

PRINCIPLE-CENTERED LEADERSHIP-A BOOK REVIEW

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The legacies of the 'Industrial Revolution' continue to linger in contemporary societies, because some people hold dearly to traditions and the challenge of changing human behaviour. Change is an unknown concept which ignites fear, apprehension, intolerance, resistance and disgust because of its nature. The issue of change does not come with a prescription of the stated reality as it is embedded in the unknown or a futuristic outlook that is concretized in finite results. Change which is "the move away from a present state toward a future state" (Rashid, et al., 2003, 161) is not only labeled in perception as is the fear of the unknown. The Industrial Revolution was fashioned in a paradigm of manufacturing, control of human resource-coordinate, feedback, strategic thinking, and tough conversation -therefore peoples' thinking was framed around this paradigm (Rodden, 2011). While it was brought to forefront of mainstream thinking by way of major transformation of societies (Rodden, 2011), it is an old paradigm dating back to 800s and early 1900s. The Industrial Revolution saw a quantum change in manufactured product and what evolved therefrom was a paradigm-principles, procedures and thinking-that focuses on production, control, performance, productivity, and profitability. Although the Information Revolution has occurred after, the legacies of the Industrial Revolution are dominants in organizations and human operations. It is paradigm of the Industrial Revolution that explains, power-over people in management and leadership, the bottom-line

(profitability) and production over character ethic such as justice, equity, honesty, integrity and fairness, which Covey believes dominates the Information Revolution (Covey, 1991). He contends that this old paradigm has its remnant in 21st Century thinking and most organizations and people recognize that there has to be an alternative paradigm as this one is obsolete and is not working. Hence, Covey offers a new paradigm entitled Principle Centered Leadership which is an alternative to the traditional paradigm. The Principle-Centered paradigm is detailed in the book of name 'Principle-Centered Leadership'.

In the book, Principle-Centered Leadership, Covey argues that empowerment of the human consciousness is profoundly more effective in getting people involved into any activities than control or the conventional approach to leadership (p. 14). He believes that the control of people by leaders- power-over-is a short-term 'quick-fix' approach that many leaders recognize is not creating long-term empowerment. Covey illustrates that sometimes leaders want their employees or followers to become involved in their visual and wonder why they seem not to garner wholesale participation. They [leaders] would want a quick-fix to the problem because sometimes it is felt that remuneration, a shared vision, and control are sufficient to transform the attitude of their subordinates. Covey, however, notes that the issue of Principle-Centered Leadership, the new paradigm, is NOT a quick-fix, and easy as it is time consuming, lengthy and builds relationship from inside out (p. 17).

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Simply put, the Principle-Centered Approach targets the human as a whole-spirit and soul- and so the book was categorized into two sections (Section I, Personal and Interpersonal Effectiveness; Section II, Managerial and Organizational Development) in which the author illustrates and display how this new paradigm works. Covey writes that one leader, executive, believes that leader is about control and lead, which speaks to the issue of power-over people in order to have participate in activities. So to grasp the author's disagreement to the authoritative style of leadership, Covey opines "I have long advocated a natural, gradual, day-to-day, step-by-step, sequential approach to personal development" (p. 29), suggesting that leaders need to work on total person in order to have effective leadership-internal effectiveness. So, he forwards four principles upon which 'Principle-Centered Leadership' holds. The four principles are 1) Trustworthiness; 2) Trust, 3) Empowerment, and 4) alignment. Covey reiterates that the new paradigm is about changing the inside of the leader before she/he is able to change the outside, people. He contends that this inside transformation of the leader has nothing to do with skills, knowledge

and competencies of the job; but it is about integrity (p. 17). "But significant breakthroughs often represent internal breaks with traditional ways of thinking. I refer to these as a paradigm shift (Covey, 1991, p. 18). Simply put, the Principle-Centered Leadership approach is a paradigm shift from what currently obtains in leadership. It is building character instead of skills, knowledge and task, the issue is about principles.

