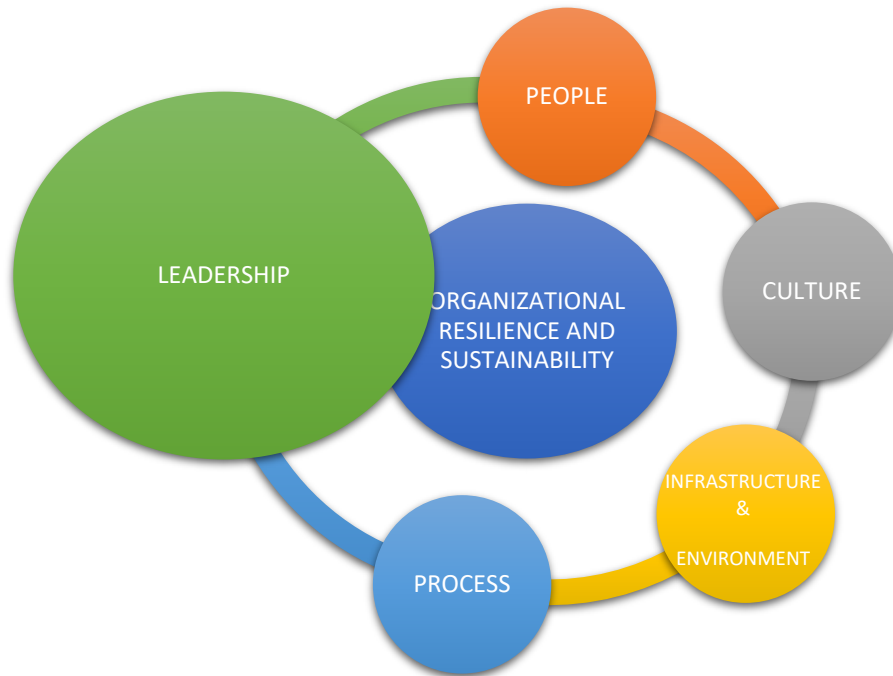


SeLD5202: RESILIENCE AND THE INSTITUTION

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Organizational Resilience and Sustainability

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines ¹Resilience as, ‘the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change’. Therefore, resilient organizations must anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions, in order to survive and prosper. The dictionary further defines ²sustainability as ‘a method of using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged.’ Sustainable institutions are those that can secure support and inputs to be able to perform efficiently and effectively while accomplishing the mission agreed to by its stakeholders.

Several factors are important in creating organizations that are resilient and sustainable.

People

Empowered individuals are the greatest assets in any organization. It is good to have the best and brightest minds in your organization, however, if they are not

empowered, and if they do not believe in your mission and vision, then they can become your greatest liability. That is the reason sustainability is critical in organizational leadership.

Infrastructure & Environment

Another important factor in our drive for sustainability and resilience is the creation of the right infrastructure and environment that is conducive to development and growth. Crops require the right environment - sunlight, water and nutrients to grow, develop and produce a harvest. When we hire individuals, we must provide the right environment for their growth and development and then empower them to be productive. Do we empower them and inform them of how critical their function is to the success of the institution? Or do we just hire them and leave them to figure it out on their own? In our organizations, leaders must recognize the importance of empowering their workers and creating the right environment for them to personally and professionally strive and thrive. ³Taylor Hartman started chapter 15 of his book, *The People Code: It's All About Your Innate Motive*, by quoting Mary Kay Ash, businesswoman and founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics 'People are definitely a company's greatest asset. It doesn't make a difference whether the product is cars or cosmetics. A company is only as good as the people it keeps.' Hartman went on to state that 'both top and bottom lines in business are strongly tied to the people factor.'

