

EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATION

(Part 2)

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Because of the tightness schedule, I feel like we are just introducing us to the areas being presented. That's true of the concept of collaboration. I gave to you at the opening slide on Friday, the phrase "institutional collaboration as academy strategy" It is not a program, not a plan, not even a method, but a strategic way of nurturing and developing and moving us from this level to the next. I want to proceed now and develop what will be day 2 of this presentation.

At the close of our session on Friday, I shared with you several lessons that we had learned about collaboration at MVNC. I concluded with these thoughts: Using collaboration to manage change is challenging. A vision and need are required for success. Regular communication is the glue of collaboration. Active, committed leadership and a steering committee are required because collaborative relationships are high maintenance. Leadership is important. The greater the trust and communication the faster and the more profound is the benefit. I'll come back to that point in just a few minutes. And then I concluded by saying at MVNC that institutional collaboration must become institutional strategy.

I referred you to the last sheet in the booklet, which is really strategic initiative 9 of our decadel agenda for MVNC. Out of those four broad goals and the objectives that are identified, I said "We are serious about collaboration, collaboration with other Nazarene colleges, collaboration with schools in Ohio, other schools within the Church of the Nazarene, both nationally and internationally. We are very committed to the concept of collaboration. We're committed to

working with corporations and organizations that may not be Christian but at the same time, have something we need and we may have something that they need.”

I referred back to the statement on leadership “Leadership springs up at the intersection of personal passion and public need.” I asked the question “what are we passionate about as it relates to the institutions we serve.” We can talk about collaboration intellectually or we can talk about collaboration and working together but what are we passionate about? How can we move from an intellectual discussion to passionate resolve? I said at the close of the Friday session, our responses to others’ passion ought to be a WOW! I was including in that phrase a variety of affirmative first responses.

Today, I want us to move to applying collaboration to the Academy for International Education. You do remember in the e-mails from Al Truesdale he used this phrase, “the driving force behind the Academy is the desire to maximize access—key phrase—maximize access to the rich educational resources in the Church of the Nazarene.” On Friday we said there are various levels of intensity when we talk about collaboration. It can move from teamwork, which is far more informal, to cooperation and coordination that can be somewhat transitory, to the more defined term, collaboration.

If we could have an ideal among us it would be, I believe, that we would develop among our institutions of the Church of the Nazarene worldwide a culture of collaboration. I am so intense on understanding, in some measure, what it means to develop a culture of collaboration that on our own campus, we’re involved in a three-year study of looking at ourselves intra-institutionally and what does it mean within an institution to develop a mindset, a way of thinking, a culture of collaboration, working together, working outside one’s comfort zone or responsibility area.

Collaboration needs commitment. It needs leadership. It requires compromise, needs trust across individuals, is structured, and requires communication. In a few moments, I'll ask you to look at this list in a somewhat different way. If we had time, it would be good for us to take a few minutes and ask which of these bullets regarding collaboration jumps out at you as the greatest need within your institution or the institutions on your region? And which do you think will be the greatest challenges for us as an Academy of International Education for the Church of the Nazarene?

As I talked with you, it seems to me that the fourth bullet is one that we need to give attention to if we are serious about an Academy that develops as we have discussed it at this conference, the whole issue of trust, trust across individuals or among individuals within an institution and between institutions, within a country or within a region, and for sure denomination-wide. I thought about this issue of trust and went back and prepared a couple of slides on it. Unless we can face this head-on, we're not going to get very far, Al. Trust is at the heart of fostering collaboration. In fact, it is the central issue in the human relationship within and outside human organizations. Trust is not the same as liking people or being liked or getting my own way. Trust is about reliance and hope. Reliance that you will do what you said you will do and hope that we will achieve what we say we will achieve.

Questions arise, it seems to me, as we talk about collaboration or partnerships or alliances. Should the Academy for International Education (AIE) use collaboration to put flesh and bones on the concept of AIE? Can we apply collaborative experiences, such as MVNC's and other brick and mortar experiences, to a concept-based organization? Right now, the Academy is a concept, is it not? It's not located on a campus that you can identify.