The author outlines, "Principles are not invented by us or by society; they are the laws of the universe that pertains to human relationships and human organizations" (p. 18). He continues, "They are a part of the human condition, consciousness, and conscience"(p. 18), suggesting that people should live based on the natural laws of life-fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty and trust. The principles are the driving forces or compasses that direct the individual to the right path and our daily lives. As such, the "Principle-centered leadership is based on the reality that we cannot violate these natural laws" (p. 19). They are the nexus of human existence, which starts from the trustworthiness to alignment based on the four levels, Figure 1 (Covey, 1991, p. 28).



Figure 1. Four Levels of Principle-Centered Leadership with key principles

Figure 1 shows many layers, levels, from personal to interpersonal to managerial to organization (Covey, 1991, p. 31). It should be noted here that the core, center, of level is self and this is rationale of leader. The Principle-Centered Leadership, paradigm, commences with a internal inspection of the leader before she/he is able to yet to the stage of organizational leadership. The principles that govern both the personal and the interpersonal levels are trustworthiness and trust, respectively. Clearly, trust and trustworthiness are the pillows upon which people effective deals with each other. Thus if inter-personal trust is high, people are more likely to easily related with those people with whom them communicate or interact and so there is less need for litigation. It is upon this premise that Covey forwards, "When trust is high, we communicate easily, effortlessly, instantaneously. We can make mistakes and others will still capture our meaning. But when trust is low, communication is exhausting, time-consuming, ineffective, and inordinately difficult" (p. 18), suggesting that if this interpersonal social issue is low leadership at the organizational level will be problematic.

When there is distrust for a person-in the form of the leader-it is highly unlikely that the individual will effective motivate people in given of their best over the long term. The rationale for this is simple as instinctively trust allows people to believe in those personalities that display character ethic as they believe in other people, radiate positive energy, service-oriented, and synergistic (pp. 34-37). This makes them highly effective people unlike the authoritative, democratic, laissez-fair and other controlled type leader.

This takes the discussion in the habits of an effective leader. Covey explains this with a diagram which is a circle of habits (Figure 2; p. 41). The author believes that these 7 Habits when practiced by any individual or endowed in him/her resonate with other people and catapult the person into greatness. Habits 1-3 are classified as private victory as they are primary human endowments, they will deal to secondary endowments-Habits-4-6, public victory. The author outlines some of the primary endowments of humans -self-awareness or self-knowledge; imagination and conscience, volition or will-power.

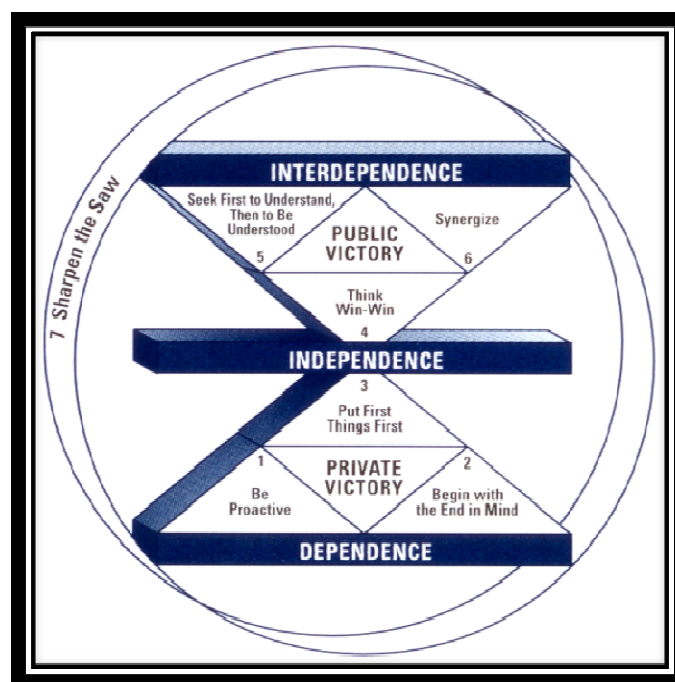


Figure 2. Seven Habits of Maturity Continuum

The secondary endowments are abundance mentality, courage and consideration and creativity and the last being self-renewal (p. 40). Having outlined the habits, Covey notes that “At the upper end of the continuum toward increasing effectiveness is self-awareness” (p. 40) and offers an insight into great and effective leaders. It should be noted that the seventh habit is ‘Sharpen the Saw’ which is the continuous retraining, improvement and self-renewal of the individual. So Covey opines:

