

LEADERSHIP FOR NONFORMAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Effective leadership for nonformal education is not the same as for formal education. Particularly when working in international settings, the educator must be aware of the similarities and differences between formal and nonformal education. In addition, the educator must be able to employ diverse leadership styles. Too much reliance on an authoritarian leadership style, which works in the classroom, may cause problems outside the classroom. Finally, a knowledge of consultant styles is important. Consultant behavior based on a "prescriptive" style or an approach which emphasizes "theories and principles" may not be appropriate for nonformal educational settings. The author advocates a "catalytic" style of consulting for nonformal education and describes how it can be applied for effective leadership in nonformal education.

How can educators provide leadership to insure the success of nonformal educational programs in international settings? Competent educators, whether "nationals" involved in their own extension organizations or "ex-patriot consultants" involved in an array of out-of-school educational programs, are concerned with the design and delivery of quality programs. They cannot be effective, however, if they do not have a broad understanding of leadership diversity, nonformal education, and various consultant styles.

Most educators are aware of differences when they move from the classroom to nonformal educational settings typical of Scouts, 4-H, youth sports, church groups, or young farmers organizations (outside schools). Many educators see these groups as "inferior educational settings" where there is lack of discipline and professionalism. Such educators often behave the same in such groups as they do in the classroom.

Educators who base their approach only on the school model, however, often fail when dealing with nonformal educational programs. Schools tend to emphasize compulsory attendance, techniques to discipline students, prescribed curricula, and dependence on teachers to control the learning that occurs. Consequently,

hierarchical relationships among students, teachers, and administrators are the norm. Classrooms usually contain age-specific groupings of youth whose learning is put to use after they graduate rather than immediately. Educators who come from formal settings often agree with Kindervatter when they confront nonformal educational settings. They quickly develop "... a dissatisfaction with traditional approaches to learning and search for a new pedagogy" (Kindervatter, 1977).

In nonformal educational settings, client groups seldom resemble the typical school classroom. Attendance is usually voluntary. Learners come with their own objectives and leave when those objectives are met or when they conclude that their objectives will not be addressed. Diverse age groups are common in nonformal educational programs where effective educators are less rigid than classroom teachers in regard to the teaching role. Such educators constantly learn from their clients and often use their clients, intentionally, as educators because of their skills, knowledge, experience or expertise. In order to positively affect nonformal educational programs educators need to be aware of the historical forces such as authoritarian leadership that may work against them. They need to understand how formal and nonformal education differ. They need an

expanded awareness and skills in leadership and consultation. This article will address each of these issues.

A History of Authoritarian Leadership

In this century most of the world's population has been deeply affected by colonialism, World War II, the Cold War, independence movements which have often been turbulent, and a period of regional wars and tensions. With few exceptions, world leaders during this time have used an authoritarian leadership style. Military leaders, political "strongmen," and the more recent fundamentalist religious leaders have outnumbered leaders such as Gandhi or Martin Luther King, Jr. Even in newly independent nations the leaders have usually imitated the leadership style of colonial administrators rather than less authoritarian styles. Most decisions affecting people have been made "at the top" rather than at a "grassroots" level. In times of turbulence and scarce resources, this "top down" mode of decision making is understandable.

Even in extension work, technology transfer and innovation have been consciously directed in most countries as part of a national plan toward the "better-off" farmers who are the innovators and early adopters. This approach, however, is being questioned. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations held a global consultation in Rome in December, 1989, on the need to improve extension services. "The consultation found that the *trickle-down* theory of extension--that extension messages flow from the better-off to the poor--had *limited validity*" (FAO, 1990). The consultation concluded, "In many countries, the extension service will have to make greater efforts to adopt the participatory extension approach and mobilize farmers' and other community organizations" (FAO, 1990). To replace "top down" programming with a more participatory approach, extension educators need to understand how nonformal education differs from the formal (school) system. Then they need to modify their leadership and consultation styles accordingly.

What is Nonformal Education?

Nonformal education is difficult to define satisfactorily, and some educators even feel that definitions confine more than clarify. Since nonformal educational activities are numerous and diverse, a single definition which applies to all is difficult to develop. Coombs (1973) says it is:

...any organized educational activity outside the established formal system--whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity--that is intended to serve some identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives.

Even this definition can be confused with formal schooling. Because education is too often perceived in terms of schooling, we must be careful to state our assumptions so that such misconceptions are avoided. We must further clarify and extend Coombs' definition.

