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Leadership, Service, and Wicked Problems: Impact of War, Lack of Funding, and COVID-19 in Service of Those with Fewer Opportunities

Plant A Seed, a nonprofit organization, has been hindered by political unrest, the COVID-19 pandemic, financial challenges, and leadership style challenges in the implementation of its mission. In this article, the founder and CEO of Plant A Seed, also known as Plant A Seed Africa, addresses issues affecting the organization. Issues are labeled wicked problems, complex problems, or problems that are volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) problems and require a sophisticated consciousness and agility to address them (Johansen & Euchner, 2013; McKinsey, n.d.). Problems are labeled wicked because of their complexities and constantly changing nature. Complex problems can be addressed from multiple perspectives, resulting in competing policies and procedures. VUCA problems are issues that can be addressed individually with distinct strategies. The guiding theories for this paper are integral theory and chaos theory. Chaos theory is the complexities facing the organization and how often undervalued issues such as leadership style or culture can lead to unforeseen negative results (Raisio & Lundström, 2017). Wilber's (2000) integral theory is the integration and interconnectedness of elements within a system. After addressing these issues, I leverage the collective intelligence of change leaders such as Kotter (1996), Senge (1990), Higgins (1980, as cited in Channon & Caldart, 2015), Goleman (2000), and UNESCO (2020) to create change models for the organization.

Plant A Seed Overview

Plant A Seed (2010) is a 501(c)(3) in El Segundo, California, with roots in the village of Babanki, Cameroon. Dating back to 2001, the vision of the organization is to create opportunities for all. The mission is to turn hopes and dreams into reality by creating change and opportunity

in individuals, schools, and communities across Cameroon and the world through education, sports, clean water, and more (www.plantaseedafrica.org). The organization uses a holistic and a project-based approach in meeting communities' and individuals' needs. A holistic framework recognizes that problems in organizations and societies have varying factors that make them complex (Milne, 2017; O'Loughlin & McFadzean, 1999).

Plant A Seed believes that for education to be effective, all factors such as health, finances, access, teachers, and more must be taken into consideration. This belief is supported by Wilber's (2000) integral theory, which states that elements within a system are interconnected. The organization's project-based approach follows the traditional method (Cullen & Parker, 2015). A project is suggested by the community or designed by the nonprofit after consulting with the community. It is then planned and executed, usually with the help of community members, while monitoring, controlling, and closing out the project is usually conducted by Plant A Seed. In keeping with the vision and mission, children have learned basic computer skills through the organization's learning centers in Cameroon and Kenya. Clean water contributes to the learners' wellbeing, and school supplies are provided through youth activities.

Plant A Seed, a small organization with no full-time employees, has been able to achieve incredible results with minimal funds, such as offering a burn victim from Cameroon reconstructive surgeries in the U.S. worth over \$1 million. It provided clean water for a village with about 2,000 people. The organization provided school materials to over 100 students each year for about 10 years. These are some of the projects accomplished under the holistic and project-based business strategy. In addition to these techniques, the founder utilizes a pacesetter leadership strategy which focuses on task completion in combination with partnerships. Plant A Seed has collaborated with other organizations such as Engineers Without Borders, Children's

Burn Foundation, and Torrance Memorial Hospital. Despite the organization's accomplishments under my leadership as CEO, funding the projects is a constant struggle.

Plant A Seed K–12 Online School Project

The K–12 online school project idea came about after a visit to my native home, a village in the northwest region of Cameroon called Babanki Tungo in 2018. Before 2016, children traveled from different parts of the village to school. It was rare to see children over seven years old at home. Today, most of the children are home while the school grounds and classrooms are deserted across two of the 10 regions in Anglophone Cameroon. After observing the heartbreaking consequences of the political unrest in the regions, my vision was to provide a safe space for children to be able to study by creating a K–12 online school where children can learn from home or in a location close to home. With this approach, no child runs the risk of getting shot and killed for wanting to learn. This vision both helped and was challenged by the pandemic.

