

## STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich

### Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership

#### 1. MC

Special greetings and happy New Year to everyone. My name is Kennedy Gichuhi from Kenya, a teacher by profession and currently working as civil servant in the Ministry of Education.

On behalf of Edu, I heartily welcome you to this virtual meeting. This meeting on transformative education brings together stakeholders in the Education Sector from various countries in Africa and beyond. We have people speaking various languages; English, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and even Croatian! Translations will be going on simultaneously.

For those who are joining us for the first time, Edu is an acronym for Education for unity. It is an international network of pedagogists, teachers and educators inspired by the thought and life of Chiara Lubich and the Focolare Movement, which has its foundation in the Charism of unity - A spirituality, which aims at promoting universal fraternity.

She indeed has been known for her tireless actions in favor of communion and peace between people of different races, cultures, churches and religions.

In today's meeting, we will deepen on the first step of Chiara Lubich's Educational pathways. Marilen Nkafu will introduce this topic.

Marilen comes from Cameroon but is currently living in Kenya. She is a consecrated member of the Focolare Movement and a member of Edu. She is a teacher and an educational administrator by profession.

I now take this opportunity to welcome Marilen to tell us more.

#### 2. Marilen Nkafu

Our meeting today is intended to deepen the speech of Chiara Lubich, which she presented at the occasion of her honorary doctorate in pedagogy awarded to her by the Catholic University of Washington on November 10, 2000 for "**the wonderful lessons that she gave to the world by word and example**".

For those who were connected last November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 in commemoration of the 20th anniversary of that reception of her honorary doctorate in Education, you would probably agree with me that though it was such an enchanting event to follow the wonderful fruits of Chiara Lubich's Pedagogic ideas and practices going on around the globe, the program was so dense and we actually felt overfed. It was too much to be digested in one day. For this reason we are here, to start breaking it down into steps, which in fact is the way she understood things and also taught them (Step by Step). We shall deepen it in 6 steps, the

## **STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich**

### **Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership**

way she presented them. We have planned to take one step in every two months as you would soon see in further programs.

At the beginning of that doctorate reception speech, Chiara Lubich delineated the different key-ideas of the Spirituality of Unity. These are words that invite one to stop and reflect, and then take a look at our educational realities from the perspective of unity and communion. These key ideas seem to constitute the basic principles of a new way of looking at Pedagogy.

In fact, as Chiara underlined at Washington, “Our Movement can also be viewed from a theological, philosophical, cultural, economic or educative standpoint, as well as from an ecumenical or interreligious perspective”.

Today we shall deepen the first among the six most significant points of this spirituality, which have had an impact in the area of Education.

Twenty years after, we are discovering them to be very vital and resourceful in the light of the numerous challenges we all are facing today.

The first as seen on the invitation deals with leadership, which has its roots in God who is love, described by her as the Educator par excellence. It is a kind of leadership that generates and transforms.

This theme on transformative leadership would be developed by Prof. Mbae and Dr. Michelin, followed by two ongoing life experiences in Africa. We shall then break up into groups, after which we shall have a feedback from the groups, followed by a few general impressions and closing remarks. Let us discover it together.

### **3. MC**

Thank you very much Marilen for that powerful introduction which has practically set the tone for our entire programme. I picked out one statement, “leadership has its roots from God who is love”.

I will now call upon Prof. Justus Mbae to take us through the first part of the topic on transformative leadership.

Prof Mbae is a Kenyan and member of the Focolare Movement. He is a retired Professor of Education at Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, where he served as Vice Chancellor. He sits on the Board of “Together for New Africa”, a Sophia University Institute based leadership programme for young people. He is also the main representative of the New Humanity (NGO) to the United Nations office in its newly established office in Nairobi, Kenya.

Welcome Prof. Mbae.

## STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich

### Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership

#### 4. Prof. Justus Mbae

Thank you Kennedy for that introduction and welcome all to this presentation on transformative leadership.

