

PN-AAU-951
L 9935

**THE LEADERSHIP PATTERNS OF INCOME
GENERATING GROUPS**

Conference on Income Generation in Lesotho

4 – 8 February 1985.

Hotel Victoria, Maseru.



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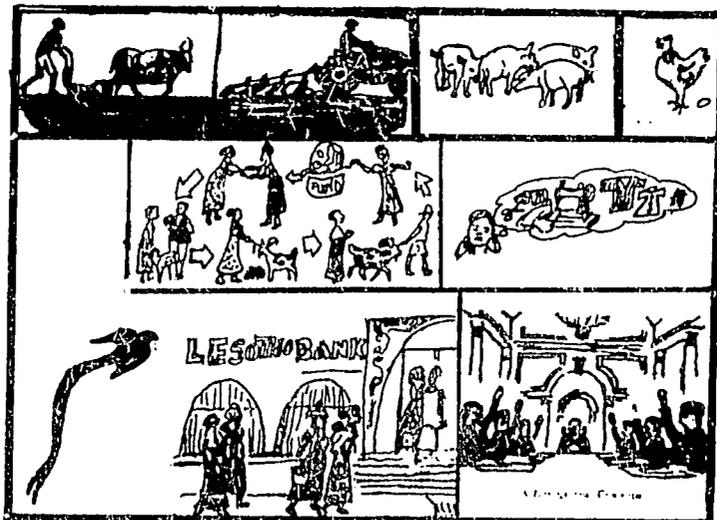
THE LEADERSHIP PATTERNS OF INCOME
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"No one's credit is as good as his money"

"If you don't try, you can't fail"

"The most effective way to cope with change
is to help create it"

(Source: Salada tea tag lines.)



Preamble

Some years back we visited a Boiteko group in Mafeteng hoping to work with it in our efforts to distribute LDTC basic rural education booklets. It was on a Sunday afternoon and we had agreed with the group to meet at that time. Nobody showed up. Both the leader of the group and my immediate superior the then deputy director of LDTC were very disappointed. We then rescheduled the meeting to the next weekend, nobody showed up, and the same thing happened for the next three meetings.

In another incident we visited a Womens Institute group and a Boiteko group at Thabana Morena Ila Khobotle and started negotiations on booklet distribution and some training agreements. A couple of months later a group leader of the Boiteko group had a conflict with her group's mother body because she alluded that she and her village group now belonged to LDTC's groups.

These are just two examples of the kind of problems one faces in working with groups in rural Lesotho.

BACKGROUND

A couple of days ago, in preparation for this conference, I went through some number of resource materials and notes both on nonformal education and Income Generation and I came across an interesting statement quoted by Dr. Z. A. Matšela from "Dynamic Conservatism" of Schon - "... All of us work hard to stay as we are!" This posed a question in my mind as to whether this is the reason why people hesitate so much to accept innovations - unless these bring them immediate obvious and accepted gains, as in the form of monetary wealth. I wondered as well to what extent our human personalities and this conservatism rested with the leaders of innovations and or with group members. Like Dr. Z. A. Matšela I think think conservatism rests more in the mind, attitude and tradition of people than elsewhere. It is true that we may work hard to stay as we are: If we were not sure what the change or innovation would bring us, if we were satisfied that we were wealthy or pretty or intelligent or we were convinced in our inner selves that we could not be or get any better. Similarly, experience has shown that our elders learned the arts of intellectual prowess right into old age. This may be the reason why so many of the elders in our society even today are respected leaders.

The main reason for bringing up these arguments, is to try and re-focus our attention to the origins and structure of leadership patterns of groups in Lesotho. Likewise to remind ourselves that the biggest hurdle in our work with groups is embedded in the attitudes they have towards us, themselves, the process of learning and what they want to learn.

