

# **On the Effects of ELP**

## **Selected Comments from Four Classes of Fellows**

**October 2007**

Below are Fellows' own words about the program's impact, what they learned, how they've applied that learning, and what others see in them as a result of their participation. These statements were selected from a considerably larger pool of statements drawn from end-of-year assessments (four graduated classes) and a longitudinal survey completed by members of the first class. Altogether there are 98 quotes (20 ELP1, 26 ELP2, 26 ELP3, 26 ELP4) from 50 Fellows (6 ELP1, 13 ELP2, 17 ELP3, 14 ELP4). Feedback from ELP 5 and ELP6 classes are entirely consistent with that from earlier classes and will be incorporated into successive versions of this document.

### **1. The Programme As a Whole**

I have been exposed to a number of leadership programmes before ELP. With ELP this is the first time I have been exposed to a fully integrative programme that does not just focus on leadership as a theory but looks at the whole person, not only in terms of the importance of personal renewal but in terms of the congruence between personal and public values in general: the linkage between your own thinking and what the public would expect.

The focus on Public Values by this Program was a new dimension to the many other leadership programs I have attended before. Transformational leadership cannot take place in societies where Public Values are non-existent, ignored or used at convenience. The sharing of experiences amongst the fellows also provided a new dimension in that we need not look far for answers.

For me, ELP is one of a number of influences on my career path and the focus of my leadership. I think what stands out for me, is my learning about how to 'hold a line' in the midst of a difficult situation where others are not in agreement with me, without making them wrong. This has been a gradual learning, but a seed was sown in this area at ELP for me.

The program had many strong points, its multinational participants, the vast range of experience and abilities represented by fellows and mentors, the South Africa setting of the retreats, the emphasis on leadership couples, the extremely capable staff, and the substantial leadership of Jim Joseph.

This program met and/or exceeded any expectations I had going in. It served as the most transformational experience I have ever had. I have come to understand that a study of and commitment to servant and transformational leadership requires nothing less than complete commitment to those principles throughout all areas of your life - you become a servant leader in your personal, social and professional lives. The programme provides an all-encompassing experience from which you emerge, more whole, more strong, more determined, clear and focused than you were going in.

It is a unique leadership program- different from rest of market.

The fellowship came at a really crucial time in my life. I was transitioning and trying to identify what was important to me and what kind of leader I wanted to be. This experience has profoundly changed my life and given me the ability to move forward with purpose and meaning.

[L]eadership is not only about being technically competent but to also have a clear moral center. A way of behaving that draws people to you because they know you will do what you say you will do and that you will keep confidences.

The ELP goal was to help enhance the capacity of promising emerging leaders to contribute and transform their communities through personal reflection, personal renewal and action based on a values based set of principles. Goal achieved.

The programme was holistically focused bringing into perspective both personal and professional growth aspects with a clear emphasis on leadership and public values. The coaching element of the programme was immensely valuable in reinforcing the key teachings of the retreats and highlighting the power of reflection and discernment in leadership.

The Programme exposes a person to a different approach to leadership. You have to put yourself in shoes of others and see the world through others' eyes. One's whole approach is informed by having a better understanding of people....The Programme also made one have a different look at oneself. I have changed my approach to life. At end of each day I have to reflect on my thoughts and actions during the course of day - based on this I am able to take any corrective measures or make adjustments.

I think the opportunity to spend time with influential ethical leaders and gain insight to their lives and the challenges they had faced was inspirational and life altering. I certainly had a good look at where I wanted to make a difference.

By far, the most holistic leadership development program. US-SA linkage. Emphasis on values and ethics is unique.

All the aspects of one's life were addressed in the context of leadership and public values – civil society, public service and business.

The most fulfilling leadership program I have ever been in.

I think that the integrity of the program, quality of instructors, concept of ELP is one of the best programs I have ever been involved in.

The Program is unique in supporting the development of the whole person as a leader. The inclusion of the coaching is a strong element of the program. Also, the program gives us tools to be better leaders, while encouraging us to find our own answers and role as leaders.

The Programme is unique in its kind in that it is structured in an unconventional way, addressing areas generally regarded as 'soft' in the cut-throat environment of management and leadership.

