BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF LEADERS: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF A PROGRAM TO TRAIN SENIORS AS EMPOWERING LEADERS[1]

Sandra Cusack
Research Associate, Educational Gerontology

and

Wendy Thompson
Simon Fraser University at Harbour Center

Abstract

The Leadership for the 90's project trained senior volunteer leaders committed to the concept of "shared-servant" leadership (as outlined in the training manual Flying High [Thompson & Cusack, 1990]) to facilitate the development of their peers as leaders in a 3,000 member association. A method of case study provides an in-depth understanding of the research and development of the training program and the model that emerged. Twenty-one people, aged 52 to 75 years (average 64), participated in a 10-month program. Results of self-assessments support anecdotal evidence of significant improvement in conducting an effective meeting, communicating ideas clearly, the feeling of being heard, general confidence in a group, confidence in speaking to a group, and the ability to plan an effective presentation.

Résume

Le projet Leadership for the 90's visait à former des bénévoles du troisième âge suivant le concept de «l'assistance partagée» (tel que décrit dans le manuel de formation Flying High–Thompson et Cusack, 1990) afin de faciliter le développement de leurs pairs en tant qu'intervenants au sein d'une association regroupant quelque 3 000 membres. La méthode de l'étude de cas permet une compréhension approfondie de la recherche et du développement ayant conduit à l'instauration du programme, ainsi que du modèle qui en découle. Au total 21 personnes âgées de 52 à 75 ans (moyenne: 64 ans) participèrent au programme pour une durée de 10 mois. Le résultat des autoévaluations révèle une amélioration, ce qui confirme les renseignements anecdotiques concernant la gestion des réunions, la communication efficace, le sentiment d'être écouté, la confiance en soi dans les situations de groupe, l'assurance lors de communications orales, et la capacité de planifier une présentation efficace.

In a learning society, education in later life is not simply an indulgence for the educated or affluent; it is as critical to quality of life as housing or income assistance (Moody, 1987-88). The Third Age or retirement stage of life is now accepted as neither a period of disengagement, as Cumming and Henry (1961) suggested, nor a time for "keeping busy" (as supported by activity theorists), but

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a period of personal growth and active engagement in challenging and worthwhile enterprises.

The concept of continuous personal development is much more than filling time. It embodies the hope that, with the luxury of time available, the third age provides an opportunity to contribute the knowledge and experience of a lifetime to the betterment of community life. Today these aspirations are not just those of the wealthy and powerful, they are commonly expressed by older adults from all walks of life. What is missing for older adults in our society is the opportunity for education and productive engagement.

The *Leadership for the 90's* project represented a unique opportunity to offer leadership training in response to the personal development needs of volunteers in a seniors' center and to marry the talents and desires of individuals with the needs and goals of the organization.

Background to the Project

With the changing view of the capacities and desires of older adults, retirement is becoming a time for personal development and productive engagement in community life. For some, this means assuming new leadership roles in groups and organizations. However, old attitudes die hard. An in-depth study of leadership in Centennial Center (Cusack, 1993) suggested that the general membership shared assumptions about leadership that were formidable barriers to the emergence of leaders, such as:

1. The leader must be a visionary who takes charge and makes the decisions.

2. There are leaders and there are followers.

3. Most volunteers will *never* be leaders.

4. Leadership involves skills associated with management.

5. Men should be "running things."

Assumptions about power also act as barriers to emergent leadership. People who have not been in positions of power in their working lives tend to view power as negative and, therefore, say that they do not want or need it. Thus people who have had power in their working lives and want to maintain it are most willing to assume leadership roles. Such people often have traditional styles of leadership that perpetuate many of the assumptions about leadership (identified above) that prevent the vast majority of people from getting more involved, developing their personal potential, and sharing the power and the leadership.