The K–12 online program with a vision to offer a safe learning space for children in Anglophone, Cameroon, was the most pressing problem for the organization. It falls under providing skills to students with fewer opportunities. One positive outcome from the pandemic regarding the K–12 online program is that it is no longer an abstract concept to donors. In 2018, donors found it an elusive idea. Today, with the move to online learning globally, the main complaint by donors is the lack of discretionary income to support this project. Besides providing a safe space for learners, the online school also aims to create programs and flexible schedules to support students who drop out of school due to political unrest. The goal is that the school will be accredited in the U.S. and will equip students to take the national board exam

known as the General Certificate of Education (GCE). Tuition for the school would include all school supplies.

Global Context: The Wicked Problem of COVID-19

In early 2020, nations were in a pandemic that is far from over as of this submission. In many developing countries, such as in India and Brazil, a variant of the coronavirus in April 2021 led to an uptick in deaths to 2.17 million and about 405,000, respectively (UN News, 2021). The unpredictability of new variants of the virus continues to threaten all nations by slowing down economic growth and, most importantly, costing human lives. Termed the worst global economic recession since the Great Depression, the downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic cost an estimated 255 million full-time jobs between 2020 and 2022 worldwide, with the most significant impact among female and young workers (Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, 2022.). The pandemic resulted in a decline in GDP of 5.3% in 2020 worldwide, but economists expected global real GDP per capita to increase by 3.6% in 2021, and 2.6% in 2022 (Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, 2022). Most of the jobs lost during the pandemic have been recovered, and nations are reporting economic gains, but some small-size organizations, including Plant A Seed, continue to struggle financially.

Plant A Seed was largely impacted because funding for its project comes from individuals in the U.S., particularly women and young workers, making one-time small donations. Many of these individuals lost jobs and/or discretionary income during the pandemic. Even though the economic situation in the United States has improved, donors do not appear to have extra income to support Plant A Seed's projects.

Local Context: The Wicked Problem of “War”

In 2016, political unrest in Anglophone, Cameroon, led to school closures as separatists called for a boycott of schools. UN News (2021) reported that 80% of schools in Anglophone, Cameroon, remain closed. This is due to the conflict between the government and armed groups, also known as separatists (Deccan Herald, 2020). When the crisis started, there was a call for the boycott of schools by the separatists because schools and legal institutions were viewed as tools of a centralized government, pushing its postcolonial agenda on the Anglophone region (Annan et al., 2021). Expats from the Francophone region of Cameroon with little to no experience or understanding of the Anglophone education and legal systems, nor the English language and culture, are teachers and judges in the region (Annan et al., 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022). Meanwhile, those who are qualified to fill these jobs in the region remain unemployed. The original demand for the nation to return to its pre-1972 federal system where the Anglophone region had more autonomy was met with military force escalating into the fight for an Ambazonian state (Annan et al., 2021; Bang & Balgah, 2022)—the Anglophone region that is separate from French Cameroon. The use of schools as a weapon of war for the new state persists, costing the lives of those children who disobey calls for school boycotts.

Crawford (2020) reported that a seven-year-old boy on his way to school was killed, and students who ignored the boycott were intimidated or threatened with violence. These occurrences continue to be common six years into the crisis. Gunmen at the Saint Augustine College in Kumbo arrested 176 people, mostly students, in 2017. In 2018, at a Presbyterian school near Bamenda, 78 students were kidnapped and released only after negotiations (BBC News, 2019; Wamsley, 2018). These kidnappings are often blamed on the separatists by the government, but the separatists argue that the government forces are impersonating them. The

blame game continues, and more killings of children persist. In 2020 at the Mother Francisca Bilingual Academy in Kumba, seven children were massacred and another 13 injured (Human Rights Watch, 2020). These are only a few of the horrors both children and parents must endure for wanting to learn or educate their children.

The Wicked Problem of Leadership and the Organization's Structure

It can be argued that leadership structure is a complex issue and not a wicked problem because it can be easily solved using the myriad of leadership design structures and strategies available in literature. However, it is a wicked problem for Plant A Seed. The organization is structured to function with volunteers and short-term contractors only, which is the reason for the project-based system. Plant A Seed mostly hires contract labor because of the organization's limited administrative budget for salaries and the need to maximize every donation for every project. Noncontract employees receive a stipend, but it is too small to make a decent living. This compensation problem means that valuable workers rarely stay with the organization for longer than six months.

