Leader Development Through Planning

**Program planning has built-in experiences that
can help greatly to enhance leadership growth**

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HISTORICALLY, Extension programs have taken into considera-
tion the ideas and concerns of local people. The degree to which
people have been involved in the programming function has fluctu-
ated due to shifts in program emphasis, emergency situations, and
the like. This is borne out when we review the program function
from the time of Extension's official beginning.

Initially, problems were identified by the professional worker
based on his own knowledge of the situation and informal contact
with the people, largely on an individual basis. Based upon this
combined information, solutions were prescribed. Over time, it was
recognized that lay leadership, on an organized basis, could make a
significant contribution through providing direction to Extension
programs and assisting with implementation. Today, we find a large
number of lay leaders engaged in various types of program de-
velopment activities.

It is generally accepted that effective program development is
associated with the involvement of local leadership. This involve-
ment varies in degree and has been subject to many interpretations
and overt actions. In reality, it has been carried to two extremes.
One extreme finds the professional Extension worker dominating
program decisions (where it is thought that he should know the
problems of the people and be in a position to inform them of such
problems). In the other extreme, lay leaders dominate such deci-
sions. Under these circumstances, decisions may or may not have
been based on sound factual information; objective analysis may
have been overlooked and personal judgment given priority.

The purpose of this article is to examine the place of local leader-

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ship development in the Extension programming function—not as the basic purpose of this function, but as a possible important by-product or outgrowth. By analyzing roles of professional and lay leaders, reviewing various kinds of learning experiences inherent in this function, and by discussing what is meant by maturing leadership, we may discover certain new dimensions or opportunities for leadership growth.

DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT

Initially, in working with program planning groups, the professional worker may find it necessary to assume the major responsibility for programming. He must be cautious, however, that he does not lose sight of the direction in which he desires to move the committee in terms of its development or in terms of the development of its potential leadership. A professional may get so much personal satisfaction in a dominant leadership role that he will become self-satisfied and find it difficult, if not impossible, to develop a two-way working relationship with lay leaders.

The degree to which the professional worker will or will have to assume responsibility for the programming function will depend on factors such as the following:

1. The basic concept the professional worker holds of the program development process and his confidence in this area.
2. The professional worker's willingness to accept decisions made by leaders who have had the facts as a basis for their decisions.
3. The traditional setting for program development (how it has been done in the past).
4. The ability of lay leaders to analyze facts and think beyond personal concerns in reaching program decisions.
5. The degree of understanding possessed by lay leaders in relation to the program development process.
6. The expectations held by both professional and lay leaders as to the responsibilities each has.
7. The willingness of lay leaders to assume responsibility in making decisions.
8. The complexity of the decisions to be made.
9. The time to be devoted to program development.

These and other factors must be considered before the professional Extension worker can determine how he might specifically function. Too many times professional workers have asked local people to make decisions before they were prepared to do so. This

has resulted in mediocre programs, superficial involvement, and a "pooling of ignorance." This kind of experience has not provided real satisfaction for professional or lay leaders and has not resulted in leadership development.

If the professional worker is willing to devote only an evening or a day each year to work with each program development committee (and if records were checked, this might be more the rule than the exception), it is impossible for the planning group to reach the stage of maturity (to have the kinds of experiences which will help it further develop its leadership potential) suggested in this article. In fact, if time is not allowed for actively involving lay leadership, it may be that the professional worker might best assume full responsibility for programming. But, to do so, he is assuming a responsibility far beyond his competency. Superficial, unsatisfying involvement may be more detrimental to a program than no involvement at all.

As a program planning group matures in its ability to make meaningful decisions the leadership position of the professional worker is strengthened. He will be expected to provide additional factual information, further evidence of progress, and to deal with decisions of greater significance. Consequently, the Extension worker should not fear that, as lay leadership assumes more responsibility, he will become less important. He should be sure, however, that responsibilities continue to be well defined and that he performs at a higher level of proficiency.

In turn, as lay leaders participate in meaningful program planning experiences, change will occur in their attitude, knowledge, and skills. As a result, they contribute more as influential leaders in their respective communities because they are more cognizant of the wide range of factors influencing the social and economic conditions of their area. They will also have a greater appreciation for the contribution the Extension Service and other educational agencies can make in helping bring about dynamic action programs.