To promote a new approach to leadership in the center, a training program was proposed and two consultants hired to develop and implement a series of workshops focused on "shared-servant" leadership as outlined in the training manual *Flying High: A Guide to Shared Leadership in Retirement* (Thompson & Cusack, 1990). Shared-servant leadership is an approach that combines the concept of the leader as serving the group's needs (Greenleaf, 1977) with the shared leadership style exemplified by Canada geese in flight. Seniors who took the training became committed to this new approach, formed the *Leadership for the 90's* Committee, and laid the groundwork for a second training program designed to promote shared-servant leadership throughout their center and the wider community. The expectation was that seniors trained as "empowering" leaders (i.e., people who could support and encourage leadership amongst their peers) would thus contribute to a sustainable culture of leadership. This paper describes the development, implementation, and evaluation of the second leadership training program, presented as a case study designed to provide a deep understanding of the program. The model that emerged is intended for senior leaders and adult educators working in seniors centers and other contexts who want to implement a program of sustainable leadership.

The Context

With the growing population of healthier and better-educated retired people, seniors centers are becoming "big business"–the business of helping older adults to create more satisfying and meaningful lives during their retirement years. In order to develop and deliver a wide variety of programs and activities that serve the leisure and educational needs of adults aged 50 and over, seniors' centers require a supply of willing and able leaders who work with staff in delivering programs and services to members.

Centennial Center is no exception. Like the surrounding community, the history of the center is characterized by rapid population growth, beginning with a membership of 600 in 1977 and expanding to over 3,000 members in 1992. In 15 years, programming has grown from approximately 30 activities to over 100, with a total of nine staff members (full- and part-time) to assist in programming, registering, food services, and operation of the center. From the beginning, the center has had a strong sports program (e.g., curling, lawn bowling, snooker) as well as traditional crafts, woodworking, and musical groups; and many community support services (e.g., stroke club, cardiac rehabilitation group, a widows' group and a caregivers' support group). Increasingly, programs of an educational nature (e.g., computer classes, assertiveness training) are offered.

The center is supported by membership dues and partially subsidized by the City through its Parks and Recreation Commission. A seniors advisory board in the center provides input into decision making through the coordinator, who represents seniors' interests at management level. In the final analysis, decisions

are made by management and, because the community is not a "retirement community" (e.g., the percentage of people over 65 is less than the national average of 11%), the needs of seniors are low on the list of priorities for tax dollars. Moreover, in these recessionary times, subsidies to seniors are being reduced and senior volunteers are increasingly required to assume a greater share of the workload in the delivery of services and programs.

The Leadership Training Program

Purpose

The *Leadership for the 90's* project was designed to address three primary goals:

1. To promote leadership and personal development for seniors.

2. To train a group of seniors as "in-house" workshop leaders.

3. To prepare a group of volunteer leaders to work with staff to promote, organize, and coordinate leadership opportunities to meet the needs of leaders and potential leaders.

As consultants in educational gerontology, hired to develop and facilitate leadership training workshops, our goal was to develop self-confident and capable leaders who knew how to empower others, thus creating a sustainable culture of shared leadership. Changing attitudes and beliefs deeply embedded in a culture involves more than simply providing training workshops–it involves learning a new language, learning and relearning skills, and putting new skills into practice. Most of all, it involves building confidence. We recognized that many people, by their example and by encouraging and supporting others, could promote the development of leadership in their peers. However, we expected that only a few people would express a desire to become workshop leaders.

Developing the Training Program

The program for developing seniors as empowering leaders is based on:

1. A philosophy and an approach to research as emancipatory education, based in the work of critical pedagogues such as Freire (1973) and Lather (1991).

2. A collaborative approach to program development reflecting principles of andragogy, based in the work of Brookfield (1986) and Knowles (1980).

3. Reciprocal learning experiences that reflect principles of empowering pedagogy informed by Kreisberg, 1992; Lather, 1991; and Vella, 1994).

In many ways, developing the model that grew out of the program involved systematizing the training experience into a kind of language that participants could apply to specific situations. Cousins (1990) cites Florence Nightingale's impassioned plea for an education that empowers women.

Many long for an education to teach them to teach; to teach them the laws of the human mind and how to apply them–and knowing how imperfect, in the present state of the world such an education must be, they long for experience, not patchwork experience, but experience followed up and systematized (into a kind of a language). And how should we learn a language if we were to give to it an hour a week? (p. 39)

Learning the language of a confident servant leader and how to facilitate its emergence in others requires a much more intensive learning experience than simply attending a one-hour lecture once a week.