It is holistic, integrative, and relevant for the South African context.

The programme provided a solid foundation for personal growth and leadership development. It was the beginning of a life-long learning experience.

It was the best leadership programme I've been a part of.

The coaching element especially made the program relevant and kept the lessons and theories of leadership alive for me. Also, the program came at a critical moment for me professionally and

personally, helped me put language around the leadership model that I was working toward, and helped me establish goals for the development of my leadership.

I think it's a great program and much thought has been given to the various components. I especially like the emphasis on public values and on personal renewal. Most leadership programs focus on skill and what I like about ELP is its focus on character.

Well organized, unique, life-equipping

The program was excellent in exposing(?) me to the dilemmas, opportunities, challenges, and benefits of values based leadership.

It had clearly articulated objectives around leadership and public values, which were delivered with a good balance of theory and practical insights from experienced practitioners and the value add of coaches and mentors was a bonus.

I had a life-changing year based on the knowledge and experience I gained through the programme. The quality of the coaching, self reflection and threaded discussions have all helped me to reflect, change and grow.

The benefits are understanding the role and responsibility of leadership, the growth & support from coaching and mentoring, the fellowship with other people participating, the sense of belonging to something big and worthwhile for the rest of your life, which comes with knowing that when in serious trouble, someone will always be there for you.

I would strongly encourage [others to apply to ELP], pointing to the retreat mentoring, interaction with other Fellows, networking, specific leadership themes, and...coaching aspects [which are] potentially quite beneficial.

## **2. Lessons/Learning**

The principles of transformative leadership apply equally in business as well as the public sector. The importance of discerning feedback and journaling it regularly. The purpose of organization can't be measured with profit only – there is a need for multiple measures.

...[I]t is difficult and not really authentic to draw firm lines between your personal self and professional self;...I am more effective when I am at peace with who I am as a person;...being fully present in all situations opens up many opportunities.

To trust self and others, delegate and devolve power. Put my life and leadership constantly on a mirror and reflect on these.

That leadership can only be effective when used as means to serve others. That in order for one to be an effective leader, one should take care of oneself holistically, i.e. mind, body and spiritual.

Treating people as whole beings by engaging others as thinking partners, through good listening skills and creating thinking environments. Valuing feedback and using it to improve on service delivery.

Ubuntu was the most important lesson I learned from the Programme. I find in America the work and social culture is that there as to be a bifurcation of personal and private values. Do not bring

personal values into work situation. I don't live(?) my life separately. Ubuntu helped me to understand and stay true to myself at all times and that it is okay. This freed me to be me.

...on an individual basis, there is potential for me to have a big impact. The course has provided me with examples of people, among resource persons and fellow participants, who are doing that. This has called me out to do more. And...those personal issues which have contributed to my 'holding back' from leadership are valid and I have been justified in spending time and energy in addressing them. Without doing so, I could not have begun the journey to engage in public and ethical leadership on the basis of "loving my enemy" or using "soft power" to effect the changes I value.

There is no generic answer to leadership. Leaders come in many different forms. The key is to understand what unique qualities in you make you a leader.

The most important lessons I learned from the program over the past year are...that to value and honor myself and my needs is at least as important as valuing and honoring the needs of others, that to serve myself only increases my ability and capacity to serve others...that self-awareness is the first step and the key to being able to see, hear and understand others...that leadership is simply another word for service... that this work is very, very, very hard, can be lonely/isolating at times, but is the most rewarding work one can engage in.

The most important lesson for me was that I should first take care of myself so that I [can] take care of others and serve them better. For me self mastering is the key to effective leadership.

I learned methods to discern complex leadership issues from a more servant leadership perspective. This included giving time for the answers to come. Too often I am faced with leadership decisions that need split second execution, but more often I have learned that there may be time to stop, reflect, and allow the answers to come. The patience in doing this was a real personal break through. Also the need to sharpen the axe in the context of personal reflection and the intense focus on improving by listening to self was incredible fulfilling.

An ELP classmate said 'There cannot be a leader until there is a me.' Understanding and having a firm answer to the question - Who am I? - gave me a foundation to understand and know the 'why' of my existence in context of being a values-driven person and leader.