If you don’t improve and renew yourself constantly, you’ll fall into entropy, closed systems and styles. At one end of the continuum is entropy (everything breaks down), and at the other continuous improvement, innovation, and refinement (Covey, 1991, 47)

The 7 Habits are, therefore, life changing behaviour that is a compass to being an effective person and it is this effectiveness that has produced great leaders such as Nelson

Mandela, and Gandhi. If the 7 Habits constitute a compass for human living, it means that behaviour change must be done by those who fall short in any of the habits. While recognizing and accepting that behaviour change is difficult, Covey postulates, “It’s relatively easy to work on personalities all we have to do is learn new skill, rearrange language patterns, adopt human relations technologies, employ visualization affirmations, or strengthen our self-esteem” (p. 18), which is why the new paradigm, Principle-Centered Leadership, is time consuming, lengthy and is a long-run phenomenon that will not immediate seen effective. The rationale, therefore, for the effectiveness of the new paradigm is simply, it is a compass to the normal law of human life (p. 20) and that real growth is an incremental process (p. 79), a step-by-step process and a natural growth cycle (p. 121). The new paradigm is a set of principles that must be inculcated into one’s consciousness and conscience. Covey classified those into four dimensions-security, guidance, power and wisdom (Figure 3).

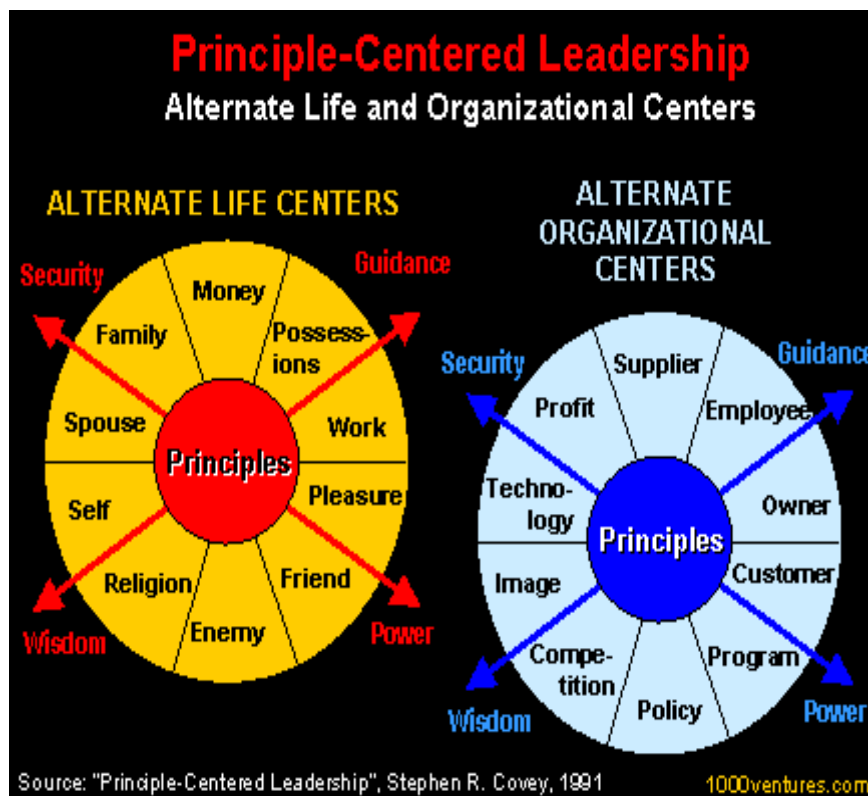


Figure 3. Alternative life centers and alternative organizational centers

Figure 3 has two distinct diagrammatic representations of the four dimensions within a principle, 1) alternative life centers and 2) alternative organizational centers (pp. 23, 24). Covey believes that if one centers his/her life around the right sets of principle this is critical to fostering and developing a 'rich internal life of power'(p. 20). It should be noted that principles are to the center of each diagram and Covey says "Like the hub of a wheel, it unifies and integrates. It's the core of personal and organizational missions. It's the foundation of culture. It aligns shared values, structure, and system" (p. 20) and this follows that when the core of a person's life is principles, this becomes the thinking of that individual. However, the outer parts indicate that when alternative issues become the guiding principle of people's lives, alternative principle, Covey opines that this weakens the individual (p. 21).