The Professional Extension Worker

The attitude of the professional Extension worker toward lay leader contributions to program development is a major factor to be considered. Lippitt, Watson, and Westley[1] raise certain questions concerning motives of the "change agent" that may provide added insight when considering attitude. They say that, presumably, a

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[1] Ronald Lippitt, Jeanne Watson, and Bruce Westley, *The Dynamics of Planned Change* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958), p. 93.

change agent is motivated by a desire to help other people. But why does he want to help? Is he genuinely interested in their welfare or does he enjoy giving his help because it inspires feelings of power, assurance, or self-righteousness within him? It is possible, they suggest, that the agent may create a situation where he is so concerned with satisfying his own needs that he is unable to respond to the needs of the people.

The relationship that exists between the professional and lay leader will have a material effect on the degree to which the local leader will participate in planning activities. A satisfactory relationship can only result from a clarification of role. The lay leader should have clearly in mind what he, himself, can contribute and what he can expect from the professional worker. The professional worker, in turn, should have clearly in mind what to expect from the lay leader. This clarification should be arrived at jointly prior to initial involvement in the programming function.

Lay Leader Involvement

The Extension Service prides itself in being one of the leading voluntary adult educational movements in the world. One of the basic reasons it has achieved this reputation is because the content of Extension programs reflects the significant needs and concerns of its clientele. To a great extent, this has been accomplished through participation of local people in programming.

Research in program planning in adult education will support the claim that involvement in program decisions on the part of prospective "students" has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of these programs. Brunner[2] says that studies show practically unanimous agreement that maximum involvement of potential and actual constituents in program building produces the best results. In summing up available evidence, he says that

research in adult education clearly shows, at least in terms of informal and non-credit agencies, (1) that the situation and the problems inherent in it must be taken into account along with the objectives, interest and needs of the people; (2) that the participation of local people in the development of the program on the basis of the facts should be secured; and (3) that the planning itself should become an educational process which will assist people to analyze their own problems and decide on those steps which will help toward their solution through education.[3]

[2] Edmund deS. Brunner, *An Overview of Adult Education Research* (Chicago: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1959), p. 133.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

Leadership/Leader Defined

The terms leader and leadership have been defined in many ways. Beal, Bohlen, and Raudabaugh suggest that *leader* is a personalized term and *leadership* is more abstract. They say that "an individual is a leader in any social situation in which his ideas and actions influence the thoughts and behavior of others."[4] Leadership may be thought of as the process by which the individual and the group interact in an effort to achieve certain goals. Berelson and Steiner suggest that "active leadership is characteristic of groups that determine their own activities, passive leadership of groups whose activities are externally imposed."[5] We could probably agree that participation in program development provides opportunity for active leadership development.

DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES

Through continued learning, lay and professional leaders will mature as planning group members. Overstreet places emphasis on continued learning as an important characteristic of the mature mind; learning itself is not enough. Maturing adults, he says, would want to put their learning into practice.

Out of the human tradition they would have caught the flair of man's creativeness. . . . They would want, then, each on his own or in fellowship with others, to undertake some project for human betterment. . . . Most adults remain merely adults because they never do more than skim the surface of things. . . . These adults of whom we are speaking would want to raise their adulthood above average superficiality by going—each of them—at some specific problem, physical, or social, or what not, and applying their minds in a way that good minds should properly be applied.[6]

The program development process provides the opportunity for creative thinking, commitment, and research which, in turn, should stimulate further maturity.

The Problem-Solving Process

Problem solving is a joint responsibility of the professional and

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[4] George M. Beal, Joe M. Bohlen, and J. Neil Raudabaugh, *Leadership and Dynamic Group Action* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1962), p. 35.

[5] Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, *Human Behavior—An Inventory of Scientific Findings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), p. 343.

[6] Harry Allen Overstreet, *The Mature Mind* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1949), p. 289.

lay leader. Gordon suggests that if members of the group have been involved in initial stages of the problem-solving process (recognizing and diagnosing the problem) they will be in a position to participate constructively in making final decisions. Specifically, Gordon says that this stage of the problem-solving process is a complex one. He says that

among social scientists there exists a widespread recognition of the value of group member participation in decision-making if groups are to arrive at satisfactory decisions, and if they are to carry out their decisions effectively. The pioneering study of Lippitt, Lewin, and White, for example, showed that democratically led groups in which the members were allowed to make decisions about their work activities were significantly different from more leader-centered groups in the following respects: (a) the members were less aggressive toward each other, (b) they showed less dependence upon the leader, (c) there was more group initiative to start new work, and (d) more time was spent in productive work.[7]

Gordon suggests that studies such as these, although few in number, provide considerable empirical evidence for the hypothesis that groups that encourage members to participate in making decisions will be productive and will arrive at decisions that are of high quality and satisfying to the members.