Increased self-awareness around how day to day behaviors can increase my impact and leadership. How creating a culture and structure of inclusive leadership can positively affect the social change work I do. How individual behavior and values links to public and private sector work and my role in a larger organization.

I have learnt that leadership is not necessarily public or positional in nature. The power to shape and influence the various contexts in which we are placed may manifest in different forms and one needs to have the courage to build bridges and restore relationships. Servant leadership is a key value to live and demonstrate in all facets of life both personally and professionally reinforcing the key teaching of 'Leadership as a way of being, not doing'. To be humble but not docile is also a key learning, for me especially in a corporate environment where power and ego play a significant role and personal interest and 'blind ambition' surfaces often.

First, I came away with an excellent working understanding of transformative leadership. Second, I brought with me some very practical tools and vocabulary for leadership in context. Lastly, I adopted a helpful leadership framework for life long learning.

I have learnt that I have leadership qualities that I was not very sure I had before ELP. 2) I have tried to employ Programme techniques and methods in my work life - there is a marked change - subordinates and colleagues are seeing a change in the way I do things. ELP made me realise my leadership potential.

Ethics and leadership are “bedmates”. I’ve learned that ethics and values-based leadership are core if one is to become a successful and effective leader. I’ve learned that leadership is not an event but a process through which one learns, unlearns and re-learns continuously. I’ve learnt that leadership is more than merely managing, but means a deeper commitment towards serving others not for personal gain, but for the good of society and the country, and ultimately, to make the world a better place to live in.

The most important lessons I have learned are: 1) being a leader is often difficult, but the most value and success is often found in taking on challenges, 2) to define success less by the end result and outcome and more by my actions to take risks and do what I believe to be right, and 3) often the decisions we make are not clearly a choice between right and wrong, but are choices between right and right.

It all starts with the person at individual level because most, if not all answers already are there within us. Sometimes it just takes making ourselves vulnerable to others to allow the answers to emerge, and this is not always easy. I found that the programme created a ‘safe’ environment for me to be more in touch with myself without fear of being judged.

The way that I lead is rooted in something – my values. The need to create space during the day for reflection and maintain/guard that space. Self-awareness – awareness of my strengths, weaknesses and how others experience me – is the foundation of good leadership. Sometimes good leadership is doing nothing, letting things happen vs. trying to control every variable. My ability to hear and absorb the opinions and experiences of others...is important to me and it factors heavily in my ability to lead. Transparency, clarity and consistency (rooted in my beliefs) are core to the way that I lead and are the things that I want people to feel and observe in me as a leader.

I as a human being am very powerful...I need to continuously assess and reassess the values that constitute my being in order to ensure that I can be effective as a leader. Only by doing so will I be able to positively influence those who work with me. Servant leadership is not a passive role, it requires that I be very active but in a passive way. Sufficient time must(?) be given to master the skill of servant leadership. This time includes time alone and time with others. Listening and suspending judgment is critical in my interaction with others.

Learnings from the first retreat included: 1. reinforcement in my own thinking of the crucial role the NGO sector needs to play (in relation to the public and private sector) in the formation of ethical, democratic, and socially equitable institution and a socially viable citizenry; 2. A greater appreciation of the role of the private sector can play in achieving social goals and fostering ethical values; 3. My need to focus greater attention on the social implementation and facilitation of vision and ideals.

A far greater understanding of the personal challenges that one faces as a leader and the options and choices available and their implications. A sense of the value of ethical leadership and how it impacts on one wider than just the problem. <-(this sentence doesn't make sense) The need for context and vision in the application of leadership and impact of a leader's ethics on the effectiveness of his leadership!

The fact that authentic transformational leadership is a collective process requiring participatory democracy. The leader is first a servant then a leader; the emphasis of the program on adopting leadership styles and ethos from the African perspective for use in a corporate environment.

### **3. Applications of Lessons**

I have become a better manager of my program, more willing to take on the issues that are risky and to push to make my program better. The coaching has been enormously helpful to me, allowing me to better understand who I am and to learn skills that will enable me to be stronger in the future. I am more willing to tackle that which I find difficult or uncomfortable.