Key dimensions can be identified for particular nonformal educational settings. These dimensions are contextual. They may vary from one international setting to another. A review of literature on the theory and practice of nonformal education found that six dimensions tend to dominate (Etling, 1975; Khan, 1989).

1. Learner-centered means that emphasis is on learning rather than teaching. The learner participates in determining educational objectives and exerts substantial control over content and method. Attitudes of self-awareness and power to control the environment are fostered. Local initiative, self-help, and innovation are encouraged in order to prepare learners to analyze critically and take action to resolve their own practical problems.
2. Cafeteria curriculum (options, variety, and flexibility) is featured instead of the sequential, prescribed curriculum associated with schools. The curriculum

is generated primarily by learners. A strong entertainment feature is included. Examples include local radio, village newspapers, market day exhibits, posters, mobile libraries, drama, role play, games, puppets, and epic narrative. Resources and skills need not be imported or professionally designed.

3. Informal human relationships are essential. Learners and educators are roles which, ideally, switch back and forth among participants. Informal relationships based on mutual respect are necessary if education is to be learner-centered and learners are to choose from a cafeteria of learning opportunities. While this value position is often difficult for professional teachers to accept, local nonprofessional "facilitators" who see their role as catalyst, helper, or enabler are often more effective than lecturers or classical academicians.
4. Reliance on local resources means that costs are kept low without sacrificing quality. Both conventional and unconventional sources are used, and available resources are deployed efficiently. Expensive technology is not necessary and often undesirable. Because learners often bear part of the cost, higher motivation and greater program accountability often result.
5. Immediate usefulness is necessary to learners, who are seldom required to participate in nonformal educational programs. If they cannot see immediate and personal value in the program they are likely to leave. Formal schooling often is oriented to future application. Nonformal education usually involves short term activities with immediate impact.
6. A lower level of structure is necessary when local situations vary so much between and within themselves. Since a

high level of structure means a high level of control, learner-centered approaches, informal human relationships, and immediate usefulness are difficult to achieve under tightly controlled situations. Flexibility too frequently is sacrificed for control. Yet flexibility is necessary to meet the needs of individuals, subcultures, and minority groups. Voluntary organizations and amateurs who learn on the job are favored over governmental programs featuring bureaucratic approaches managed by civil servants. Decentralization is necessary to allow for local approaches to be used to solve local problems.

If these six dimensions are carefully considered by educators when working in nonformal educational settings, planning and implementation will be more effective. These dimensions affect nonformal educational programs at many points. In cooperative extension in the United States, for instance, these dimensions need to be considered in the structure of the organization, in its mission statement, choice of priorities, in-service training of professionals, and in its use of educational methods and techniques. To be truly effective in the future, extension workers will need to shape their organizations, at both the national and community levels, to be flexible in responding to the needs of clients rather than requiring clients to adapt to a rigid, unresponsive organization. Effective agents have always done this in the past.

Extension workers will need to give special attention to the way extension programs are planned. The steps in program planning, however, do not change with formal and nonformal education. But the involvement of people and the techniques used to plan programs collaboratively differ strikingly. With an authoritarian leadership style and a paternalistic attitude toward clients, nonformal educators are bound to fail. Before working on nonformal educational programs, these educators need to diversify their leadership style.

Diversifying Leadership Style

We all agree that a leader is someone who influences others. Most individuals have an image of the ideal leader who may be described by such words as persuasive, courageous, powerful, skillful, and intelligent. In addition, many people have ideas about leaders which can be called myths. Examples of myths include the following misconceptions:

1. leadership is no more than getting others to do what you want of them;
2. leadership is a person--some have it and some do not;
3. some people are born leaders.
4. leaders defeat enemies; and
5. leadership always involves action.

These are myths because:

1. manipulative leaders eventually arouse opposition;
2. anyone can be a leader at any time if that person helps a group meet its goals;
3. leadership is learned;
4. leaders help others accomplish group goals which need not involve an enemy; and
5. sometimes leadership involves not taking action.

A definition of leadership which avoids these myths is: **the art and science of helping others to decide on goals and work toward accomplishing those goals.** Of course, leadership is much more. Most writing on leadership focuses on three styles of leaders (Figure 1):

<i>authoritarian</i>	<i>democratic</i>	<i>laissez faire</i>
which may also be called		
directive	democratic	non-directive
or task oriented	process oriented	no orientation
or task behavior	relationship behavior	do nothing

Figure 1. Three Styles of Leadership.