In previous years, the organization has been able to leverage people's passion to create tangible change in the lives of individuals and communities. However, the recorded success is all based on short-term projects with the longest lasting up to five years. With the development of the K–12 online school, the organization faces the reality that it cannot continue to function in this fashion. For the project to be successfully implemented in Cameroon, workers need to be rewarded appropriately or paid a livable wage, which the organization cannot afford at this time; thus, this is the wicked problem I am facing as the leader. What needs to be done is different from how things have been done in the past, and Plant A Seed does not have the financial support or labor necessary to move quickly into a new structure.

As mentioned earlier, Plant A Seed's past projects have been short-term, which means that the leadership style needed to have a sense of urgency and pacesetting. For the previous projects, I focused mainly on tasks, leveraging volunteers' and contractors' passion to complete projects. Pacesetters are task-oriented leaders, demanding high standards, continuously pushing a sense of urgency, and providing in most cases less emphasis on the employee (Goleman, 2000). Pacesetting also has a negative impact and may destroy the climate, initiative, and commitment from employees and volunteers. Leading as a pacesetter has been very successful for short-term projects, but the organization's new project, the K-12 online school, is a long-term project that requires a different leadership style (Bingham, 2020; Goffee, & Jones, 2000; Goleman, 2000).

Leaders are encouraged to be authentic, acknowledging their own strengths and weaknesses (George, 2007; Goleman, 2000; Jones, 2000). After taking an honest look at past decisions and actions, as well as studying different leadership styles (Dionne et al., 2004; Goffee, & Jones, 2000; Goleman, 2000; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014; Rubin, 2013; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014), that pacesetting style I have been using since the creation of Plant A Seed in 2001 needs to be modified (George et al., 2007). Given the negative impact of this style and current approach, continuing with the strategy will not be beneficial to the project and will not be effective in solving the organization's financial challenges that have been made more complex by the pandemic. Research shows that leadership style selection depends on leaders' personalities and situations and can be developed to produce greater outcomes (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014).

The Wicked Problem of Money, Service, and Culture

Leading a nonprofit outside of the U.S. poses financial, cultural, labor, and service challenges. As CEO of an organization that works in both Africa and the U.S., there appears to

be constant pressure for me to prove that I am not a grifter extorting my fellow Americans out of their hard-earned money. Many African countries are known to be corrupt and consequently the above leadership strategy and organizational structure have aimed to show that the Plant A Seed's only goal is to serve (Trading Economics, 2020). I have, on many occasions, finished projects out of pocket, and, as mentioned above, many volunteers and contractors have worked for almost nothing. I remember being questioned accusingly by a donor who gave a \$5 donation. Yes, every penny counts, but that occasion and the constant personal donations and emotional investments that I put into the organization, have made evident the cost of the service. Larger and well-established nonprofits can afford to pay employees decent wages and often face less scrutiny. In my experience as a Black woman from the continent of Africa, service is a wicked problem. I love to serve, but finding people who believe enough in the work I am doing to fund projects let alone salaries has been a significant challenge thus far. There is a significant amount of grants, but these grants are usually restricted to boundaries within the U.S.

Leading a nonprofit outside of the U.S. poses financial as well as cultural challenges. There is also the challenge of finding volunteers who are passionate about serving a cause on another continent. As a global leader with roots in subjugated Africa, the challenges that come with the history of my people, a culture of corruption, and the skepticism of my donors are continuous struggles. Today's leaders are expected to possess global leadership competencies, such as integrity, humanity, resilience, inquisitiveness, a global knowledge and mindset, cognitive complexity, trustworthiness, and ethical decision making (Bingham, 2020; Mendenhall, 2018). A leader who intends to interact with Africans, especially those from subjugated parts of Africa, should be trustworthy, humble, accepting, and adaptable in cultural and intercultural settings. These attributes diverge from a colonial mindset where the colonial

and postcolonial leaders from within and outside the continent alienated the natives by rejecting their culture as primitive or pagan while exploiting resources, property, and labor (Abdi, 2005; Boogaard, 2019; Césaire, 2001).

