experienced participating leadership in the TCI-Style not only with Christians but also in intercultural and interreligious settings like groups of Croatians, Muslim-Christian groups in Kenia, Germany, and Austria. This year, I facilitated four Muslim-Hindu-Christian groups in India. Learning in/through religion in the “Presence of the Other” (Scharer 2015) was reflected, and practiced. *In the workshop, we can see the possibilities and the limits of the leading concept in intercultural and interreligious contexts.*

Another theoretical background for the workshop are the theological-empirical studies that we did at the University of Innsbruck in cooperation between Practical and Systematic Theologians (see Serie of Communicative Theology Vol. 8). In this project we speak about “Redemptive Leadership within a Gifted We” (Scharer 1998; 2014). Redemptive Leadership means that I will provide leadership as competent as possible. However, how the workshop or institution unfolds is not completely in my control. A kind of gift or grace can be experienced in facilitating processes; gift and grace is gifted but not manageable. *Also, if we have time, we could go over the results of this theological-empirical studies.*

The resource which we shall use in this workshop is the leading/facilitating experience of each participant. As a native German speaker, I may, at times, need your support in English. But I will give it my best.

After the workshop you can find the conclusions on my homepage (www.matthiasscharer.com). Beside of the many German texts there you also can find some English articles which I have published in the last years.

References

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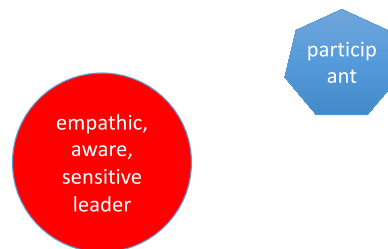
Leading above....



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Leading for...Leading within...

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Leading within (participatory)