According to Etling, Radhakrishna, and Bowen (1993), when a leader is **directive**, that person initiates action, structures activities, motivates others, delegates responsibility, and praises or reprimands subordinates. A **democratic** leader gets results by leading discussions, asking questions to involve others, encouraging others to volunteer for responsibilities, confirming commitments, and asking for a vote to get a consensus or a majority decision. A **non-directive** leader refuses to make decisions for others, uses silence until someone in the group speaks out, gives non-verbal support (nods, smiles) to others who show positive leadership, and gradually fades out of a group when others in the group show an ability and willingness to take over.

Different situations require different styles of leadership. Evacuation of a burning building calls for directive leadership. Deciding among several suggestions for an organization's social event calls for democratic leadership. Helping qualified, experienced, and enthusiastic committee heads calls for non-directive leadership.

Leadership will be most effective if a leader can look at a situation, decide what style of leadership is needed by the group, and act accordingly. When a leader is able to use each of the three leadership styles appropriately, this may be called **facilitator leadership**. A facilitator may therefore direct, use democratic leadership, or intentionally let the group provide its own leadership. The style used will vary according to the leader's formal role within the group, the size of the group, the skills and experience of group members, and the motivation and goals of group members. It also depends on group maturity (the ability and willingness of group members to set goals and work toward the accomplishment of those goals). An effective facilitator leader will learn to quickly consider all of these factors and choose the best leadership style for the situation.

Facilitator Leadership

Learning more about facilitator leadership is important. Most people value democratic leadership. Historically, however, they have usually followed directive leaders.

Non-directive leadership often has been viewed as weak. Military and business activities usually call for directive leadership. Most national leaders come from those backgrounds. But in community volunteer organizations, directive leadership can be overused with disastrous results.

A comparison of the traditional directive leader and the facilitator leader (Etling, Radhakrishna, & Bowen, 1993) is in order (Figure 2).

Nonformal educators, who would develop a facilitator style of leadership need to strengthen their skills and sensitivity in all three areas. To more effectively employ directive leadership, they need to consider if it is the best style for the situation. Does the group need directive leadership? Who is the best person to direct? Who in the group will compete for the leadership role? How can conflict be avoided and cooperation fostered? The directive leader must also avoid taking all of the jobs or seeking all of the glory. A directive leader needs to recognize individuals' contributions, praise them in front of the group, keep criticism constructive and private, delegate responsibility, think before speaking, speak briefly and to the point, seek advice before making decisions for a group, and admit mistakes when they are made.

When practicing democratic leadership, the educator, whether extension agent or outside consultant, should make each group member feel important by asking for opinions, especially from the quieter members, by using a variety of techniques for decision-making (majority voting, negative voting, consensus, compromise, etc.), and by asking questions to get others involved. The democratic leader

<u>directive leader</u>	<u>facilitator leader</u>
leads from in front	often leads from behind
one style	three styles
gives orders, make statements	relies more on questions and suggestions
focuses on leader's strengths	focuses on group's needs
person of action	sensitive, thoughtful person
know-it-all	seeks help from others
says, "Don't just sit there, do something."	says, "Don't just do something, think about it first."

Figure 2. A Comparison of Traditional Directive Leader with the Facilitator Leader.

should encourage group decisions and discourage individual decisions which do not support the group. Once a decision is made, the democratic leader should summarize agreements and commitments then "check back" to see if group members need help to complete their commitments.

To be an effective non-directive leader, an educator must learn to listen, observe, consider what is happening and why, and encourage others through non-verbal behaviors (smile, nod in agreement, give a "thumbs up" signal). When group members ask for the leader's opinion, the question should be turned back to them or to a quieter member by saying, "I'm not sure. What do you think, Jill?" When asked to decide, a non-directive leader should turn the decision back to them by saying, "I really don't feel I should decide for the group. What are the possible decisions? What are the pros and cons of each? Which possibility would you choose?"

In summary, a facilitator leader assesses the situation and chooses a leadership style appropriate for the situation (Figure 3):

As skills increase, a facilitator will be able to shift from a directive to a democratic to a non-directive style as appropriate. When the group is able to make decisions and take responsibility for its concerns, the facilitator will be prepared to relinquish leadership in order to give attention to other needs or opportunities.

Consultant Styles

When working with local groups in nonformal educational settings in other countries, the educator needs one more tool in order to be effective: an understanding of different consultant styles. Blake and Mouton (1976) describe five consultant styles which they call "kinds of intervention: prescriptive, theories and principles, confrontation, acceptant, and catalytic."