I want us to come out of here with a resounding yes, we can. If the answer is yes, then what is the next step? Eleanor Roosevelt, United Nations delegate, wife of a U.S. president, said, “We must do the things we cannot do. The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” Whatever the problems may be about us finding ways of collaborating, networking, partnering together and building alliances as appropriate, it can be done. There is a way through this. If we’re committed to it happening, in God’s good time, as we work with each other, it can happen. What we have been discussing is a concept, a dream. It will not be easy and, in fact, appears impossible. But just because it’s impossible does not keep us from believing that, with God, there is a way through. With this mindset, we will find ways.

Friday I talked about the issue of assessment. That’s not a new word to educators. In fact, it’s a frustrating but a necessary word. When we talk about collaboration as AIE strategy, I’m talking about the necessity of assessment at every level, at the institutional level . . . these next two circles could be interchangeable or become one, either the national or the regional, according to the institution and the country. We must talk about assessing where we are, we talk about our need and the contributions we make, how we can break out of a narrow mindset to a much broader mindset. It will require assessment at each of these levels, particularly at the institutional level, the regional level, and at the AIE or global level.

In the book *Collaboration Handbook, Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey*, there is an approach to assessment that I’ve used – even with the pain that it brings to me. It’s an approach to assessment that includes what is called the factors of successful collaborative. When entities, individuals, institutions, schools or corporations, come together for the common good and mutual benefit of each or all, what have been those factors that have made the collaborative initiative successful? Those of you may recognize this profile as a SWOT analysis, an analysis of the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and threats. Any time you’re involved in

strategic planning, at some place you work through a grid like this to get at the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities, and the threats.

What about the environment? Is there a history of working together, touching each other, assisting each other? Have there been previous efforts at partnering, assisting each other, collaborating? What about the leadership on your campus? With the schools within your country? Or on your region? What about the leadership that will emerge or give assistance to the development of the Academy? Is there a favorable climate to working together? Is there hostility toward other members on the faculty or within the administration or to the regional theological coordinator or regional director? What is the climate within which you are working? Does it facilitate or inhibit collaboration?

Following the words favorable climate, I added the words, mutual respect. Is there mutual respect? When I use that phrase, mutual respect, mutual – where listening takes place. We're not going to get very far in this issue of collaboration unless there is mutual respect.

What about the climate within the institution you or I serve? What about the membership of those who work within our institution or institutions, what about the trust? Trust deals with reliance and hope and those words were defined, as I did a few minutes ago? What is the level of trust among us? What about the participation of the members, even if the member needs to express his or her self-interest or responsibility area? Are those with whom you work able to compromise? There's one style of leadership that says "my way or the highway." Wherever we are in our assignments and our responsibility areas, are we able to compromise, are we able to listen? Where would you score yourself and your colleagues within your institution, within your region, within the Academy?

What about the structure? Is the structure within your institution or on the region flexible enough for us to do what we say needs to be done or is it inhibiting, confining, restrictive? What about the structure within which we work? Are the roles and guidelines clear as it relates to structure?

What about communication? Is communication open and frequent? Is it one way, two ways or multiple ways? It seems to me the whole area of mutual listening comes in here. We must not simply say, "I cannot do that because . . ." In a way that expresses dignity to the discussion, we seek to communicate that at least we've understood. Try to paraphrase what it is they have said to us and in ways that are possible and appropriate, seek to at least take that to another level for discussion.

Purpose. Are the goals that are being outlined within the institution or the region, throughout the Academy, attainable? Is there a shared vision? Has it emerged from the discussion among us and the give and take and the compromise that is always a part of this discussion and others? What about the resources? Sufficient funds? Sufficient time? A skilled facilitator? Resources can mean different things but don't let the issue of insufficient funds automatically eliminate a good idea that comes along. If we've discussed anything here this week, it's that together we can do some things that not one of us could do individually.

We can talk conceptually about an Academy but we have to find strategic means and ways by which it really takes place. Collaboration becomes that strategic vehicle for us. But for it to work, these categories need to be addressed. Turn to page 13; probably page 14, that says "Institutional" at the top and the question, does our organization match with the factors of successful collaboratives? On the left-hand side are these categories that I just discussed and columns for high, medium and low. Rate your institution in the areas of environment, history,

leadership, climate, the membership, regarding trust, ability to compromise, is this structure flexible and have clear roles and guidelines? Is the communication open and frequent? Are there established links for communication?