Process

There are times when so many red tapes are involved in carrying out a seemingly simple function that our employees become so frustrated and stressed. Streamlining of our operations must be a priority. The processes involved in completing simple tasks must be simple, straight forward, and practical. Someone once said that 'If you have to constantly refer your clients to

your policy, then something is wrong with your process.’ Process streamlining is only possible when leaders understand the inter-connectivity and inter-play of all departments within their organization – knowing how the organization functions from the ground up. Everything in life functions through processes, even salvation in its truest form requires a process. However, the more complicated and demanding a process, the less likely it is to be followed. Leaders, is it time to revisit the processes we have implemented? To do this we can have mystery shoppers trying to access some of the services we offer to see how easily our processes are to follow, and, ask our workers to help us in streamlining the processes that they find to be frustrating. An organization tied up in red tapes and a process that is frustrating for its workers is not positioned for a sustainable and resilient future.

Culture

The culture of an organization can be its strength or lead to its demise. It doesn’t matter how driven and determined a new employee is, once placed in an organization with a negative lackadaisical culture, very soon that individual will become engulfed. If as the adage says ‘one bad apple spoils the bunch’ can we imagine when it is the bunch that is spoiling the one apple? Leaders must demonstrate the organizational culture they desire. They must also ensure that the various managerial levels exemplify the culture and are able to communicate that culture to their subordinates. The culture will shape the future of your organization.

LEADERSHIP

As you realize, leadership takes the biggest chunk of the pie, consequently, the rest of the presentation will be focused on leadership.

The COVID-19 pandemic will impact how our institutions operate and grow. Our institutions will need to reassess and develop flexible strategies to become

sustainable post COVID-19. Adaptability and dogmatic attention to guiding principles are key to sustainability for the Seventh-day Adventist institutions. For this transition to be effected, the mindset of our leaders must also become adaptable. There is now an urgent need for us to look at sustainability of our institutions as a leadership issue and one that is imperative to our long-term success. We need a new model of institutional leaders: one that makes the long-term sustainability and resilience of our church and our communities a top priority. Israel prospered when it had good leaders and suffered when leaders deviated from the plan of God.

Presidents and boards need to be ambitious in driving a new vision for leadership - a vision that is mission based. We need to develop and foster sustainable leaders in our ranks and build a culture of succession planning that will ensure the work is continued after each generation leaves the scene of action. Joshua understudied Moses and was able to lead the children of Israel following the death of Moses. Life is too complex, unpredictable, and changes are too rapid to rely on a single individual to be responsible for sustainability. Hence, Jethro, the father in law of Moses had told him to assign spiritual leaders over various groups of Israelites (50's, 100's) as recorded in Exodus 18: 17 – 27. The systemic and complex challenges present in our world today, means that sustainable leadership cannot be confined to a small minority; institutions must instead cultivate sustainable leadership that is diverse and competent at all levels. There is an urgency to effect this to be ready for life in a post COVID19 world.

Authors ⁴Lise Kingo (*Chief Executive Officer, United Nations Global Compact*) and Clarke Murphy (*CEO, Russell Reynolds*), in their article published on the World Economic Forum website on June 16, 2020, reported their analysis of 55 sustainability pioneers. In their article *How to build sustainable business*

leadership in a post-covid world, they discussed the key attributes that transform a leader into a sustainable leader as observed in CEOs and board members with a track record of integrating sustainability into business strategy. They purport that ‘sustainable leaders combine a sustainable mindset—a purpose-driven belief that business is not a commercial activity divorced from the wider societal and environmental context in which it operates—with four differentiating leadership attributes:’

1. Multi-level systems thinking

This is where leaders incorporate the interplay of institutions, community and environmental systems and drive decisions that turn sustainability into a competitive advantage. It is having an understanding of how each segment influences or impacts another within the whole structure. This requires persons having detailed knowledge about all levels of the organization, being at the decision-making table. If decisions are made that impact one area directly and the ripple effects are not analyzed and planned for, then that decision can have major negative effects that go unnoticed until it is too late. The disruptions caused by COVID-19 have brought to the fore the importance of the various levels within our institutions. For example,

- educational institutions need to offer teaching remotely, however, not all our students have the tools and internet access to continue their education during this period. By ensuring that our churches have these services, students can continue their education at our churches or church halls.
- It also means that the business services that we ordinarily offer to our students will not be needed, thus cutting into the revenue stream of the university.
- Our communities that offered rented spaces to our students will no longer have tenants and the ripple effect of that can be devastating.

- Working remotely has showed us the major interplay and overlaps between and among departments within the institution that need to be addressed.