The author states, "Centering life on correct principles is key to developing the rich internal power in our lives, and with this power we can realize many of our dreams. A center secures, guides, empowers" (p. 20). The Principle-Centered Leadership approach is seeking to cultivate those four principles in life (i.e., personal and organization) for 'internal source of strength' (p. 21). The individual or organization may decide to focus on the external instead of the core principles and this retards the person or business ability to change as wisdom is not learnt from mistakes in this approach. However, whenever person or organization focuses on the center or the hub, principles, he/she or the business is able to welcome change, criticism, mission, roles, goals, and wisdom to learn from mistakes and continuously improve in order to grow, learn and develop. He, then, went on to describe the four dimensions (p. 23).

Security deals with people's sense of worth, identity, emotional state, self-esteem, and personal strength (p. 22). Guidance looks at

one's direction to life, which is guided by our conscience-include spiritual and social consciences. Wisdom addresses the sense of balance as it relates to how one looks at life-an understanding of the separateness and collectivity of all the parts in life. Power, on the other hand, based on Covey's perspective is "...the capacity to act, the strength and courage to accomplish something" (p. 23). Because Covey conceptualizes his book as a new paradigm, he provides the compass for the principles and guides the thinking that must be chartered from henceforth. So he outlines eight characteristics of people who are Principle-Centered leaders: 1) continually learning; 2) service-oriented; 3) radiate positive energy; 4) believe in others; 5) lead balanced lives; 6) see life as an adventure; 7) synergistic; and 8) exercise for self-renewal (pp. 33-39). The issue of exercise for self-renewal means practicing the four dimensions of human personality: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual (p. 38). What was the rationale for a practice of the principles and four dimensions? The answer is simply, primary greatness (pp. 57-66). Using Erich Fromm's perspective, Covey writes that human personality market is where the individual sells himself/herself to others. The personality market is based on positive personality traits. But, the author argues that these are secondary greatness. He contends that "To focus on personality before character is to try to grow the leaves with the roots" (Covey, 1991, p. 57), and this does not provide long-term change. Sometimes, personality strategies are manipulated by some people to attained desired results including outcomes. Secondary greatness includes social status, position, fame, wealth or talent to frame a desired message or solicit certain behaviour and these issues lack primary greatness or goodness of character (p. 58). It means, therefore, that for a leader to sustain long-term behaviour from his/her followers or workers, this must be by way of character traits (p. 61).

Those character traits are integrity-value you place on yourself; maturity-balance between courage and consideration; and abundance mentality-which is the basic assumption that there is plenty for everyone (p. 61).

Having detailed how the Principle-Centered Leadership approach applies to person, the author shifts the discussion organizations to include marriage and family relationship (p. 130). Using his family and its practices, Covey argues that he and his wife have always sought to build character in their children instead of personality. Interestingly, the building of character traits in children arms members of the family for primary greatness, effectiveness. One of the things that the author argues is that just as an organization has a mission statement, his family has one and indicates that all family should have one. The purpose of the family mission statement is to focus the members around a core set of ideas, and that this should be done constructed by all the members therein. In building of the mission statement for his family, Covey outlines what was mentioned by his son and I found it amusing. He writes, "I am reminded of our own family's first effort to create a mission statement. My football-playing son's first shot at it was this: 'We are one hell of a family, and we kick butt!' We had great experiences together over several months. We learned a great deal about each other, and in the end we were united around a mission in which we were committed to supporting each other" (Covey, 1991, p. 143). After the entire process was completed, Covey notes that his children keep to the mission statement because they were participants to the experience.

