

EXAMINATION COPY

**Community Adult Education:
Empowering women, Leadership and Social Action**



A minithesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Magister Philosophiae in the Faculty of Education,
University of the Western Cape

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February 2006

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Community Adult Education: Empowering Women, Leadership and Social Action

Desiree Paulsen

KEY WORDS

Adult Education

Community education

Popular Education

Feminist popular education

Empowerment

Women

Leadership

Training and Capacity building

Social Action and Social Transformation

Delft



ABSTRACT

Community Adult Education: Empowering Women, Leadership and Social Action

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University of the Western Cape.

In this minithesis I explore the relationship between community adult education and social action. I examine the conditions which facilitate the empowerment of women and social action, and look at how leadership emerges when women take social action.

I investigate a community adult education programme which uses Freirean popular education, and a trainer who has implemented the programme from a feminist popular perspective. I focus on a group of 6 women from an impoverished community who were part of the community adult education programme. This research uses an interpretive approach with a strong emphasis on feminist research methods. Focus groups and interviews are the main data collection methods. I argue that popular education and feminist popular education can only be effective in empowering women and facilitating social action, if the conditions are conducive. The conditions which I find through this study are the central role of the trainer in advocating a feminist popular approach and creating conditions which facilitate this approach. Then, the inner conditions of women, the area of personal development (the self, identity and emotions) is revealed as a fundamental area through the research and the major contribution of feminist popular education. I support Weiner's view that says "for women to free themselves, an 'interior' (as well as societal) revolution is necessary so that women are able to challenge their own oppression" (Weiner 1994:61). My study concludes that inner and societal conditions need to be viewed holistically and cannot be seen as separate since they have bearing on and impact on each other.

February 2006

DECLARATION

I declare that *Community Adult Education: Empowering Women, Leadership and Social Action* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Desiree Paulsen

February 2006

Signed:.....



DEDICATION

This mini-thesis is dedicated to the women who work tirelessly towards social transformation in communities, despite the many adversities they face on a daily basis. This is in honour of their contribution to social change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who have supported me throughout this journey. I thank all of those who have touched me in profound ways contributing to my feeling, thinking, ideas and writing for this minithesis. The women of Delft who participated in the focus groups and the trainer and organisation, who made the research possible. My supervisor, Prof. Zelda Groener, who provided unwavering, honest, insightful and valuable guidance and was mindful of my needs as an adult learner. Lecturers, close friends, colleagues and fellow academics, who provided inspiration, encouragement, academic support and assistance with the initial shaping, proof-reading and feedback (Prof. Nelleke Bak, Linda Cooper, Coleen Jaftha, Tony Roberts, Marie Corcoran-Tindill, Nomvula Dlamini, and Lynn Coleman). My mother, Norma Tobin, for her invaluable assistance in recording and note-taking during the focus groups and for ongoing encouragement throughout. Then my appreciation to Nicky Roman from the writing centre at UWC who provided excellent advice and guidance. My organisation, CDRA (Community Development Resource Association), for allowing me the space and time to focus on my studies and my colleagues for their stimulating, thought provoking conversations and moral support. Finally, to my family, my daughter Kirsten and husband Ashley Paulsen, whose love and encouragement supported and sustained me throughout.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What prompted this research?

Over the last 10 years, through my work in the NGO sector, I have been involved in various community adult education and training programmes aimed at transforming individuals and communities. There is an assumption that transformational adult education or training leads to individuals becoming empowered and that once empowered, they will start taking action in their communities, thus empowering whole communities and contributing to social transformation. Leadership is seen as playing a key role, and it is assumed that through adult education programmes and leadership training, individuals can be empowered to take the process of social action forward.

At various moments I have wondered and questioned whether these programmes have fulfilled this aim. Questions which have emerged during my years as a trainer have been: what do these programmes actually do for people? and how do they impact on their lives?; what does empowerment mean?; what is the link between adult education and social action?; how does adult education lead to social action; what are the other conditions which lead to social action and what drives women to take social action? I write from the perspective of a practitioner in the field of adult education. I also write as a development practitioner, as development has been my site of practice for the past two years. My questions emerged out of my own practice and experiences and a sense, through engaging with practitioners and adult educators, that others were also struggling with these same concerns. My research has been prompted by and is grounded in my own practical experience working in nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) mainly engaged in training and development in disadvantaged communities. It is informed by: firstly, the lived experiences of the 6 women participants of the 'Leadership Education for Action and Development' (LEAD) programme who were part of this study and who all live in Delft (a community in Cape Town); secondly, the experience of the LEAD trainer who conducted the programme and thirdly, the organisation, LEAD (Leadership Education for

Action and Development). For the purpose of this study I use a pseudonym for the organisation's actual name.

The literature portrays adult education as a vehicle for social transformation (Freire, 1972; Thompson, 1983; Stromquist, 1992; Walters and Manicom, 1996; Brohman, 1996; Wangoola and Youngman, 1996; Foley, 1999; Barr, 1999). Similarly LEAD which is the organisation that conducted the training programme, projects adult education as a means to empower women in order to transform their communities. I recognize that the word empowerment is an overused term which is interpreted differently by various individuals and groups. I will attempt to explore its meaning in the context of this research. Some people may disagree with its usage as being condescending since it is almost a misnomer. The term also raises false hope for people as it is used liberally. It seems that since it is still a word used in many social transformation programmes, it might be useful to begin to understand its usage and interpretation.

LEAD's vision and mission statement states that the organisation believes that the empowerment of women is an essential element for participation and leadership. The organisation further promotes and encourages a women's movement that is fully representative and will enable women to take a more active part in transforming the world for sustainable development. The organisation hopes to achieve this through an integrated programme of training, development education, organisation development, support and networking. Notwithstanding, it was difficult to find systematic documented evidence to show that adult education has empowered the women of Delft to change their community. It is this lack of documented evidence which prompted my research.

The participation of 36 women in the Level One programme in 2001, an entry level leadership programme offered by LEAD, provided an opportunity to investigate systematically the relationship between community adult education, empowering women and social action. The trainer and six women participants of the programme agreed to participate in the investigation. The six women share a history. Aged between 30 and 50, most are or have been married and have focussed most of their adult lives on domestic

work related to their husbands and children. Some have not completed their formal schooling and struggled to find employment. After living in different parts of the Cape Flats, they eventually moved to Delft, a sub-economic low cost housing area on the Cape Flats, situated approximately 20kms from the centre of Cape Town. Their lives and struggles began to converge when they met each other for the first time when they joined the LEAD programme.

An investigation into the lives of these six women reveals that if community adult education programmes are implemented by an adult educator using effective approaches and methodology, and if the conditions are conducive, then women can be empowered, through adult education, to take social action which could transform their communities. The six women were among 36 women who were recruited by LEAD, the NGO, to attend a programme which was aimed at developing women's leadership skills to empower them to engage in social action in their community. I will refer to the 6 women who participated in the study as the 'research group' or 'the six women' so as to distinguish them from the rest of the women. In order to protect the identity of the women, since many of them shared very personally, pseudonyms will be used. The pseudonyms used, reflect the women's cultural and racial group.

Description of the LEAD participants (the research group)

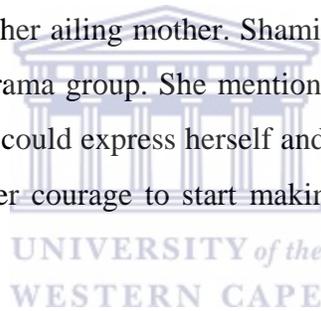
Valerie is a 36 year old coloured woman, married with 3 children. She possesses a quiet inner strength and is very articulate and confident. Valerie has been involved in community activities, specifically the police forum, to empower victims of crime. She was with the LEAD programme previously, having done her Level one training in 1999 with another LEAD group in Mitchells Plain, a coloured township about 10 km's from Delft. She was then asked to help recruit women for the Delft training programme group. She was one of two woman in the group who was selected by LEAD to do Level two in 2000. Valerie came across as a very determined woman who did not allow her disability to limit her from moving forward in life. Both Valerie and her husband are disabled – Valerie walks with the help of crutches. She diligently attended all the focus group sessions despite the fact that she lived quite far from the library and had to walk a

distance to get there. In many ways she was a spokesperson for the group and it was very easy to see why the trainer had made her a co-ordinator to take over the group whenever the trainer was absent. She had a demeanor that demanded respect, speaking in a calm voice that made people sit up and listen. Valerie presented herself as a committed woman with a great sense of responsibility who could be relied on to do a task. It was this very resilience that eventually led to Valerie being appointed as a trainer for LEAD. Valerie mentioned in one focus group that previously she was very quiet and never used to speak, but the LEAD training had given her confidence. Valerie was involved in the child recreation project and the drama project with LEAD. Other community activities include involvement with the AIDS action groups in churches and with SANTA as a TB treatment supporter. Valerie is also the co-ordinator of WAIDS (Women Acting in Delft South) – the organisation formed by the women during the LEAD Training programme.

Doris is a 40 year old coloured woman, married with 3 children. She is an animated, powerful woman who was the most vocal, descriptive and humorous storyteller during the focus groups and attended all three of the sessions. Doris also had a sadness about her which sometimes showed in her face, the tell tale signs of a woman who has endured great hardship in her life. It was this hardship that drove Doris to further empower herself. Doris was not afraid to express her opinions and shared how she had become more assertive with her husband as a result of the LEAD course. A great activist, Doris was no stranger to community activism and taking up issues in her community and she remains very involved in her community at all levels. She was one of the women who had been involved in community activism before coming on the LEAD Programme. The biggest challenge facing Doris is poverty and providing for her children's basic needs like food, is a constant struggle. Doris was also experiencing marital problems but was not allowing it to make her despondent. Doris showed enormous growth as a result of the LEAD course, and throughout the focus groups she spoke about how the course had given her courage and strength. Doris mentioned that she was no longer waiting for her husband to provide for her like she used to in the past, but now she herself would attempt to earn money. She was involved in the child recreation project and was the co-ordinator of the drama project. In addition to LEAD, she was involved with 'Protocol', an

organisation working with abused children and a community housing project which is a local initiative. Doris won the 'Anne Hope Award' for empowering women at a grassroots level.

Shamiela is a 38 year old coloured muslim woman, married with 5 children ranging in ages from 24 to 12 years old (including her husband's children from a previous marriage) and two grandchildren. Shamiela was an active participant in the research who attended all three focus groups diligently. She was often my contact person, because she was the only person with a telephone and sometimes I relied on her to inform the other women about the sessions. A warm, expressive woman, also a good storyteller, she was not shy to speak during the sessions, and shared very openly. Shamiela had joined the group late and mentions that one of the challenges was being the only muslim woman in the group. The other challenge was not being able to be as involved as she would have liked to, because she needed to care for her ailing mother. Shamiela was the leader of the sewing project and a member of the drama group. She mentioned that she used to be very shy, but after the LEAD course, she could express herself and say how she felt. Shamiela also related how the course gave her courage to start making things from home to earn an income.



Thandeka is a 35 year old black woman, married with 4 children. She is an articulate, confident, softly spoken woman who has shown enormous growth as a result of the LEAD course. This, despite the fact that she was experiencing marital problems and was in an abusive relationship with her husband. She was one of two women who went on to do LEAD Level two, an advanced course for women with exceptional leadership qualities. She was involved in the literacy project, teaching senior citizens to read, the sewing project and the drama project. In addition to these she was also a volunteer for another project which starts AIDS action groups in churches. At the final focus group session, the women said that Thandeka had successfully started her own business. Thandeka attended two of the three focus group sessions. She spoke with great conviction in both focus groups and believed that she could be a leader. Thandeka won the 'Wheat trust award' – awarded to women who show commitment to their communities.

Sarah is a 52 year old coloured divorced woman who has children and grandchildren. Sarah was the only woman who mentioned that she was the 'boss' in her house. The fact that she did not have a husband seemed to have empowered her. She had a great support in her family and was one of the women who were seen as financially more secure. Sarah was involved in the sewing group and the drama project. It appeared in the sessions, that she had not really found her 'niche' in terms of the projects, and she related how she had moved from one project to another. She attended the first and second focus groups and was not one of the most vocal women – in her own words she said that she was not a person who speaks a lot. Sarah spoke about the fact that the LEAD programme helped her to 'control her attitude' and it had taught her to believe in herself. She believed that it 'made her into a better person'. Sarah was also a recipient of the 'Wheat Trust Award'.

Joan is a forty something coloured woman who does not have children and is married to her second husband. She mentioned that she had to work for her first husband and how she used to work shifts, then still came home to cook and clean. Eventually she had divorced her first husband and is now happily married to a man who supports her. Joan's face lit up when she spoke and I observed in her a quiet strength, a wonderful disposition and caring nature. She mentioned that she had a painful past and that the course helped her to deal with that past. In fact it was her story that was chosen to be depicted in the drama project, which focused on abuse of women. Joan spoke about how acting in the drama had helped her to heal the pain. Joan used to work for an agency employing home carers to look after the sick and elderly. She spoke about how she had worked for and been dedicated to a family for years looking after the elderly parent, and how that person had grown to love and trust her. She is still involved in home caring because it is something she appears to be very good at and has recently, along with a few other women initiated a home carers' group. She mentioned that previously she believed that she had to work for an agency, but since the LEAD course, has found the confidence and strength to start something herself.