The program has reinforced behaviours that I already had but often doubted if I was on the right track. I have managed to convince my business colleagues about the need to have a code of conduct and business ethics prescribing minimum standards. Realizing that I could use my position to advance societal changes which are for the common good. Creating a balance between personal recognition for a job well done with influencing changes for the good of all even if it means credit is given to someone else.

My leadership style is now characterized by giving colleagues and subordinates more space by appealing to their creativeness. I've found that by empowering others, I've empowered myself and that I am more confident in myself. Others have more confidence in me as well. I am relying more on collective efforts, e.g. team work, than individual sloggng.

The values-based approach is very central to my personal and professional life. Many times I have found that I am able to express the 'conscience' of the organization especially when things go wrong. Central to sticky issues I have reminded myself to ask the question "who will benefit/be disadvantaged, has the principle of justice been applied?" This was particularly so when we were restructuring a few months ago and a few people stood to lose their jobs.

I have moved more clearly towards work which I consider in line with my personal values, and I have stepped into more leadership in the volunteer organisation I am working with. My leadership in the bank is more as a specialist and advocate - but I have been pleased that my reputation in this sphere has grown over the period.

Different things, such as, not using but demonstrating different principles and points of being a leader - the importance of managing myself, my time, and people in a more effective way. I have always been aware of it but became more focused on how important it is. Before, personally, life was about dealing with things on a day-to-day basis. The act of sitting down and documenting things – to sit down and take stock and evaluate things all the time, and in managing people to suspend judgment and listen.

I no longer hold an administrative leadership role but I feel I am playing a more powerful leadership role as a follower. Leadership is a way of being not what you do and where you are. It is how you conduct yourself. I found that I command more power from this position – a "back bencher".

I understand the concept of transparency much better. The program has helped to reinforce the need to take strong stands on issues and to not be afraid of having others step forward and enable them to step forward, sharing the leadership role and responsibility. Elements of servant leadership. You don't always have to be the [person] talking or doing – you have to enable others to provide leadership. People look up to leaders for example (sentence incomplete)

There has been a process of 'letting go' to empower others to bring what they have to offer to the process, rather than me 'driving' it.

The most meaningful ways I have applied what I have learned through the Programme in my leadership roles have been 1) to coach my peers, colleagues, friends, and junior staff on the principles I learned through the programme as they relate to both personal and professional circumstances; 2) to use the tools of self-awareness (to understand my feelings, needs and desired outcomes) that my coach taught me going into a situation/circumstance so that I can get the most out of it; 3) to share power (information, leadership opportunities; etc) with those around me and with junior staff to help further their development; 4) to speak honestly and truthfully about what is not working for me in both personal and professional settings in order to manage my fears so that they don't hold me back from serving as a true leader.

I have made conscious efforts to empower those that I work with by delegating certain decision making powers to them. In giving feedback to my subordinates, I have been compassionate. For me being a servant leader has meant that I should be [non-racial in orientation]. I have made deliberate attempts to engage with my fellow white compatriots in order to expand my understanding of transforming leadership. Recognising and acknowledging the personhood of others has been most helpful in this journey.

I have used the techniques of suspending judgement very actively especially in the context of taking forward the transformation agenda in a corporation with baggage from apartheid SA. Different constituencies with vested interests very often surface and the misunderstandings tended to delay progress. I have taken a step back from the situation and helped contextualise it in a way that helps meet people where they are at on this journey of transformation. Using moral and social messages to help decision-makers find the win-win solutions. A big lesson was respecting the other points of view, of practicing forgiveness and giving grace helped me tremendously to reconcile my past and move forward in building and restoring broken relationships.

Briefly, my attitude towards working in an organisation that does not embody all the values I espouse, has changed - rather than remaining cynical about my (senior) colleagues, I now realise that there is a need for communication and education, and that is a role I can play.

I reorganized my staff so that I could have some management responsibilities with a person with a different leadership style. This enabled her to grow and me to observe the draw on her style. I schedule my time at work differently so that the mix of meetings and activities allows me to serve and be nurtured.