For Chiara Lubich, all aspects of life have their origin in God who is love. This is true of politics, it is true of history, of economics, of education, and yes, of leadership too. But we have all seen or heard, about leaders that could hardly be associated with God and His Goodness. So what kind of leadership is Chiara thinking about?

In 2010, a man called Robin Sharma wrote a book entitled **“The leader who had no title”**.

To many people, that very notion seemed to contradict a commonly held view that leadership is a position of authority within an organization or in society. In this view, to be a leader, is to be in a position of authority, of power.

Others understand leadership from the standpoint of making decisions, giving commands and directions. Then there are those who define leadership merely as influence.

Transformative leadership may be defined as the capacity to develop a vision for the future, and to inspire others to support that vision by working towards its realization or actualization.

On the surface of it, this kind of leadership (transformative leadership), would seem to be in direct contradiction with traditional African leadership and practices as guided by Ubuntu culture and values. In the African context, societal morals and values did not change. They were understood to be “fixed” and “absolute”. The main responsibility of the leader was to maintain “status quo” and to ensure that values, such as peace, harmony, justice, respect, social cohesion and unity were observed by all citizens at all times. That is why traditional African leaders would go to any length to “dialogue” or “palaver” just to ensure there was an agreed settlement to any perceived conflict. Of course, today, Africa has embraced a different style of leadership to suit the modern reality.

Whatever our definition of leadership, it is important to distinguish between holding a position of leadership and being a true leader. It is increasingly clear, that many who occupy positions of authority and power lack leadership qualities while there are hundreds and perhaps thousands of individuals who do not occupy such positions but who are the true leaders in their organizations or in their society.

Transformative leaders are visionaries who are not contented with the world or society as it is. Instead, they have a vision, a dream of a better world, a more perfect world. They dream of change and because they are so passionate about it, their vision they share it with their subjects and seek to inspire and to motivate them to join in the pursuit of shared vision.

## **STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich**

### **Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership**

Unlike the more traditional perspectives of leadership which are usually based on a leader's individual characteristics, transformative and generative leadership focuses on the interactions between leaders and team members with a focus on building organizations as communities for learning. It has been said, that transformative leadership is an "everyone, everywhere, everyday leadership". As such, there is a sense in which we are all leaders.

Furthermore, transformative leadership then, far from being the function or position that one holds, is better seen as the ability to generate a future that matters and to get others to commit to that future. This is what is known as generative leadership.

To live in this way is also to lead. Seen in this light, as such it eliminates the dichotomy between theory and practice that we often encounter especially among our political leaders.

If living and leading are one and the same thing, it follows that a leader cannot say one thing and do its opposite. True leadership is seen in the "living", not in talking or in speech.

Understood in this way leadership becomes a participatory process, a process of creative collaboration of leadership and transformation for mutual benefit.

In her teachings and by her practical living, Chiara Lubich, the foundress of the Focolare movement, gives us an excellent example of a transformative and generative leader, who empowers and unites her followers to work towards changing the world as Jonathan will now demonstrate.

Thanks for listening.

**5. MC**

Thank you very much Prof Mbae for your very insightful presentation. You have clearly articulated the meaning of transformative leadership and also linked it very well with generative leadership. I have now understood that true leadership is manifested by living.

Let me now invite Dr. Jonathan Michelin to build up on the presentation by Prof Mbae.

Dr. Jonathan Michelin holds a doctorate in International Education from the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio - Texas - USA. He is currently undertaking a Post Doctorate in Youth Leadership at Sophia University where he teaches Leadership. Jonathan has taught for several years in the US at University and Community College level. He is also coordinating "FormaT", a global project for the formation of the formators. At the same time, he does consulting and public speaking on the themes of leadership and youth formation.

Welcome Dr. Jonathan.

## STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich

### Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership

#### 6. Dr. Jonathan Michelin

Thank you Prof. Mbae. Thank you Mr. Kennedy.

