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Leadership Competencies for Effective Social Innovation

John Gardner described leadership as “the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers.” Innovative leaders have been called “change masters” (Kanter), and the process is “transformative leadership” (Burns), “catalytic leadership” (Luke), “adaptive work” (Heifetz), and “effective change” (Kotter). All of these approaches emphasize collaboration and partnerships as key elements in creative change.

This paper reviews the literature on the change process. It argues that both transformational and transactional leadership are needed in order to effectively work with others. Leadership is both innate and can be learned. The Leadership Management Skill Set (Beinecke and Spencer, 2007), based on a study of leadership training programs in eight countries, sets out five leadership competency areas -- personal knowledge and skills, interpersonal (people skills), transactional skills, transformational skills, and policy and program knowledge – that are the bases for successful leadership, leadership training and innovative collaboration.