Evaluation research as emancipatory education. Evaluation is a critical component of any community program, but, in seniors' programs it can be a disempowering process, objectifying participants and involving tedious written work that interferes with enjoyment and spontaneity. To the contrary, evaluation research in the tradition of emancipatory education can be an empowering experience. The *Leadership for the 90's* Planning Committee was involved in the development of the evaluation procedures with a focus on making evaluation an integral and enjoyable part of the training program. Critical reflection was encouraged throughout the development of the project using both informal and formal methods. Participants were engaged as equal partners, not just by asking them what they liked and what they did not like about the training, but by giving voice to personal experience, raising critical awareness of their social world, reinforcing their personal skills, and recognizing contributions.

The method of case study was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the development and implementation of a program within a specific context and the meaning for those involved (Merriam, 1988). As Stake (1978) suggests, case studies offer descriptions that are complex, holistic, and involve a myriad of variables that cannot be easily isolated. Data are gathered partly by personal observations. The writing style is informal with verbatim quotes included.

Data collection procedures were:

1. Pretest and posttest questionnaires to participants.

2. Weekly workshop and personal progress reports.

3. A participant observation record of all training sessions.

4. A half-way assessment designed to focus the leadership practicum.

5. Written responses to three questions concerning the value of the program to be submitted on the final day.

6. A final evaluation in the form of a focus group discussion.

Collaborative program development. Our approach to program development is andragogical; i.e., philosophically based on a set of assumptions about adults as learners (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). Knowles has been criticized widely for not grounding his approach in empirical research. As Jarvis writes,

Andragogy has acquired the status of an established doctrine in adult education, but without being grounded in sufficient empirical research to justify its dominant position. (1984, p. 32)

Based on Knowles' (1980) philosophy of andragogy and Brookfield's (1986) recommendations for collaborative program development, we practiced the following principles for empowering adults throughout the project:

1. Encourage autonomy and self-direction, involve participants in decision making regarding every aspect of the program.

2. Follow the needs, interests, and leads of participants, rather than the needs as professionally defined.

3. Give each participant equal opportunity and encouragement to express his or her views.

4. Take every opportunity to recognize individual talents, contributions, and achievements.

5. Recognize and build on the diversity within the group.

6. Recognize the source of ideas.

7. Encourage individuals to choose what they want to pursue and to contribute in self-defined ways.

8. Encourage participants to set reasonable limits on their involvement, and provide constant checks on the workload, extending maximal opportunity with minimal obligation.

Empowering pedagogy. In contrast to andragogy, pedagogy is an approach to teaching children that presupposes a difference in status between the teacher and

the student. Empowering pedagogy is particularly appropriate as an approach to teaching adults when a difference in power exists between teacher and student and one of the primary objectives is to shift the power and control to the learner. The teacher-facilitator who empowers others does not give up authority and responsibility, but actively works to transfer responsibility for learning to students. Empowering pedagogy involves a shift in power as domination to power as creative energy. A view of power as creative energy requires that strategies be developed to counteract unequal power relationships and to move the dynamics toward equality of power (Shrewsbury, 1987). In classroom discussion sessions, our approach incorporated strategies for facilitating critical thinkers outlined by Brookfield (1991) and Vella (1994):

1. Affirm participants' self-worth.

2. Listen attentively to what each person has to say.

3. Show that you support participants' efforts.

4. Assist people to identify and challenge limiting beliefs and assumptions.

5. Motivate and inspire people to accept new challenges.

6. Regularly evaluate progress.

Leadership Training Workshops

The first half of the program consisted of nine training workshops, each of two-and-a-half hours, designed to clarify the concept of shared-servant leadership; to build individual self-confidence and self-esteem; and to build a supportive team. Confidence in one's leadership skills does not occur as a result of injections of topics x, y, and z, but develops through continuous discussion, practice, feedback, reflection, and renegotiation with the focus on topics that relate to the tasks involved in leadership.

The training program evolved as a continuous process, drawing on the trainer's knowledge and skill, and building on the skills and experiences of the participants. A base of knowledge was developed relating to four topics: (a) Group Dynamics, (b) Making Meetings Work, (c) Facilitating Discussion, and (c) Making an Effective Presentation. Skill-building continued throughout the program in the areas of communication, confidence, sharing the leadership, and public speaking.