My small contribution will focus on transformative leadership, or as sometimes I call it on transformative co-leadership. Concentrating on both aspects, transformative and generative, so beautifully explained by professor, will take more time than what I am allowed to and I am not willing to cram too many concepts with the risk of losing important notions in doing so. So I said to myself, let's do something generative and new (I am sure)!

I thought to offer you the possibility, if you wish, and only if you wish, that after having completed today's module, to reflect and write your considerations, surely all precious, on the generative part of Lubich's leadership at the light of what you learned today, keeping in mind that the Focolare Movement gave life to a number of educational institutions at all level with hundreds of students in all the continents. Your guiding question could be: at the light of what you have experienced today, how do you consider Lubich's leadership generative?

Do you like the idea? I humbly hope so.

Let's start and think now, just for a second, about the definition of transformative.

**“Causing a major change or a lasting change in something or someone**, especially in a way that makes it or them better or different.” Many of climbers of the Kilimanjaro say that it was a transformational experience. Something in that experience touched them so deeply that they are not the same anymore of when they left. Here are some synonyms for transformative **life-changing. transformational, metamorphic.**

**To another level, people that experience the type of transformative leadership especially in an educational venue, inspired by the thought of Chiara Lubich, affirm that it was indeed an experience of transformation.**

**Why is it so? Before suggesting the obvious proposition of trying, *experientia docet*, experience teaches, which is certainly an essential prerogative. Let's explore the reasons that lies at the bases of the descriptor transformative.**

Chiara's Leadership is:

- a) transformative in its origin. It's a gift, a charism. It's a God given gift. Everything stems from here, all our considerations, everything that we are going to say comes from this gift. Every God given charism tends to transform reality. God is a transformative force that can only offer transformative gifts. Let's think about Saint Francis and how his gift changes the society of its time and it's still performing 800 later. Let's think about Saint Benedict and his rule with the huge impact it had on the Western World all together.

## STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich

### Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership

- b) It's transformative in the way it is given. It happened in disguise but it's perfectly timed. It's a transformation within a transformation. In the early '40 the world is rapidly changing, fascism and Nazism are conquering Europe on one side, communism is counter fighting on the other, and the allied forces are moving in this apocalyptic scenario to free the oppressed. The political thinking is in terms of axis, walls, treaties that put entire groups of countries one against the other, dualism represented by cluster of nations. While all of this is taking place, in a dark and humid cellar, shaken by the bombs there is another transformation happening, the transformational leadership of unity is coming into light. The first one is apparent, the second one unexpected. It's the vaccine against the first.
- c) It's transformative in the subjects exercising leadership. It's about the "we", it's not about the "I". Transformative Leadership is about us and not about me. It's a paradigm shift, moving from a single leader to a cohesive team, from a decision maker to a group of people experiencing life together, sharing every decision.
- d) It's transformative in its gender. It's woman power. Not only this leadership's view is about a group of people but a group of women, of young women. The transformative leadership or co-leadership of unity is in the hands, at least in the early stages, of women.
- e) It's transformative in its view. It transformed the way they see natural and supernatural reality. The idea of God is transformed. He is not anymore a distant Judge that decides about the fate of the world from his throne but God is Love, he is a loving Father that hides His love behind all the circumstances of their lives. The idea of the other changes. The other is not a bother, somebody that we have to tolerate or endured, but because of the love and care we share and outpoured on others, they are generated to become co – leaders with us.
- f) It's transformative in its goal. The goal is unity. "That they all be One" they read in the Gospel, deciding to make that the ideal of their lives. Chiara and her first companions experience a very new leadership goal for that time: Unity, which Universal Brotherhood, all brothers.
- g) It's transformative in the literature they are inspired from: a small book, the gospel. In it the key concepts of Lubich's transformative leadership are contained, such as unity, dialogue, service, sacrifice, courage, togetherness, care, equality, equity.

But how does Chiara's transformative leadership relate to education?

For transformative leaders in education the aim is clear. It's to bring unity, to be at the service of unity in the realm of education.

