

Development of Local Leadership for Extension Work*

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AS THE PROGRESS OF A NATION DEPENDS on the type of leadership it gets, the success of extension activities in any area also depends to a large measure on the efficiency of its local leadership. The very fact that modern extension work relies more and more on the participation of local leaders in planning programmes and in the carrying out of mutually agreeable course of action, makes the question of local leadership of extreme importance to the success of extension activities. Another reason for the current concern for the development of local leadership is the democratic belief in the possibility of a learned leadership.

Though these facts have long been recognised, only limited attempts have so far been made to identify or formulate any principles on which an effective training programme for leadership could be based. If leadership is to be developed it must come about through efficient training which, in turn, should rest on tested and proven principles. The lack of such a set of generally accepted principles on which to base an effective leadership training programme is currently the limiting factor. In view of these facts, a study was designed primarily to provide a summary and partial analysis of leadership principles presently held and provide a suggested set of principles to

be used as a guide in the formulation of a training programme.

Though various authors have defined leadership either as traits within individuals or as a function of the group or of the situation, a critical analysis indicates that it is only fair to consider leadership as a function of the interaction of the above mentioned three factors and other more specific variables like structural role of the leadership, social climate and value system of the group.

Leaders are grouped both on the basis of the roles they perform and on the basis of the location of the decision-making function. Since extension work is based on group decisions, more emphasis is given to the latter type. A realistic approach to the problem of deciding which type of leadership is most appropriate for extension work suggests the feasibility of a leadership which is a harmonious combination of all types. Some factors influencing the emergence of a desirable type of leadership are: the educational level of the people, the chances for inter action, the degree of economic security, presence or absence of disagreements among the people, size of the group, altitude of members and the nature of work.

Studies conducted in the area of identification and selection of leaders suggest that

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leadership selection tests valid for a particular situation, will probably have some validity for related situations also. The sociometric and sociodramatic tests are often employed for the identification and selection on the basis of the theory of Ross & Hendry, that the measurable factors in leadership can be put into use in the identification of potential leadership. These tests are developed consistent with the concept that a leader can be studied best in a total group situation and that a true group leader can be identified only by some kind of observation of the effectiveness of his performance in the type of group to which the leadership is related. Using these tests as bases, the following principles were formulated which seem to be valid for the identification and selection of potential leaders.

(1) The testing situations should be set up with reference to a precise criterion of leadership.

(2) The sociodramatic activities should contain an identifiable number of components involving the demonstration of a number of specific skills.

(3) The situation should be simple.

(4) Each response of the one rated should be given some numerical weight.

(5) Ratings should be made by associates as well as other observers.

(6) Final results should not be expressed in too exact gradations.

Further more, there are sufficient indications to believe that persons who come forward voluntarily are more reliable and consistent under practically all conditions.

Authorities in the leadership field agree that ability to lead can be enhanced by training. Leadership training is basically an attempt to stimulate and support leaders' efforts to learn knowledges, attitudes and skills that will improve

the quality of their performance in leadership positions. Resistance to change, which is the primary problem to be tackled in any practical training programme, is basically centred around the restructuring of personality. Research indicates that a decisive factor in the development of leadership type personality is the necessary change of attitudes. This study indicates that the common and individual types of attitudes should be tackled simultaneously if any appreciable progress is to be made in changing attitudes.

Some of the more important principles, formulated, affecting a training programme are:

(1) A climate conducive to participation of trainees should be created.

(2) The programme should be based on the needs of the participants.

(3) In an on-the-job training, a setting should be provided in which the trainee can feel free to try out different methods of handling relationship problems, knowledge and skill and become accustomed to applying these methods in a manner suited to his own personality and the needs of his local situation.

(4) Since each member will have something to contribute, a leadership training programme should emphasize respect for each individual and for his creative ability and past experience.

(5) Leaders-in-training should be given opportunity to share in the determination of the goals and methods used in their training.

(6) Provide learning experiences to give sufficient insight into the "know-how's" and "know-why's" as well. The leaders after training should be able to recognize the ways for leading one way instead of another.

(7) A well-built and maintained group is essential for **effective training**. The size of

the group should be limited so as to allow maximum interaction.

(8) The trainer should help the group in uncovering and analyzing individual and group problems of planning their tasks and carrying them out.

(9) Any leadership training should give equal importance to training in human relations, knowledge, skill and ability to think critically. Human relations training should make the trainees capable of diagnosing possible causes for the particular behaviour of a person and help them to cope with such causes skill-fully. On the whole, training should provide a situation for the development of sensitivity through purposeful and guided experience in interpreting behaviour of others.

(10) A training programme should give opportunities for the trainees to develop the ability to study any social situations along with the ability to analyse the forces pushing against change.

(11) The body of knowledge should be imparted through experience. Each planned experience should provide for every individual to participate actively in the various types of interactive experience, and simultaneously or almost immediately analyse the consequence of his interaction behaviour and to become diagnostic about the situation of which he is a part.

(12) Trainees need to be free of trainer's dominance when they are ready to construct their own training situation.

(13) It is necessary that the training should equip the trainee to know when he is dealing with a problem which goes beyond his own capacity to solve.

When a training programme is developed on the basis of the above principles, it should include the following general items : development of critical thinking, understand-

ing a social situation through analysis of the forces pushing for or against change with the human behaviour involved in it, development of the ability to communicate, increasing the understanding in the interpersonal relationships between individuals in group and problems arising within it in simulated and later actual situations, and creating group cohesion and co-operation.

Local leadership as utilized by various agencies has produced important and lasting results in helping to plan, conduct and evaluate working projects and programmes. It has assisted extension by making possible a much greater diffusion of research-verified knowledge, skills and practices. Local leadership will face a task of immense proportion in the years ahead, the task helping extension and other educational workers perform their increasingly more complex duties more efficiently. By perfecting its local leadership training methods, extension can continue to make itself equal to that challenging task.

This study suggests the necessity for further research in the following areas.

1. Continued efforts should be made to identify the qualities or characteristics of desirable leadership type and to get general understanding and agreement. Standards and criteria should then be established for determining leadership type.

2. More effective tests for aiding in the identification of potential leaders be developed and validated.

3. Further research should also be conducted with an eye to developing and validating instruments to measure the leadership abilities of people before and after leadership training to determine how effective they are as leaders.

4. Studies are needed to determine the comparative effectiveness of methods used for training local leaders for extension and other rural educational programmes.