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A FRAMEWORK OF FIVE TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES FOR CHURCH LEADERS IN THE DRC

ABSTRACT

What framework of transformational leadership competencies could guide the development of church leaders in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) with regard to the changes facing the church in South Africa in the 21st century? The article summarises the results of a Delphi research to find consensus on the formulated research question in a panel of 25 DRC leadership experts. Five competencies are formulated: spirituality, sense-making, visioning, relationships, and implementing. Spirituality in the agreed upon framework is characterised as biblical and missional. The competencies are linked to the so-called 4 Capability Framework of Leadership (Ancona). The authors show what is new and unique in the transformative framework for ministers in the DRC. One of these outcomes is a very strong link between spirituality and transformative leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in an age of contingency (Hermans 2019a; 2019b). Our world is in the grip of unforeseen, discontinuous change, and transformation. Science, changing economic realities, globalisation, education together with technological advances, and the digital

information revolution create circumstances in which people re-orient themselves towards long-held beliefs and ways of life. All of this contributes to an ongoing re-orientation towards both the content of the Christian faith and the way people want to experience and express their faith. Pastors from churches across the world face tremendous leadership challenges ministering the Christian faith to people in these tumultuous times.

Changes are taking place so rapidly that leaders need to regenerate and transform themselves, in order to keep abreast of the challenge of leading people spiritually in a new world. The understanding of being a believer and church in a changing world demands constant adaptation. This puts a huge responsibility on the leadership skills of pastors. Niemandt (2016:91) describes “missional leadership” as transformative¹ leadership. Missional leadership is

the Spirit-led transformation of people and institutions by means of meaningful relations to participate in God’s mission. Transformation is a vehicle for personal and institutional growth. It ignites and drives change, starting with the inner transformation of the leader, leading to the transformation of the church, as well as the context where the church finds itself.

Niemandt (2016:100-101) emphasises that missional leadership brings a dialogue between church, culture, and biblical narrative that could lead to transformation.

The research results discussed in this article relate to the specific historical and hermeneutical context of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa. It develops a theological theory on the subject of transformative leadership within the hermeneutic context and field of the DRC. This valuable research contributes to the broader dialogue on the need to develop transformative leadership in the church.

The research aimed to develop consensus on a theoretical framework of transformative leadership competencies for pastors in the DRC. It used the practice-oriented Delphi research methodology to develop consensus between leadership experts on a framework of transformative leadership competencies for pastors in the DRC. The practical knowledge obtained by using the Delphi research method resulted in an agreed upon framework of transformative leadership competencies. This consensus is an

1 The original research question used the concept of ‘transformational leadership’, but the Delphi results changed the concept to ‘transformative leadership’. This article uses the concept of ‘transformative leadership’.

important stepping stone towards developing a transformative leadership development curriculum and programme.

In this article, we start by describing the theoretical frame of leadership that inspired the development of the framework of competencies of church leaders (section 2). Next, we present the research design (section 3) and the results of the Delphi research (section 4). The article ends with a summary of the results and a discussion on new theoretical insights developed in this research (section 5).²

2. THE FOUR CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP

There are many theories on leadership. A review of recent theories (Avolio *et al.* 2009) mentions the following theories (without claiming to be comprehensive): authentic, cognitive, complexity, cross-cultural, transformational, transactional, shared, and servant. All theories focus on a core theme or marker of eminence in leadership. Some theories focus on a content perspective of what constitutes leadership (for example, authentic, transformational, or visionary); others focus on a process perspective (shared, complex, or strategic) (Avolio *et al.* 2009:442). Avolio and colleagues suggest, however, a growing trend towards a more holistic view on leadership, combining different components in an integrated structure of leadership. They also signal a growing interest in the development of leadership in an increasingly uncertain world. Leadership is never finished, but it is developing; it is not restricted to one person, but it is shared and collaborative.

In line with this trend, we did not choose one of the aforementioned theories of leadership, but opted to align with a holistic, open theory, namely the 4 Capability Leadership Framework of Ancona and her colleagues (Ancona 2005; Ancona *et al.* 2007; Ancona 2011).³ The underlying assumptions of their theory are:

Leadership is distributed. Leadership (...) should penetrate all levels.

Leadership is personal and developmental. There is not only one way to lead. The best way to create change is to work with the particular capabilities that you have, while constantly working to

2 The Delphi research is conducted by L. Venter as part of his PhD study. The author of this part of the research is L. Venter. The other parts of the research are the result of a joint authorship of Venter and Hermans.

3 Hereafter called the 4CAP Model.

improve and expand those capabilities: leaders need to develop their capabilities.

Leadership is a process to create change. Leaders may create change by playing a central role in the actual change process, or by creating an environment in which others are empowered to act.