The first is an educational leadership that aims to integrate and unite a learner's study and life, as evidenced in a lasting impact beyond the defined educational moment connecting the multiple dimensions of the learners. The Enlightenment paradigm, which placed reason

## **STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich**

### **Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership**

at the center of intellectual discourse, shaped education itself, as well as models of teaching and learning. Scientific reasoning became the means and the end to the educational process. Learners were valued exclusively for their ability to reason, to retain information, and to process it mentally. Such an educational philosophy led to positive technological and academic achievements; however, it also reinforced a dichotomy within learners, a division between reason and heart, between mind and body. Such a dichotomy tends to reduce the educative process to one simple dimension, the intellectual, at the expense of the experiential, spiritual, ethical, and emotional.

In contrast, Lubich's transformative leadership in education foster a holistic perspective validating dimensions of learning beyond the purely theoretical or academic, including the development of all other aspects of human experience. Separating the academic and the affective phases of the educational experience, in theory or in practice, produces an altered and unbalanced learning experience in which educational discourse portrays the learner in an inhuman context. Not educating the learner as a whole may cause academic incompleteness and the deviant behaviors common in the academic environment, such as the abuse of alcohol and drugs, or violence. Statistics confirm this hypothesis, noting that psychological problems such as depression and anxiety among college students in the last decade. The educational process must be centered on human beings in their wholeness not only on the fulfillment of their intellectual dimension.

The second issue is the need for an interdisciplinary model, a cross disciplinary cooperation which would not merely compile knowledge within particular disciplines, but integrate and unites the different disciplines into a mutual relationship fostering a fruitful, constant exchange among them. Also Vartan, an American Educator and Historian, president of the prestigious Carnegie Corporation calls attention to the disaggregation of knowledge in higher education into disciplines and sub disciplines. He affirms that colleges are becoming progressively like market places, with huge choices of courses that students must select and connect for themselves. He suggests that a better system would provide students the opportunity to think systematically and to draw and interconnect knowledge from many sources.

The third issue, at the heart of transformative leadership calls for a "360-degree dialogue" at all levels, between and among professors and students. Dialogue and cooperation must be nurtured at the levels. In sum, transformative leadership in the sphere of education fosters and offers an educational model that links academic study and life. These new perspective propose a unifying vision of knowledge through interdisciplinary collaboration and dialogue among disciplines encouraging open dialogue among faculty and students in academic communities.

## **STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich**

### **Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership**

In conclusion, transformative Leadership is at the heart of Chiara's charism, gift. It transforms everything it comes in touch with, it brings unity, which is a pressing need, maybe the pressing need of our times. Starting with what we love the most, to educate! Thank you all, thank you very much.

#### **7. MC**

Much appreciation to Dr. Michelon for that wonderful presentation. It is worth underlining from your presentation that leadership is a gift from God. You have also shown us how Chiara's leadership is transformative from various perspectives.

In the next session, we will watch a video which will give us some insight on the programme named Together for New Africa. This is a Sophia University based leadership programme for young African men and women who are seeking to make a real difference in the governance of their continent. This programme enjoys support of the Focolare Movement and of the New Humanity International NGO.

Let's sit back and watch the presentation. The technical team will take us through.

#### **8. Together for a New Africa – video in English**

#### **9. MC**

That was a very colourful presentation indeed. We now have a clear idea of the very noble objective of T4NA.

While still in this spirit, we will listen to an experience that will be shared by Isaac Kiara.

Isaac Kiara is student from Kenya and has actively participated in TFNA. He has been involved in church leadership and is also an aspiring politician.

#### **10. Experience of Isaac Chiara**

My name is Isaac Kiara from Meru, and I'm a student from T4NA Kenya.

I really want to appreciate the fact that I was considered one of the members of T4NA since it started in 2018.

First of all I want to say that during these years, I have been involved in various types of leadership for example as a church leader in my parish and also in politics. I've participated in the 2017 elections when I was vying for a post of MCA in the Kenyan Government Administration. I am the chairman of the Board of Management in my local Primary School and also a member of the Board of Management in KIAMURI DAY and BOARDING secondary school which is also in my locality.