This history is a constant reminder of the complexity of my position as the CEO of Plant A Seed. Nonetheless, I continue to strive towards these ideals which are critical given the colonial history and corruption that have created a rift in trust on both continents. There is a history of distrust and poor leadership from both ends, and even though I am African and American, I find myself struggling to bridge the trust gap (Bingham, 2020; Mendenhall, 2018). In the same vein, I have to lower the expectations of fellow Africans who assume that there is a surplus of money from the U.S. that has been given to Plant A Seed to solve their problems. Amidst all these challenges, I must find a better strategy to lead the organization into a new era postpandemic.

United Nations (UN) Response to the Pandemic

As coronavirus strains continue to mutate and pandemics continue to loom over the globe, it is critical for education leaders to not lose sight of the global learning crisis in which 617 million children worldwide lacked literacy and mathematics competencies (United Nations, 2022). This number increased to 1.6 billion across 165 countries during the pandemic impacting 87% of the world's school population (UNESCO, 2020; United Nations, 2022). UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, noted that there has never been an educational disruption on this scale and that the only way to move forward is through partnerships (UNESCO, 2020). The UN is responding to the impact of the pandemic on education by creating the COVID-19 Global Education Coalition, which focuses on bridging education gaps by responding to country-specific needs.

The coalition will attempt to meet the connectivity and content needs of countries with free and secure solutions through partnerships (UNESCO, 2020). Support from the coalition will include digital and learning management tools and data protection, as well as protect learners' and teachers' privacy. Governments and large institutions such as the national Ministries of Education and the UN create education policies, strategies, and guidelines such as sustainable development goal (SDG) 4—inclusive, equitable, quality education for all (Carter, 2018; United Nations, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic is proving that it will take more than ideas or goals to solve the learning crisis. Prior to the pandemic, the learning issue was viewed as a complicated one requiring linear thinking and expert input (Bingham, 2020). This pandemic is a complex problem living in the sphere of the unknown with no expert knowledge, best practices, or solutions based on predictions pulled from lived experiences.

Therefore, everyone, including Plant A Seed, is in uncharted water, which requires a complex consciousness or mindset to address issues made worse by the pandemic. The UN is using a complexity mindset by tapping into its network of partners through the COVID-19 Global Education Coalition to create solutions both in the global and national contexts (Bingham, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). A complexity mindset or consciousness is a focus on creative problem solving. The UN leverages collective intelligence and a complexity mindset to address the pandemic while preserving its core values of equity and inclusion.

It remains to be seen what impact the coalition will have on the education crisis, especially in developing countries. Sengupta (2018) cautioned that the UN and SDG 4 in the African context must move from guidelines to practical steps, processes, and strategies, including funding and resources that support poorer regions and communities. It was therefore

Plant A Seed's hope that the online school will aid in reducing the learning crisis by creating access for children who cannot attend school because of war, the pandemic, or other reasons.

Collective Intelligence and Moral Imperative

Participative theory is a leader's collective decision-making abilities or the role of followers in the process; it supports the need for use of leadership styles that can motivate all stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process (Bingham, 2020; McKinsey, n.d.; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). It will take the collective contributions of global governing bodies, nonprofits, and researchers to determine how to collaborate to solve education issues effectively in the midst of war, pandemics, lack of funding, and other challenges. It is a moral imperative for Plant A Seed to change its leadership strategy by defining and understanding these problems as complex and addressing all the variables that make the problems complex as elaborated earlier (Bingham, 2020). It is equally these entities' responsibility to tap into individual and collective intelligence while prioritizing organizational and personal values in deciding the best strategy for solving issues that are considered wicked, complex, or VUCA (Bingham, 2020; McKinsey, n.d.).

In the case of Plant A Seed, collective intelligence or group intelligence is a result of collaboration and engagement with stakeholders such as partners, employees, volunteers, board members, advisors, and donors, who all contribute ideas and resources to solve a particular issue (Bingham, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). There are four conditions to collective intelligence that Plant A Seed will follow (Bingham, 2020). The first is to guard against groupthink by inviting diverse opinions. Stakeholders inside and outside the organization will be useful for mitigating groupthink and creating a culture that values the opinions of individuals from diverse backgrounds. The second is to create an environment where individuals feel safe to share different viewpoints without pressure. Stakeholders can offer opinions, ideas, and suggestions

without fear of judgment, thus resulting in independent thinking. The third is to create a decentralized system to allow stakeholders to be close to the problem. For Plant A Seed, this will mean opening lines of communication between stakeholders in Africa and the U.S. Offering opportunities for donors to visit the different project locations and experience firsthand will impact their donations. The last is to share testimonies and results of the impact of the work done by stakeholders publicly.