When one looks at Lesotho's group infrastructure one will recognise basically four main nonformal education types of groups. These are Boiteko Womens' Association , Homemakers Association, Lesotho Womens' Institute Association and Agric Extension Nutrition division assisted groups. The first three belong to the Lesotho National Council of Women. All these groups have roughly the same goal, that is, to encourage village women to work together to better themselves and to improve the quality of village life. The activities of the groups are many and varied: Nutrition and hygiene education, cooking and bottling, handicrafts, poultry keeping,

sewing and knitting for income generation and many other activities.

The Lesotho Homemakers established in 1935, is the oldest of the three organizations. Boiteko Women's Association and the Lesotho Women's Institute were established in 1961. In the mid-sixties all national women's groups were given support by the nutrition department of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Nutrition department wanted to work with the local sub-groups in its rural education programme. In some cases the support consisted of supplying meeting facilities and transport, and assisting them with organizational methods. However as the groups increased in size the links between them and the Nutrition department deteriorated although the nutrition department continues to work with local sub-groups of the three organizations in some areas, while in some areas it forms its own groups who may later join any of the main national organizations.

In all, the Lesotho National Council of Women has about 200-odd village groups split amongst its three main associations. However, most of these have been dormant for some time or have ceased to exist. Many of these village sub-groups do not meet regularly, year after year. They become active for a few months if there is a specific activity such as canning, training courses, handicraft work and so on. These activities may well be followed by a long period of inactivity.

In many cases the membership of the three groups overlaps. If, say the Women's Institute is not active some of the Women's Institute members may join the Boiteko group.

Group leaders tend to have a relatively high socio-economic status. Generally they hold their meetings at their homes, which tend to be bigger than the average. In many cases leadership is invested totally in one person, with the result that group disintegrates if she is sick, goes on a journey, or drops out. Also some leaders tend to recruit neighbours and relatives who then become orientated to a particular leader and not to the group's work. If the leader changes they often stop attending. The poorer women of the village who stand

to benefit most may be left out if the group recruitment by better off leaders is too narrowly biased.

Further if the group leader is not present for a meeting, the house is not used and the members do not carry on by themselves. Leaders are in most cases selected because they are respected members of the community, and have a better education, however they are the most likely to find jobs elsewhere.

Given these limitations of voluntary women's groups in Lesotho - lack of activity for long periods during most part of the year, lack of variety in their activities and lack of trained or skilled group leaders for proper groups' task maintenance and operational committee functioning - it is perhaps useful to decide whether:

- (1) A training programme is needed.
- (2) What particular aspects of a training programme are most needed and are most appropriate.
- (3) How a training programme can be refined and be improved?

DEFINITION

The main theme of our discussion focusses on "Leadership patterns of income generating groups in Lesotho." The term group is defined as any number of persons interacting with one another in one face to face meeting or a series of meetings. During the meeting each member receives some impression or perception of every member. This impression is distinct enough that he can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the other members as individuals, even if it is only to recall that the other member was present (Cartright Zander; 1968! 30)

Included in this concept is the interaction of group members. Bales regards interaction as a continuous stream of actions, words, symbols, signs, gestures etc. This stream flows from one member to another, sometimes including all members and sometimes only some members. Interaction is therefore distributed in time and among a number of

persons.

Bales regards all action in small effective groups as action turning upon the solution of a problem. The effective group works productively towards the achievement of group and individual goals. Effectiveness also implies a climate of trust and community in a situation which promotes group and individual growth. In an effective group the necessary leadership functions are performed, and their performance is shared.

The term leader is usually used to refer to a person who possesses such traits as courage, high intelligence, strong personal attractiveness, aggressiveness, and flexibility. However it is important to make a distinction between "leading" and "managing." "Managing" often refers to the formal process in which organizational objectives are achieved through the efforts of subordinates. "Leading" on the other hand refers to the process in which a person with power is able to influence the behavior of others in some desired way. Three main theories of leadership are : Trait theory- intelligence, supervisory ability, self-assurance, initiative, individuality etc. Behavioral theory - autocratic, supportive (or employee centered), instrumental (or task oriented). Situational leadership theory - relationship between leader and group members, the task structure, and the position power of the leader (style is on employee centered or task-oriented).