In **prescriptive** consulting the client is told what to do or the consultant does it for the client. The consultant assumes the responsibility and makes decisions. Obviously this style conflicts with the six dimensions of

<i>directive</i>	or	<i>democratic</i>	or	<i>non-directive</i>
initiates		asks questions to involve others		fades out gradually
structures		leads discussion		uses silence
motivates		tests to see if consensus exists		gives non-verbal support
delegates		encourages others to take responsibility		refuses to make decisions for others
praises		thanks		nods, smiles
reprimands		confirms commitments		allows it to happen

Figure 3. Leadership Styles for Appropriate Situations.

nonformal education and would be inappropriate for many nonformal educational settings. It is more consistent with directive leadership. A facilitator leader would not be able to rely extensively on this consultant style.

Theories and principles is a kind of intervention where the consultant helps the client internalize theories in order to diagnose and deal with situations using "sound behavior." Theory is defined strictly as explicit hypotheses--systematic behavioral science formulations--that can be tested. Since nonformal education involves trial and error, common sense, and flexible plans (all of which are specifically rejected in Blake and Mouton's definition of theory), this kind of intervention is also largely inappropriate for a nonformal educational setting.

Confrontation is a means of challenging assumptions of clients. Although this type of intervention may be helpful and necessary at times, it may damage informal human relationships if overused. Care should be exercised in the use of this consulting style. It tends to be teacher-centered rather than

learner-centered and it fits more with directive leadership than with facilitator leadership.

Where the client needs a sense of personal security or encouragement toward self-reliance, the **acceptant** style may be used. This style is often appropriate in nonformal education (i.e., when encouraging local communities to exercise self-determination). This style may be appropriate in the same situations that call for non-directive leadership. By itself, however, this style is one-dimensional. A facilitator leader might use it occasionally but not always. The acceptant style, if overused, can disappoint clients who may feel that they do not need a consultant who only tells them that they are on the right track.

The fifth kind of intervention, the **catalytic** role, is usually most appropriate where participation is desired. In consulting, as in chemistry, the catalyst is an agent which, when added to other substances, causes a change in the speed of reaction but does not get used up in the process. Catalytic intervention is consistent with the six nonformal education dimensions. It is also similar to the "facilitator" role and involves skills needed by effective nonformal educators.

At times, the catalytic consultant will use directive leadership; at other times democratic leadership will be appropriate; and occasionally, non-directive leadership may be best to catalyze a client group. The key in catalytic consulting, as in facilitator leadership and nonformal education, is to focus on the learner, maintain flexibility, provide options, maintain informal human relationships, emphasize practicality, and avoid rigidity in structures or processes.

Summary

This article has focused on effective leadership for nonformal education. The underlying theme is sensitivity and diversity on the part of the international educator. For too long, we have seen "airport consultants" working on nonformal education programs. Such consultants accept assignments for which they are unprepared. They often decide on solutions while enroute to the assignment. Their solutions, however, are usually based on their experiences in formal education. Unfortunately their attitude, on too many occasions, is "Here is my advice, now tell me about your problem." Finally, such consultants usually return home before "their" solutions are implemented. A similar attitude often prevails among the "experts from the capital city" when they visit local educational programs.

Needless to say, competent nonformal educators who practice the preferred behaviors described in this article are rare. Further, to find educators who can move from formal educational settings to nonformal educational settings is even more difficult. If local people are to benefit from their education, they must be heavily involved--not just as passive receivers of "so called" expert advice, but also in the planning and control of their educational programs. The need for active participation by learners is clear. FAO (1990) reviewed several past efforts of top-down administration and trickle down delivery of extension programs and concluded that a new strategy is needed to revitalize rural development:

A basic element of the strategy is already clear: people's participation. Future development efforts must aim at releasing the energies of rural people and guaranteeing that they share fully in the fruits of their efforts. This can only be achieved by enabling the poor to take charge of their lives, to make full use of resources and to manage their own activities.

This article has discussed several desirable skills and knowledge needed by educators who wish to be effective in nonformal educational settings. It has also described many of the attitudes necessary to work effectively in nonformal educational programs. Of these three--skills, knowledge, and attitudes--the most important is attitude. Educational programs will serve the needs of learners more effectively when educators recognize the basic similarities and differences between formal and nonformal education and then expand their leadership and consulting styles to fit the needs of the programs with which they are working.

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