Plant A Seed Responses to the Pandemic

As the war on COVID-19 waged on and the hope of implementing the online program grew dimmer, I found myself questioning whether as an organization we have done all the good we can for those with fewer opportunities. Efforts to raise the \$50,000 seed money for the project had failed. Efforts in Cameroon with the computer center, which was going to be the test site of the project, also failed. The employees were dissatisfied and had little interest in the vision or mission of the organization. Grounded by the pandemic, a trip was out of the question, and my multiple attempts at virtual communications were met with passivity. This resulted in a breakdown of the site. As my search for a new employee went from weeks to months, I received reports that the location had been robbed.

These complex challenges crippled the online school idea, so I put it on hold to focus on other Plant A Seed short-term projects and to adopt the mindset that chaotic situations can lead to new opportunities (Johansen & Euchner, 2013). I then shifted my focus from the online school to the pandemic and how I could be of service to educators in the African continent and globally during this time. This desire was spurred by my experiences as a student in the Global Leadership and Change program at Pepperdine University. After meeting with my professor, Dr.

Eric Hamilton, I worked in partnership with my colleague Dr. Jennifer Jukanovich to start the *The Forum for the Future of Education in Africa* through *africleads.net*.

with the goal of bringing together educators from across the African continent with invested partners from around the globe to both reflect and act around sharable solutions that empower educators. The vision is to see motivated educators in the private and the public sectors come together to address educational challenges in Africa and to suggest and share solutions (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014).

Our first forum was held in June 2020 with over 50 participants globally. We have reached about 300 educators from over 20 countries across the globe and hosted multiple speakers including Sal Khan of the Khan Academy, Fred Swaniker of African Leadership Group/African Leadership University, and Conrad Hughes who is the Campus and Secondary Principal at the International School of Geneva, the oldest international school in the world. The forums are held quarterly and have the potential to be a powerful network of educators if given the financial support and the attention it needs to grow.

Combining Leadership Techniques

To address the above challenges, the goal is to build partnerships, create a compensation plan, and shift from a pacesetter leadership style to a combination of styles that will allow for effective leadership daily. Goleman (2000) stated that the most effective leaders switch flexibly among leadership styles. In this light, visionary, pacesetter, and transformational leadership styles will be used to rally volunteers, employees, and partnerships to raise funds for the implementation of the K–12 online school program and for management of the organization. A visionary leadership style, according to Goleman, is most appropriate when organizations need a new direction and want to unite people around a shared vision. Since I can create a sense of

urgency and have a vision for the K–12 online school, combining these with transformational leadership will provide the balance I need to implement this program.

Transformational leadership develops followers and upholds their interests, especially when they are aware of and accept the organization’s purpose and their role in its success (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). As a transformational leader, I am committing to the following actions: I will find partners with similar values and visions, build coalitions, and put in place a compensation plan to implement the K–12 online school program and create a safe learning space for children. Having a shared vision with employees, students, and partners such as foundations that donate to educational causes will inspire and motivate everyone to raise the funds needed for the compensation budget for those working for the organization and the K–12 online school (Dionne et al., 2004; Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Research shows that understanding employees and their values through relationship building establishes a climate of trust for sharing the organizational vision, leading to better output from followers (Bass, 1985; Jung & Avolio, 2000).

To build trust, it is important to communicate clear expectations and share information that all stakeholders might need or want (Bingham, 2020; Mendenhall, 2018). This is information that can increase transparency, remove assumptions that reinforce negative behavior or perception, promote behaviors that lead to trust, and encourage engagement. As CEO, I hope all these will motivate and inspire employees and volunteers to reach out to corporate and individual sponsors to raise the cash and in-kind capital needed to implement the online school project and other organization projects.