Leadership develops over time. It is through practice, reflection, following role models, feedback, and theory that we learn leadership (Ancona 2005:1).

Capabilities refer to what leaders do and what can be developed over time. Capabilities differ from skills in the sense that they find their origin in interpretative practices (Winter 2012). Capabilities differ from traits (character) in the sense that they refer to what leaders do and practise (Ancona 2005:1). The capabilities framework views leadership as a set of four capabilities: sense-making (understanding the context in which a company and its people operate); relating (building relationships within and across organisations); visioning (creating a compelling picture of the future), and inventing (developing new ways to achieve the vision) (Ancona *et al.* 2007:2).

Sense-making and relating are described as enabling capabilities; visioning and inventing are creative and action-oriented capabilities (Ancona *et al.* 2007:2). Together, these capabilities span

the intellectual and interpersonal, rational and intuitive, conceptual and creative capacities of leaders. But no leader will be strong in all capacities (Ancona *et al.* 2007:3).

What is more, leaders need to balance different aims that do not always align with each other.

These capabilities can also create tensions that need to be managed. It is difficult to hold an image of the future and the present simultaneously. Balancing people and processes, action and understanding, individual and collective aspirations, can be challenging. Yet it is inherent in the framework that managing these very tensions is the essence of leadership (Ancona *et al.* 2007:3).

All leaders will be different, and each leader has a unique way to make change happen. Ancona (2005:2) calls this

their unique Change Signature – the leader’s credo and characteristic way of creating change. Each leader’s signature draws upon his or

her values, skills, experience, tactics, and personality to build trust, respect, and authenticity.

As stated earlier, the capability approach needs to be situated in the context of a changing, uncertain, and unpredictable world. In the capability framework, this is most strongly visible in the capability of sense-making.

Sensemaking is most often needed when our understanding of the world becomes unintelligible in some way. This occurs when the environment is changing rapidly, presenting us with surprises for which we are unprepared ... Adaptive challenges – those that require a response outside our existing repertoire (Ancona 2011:2).

The founding father of this concept of “sense-making” is Weick (2006; 2015). Sense-making refers to situations that are open to several interpretations. Sense-making is how we “structure the unknown so as to be able to act in it” (Ancona 2011:2).

In a more general sense, to grasp ambiguity is to adopt an attitude of wisdom. The essence of wisdom lies not in what is known but rather in the manner in which that knowledge is held and in how that knowledge is put to use. To be wise is not to know particular facts but to know without excessive confidence or excessive cautiousness. ... to remain somewhat wary, doubtful, and dubious, which means there is always some ambiguity woven into action (Weick 2015:123).

Sense-making is a mapping of the situation because of the future that wants to emerge, but at the same time understanding that this process of mapping is contingent, and unintelligible. This “contrasts sharply with our backward oriented theoretical propositions that depict that living as settled, causally connected, and coherent after-the-fact” (Weick 2006:1732).

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research question

The main question for the Delphi research is: What framework of transformational leadership competencies could guide the development of church leaders in the DRC with regard to the changes facing the church in South Africa in the 21st century?

The research aims to develop a list of transformational⁴ leadership competencies for pastors. A competency is defined as a combination of

4 The Delphi results led to the use of the concept of “transformative” instead of “transformational”.

ability, knowledge, and attitude that enable a person (or an organisation) to act effectively in a job or situation. According to Holt and Perry (2011), there is often confusion between the terms “capability” and “competence”, because they are very closely related to each other. They are linked and often used interchangeably. Capability is sometimes used to describe the ability of an organisation or organisational unit, but competence is always used to describe the ability of an individual to do something (Nagarajan & Prabu 2015:9). Others define competence as a combination of knowledge, experience, productive attitudes/attributes, and the right combination of functional and technical skills to make things happen (Campion *et al.* 2011).

3.2 Delphi purposive sample

We selected a purposive sample to participate in the Delphi study, because Delphi participants should be highly trained and competent in the specialised area of knowledge related to the chosen topic (Hsu & Sandford 2007:3). Expert participants were selected from different perspectives and positions in the DRC, namely 12 participants from the Western Cape and 13 from other parts of the country. Ten are academic practical theologians:

- Four practical theologians from Stellenbosch University’s Faculty of Theology.
- Four practical theologians from the the University of Pretoria’s Faculty of Theology .
- Two practical theologians from the University of the Free State’s Faculty of Theology and Religion in Bloemfontein.

Five are influential synodical leaders:

- Two participants are positional synodical leaders with specialised knowledge of leadership.
- Three participants are leadership consultants from *Communitas* and *Ekklesia*.

Ten innovative Congregational pastors:

- Ten innovative Congregational pastors with specialised knowledge of congregational leadership from different parts of the country.