Profile of the LEAD Trainer

The LEAD trainer had been working in the organization for about 2 years at the time of the interviews. Previously she had worked for the 'City of Cape Town' co-ordinating its Adult Basic Education unit. She is a coloured woman, 37 years old, divorced, and a mother of two children. She is soft spoken with a friendly, warm and nurturing manner. The trainer was a compassionate woman with a gentle disposition. The LEAD women participants commended her for the manner in which she conducted the programme which seemed to have created a safe space for women to share openly and honestly. The trainer's educational qualifications are: an Advanced Diploma in Adult Education and at the time I interviewed her she was doing a Post-graduate Degree in Gender Studies. She seemed very committed to the kind of work she was engaged in with LEAD and would often go beyond the call of duty to support the women of the Delft group.

Description of the LEAD Programme

LEAD's vision and mission

The vision and mission reads

We, the LEAD Women's Leadership Training Programme based in South Africa, believe that the empowerment of women is an essential element for participation and leadership of all levels of decision making. We seek to promote and encourage a women's movement that is fully representative that will enable women to take a more active part in transforming the world for sustainable development, through an integrated programme of training, development education, organisation development, support and networking. (LEAD Annual report, 2000)

LEAD implements training programmes in various disadvantaged communities in the Cape Town and surrounding areas and each is run by a trainer who is responsible for specific areas. LEAD has two levels of courses, a Level One programme which is the first course in its leadership programme. The Level Two programme is a second, more advanced course offered to selected participants of the Level One Programme. The programme completed by the Delft women and the focus of this study, is the Level One Programme. According to LEAD's document, 2001 describing the programme, LEAD believes that "many women have the potential to take leadership, to initiate and to

develop themselves and the country as a whole, but they lack confidence, access and opportunity”. The document continues that “women’s leadership, creativity and initiative can be seen in their home lives, but is not always evident on a broader scale”.

LEAD’s objectives

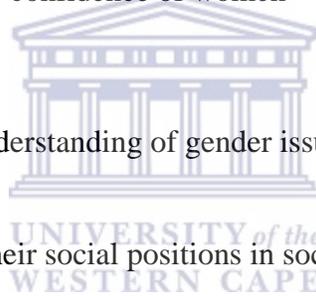
The LEAD Document, 2001 outlines the Level One Programme as having the following broad and specific objectives:

Broad objectives

- To empower and uplift women
- To unleash their potential
- To encourage independence by promoting and facilitating economic development
- To assist in building the self-confidence of women

Specific Objectives

- To give women a deeper understanding of gender issues and how it impacts on their lives
- To create an awareness of their social positions in society
- To allow women the opportunity, through skills development, to gain access to further training
- To raise their awareness of community issues and help them gain an understanding of how communities evolve and develop
- To equip them with skills and knowledge in order for them to take up leadership positions in their communities and other levels of society
- To network with other women’s organisations
- To assist women to discover their potential through educational programmes
- To motivate them in their roles as decision makers
- To help them understand their community
- To understand the complexities of basic legislation that affects them directly
- To raise women from where they are



- To challenge and change the mindset and lives of women
- To challenge the gender status quo
- To create an awareness and identification of available resources
- Lobbying and advocacy

The LEAD document, (2001) further states that LEAD selects women who are either unemployed or employment part-time. The women need not be ‘functionally literate’ and are ‘*women who have had no access to education, training and development workshops*’. The description of the course states that the curriculum is integrated and outcomes based. The course is presented in English. LEAD believes that “*the programme should start with Personal Development because it is vital for all participants to know themselves before they embark on interventions with other people*”. According to the document the LEAD course is “*flexible and allows women to add to the curriculum if they feel an issue relates to them specifically*”.



LEAD’s Methodology

The LEAD document, (2001) states:

The Level one programme is offered in the communities where women live. Not only does this contextualise their learning but it affirms them because they bring their knowledge and understanding about their communities and their own experiences to the workshop. This lessens the power relations between the facilitator and the participants. The programme uses the participatory methodology of Paulo Freire as well as other methods. The participatory method is learner-centred, encourages and affirms the women. Various codes are used to generate discussion. Due to the fact that the ages and educational levels of the women are varied, the co-operative method is used extensively. This facilitates the process in that the women can work in groups discussing the same topic, but focus on different angles of the topic at the same time. The methods are empowering, and the women can engage with the material, give input, and interact with each other. This results in the creation of new knowledge, a principal which is central to the practice of feminist epistemology and methodology.

Description of the training manuals

The training materials used by LEAD are the “Training for Transformation” series written by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel(1996). There are four handbooks in the series:

“Training for Transformation” Handbooks 1, 2, 3 (Hope and Timmel, 1996) and “Training for Transformation” Handbook 4 (Hope and Timmel, 1999). The Level One course specifically focuses on Handbook one and two (See Appendix 2 for the table of contents of Handbooks 1 and 2). The manuals provide a comprehensive guide for community workers and trainers which cover both theory, content and process with useful theory, frameworks, exercises, pictures and poetry. It has been written out of the practical experience of the writers.

Time Frame of the programme

LEAD’s training programme was implemented over a period of twenty five days and workshops were presented twice a week over a period of three months. Thereafter LEAD provided a ‘support programme’ which was in the form of meetings or visits with the group facilitated by the trainer. The support programme lasted six months. It was expected by LEAD that women start projects after the training period. From the larger group of women, 2 co-ordinators and 4 project leaders was elected. This was an attempt to provide leadership from within the group for when the trainer was not present and to lead projects.

Projects Started by the Delft Group

- Theatre/ Drama Project – A Play produced and performed by the women entitled “Breaking the wall”
- Child Recreation - Arts and Crafts recreation conducted for children primary to high school (to occupy children after school)
- Literacy Project – Teaching Xhosa and Afrikaans to senior members of the community
- Sewing and Designing – For income generation
- The Level 1 group of women formed an organisation called “WAIDS – Women Acting in Delft South”, and wanted to register as an NGO.

Awards won by the Delft group

The Delft group of women won several awards both as individuals and as a group during

their participation in the LEAD Programme – The ‘Wheat Trust award’ for training in arts and crafts, lifeskills and literacy, the ‘Anne Hope award’ for empowering women at a grassroots level and Adult Learner awards for best community developers.

This next section describes the broader context of social action and situates the LEAD programme in the South African context.

The context of social action in South Africa

The context of social action in South Africa has progressed through various phases. South Africa has a rich history of community engagement in social action, which is rooted in the political struggle towards democracy and freedom. Because of oppression marginalised and disadvantaged groups have had to fight for their rights. One could go as far back as the slave revolts against the colonisers in the 1800s to find evidence of this, however, for the purpose of this study, I will track some of the developments from the 1970s. The idea of education for social action became very popular from the 1970s to 1980s and many oppressed groups of largely blacks, coloureds and indians were involved in political activism with an aim to conscientise the population through education. It was hoped that through this conscientisation a mass movement would grow and eventually overthrow the oppressive apartheid government. A strong and thriving underground, anti-apartheid movement both inside and outside South Africa gained momentum. Church based activist groups, civic groups, youth groups, literacy groups and worker unions were successful in practicing this type of education. As a result of mounting pressure both from inside and outside the country, the apartheid government was forced to succumb. From 1990 onwards, South Africa was able to welcome back exiles, key political activists were released and previously banned political organisations were un-banned. Many community leaders and activists were recruited by the democratically elected ANC and associated parties. The vibrant activism of the 1970s and 1980s where communities and organisations were united by a common struggle, found itself in a phase of disintegration and reshuffling after 1994 as community and political organisations and the individuals working for them struggled to find their new roles. Then there was a period when communities became complacent as they waited for their newly elected

(ANC) government to deliver. Eventually communities became disenchanted because of the ANC government's slow process of implementing the reconstruction and development programme, and then the diminishing of the RDP further confounded this. This reached a point where communities were no longer as united and active as they had been during the political struggle to overthrow apartheid. Party politics threatened many communities and social problems increased. Roy (2003) provides a strong critical voice in describing the situation,

In South Africa, after 300 years of brutal domination of the black majority by a white minority through colonialism and apartheid, a non-racial, multi-party democracy came to power in 1994. It was a phenomenal achievement. Within two years of coming to power, the African National Congress had genuflected with no caveats to the Market God. Its massive programme of structural adjustment, privatisation and liberalisation has only increased the hideous disparities between the rich and the poor (Roy, 2003:23).

Since poor communities realised that they needed to address their problems and could no longer depend on the government to deliver, there has been a slow resurgence of community engagement and an increase in communities taking ownership of community processes in some parts of South Africa. NGOs who had previously operated as part of the anti-apartheid movement post 1994, still continued to work towards social transformation using various vehicles to bring about change. Some NGOs collapsed after the 1994 elections since they struggled to find a purpose because they had previously been largely driven by overthrowing the government. Other organisations like LEAD, managed to find a new role in building a post apartheid society. LEAD uses education towards women's empowerment and the concept of leadership, collective action and social mobilisation as the key elements towards social transformation. The notion of social action linked to political struggle of the apartheid era, has been replaced by different kinds of struggle today. My study focuses on how social action was taken up by the Delft women (specifically the six women who partook in this research) and what precipitated this action. I also examine how adult education in the form of the LEAD programme played a role in initiating, encouraging and stimulating the six women to take social action. The context of Delft – the area in which the LEAD programme was implemented, will be described in more detail at the end of Chapter 3.

This study uses the term popular education which in the context of this research is 'community adult education for social change'. I use popular education as espoused and developed by Paulo Freire (1972).

My background and experience

As a child I became aware of the unfairness and inhumanity of the apartheid system very early in my life. My formative years were influenced by my family who conscientised and politicised me. Most of my primary, secondary and tertiary schooling occurred during the height of student protest and action (1976 – 1986) and through certain teachers and older students, I was further politically conscientised and became involved in student protest and action. Later, as a teacher (1988 – 1994), I continued to be involved in protest and action during the pre-1994 teacher strikes as a member of the South Africa Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU). Having continually fought the system, I found a natural home in NGOs working toward social transformation, and for the last 10 years, I have worked in the adult education, training and development sector. I was not severely disadvantaged or impoverished in the way the women in this study were, but nevertheless, being classified 'coloured' meant that I experienced apartheid through being denied equal rights and access in all areas of my life. I only had the opportunity to attend university late in my life, at the age of 28, as an adult learner doing part-time studies. I started my journey at the Community Adult Education Programme at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1994, then went on to do the Certificate and later the Advanced Diploma in Adult Education, Training and Development at UCT from 1995 to 1997. After a two year break from studies, I enrolled in this Masters in Adult Education, Training and Development at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in 2000. I have been fortunate to have the chance to further my education, which is something most black people of my generation have not been able to do and through the 'recognition of prior learning' policy was able to gain access to the Masters programme at UWC. My background and experience have shaped my person and prompted me to choose the kind of work I do as an organisation development practitioner at the CDRA (Community Development Resource Association). CDRA is an NGO based in Cape Town and working locally, nationally and internationally with NGOs involved in social

transformation. My background and experience thus informed my decision to explore the area of study which I have chosen in this thesis. I bring to this study my experience as a black South African woman with multi-faceted roles of mother, wife, daughter, sister, friend, feminist, activist, adult learner, adult educator, organisation development consultant, development practitioner, fledgling philosopher and budding writer.

The Aims of the Research

The broad field of my research is Adult Education, Training and Development and the area is Community Adult Education. I will be investigating how LEAD, a non-governmental organisation based in the Western Cape, has empowered women to assume leadership and take social action in their communities. For the purpose of this study I focus on six women participants of LEAD who became the sample group for the research.

I will be using the six women's experiences and stories about their lives and their participation in the training programme as the central and key feature of this study. I then examine the content, methods and approach of LEAD's training programme, particularly focussing on the Level One programme from the trainer and women participants' point of view. It is out of the women's lived experiences and the trainer's experience with the women and the programme, that I will be determining what the conditions were that made social action possible and whether there was a link between the training programme and the women becoming empowered to take social action.

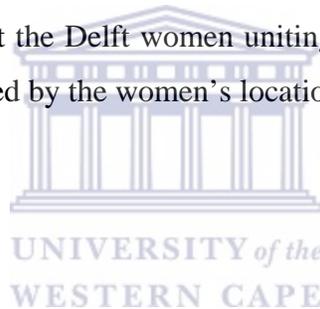
LEAD has been running programmes specifically for women since 1992 and its primary aim is to empower women. The organisation conducted impact assessments in 1998 where interviews with participants of their training programmes revealed that LEAD had definitely influenced and changed the lives of these women. During 1999 an impact assessment revealed that the programmes had an impact on women in terms of their confidence, becoming more involved in their communities and addressing social issues as a collective group. The impact assessment claimed that women were able to take control of their own lives and use their initiative. Therefore it appeared that LEAD had

contributed to building the capacity of women to take control of their lives, assume leadership and take social action. With a sense that the programme was generally successful and useful, I wanted to take impact assessment to a deeper, more contained level where I focused on a smaller sample group of women who had completed the Level One programme. I hoped to reveal through these six women's experiences, how the programme had impacted on their lives and their broader community.