This crisis has opened our eyes to the interconnections within and without our institutions, and what is required for the optimal function of each entity. Multi-level systems thinking requires sacrifice to ensure that the goals and objectives are met, and that the critical areas are provided with the needed resources. When this is not done, resources are tied up in areas that do not require them. Leaders must sacrifice now in order to ensure a brighter future for their organization. This is a biblical principle. From the foundations of the earth, the Trinity implemented a sustainable plan that created for us a competitive advantage against the wiles of the enemy. This Plan of Salvation is not about enjoying the pleasures now but making the sacrifices so we can enjoy eternity later.

2. Stakeholder influence

Leaders of repute who have implemented sustainability do not seek to manage stakeholders, rather they actively include them in defining and carrying out decisions. Some of our institutions are redefining how their Board of Governors are constituted, such that more workers and community members are included as part of the Board. Such persons help to craft a vision that is broad based and help to secure greater participation from those constituencies that they represent. This usually result in more resources been made available to accomplish goals that are set. At Northern Caribbean University (NCU), we have had stakeholder meetings to discuss the impact of the pandemic and aired suggestions regarding the way forward. This is the technique that Jesus used in choosing His disciples. They were chosen from all cross sections of society, he chose implementers, thinkers and supporters. He had quite a mix of

personalities, experiences, and backgrounds. Thus, when they were converted, they became a powerful tool to reach and impact all categories of people. The same is required in our institutions today – a wide cross section of persons that can influence sustainable and strategic decisions.

3. Disruptive innovation

This may sound scary, but leaders must have the courage to ‘challenge traditional approaches when needed, minimize bureaucracy, and drive the disruptive innovation needed to effect change, resulting in efficiencies and better customer service. It is unwise to repeat the same actions using the same processes and expecting different outcomes. This can be exemplified by Paul’s transformation and subsequent mission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. It was not a mission without opposition, however, Paul pressed forward in faith.

4. Long-term activation

Leaders must set bold sustainability goals and provide focused attention until the goals are achieved. Long-term activation requires the implementation of goals and objectives that are able to take institutions through economic downturns, pandemics and other major catastrophes. When Joseph was in Egypt, he built massive barns and store houses to harvest food during the years of plenty. Many may have thought that he was going overboard, however, he was being proactive. He assessed the current situation in Egypt, but also looked at the other nations who would turn to Egypt for food. Thus, he created the opportunity for Egypt to become the centre of commerce and build the financial resources to ensure long term sustainability.

5. The value-added effect

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are mission focused, and as such, there is one other key component that must be included as a differentiating leadership attribute. For this presentation I will term it the value-added effect. Leadership in our Adventist institutions must ensure that our plans for sustainability include the value-added component. What values do we instil in our students? How impactful are we in their lives to ensure that when they leave our institutions, they will never forget who we represent? For example, the blind man who came to Jesus for healing was only concerned about his physical eye sight being restored as recorded in Mark 10:51. However, Jesus's mission was to bring spiritual wholeness to those with whom He made contact, so He asked the blind man, "what will you that I should do unto you?"

Students sign up for an education that will last them for this life, we must endeavour to offer them an education that transcends to eternity. Thus, they will have a positive impact on those around them and the downstream effects will be much more than we can think or imagine. Institutions would no longer need to do appeals for funding as alumni and friends would eagerly support the institution that changed their lives trajectory.

In addition to those five attributes, the conference coordinators have highlighted six factors that can guide and protect the long-range survival of institutions.

1. PROACTIVITY

Proactive leadership requires hard work, dedication and focus. Most organizations have a reactive culture in which employees are always busy, tired and overworked. However, how productive are these organizations? Crises and emergencies will always arise, however, if our time is spent reactively

responding to these situations, when do we get to plan and execute. When does sustainability and resilience get incorporated within our organizations? ⁵Ben Brearley in his article *Why Leaders Strive for Proactive Leadership* recommends that we aim for an 80/20 balance in our time at work. Eighty percent of the time is to be used for regular work; however, we should strive to use the other twenty percent for improvement. As leaders we must focus on team building, assess the emergencies and determine mitigating strategies for the future, and plan for the future. Proactivity is not always about getting everything done in the present, it is about the planning and implementation of strategies that will yield returns in the long-term. When God told David that he would not build the temple because his hands were stained with blood, David did not just sit back and drop his hands, instead, he readied the material for the temple, he made the alliances that would be necessary for its construction so that when Solomon was instructed by God to start the building process, most things were already in place (1 Chronicles 22).