3.3 The Delphi research method

The Delphi technique is a research method for consensus-building, using a series of questionnaires to collect data from a panel of selected subjects. It employs multiple rounds designed to develop a consensus concerning a specific topic (Hsu & Sanford 2007:1). In the Delphi research method,

the participants are part of the development process over an extended period of time. Participants can rephrase or change their minds and engage with other participants in a constructive manner without being intimidated by any other participant, because each participant has enough time to analyse other participants' contributions and can make his/her contribution anonymously (Hsu & Sandford 2007:1-18).

The Delphi procedure is guided by three characteristics. *Anonymity* protects the Delphi results from the influences of group conformity, prestige, power, and politics. *Iteration* sees the Delphi procedure taking place over several rounds, allowing individuals to change their opinion. *Controlled feedback* ensures that the results of previous rounds are fed back to the participants. In addition to these three, the fourth core characteristic of the Delphi methodology is that of *Statistical group response*, which asserts that all participants are equally represented in the findings. This is a crucial characteristic of ensuring participants' trust and full engagement in the research process (DeVet *et al.* 2005).

In the actual process of the Delphi, we offered the participants, in the first round, Osmer's (2008) definition of transformational leadership. Osmer is a well-known author in South Africa, and we expected that all participants were familiar with his work. This is a knowledge elicitation technique in qualitative research, which is commonly used in both policy research and consumer research. To elicit the insight and feedback from participants, we presented them with the sample definition by Osmer and asked them to comment on it.

In the first Delphi round, we started with an open round, in which respondents could create their lists of transformational leadership competencies. We analysed the feedback and, from the second round onwards, we clustered the respondents' feedback on the transformational leadership competencies in a proposed competency framework.

3.4 Design of Delphi analysis

In an open-ended round one, the participants made their initial contributions to each question. The task of the Delphi researcher is to consolidate the answers of the participants, remove the duplicates, unify the terminology, as well as develop and refine a consolidated list. In round two, the participants received the consolidated list on which they have to comment, criticise, and indicate on a Likert scale whether they agree with it or not.

From the second round onwards, the Delphi participants were afforded the opportunity to mark their agreement/disagreement on a 5-point Likert

scale. The researcher measured the level of consensus between the participants and weighed the comments of participants to build towards a greater agreement. The goal was to analyse the feedback of the participants from rounds one and two and develop proposals that will achieve a 75% consensus between participants.

4. THE DELPHI RESEARCH RESULTS

The main research question of the Delphi research was: What framework of transformational leadership competencies could guide the development of church leaders in the DRC with regard to the changes facing the church in South Africa in the 21st century?

4.1 Connection to the 4 Capability Leadership Framework Model

In the first round of the Delphi research, one participant's feedback was rather comprehensive and insightful and strongly resembles Ancona *et al.*'s 4CAP Model:

(Osmer's) definition contains the four components that are distinguished in theories of leadership:

1. Essence-oriented aspects – These relate to the person, character, identity, and integrity of the leader.
2. Relational aspects – Good leadership always has good relationships.
3. Constructive aspects – These make sense in a specific context.
4. Prophetic aspects – To create an alternative future based on historical sources (Participant 16).

The researcher (Venter) interpreted participant 16's feedback as resonating strongly with the MIT 4CAP Model of Ancona.⁵ We interpret "relational aspects" as referring to the capability of "relationships" in the 4CAP Model; "Constructive aspects" (quote "make sense in a specific context") was interpreted as referring to "sense-making" in the 4CAP Model. Lastly, the reference to "prophetic aspects" was interpreted as

5 In the discussion, we will compare the specific elaboration of the 4CAP Model in the context of our research (i.e. church) with the more general notions used by Ancona and her colleagues.

including both the two capabilities visioning and inventing, both of which relate to the ability to create an alternative future from the current situation.

We added one component, which we labelled spirituality, to the 4CAP Model. This respondent did not use the term “spirituality” when he referred to “essence-oriented aspects”, *i.e.* to the unique, personal expression of the leader’s personality and his/her personal development and relationship with God. Many other respondents used the term “spirituality”. We thus chose to use this term that seems to reflect the mindset of our respondents.

In round two, we proposed a transformative leadership competency framework, based on the 4CAP Model, to the participants, with the addition of spirituality as a competence. We called the proposal to Delphi participants a “competency framework”, instead of a “capability framework”. It was a deliberate choice, as the research was aimed at developing insight on what knowledge, skills, and training individual pastors need in order to become effective transformative leaders. There is often confusion between the terms “capability” and “competence”, as they are inherently very closely related to each other (Holt & Perry 2011:5). We followed Nagarajan & Prabhu’s (2015:9) definitions for capability and competence:

Capability is sometimes used to describe the ability of an organisation or organisational unit. However, competence is always used to describe the ability of an individual to do something.