This school has transformed me a lot in my leadership practices and skills.

## **STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich**

### **Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership**

For example regarding humility – I was so surprised because in a normal African set-up there is a clear difference between the seniors and the juniors. The seniors will sit at different tables, they drive big cars and so on, but in T4NA you couldn't see who was a senior or who was a junior. In transformative leadership you have to be humble, you have to sit with all kind of people and eat with them. I have learned this through T4NA.

It also taught me how to live in co-existence with other people. For example before I joined this project, I was not elected as the vice-chair of the choir in our parish, which is a very big parish of the Catholic Church. When I had to explain things in my parish or elsewhere, I realized that I am dealing with people of different experiences and ages, different social backgrounds and religious beliefs. They all have to co-exist together. Through T4NA I have learned how to make these different people feel equal and to live together in harmony under the same umbrella. And therefore, when I accepted the post of vice-chair I knew I was able to lead this big group very well.

I also want to say that it has taught me a lot of determination and love. Determination, because since I was not able to successfully win the seat of MCA in my first attempt, the encouragement from the members of the T4NA, from all countries and specifically my country Kenya, is still instilling a lot of power in me and a lot of determination to vie for the seat again and because of the skills that I've learned I'm very sure I'm going to win. Love, because from the beginning of the school they talked about it. Love is paramount in leadership. If you love as a leader you cannot discriminate people. The political leaders in Africa, they do not love the people, but I have learned how to do this.

The last thing I would want to say is that it has also assisted me in being a leader and a role model in the community where I live, in my home, in my family, and in the place where I work. For example I have been helping the children in the children's home, I have given assistance to street children, and even I have been helping the pupils in my local primary school where I went as a boy.

Thank you very much.

#### **11. MC**

Thank you so much Isaac for your beautiful experience. We have learned a lot from your sharing.

In the next session, we will encounter the Ecoforleaders experience which will be shared via video.

Ecoforleaders is a 'Higher Training School for Leaders to Unity' in DRC (Congo) whose mission is to offer to the DRC, Africa and the World, a series of leaders that have a spirit of excellence and universal brotherhood in the management of services, goods and employees. It was born from the initiative of the 'Political Movement of Unity', and has set itself as a concrete social objective to form NON-TRIBALIST AND NON-CORRUPTIBLE leaders in all fields. The institution also works in schools by forming a leadership model based on unity and the pedagogy of Chiara, rooted in the love that aims at the personal inner transformation of man so that it influences and positively transforms the world around him.

## STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich

### Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership

#### 12. Video Ecoforleaders

**Female Speaker:** A new school for the formation of leaders was born in Congo, it is a school of higher education for the formation of 'leaders of collaboration and communion', *Ecoforleader*, of the Focolare movement. The opening ceremony of this school was on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> of July at the Italian cultural centre located in the municipality of Barumbu in the presence of many scientific, political and religious personalities. In many African cultures the birth of a child is announced with the sound of drums, the birth of Ecoforleader has been accompanied by many rituals, many have accompanied this creature with joy, and many want to accompany it so that it grows for the good of the human community. The Ecoforleader Higher Education School for Community Leaders is a child of the 'MPPU Congo', which is the 'Congolese Political Movement for Unity' launched on 20 October 2016 by two deputies. This experience coincided with the launch of the 'Together for a New Africa' project promoted by young African scholars from the University of Sophia and supported by the leaders of the Focolare Movement in Africa.

**Male voice:** When the political movement for Unity celebrated its twentieth anniversary, the Honourable Georgiane Madiko and I were invited to Italy and participated in the meeting. Various politicians shared their experiences and we, as men and women politicians, said to each other: "There is no politics without love, there is no politics without fraternity." We thought it would be interesting to share this experience in Congo as well. Once we started other people joined us because we needed to train young people, train leaders. We thought we needed to set up this school of leaders that work in collaboration and communion.