Listening attentively to people around me and applying values-based, ethic together with the newly acquired leadership style has enhanced my effectiveness in whatever I do.

Leading the change process in [the company] allowed me the opportunity to inculcate the culture of trust, integrity, commitment, honesty, teamwork and self-actualization in many [of our] people.

I have managed to bridge the race gap in my work environment and make people focus on work objectives. I have managed to refocus a project that has been going on for five years and complete it in one year. I have relied on the support and encouragement of friends.

I have developed and articulated my own values and juxtaposed them against the values of my organization. This program has helped me to hold my organization accountable for its

actions/decisions, particularly those that affect the public domain. I also hold myself accountable to the same values.

I have made a covenant with one of my members in my church to check on my leadership style, i.e. the manner in which I conduct my meetings, my sermons and how I interact with other people generally.

Ubuntu for me is ensuring resources that I manage get to those I need to for their work in the community. I am free and empowered to challenge my organization to work more effectively and efficiently to do so. I speak up, advocate, find better ways to be efficient, offer suggestions and more! I trust my instincts and have faith that God will point out how to proceed.

Two years ago [my company] was not aware nor willing to embrace 'sustainability' in its business. I have led a process, with support from Executive Management, to introduce the concept to the business, and begin the process of introducing the changes it requires. I have held together a disparate group of volunteers under extremely challenging (financially and logistically) circumstances to complete the first phases of the development of a development project and retreat centre in NW Province. We have now completed a number of environmentally sustainable buildings, raised funds to kick off three projects (woodwork, gardening and a pre-school), and held our first large (70 people) international workshop.

I believe that [my work since ELP has resulted in] a more structured, democratic and empowering organisation. I have led this change and keep the other leadership to this vision. I have worked with a team to work with the environment closely and my role has been to remain true to our principles. I have been effective in more selecting work that fits my values in life.

I have developed an understanding over the last four years that leadership, for me, is not about having a senior position, necessarily, but about what I am creating through my work (opportunities for poor rural people, for people seeking opportunities to contribute to development etc. as well as small but hopefully increasing change in the business world around issues of sustainability) and how I can influence others to do their work in an ethical and values based way.

#### **4. What Others See**

My boss and my most supportive and influential mentor, CEO of [the company] recognised the level of maturity and sound judgement on key 'soft' issues relating to [the company's] business which we have discussed in the past two years. Last month I was approached by the Executive Director of Human Resources and Strategy on two high profile assignments....I have decided to opt for another opportunity that falls more within the core business arena to grow and utilise my business and engineering skills having the foundational values-driven leadership qualities that will bode me well should I get to a decision-making role in the future. This has taken significant change in direction from being influencer/shaper to a mover....I have been liberated and feel like I could conquer the world, thanks to the programme, its fellows.

Close colleagues have said that ELP has done wonders for me. Colleagues know about my involvement in ELP.... People close to me and others have noticed that how I react to a situation is very different.

I have received quite a few comments. One in particular stands out in terms of overall leadership linked back to ELP. As a person I tended to be very self-critical and hard on myself. Now I am not as self-critical as I used to be. The feedback I've gotten is that I relate more deeply and

authentically than before and this has also been affirmed by my coaches' comments. My immediate superior has given me feedback about the authenticity of my relationships.

My office employees feel that being involved in critical decision making on issues related to the business, as opposed to being told on the basis of ownership, has made them grow confident in decision making processes. Also, they have grown in confidence as they are expected to manage their own clients as if it's their own business, allowed to make mistakes that can be justified, present different solutions for resolving those mistakes and learning from such experiences. They also like the independence and trust I give them...

Others have noticed that I listen more intently because usually my mind is on twenty different things at the same time. Learning to tune out everything else and give my undivided attention to the present has been a challenge to me. Others have noticed a marked improvement in this area. I think this was a result of taking the time to have some personal reflection time at the end of the day.

I have had people tell me that I seem so much happier, lighter, positive/optimistic and that I even smile more. I have also had people tell me that I seem more excited about my life and my work. I talk more about that which is positive, what is working, where change/impact is possible as opposed to focusing on that which is negative or can not change. I have been told that my perspective on life seems to be more in terms of the 'glass half full' than 'half-empty.' I have also been told that the changes in me, my thinking, and my outlook has been an inspiration to observe.