Assumptions

- The first assumption is that the LEAD approach and methodology leads to empowering women as individuals and as a collective, which leads to women taking initiative in social action.
- The second assumption is that the LEAD trainer has facilitated this, through her intervention into the lives of the Delft women.
- The third assumption is that the Delft women uniting to take collective social action to address problems, is shaped by the women's location and the fraught nature of Delft as a community.

Main Research Question



What are the conditions which led Community Adult Education, through the LEAD Programme, to empowering women in Delft to take social action?

Further questions include the following:

- What does 'empowering women' mean?
- What is the link between Adult Education and Social Action?
- Does Adult Education lead to Social Action?
- Are there other conditions which lead to social action?
- What drives women to take social action?
- What does leadership mean for women in the context of social action?

Purpose

To establish whether the training content and methodology and the approach of the LEAD trainer effectively facilitated the process of empowering women to assume leadership and take collective social action in their communities.

Research Aim

To investigate the conditions under which women become empowered, assume leadership and take social action, in order to understand the relationship between Community adult education and Social action. My point of departure is that if community adult education programmes are implemented by an adult educator using effective approaches and methodology, and if the conditions are conducive, then women can be empowered through adult education to take social action which could transform their communities.

Outlining the Chapters

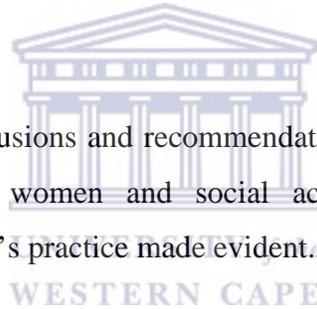
Chapter Two is the literature review, entitled “Popular Education and Women’s Empowerment”. The chapter focuses on Freirean popular education explaining a brief history and then providing perspectives of the Freirean approach. The goal of Freirean education is outlined, and interpretations and critiques of Freirean approaches are provided. The second part of the chapter examines women’s empowerment, particularly feminism and notions of empowerment, and explains how feminist popular education grew out of and improved on popular education. Feminist popular education is explored as a specific approach that contributes to empowerment of women. Key aspects are highlighted as being imperative to the success of feminist popular education programmes. The connections between empowerment, leadership and social action are made and the significance of these for the field of feminist popular education illuminated.

Chapter Three explains the research methodology. The methodological framework is sketched, explaining the qualitative, feminist approach. The rationale for using feminist research methodology, particularly, focus groups is explained as well as its role in raising consciousness of the participants. The process involved in the data collection phase, is described particularly in relation to interpretive methods and what it entailed. Focus

groups and interviews are discussed with descriptions of the processes involved and a reflection on the use of this methodology. The observation of the drama project is mentioned as well as documents which were used for the research and the ethical guidelines which guided the study. This is followed by the data analysis phase describing the framework used and processes involved. The chapter ends with a reflection on the research methodology and examining the limitations of the research.

Chapter four presents the findings of the research and analyses the data. The LEAD organization's interpretation of popular education and feminist popular approaches is put forward. I then present the trainer's perceptions of the LEAD programme. Thereafter the participant's perceptions are presented. I then look at how women were empowered into leadership and how they took social action. Throughout the data, the women's voices, the trainer's voice and my own interpretations are interwoven. The chapter ends with an analysis of the key findings.

Chapter five presents the conclusions and recommendations. Here, the conditions which impact on empowerment of women and social action are highlighted, and the implications of those for LEAD's practice made evident.



CHAPTER TWO

POPULAR EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Introduction

Popular education offers an alternative to traditional education. It is more accessible and focuses on the issues facing poor communities, using their concerns as a starting point. In the context of women's empowerment, popular education provides a vehicle for disadvantaged, impoverished women to have their voices heard in society. In this way, spaces are provided for groups of people to come together and find solutions to their problems in order to bring about social change. Organisations advocating the empowerment of women, use popular education approaches since it provided an alternative, more progressive approach to develop women's abilities and facilitate women's empowerment. As a result, women have begun engaging in social action and driving processes of change in their community. Women have become stronger because of their interactions with other women and the enormous efforts of NGOs to strengthen and empower women. In this chapter, popular education, particularly the approaches of Paulo Freire, is explored as a transformative educational approach that empowers individuals and transforms communities. This is followed by the feminist approach to popular education, which is examined and investigated as a specific approach that empowers women. Within the feminist approach, the particular emphasis of the feminists are illuminated, the conditions that empower women are examined and conclusions are drawn about what a feminist popular education approach demands. Leadership is subsequently examined as part of women's empowerment and social action.

Popular Education

Brief history and description of Popular education

Popular education has been used around the world as a tool to transform the lives of people, communities and countries e.g. Brazil and the Phillipines. This type of education has driven successful revolutions, social and civil campaigns, been responsible for improving adult literacy and empowered many adults who had not had the privilege of

formal education as children. Educators, community development workers and activists have embraced popular education as a useful approach for transformation. Sites of practice of popular education are community based organisations, unions, religious-based organisations, social movements, community colleges and schools, NGOs practicing non-formal education and universities. Popular education provides an alternative to conservative or traditional education. In describing the difference between the two, Barndt states that popular education has a critical perspective on social reality, whereas traditional education is conservative and “reproduces inequalities in its form, content, process and product” (Barndt, 1995:93). Furthermore, she adds that popular education has a vision of a just and equitable society in contrast to conservative education which reinforces competition, consumption and individualism (Barndt, 1995:93).

Crowther describes popular education as having deep roots in radical adult education. He states that key values of popular education are democracy and rights of citizenship (Crowther, 1999:29). Hamilton refers to Elias and Merriam’s (1980) ‘historical roots of radical adult education’ as coming from three sources: firstly, the anarchist tradition of the eighteenth century which questions the role and nature of authoritarianism in society; secondly, the Marxist Socialist tradition based on personal freedom and autonomy by eradicating state control and requires a “revolutionary change from a capitalistic political economy to a socialistic type of government and economy”; and thirdly the Freudian left, “which is a reaction to the Marxist assumption that once people become aware of unjust social structures they will be able to change them. The Freudian left challenges this assumption on the basis that authoritarianism is imposed during child development. Solutions can be found in the areas of sexual freedom, changes in family patterns, and better methods of child rearing” (Hamilton, 1992:12).

Walters and Manicom provide a description of popular education which encapsulates some of the key elements from a practical perspective.

Popular education involves an inherently self-reflective, reflexive and non-dogmatic approach. It works to make space for the collective, participatory production of knowledge and insight, and builds on what emerges from the experiences of those actively participating. The richness of the approach lies,

therefore, in the thought and implicit analysis that has gone into the design of the specific educational events or programmes, and in the spontaneous, sometime serendipitous, process as it unfolds at a particular moment, yielding even more challenges and possibilities (Walters and Manicom, 1996: 2).

Based on the description of Walters and Manicom's (1996), the nature of popular education emerges as an approach that has the following qualities. It values the experiences of the learner and uses these in the learning situation. It promotes the 'collective' rather than the 'individual'. Education is seen as benefiting entire communities of people, and not only focussed on the individual. Participation is valued and individuals and groups are encouraged to reflect on their learning. Education is not brought, or imparted to learners in a dogmatic manner, but rather knowledge is thought to exist within the learners themselves. It involves a thoughtfully designed process but allows for spontaneity, and thus new learning to emerge. Popular education is practiced more actively in third world countries involved in liberation struggles, with disadvantaged and marginalised groups and poor, illiterate communities. Some of the documented examples researched for this study were from Latin America (Freire, 1972; Stromquist, 1992; Fink, 1992; Jelin, 1990); India (Patel, 1996); Malaysia (Heng, 1996), Philippines (Medel-Anonuevo, 1996) and South Africa (Walters and Manicom, 1996). It has also been used in first world countries seeking alternative approaches to adult education and where there are pockets of marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Examples of these are Scotland (Crowther, Martin and Shaw 1999; Barr, 1999); Australia (Pritchard-Hughes,1996); United States (Hamilton, 1992; Horton, 1990, Brohman, 1996). The historical perspectives described here, show that the approach grew out of a radical, transformative tradition and that adult education is seen as a means of bringing about social transformation. Popular education emerged more strongly in countries where radical change was needed in order for a marginalized group to fight dominant, suppressive forces in order to achieve independence. South Africa and Latin America are examples where this form of education was embraced by many organisations and movements as a means of bringing about social transformation during the struggle for liberation.

Kane states that “throughout Latin America, popular education was inspired by the Brazilian experience of the early 1960s when, in the course of struggling to bring about social change, popular organisations themselves identified the need for an alternative education, one which was related to their experience and under their control” (Kane, 1999:55). Popular education became more widely known through the practice and writings of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire and his educational work in Latin America since the late 1960s. Youngman states that “Freire’s practical activity in adult literacy and rural extension in Brazil and Chile in the 1960s was conceived in terms of challenging the underdevelopment produced by dependency” (Youngman, 2000:65). Youngman continues that

For Freire, an important dimension of this dependency is cultural, as the process of Europeanisation in the colonial era had been a ‘cultural invasion’, leading to alienation and a culture of silence. He therefore argued that the struggle for national independence must be accompanied by cultural action for freedom (Youngman, 2000:65).

Hamilton documents the work of another educationalist, Myles Horton who was pioneering education for social change as early as the 1930s. He worked in the rural Appalachian mountains in the south of the United States, where he developed his philosophy from his actual experiences with poor and marginalized groups and held a core belief that people are able to solve their own problems. Horton’s ‘Highlander school’ played a significant role in training community leaders during the civil rights movement in the 1960s struggle for racial equality in the United States. He believed that the educator does not need to be an expert but has to assist in ‘careful diagnosis of the need’ and has to ‘draw out what people already know and get it shared so that people learn from each other’ (Hamilton, 1992: 14 -16). Freire and Horton eventually met and found each other’s ideas similar and different. They agreed to collaborate on a joint book where they shared and discussed their experiences and ideas. In their book they are referred to as “the two pioneers of education for social change” (Horton, and Freire, 1990:XV). In the literature, Freire emerged as the most prominent and referred to writer in the field of popular education. His key publication “*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*” of 1972 has influenced most of the theory, concepts, methodology and approaches in transformative and radical adult education. Generations of activists, adult educators,

organisers and writers have been inspired by Freire's ideas. NGOs such as the LEAD organization use popular education and particularly Freire's methods and approaches to empower women to play a more active role in their communities. Freire's, (1972) work in which he conceptualised and shared his ideas became widely known and used in radical and transformative education circles. Reference is made to his popular education model and approach in most of the popular education writings. One of these writings by Hope and Timmel (1996) captures six key principles of Freire in a training manual which promotes Freire's popular education and is used by the LEAD organisation that is the focus of this study.

Perspectives on Freirean Popular education

Hope and Timmel identify six key principles of Freire. The first is that 'the aim of education is radical transformation'; the second is that 'through relevant, generative themes, empowerment will happen'; the third is dialogue; the fourth is a 'problem-posing approach'; the fifth is 'reflection and action'; and the sixth is that 'no education is neutral' (Hope and Timmel, 1996:16).

In discussing the first principle – that 'the aim of education is radical transformation', Hope and Timmel state that learners are called upon to transform their personal lives, community, environment and the whole of society. Education is not only for individual development, rather it is seen as a tool for social transformation. This is a fundamental shift from conventional, conservative approaches to education which was seen as educating individuals for their own personal gain – for a profession or to develop a skill, where it was mostly to impart knowledge and where learners played a more passive role. In popular education, the learner plays an active role. The learner is not given information as in a banking model of education where the teacher feeds the learner and the learner then regurgitates the information when asked what she/he had learnt. The learners are rather seen as active participants in the process of learning where their experience is valued in the process of learning. The educator plays the role of facilitating the process of learning so that learners are able to learn from their own experience and the experiences of others thus creating and generating their own knowledge.

The second principle refers to ‘generative themes and empowerment’. Empowerment happens through developing themes which are relevant and generated by the learners themselves. These “generative’ themes are seen to be very emotive and it is thought that by tapping into the emotions and bringing forth those issues which learners feel most strongly about, learners can be jolted into taking action that can bring about change in their lives and empowerment can begin to take place. Hope and Timmel state that

Paulo Freire has taken this concept much deeper, by pointing out the link between emotion and motivation to act. Much education has tried to ignore human feelings and concentrated only on reason and action. But Freire recognises that emotions play a crucial role in transformation. Feelings are facts. Only by starting with the issues on which the community have strong feelings – hope, fear, worry, anger, joy, sorrow – and bringing these to the surface, will we break through the deadening sense of apathy and powerlessness which paralyses the poor in many places...The role of the animator is to help people find new hope as they tap into their natural energy and break this apathy together. Paulo Freire calls the issues that generate this natural energy and hope “generative themes” (1996:17).