Using his family, Covey outlines how principles can be instituted to create primary greatness. Nine issues were identified as important characteristics to build champion children (Covey, 1991, p. 144). These are 1) building self-esteem; 2) encourage primary greatness, 3) develop children's own interest; 4) create a

family culture; 5) plan ahead; 6) set an example of excellence; 7) teach them how to visualize their own potential; 8) adopt their friends, and 9) teach them faith, trust in others and to affirm, build and serve others (p. 149). One of the humours of this book is on page 146. The author writes:

Third, we encourage them to develop their own interest. For instance, when Joshua [one of Covey's sons] saw the movie *Karate Kid*, he wanted to take karate lessons. I immediately signed him up, knowing full well that he'd likely get turned on by something else in two weeks and gradually lose interest in karate. But I want him to try something when he'd excited about it. I try to affirm him in his choice of activities. For example, recently we were throwing the football in the hallway and he said, 'Notice how good I am at football'. He doesn't doubt his ability to do many different things well (Covey, 1991, p. 146)

Clearly from reviewing the aforementioned perspectives depicts how to empower children. Covey shifts the discussion from the person to the organization or management. So he writes an entire chapter on empowerment, which is entitled 'Six Conditions of Empowerment'. The six conditions of empowerment are 1) specify desired results; 2) set some guidelines; 3) win-win agreement; 4) identity available resources; 5) define accountability, and 6) determine the consequences (Figure 4). Covey believes and expounds that empowerment-motivates people to their highest degree of performance-can be attained by way of win-win agreement-everybody benefits or wins from a process; self-supervision; help structure and systems and accountability (p. 192). The authors argues that when a win-win agreement perspective is held by the leader, it a psychological state where there is a mutual understanding and commitment as it relates to desired results, guidelines, resources, accountability and consequence.