4.2 Spirituality

In the Delphi research, the respondents strongly suggested that spirituality is a foundational transformative leadership competence for DRC pastors. However, reaching an agreement on how to define the competence of spirituality was much more complicated. The participants reached consensus on the following definition for spirituality as a leadership competency:

1. Christian spirituality is a relationship with and obedience to Jesus Christ, a commitment to the community of believers and the kingdom of God, with a life-changing consciousness of the transformational work and presence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. This vital relationship with, and commitment to Jesus Christ is life-changing, transforming, and creates community.
3. Spirituality takes the spiritual leader at the crossroads of the eternal perspective of the present Christ and the historical perspective of people in their current context. Therefore, the main task and the outcome of the spirituality of a spiritual leader is wisdom or discernment.

4. Christian spirituality develops emotional maturity, wisdom, a new life-style, and a kingdom-oriented attitude in spiritual leaders.
5. Christian spirituality is a core competency that precedes and feeds all transformational leadership competencies of Christian leaders.

We achieved a 100% agreement in round three on the definition of the leadership competency of spirituality (84% strongly agree).

Spirituality is marked by a strong commitment to a living and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A spirituality that characterises transformative leaders should have a Christological foundation.

I would like to base (the definition) much stronger Christologically. It's about a deep living relationship with Jesus, about a commitment to Him that characterizes a transformative leader's life and spirituality. To simply speak of God and leave the Christological foundation is to miss the deep connection of the New Testament church to the person and work of Jesus. (Participant 1)

Secondly, this relationship with Jesus is life-changing and creates community: *“slightly more active engagement with God, rather than just a rational awareness of God's presence”*. (Participant 13)

The third component refers to discernment at the intersection of the eternal perspective of the present Christ and the historical context of people. In the proposed spirituality of transformative leaders, this discernment is connected to a *sense of calling* to serve the kingdom of God. The space of the kingdom opens a view of God's future which is much larger than the boundaries of the church.

The kingdom (not the church) is the space within which the spiritual leader is living. It is often the boundaries of the church that inhibits spiritual leaders' consciousness of God, their sense of calling, their view of God's future. Faith discernment without a kingdom perspective is inadequate. (Participant 19)

Finally, spirituality is the basis of, and influences all other transformative leadership competencies in the church.

4.3 Sense-making

Ancona (2011:2) defines sense-making as the way we “structure the unknown so as to be able to act in it”. The Delphi participants agreed with this definition, although they defined sense-making in their specific context from a theological perspective. For them, sense-making is an analysis of the context, but also a connection of the real (changing) world

experience of believers with the insights gained by discerning the Word of God. Sense-making thus includes analysing the Bible and making connections between the biblical truths and the analyses of the (changing/shifting) social and historical context of the congregation.

The Delphi participants reached consensus on the following definition for sense-making as a leadership competency:

1. Sense-making is the hermeneutical ability or skill of a transformative leader to present clear links between the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Bible text) and the local context in which the faith community finds them.
2. The hermeneutical skill of sense-making connects the biblical insights that are discovered in discernment with other believers in the work and presence of God in the daily real world of the community of faith.
3. The leader develops insight into what it means to follow Jesus Christ and serve the kingdom of God in the context of the local religious community, by practising faith practices and disciplines, experimental action, the crossing of boundaries (boundary-crossing) along with on-going discerning practices with other believers.
4. The leader shows emotional maturity, cognitive skills, inductive and deductive reasoning, personal adaptability, a team approach, good relations, and a well-developed intuition as part of his/her ability to develop, in a team, a meaningful and understandable analysis of the local life context of the community of faith from the Bible.
5. The leader can develop an energising and transforming vision from an analysis of the Bible and the local context.

In Delphi round three, it was remarkable that 100% of the participants strongly agree with the definition of sense-making.

We now discuss some of the remarks and comments from the respondents on the proposed definition of the competency of sense-making.

The characteristic of making sense of the local context is hermeneutical. Transformative leaders have the hermeneutical ability to connect the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the local life context of the community of faith. Sense-making is a leadership competency done with others, discerning the will of God in the world.

To develop sensemaking charts and action plans on your own (as suggested in the definition) in which others should engage in a personal and community-transforming level, sounds too much like modernist leadership where the leader is still the great expert.

They must involve the right people in teams that can help lead.
(Participant 1)

Sense-making is about reading the text of the Bible and relating it with the context of real life. To be able to analyse the local context from the Bible, transformative leaders must have emotional maturity, cognitive skills, inductive and deductive reasoning, personal adaptability, a team approach, good relations, and well-developed intuition. The fourth component focuses on the necessary conditions of the hermeneutical ability of leaders. It is not that easy and is lacking in pastors most of the time.