It is almost impossible to accomplish the program without partnerships because it requires money for teachers and supplies (UNESCO, 2020). Having the finances to support this

long-term project will require working with people from across industries. As the CEO of a nonprofit, there is no greater challenge than raising funds needed for projects and employee compensation. A powerful team of organizations, institutions, and individuals who are encouraged every day to call donors or donate to our cause is the only way to create a transformational educational change in Cameroon and other developing countries facing political unrest, poverty, pandemics, and more (Jung & Avolio, 2000). The coalition will help raise the funds needed to take care of the organization's financial challenges.

With a funding strategy in place, I will create a rewards plan, including procedures for promotion, allocation of resources, and how success will be measured. Having a long-term mindset means employees and volunteers need to be rewarded for the work done in the organization. Burnout or a loss of motivation and commitment need to be avoided because these are the people who raise funds, form partnerships, and even work in the field. Paying employees more than a stipend will reflect a transformational leadership style because it shows that I value the person as well as the task (Bingham, 2020; Goffee, & Jones, 2000; Goleman, 2000; McKinsey, n.d.).

Effectively combining pacesetter, visionary, and transformational leadership will ensure the successful implementation of the program and management of the organization under my leadership. Since the transformational leader's primary concern is getting employees and partners to engage in and support organizational objectives (Goleman, 2000), transformational leadership appeals to me because it focuses on people as well as a task, which, as a pacesetter, I can easily stray from doing. The extent to which a leader can shift the primary focus of their leadership from the organization to the follower is the distinguishing factor in determining whether the leader is a transformational or servant leader (Bass, 1985; Goleman, 2000; Jung &

Avolio, 2000). A servant leader places great emphasizes on serving others. Such a leader can also be referred to as an agile leader who is able to change the organizational structure effectively by decentralizing processes and people models to give stakeholders more autonomy (McKinsey, n.d.). An agile leader prioritizes people over processes by changing the organizational culture, processes, and structures without creating major disruptions for employees. As an agile leader, I will support human-to-human or informal connections, open channels of communication, and all stakeholders (George et al., 2007; McKinsey, n.d.).

Organizational Change Models: A Review

Wicked problems are here to stay, and a leader designing projects based on values such as trust, communication, respect, humility, partnerships, and compensation requires a change strategy. These values will enable the organization to continue to prioritize people over processes (Bingham, 2020; McKinsey, n.d.). As I look to the future, I have the values as well as the vision and mission as recommended by McKinsey (n.d.) to keep me on track. In addressing the organizational structure, models that enable the organization and its partners to be successful in their endeavors are considered from a list of 10 (Ciopages Staff Writer, 2021). Three models will be used to construct a theory best suited for the organization—the Plant A Seed model created by comparing three models. Since Plant A Seed projects, especially the online school, call for collaboration between the U.S. and Africa, the following models were selected: Kotter (1996), Senge (1990), and Higgins (1980). McKinsey is also referred to as Higgins in Table 1.

Table 1

Selected Change Models

	KOTTER 8 STEP MODEL	HIGGINS 7-S MODEL	SENGE 5 STEP MODEL
1	Establish a sense of urgency	Shared Values	Shared Vision
2	Forming a powerful guiding coalition	Skills	Mental Models
3	Creating a vision	Staff	Personal Mastery
4	Communicating a vision	Style	Team Learning

5	Empowering others to act on the vision	Strategy	System Learning
6	Planning for and creating short-term wins	Structure	
7	Consolidating improvements and producing still more change	Systems	
8	Institutionalizing new approaches		

Kotter created the leading change model in 1996, providing eight steps that managers can use to create transformational change. Senge's (1990) five-step model is geared towards organizations that desire continuous learning and growth at all levels of the organization. Higgins' (1980) 7-S model is geared toward creating alignment within the organization. Understanding some of the similarities and differences of these models will aid in the creation of the Plant A Seed model.

Higgins' (1980) and Kotter's (1996) models are easy to understand. Kotter's model is linear, conversational, and descriptive. For instance, "establish a sense of urgency" is very descriptive of what to do. Higgins' model is a list of seven steps. The following questions can aid in the application of the model. What do we value in our organization? What are the capabilities, training, educational levels we have? Who are we? How do we behave or do our work? What plans do we have in place to help us succeed? How are we organized, or who does what? How do we measure success, and what are some of the rewards we get for being a part of the organization? The Plant A Seed model should be easy to understand.