Summary. Following the nine-week series of classes, a member of the class provided the following summary:

A group of retirees have now completed the first phase of a leadership development project designed to prepare them to facilitate the emergence of a new approach to leadership in our seniors' center. As a member of the group, I have observed the transformation of a noncohesive collection of individuals (aged 50 to 75) with diverse histories into a cohesive and homogeneous, tolerant, confident, assertive, and productive group. How did we manage this metamorphosis in such a short time?

We started by absorbing the principles of Shared-Servant Leadership, an approach promoted in the training manual, *Flying High: A Guide to Shared Leadership in Retirement.* We were then engaged in identifying our individual training needs, while encouraging and supporting each other to develop their individual potential and to share the leadership. Participants were given equal opportunity to speak and to share their points of view, as well as to share their skills and talents. The respect given to each person's views and experience enabled them to recognize and share their strengths.

The first step in developing self-confident leaders was building confidence by motivating, encouraging and supporting each member's efforts. For example, participants were asked to introduce another member of the group, and introductions were followed by positive feedback for their efforts. While practicing and developing skill in communicating our ideas in an interesting way, we all developed a feeling of acceptance by the group, despite our personal limitations. Positive feedback from the group helped people cope with frustrations and nervousness, and promoted feelings of strength and confidence.

Opportunities to build self-confidence and develop speaking skills were presented at each session. For example, participants were given opportunities to introduce the session, share a joke or poem with the group, and report on any events or books relating to shared leadership. Each session was designed to heighten our sense of self-worth, while developing listening and communication skills by using appropriate assertive and supportive language as well as defining, adjusting, assessing, and restructuring our personal development goals.

During the first phase of the program, I have myself gone through a profound change. I began the course somewhat reluctantly with a negative attitude towards groups, based on a lifetime of experience with autocratic group leadership that suppressed individuality and creativity. This group has been a new experience for me. I have learned to communicate more effectively and with more sensitivity to the needs of others in the group. I have come to enjoy sharing ideas in a group and I have a new feeling of acceptance and freedom to express myself.

These insightful observations provide dramatic evidence of both individual and group transformation. In the truest sense, this project illustrates emancipatory research liberating individuals, being transformed to a higher sense of self. People gained the freedom to express themselves; they gained confidence in their capacity for leadership, and moved to a higher level of contribution, while supporting and encouraging each other to create a united team. This participant's summary corroborates each statistically significant finding (see <u>Self-assessment scores</u> section, p. 27).

From Training into Practice

Based on our analysis of the weekly assessments, the practicum began with weekly sessions designed to develop and support skills in three areas:

1. Speaking with confidence in a group.

2. Becoming a more effective group leader.

3. Communicating ideas clearly.

Putting newly honed leadership skills into practice involved a process of gradually developing and refining individual goals, and matching the skills and desires of individuals with the needs of the 3,000 member organization. This occurred throughout the training workshops, beginning in session 2, according to the following steps:

1. Weekly assessments at the end of each workshop asked participants to identify the skills they would like to develop.

2. Participants were asked in week 5 what they would ultimately like to do with what they have learned.

3. The center coordinator visited the class in week 6 to present a list of opportunities at the center and requested volunteers for the various roles.

4. The previous week's commitments were reviewed and discussed and additional ideas solicited and explored. The instructor emphasized that individual needs and desires must always come before the center's needs.

5. Participants handed in written statements of their personal goals for the practicum at the final training workshop, and these were discussed and clarified.

The Practicum

The purpose of the practicum was to assist and support people in carrying out self-chosen leadership projects and activities, and to prepare leaders to facilitate leadership training workshops. Participants volunteered to open and close meetings, and to facilitate brainstorming and group discussion. The first practicum session was introduced by a participant-leader:

> The practicum is an opportunity to put theory into practice. It is an opportunity for each one of us to practice our skills and to work on improving them. I am reminded of my first practicum almost half a century ago at the age of 22. In preparing for my profession as a social worker, I had three months of theory under my belt. That and the enthusiasm of youth were all that I had. Our experience here is much different. We have had some theory over the past three months, but we also have many years of experience and wisdom to draw on. We are in good shape to fly high, and to try many things in the weeks ahead. We might fly out of formation from time to time, but we have our weekly practicum sessions to keep us on track and support us in what we are doing.

