

Workshop 2: A System for Large Scale Transformation

Quotations

We yield thanks to God that, through the potency of His Word, you—the community of His Greatest Name—are cultivating environments wherein true understanding can blossom...
(The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, Ridván 2012)

One of the most effective instruments at your disposal in this respect is the training institute. It strives to engage the individual in an educational process in which virtuous conduct and self-discipline are developed in the context of service, fostering a coherent and joyful pattern of life that weaves together study, worship, teaching, community building and, in general, involvement in other processes that seek to transform society. At the heart of the educational process is contact with the Word of God, whose power sustains every individual's attempts to purify his or her heart and to walk a path of service with "the feet of detachment."

(from a letter dated 23 April 2013 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

Specifically, the courses of the institute are intended to set the individual on a path in which qualities and attitudes, skills and abilities, are gradually acquired through service— service intended to quell the insistent self, helping to lift the individual out of its confines and placing him or her in a dynamic process of community building.

(from a letter dated 19 April 2013 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to three believers)

In the system of distance education that has now been established in country after country—the principal elements of which include the study circle, the tutor and the curriculum of the Ruhi Institute—the worldwide Bahá'í community has acquired the capacity to enable thousands, nay millions, to study the writings in small groups with the explicit purpose of translating the Bahá'í teachings into reality, carrying the work of the Faith forward into its next stage: sustained large-scale expansion and consolidation.

(The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, Ridván 2010)

Questions

- a) Share some insights from these quotations about walking with other souls along the path of service? How do you visualize accompanying the friends until such a point that they become protagonists of the community-building process?
 - b) What capacities related to service and sharing and applying the Teachings of the Faith do you think you have been strengthening as an individual, as a family, or as a community over the last months?
 - c) What are your current questions or objects of learning?
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Quotations

At the end of the Four Year Plan the Universal House of Justice wrote that "the culture of the Bahá'í community [had] experienced a change." and that "new patterns of thought and action" introduced by the training institutes were having a profound impact on individuals, institutions, and communities. Fundamental to this new orientation was an attitude of learning, along with an appreciation of systematization and focus, a commitment to enlisting a greater number of believers in the work of the Cause, and a conscious outreach to society at large.

(The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, Ridván 2000)

Prevailing habits, customs, and modes of expression all become susceptible to change—outward manifestations of an even more profound inner transformation, affecting many souls. The ties that bind them together grow more affectionate. Qualities of mutual support, reciprocity, and service to one another begin to stand out as features of an emerging, vibrant culture among those involved in activities.

(The Universal House of Justice, in a message dated 29 December 2015 to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors)

Questions

- a) Discuss and describe some elements of the culture strengthening within your communities thanks to the instrumentality of the training institute.
- b) How can each of us act as promoters of this culture that the Universal House of Justice is describing, for example, a culture of mutual support, a culture of learning, and humble service?
- c) In what ways can you encourage others, seeing the efforts of each as advancing the overall aims of the Faith?

Quotation

Within this landscape of unfolding processes, emerging structures, and enduring fellowship, that moment which has come to be known as the "launching" of an intensive programme of growth represents conscious recognition that all the elements necessary to accelerate the expansion and consolidation of the Faith are not only in place but also functioning with an adequate degree of effectiveness. It signals the maturation of an ever-expanding, self-sustaining system for the spiritual edification of a population: a steady stream of friends is proceeding through the courses of the training institute and engaging in the corresponding activities...

(The Universal House of Justice, in a message dated 28 December 2010 to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors)

Question

- a) If your cluster is moving toward this second milestone of development, discuss which or these elements you can already recognize and which will need to be strengthened in the coming cycles. If your cluster has already passed this stage of development, identify what steps and approaches helped to intensify the programme of growth and to approach the third milestone.