The feedback that I have received is that I have become more sensitive and compassionate. In telling it as it is, I have learnt to be empathetic. I no longer think that the truth must be told irrespective of how it makes others feel. I agree with the feedback that I have received thus far because I also believe that I have changed for the better, for I can now suspend judgement.

In my previous job, when first started ELP I was very stressed. Now colleagues, children and my husband say that I am noticeably less stressed - that I listen better than before. I now spend more quality time with my family, and people say that I have a better understanding than before ELP...I think that I am far more understanding and cooperative since ELP. This is exactly how I have always wanted to be.

...during ELP...I progressed to [a new, very high level governmental position]. This was the best time to be exposed to the learning of ELP. Not everyone will always like you but at my level my colleagues say they are able to come to me as a human being for both work and personal issues because I have an ability to listen and to appreciate their problems. I am a good listener - and I have found ultimately that this approach is much more efficient in the long run.

The one specific comment I've received is that I tend to have more depth in listening to others - more than ever before. I make them explore and find/deal with their own problems when we go through the process of discernment...The other example is the issue of really applying the ethical values to allow every group member to be heard and participate...I give people an opportunity to participate in the decision making process even if they are shy. People are commenting that these are very good things [and] I have learnt them from the Programme...

Others have noticed that I...am more inspired about my work, cope better with having to make tough decisions, and take more time to mentor younger staff.

A number of people - colleagues, friends and subordinates as well as my parents - have commented that "I seem more at peace with myself" "I seem happier" "My appearance has

changed” “I appear to be calmer”. In each instance I reference work I have done on my inner self, especially aided by ELP.

My staff has indicated that I am listening more to their problems. They feel that I am taking interest in their well-being and they now feel the commitment to contributing selflessly to the cause.

I believe that people know where they stand with me. My values are most certainly not ambiguous and do not have to be constantly justified or clarified. The freedom that comes with saying I don't know. Being open to listen and learn from others soon empowers them and yourself and breaks down barriers because colleagues reciprocate by being trusting enough to be vulnerable and saying they don't know. Solutions are found sooner and problems identified sometimes before they occur. Giving situations time to breath and resolve by themselves and knowing when to do that. This happens when it is obvious you don't have all the facts and especially when it appears to be a very emotional situation one is dealing with. Just listen carefully and try to remember details.

My CEO has commented that I bring a fresh view of issues compared to my other colleagues and that I have developed the ability to think “outside the box.”

My personal and business life has become more purposeful. I often receive feedback from my team that I have more time for them as individuals and that they value the attention that I give to them. I have also resolved not to shy away from difficult issues, but to face them head on. My personal mantra now, is to tell the truth, irrespective of how difficult it may be.

Overall, people around me both at home and in the workplace and in the community that I belong have made a few observations on my orientation to issues, decisions, namely...a strong desire on my part to talk about the importance of “values” and “due process” and that there is a strong bias for using values as a basis for action;...my reflection on my life in terms of its purpose and a concern about what my legacy in all spheres of my life is going to be (I have raised concerns on the waste of not allowing people to express their full potential);...a significant shift in an attempt to find the optimal balance in my “quality of life” in the form physical body, mental and spiritual activities;...a strong desire on my part to ensure individuals and organizations appear their “part” in the societies/communities we live in.

People say “Where do you get the energy?” “We feel safe in your hands” “Our organization is well run” “Our ND gives thought to organizational systems products and relationships.”

In terms of my colleagues we have refocused on where we are going in the organization and this occurred after ELP. There is a new vibrancy in the organisation. No one mentioned that this may be because of my exposure to the programme - maybe because we don't think that way. There is more leadership and more delegation and other staff take on more responsibility.

Colleagues, supervisors, subordinates have commented, for the first time, that they believe I am ready to manage an organization or institution. I am being sought out intentionally to mentor and advise young black women. My newfound confidence and freedom create a spirit of openness and change that I believe I now emit.

People have commented on my more relaxed state. My focus has been sharpened. I have grown [and am] being sent to lead and be part of influential teams.