Senge (1990), Kotter (1996), and Higgins (1980) have similar attributes. Higgins started with shared values. Values are the principles on which visions are developed, thus resulting a similarity between Kotter's creating and communicating a vision, Senge's shared vision, and Higgins' shared vision. Though the deeper meaning behind system learning for Senge's model is different, they are similar in that all have attributes of systems such as processes and procedures. Kotter talked about institutionalizing new approaches, which could be rewards or compensation plans. It is crucial to have a rewards system in Plant A Seed to attract high quality partners and

talent. It could equally apply to the process of mapping and analyzing problems and situations that might arise to impede the systems such as the pandemic (Senge, 1990). Kotter and Higgins have a more direct meaning systems, and the steps are self-explanatory.

Kotter's (1996) model is time-consuming and costly compared to Higgins' (1980) and Senge's (1990). Kotter's model requires a significant amount of time and money collecting data about the problem and creating a sense of urgency. It is not as simple as getting everyone together and telling the firm the situation is dire. One must form a powerful guiding coalition willing to address the problem head on, then find ways to keep the organization motivated in solving the problem. Senge is different from Kotter and Higgins in that the Senge model takes time to understand, especially the keywords. It is not as straightforward as the Kotter and Higgins models. For instance, by looking at systems learning, I am unable to determine that step five is talking about the nonobvious things in a change process in the organization. This information is clear only after studying the model in detail. The Senge model is interconnected and requires expertise to implement (Cropper, n.d.). The Plant A Seed model will need to be less complicated.

The Kotter (1996) model could be viewed as redundant after forming the coalition, creating the vision, sharing the vision, and empowering the organization to act on the vision. These three steps could be combined into one. The idea of creating, planning, and celebrating small wins is essential, but this model might need micromanagement at every step for it to succeed, after completing the first six steps, consolidating improvements, and institutionalizing new approaches. It is a necessary step but a clear indication that this model needs a full-time employee to manage the process.

As noted above, Kotter's (1996) 8-steps could be reduced to six steps: (a) creating a shared vision, (b) communicating a vision, (c) empowering others to act on the vision, (d) planning for and creating short-term wins, (e) consolidating improvements and, (f) producing still more change. Unlike Kotter (1996) and Higgins (1980), the Senge (1990) model is not flexible by design and cannot be easily modified. Even though elements are developed separately in the Senge model they are interconnected and "critical to the others' success, just as this occurs with any ensemble" (Senge, 1990, p. 6).

Senge (1990) used a very familiar story (the history of airplanes) to drive home the point that each element depends on the other for the model to succeed. The model therefore requires precision in its use, and because elements are interdependent, it is prudent to start with a shared vision, then walk through the rest of the steps, quickly circling back to concentrate on the one that needs the most work. Higgins' (1980) model, on the other hand, is suitable for organizations that suspect there is a problem and want to figure out what it is and how to address it.

A unique model, referred to as the Plant A Seed 5-F model was created by comparing, contrasting, and exploring different application to the organization. The model could enable the organization to forge successful partnerships with companies and other organizations in the U.S. and Africa for the implementation of the online school project. The model starts with shared values because aligning Plant A Seed's values with those of potential partners is critical to maintain mutual interest (Higgins, 1980, as cited in Channon & Caldart, 2015). This is followed by forming a powerful guiding coalition (Kotter, 1996, as cited in Kotter, 2012). It is almost impossible to accomplish the project in the desired timeframe without coalitions and partnerships (UNESCO, 2020). Once the alliance has been created, all organizations will collaborate to create a vision (Kotter, 1996, as cited in Kotter, 2012), which will help the coalition stay on the right