In terms of 'sensemaking and analysis of the context', I see how pastors struggle with this. There is enough Biblical knowledge, but the ability to make hermeneutical connections between 'text' and context/'co-text' is inadequate. A core skill of a transforming leader is to have hermeneutical skills. This may be obvious, but in practice, it is not so. (Participant 11)

The skill of using the Bible and the tradition of the church to analyse the context is essential.

This understanding must be framed within the two primary deontological sources of our faith (Scripture and Christian tradition). Without these aspects being firmly entrenched, the leader may offer social, political, or communal leadership. However, it will lack the critical aspect of being spiritual leadership (participating in leading the congregation to partner with God in the *missio Dei*).
(Participant 13)

In the development of a transforming vision, the hermeneutical process of analysing the Bible and context is essential.

4.4 Visioning

The Delphi research identified vision as a transformative leadership competency closely linked with spirituality and sense-making. It describes the leader's ability to develop a clear vision with other believers on the concrete implications of the calling of God for the congregation in their local context.

The Delphi participants reached consensus on the following definition for visioning as a leadership competency:

1. Visioning is the skill and ability of a transformative leader to develop a clear vision with other believers on the work and calling of God in, and for the local religious community.

2. Visioning articulates the community of faith's commitment to follow Jesus Christ and their calling to serve God's kingdom in the local context.
3. The Word, sacraments, and work of the Holy Spirit form an integral part of the formation, maintenance, and realisation of the vision.
4. Visioning is prophetic, identity-forming, future-oriented, and focuses on the vocation and mission of Jesus, and it brings the community of faith obedience in motion.
5. The vision of the leader is communicated and embodied with understanding, compassion, conviction, and love.
6. The transformative leader creates and maintains a vision that becomes shared, embodied, familiar, and an energising language field in the community of faith.

In Delphi round three, 96% (88% strongly agreed) of the respondents agreed with the following definitions of the competency of vision.

The first characteristic of visioning is the connection to the work and calling of God in, and for the local community. Leaders do this in cooperation with other believers.

Secondly, a vision is to be open to God. It is the ability to translate this openness to the kingdom of God in language and share it with other people.

Is the openness to the future of God. Language is indeed the key. It creates metaphorical openness to God's kingdom; it bridges strangeness. (Participant 1)

Thirdly, vision also requires formation and maintenance. This is voiced in the fact that the Word, the sacraments, and the Spirit play a role in creating vision.

- The fourth component stresses the fact that a vision is more than simply language and must bring people in motion.

If you cannot describe new realities or dreams, or name it, it is difficult to conceptualize it. You have taken the believers on a journey. In other words, it is more than just language. It is about to come in motion. A transformative leader has the characteristics of Moses and Nehemiah, bringing people into motion. (Participant 2)

Finally, visioning must become shared, embodied, familiar, and an energising language field.

4.5 Relationships

The fourth transformative leadership competency, on which the Delphi participants reached consensus, is the ability of the transformative leader to develop loving, meaningful, constructive, influential, and energising relationships with others in the community of faith. The competency to build transformative personal relationships is a critical differentiating factor that influences success or failure in congregational ministry. In these interpersonal relationships, the pastor needs to be able to understand and manage his/her feelings and those of others and be able to motivate themselves and others.

The Delphi participants reached consensus on the following definition for relationships as a transformative leadership competency:

1. A core competency of a transformative leader is to develop loving, meaningful, constructive, influential, and energising relationships with others.
2. The transformative leader serves and leads the community of faith as the body of Christ to shape their common faith commitment and commitment to Jesus Christ and service in the kingdom of God.
3. A transformative leader develops collaborative relationships and coalitions (leader teams) for change. (Collaboration.)
4. A transformative leader communicates the will of God (vision/ advocacy) prophetically without condemnation and ridicule of people.
5. A transformative leader is highly visible, reassuring, and encouraging with people.
6. A transformative leader develops teams and partnerships, builds mutual relations as well as relations across borders, and empowers people to take ownership of change.
7. A transformative leader creates a healthy emotional climate, in which people can make internal changes and transitions.
8. A transformative leader develops and nurtures loving relationships with all people.

In round three, 100% (96% strongly agreed) of the respondents agreed with the definition of the competency relationships.

First, developing relationships is a core competence of leaders. The relationships competency is crucial in the community of faith, due to its link with the status of the believers as the body of Christ.

We can hardly talk about relationships without talking about the koinonia and community in Christ. The core skills of leaders of faith communities are embedded within a particular koinonia. (Participant 4)

Secondly, the competency of relationships encompasses both internal and external relationships.