The group decided to continue with regular weekly sessions designed to further develop leadership skills and to support people undertaking new leadership roles in the center. Discussions addressed specific roles and group challenges, principles of adult learning (Brookfield, 1986; Vella, 1994,) and what is different about teaching retired people (Thompson & Cusack, 1990). Three sessions focused on planning, promoting, advertising, facilitating, and evaluating a leadership training workshop (Thompson & Cusack, 1990).

Program Evaluation and Assessment

Participants. Twenty-two members began the training program, and 21 completed it; five did not complete the practicum. Fourteen women and two men completed the posttest, including one man who did not complete the pretest, leaving a sample size of 15. Participants ranged in age from 52 to 75 years with an average age of 64 years. Level of education ranged from two people with Grade 8 education to two people with postgraduate degrees–high school graduation was the norm. Primary occupations included: coordinator for several organizations while raising seven children, food service supervisor in a seniors' home, dental assistant, research and resource librarian, public relations, nurse, office work, social planning, and organizational development. With respect to prior leadership training, eight had taken the previous leadership training course at the center, two had taken other leadership courses, six had led Cubs, Guides, or Sunday School, or a combination thereof. With respect to teaching experience, four had taught Sunday School, others mentioned crafts, night school workshops on retirement planning, first aid, and conference presentations.

They had chosen to take the course for either personal development or to be more effective leaders. When asked to identify specific skills they would like to develop, seven people mentioned communication skills:

> ...confidence to speak in a group, ability to express myself clearly; to talk in front of people without passing out from fear.

Others mentioned:

> ...making other people comfortable, the art of meeting and greeting new members, patience and tolerance.

One person commented:

> Please help me! I need more self-assurance to overcome my shyness in groups.

Post program self-assessment. The project had three expected outcomes and three questions were designed to assess the degree to which these were achieved:

1. Do you feel prepared to promote leadership for retirees?

   Without exception, everyone responded "yes." Individual comments included:

   > Yes, I feel confident in my understanding of shared servant leadership and able to communicate such.

   > Yes, I feel there are a lot of retirees who have skills and just have to be shown their skills are needed.

   > Yes, I have the confidence to do the task and the mental attitude and verbal ability to help others become leaders.

2. Do you feel prepared to facilitate leadership training workshops?

   Eight people said "yes" and seven said "no" (reflecting the two levels of development in the group). Those who had reservations said they needed more practice and two declined for health reasons.

3. Do you feel prepared to plan and coordinate leadership opportunities?

   Responses again reflected two levels of development: eight said yes and seven were not prepared. The people who said "no" said they would help, with support.

Every participant expressed confidence in becoming a more effective leader:

Yes, I am more productive and willing to take on more leadership responsibilities. I also get personal enjoyment from participating.

Yes, I feel more confident, and I know I am more effective, because my group tells me. I share more work, and I am more sensitive to the needs of others.

Yes, I have tested some of my skills in practice and I am more effective in dealing with groups, planning, organizing and coordinating projects.

Yes, I can speak more easily at functions and I think more quickly on my feet.

Yes, I am more confident and I share my skills by assuming roles that I would never have taken on before.

Yes, I communicate better, my confidence level is higher, and I see the results in my group.

Self-assessment scores. On both pre and post program self-assessment, participants were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being high) on 12 items reflecting skills of empowering leadership. In comparing the mean scores, it was noteworthy that there were increases in means on every item. Statistically significant increases were in items:

1. Ability to conduct an effective meeting (p=.001).

4. Ability to communicate ideas clearly (p=.004).

6. The feeling that others listen to what I say (p=.016).

7. General level of confidence in a group (p=.010).

8. Confidence in speaking to a group (p=.012).

9. Ability to plan an effective presentation (p=.024).

Table 1 shows the scores on the 12 items for 15 participants (NB: those scores which are statistically significant support anecdotal evidence, reference Summary, p. 25-26).