2. ASSESSMENT

In her article, ⁶*Evaluating the Performance of an Organization*, Evaluator and Senior Project Manager at Universalia Montreal, Katrina Rojas, noted that ‘an organizational assessment is a systemic process for obtaining valid information about the performance of an organization and the factors that affect performance.’ Most institutions are usually engaged in department or project assessment; however, an overall assessment of the entire organization is what is required periodically. Leaders that are keen on the values to be derived from assessment, often are able to mitigate against crippling circumstances as they know the capabilities of their institutions – both human and other resources. They are able to pull on the skill set and expertise resident within and without their organizations to achieve the desired outcome. Assessment must be;

- immediate to see where you are,
- continuous to ascertain the achievement of long-term goals and
- final to make the evaluations to determine the necessary steps forward.

When 8-year-old King Josiah took reign, he was unsure of the circumstances in which he was plunged. However, when he heard the “Words of the Law”, he did his consultation, he assessed the nation, he realized that the people were not living according to the principles outlined in God’s word (2 Kings 22). King Josiah was in a predicament, however, he knew where the nation was, he learned through the ‘Words of the Law’ where they should be, and as such he was able to implement a strategic plan to get the nation to where they needed to be. The same is true for our institutions, we must do institutional assessment to ascertain where we are and where we should be and then implement strategies to get there. This will sometimes take collaboration and dialogue.

3. OPPORTUNITIES

As part of an organization’s assessment, a SWOT analysis is usually conducted. In completing this analysis, the organization is able to view the various opportunities to which it is predisposed. Organizational opportunities, in this regard, refers to external factors that will create a competitive advantage. Seventh-day Adventist institutions sometimes operate as though in silos; however, this is not sustainable. We are part of the larger economic playing field on which institutions must operate and compete successfully in order to remain viable. Consequently, we must assess our external environment for opportunities that will help us to move our mission forward. When Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, besieged Jerusalem and took captives, he did not just take them as slaves and put them in the field. He tested them and chose the brightest ones for use in the building of his kingdom (Daniel 1). We must have confidence in the persons within our ranks and not allow them to go to

other organizations to build their institutions while we languish. It is high time we train and empower those in our ranks to become sustainable thinkers and leaders, thus preserving our mission. Another point to note about opportunity is that we can't stay on the mountain top of previous successes and expect to remain viable. As mentioned earlier, sustainability comes with adaptability. Moses was at the peak of his success in Egypt, being considered one of the best of his time. However, he had to leave that mountain top in order to be retooled for the other opportunities that God had prepared for him. How many of us still strive on accomplishments from 10/20 years ago while God is calling us to greater things?

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are another important factor when considering sustainability and resilience. Most organizations do not possess all the knowledge, expertise and other resources necessary to remain sustainable and resilient, hence outsourcing, partnerships, joint ventures and other collaborative activities. Seventh-day Adventist institutions must learn to partner and create a web of services and resources for the advancement of our organizations. The impact of COVID19 has made this even more evident. It is incumbent on us leaders to determine partnerships that help us to rebuild and create a path for sustainability. For example, in academia, we can form partnerships in the delivery of courses. This will ensure that our programmes supersede the requirements of accrediting organizations to which each partner university subscribes. In addition, it will also ensure that we maximize on the integration of faith and learning. Furthermore, there may be unlikely ventures - partnerships with non-SDA institutions that will help us in achieving our objectives while maintaining our standards. At NCU we are partnering with the Government of Jamaica in offering some diploma courses; partnering with the National Commercial Bank to retool individuals to re-enter the workforce post COVID 19; we are also in

discussions with HEART NTA to identify areas in which we can partner. Partnerships should be strategic and still mission focused. An unlikely partnership agreement was reached with Rahab the harlot and the Israelite spies who hid from the Jericho authorities in her house. They needed a place to hide, and she needed protection for her family when Israel invaded Jericho. Rahab knew the God of Israel because she heard of the great things He did for His people. When we enter partnership agreements, we must do so with others who know our mission, vision and values. (Luke 9: 38-40, 46-50)