The leader can build these relationships with (church) members as well as people in the community, building a bridge to the community. (Participant 25)

Thirdly, leaders need to develop relationships that are collaborative and focused on coalitions for change.

I think that internal collaboration is essential i.e., that a leader will “support” her or his weaknesses from among the team. However, external collaboration is also critical, an ecumenical engagement that draws on the unique strengths and positioning of various stakeholders in the Christian community, and perhaps even in civil society and other faith-based organizations. (Participant 13)

Fourthly, emotional intelligence is vital for relationships. Leaders create a healthy emotional climate in which a change of heart is facilitated and made possible.

Empathy is important for relationships. Emotional intelligence is critical. The leader takes the best out of people. Extract best out of people. (Participant 12)

4.6 Implementing

The fifth and last transformative leadership competency on which the Delphi participants reached consensus is the creative and action-oriented ability of the transformative leader to make things happen, to make difficult decisions, to develop and maintain structures and systems that let change happen.

The Delphi participants reached consensus on the following definition for implementation as a transformative leadership competency:

1. The competency of implementation means that the transformative leader shows an action orientation, the ability to make effective decisions with others, a focus on implementation, and a willingness to take risks.

2. A transformative leader takes effective, common, and shared decisions and action steps to actualise the vision of the religious community that is determined by discernment within the context of the church.
3. A transformative leader translates the vision of the community of faith in concrete goals that could regularly be evaluated in discernment in light of the vision.
4. A transformative leader creates a culture of consent to others to make decisions and take action. Implicit in the ability of implementation and action is the principle of distributed leadership, in which people are empowered to embody the vision of the community of faith in their context.
5. A transformative leader creates a shared set of values that empower, facilitate, and guide decision-making and action by the community of faith.
6. A transformative leader develops a culture of accountability in the community of faith as followers of Jesus Christ.

In round three, 100% (84% strongly agreed) of the respondents agreed with the definition of the competency of implementing.

First, action orientation and decision-making are vital for transformative leadership.

I agree that a measure of risk aversion is necessary for strong leadership. It requires both courage and wisdom. Courage is essential to break with the norm and approach a situation or problem in a new and unexpected manner. Wisdom is needed both to “bring the congregation along” (and nurture them in that process), but also to avoid danger. (Participant 13)

Secondly, action is needed to make the vision a reality. This process of actualisation is determined by discernment.

Safety is important for a leader. Members and stakeholders must feel safe to take the initiative, make decisions, dare, and feel safe enough to make mistakes. (Participant 19)

Thirdly, the vision must be broken down into action steps.

The leader translates the vision into concrete, achievable goals that are reviewed with regular evaluation in the light of the vision. (Participant 25)

The leader holds people accountable for agreed action steps and responsibilities. (Participant 6)

Fourthly, implementing is a competency that is distributed in a team. Sometimes others in the team may be better at implementing than the leader.

It is about a team where designated persons sometimes take the lead, in terms of competence, and others in other contexts. Depending on people's talent, it will indeed take a whole team to shape these points effectively. (Participant 1)

Fifthly, implementation is based on a shared set of values. A shared vision is developed and implemented, and decision-making takes place in that context.

All activities are right and good, but effective decision making often takes place based on a shared set of values or rules. Within the context of a Reformed Church, something like the Church Order, Church Council, or whatever you want to call it, plays a certain role – it determines the limits of the mandate of decision-making. (Participant 4)

Lastly, accountability is essential for implementation. “The leader holds people accountable for agreed action steps and responsibilities.” (Participant 6)

5. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this last section, we summarise the result of the Delphi research. What is the agreed upon framework of competencies of transformative leadership? (5.1). Next, we discuss what this research contributes to the development of a theory on spirituality and leadership. First, we characterise the kind of spirituality voiced in the agreed upon framework as biblical and missional (5.2). We elaborate on how the other competencies of leadership are grounded by spirituality (5.3), and finally illustrate what is new in our framework compared to the generic 4CAP Model (5.4).

5.1 Five competencies of transformative leadership

The agreed upon framework of transformative leadership resulted in five competencies. The first competency that precedes and grounds all other competencies is Christian spirituality. This is defined as a personal relationship with, and obedience to Jesus, which is life-changing, transforming, and creates community. The main ability or task of spirituality is discernment.

To grow in discernment, leaders need to develop emotional maturity, wisdom, a new lifestyle, and a kingdom-oriented attitude.

Sense-making is the second core competency. It is the hermeneutical ability of a transformative leader to present clear links between following Jesus Christ and the local context of the community of faith. Discernment practices with other believers play a crucial role in sense-making. Sense-making is both discernment of faith, meaning interpreting the Word of God, and understanding what is happening in the world and the local communities.