The third principle highlights ‘dialogue’ which is about giving a voice to the learners where they are able to express themselves and start to share with others in the learning situation. Freire says “To exist humanly, is to name the world, to change and recreate it. Only by using true words will people transform the world” (Freire, 1972:79). It is felt that the answers to problems lie within the people themselves, and that everyone involved has a contribution to make and should be made more responsible for finding their own solutions. Furthermore, by starting to name the problems, solutions can be sought. Hope and Timmel believe that

...There is a new awareness now, that on all the major problems that face the modern world, no experts have all the answers. Each may have valuable information to contribute, but we need dialogue to draw in the insights of all who are concerned as we search for solutions. Local participation is crucial for effective development... Dialogue requires patience, humility and a real belief that there is something that one can learn from the other person...The role of the animator is to create a climate in which true dialogue can take place. For this she/he needs an understanding of group dynamics and group leadership skills (Hope and Timmel, 1996:19).

The fourth principle discusses the ‘problem-posing approach and search for solution’.

Once we have found the generative issues of a community, we need to find a concrete way of presenting a familiar experience of the core problem back to the group. Posters, plays, photographs, slides, songs...can all be used to help focus the attention...on the same problem. These problem-posing materials are called “codes”. They often link feelings to facts, and highlight contrasts. It is striking how much more energy such codes generates in group discussions than lectures or abstract questions (Hope and Timmel, 1996:19).

The problem-posing approach is seen as a ‘model of liberating education’ where learners themselves critically analyse their reality and devise ways to solve the problem. Hope and Timmel say that the role of the animator is not to give answers, but to set up a process through which the group can search for answers themselves in a systematic way (Hope and Timmel, 1996:19). The process through which problem-posing happens is ‘the cycle of reflection and action’, which is seen as a vital and central element of the Freirean model.

This is the fifth principal – *reflection and action*, which is also referred to in Freirean terms as *praxis*. A feature of the model is about people learning together, which is perceived as a very powerful and dynamic method. In Freirean education the emphasis is not on individual learning but rather the individual in relation to the collective (“community, environment and society”) and how they can, together, reflect and act to transform their world. According to Freire,

Radical change begins when a community experience dissatisfaction with some aspect of their lives and are willing to take time to look at their dissatisfaction. By setting a regular cycle of reflection and action in which a group are constantly celebrating their successes and analysing critically the causes of mistakes and failures, they can become more and more capable of effectively transforming their daily life (Hope and Timmel, 1996:21).

The sixth principle is that “no education is neutral”. Hope and Timmel state that “no teacher is fully objective”. They argue that

we are all conditioned by our life experiences and it is important that we look critically at how these have affected our values and judgements. We need to check to what extent we use our role and our power in the group to try and shape others in our own image. We also need to look to what extent we encourage participants to develop along their own unique paths. We need to check to what extent our education is “domesticating” them to fit obediently into roles required of them by the

dominant culture, and to what extent it is liberating them to be critical, creative, free, active and responsible members of society – as well as in this learning group (Hope and Timmel, 1996:22).

Here they refer to Freire as seeing the educator's role as a highly responsible one where it is important to have an awareness and consciousness about the power they may have to influence the learning situation by virtue of who they are and what their prior life experiences may be.

The key principles outlined above provide the conceptual basis for the practice of popular education, the outcome of which is critical consciousness – the goal of Freirean education.

The goal of Freirean education

Conscientisation happens when learners are taken through a process where they 'develop consciousness' so that they are able to examine and analyse their situation and look increasingly beyond themselves at the forces which impact on their lives from the outside and examine how they may start to act on these in order to bring about change in their lives. It is essentially about the ability to ask questions and become more challenging about why things are as they are, and then to look at what can be done about it. Pritchard-Hughes supports this in stating that

Central to this education process is the notion of conscientisation: the development of critical consciousness which facilitates understanding of the operation of power structures. Crucially, conscientisation is thought to develop in concentric circles (Freire, 1972:75), beginning with the learners themselves and then moving to locate the learners within gradually widening contexts: within a community, a society, a nation and so on (Pritchard Hughes, 1996: 103).

A vital part of the process involves group process and people engaging with each other actively. Through this engagement with fellow participants in the learning situation, and the intervention of a skilled "animator" or facilitator taking the group through processes, individuals and groups can become conscientised. In these processes, generative themes draw attention to the most emotive issues needing to be transformed, dialogue facilitates meaningful, critical interaction and a problem-posing approach helps learners to identify and begin to solve problems themselves. Throughout the learning process, reflection and

action becomes an important part of making people aware of their lives and how they can begin to change it. Shor confirms this by stating that critical consciousness is the 'goal of Freirean education' and he describes 'four qualities of critical consciousness: power awareness' which refers to understanding power relationships and how they are organized and used in society; 'critical literacy' which encompasses analytical ways of thinking and an understanding of the deeper meanings of issues and applying the meaning to ones own context; 'desocialisation' which is about recognizing and challenging societal myths, values, behaviours and language learned in mass culture, critically examining regressive values operating in society e.g. racism, sexism, class bias, homophobia; 'self-organisation/self-education' which is about taking the initiative for social change projects and social transformation (Shor, 1993: 32-33). If the process of consciousness does not develop it is thought that people are not able to move beyond their situation of marginalisation or poverty. Shor says that

Freire outlines several stages in consciousness growth which culminate in critical thought. The lowest stage is the most dominated 'intransitive thought', where people live fatalistically, thinking that their fate is out of their hands...They do not think their action can change their conditions. Disempowered they are stuck in time, under the thumb of the dominant elite ...(Shor,1993:32).

'Critical consciousness' has been subsumed into the language of radical and transformative education and is used in most publications on popular education e.g. (Walters and Manicom, 1996). The idea of critical consciousness – that it develops individuals and communities of critical thinkers and promises to bring about social change and transformation, was easily embraced by organizations involved in education for social change. It seems that Freire has encouraged those who would use his approaches to adapt and contextualise them to suit the situation.

Inside the frontier of critical education, Freire has provided guidance and inspiration. But in making his contribution, he denies that his ideas or methods should be followed as rigid models. We have to reinvent liberating education for our own situations, according to Freire (Shor, 1993:34).

Interpretations of Freirean popular education

The philosophy and approach underlying 'reinventing of liberating education' is wide open to interpretations which may not always be true to the goals of popular education.

The openness to interpretation has led to variations on how popular education is implemented around the world. This extract from a Latin American popular education organisation called Cantera¹, further explains a more general concern around interpretations of popular education, which relates to its abuse of the methodology without careful thought about its initial intention:

The recent popularity of popular education brings with it the risk that it will be reduced to group dynamics and participatory training techniques –this is a misuse and a misreading of what popular education is about. Popular education is part of the wider process of organising for social change and movement building...
(Cantera, 2004: 2).

The way popular education methods have become ‘abused’ and ‘overused’ in some NGOs and adult education settings, is less for transformation and more as a fashionable participatory method. The real reason why popular education was developed was to empower the oppressed peoples of the world. The fact that large numbers of popular education programmes struggle to show impact in the broader community, means that if popular education is used indiscriminately and not thoughtfully engaged with, it will lose its essence and power. Jones (1997) refers to another problem with interpretation which relates to gender. Research conducted by Jones, in investigating “Training for Empowerment”, revealed that the training was “not used consciously as a strategy to empower women” and that “providers (of non-formal education) do not recognise this form of education in empowering people and facilitating social change”. Jones highlighted the fact that “large numbers of non formal education activities using the language of radical development in fact continue to focus on women’s traditional and reproductive roles in society, in turn marginalising women even further” (Jones, 1997:19). Jones’ concern highlights how the methods used do not empower women, but merely use radical approaches to entrench traditional beliefs about women’s roles in society. Fink (1992) also refers to the danger of reinforcing domestic roles and the fact that programmes need to continue to search for women’s identity in the process (Fink, 1992:181).

¹ Cantera- Popular Education and Communication Centre. Available online website www.oneworld.org/cantera/education/index.html

Critiques of Freire's Popular Education

Freire's ideas were the basis for a new way of seeing and thinking about adult education. He has laid the foundation or been the catalyst for the emergence of new ideas and thoughts in the field of popular education. His work remains a cornerstone of adult education practice which has been updated and improved over time. Whilst he has been revered by many, there have been critiques of his model and approach (Barr, 1999; Weiler, 1991; Kaplan, 1996; Prinsloo, 1987). These critiques can be used to improve the practice of popular education especially in countries where it has become stagnant and is not as effective as it could be.

One of the challenges arising out of the Latin American context according to Fink (1992) is that the current economic crisis has prompted programmes to move beyond conscientisation and address women's immediate needs – “therefore to develop other skills, both analytical and practical that will give women greater control over their lives”. Fink portrays the tension between developing critical consciousness and developing technical skills as method vs. content (Fink, 1992:190). This is a challenge which South African organizations also face – the LEAD programme being one of those which had to incorporate an element of economic empowerment into their programmes.

There is strong critique from feminist authors who claim that Freire's popular education examined oppression from a male perspective and ignored the gender issue in oppressive structures.

The assumption of 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' is that in struggling against oppression the oppressed will move towards true humanity. The problem with such an abstract, universalised (and again, gender-blind) notion of humanisation is that it fails to address the different forms of oppression experienced by different groups...As such, it does not consider the possibility that different groups might propose different – even conflicting – definitions of 'humanisation'. In its simple oppressor-oppressed model of power and its implicit assumption that when the oppressed perceive themselves in relation to the world they will act together to change it, it fails to acknowledge the possibility of a contradictory experience of oppression among the oppressed Weiler (1991) in Barr (1999:15).

Another critique comes from the perspective of development, in which Kaplan challenges Freire's neglect of the phase beyond independence.

In Paulo Freire's terms, development moves from dependence to a critical consciousness; the ability to analyse circumstance, to question existing reality, and to say no. This however, only corresponds to the stage of independence. I am saying that this is only partial development, and that interdependence is a phase beyond (Kaplan, 1996:22).

Interdependence relates to the phase where an individual or a group realises that it cannot achieve what it needs to on its own. Kaplan (1990) refers to the concept of interdependence as "the recognition of ourselves as separate coupled simultaneously with the recognition of our inevitable dependence on others...the ability to stand on our own in the midst of our need for others"(1990:7). Kaplan argues that interdependence "demands give and take, maturity, looking to others needs as much as to your own" (1990:7). This raises the dire need for networking and collaboration with other individuals and communities in order for a group in a community to fully integrate into its environment and have impact on social transformation. Taylor (2001) elaborates on the concept of interdependence which he places in the South African context as "deeply integrated into the way the world is understood in the philosophy of Ubuntu" (Taylor, 2001:1). Taylor states that

the concept of Ubuntu places social interconnectedness as the starting point for understanding human existence. The human individual can only be conceived of in relationship to others – never alone. 'I am, only because you are – we are, only because the community is'. This interdependence goes beyond people's mutual dependence on each other, to their collective dependence on the natural environment in which they exist (Taylor, 2001:1).

This area of interdependence is not explored sufficiently in Freire's approach. Prinsloo confirms this in his critique in which he identifies the 'political limits of Freire's perspective (Prinsloo, 1987:361). He has a number of critiques. Firstly, that "Freire does not have a theorization of power which is equal to the social complexities he faces" (Prinsloo, 1987:368). Another critique is that the educator and learner as equal partnership is farcical – he relates research where popular educators in Latin America were observed to still behave as 'teachers' and determine what would be learnt instead of generating themes as Freire proposes (Prinsloo, 1987:369). Prinsloo also refers to a study

where “peasants were able to articulate opinions on repression, corruption, dependency and the like but no sense of strategies for change or contestation”; Prinsloo argues that “consciousness raising has difficulty influencing reality in the absence of social organization and political action” (Prinsloo, 1987:370). He confirms his argument by stating that “The Freirean curriculum is not located with any sense of facilitating group formation, and group identity in the context of struggle” (Prinsloo, 1987:371). Prinsloo’s statements about lack of social organisation and group formation link to Kaplan’s comment on Freire’s approach being ‘partial development’. It seems that the missing stage in Freire’s model is the phase after independence which is interdependence. Interdependence would accommodate group formation and social organisation, which appears to be missing in these models and perhaps a contributing factor to popular education not being as successful as it could be in bringing about social transformation.

A critique of Freire states that “popular education is male-biased” (Walters and Manicom, 1996:6): Feminism and feminist popular education challenges popular education and explores an alternative approach. It is assumed that this alternative approach empowers women in ways that the male-biased approach may not have been successful.

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Women’s Empowerment and Feminist popular education

The literature reveals that even in the resistance movements women have been suppressed and not given full opportunities to realise their potential, this has also been my experience in community organisations where women do administrative and background work whilst men take the limelight and occupy key positions. Despite this women have made significant contributions to education for social change, mainly through their community involvement and women’s movements. Feminist popular education has grown out of the women’s movement, and takes into account the particular needs of women. Feminists have taken popular education and adapted it for women’s needs particularly looking at women’s struggles and how they could best benefit from popular education. The feminists challenge gender stereotypes and how these impact on women’s lives and affect their ability to take social action and contribute to

transformation. “Elson identifies gender relations as the socially determined relations that differentiate male and female situations” (Elson, 1991:1 in Brohman, 1996:277). Feminism is a critical response to gender relations and how these socially determined relations referred to by Elson, limit women and contribute to their struggles in becoming empowered.