DIALOGUE WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Solomon was the wisest man on earth and there was none after as wise as he (1 Kings 3: 10 – 14). Therefore, resident in no individual is all the knowledge and expertise to build a sustainable and resilient institution, hence, the dialogue is critical. Each stakeholder will fit a different piece of the puzzle – students, parents, suppliers, workers, alumni, boards and communities are some key stakeholders that must be engaged in order to assess an institution's ability to be resilient and sustainable. All these stakeholders will contribute to the growth and development of our institutions but can also contribute to their demise. What are academic institutions without students? COVID 19 has shown us the disastrous impact of not having students on our campuses. It has also shown the churches, conferences and unions the value of their members. We must not allow our stakeholders to feel disenfranchised. We must keep them engaged and at the forefront of our decision making. Jesus understood the importance of dialogue with all stakeholders and used language each group understood to communicate with them. While He taught in the mountains, He used object lessons that laymen could understand and appreciate. He also spoke with the Scribes, Pharisees and the various leaders. Consequently, His mission was communicated to everyone who would listen, even the children and demoniacs.

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

A comprehensive master plan must be adaptable and include all stakeholders. No institution had in their five-year strategic plan the impact caused by COVID19. Leaders who are sustainable thinkers, who understand the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations, are better able to adjust their plans to suit the new demands. For example, NCU was able to start offering remote classes almost seamlessly after the government made the decision to close schools. How would this have been possible had we not already developed the infrastructure to support that change. S.D.A. institutions must not be left behind, we must be ready to adjust and adapt to the changing climate in which we operate, without compromising our values. Our master plan must not be in isolation from the other development activities in the world. For example, Jamaica Vision 2030 outlines the trajectory of the Government, which will also affect the labour market demands, thus, the degree programmes that we offer. Further, online education in its several forms, have been in high demand, consequently, this too must shape our master plan. Gideon understood this, as recorded in Judges 7. Gideon had an army of thirty-two thousand men to fight against the great army of the Midianites, however, God said the army was too big. When God was through, Gideon was left with three hundred men. That master plan was not altered; it was totally decimated. However, because Gideon had faith, God gave the Midianites into his hand. Sometimes our master plan may be totally decimated, however, we must always remember that the Master always has a plan.

Conclusion

Sustainability and reliability are critical to the survival of all institutions, and as Seventh-day Adventists, we too must develop the competencies necessary, and adjust our mindset to create the future of our institutions by making the needed changes now. We have the ultimate advantage – God is on our side. Just as He

worked wonders in times of old, He is able to work in and through us to accomplish marvellous things in promulgating His mission through our various services. Let us not be daunted by the challenges that loom over us and the seeming giant obstacles to progress, but, as did those recorded in the ‘Hall of Faith’, move forward with faith knowing that ‘He who had begun a good work in ‘us’ will carry it on to completion’(Philippians 1:6).

¹ Resilience. 2020. In Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved June 18, 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resilience>

² Sustainability. 2020. In Merriam-Webster. Com. Retrieved June 18, 2020 from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sustainability>

³ Hartman, T. (2007). The People Code: It’s All About Your Innate Motive (#2). Scribner

⁴ Kingo, L., & Murphy, C. (2020, June 16). How to Build Sustainable Business Leadership in a Post Covid World. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/how-to-build-sustainable-business-leadership-in-a-post-covid-world/>

⁵ Brearley, B. (n.d.). Why Leaders Strive for Proactive Leadership. Thoughtful Leader. <https://www.thoughtfulleader.com/proactive-leadership/>

⁶ Rojas, K. (n.d.). Evaluating the Performance of an Organization. Better Evaluation. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/theme/organisational_performance#:~:text=An%20organisational%20assessment%20is%20a,the%20primary%20unit%20of%20analysis.