Table 1

A Comparison of Mean Scores on the Self-Assessment of Empowering Leadership Skills

Item			Mean Score
1. Ability to conduct an effective meeting		pre	5.5
		post	**7.0*** (p=.001)
2. Level of self-esteem		pre	6.6
		post	7.5
3. Ability to facilitate a group discussion		pre	5.5
		post	6.7
4. Ability to communicate ideas clearly		pre	6.1
		post	**7.4*** (p = .004)
5. Listening skill		pre	7.7
		post	8.1
6. The feeling that others listen to what I have to say		pre	7.1
		post	**7.8*** (p = .016)
7. General level of confidence in a group		pre	6.6
		post	**7.8*** (p = .010)
8. Confidence in speaking to a group		pre	6.2
		post	**7.7*** (p = .012)
9. Ability to plan an effective group presentation		pre	6.0
		post	**7.6*** (p = .024)
10. Ability to give constructive feedback to others		pre	6.3
		post	7.5
11. Ability to accept criticism		pre	7.4
		post	8.1
12. Ability to think clearly in my seat or on my feet		pre	7.1
		post	7.7

* Indicates statistically significant difference between pre-and post-test mean scores

Assessing the impact of the program. As Brookfield (1986) suggests, adult learning goes beyond prespecified learning objectives: "significant personal learning entails fundamental change in learners and leads them to redefine and reinterpret their personal, social, and occupational worlds" (p. 214). Such evidence is provided in written responses to three questions during the final week of the project. Selected responses were:

1. How have you benefitted personally from this program?

The program has taught me valuable communication skills which I can apply to all aspects of my life. It has made me think about myself as a person. It has given me confidence and more self-esteem, and I have begun to realize that my ideas and opinions are of value to others in a group.

My preconceived ideas of retirement kept getting in my way of actively participating in various projects of interest to me. This program has removed these inhibitions, and given me a real kick start to once again enjoy the satisfaction of involvement.

I was able to modify my leadership style from an authoritarian to a shared-servant leadership approach. I have increased confidence in assuming roles and responsibilities. I have improved my communication and observation skills with individuals and groups. I have enhanced my organizational problem-solving skills which were always fairly strong. I have increased knowledge of group dynamics and interaction resulting in improved facilitation skills. I have more awareness of the needs of seniors and I am in a better position to help other seniors meet their needs. I have gained a deeper appreciation of the value of humor in working and interacting with people, and I have acquired tools that I can use in facilitating workshops.

2. How does the community benefit when a seniors' center offers leadership training programs such as this?

   The community benefits in many ways by the leadership skills we have learned in the program. I have learned how to understand the needs of others, how to share my knowledge, and how to work together to reach common goals. I have become an empowered leader!

   The community benefits directly and indirectly. Directly–by having a core of senior leaders who continue to make a contribution to their community by helping other seniors help themselves. Indirectly–shared-servant leaders will promote and help to implement the concept of active living and wellness of seniors at all levels of community life.

   The whole community benefits when we take our new leadership skills into groups outside of the center. More new volunteers come forward as they gain confidence. With more volunteers, the workload is shared. Furthermore, new volunteers bring new ideas and energy to the community, often becoming leaders themselves and developing new programs that are of benefit to the community.

3. What else would you like to tell the people who funded the project?

Anyone can benefit by taking a course in shared servant-leadership. The skills acquired can be applied to all groups and for all walks of life.

That feeling of being empowered is great. This program has given full meaning to the word. E - enthusiastic, M - motivated, P - powerful, O - optimistic, W - wise, E -energetic, R - revitalized.

It was exciting to see how each of us changed as the months went on. It is a snowball effect–the more we shared, the bigger our confidence grew, and some people gained enough confidence to start new projects.

Further expansion of this project could lead to alleviating the costs of social service programs for seniors.

Program evaluation. During the final session, participants were urged to reflect critically on the program and to identify what was most effective, and what could be improved. With respect to improvement, they suggested:

Many of us weren't ready for the practicum and there wasn't enough practice leading class discussions before we launched into the actual workshop. It would have been helpful if we had practiced different aspects of presenting the workshop as we went along throughout the course.

We may not have been perfect, but I think we regenerated some brain cells. My only criticism is that it can't go on. We need a shot in the arm now and then, a training session once a month would help us to maintain a level of skill and confidence.

It would have been helpful if we had used the assessments ourselves each week and were then able to keep track of our own progress.