Bases for Decisions

It is often stressed in the programming function that program decisions should be based on an analysis of past trends, the present situation, and a recognition of practical potential. Intelligent decisions must be based on fact—an area where professional Extension workers can make a major contribution. Beal, Bohlen, and Raudabaugh say that "the democratic group succeeds on the assumption that people, given the necessary facts, can make better decisions than others can make for them. One of the weaknesses of group democratic action is embodied in the phrase 'if given the facts.' All too often decisions are made emotionally and on a basis of ignorance."[8] When this happens, program development becomes a "pooling of ignorance" and neither an educational nor a developmental experience.

If an individual as a member of a group is to make intelligent decisions and suggestions for action, he must accept responsibility.

[7] Thomas L. Gordon, *Group Centered Leadership* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1955), p. 63.
[8] Beal, Bohlen, and Raudabaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

Beal, Bohlen, and Raudabaugh place emphasis on knowledge. "Responsibility," they say, "calls for knowledge: knowledge of the group and its goals; knowledge of alternate means by which the goals may be sought; and general knowledge of the area in which the group operates."[9]

Since democracy is vitally important in our American way of life, the way decisions are made should reflect the democratic philosophy. If we are to practice democratic principles, every individual should have some insight into the process of leadership.

MATURING LEADERSHIP

Involvement in the program development process is an excellent means for implementing the democratic philosophy and, at the same time, providing maturing experiences for our leadership. A measure of leadership maturation might be based on the criteria that lay leaders develop the following:

1. Ability to see a situation or problem in its entirety.
2. Ability to see things from the other person's point of view.
3. Appreciation of knowledge recognizing that all knowledge may be useful whether from one's own or other's field of interest.

An additional measure of leadership maturation is suggested by Lippitt[10] when discussing elements of leadership growth. He says that regardless of the type of organization or situation, there is need for some basic individual goals toward which the person who is developing leadership attempts to move. Certain of these goals are expressed as follows:

1. *Insight into self*—since a leader exercises certain power and influence in many situations, it is essential that he understand his own feelings and motivations.
2. *Appropriate sensitivity to situations*—such sensitivity to interpersonal relationships is an important dimension in leadership action.
3. *Diagnostic ability*—the ability to diagnose objectively the emotional and rational needs in a situation.
4. *Rational relationships through application of scientific problem solving*—to work effectively with others, the leader must practice the problem-solving approach of science.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[10] Gordon L. Lippitt (ed.), *Leadership in Action* (Washington: National Training Laboratories, National Education Association, 1961), pp. 94-95.

5. *Continuous learning*—one of the major goals of any individual, particularly of a leader, is to learn how to learn.

CONCLUSION

No effort is made to suggest that leadership development is the end product of the programming function. Rather, it is suggested that leadership development can be a significant outgrowth of this experience. It is not the intention of the writer to suggest that program development committees should be organized for organization's sake. It is not implied that lay leadership should be involved in the program development process for the sake of involvement. To the contrary, if there is opportunity to develop leadership potential through participation in program development then no effort should be made to involve leaders until there is a clear purpose for this involvement and steps to assure effective involvement have been clarified.

Basically, the writer is suggesting that lay leadership maturation can result from time and effort invested by the professional Extension worker. The programming function has "built-in" experiences that should help greatly to enhance leadership growth. These meaningful experiences can be provided if careful thought is given to the opportunities inherent in the program development process. Leaders, in addition to contributing their ideas and suggestions, can be influential in maintaining understanding and support for Extension as well as making a major contribution to the implementation of programs they have had a significant part in designing.

INSTRUCTION FLOURISHES in situations where conformity and obedience rather than considered participation are the goal. Teaching differs from instruction in that it exceeds the goals of instruction. Instruction conditions the mind for acceptance. Teaching goes beyond the presentation of material. Teaching guides the student in how to think and not what to think. Teaching opens the mind to venture out into the great spaces of thought equipped with chart and compass to guide the mind in its quest for truth and meaning.—NORBORNE BERKELEY in *Improving College and University Teaching*, XIII (Winter, 1965).