Use this page to evaluate and assess where you are as an institution and where you are as a region. We will have to go through that same assessment as an Academy sometime.

Going back to AI's core statement, "the driving force behind the Academy is the desire to maximize access to the rich educational resources in the Church of the Nazarene." Look around this room and see the strengths that perhaps none of us thought we had before. I'm talking about the strength of personnel and people. When you think of those who are not here, administrators and faculty, we may have far more resources than we ever dreamed possible. Now how can we tap in and maximize those resources for the good of the Academy?

The second question is what key areas do we need to strengthen to maximize access? All of us have blind spots that need to be addressed, or we don't see things as clearly as we should. Talking about some of the problem areas or the areas that need to be strengthened in order for us to do what we want to do as an Academy is very important for us. We'll have to ask these questions as an Academy.

We've been asking this immediate question throughout the week with Mike We have been going through those lists. Tonight Mike will share a draft of reachable priority targets we can collaborate on to develop the Academy. I look forward to tonight. Not that it's going to bring closure. I think it's going to bring commitment. We're going to come to the end of this conference with three dots after the conference, which means to be continued. There will not be a period. We are working on this question.

By the way, it's also a good question to ask within an institution. Within your institution, what are the reachable priority targets where we can collaborate, where we can collaborate within our institution and between institutions on our region? When we talk about assessment and these categories or relating to these factors that I just mentioned, we need to continually be assessing. We need to be obsessive about assessment at each of these levels. As we assess ourselves institutionally, within our own institution, then we are ready to join hands with those within a region, within the Academy.

Remembering that collaboration starts one to one, and assuming that you are one of the two, then what can you do to enhance collaboration at your institution? I can look at the church. I can look at the Academy. I can look at the region. I can look at our institution and identify all the things that ought to be done. What can you do at your institution? It's a good first question. As we do that, it will lead beyond our institution, asking that question with other institutions.

Warren Benis, distinguished professor of business administration, University of Southern California, author of *Organized Organizing Genius* said, "None of us is as smart as all of us." In fact, I have this as my computer screen saver to remind me that my way is not the only way and sometimes, my way is not the best way. I'm not the only one who has a good idea or who has access to the Spirit of God working on our campus.

I talked to Leah about this African proverb that says, "When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." Would you tell us what that means?

Leah Marangu: Elephants are big animals, aren't they? When they tramp around, they don't ask the grass whether it is hurting or not. It just goes down. Therefore, it really means when the

powers are fighting, it is the grassroots people—the weak, the needy, the hungry, and the poverty stricken—who suffer. If you go to Kenya today, you’ll find that we have power shortage. The people who live near our state house are not hurting because the power is there all the time and the water is there all the time, but the rest of us are suffering.

LeBron Fairbanks: When the giants, or the power brokers, if you will, fight, it is the grassroots people who suffer. In my institution I applied that to my role as president and my cabinet of senior administrators. When we cannot get along and we tie up programs and projects because we can’t agree, who suffers? Faculty, staff, students.

Remember these scriptural passages as I close. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friends can help him up.” Listen to this. “The one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.” I like this. “A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” And this one, “Just as there are many parts to our body, so it is with Christ’s body. For we each have a different work to do. Each needs all the others.” God help us to embrace that, not just in our head, but in our heart and in our actions and reactions.

This morning, you quoted Helen Keller, I believe. I think this is an exact quote you wrote. “Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.” I caught that. I appreciate your sharing it with me and I quickly added it to this. That’s a mindset. That’s a way of the heart, a way of thinking, but far more, a way of living out what we believe. Remember the benefits of collaboration. Christian leaders who embrace and value collaborative approaches to ministry discover the power of involving others. The sum is so much greater than the parts. Being collaborative taps into the gifts of many people, fosters creativity, and achieves greater results.

What I've tried to say in these very short hours is that institutional collaboration can become Academy strategy. I hope and pray it will. May it be so, Lord.