With regard to "what worked," they said:

It is amazing how shy quiet people improved from almost crying when they spoke to speaking with ease and confidence.

People have always told me I was talented and I never believed them. Now I know that my contributions are important.

The technique of having the answers come from the group rather than the leader was most effective.

This course is for everyone–it's not just for leaders. We've learned that we are all leaders.

This would be an excellent course for anyone newly retired.

Conclusions

The development of seniors as empowering leaders is the culmination of a five-year period of leadership and organizational development in a seniors' center. It demonstrates what is possible when skilled staff work with committed volunteers to secure funds to support the expertise and intensive training required. Collectively, these people are redefining retirement as a time of continuous contribution. Despite what we know about the changing nature of retirement and about the desires and capacities of retired people, we (regardless of age) tend to operate from the beliefs and values of a lifetime; i.e., the negative stereotypes that limit late life potential, unless our assumptions are continuously challenged. Volunteers engaged in changing attitudes and helping their peers to assume new challenges and to contribute their skills need and deserve to have the highest quality of training opportunities.

The Model

An important outcome of the research process was a model to assist senior leaders and adult educators in other contexts in developing a culture of leadership. The model, based on the metaphor of the Canada goose, emerged from the participant observation record of the training program, and was refined through group discussions. Because developing leadership involves more than just a training program, the model includes changing attitudes and beliefs and the language that people use. The seven components of the model are:

1. Principles of adult learning.

2. Secrets of empowering leadership.

3. Leader language.

4. Techniques for building self-confidence and team support.

5. Group challenges.

6. The human factor.

7. Facilitating a training workshop.

The model provides a framework for training leadership trainers, however, there are limitations to its use by other groups wanting to train seniors and *eliminate* the need to fund professionals. First, unlike the training manual, *Flying High*, it is not a "how-to" guide. Rather, it lays out the elements of the trainer's program

based on a particular approach to leadership. A measure of group empowerment comes from creating a unique product (Rudd & Comings, 1994). Seniors, who use the model as a base for working with consultants to develop their own unique training program, will become more invested in and committed to its success. Collaborative program development is key to empowerment and motivation. Finally, the successful development of seniors as leaders *in any context* depends on skilled and effective adult education and the appropriate support from professionals.

Discussion

The project raised two critical issues.

1. Can we expect seniors who participate in a training program of eight to ten weeks to deliver leadership training workshops?

It takes many years of training and experience to become an effective workshop facilitator, and few seniors have either the desire or the skills to take on such a job. Those who have been teachers throughout their working lives seldom wish to continue in such a demanding role following retirement without remuneration. However, with considerable support, skilled and intensive training over a 10-month period, six people worked collaboratively to prepare and deliver a leadership workshop to volunteers in their center. Ongoing training and support from staff are required if this group is expected to offer leadership workshops in the future.

2. If seniors are assuming the role of staff in developing leadership, does this mean staff are no longer needed?

Unfortunately, this kind of research and development can be misused by administrators and policy makers eager to cut tax dollars and reduce staff. To the contrary, it means that staff may require more intensive leadership training themselves in order to work most effectively with senior leaders.

Epilogue. Following the conclusion of the program, support staff were further reduced. Graduates of the program are continuing to play a leadership role in moving the center toward a fully autonomous operation, one run for and by seniors. To expect senior volunteer leaders to carry the workload without staff support, recognition, and continuing opportunities for leadership and personal development is exploitation of this population. We then risk losing, instead of gaining, a vast resource yet to be tapped in our aging society.

In summary, what this project teaches is the power of education to transform the lives of ordinary people by giving them the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to assume leadership roles and make important contributions to their

communities. It demonstrates what is possible. Seniors are a rich community resource–many are already serving their families as caregivers to grandchildren, spouses, and parents. They will continue to give generously of themselves to enrich communities across the country, if they receive the stimulation, challenge, and professional support they require. More particularly, we need to recognize the critical role of education in the lives of older adults, and develop social policies and funding to support it.

As Moody claims,

Human-development policies for an aging society must be based on a commitment to enlarging human capacities throughout the entire life span, including old age. Such a commitment demands a new understanding of the lifelong role of education for building skills and knowledge. (1987-88, p. 7)

The challenge is to develop our full human potential in the second half of life, and education is the key.

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