Contextualization of Leadership Development

**Contextualization –** must be understood as a principle that will characterize mission along the whole theological spectrum. The first messages, the early and later discipling, the formation witnessing and social action, all this comes under the discipline of contextualization.

**Synthetic Model:** The synthesis is in the bringing together of four basic elements – the gospel, Christian tradition, culture and societal change. The product comes from the dialogue between these, using the insights of the people themselves. There is a recognition that no culture exists in a vacuum but is influenced by other cultures and contexts; so it is important to recognize the elements that rare shared with other.

No cultural setting is complete, it needs the complementary features of other contexts. The advantage of the Synthetic Model is that it is through the dialogical process that a real appreciation for truth arises. (Dean S Gilliland, “Contextual Theology as Incarnational Ministry” Word, 1989)

**Critical Contextualization Model:** This model takes both the culture and scriptures seriously and asks the believing community to participate in the hermeneutical task. Critical contextualization confronts the double edged risk of too much permissiveness in the role of culture on the one hand and the outright rejection or denial of traditional belief and practice on the other. Uncritical contextualization risks syncretism or a suppression of old forms that go underground. Critical contextualization first exegetes the culture and then turns a fresh study of corresponding biblical themes. (Paul Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization” IBMR, July, 1987)

**Contextual Preparation by the Leader:**

1. Leaders can be expected to emerge as the context stimulates them.
2. Existing leaders serve in part by removing obstacles, which inhibit the work of emerging leaders.
3. Wise leaders transfer the vision and mission to the leaders through powerful relationships, not just busyness or activities.
4. It must be an environment where the emerging leader can do what needs to be done.
5. Authority must be given commensurate to the current competencies.
6. The environment should be characterized as coaching, encouraging not critical or legalistic.
7. The existing leader must be careful to prevent others from overshadowing and stifling the emerging leader, but building his/her credibility and legitimacy.
8. Existing leaders must develop support systems for emerging leaders.
9. Support networks not only facilitate the development of new leaders but provide a pool for the next generation of new leaders.

**Empowerment of new leaders:**

The empowerment of new leaders may or may not require a transfer of power from the existing leader.

1. The existing leader should focus on the development of multiple kinds of power for the emerging leader to use, which should include spiritual, personal, and positional.

* Spiritual, related to ones relationship to God
* Personal, related to one’s personal abilities and charisma
* Positional, realted to one’s status in an organization.

1. Responsibilities must be related to the maturity of the emerging leader and fit the expectations of the followers.
2. Give emerging leaders important work to do on critical issues.
3. Give emerging leaders discretion and autonomy over their tasks and resources.
4. Give visibility to others and provide recognition for their efforts
5. Build relationships for emerging leaders, connecting them with powerful people and finding them sponsors and mentors.
6. Use public rituals to recognize and bless the emerging leaders.
7. True empowerment for emerging leaders must come from followers not top down.
8. Emerging leaders must sense the confirmation of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with their spirit in order to grow and establish confidence and overcome fear.
9. The process of empowerment must be accompanied with a building of a value base, which directs and constrains the use of social and spiritual power.

Henry Nouwen – *One thing is clear to me: the temptation of power is greatest when intimacy is a threat. Much Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships and have opted for power and control. Many Christian empire-builders have been people unable to give and receive love.*