In concluding this part of the paper it is worthwhile pointing out the need for one to know his/her leadership characteristics. Anyone can be a leader. For example anybody who owns a small business or is considering starting one possesses the leadership characteristics and abilities necessary or indeed requisite for successful management and leadership regardless of personality, traits, quirks, and idiosyncrasies. What is really important in the success of small businesses is the personality and charisma of the small business manager; attitude; personality, and charisma of the people the manager is leading, and lastly the situation itself. Thus, being a good, effective and successful leader depends upon the people you are leading and who will work well with you as a leader. Often times

poor leadership and failure are associated with incompatible followers.

TRAINING OF NFE GROUP LEADERS IN LESOTHO

Most of the group leadership training courses in Lesotho have basically two aims:-

- 1) to advise group leaders on use of educational materials eg. booklets, posters, pamphlets, flipcharts etc.
- 2) to motivate groups leaders e.g. leadership, group organisation, content areas and goals getting.

Up to date it is fairly difficult to conclude that group leadership courses enable group leaders to make better use of educational materials than they otherwise might have done. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that such courses did have a beneficial instructional effect.

Experiences in group work also indicate that group leader training courses have a powerful motivation force behind the leaders' group dynamics. In most cases the motivational impact extends beyond the decision of group leaders to cooperate in the first place. The emphasis here is on the groups commitment and sharing to social change at the community level, and their involvement in education and the production of knowledge. In essence what we are saying here is that at field level, activities do not break down into nice categories but overlap constantly in both method and content. Similarly at community level, most of the leaders apply what was taught in the course and their members, even if experienced in the content topic being dealt with, learn the various new ways taught at the courses. In all, the group leaders really get exposed to some sort of intensive training mainly at their usual associations' annual regional meetings. At these meetings different celebrities, experts and what have you from various organizations are given an opportunity to pass their new trends of development to the group leaders and accompanying members.

A former colleague of mine, Roger Mition, often asked a question that is still relevant to us here even today.

"Can group interaction and support be helped in the development of entrepreneurial small income generating groups spirit?"

David McClelland and other social psychologists have found an answer in what they call "the need to achieve" today commonly known as achievement-motivation, an area of virginity that still has to be explored more. Group training strategies based on McClelland's approach that have been incorporated into nonformal education training are:

1. To teach participants how to think, talk and act like persons with a high need to achieve.
2. To stimulate participants to set for themselves high but carefully planned goals over a special period of time.
3. To increase participants' knowledge about themselves.
4. To create a group spirit among participants from learning about each others' hopes, fears, successes, failures, and from sharing emotional experiences in a retreat setting.

In this perspective group interaction is guided in such a way that participants reinforce each others' striving toward individual goals. The group thus constitutes one element in an ever widening network that truly supports the individuals' need to achieve.

It must be pointed out however that change in individual behavior takes place essentially through introspective process! Each group member must examine her own motive, values, attitudes, fantasies, and aspirations and involve himself in creative problem-solving and risk-taking experiences. The group, acting as a mirror, provides feedback helpful to each member in examining his own behavior and increasing their effectiveness in attaining the goal they have set for themselves.

themselves. Thus, the achievement motivation approach has much to offer for those wishing to innovate more in nonformal education.

INSIGHTS GAINED

In this paper I have started off with group infrastructure and leadership structure in our LDTC interaction with groups. I also looked at some definitions of leadership and ended up with some training aspects of group leaders in Lesotho.

A few comments pertinent to the nature of leadership in formal and nonformal groups may be highlighted hereforth. In the formal work groups or organizations, those in positions of leadership, such as heads of departments, section heads, directors and managers, permanent secretaries and foremen, are never selected by their subordinates. Their appointment solely depends on their supervisors which in most cases is the Cabinet. Although to some extent their continuing employment and advancement are certainly dependent in some measure on reactions of their subordinates, fundamentally their job tenure is at the pleasure of their supervisors.

The basic difference in leadership in nonformal work groups is that it remains in effect by consent of the members of the group; indeed, the leader assumes the leadership position because of acceptance by the group.