Feminism

There are a range of feminist approaches which have emerged over decades of women’s struggle and each of these reflect the particular issues of specific groups of women in varying contexts. Different feminisms have ‘fragmented’ the women’s movement. Barr refers to “the gulf which separates feminist theory of the 1970s from feminist theory of the 1990s” and the “fragmentation of feminism as a political movement” (1999:6). She says that women can no longer categorise themselves according to specific groups of feminists. Barr explains the problem,

Gone it seems are the days when we confidently separated ourselves out neatly according to the political categories: liberal feminist, socialist feminist, radical feminist – each distinguished by its specification of the cause of women’s inequality or oppression...although we differed in our answers – liberal feminists specifying the absence of equality of opportunity between men and women, socialist feminists, capitalist economic relations of production, and radical feminists, patriarchal relations of reproduction – we were all agreed on the central question of feminism. The political categorisation of feminism reflected the nature of what was afoot (Barr, 1999:6).

Barr elaborates this issue in the following ways referring to

Black women’s and lesbians’ critiques of the ethnocentrism and heterosexism of western feminism – the emphasis on ‘difference’ between women; A growing interest in psychoanalytic analyses of sexual difference and identity and a growing celebration of the difference women could make to an alternative kind of society; Developments by feminists of poststructuralist and postmodernist insights and, in particular, the alleged Foucauldian² emphasis on ‘words’ or discourses referred to above (Barr, 1999:6).

Weiner concludes this debate by saying that

² Poststructural feminism has placed more emphasis on the creation of ways of seeing and knowing. Drawing on the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault among others, poststructural feminism seeks to analyse in more detail the workings of patriarchy in all its manifestations – ideological, institutional, organizational and subjective. (Weiner, 1994:63)

... new feminisms will continue to emerge in the decades to come to reflect the different cultural, psychological and material concerns of new generations of women, rather than any terminal decline of feminism or entry into any post-feminist era (Weiner,1994:66).

It appears that women have been fighting 'ideological battles' amongst themselves and have in the process discriminated against each other. This is quite paradoxical if one examines what the feminist movement was really about – women uniting in a common cause against gender oppression. Instead the women's movement became fragmented as a result of all these different feminisms. The more 'progressive thinkers' in the feminist movement have begun to realise that in order to move forward and fight for the cause of women all over the world, they would have to start becoming more embracing of the different views and theories emerging. Gordon highlights the need for a diversity of feminisms.

Feminist theory and social action to help women improve their lives must take into account not only the diverse forms of patriarchal oppression women face but the other sources of oppression women must contend with both from within their societies and from their society's place within the whole system. For this reason there is a need for a diversity of feminisms responding to women's needs (Johnson-Odim, 1991; Cagatay et al, 1986 in Gordon, 1996:79).

In the literature, these different feminisms are present and feminist views on empowerment will differ, depending on which feminist perspective through which it has been analysed. The liberalists argue for democratic reforms, and see empowerment as having been achieved when women have equality. Socialists argue for social and economic reforms, and believe empowerment will only happen when class and capitalist economic structures change. Black feminists argue for equality in respect of race and see empowerment of women taking place when they are no longer discriminated against because of race and ethnicity. Each of these different feminisms are in essence outer manifestations of the problem of women being disempowered because of their gender at various levels and each feminism puts forth its argument very well and makes a case for what needs to change. In all of these 'main' feminisms, the inner issues of women seem to be neglected. The feminists who have given this area some attention is psychoanalytical feminist theory. Most of the feminist theories neglect the issue of self and identity in the process of empowerment. Weiner, 1994:61, who argues from a

psychoanalytical perspective, strongly proposes an emphasis on working at the level of the self and identity. It is important that democratic reforms take place, that social and economic factors are considered as well as class, gender and race issues but if all of these do not consider that empowerment can only happen from within and if women's inner issues of 'self, identity and emotions' have not been examined, then empowerment will be limited or stunted. There is a need for diversity of feminisms but there should always be an emphasis on the self and identity, and emotions or an attempt to integrate it into other feminisms. On psychoanalytical feminism, Weiner states that

Its main concern was to place greater emphasis within feminism on how the oppression of women affects their emotional life and their sexuality (as opposed, say, to their employment prospects or position within the family). It argued... that the roots of women's oppression are deeply embedded in the psyche and that for women to free themselves, an interior (as well as societal) revolution is necessary so that women are able to challenge their own oppression (Weiner, 1994:61).

This interior revolution to which Weiner refers, is a perspective on feminism that emerges strongly in feminist popular education where the inner issues of emotions and psyche (self and identity) emerge as one of the key elements to focus on in facilitating empowerment of women. Feminist popular education has attempted to bring together this key element and some of the diversity of feminisms into its approach to adult education for social change. It becomes evident then that the self and identity are important parts of the empowerment process in feminism and feminist popular education.

Feminist Empowerment

The term empowerment is one that has become jargonised in adult education language. It is a word that is used often and referred to as a goal for educational programmes. The term is complex because its meaning can be misleading. In relation to feminist empowerment, it may mean different things to different groups of women – for a group of women who are very poor and struggling to feed their children, empowerment may mean becoming financially secure so that they can buy food, for a group of middle-class women; empowerment may mean furthering their education. For many of the world's cultures, empowerment is not a term that is part of the local language for women. Empowerment is relative to the situation, culture and context. Von Kotze states that “ever

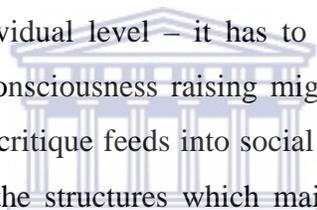
since Freire set out to conscientise learners, the concept of empowerment has become central to progressive or popular education” (Von Kotze, 1996:159). Von Kotze confirms that the term ‘empowerment’ is problematic – she believes that popular approaches are often a ‘charade’ of empowerment in that the ‘power sharing’ that supposed to happen, may be as restrictive as ‘non- progressive’ education. She uses the example of the talking stick³ as a ‘regulated and controlling’ method (Von Kotze, 1996:159). Von Kotze shares her skepticism about empowerment in stating that

The notion of empowerment implies both an agent and a desired state or condition, and this necessarily throws up considerations of the ethics of educators. In many educational endeavours the form the desired ‘empowered’ state might take remains unclear and one might ask whether there can ever be a general vision of ‘empowered’ learners. Unless power is defined in terms of being able to do something fairly specific as a result of learning, empowerment remains a popular slogan but not an achievable or, indeed, desirable aim of teaching. ‘I taught them but they didn’t learn’ easily becomes ‘I empowered them but they didn’t get empowered’ (Von Kotze, 1996:159).

This shows that empowerment is not an easy concept to work with and therefore not an easy goal to define let alone prove as having happened. It depends on the ‘ethics of educators’ – which is quite a dangerous terrain and a perilous position in which a learner could find herself. Patel confirms Von Kotze’s point in her stating that “Empowerment, then, is both a means and end, a process and the result of process” (Patel, 1996:90). Patel defines empowerment in terms of its goal which according to her is “a process aimed at transforming existing social relationships, particularly as they affect the most oppressed women, those disempowered also on the basis of class and race” and she further refers to the goals of women’s empowerment which are to “challenge patriarchal ideology, transform structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination, and enable poor women to gain access to and power in relation to control of both material and information processes” (Patel, 1996:90). Patel argues that the “demand for change does not arise spontaneously from the conditions of subjugation. It must usually be sparked off by a realisation that those conditions are unjust, and such realisation must

³ It is a popular method where learners pass the stick to the next person who is allowed to talk only when the stick is handed to her – the rule being that people may not just talk...but may only do so when the stick is passed to them. The talking stick is supposed to combat domination in groups.

often be facilitated”. Patel sees the role of the “external activist” as initiating a new way of thinking for changing how women see themselves and “inspiring action” (Patel, 1996:90). It seems that empowerment needs a stimulus, either from outside or from within which can help a woman realise the position she finds herself in, and furthermore help her to decide what she wants to do about it. Empowerment is also about gaining access to resources and knowledge which was not available to women before and equality and equity in terms of redressing previous imbalances. Most importantly empowerment is about power and the fact that within the relationship between the educator and learner there is the issue of power and how this gets used by the educator. The conclusion then is that one person cannot empower another, but rather one can facilitate or initiate a process of empowerment and it would then be up to the learner to decide how they will use their own power to empower themselves. Linking empowerment to the process of social transformation, the idea is that women cannot be empowered merely at the individual level – it has to move beyond to the collective. Pritchard Hughes says that “Consciousness raising might well empower women on an individual level, but unless the critique feeds into social action for change, which moves beyond individual awareness, the structures which maintain oppression remain intact” (Pritchard Hughes, 1996:104).

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In describing empowerment strategies and a process of empowerment which organizations should adhere to, Patel (1996) draws from Batliwala’s (1994) conceptual model whose key concepts are: 1) Educational models should challenge patriarchal ideology and put emphasis on enabling poor women to gain greater access to and control over material and informational resources; 2) Locating the geopolitical region where the organisation wants to work and focusing on the most disadvantaged and marginalised women in that area; 3) Female activists should be drawn from the women themselves and then have to be trained; 4) Imparting to activists an awareness of the structures and sources of power, especially in relation to gender, and equipping them with necessary skills to mobilise, while also learning from the women with whom they plan to undertake consciousness raising; 5) Activists should encourage women to seek empowerment rather than be passive recipients of welfare or beneficiaries of programmes – to question their

situation collectively and develop their critical thinking about it, women should be assisted to examine themselves and their environment in new ways, recognise their strengths and develop positive self-images; 6) Women should evolve from a collection of individuals to a cohesive collective and activists should help women collectively claim access to new information and to begin to develop a critical understanding of the ideology of gender, the systems and institutions through which it is perpetuated and reinforced, and the structures of power governing their lives (Batliwala 1994:127).

Batliwala's model claims that this is the process that expands women's awareness beyond their immediate conditions. It further claims that with a growing consciousness and collective strength, women's groups can prioritise the problems they would like to address. They can begin to confront oppressive practices and situations both inside and outside the home, and gradually alter their own attitudes and behaviour. It is thought that through the process, women also build skills relating to collective decision-making, accountability and action. This may include forging new strategies and methods, such as forming alliances with other groups of exploited and oppressed people, or involving sympathetic men from their own communities and projects. The model states that another vital element in the empowering process is the acquisition of practical skills that enhance women's individual and collective autonomy and power. It is said that activists and NGOs should help women to gain competence in such areas as vocational and managerial know-how, literacy, numeracy and basic data-collection techniques for conducting their own surveys. It says that this will help women's collectives to then begin to seek access to resources and public services independently, demanding accountability from service providers, lobbying for changes in laws and programmes that are inaccessible or inappropriate, and negotiating with public institutions such as banks and government departments. The model concludes that collectives operating in villages or neighbourhoods may form associations at local, regional, national and even global levels. In concluding, Batliwala says that an empowerment process of the kind outlined here is impossible without democratic space for dissent, struggle and change. Patel quoting Batliwala (1996:97-98)

This process of empowerment resonates very strongly with Kaplan's notion of dependence to independence and then interdependence. It seems that Batliwala's model falls into that framework. It also supports Kaplan's point that Freire's approach was only partial development. Freire's model of conscientisation brought individuals to the point of critical consciousness, and he mentioned co-operation, unity and organisation, but did not emphasise explicitly enough, the collective connecting with other collectives towards social action. Batliwala's conceptual model takes the process further to include the building of the strength of the collective. Batliwala's model furthermore incorporates 'the self' and "expects that women should be assisted to examine themselves and their environment in new ways, recognise their strengths and develop positive self-images" (Batliwala, 1994:127).

This model provides a useful conceptual framework, but underlying women's empowerment, there is still the concern about men and how they relate to women who become empowered. One of the key issues concerning women's empowerment has been the effects of women's empowerment on male-female relationships. In reference to the latter, Fink (1992) in her documentation of the Latin American experience of popular education, claims that women have been prevented from attending courses by husbands and sometimes a woman "is confronted with the dilemma of having to acquiesce or suffer repercussions from her partner". Fink points to efforts made to incorporate men into the programmes and help them recognise the benefits offered by such programmes to both their wives and their families. She says that several participants maintain that they have actually seen their marital relationships improve in the process, and as men see concrete benefits in the household, they gain respect for their partner's new skills. It is also said that when women bring home money it "open's her husband's mind to continued participation" (Fink, 1992:185). It appears that men only gain respect for women's empowerment when it contributes to an income for the household.

Empowerment models may have excellent practical processes built in to them, such as the one outlined by Batliwala, but there are no guarantees that women will emerge from the process empowered. It has become evident that the areas of 'the self, identity, and

emotions', may be the key components which should be incorporated into all areas of feminist popular education work. Medel-Anonuevo, Nadeau, Heng in Walters and Manicom (1996), as well as Barr (1999), all argue a strong case for these areas to receive sufficient attention in empowerment programmes, as it is this area that seems to facilitate transformation towards empowerment.