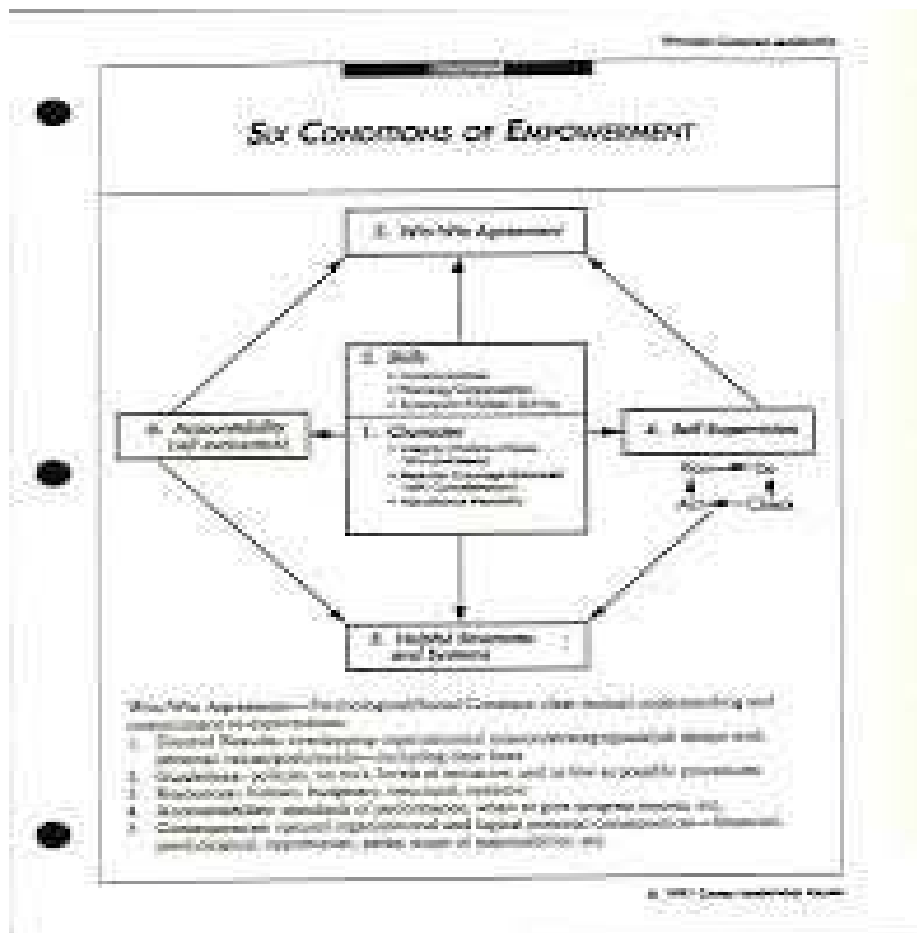


Figure 4.Six Conditions of Empowerment

Covey forwards that win-win agreement can be instituted and implemented in organization, and this he explains by way of the five steps. The organization must begin with clearly articulated and understood objectives, expectations (p. 192). It means that organization must set up budgets and schedule and people should be committed to these in order to obtain the specific results-time management. Secondly, the guidelines must be clearly stated and know as they will be used to assess performance, including policies, principles, procedures and desired results (p. 192). The next step is identifying available resources to include financial, human, technical and organizational resources available in order to complete and attain the desired results. The resources apparatus must also advance information, training and communication as well as the involvement of the human resources. Then, the fourth step is to define

accountability. Having clearly outlined and stipulated the various apparatuses and principles for organization, the institution must hold each member accountable for his/her aspect to the outcome. Covey writes:

Results can be evaluated in three ways: measurement, observation, and discernment. Specify how you will evaluate performance. Also, specify when and how progress reports are to be made and accountability sessions held. When the trust level is high, people will be much tougher on themselves than an outside evaluator or manager would ever dare be (p. 194)

Having identified the other processes, the author contends that consequences must be attached undesired results and positive rewards must be linked to desired outcome (p. 194). Positive rewards are more than monetary

compensation such as training, recognition, appreciation, advancement, new assignment, flexible schedule, leave of absence, enlarged responsibilities, and promotion. The negative consequences could range from reprimand, retraining to termination (p. 194). Based on the win-win performance appraisal, unlike the traditional approach where the manager is the person who evaluates performance, this one is where worker assesses his/her performance. Covey indicates, "Since they have a clear, up-front understanding of what results are expected and what criteria are used to assess their performance, they are in the best position to evaluate themselves"(p. 196), which predicates upon integrity and win-win as he/she equally benefits from his/her actions. Such an approach requires a change of the perception of the manager or the leader from the tradition manager-control assessment system.

Chapter 31 deals with 'Principle-Centered Learning Environments'. The author employs Principle-Centered Leadership to educational institutions and shows the applicability of the new paradigm. Covey laments the state of the education system, using the current paradigm, and forwards that it is a 'land-minded wilderness' (p. 302). To emphasize the travails of the current paradigm in the education system, Covey forwards:

Controversy diverts educators from their focused task. They sincerely want to prepare the next generation, but there are many conflicting expectations. It is as though society wants education to handle all of its basic ills, its deeper problems. The educational system is expected to address and compensate for the failures that take place in the home and other institutions such as the church, the government, and so forth (Covey, 1991, p. 302)

The perspectives that Covey outline examine challenges and conflictory issues in the

education system and that they are as a result of the paradigm that underpins the decisions and choices taken by people. Despite the realities of the low performance of students in the secondary-education system, educators normally, over time, develop a mentality to survive and modify old behaviours instead of a transformational change (p. 303). Covey believes their resistance to change by educators is totally as a result of 'lack of common vision' and this retards the needed and likely change (p. 303). It is the individuality, separateness, in personal ideology that hampers cooperativeness as there is no state common vision (p. 303). This is decentralized thinking and the students are knowledgeable of this-most times they resent this process (p. 304). The message has a lasting and unfavorable effect on the students to the point where Covey shows how this process is destroying the teaching process with an understanding by the education. He opines, "In fact, the whole image children may have of the teaching profession often discourages them from going into teaching themselves" (Covey, 1991, 304). He continues, "If throughout society the teaching profession loses its reputation and its tremendous capability to influence, young people will not be empowered to be responsible for their own learning and lives because they will have seen too much blaming, too much criticism, too much transfer of responsibility, and too much abdication of power to the weaknesses of other people or to institutions" (p. 304). Such an approach is a blame gain, and there is no win-win in this situation.