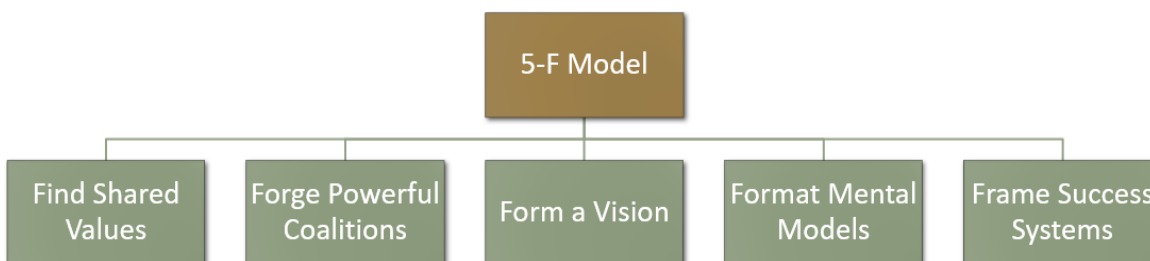
path. Since the project is in Africa, a critical step is mental models (Senge, 1990). This step will help unravel assumptions, beliefs, and biases about the continent, its people, and the culture that might impede the progress of the project. Lastly, systems (Higgins, 1980, as cited in Channon & Caldart, 2015) will help Plant A Seed create reward plans, procedures for promotion, allocation of resources, and measurements of success.

Plant A Seed Organizational Change Model

The Plant A Seed 5-F model in Figure 1 was created by combining elements of Kotter (1996), Senge (1990), and Higgins (1980) with slight modifications for better understanding. As shown in Figure 1, the keywords are descriptive and active words start with F to make it easy to remember. The Plant A Seed model could create the desired change for both the online school project and the organization.

Figure 1

Plant A Seed 5-F Model



The Plant A Seed 5-F model is preferred over the other three models discussed because it was created to address the problem the organization is currently facing. Plant A Seed is going to be collaborating with different companies and organizations on an education project. In the nonprofit world, organizations are not motivated by money but by the desire to change lives. Since Plant A Seed shares the same values as many organizations; creating a coalition will be more impactful than working alone. Using shared values, Plant A Seed will be able to partner

with companies and organizations that want to make the world a better place. Together, the coalition will form a vision that will enable them to stay focused on the online school project.

It is critical to form mental models after establishing a clear vision by all partners. Individual and organizational biases and assumptions should be addressed so as not to compromise the vision of the coalition. For instance, if someone believes African countries are primitive, pagan, or inferior, it is important to walk them through modifying these thoughts (Abdi, 2005; Boogaard, 2019; Césaire, 2001; Senge, 1990). By modifying, I mean helping partners understand the positive messages about Africa. For example, countries in Africa are underdeveloped, but they own some of the world's most envied natural resources such as diamonds, gold, and cocoa. Creating a different way of looking at Africa will help build a stronger coalition and lead to a successful project. The coalitions' ability to acknowledge that all cultures, societies, and individuals have issues will help reduce biases or unforeseen problem.

The model ends with framing success systems or rewards because everyone in the coalition will benefit either directly or indirectly from working together to solve a problem in the world. For Plant A Seed and organizations looking to serve in Africa, the Plant A Seed 5-F model offers five clear and easy steps to follow. Using this model, parties can build a strong coalition with great rewards following an agreed-upon vision created from shared values and modified thoughts about Africa. The model could support Plant A Seed and stakeholders to implement a successful online project and reduce the number of children without education and 21st century skills, which have been impacted by war and the pandemic.

Conclusion

Plant A Seed has been hindered by political unrest, the COVID-19 pandemic, financial challenges, and leadership style challenges in the implementation of its mission. Using the

collective intelligence of organizations, such as UNESCO, and organizational change strategists such as Kotter (1996), Senge (1990), Higgins (1980), and Goleman (2000) for leadership techniques, new strategies have been created to help Plant A Seed navigate some of these issues. This collective intelligence strategy has resulted in a combined leadership technique with the aim of switching between pacesetting, visionary, and transformational leadership styles.

Leveraging the collective intelligence and experiences of experts also led to the creation of the Plant A Seed 5-F model to be used for structuring the organization and the online school project. This framework could enable the organization to survive current and future challenges. The chaos of the pandemic, lack of funding, war, and other problems prompted a system assessment of the organization and an analysis of issues and led to the creation of a new model and leadership strategy (Wilber, 2000). Since the world has become more complex, it requires dynamic and driven leaders who are agile with a complexity consciousness. These new strategies could be what the organization needs to move into a more secure future. My hope as the CEO of Plant A Seed is that through coalitions and this new leadership strategy, I will successfully implement the online school program in Cameroon, impact over 600,000 children out of schools in the Anglophone region (Crawford, 2020), and reach students in other remote parts of the world.

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