The individual – Self, Identity, and Emotions

Self and identity refers to ways in which women perceive themselves on an individual and personal level – their self-image, perceptions of self and self esteem. It is hard for many women (particularly disadvantaged women), by virtue of how they perceive their role and purpose in their family and broader community, to see themselves as a separate entity. In a traditional sense many impoverished women may have lost their sense of identity and taken the identity of their husbands in name and in the ways that they present themselves to the world and having children to provide for may further compound this. This has caused the self and identity to be very low on their priority list. It is even more difficult to afford themselves the time to think about their identity, examine the self and reflect on emotions. Weiner confirms this when she says that

Simone de Beauvoir (1953) conceptualized women's oppression as unique, derived from her position as the Other, not only separate from man but inferior to him. Her perception of the effects on women of having and caring for children suggested to de Beauvoir that it was harder for a woman to become and remain 'a self', especially as a mother (Weiner, 1994:65).

Popular education emphasises the importance of critical reflection on the world around, and an orientation towards moving beyond the self in order to impact on the world around the individual. The feminist literature refers to the issues of the self and identity as important factors in determining whether a woman can begin to develop critical consciousness and move beyond herself and interact with others as a collective. It becomes evident that women need to begin to examine issues of identity and self so that they may be able to make strides into the world beyond themselves, since the inability to look at one's self and identity may deter or prevent women from being effective in a group or as a collective. Medel-Anonuevo echo these sentiments by bringing attention to the roles and identity of women.

We need to emphasise that women are not only victims of unjust societal structures and poverty but also agents of change, whether at the level of making choices in their everyday lives or in organised action aimed at confronting macro-structures. This entails questioning dominant messages such as that women are passive or suited to certain roles. Our education work should provide an environment in which women can reflect on this whole matter of identity, unpacking those aspects imposed by society and examining how they preserve such imposed identity within themselves, as well as in other women (Medel-Anonuevo, 1996:132).

Medel-Anonuevo points out that this is not easy in a movement where societal analysis has been the primary focus of analysis. She also adds that “looking for one’s identity or searching for one’s self is a preoccupation of women in northern countries” (Medel-Anonuevo, 1996:132). This could also be seen as a critique of popular education – that it has been too much of an outward orientation, concentrating too much on the collective feeling and neglects looking inward, at the self and individual feelings, and examining what the constraints are in this area. It may be a masculine quality of popular education – neglecting to look at the self, which could be a very feminine quality and the feminists’ contribution to popular education.

A huge part of looking at the self may involve dealing with very emotional issues and confronting and facing the past and very painful memories that may have shaped a woman’s identity. Focusing on individual emotions is an area that has not been foremost in popular education. Previously, in education for social transformation and organising for social action, the emphasis has always been on the emotions of the collective, critical consciousness, mobilising and organising for social action. Within all this are the individuals who have lives and past experiences of their own. This has been almost ignored since the emphasis has been on becoming empowered to move beyond the self and making an impact on the broader society as well as challenging the oppressor. With oppression comes pain and for women this is experienced at many different levels. If this pain is not dealt with or if spaces are not created for women to talk about their individual and personal feelings, then empowerment may be hampered or they may struggle to move beyond themselves. In some cases they may be successful activists, but carry the burden of pain and past emotional baggage around with them and sometimes it may

manifest in later years causing them even more damage. Heng says that in her work with women she neglected to take into account “their lack of emotional well-being” and “was aware of the existence of a wealth of unspoken feelings, thoughts and experiences among them, but did not know what to do about it” (Heng, 1996:204). She also adds that her activist colleagues did not see that this was an issue that needed attention and she substantiates Medel-Anonuevo’s statement about dealing with personal issues. Heng feared being seen as ‘unprogressive’ or ‘promoting individualism’. Heng says her work is now informed by an understanding of the “centrality of emotion” and “the transformative potential of emotions” (Heng, 1996:204). Heng substantiates her claims by quoting Weiler who says that

Emotions have constituted a very powerful resource for liberation in the women’s movement. Feminist educators, particularly women in the early consciousness-raising groups, have explored feelings as a ‘critical way of knowing’, or ‘inner knowing’: the source of true knowledge of the world for women living in a society that denies the value of their perceptions. Weiler, (1991:463), cited by Heng (1996:205)

Heng became convinced that “it is necessary to include experienced subjectivities in our educational agenda if we are serious about education for empowerment... Subsequent evaluation of the workshops revealed that it was the supportiveness and emotional responsiveness of fellow participants, coupled with effective facilitation, that elicited talk and enabled reflection” (Heng, 1996:221). Freire also recognised the crucial role that emotions play in transformation, and it is mentioned under one of the key principles, as part of ‘generative themes’, in Hope and Timmel (1996:17). There is a danger though, that feminist popular education in dealing with emotions and the self, may border on psychotherapy which is a very specialized discipline. Walters and Manicom refer to the overlap between feminist popular education and psychotherapy.

Walters and Manicom refer to Nadeau⁴ who argues that there are clear boundaries and differences between the two disciplines.

⁴ Nadeau in Walters and Manicom (1996:58) writes about how “ Embodied feminist popular education reaches women where they live, at the level of daily life. It counters the everyday powerlessness individual women experience by freeing the emotional body, breaking down the internal walls that block energy for action.

Perhaps the most important result of the current focus on the notion of empowerment, and one which feminist popular education has contributed to developing, is the attention given to the subjective aspects of political change or, in other words, to the construction of political subjectivity..., the process of reflecting on experience and collectively building alternative interpretations of the relations shaping one's life, produces shifts in subjectivity as well as building confidence and capacity. This aspect of subjective transformation has led some to question the relationship overlap between feminist popular education, which works self-consciously to elicit feelings and emotions, and psychotherapy. Nadeau argues that the collective focus of popular education distinguishes it from the individualized therapy, although clearly similar learning processes and reinterpretations are taking place (Walters and Manicom, 1996:17).

Barr refers to the recognition of feelings as knowledge (Barr, 1999: 114), and cites Walters and Manicom (1996) where she identifies one of the themes focused in their book 'Gender in Popular Education' as being "the pedagogical importance of attending to feelings and emotions, - ignored it is claimed, in much gender blind popular education – as well as to pleasure and fun" (Barr, 1999:116).

Feminist popular education

Feminist positions claim that conventional popular education methods did not meet the needs of women as they were developed to achieve certain aims, which were largely dominated by male discourses. "Feminist Popular education developed in the early 1980s as a critique of the male-biased popular education" (Walters and Manicom, 1996:6). "Feminist popular education ... supports the struggles of women in oppressed communities" Walters and Manicom (1996) in Barr (1999:115).

Feminist popular education obviously focuses particularly on the conditions and positions of women and the re-negotiation of gender relations; but, given that gender is a social category, referring to the historical and culturally defined constructs of masculinity and femininity, feminist popular education must simultaneously engage with the ways in which the social categories of race, ethnicity, culture, age, social class, sexuality and physical ability are implicated in constructions of gender (Walters and Manicom, 1996:7).

In the above quote, Walters and Manicom show how feminist popular education attempts to embrace the different feminisms e.g. race, culture, class, sexuality. In the South African context this becomes very important since we have the added dilemma of having

only recently emerged from an apartheid system which further entrenched concepts of race, ethnicity, social class and culture. Walters and Manicom provide a definition of feminist popular education, by stating that

Feminist popular education has a core orientation and offer the following characterization: it is a participatory, democratic, non-hierarchical pedagogy which encourages creative thinking that breaks through embedded formats of learning. It valorizes local knowledge, working collectively towards producing knowledge, the principal of starting from where people are situated, and working to develop a broader understanding of structures and how these can be transformed. It strives to foster both personal and social empowerment (Walters and Manicom, 1996:7).

Walters and Manicom further examine feminist pedagogy and its link to critical pedagogy.

Within feminist popular education is the use of feminist pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy is part of and an elaboration of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy in general is concerned with transforming the position of the oppressed. Feminist pedagogy deepens and extends this with a particular focus on improving the position of women. It developed as a critique of critical pedagogy which in the past largely ignored gender as a key social category Ellsworth (1989) and Weiler (1991) in Walters (1996:28).

A key contribution of feminist popular education has been in its focus on gender – it has added this dimension to its work in the popular education realm and brings the diversity of feminisms into its approaches and methodologies. The aspect that has been referred to in feminist writings (Barr,1999 ; Weiner, 1994; Walters and Manicom, 1996; Nadeau in Walters and Manicom, 1996; Medel Anonuevo in Walters and Manicom, 1996; Heng in Walters and Manicom, 1996) as being an area not given sufficient attention, is the area of the self and identity, and emotions (which has strong links to psychoanalytical feminism). Feminist popular education has attempted to bring this neglected area into its work towards empowering women.

Nadeau (1996) provides a very apt definition of feminist popular education which shows how it tries to embrace a diversity of feminisms. According to her “feminist popular education is defined by the way it encompasses every dimension of women’s lives”. Nadeau continues that “its methods integrate the emotional, physical, spiritual and mental dimensions and can be used with men as well as women”. She says that “in doing this it

challenges traditional popular education to broaden its understanding of social change”. Nadeau claims that “social change involves transformation of the whole person and of the collective at the level of body and spirit”. According to her, “it is this combining of feeling and rationality, or personal and political realities, of private and public that makes popular education feminist” (Nadeau, 1996:59). Nadeau’s views reflect a convergence of all the feminisms and an acknowledgement that transformation of the whole person and communities will need to bring together both the inner (self, identity and emotions) and outer (societal) realm of women’s realities. Her definition sees feminist popular education as bringing a more embracing and holistic approach to social change in order to empower women and bring about transformation in communities. The area of self, identity, and emotions, not given sufficient attention in most popular education programmes, deserves more focus as an important part of feminist empowerment.

It becomes apparent then that the building blocks of empowerment depend on the inner issues of women being explored in tandem with her engagement in social action. They are not mutually exclusive but co-exist in an interrelated way. The inner (self) and outer (community) influence and impact on each other in the continuous cycle of life. Leadership demands enormous responsibility and requires a person who has special qualities which stand out from the rest. Women who have sufficiently examined their inner issues, are able to explore leadership with confidence and become more effective as leaders. Still, women may face many challenges with taking leadership and these are strongly linked to gender stereotyping or where women may prefer to place the emphasis in taking social action. Women-only organisations remain the best place for women to develop themselves and become empowered into taking leadership.

Empowerment, Leadership and Social action

Community adult education programmes provide ideal opportunities for women’s potential as leaders to be unleashed and for those with natural leadership abilities to be nurtured. Jelin confirms that grassroots organisations have been the entry point for women where they could develop leadership.

Through collective grassroots organisation, women have begun to enter the political arena, a sphere from which they have been traditionally excluded. Spaces

have been created in which women can acquire leadership skills, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Jelin (1990) quoted by Brohman (1996:296)

Not all women are interested in leadership positions and according to Moser, “as a result of gender-role socialisation, men often pursue leadership positions for personal advancement, while women normally demonstrate a deeper commitment to community goals” Brohman quoting Moser (1996:296). In feminist popular education, training programmes exclusively for women are often encouraged, because it allows for women to find their leadership capabilities more easily than if men were part of the group. Fink says that “these programmes serve as springboards for the development of leadership skills, strengthen local organisations and build networks among groups, thus having a much broader impact” (Fink, 1992:182). In my experience of working in organisations, I have observed that men tend to take over from the women and generally dominate in the area of leadership. Traditionally, women have played the role of doing the ‘women’s work’ in organisations, like organising the food, being secretaries or performing administration tasks and the men would do the actual work of organising and facilitating and chairing meetings. It is mostly only the very strong and assertive women who will be respected in organisations where men are also involved. Fink makes a strong case for women’s only groups and says that “results from social science research indicate that women more effectively develop initial participatory and leadership skills in mutual support environments such as all women groups” (Fink, 1992:184). On looking at the impact of popular education efforts, Fink highlights the impact at the individual level where women become role models assuming a range of new responsibilities and then at group level, a sense of community and common purpose is forged. Fink says that

Popular education is instrumental in the development of collective survival projects and the improvement of living standards. It provides the building blocks for continued organising and networking on community and regional level by helping women develop leadership skills and play a greater role in grassroots organizations (Fink, 1992:189).

Conclusion and Summary

The literature review has confirmed that popular education has a very valuable

contribution to make to society, especially marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Its theories, methodologies and approaches, particularly those of Paulo Freire have been some of the most fundamental sources for adult educators, writers, activists and development practitioners and many other disciplines, worldwide. The approaches and methodologies have been adapted and expanded on – as in the case of feminist popular education, so that it could be used in particular contexts with specific groups. The literature highlights that it is a humane approach that brings society back to key concepts which seem almost simple and basic in essence and yet it has had to be re-learned because humanity has lost these abilities and ways through colonisation, globalisation, poverty, capitalism, domination and greed. The impact of this dominant destructive global discourse has resulted in the marginalized people of the world being stripped of their dignity, made them submissive, silenced them, removed them from their natural traditions and ways, thus resulting in a loss of indigenous knowledge and group processes. People have had to be taught how to engage with each other meaningfully again, taught to be critical and solve their problems – in a sense learn how to ‘be’ and this calls for conscientisation where individuals and communities have had to be awakened to their very thinking and ways of thinking. When one looks at these elements, they should be natural inherent qualities in human beings and they are, but they have had to be re-awakened and re-introduced, because people have been made to believe that they cannot do these things. Feminist popular education has developed a particular approach which has become widely used and research done by feminist practitioners has documented huge success in women’s empowerment. These concepts, ideas and findings from the research of others have helped to define what the real issues are. The real issues emerging in the feminist popular education literature have been self, identity, and emotions which need to play a more fundamental role in adult education programmes. This links to the recognition that conscientisation starts within the self and then only moves to the outer world. An individual needs to be aware of their own issues first and understand what has happened in their own lives so that they can be more effective in taking action and looking beyond themselves to their communities. Freire’s approach is intrinsically noble and valuable in its emphasis on the collective and the community. The drawback of this is an outward orientation that sees the community as being the primary focus and the

individual a lesser focus, which becomes almost paradoxical because a community is made up of individuals and if work is not done at the individual level then the impact on the community may not be as effective. The Marxist-socialist underpinnings of popular education have influenced the thinking that the collective is more important than the individual and that emphasis on the self may almost be perceived as 'selfish' and imperialist.