Covey argues that the Principle-Centered Learning Environment, the new paradigm, realigns the system to focus on the learning environment (p. 306). Traditionally, people view the learning process as the responsibility of the teacher-and-students and Covey's perspective is the process is collective unit of

various stakeholders-teacher, parents and family, peer group, office administration, students, government, school board, government entities and business as well as community, which the author uses a diagram, Figure 5. At the heart of Principle-Centered Learning Environment is empowerment of the students, which requires a totally different

paradigm from the traditional teacher-centered paradigm. As a result, Covey outlines that to implement a Principle-Centered Learning Environment it is critically based on the individual staff members (p. 312) and an understanding of: 1) inside-out, 2) principle-centered, and 3) personal empowerment.

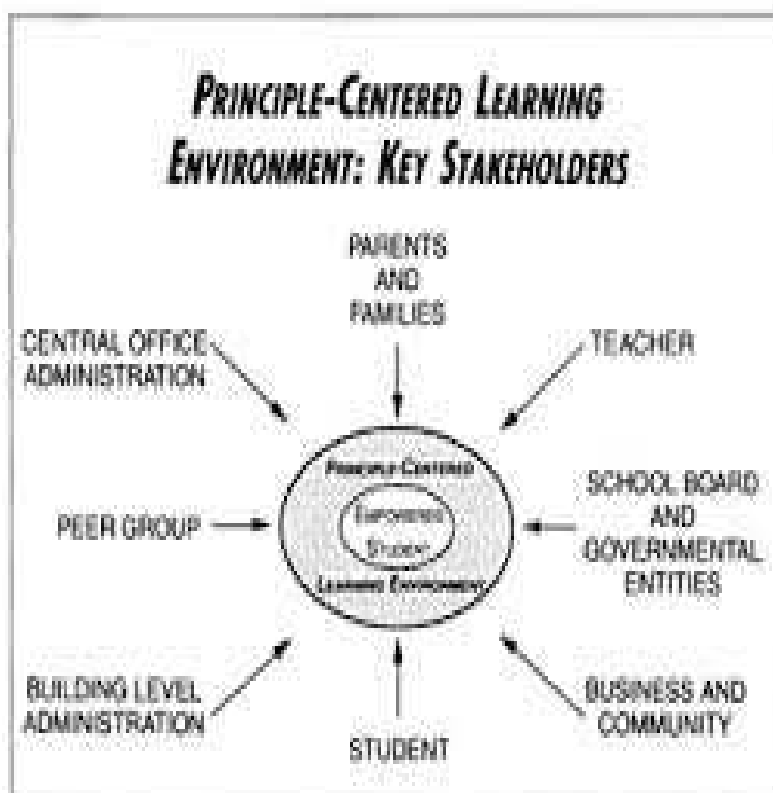


Figure 5. Principle-Centered Learning Environment

The entire book, Principle-Centered Leadership, is forwarding a new paradigm, which Covey calls a paradigm shift. It is not the first time in history that paradigm shifts have occurred and initially they were challenges until they become a normal science. Covey explains a paradigm as a pattern or map for understanding reality (p.

67). The paradigm shift is a fundamental transformation, revolution of thoughts, great leaps of understanding, and sudden liberations from old limits (p. 67). Covey did not only for a perspective of the issue of paradigm shifts, he used exemplars (see Table 1):

Table 1. Pioneers that have created paradigm shifts in history

Isacc Newton	Law of force and gravity (p. 70)
Christopher Columbus	Challenged conventional world view of the flat perspective of the world (p. 67)
Nicholand Copernicus	Developed a map of the stars (p. 68)
Albert Einstein	Principle of relativity (p. 70)
Chuck Yeager	Break the sound barrier (p. 71)

Having outlined the aforementioned exemplars; Covey indicates that old habits can be broken (pp. 72-73) and that there is a process to do so by three stages: 1st) count the costs and calculate the restraining forces, 2nd) fundamental orientation or transformation-sometimes alliances with other people is necessary and 3rd) sacrifice freedom (p. 74). "We expend more effort and energy in starting a new behavior. Old habits exert a powerful pull" Covey says (p. 74), which explains why the new paradigm will take some time to implement and by extension be the effective acceptable change-agent. The reality is for old habits continuing is simply "We expend more effort and energy in starting a new behavior" (p. 74), suggesting that old habits imprisons functionality and change of human endeavours. While the primary purpose of the book is to change behaviour, Covey wants against eagerness to change and so neglect the how it is done. He warns against the three issues when one attempts to make change: 1) advice before understand the issue, 2) attempt to build/rebuild relationship without changing conduct or attitude and 3) assume that good example and relationship are sufficient (p. 129). With the new paradigm, character building of the leader will assist in understand the best approach to empower the follower or employee.

