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The Church Executive: Building the Kingdom Through Leadership Development Lloyd, K., Price, K., Merrell, V. D., and Johnson, E.

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(Reviewed by Joseph Bentley, associate professor of educational psychology at University of Utah. Dr. Bentley has published widely and presently has a book at the press.)

It may be that the most important aspect of the training project reported in this book is that it actually happened! By this I mean to say that an administrative training program for Church leaders was organized, designed, and carried out. The fact that it was planned and executed by competent and trained professionals and that it carried the implicit, if not explicit, support of the church hierarchy (Howard W. Hunter attended the first session in Los Angeles and spoke informally) makes this training program a significant event.

The issue of training programs for LDS Church leaders is one that has not been fully explored. The relationship between a formal educational or training program and reliance upon the powers of inspiration and revelation is not clear. For example, for generations we in the Church have taken pride in the fact that our leaders are not "learned" men in the sense that they have attended schools designed to prepare them for religious work. Indeed, I have heard some sneer at the Protestant clergy and its heavy emphasis upon academic and intellectual preparation. Yet at the same time, training programs in the LDS Church are extensive and seem to be expanding rapidly: seminary has been with us for many years; institutes of religion are proliferating; teachers in the Church school system are encouraged to take advanced degrees (not in religion, however, unless at BYU) and are returned every other summer or so to a campus experience; some missionaries are given language

training, and so forth. Yet beyond the statement that "the Lord expects you to learn all you can and then he will inspire you," the difference between a trained and educated leader and one who is not in meriting inspiration and divine guidance is simply not clear. Does the educated and trained leader have more call upon such help? Does the level of faith possessed by a leader that God will guide and direct make a difference? In recent years there seems to be a tendency to rely more heavily upon formal programs of leadership training. The program carried out by the authors of this book is the first one, to my knowledge, which was planned and carried through outside of the formal Church system.

The Executive Leadership Seminar began on Friday evening, February 11, 1966, continued on Saturday the 12th of February, then was extended for three more full-day sessions—February 26, March 12 and March 26—and ended with a half-day session on April 30, 1966. Sixteen stake presidents, the President of the California Mission, Howard W. Hunter from Salt Lake, and the staff members were present for the first session. The authors do not report the attrition, if any, among the stake presidents except to say that, at the beginning of the third session, "several (were) excused because of conflicting stake conference assignments and four others from San Diego and other outlying regions had withdrawn because of the driving distance to Los Angeles." It was not clear whether all participants continued throughout the seminar. For example, in discussing the final session, they state, "stake presidents from throughout the Los Angeles area are gathered for the concluding session. . . ." Did this mean *all* stake presidents? And had they attended the previous sessions? These questions seemed to me to be important in evaluating the data which were reported.

I stated earlier that in my opinion the Executive Training Seminar, by its very occurrence, was an important event. That said, I now must report that the contents and the procedures of the seminar were, for the most part, disappointing. The authors seemed to go out of their way to point out that their training program was different in significant ways from other programs in other parts of the country. They claimed, for instance, that their objectives differed significantly from those of other programs in that they were interested in change in

“values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and behavior,” while other “Human Relations Training” programs were content with “participant satisfaction with program experience and information acquired” as a major objective. This is confusing. I know of no training or educational program which relies upon “participant satisfaction” as a significant objective. On the contrary, programs that I know about and have been involved in have paid little attention to “participant satisfaction” as an *objective*. They have *all* been interested in bringing about change in values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and, most importantly, behavior. In emphasizing their attention to behavioral change as an objective and outcome, they (the authors) indict themselves, *for there is practically no evidence (other than anecdotal) that behavior change occurred in any significant degree!* In fact, only five of the participants returned post-seminar data and these were all of the paper-and-pencil variety. The authors simply did not know if any of the stake presidents changed their administrative behavior in any significant way after the seminar experience! Yet they cite this behavioral approach as a strength of their program.

Related to this, the authors maintained that their evaluation procedures constituted another strong point. Yet I find their evaluation to be inadequate and rather useless. They get caught in the same trap for which they criticize other “Human Relations Training” programs. This is not to say that the staff members purposefully neglected a rigorous evaluation procedure. The problems of evaluating change programs, be they training programs, psychotherapy, counseling, or even the effects of a college education, are staggering. What bothered me was their statement and restatement that behavioral objectives and rigorous evaluation procedures set their program apart from others. I find no evidence of this.

In addition to what has already been mentioned, there were other weak points, most of which are acknowledged by the authors (p. 65). Among them were (1) an attempt to introduce “sensitivity training” as a procedure and then to give over only one hour to it. Anyone who has ever conducted T-groups should know that one hour is not only not productive, but may result in a negative experience for the participants; (2) a tour of the KleinSmid Center for International and Public Affairs at the University of Southern California as part of the fifth

session. I simply could not understand how this fit in with any of the objectives of the program. It seemed to me that the time could be better spent; (3) when reporting results of pre- and post-seminar testing, such statements are made as "this increase (in an independence scale) may reflect either a real impact of the seminar on their basic values or simply their redefinition of the terminology. . . ." As a matter of fact, there was no increase. No significant differences were found in pre- and post-seminar measures with one exception, and this was when religious items were removed from the modified F scale, which measures authoritarian personality patterns.

There were strong points also. The "Operation Empathy," in which stake presidents were dressed in old clothes and roamed the slums of Los Angeles, seems to be patterned after a Peace Corps training method. The bringing in of a Negro minister to discuss involvement in community problems was, in my opinion, an excellent contribution. The descriptive data about the stake presidents were interesting. For example, other than Boy Scouts, a part of the LDS program, the leaders were involved in no community organizations except Chamber of Commerce, Town Hall, and YMCA. They also tended to reflect a traditional conservative view of politics and government and ranked low on independence and high on conformity.

Had this program been conducted among business executives or educators, I doubt whether any staff would have published this book. There are so many more well-designed and executed programs which are not published! Yet because it happened in the LDS Church, it is important. The design, execution and evaluation of the seminar could have been significantly improved. A book more useful to others would have been a result.