**Female Speaker:** we will start short university courses that will allow us to train young people through modules. We will proceed as a spider web that will cover the entire country and all fields. This cobweb will serve to support if not to eradicate, at least to mitigate the evil in our society.

**Male voice:** we would like to prepare a youth that is not afraid like us, certainly we have not done much for our country, perhaps we have not been trained and this is the reason for our fear. For this reason we want to train young people motivated to do good who are able to denounce, announce and renounce, young people who, faced with the bipolarization of the Congolese political space, can say we must work for our nation. An educated youth can influence society with their way of behaving.

**Professor Jonas Shamuana:** the promoting committee is made up of various people ... We send our thanks to the brothers and sisters of the Focolare movement who will support us and who support us and above all the grace that Chiara Lubich will help us to obtain so that this school can be promoted in our country that needs it so much as the authorities, journalists, teachers and various people who are enrolling say and who believe in it.

We thank you and are waiting for you in Congo to experience yourself the school, which will start on 6 October 2017.

Thank you so much.

## STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich

### Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership

#### 13. MC

That was a very informative video. As a follow up, we will have Prof. PhD Felicien Mpuku Laku, who is the Academic Secretary of the Catholic University Faculty of Kinshasa and the National University of Pedagogy in DRC. He is also the director of the Eco for Leaders project and a member of the Focolare Movement. Welcome Prof.

#### 14. Prof. Felicien Mpuku

##### 1. Why Ecoforleaders was born.

Today's Congo is a state, a society, a people with "deep divisions and wounds" who is in a global crisis whose cause is found "in the depths of man", it's in the hearts of the "individual" Congolese and then "collectively". Hence the social phenomena of corruption and tribalism are the most emblematic scourges that destroy society and must be fought. It is for this reality that this School was born with a specific educational mission: to offer the DRC, to Africa and the world, thanks to a rigid high-level theoretical and practical training based on love, a series of leaders that are formed and imbued with the spirit of excellence and universal brotherhood in the management of services, goods and their employees.

##### 2. What is the specific objective of Ecoforleaders?

Although born from the initiative of the 'Political Movement of Unity', the 'Higher Training School for Leaders to Unity' has set itself as a concrete social objective to form NON-TRIBALIST AND NON-CORRUPTIBLE leaders. Not only in the political field, but in all fields (teachers, managers and state officials, jurists, doctors, artists, entrepreneurs, architects, media and religious men, members of political parties of all trends, actors of society, such as city movements, etc.). We also work in schools by forming a leadership model based on unity and the pedagogy of Chiara, rooted in the love that aims at the personal inner transformation of man so that it influences and positively transforms the world around him.

Aware of the decisive role of education in terms of knowing how to do and be able to face the many challenges of today's world, Ecoforleaders has also decided to train young leaders to unity and peace makers in schools. It links with this formation the trainers of the trainers, in particular all the directors of the schools of the Social Project "Little Flame" and of some schools of the Protestant Network, as well as those of the so-called "Revival Churches" and "Bahai Faith".

**3. The secret of the success of the Ecoforleaders:** Chiara's leadership of unity with all her means and tools can be summed up in the art of loving applicable in all sectors. To better understand this leadership model in our African context, we also refer to the cultural and anthropological paradigm of Ubuntu. In fact, a triple meaning of leadership emerges from this paradigm: service leadership, shared leadership and participatory leadership that transforms people individually and collectively. This transformation also affects family life (Buzz Groups or life groups and professional families).

## **STEP BY STEP - Studying together Educational pathways in the thinking of Chiara Lubich**

### **Session 1 – January 16<sup>th</sup> 2021: Transformative leadership**

#### **15. MC**

Thanks a lot Prof Felicien for your nice experience. Through such sharing, we learn from one another and thus improve our output as stakeholders in the Education Sector.

Having enjoyed listening to the beautiful presentations it is now time to have some group activity. This will provide us with an opportunity to deepen our understanding on what has been presented so far especially on transformative leadership.