In concluding, Principle-Centered Leadership is undoubtedly a compass of principles for holistic human relations, particularly leadership, that offers a totally different perspective on the subject matter of leadership compared to the traditional paradigm, which is a legacy of the Industrial Revolution. The book is NOT one of practice -"specific activities or actions that work in one circumstance but not necessarily in another" (Covey, 1991, p. 98); but one of principles-"proven, enduring guidelines for human conduct" (Covey, 1991, p. 95)-which is the primary different of this paradigm. Covey is

right on the matter of the traditional paradigm stressing secondary greatness, personality ethic, than primary greatness, character ethic, and accounts for emptiness and difficulty of many executives and others to leader their followers, workers or subordinates. It is for this reason that the author notes that people with primary greatness have a sense of stewardship to others and life, which explains their willingness to offer themselves and empowering others-people such as Gandhi.

Interestingly, Principle-Centered Leadership is a new paradigm which provides a gateway as to how one can break free from old habits and build pattern of primary greatness that is stepping away from the old paradigm. In the old paradigm leaders believe that they must control, have power-over and dictate performance targets; but the new paradigm, Principle-Centered Leadership, offers the principles of creating long lasting greatness because it focuses on trust, trustworthiness and empowerment. In order for leaders to chart this new thinking, they must start with a personal introspective and consciously desire to follow a pathway of change. The book forwards that breaking free from old habits, change, is difficult but that is it time consuming; but the outcome are effective greatness. Owing the challenge of challenging old habit, Covey provides guidelines to accomplish this reality. These are 1) count the cost and calculate the restraining forces; 2) fundamental orientation or transformation-it may requires alliances with other people-and 3) sacrifice freedom-simply, exerting more energy.

Hence, the old paradigm of leadership which is a legacy of the Industrial Revolution, personality ethic, is being replaced by the Principle-Centered Leadership paradigm, character ethic, but there are still barriers to principled leadership change theory. It is simply too time consuming and breaking free from the old paradigm holds the key to the paradigm

shift Covey so desperately seeks. Nevertheless, he writes “real leadership power comes from an honorable character and from the exercise of certain power tools and principles” (p. 101) that clearly many people do not want to adopt because of the legacy of the old paradigm. The Principle-Centered Leadership paradigm is about change and Covey warns about the pitfalls of wanting to influence people to change by suggesting that we should be cognizant of these issues: 1) advice before understanding of issues; 2) attempting to build/rebuild relationship without changing conduct or attitude and 3) assuming that good example and relationship are sufficient.

The core of the Principle-Centered Leadership is interpersonal trustworthiness and not power or control. By merely manipulating people will not produce lasting performance, production, behaviour or followership. It is short live and must be replaced by empowerment through trust and trustworthiness.

The author argues that when trust is high, spirits, cooperation, performance and empower are high creating high involvement as each person conceptualizes himself/herself as an author to the matter. He continues that in those cases, litigations are low because people can work amicably settle disagreements. The reverse is true, Covey argues that when there is low trust, people are easily offended, skeptical, unforgiving, and litigation is the preferred solution to problems. Hence, leaders should begin an internal introspection of character

building tenets which are embodied in the 7 habits.

The book, Principle-Centered Leadership, is a compass for effective primary greatness for its readers, particularly those who seek to lead others, and holds positive charge for human relations. While I consider the book to be a critical compass for holistic human relations, it has some of the legacies of old paradigm. Nevertheless, I concur with Dr. Covey that “change your paradigm, your scheme for understanding and explaining certain aspects of reality. The great breakthroughs are break with old ways of thinking (p. 173) and this makes the book a spiritual journey and a legacy of greatness. It should be a must read for all.

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