

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

LEARNING FORUM: DEVELOPING A GENDER BALANCED MINDSET

7th OCTOBER 2020

Introduction

The Capacity Development Programme aims to transform the impact of the global Lasallian network through enhanced collaboration. The focus of the Learning Forum session held on 7th October 2020 was twofold:

- To develop an understanding of, and actions towards, a gender balanced mindset
- To advance the strategy through developing the practical actions

In advance of the session participants were sent a thought leadership paper titled [‘Developing a Gender Balanced Mindset’](#) and a summary report from the 24th September Learning Forum which contained progress statements in relation into each of the 9 actions that the group work was focused around.

Process

45 people logged into and participated in the zoom session, of which 36 were Lasallian network participants, 3 were acting as translators and the remaining 6 were from Caplor Horizons.

A learning presentation from Julia Mayer and Heather Ruple-Gilson was made at the start of the session focusing on the subject of a gender balanced mindset through a Lasallian lens. It highlighted the principles involved, the impact of Covid-19 and how having a gender balanced mindset is relevant to the Lasallian network.

“Women hold up half the sky (Chinese proverb) and half of the Lasallian family.” It was stated that women make up 56% of the Lasallian family. One of Julia’s opening slides posed the question, “How can we achieve gender balance and enable everyone to strive?”

Covid-19 has a significantly greater detrimental effect on women and girls as a result of the rise in domestic violence, the increased domestic workload, the impact on the healthcare system which has a higher proportion of female workers and the impact of school closures. These extra challenges come on top of already existing situations of cultural barriers that impede women from having a voice and the lack of representation of women in leadership and governance roles throughout the world.

Nine feminist principles to support a gender balanced mindset were presented (see right). The participants were challenged to choose the principle that resonated with them most, to embody gender balance and take action.

 <p>Consistently challenge our assumptions and inequalities</p>	 <p>Share leadership and power</p>	 <p>Create inclusive and participatory spaces</p>
 <p>Take a strengths-based approach</p>	 <p>Be an authentic leader</p>	 <p>Care for yourself and others</p>
 <p>Learn and reflect</p>	 <p>Have courage</p>	 <p>Zero tolerance</p>



Lasallian women's gatherings and networks were highlighted indicating that since 2012 regular events have been on-going across the globe. In October 2019, 50 Lasallians gathered in Rome and the invite was explicit that invitees should include one Brother and one Lasallian woman. The session was reminded, despite the challenges, there is also much to celebrate, from the creation of a pre-school for girls in Papua New Guinea through to the formation of the Lasallian women of HOPE providing funding for women and girls in the Lasallian family.

Heather also celebrated the membership on the structure for mission and association at the Institute level. CML, the council for Lasallian association and the educational mission, includes 5 women representing each region and chaired by

Alisa Macksey. This model of strong women in leadership sitting at the table where decisions about mission and association are being made and bringing their vocations, experiences, ethnic and religious diversity should inspire gender balance at all levels.

Heather closed her presentation by saying that it is not enough for Lasallian women to advocate for a place at the table for themselves or other women. They need allies. They need Lasallian men and Brothers to advocate, insist, invite and be creative in including women in structures and leadership. The feminine element is one of the greatest assets in the Lasallian family and we need to use it well.

The facilitators would like to apologize that the interpretation function was not available during this session, and they will make sure that Julia and Heather's presentation is translated into French and Spanish in due course.

Overview of Group Work

The group work involved nine groups, each with a facilitator, discussing one practical action and answering the following two questions:

1. How could the practical action be defined even better? And hence: Where do we want to get to (by the end of the strategy period)?
2. What needs to happen to achieve this practical action? i.e. How are we going to get there?

The high-level progress in relation to these questions has been summarized below for each 'practical action' group.

Goal 1: Create a more collaborative culture

- **Create an overarching global initiative** – The group felt that target 4C of the SDGs, "Increase the supply of qualified teachers in developing countries", should be the focus of the overarching global initiative. To bring this about, the group has offered to be an executive steering group to this action. They also want to invite members from the Lasallian network as well as collaborations with other organisations working in the education sector to support the development of this action. It is important this group has representations from all 5 regions.
- **Plan, promote and engage three network wide campaigns per year** – A potential Lasallian campaign could be to launch a gender-based initiative. It was emphasized that the ideas for campaigns should start locally, so that they understand the reality of the local needs. The Institute can have a template and then work with different local institutions on their campaigns.
- **Share Learning, good practice and ideas across the network** – We want to create spaces where bilateral agreements can be developed and where global and regional work can be promoted. We also want to create a virtual platform where there is a database of what work is going on in different regions/districts. These would be categorized by themes, good practices, etc.

Goal 2: Create superlative organisational strengths

- **Strengthen brand and communications, including ‘telling the story’ even better and improving the language in the emerging strategy** – We need to consider how we represent the brand to non-Lasallians and those in the ‘outside world.’ This is a key focus of this group. Therefore, our practical action might be redefined as: “Creating a dynamic brand that motivates, inspires and unites all.” The brand should make us believe in who we are as a Lasallian. Something new, upbeat, and encouraging, while recognizing that the brand may have different ‘flavors’ in different regions.
- **Develop in each of our languages, appropriately for all our cultures, a selection of simpler and better processes, policies, criteria, frameworks and systems for collaboration** – There is a huge range of processes going on. Thus, we might focus on how people can get to know each other. This is essential for collaboration as collaboration happens between people. We recognize that this can take many years and it is easier at national level, however through Zoom and other online technologies it may be more achievable. We need champions to support this.
- **Develop shared global metrics to document our engagement and capture the difference we make** – It is important to establish a starting point, where we are, and to formulate the appropriate mechanisms for its implementation. We must also develop clear impact indicators and common spaces where data can be stored and analyzed over time.

Goal 3: Create a more connected network

- **Develop new internal and external collaborative relationships to increase funding, including work with two partners on a Lasallian project, practically building our ability to forge strategic relationships** – During the conversation a principle discussed was that this collaborative initiative provides an opportunity for institute wide general action rather than specific activities (e.g. in one geographical area). One practical action emerging was to develop a more formal structure that leads to the further strengthening the network.
- **Develop capacity building opportunities for current and future leaders** – The Institute is changing; therefore, it is important to renew leaders and allow them to take a break, we need to harness the entire community’s capacity. We rank our ‘conviction’ highly, so how can our conviction be contagious to others? We need to utilize the specific gifts and talents of individuals and support them to take action and become more responsible.
- **Through developing innovative partnerships, generate a Global Scholarship Fund that enables diverse voices and understandings to benefit, be heard and welcomed from within and beyond the network** – There is a strong culture of giving for stewardship of individual institutions. We now need to cultivate a culture of giving at the international level, while not sacrificing our local support. We need to ‘connect the dots’ between local reality and education in schools to the global mission. Potentially through technology, or by getting schools, organizational, institutions, and ministries to share information about the global mission.

Feedback

Based on the analysis of feedback received after the event, the Learning Forum was positively received, despite the technical difficulties with the interpretation. In particular the presentation given by Heather and Julia was appreciated and it is important that ongoing discussions on the topic of gender balanced mindset take place and this topic is further embedded by the Lasallian Family.

Furthermore, the working groups seem to be making good progress and fruitful conversations are taking place. According to the feedback, it appears that the groups feel that they are clarifying their practical action (scoring it an average of 7.1), and they also feel that the groups are making good progress towards their practical action (scoring it an average of 7).