

Striking a Perfect Fit in Leadership Style for Effective Farmer Training in Botswana

Flora M. Tladi
University of Botswana, Botswana

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Botswana since pre-independence days prides itself with decades of experience in development planning supported by structural frameworks comprising networks of institutions at central government and village levels responsible for leadership and coordination of affairs. Unfortunately when problems arise, development planners focus on the structural frameworks alone disregarding the leadership powering development planning at different structural levels and diverse stakeholder dynamics at play. Therefore, re-structuring is always the common solution even though not necessarily the best intervention. The trend is noted with farmer training whose program organization has for 79 years undergone cycles of re-structuring. The chapter argues for a holistic evaluation approach to always check the fit between the leadership style and whether the power processes at the different structural levels are in synch. The chapter advocates for well aligned leadership style with structural frameworks and recommends a leadership style that can be a perfect fit for effective farmer training.

CASE BACKGROUND

The general view of leadership is that of a process through which employees are influenced to work willingly towards achieving organisational goals. Leaders at all levels in the organisation use the influencing process to communicate ideas and gain acceptance of them, inspire followers to support and implement the ideas through change. Once supportive interpersonal relationships develop between leaders and followers, organisations are sure to succeed in realizing their missions (Du Toit et al., 2011).

Leadership style actually anchors on the influencing process and therefore affects communication, employee morale and their input to improving work processes, setting of goals, productivity, and the whole organisation's effectiveness. Leadership style is a critical facilitator in the achievement of organizational goals, at the same time enabling personal growth and development. Characteristics such as trust, reputation to deliver on promises, having satisfied customers, ability to attract and keep talented employees, being result-oriented, having output exceeding that of competitors, adaptability to change, and informative performance management systems describe effective organizations (Root III, 2014; Singh et al. 2008).

In the case of farmer training, the organization of concern is historically that of agricultural extension whose services are a common feature of administrative structures of change in rural areas. Leadership is an essential process in the organization of agricultural extension. In fact, the mandate of extension is educational leadership and change (Khalil et al. 2008; Morse et al. 2006). Agricultural extension services in partnership with farmers are responsible for directing development programs and change in rural areas. The purpose of the services is mainly to develop farmer training programs that will not only increase local food, but also increase farmer income and the sustainability of agricultural practices. This is to ensure that farmers have the most current information on how to grow food efficiently and economically; they must have knowledge of new techniques and technologies above all to increase their level of productivity (Rosegrant & Cline, 2003).

An extension approach that succeeds in providing the right training and therefore, increased food production exists when the right fit of leadership style is maintained throughout program planning and implementation. This is the leadership style that accommodates change and promotes collaborative action by multiple and diverse groups such as farmers who are key to successful operation of an extension system (Morse et al. 2006). Other forces that need factoring into the leadership process are globalization, its challenges, and impact on the role of agricultural extension (Karbasioun et al. 2007; Toness, 2001). The leadership style therefore, should cultivate an environment enabling extension systems to operate like learning organizations in response to inevitable changes in their work environments (Ladwig & Rohs, 2000).

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