The third transformative leadership competency of visioning describes the leader's competency to develop a clear vision with other believers on the concrete implications of the *calling of God for the local congregation*. Visioning is more than simply ideas; it must move persons to action. The transformative leader creates and maintains a vision that becomes shared, embodied, familiar, and creates an energising language field in the community of faith.

The fourth competency is the ability of the transformative leader to develop loving, meaningful, constructive, influential, and energising relationships with others in the community of faith. This competency is a critical differentiating factor that influences success or failure in congregational ministry. In interpersonal relationships, the pastor needs to be able to understand and manage his/her feelings and those of others and to motivate themselves and others.

The fifth competency is implementing, which is both creative and action oriented. Transformation requires effective leaders that can implement change strategies, in order to overcome obstacles and challenges and realise the vision of a congregation. The competency of implementation requires that leaders be able to innovate, discover new possibilities, explore ways to innovate, challenge pre-existing paradigms, tap into existing creativity or drawing it out from others, and create an environment that supports creativity and innovation.

5.2 A biblical and missional spirituality

What kind of spirituality is voiced in the agreed upon framework of transformative leadership? In this section, we characterise this spirituality as biblical and missional. Both markers intersect, in the sense that biblical implies missional, and missional implies biblical. We conceptualise biblical spirituality in line with Waaijman (2010), and missional spirituality in line with Doornenbal (2012) as well as with Helland and Hjalmarson (2011).

Being a learner and disciple of Jesus is characterised as a willingness to learn and openness to transformation. “Personal knowing and inner transformation is the most difficult part to master and teach of a transformative missional spirituality.” (Niemandt 2016:92). Christian spirituality may be viewed as an inward and personal journey, but it has profound social implications. Moltmann (1973:63) insists that Christian spirituality is not a private issue:

to be crucified with Christ is no longer a purely private and spiritualized matter, but develops into a political theology of the following of the crucified Christ.

The core task or ability is discernment.⁶

According to Waaijman (2010:32), biblical spirituality refers to

all the histories and texts that together form the Judeo-Christian traditions, of which the Scriptures and their reception form the backbone and which require adequate hermeneutics.

Biblical spirituality is characterised by four markers that distinguish it from other types of spirituality. First, biblical spirituality, naturally linked to the disciplines of the same name by its literary and historical dimension, gives depth and direction to literary-historical research and can, in this sense, be called “constitutive” (Waaijman 2010:20).

Secondly, the core notion of “experience” in spirituality is given much more content and concretion in biblical spirituality than is possible from a contemporary-synchronous perspective. Biblical spirituality offers the critical broadening of what Waaijman (2010:21) calls the “other” reading of texts and biographies. This is a kind of reading in which readers as persons are touched and transformed by the experience of God’s mystical presence in the reading of biblical and spiritual texts.

Thirdly, biblical spirituality interprets the notions of meaning-making in a specific sense of “unlocking of new, unexpected meaning by constantly reading and rereading, interpreting and reinterpreting” (Waaijman 2010:22). The basis of this marker of biblical spirituality lies in the mystery of God. We do not get a hold of it: “it presents itself as the all-encompassing and enduring mystery; we can speak to it, but not really talk about it” (Waaijman 2010: 22). By constantly reading and rereading biblical texts in new and different contexts, we deepen our understanding of the mystery of God.

Fourthly, biblical spirituality offers an alternative critical-positive attitude towards “tradition”, compared to the abstract-negative relationship to

6 See Hermans & Anthony, in this journal.

“tradition” as cultivated in enlightened modernity. This intersects with missional spirituality. “The Bible has a continuing, converting, formative role in the life of the community” (Doornenbal 2012:211).

Besides biblical spirituality, the type of spirituality voiced in the framework of transformative can be characterised as missional. Based on his study of the international missional movement, Doornenbal (2012:213) provides the following definition of missional spirituality:

Missional spirituality, then, is a spirituality that forms and feeds mission. It is about ‘an attentive and active engagement of embodied love for God and neighbor expressed from the inside out’, and it involves ‘compassionate identification, participation, and companionship with those suffering under sin, oppression, injustice, exclusion, and despair.

First, missional spirituality forms and feeds mission. In the words of Helland and Hjalmarson (2011:239-240): “Spiritual disciplines will form us and doing the Father’s work in community will feed us.” Leaders need disciplines of spiritual formation and disciplines of engagement in communal practices. At present, the urgent questions are, therefore, not centred on how to prepare preachers. It is more important to ask:

How do we equip leaders who will also equip others in what it means to love God from all one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love one’s neighbour as oneself? (Doornenbal 2012:249).

Missional spirituality is defined by the movement from “inside out”. In our framework, this is expressed in the fact that it grounds all other competencies.

Secondly, there are two key elements in our relationship with Christ: love and obedience (Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:959). Leaders learn to love as they practise love. For us, the love of Christ is not a mere morality; it is a way of life. In obedience, leaders learn to love, as they practise love.

Thirdly, missional spirituality implies

to be incarnational missionaries in their communities and workplaces who know how to exegetize and engage culture and live the gospel in deed and word (Doornenbal 2012:216).

In missional spirituality, there is a strong connection between understanding the gospel and engagement in culture and community (Matthey 2010). This is clearly expressed in the hermeneutical ability which transformative leaders need to have. They need to present clear links between the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Bible text) and the local context.

5.3 Spirituality as grounding other competencies

Missional spirituality is defined by the movement from “inside out”. In this principle lies the foundation that all other competencies are grounded in spirituality. All competencies are embedded in the leaders in a personal relationship of love and obedience to Jesus Christ and serving the kingdom of God. This element is incorporated in the competencies of sense-making, visioning, and relationships, as a thread that unites these competencies. The main task and outcome of the spirituality of a transformative leader is discernment. This element returns in the competencies of sense-making and implementing.

Sense-making takes place in a community of followers called by the Spirit on a journey of discernment. The practice of spirituality leads us into participation with the triune God, who informs and guides our discernment and sense-making that guides us into decisions, actions, habits, and culture-making.

The pastor/leader is responsible for seeking, discerning, and articulating a vision. Herein lies the connection with the transformative competency of spirituality. The pastor/leader should seek God’s guidance with other believers in following Jesus Christ and serving the kingdom. Classic spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, solitude, fasting, and reflection could bring the pastor into the right place to begin hearing God’s desires. The pastor/leader should also listen to people’s needs, become familiar with the community around the church, and talk with the members about their values and core beliefs. S/he needs to pray about the needs s/he observes and discerns individually and with others, waiting for clarity.

Transformative leaders exemplify helpfulness, respect, and cooperation, as they, by their actions, draw others into an active, enthusiastic commitment to the collective effort. Relationships are grounded on their common faith commitment, a commitment to Jesus Christ, and service in the kingdom of God. Not religious knowledge, not rational theology, but deeply grounded, embodied spirituality is the basis for transformative leadership.

The competency of implementation is strongly linked with the competencies of spirituality, sense-making, and visioning, as it refers to the actual response of the pastor and congregation to make sense of the calling of God in specific circumstances. It refers to the willingness to re-think assumptions and practices, to experiment and fail, and to take action within the framework of a clear vision and guiding values.

5.4 What is new in our framework of transformative leadership?

What distinguishes our framework of transformative leadership for ministers from the generic competencies of leadership in the 4CAP Model? We claimed that the 4CAP Model was open to interpretation from the specific organisational context of churches. What is the uniqueness of our framework compared to the generic competencies in the 4CAP Model? Or, to put it differently, what did our research add to the theory of leadership in the 4CAP Model?

First, the relationship between spirituality and leadership is completely absent in the 4CAP Model, while in our framework, it is the basis of all competencies of leadership.

Secondly, sense-making in the 4CAP Model is oriented towards multiple sources of information and engaging others in mapping the situation. What we added to this competence is the hermeneutical ability to “exegetise” both the gospel and the local context in which communities live. In the 4CAP Model, Ancona (2007:4) advises leaders to “not simply apply existing frameworks, but instead be open to new possibilities”. To see new possibilities, one needs to have the hermeneutical skill to read the gospel and context in a mutually critical way.

Thirdly, visioning in the 4CAP Model concerns creating a vision about something that inspires one (Ancona 2007:6). The vision needs to be shared and embodied. This is also included in our framework of the transformative leadership of ministers. What is new in our framework is the reference to being called in a double sense: to follow Jesus Christ and to serve the kingdom of God. The 4CAP Model does not answer the question “Where does a vision come from?”. Our framework states that visioning comes from beyond and above: it is a calling from God.

Fourthly, the capability of relationships in the 4CAP Model is focused on developing key relationships in organisations and listening to others with an open mind and without judgement. This is also incorporated in the framework of transformative leadership. There is one major difference: our framework puts relationships between leaders and members of the church on a common ground, namely a joint commitment to Jesus Christ and serving the kingdom of God.

Finally, we did not use the concept “inventing”. Instead, we used the concept “implementing”. Inventing in the 4CAP Model is “what moves a business from the abstract world of ideas to the concrete reality of implementing” (Ancona 2007:7). Ancona wanted to stress the creative aspect of the process of implementing and, therefore, chose the label

“inventing”. Our framework stressed the same process under the label “implementing”. Implementing refers to the creative and action-oriented ability of the transformative leader to make things happen, to make difficult decisions, to develop and maintain structures and systems that allow change to happen.

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