The feminist popular education literature has highlighted that the social change process needs to be holistic and embracing of both the individual and collective. As Nadeau (1996) says "social change involves transformation of the whole person and of the collective at the level of body and spirit" and a combining of what she calls "feeling and rationality, or personal and political realities, of private and public..."

The issue of interdependence is also raised in the literature. Research and activists have found that in order for empowerment and social transformation to happen effectively, individuals and groups would need to network and build partnerships. It is not sufficient for individuals to become conscientised, it has to move beyond this to communities and then connecting with other communities and so on. Effective social action needs an interdependent society. Interdependence seems the only way to survive, but interdependence, which recognizes that in many societies women need to first find themselves independently, before they can effectively work together with men towards social transformation. The other concern is to emphasise that men are also oppressed and therefore behave in ways that perpetuate a vicious cycle or hierarchy of oppression. Gordon confirms this concern by stating that

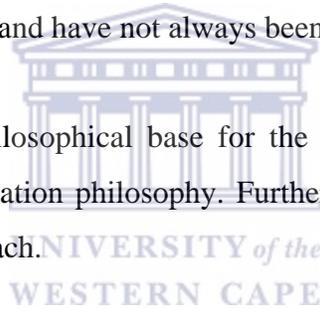
We must also realise that feminist struggle may not be best served by pitting women's interests against men's. That men sometimes oppress women is certainly true, but in many cases this is a response to their own struggles within oppressive social structures; achieving gender equality is impossible without the support of men and without changing these oppressive structures. (Gordon, 1996:79)

Hope and Timmel echo these sentiments by referring to Eisher who says "The answer to patriarchy is not matriarchy but partnership" (Hope and Timmel, 1996:48) quoting Eisher

(1988:28). It needs to be recognised that there is a bigger struggle that humanity faces and if social transformation is to be effective we must recognise this – women cannot be fighting a war against men and a war against capitalism and globalisation. For poor women to become truly empowered they need the support of men in the bigger societal struggle and together in equal partnership with men, social change can become a reality.

It needs to be highlighted that popular education is open to interpretation depending on the organisation or institution, educator, trainer or facilitator and often these interpretations lead to a distilling or misuse of the approach. Often, what is used as popular education may at times be a masked form of conventional education which may end up causing more disempowerment and leading to participants or learners feeling demotivated and more at a disadvantage than before they became involved, which is contrary to what this approach is meant to achieve. The practices of popular education have not always been authentic and have not always been used for its intended purposes.

The literature provides the philosophical base for the research methodology which is underpinned by a popular education philosophy. Furthermore the research is conducted using a feminist research approach.



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodological Framework

Popular education and feminist methodologies encourage a philosophy that sees people as actively participating in the process of learning. Therefore, any intervention into the lives of people which advocates such an approach, be it a learning programme or research, should contribute to conscientising people. The research has been designed with a popular education and feminist methodology as its overall framework. For this reason qualitative feminist research has been favoured.

Qualitative, feminist research

Qualitative research emerged as a more suitable methodology than quantitative research given the nature of this study and the context of the research group. “Qualitative research concentrates on words and observations to express reality and attempts to describe people in natural situations” (Krueger, 1994:27). This study uses the actual words and observations of the women participating as a key source and the women’s voices make up most of the data collected. In social research, which is the realm of this study, it becomes important to be able to hear the actual voices of the people being researched and to see them in their own environment. This is in line with the philosophy of popular education because it places the emphasis on what the people are saying, and using their experiences as a starting point. The women participants’ experiences shared orally through focus groups are the key sources of data in this study. Kelly, Lincoln and Denzin (1994), confirm that the common denominator of all good qualitative research is the commitment to study human experience from the ground up (Kelly, 1999:429). Kelly (1999) states that qualitative research

is less immediately concerned with discovering universal, law-like patterns of human behaviour (e.g. theories of cognitive and moral development that apply to all people in all contexts), and is more concerned with making sense of human experience from within the context and perspective of human experience. This approach has as a starting point the belief that we cannot apprehend human experience

without understanding the social, linguistic and historical features which give it shape. Kelly (1999:398) in Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999)

This is what my research attempts to do, by using the women's experiences to inform the research rather than imposing preconceived theories and attempting to find the patterns.

The research was designed in a feminist paradigm. The methodology has a strong emphasis on feminist research methods, with the hope that the process would raise consciousness for the LEAD organisation, its trainer and participants. The opportunity to reflect and share would help the trainer and participants make meaning of their experience within the LEAD programme. The intention was that these reflections could create an increased understanding of the LEAD's intervention into the lives of the Delft women and help them achieve a better understanding in relation to it. A consequence of the research would be that it should not leave those involved unchanged. Some would have been stimulated in their thinking and perhaps the process of this research may have resulted in some shifts within them. Others may have had more questions or no shifts at all. Each of the individuals participating in the research would have had a unique experience of the process. Kelly, Burton and Reagan confirm the value and significance of feminist research in stating that

Feminism for us is both a theory and practice, a framework which informs our lives. Its purpose is to understand women's oppression in order that we might end it. Our position as feminist researchers, therefore is one in which we are part of the process of discovery and understanding and also responsible for attempting to create change...Our hope is that the research we do reflects the dynamic, cumulative process of consciousness raising, combining personal and social change in a continuing and reflective process (Kelly, Burton and Reagan, 1994: 28).

The role of the researcher, according to Kelly et al (1994), is not as an objective, 'cold' researcher who maintains distance from the research participants, but rather as part of the process, fully involved, present and with empathy for women's oppression. The researcher then has to work hard at maintaining a fine balance between becoming too involved and maintaining enough professional 'distance' to enable her to interpret the research. The "role of the researcher" is one of the many challenges faced during the data collection phase which is discussed in this next section.

Data Collection

In this section I will talk about the experiences which I (as the researcher) encountered during the data collection phase and relate these to the feminist approach which views understanding women's oppression and establishing relationship as important components of the research process. I also mention some of the challenges faced and how I dealt with these challenges.

Interpretive research methods

The data has been collected using interpretive methods. "Interpretive research...relies on first-hand accounts, tries to describe what it sees in rich detail and presents its findings in engaging and sometimes evocative language" (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999:124). Terre Blanche and Kelly further point to the fact that the principle of empathy has a strong influence and the idea of "telling it like it is, is telling it in context" (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999:125). In describing the researcher, "the self is seen as the best instrument" (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999:125). Terre Blanche and Kelly state that to do better interpretive research, the researcher has to go through some personal change. They also state that listening skills and interpretive skills may be more difficult to develop, than quantitative skills. They point to the importance of developing listening skills particularly (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999:126). I have participated in many adult education programmes and courses since 1994, at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape, and internally in the NGOs I was employed. In the year the research was undertaken (2001 – 2002), I attended a "Facilitating organisational development" course in my organisation (CDRA), where 'active' listening skills were one of the areas covered intensively. All these learning opportunities had a huge impact on me and contributed to fundamental personal shifts within me. I saw myself as well equipped both emotionally and with sufficient skills to face the challenge of interpretive research.

Location of focus groups

Conducting the first two focus group sessions at the library in Delft was useful since it was central for the women, and it allowed me to conduct the focus groups in their context. As an interpretive researcher it was my intention to conduct the sessions in Delft where the women lived. Terre Blanche and Kelly confirm this in stating that "Interpretive

researchers want to make sense of feelings, experiences, social situations and phenomena as they occur in the real worlds, and therefore want to study them in their natural setting” (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999:127). Due to time constraints it was not always convenient since the library closes early on a Saturday (which was the only time I could do the research) and the time was not always suitable for the women. So for the final session, I collected each of the women from their homes and drove them to my organisation’s office in Woodstock, a suburb on the fringes of Cape Town city centre. My office which has quite beautiful serene spaces to work uninterrupted was where we conducted the final focus group session. It was by far the best focus group and I think the comfort, peacefulness of the environment and the undisturbed time contributed significantly. Perhaps this session was more meaningful because it was a smaller group and these were the women who had attended all the sessions, and with whom I had had the most contact. However, it was useful to have had the first two sessions in the community as it gave me a sense of the context. Also, collecting the women from their homes gave me a personal glimpse into their individual contexts.

Problems with Communication

I had to communicate with the women on an ongoing basis, and because not all of them had telephones, I had to find one or two women with whom I could communicate and then ask them to pass on the message to others. This did not always work, so I resorted to mailing letters to them, to ensure that everyone received the information. Sometimes I needed to know beforehand whether they would attend and because they did not have telephones to reply, I had to include self-addressed envelopes with stamps on them so that they could reply through the mail without any cost on their side. There were often sessions that did not happen or only one woman would arrive. There were also times when I needed to cancel focus group sessions, when work or family took precedence and it was difficult to get hold of the women. Setting up interviews with the trainer was just as challenging as it was difficult to pin down meeting dates. I needed to persevere and maintain contact with them to ensure the continuation of the focus groups and interviews.

Timing of the research

Since the programme with the Delft women ended in June 2001, I was not able to observe the programme in action because my first contact with the group was only in December 2001, by which time the support programme had ended. Therefore, my primary research methods included interviews with the LEAD trainer and focus group sessions with the women. I also observed the drama project which was one of the projects which the women were involved in. Setting up the focus groups was time-consuming and with some false starts and cancellations, sometimes long periods elapsed between sessions and interviews. The data collection phase extended over the period (December 2001 – November 2002). This was longer than I had expected, but it was fortunate because it allowed me to observe development over time, and the time which elapsed allowed for reflection and perspectives which were more honest, both from the participants and the trainer. It also allowed me space to transcribe, which was a hugely time-consuming task.

Establishing relationship and rapport

Involvement with the women over such a long period allowed me to get to know and understand them very well. In the process I shared a lot of myself and my own life experiences with them and this contributed to their acceptance of me and feeling comfortable to share with me. As a feminist researcher it was important for me to share as honestly and openly as I was wanting the women to share. Kelly et al (1994), confirm this in stating that one should not be an objective, 'cold' researcher but rather become a part of the process, and for me this meant sharing of myself. I felt that I developed a good rapport which was characterised by a relationship of warmth and trust. The women shared their lives very openly and were honest and sincere. I felt much richer for having met them. Fontana and Frey confirm the value of establishing close rapport

Because the goal of unstructured interviewing is understanding, it becomes paramount for the researcher to establish rapport. He or she must be able to put him-or herself in the role of the respondents and attempt to see the situation from their perspective, rather than impose the world of academia and preconceptions upon them. Close rapport with respondents opens doors to more informed research, but it may also create problems, as the researcher may become a spokesperson for the group studied, losing his or her distance and objectivity, or may 'go

native' and become a member of the group and forgo the academic role (Fontana and Frey, 1998:60).

As Fontana and Frey caution about losing objectivity, I too needed to make it very clear from the start, the role I would be playing in the lives of the women. I needed to ensure that I was not seen as replacing the role of the trainer in their lives. At times I felt like helping them, because it appeared that they could not move forward due to lack of so many resources. But I knew that if I did, it would only sustain them for the time I was with them, and it would not contribute toward their own growth. I had to remind myself constantly what my purpose was in their lives. However, once I had become close to the group, the temptation was always to want to do more, and I had to resist this at times.

The balance between holding the academic researcher role and that of supportive woman listening role is a fine balance which needs to be acknowledged when one does research of this nature. As Fontana and Frey (1998:60) state that one could “become a member of the group and forgo the academic role”, I too found myself becoming drawn into their lives and feeling less and less of an outsider conducting research. When dealing with women who suffer and struggle on a daily basis, I needed to always be sensitive and aware of their issues, but maintain a level of empathy rather than becoming too sympathetic. Fortunately the women were very clear that my time with them was limited, so when the period came to an end I was able to continue the process of the research in an objective way but with a full understanding of where the women were coming from. It helped to clarify my role and time with them from the start, so that they did not have expectations that I could not deliver on.

Focus groups and interviews were the preferred methods used in collecting the data and demanded a particular approach described in the next section.

Focus Groups and interviews

Rationale for using Focus Groups and semi-structured interviews

As popular education focuses on the collective rather than the individual, focus groups seemed the natural methodological option for interacting with the group. Also, given that

popular education is an approach that allows generative themes to emerge, unstructured interviews were more suitable. Krueger (1994), provides useful definitions about focus groups and the approach of using focus groups. I found it to be an approach which was non threatening and simple and as close as possible to the women's natural way of interacting.

A focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. It is conducted with approximately 7 to 10 people by a skilled moderator/interviewer. The discussion is comfortable and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion (Krueger, 1994:6).

Krueger further states that

It is a systematic and disciplined approach that emphasizes understandable rules and respect for other views. Each person is important and is encouraged to present his or her views and then listen and respond to others. Although consensus sometimes occurs, it is not expected. The focus group helps people hear themselves and receive feedback from peers. This process keeps us grounded in reality (Krueger, 1994:239).

I chose focus groups because I wanted to hear the voices of the women, experience them as a group and observe them as they spoke. I was interested in observing the group dynamics and to establish the kind of relationships which the women had developed within the group. I was hoping to hear about the women's lives and 'everyday experiences' as it related to the LEAD course, leadership, empowerment and social action. Madriz says

For years the voices of women of colour have been silenced in most research projects. Focus groups may facilitate women of colour 'writing culture together' by exposing not only the layers of oppression, but the forms of resistance that they use everyday to deal with such oppressions. Focus groups can be an important element in the advancement of an agenda of social justice for women, because they serve to expose and validate women's everyday experiences of subjugation and their individual and collective survival and resistance strategies (Madriz, 2000:836).

This was the most appropriate form of research for the nature of the study and the context

researched. The main focus of my research were the women and their voices. Madriz, also states that

The advantage of focus groups is that they make it possible for researchers to observe the interactive processes occurring among participants. She continues that the interaction among group participants often decreases the amount of interaction between the facilitator and the individual members of the group. This gives more weight to the participants' opinions decreasing the influence the researcher has over the interview process. (Madriz, 2000:836)

My research examines the women as a group and looks at how they were empowered to assume leadership and take social action as a collective, so the processes mentioned above would be important for my research. I wanted the research experience to really benefit the women and not just be an academic study and so the actual experience of bringing the women together was as important as the data that I was collecting. Madriz confirms this when she says "Focus groups, as a form of collective testimony, can become an empowering experience for women in general, and for women of colour in particular" (Madriz, 2000:843).

The rationale for using semi-structured interviews for both the focus groups and the interviews with the trainer was that they are informal and allow for a conversational tone, which would allow these women to feel more comfortable. It also allows the space to ask new questions as they arise.

Raising Consciousness through focus groups and interviews

I felt very strongly that the focus groups should be something that the women participants would want to attend and should have a larger purpose than my academic study. I also wanted the focus groups to serve the purpose of giving the women an opportunity to reflect on their experiences within the course. I was hoping that the focus group and interview sessions would help the women and trainer think more critically about the programme and how it impacted on their lives. Another part of consciousness raising was for women to share and learn from each other. According to Madriz (2000:842), Oakley says

Communication among women can be an awakening experience and an

important element in the consciousness-raising process. It asserts women's right to validate their own experience, and it allows them to build on each other's opinions and thoughts. The awareness that other women experience similar problems or share analogous ideas is important in that it contributes to women's realisation that their opinions are legitimate and valid. This awareness may contribute to raising consciousness among women that their problems are not just individual but structural and that these problems are shared by other women (Oakley, 1981).

The sharing of problems contributed to consciousness raising, but was also a way of accessing the self, identity and emotions.

Preparing for the Focus Groups and interview sessions

I consulted with relevant books and articles on social research methodology, (Fontana and Frey, 1998; Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999; Krueger, 1994; Madriz, 2000; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Millen, 1997; Wilkinson, 1998). Through the literature, I became aware of the preparation and process involved, the kind of questions to ask, as well as how to start and relax the group and how to come to closure. I also learnt the process involved in data analysis. In addition to preparing myself and gaining a better understanding of focus groups, I found that when I conducted the sessions, my facilitation skills and my adult education experience as well as understanding group dynamics, contributed positively to the sessions. Furthermore, my listening and interpretive skills developed through my practice as development practitioner added to my preparedness and capacity to do this kind of research. It was also very useful to have a research assistant who had adult education training to help me with taking notes and discussing the focus groups both before and reflecting after each one. Having a research assistant recording the discussion through note-taking and recording the focus group on tape recorder, freed me (as the researcher) to be an active listener and participant, maintaining eye contact throughout. This helped the group process enormously and helped me to establish rapport.

Research instruments

Questions were drawn up for the focus groups and interviews, based on the aims of the research and what I was hoping to find out. (See Appendix 3: Focus Group and Interview

questions). A questionnaire was drawn up before each focus group/interview, but it soon became evident that it would be difficult to adhere to them rigidly, so I rather allowed the conversation to take its course as it flowed and use the questions more as a guide. I would find that as the focus group was in process, new questions would arise out of what the women were saying and I would then ask them. Often I would find that when I asked fairly general questions, like at the end “Any thing else, or any other burning issues?” then women would really open up and talk about the most important issues, and this was a source of extremely rich data. I also drew themes out of the first focus group to extend on in the second one and similarly with the third. I would start off the session by recapping what we had spoken about, then if someone was not at the previous focus group, I would give them an opportunity to add their feelings on the previous session’s topics. At first I had an idea about a progression in terms of covering an aspect for each focus group, but then I found that as the women spoke it was hard to separate, and one did not want to stop them in case they forgot their train of thought. There were often overlaps from one session to the next and women would discuss previous session’s themes. The process of using a semi-structured method with extensive use of open-ended questions and allowing space for the conversation to flow made the focus groups an extremely dynamic, relaxed and rich methodology. However, as the researcher, I needed to hold the group and watch group dynamics to ensure that all the women had an equal chance to speak. I had a broad framework for what I wanted to cover in terms of my research topic and I needed to keep this in mind, throughout the focus group sessions. Extensive notes were taken throughout, both by myself and my research assistant. The second and third sessions with the women were recorded by tape recording. With the first and second session I had a research assistant taking notes. The interviews with the trainer happened in the same vein, with questions having been prepared but not adhered to rigidly, and new questions emerging as the interview progressed. The interviews with the trainer were not recorded, but I took extensive notes. I had an overall framework for what I wanted to cover and kept the aims of the research in mind, so that we did not deviate from the main areas needing to be discussed.

Sampling

Approximately 36 women were part of the LEAD programme in Delft, but for the purpose of this research, I focussed on a smaller group, so that I could gain a deeper understanding and work in a more contained and intimate manner with the same group of women over a period of time. This was important for me in building a relationship of trust. Instead of choosing a random grouping which might have been problematic in getting commitment if it was not someone's choice to be involved, I asked the women to volunteer to be part of the research. Fortunately, 10 women, representative of the different racial and cultural groups volunteered, but not all attended regularly and some dropped out. The ideal size for a focus group is 6-8 people. Six women attended most consistently and they have become my research group and the sampling whose voices are represented in the research – I call my sampling 'the research group' or refer to them as 'the 6 women'. So my criteria was met in terms of having a consistent representative grouping consisting of the different ages, racial and cultural groups. It was important to have women participating out of their own free will and this helped in getting co-operation them to attend. My sampling was thus small but representative of the larger group of 36 women who completed the LEAD programme in Delft. The sampling's consistency also meant that I could build on each session and develop a picture over time with the same women. The women came from various areas of Delft and were at varying levels of poverty. Their educational levels also varied as well as their age, race and culture. They represented a cross section of the Delft community of women. Because the scope of this research was focusing on a specific group of women from a defined community, trained by one person from an organisation, I only needed to interview one trainer.

Time Frame, content, and attendance of Focus Groups

Focus Groups

The focus groups were approximately 3 to 4 hours per session. It is important to note that throughout the focus groups there were overlaps in the content of each session. Whilst I had this framework for what I wanted to cover in each session, there were times when certain issues like personal development was discussed throughout.

The first focus group was in December 2001, held at the Delft Library. This session was trying to establish what women were doing before the course and what their lives were like before they came to LEAD. The session also wanted to establish what motivated them to join LEAD. This session was attended by ten women. The second focus group was held on 6 July 2002, at the Delft library. This session recapitulated and elaborated on key issues and themes emerging from first session. The session was also starting to examine The LEAD Programme, beginning to explore what were the most meaningful things about the course and its impact on their lives. This session was attended by seven women, five of whom were at the first session. The third focus group was held on 28 September 2002 at my office in Woodstock. This session started off by drawing out key issues and themes from the previous session. Then it attempted to find out what motivated the women to be part of LEAD, and to return each week. The final focus group was longer than the previous two and examined how LEAD had made a difference in the personal lives of the women. The session also looked at the issues of empowerment and leadership within the contexts of the LEAD course as well as the women's own understanding of empowerment and leadership. This focus group also wanted to find out more about the projects the women were part of, and what were the forms of social action taken. The session examined how the projects were initiated and what were the problems and successes of these projects. The objectives, outcomes and content of the LEAD Programme were further scrutinized and LEAD's support programme was interrogated. Then finally the formation of WAIDS (Women Acting in Delft South) was examined, looking at how the organisation was started, what had WAIDS done thus far and the future of WAIDS. This session was attended by four women, three of whom were at the previous two sessions, and one who was at the first session.

Interviews with the LEAD trainer

The first interview was in December 2001. This was an initial discussion and exploration regarding the thesis. The second interview was in June 2002, and was an attempt to find out from the trainer, how the Delft women were doing at the time, how they had developed and what were the projects they had started. During this interview I also received relevant documents regarding the philosophy, methodology, curriculum and

outline of the course. The third interview was in November 2002. This was a more in depth interview, examining the support programme after the training was completed, the problems with trying to 'develop leadership teams in action', the group dynamics and leadership issues with the women. Also looked at were the curriculum, course content and course materials as well as the difficulties with starting a project. The trainer also spoke about dealing with diversity amongst the women, and how she integrated gender issues into the curriculum. The questions for the final interview with the trainer are included in Appendix 3.

Focus groups as a methodology to investigate the self, identity and emotions

I found that allowing a safe space for women to come together and meet with each other gave opportunities for women to talk about their personal issues, their roles as women in their family, community and society, and how they were feeling about themselves. It helped that the women already knew each other well through the LEAD programme and were already close. It also helped that the focus groups were intimate and small in size. The way the sessions were facilitated and the use of open-ended questions, as well as allowing unfolding conversations, made women share freely and openly. Allowing a conversational tone gave women space to just talk which is what they were most comfortable doing. The women may not have shared as deeply in a structured interview or if they were given a questionnaire to complete. The kind of questions asked were also related to the self and feelings. The sharing of problems contributed to consciousness raising as confirmed by Oakley (1981), but was also a way of accessing the self, identity and emotions.

Observation of a social action project

It became evident to me that the drama project (which was one of the social action projects emerging out of the LEAD programme) had meaning for the research group women featuring as a major highlight in the 6 women's lives. In May 2002, the women performed their play (a product of the drama project), for another community. A group in Factreton, a coloured township near the Cape Town city centre, also being trained by LEAD, had arranged for the Delft women to perform the play in the community hall. I

used the opportunity to see one of their social action projects in action. It gave me some insights into the issues that women were dealing with and the power of the drama project as a methodology. This has been included as part of my data.

Consulting documents

Through this study I read and engaged with the relevant documents like LEAD's annual report (2000), LEAD Course Outline document (2001), "*Training for Transformation*" Manuals (Hope and Timmel, 1996) and visited the organisation's website to gain further information about the broader organisation, its philosophy, aims and strategy. The documents gave me valuable insights into LEAD's intentions and purpose for this programme as well as the underlying philosophy behind the programme.

Ethical guidelines

Consent and confidentiality

The LEAD organisation, the trainer and the women agreed to be part of the research and partake in the focus groups and interviews. One of the assurances given was that confidentiality would be ensured and real names omitted. I therefore use pseudonyms for the organisation and the women and in the case of the trainer, I refer to her as 'the trainer' and not by name. I also changed certain terms which may identify the organisation and the group of women e.g. the name of the play has been changed. In using the pseudonyms I have tried to keep the essence of the meanings e.g. in the name of the organisation I have tried to retain the meaning of the organisation's actual name. The only name I have not changed is the geographical area 'Delft'.

Data analysis

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:140) in Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), provide useful steps in data analysis within the interpretive, phenomenological style of research. They state that their analytical steps fall between the two extremes the first being "quasi-statistical styles using predetermined categories and codes that are applied to the data in a mechanistic way to yield quantifiable indices" and "immersion/crystallisation styles

involving becoming thoroughly familiar with a phenomenon, carefully reflecting on it and then writing an interpretation. Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:140) also caution that “in reality, interpretive analysis rarely proceeds in as orderly a manner as may be suggested by our step-wise presentation, but it can be a helpful starting point”.

Step 1. Familiarisation and immersion

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:141) refer to this first step as the stage where you are working with the texts (field notes and transcripts) and where you are familiarising yourself with the material, reading through it many times, and getting to know your data by making rough notes, brainstorming and drawing diagrams. They say that by the time you have completed this stage you should be able to know your data fairly well enough to know where to find things and start the process of interpretation (Terre Blanche and Kelly 1999:141).

Step 2. Inducing themes

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:141) state that this process involves looking at the material and trying to work out what the organising principles are that ‘naturally’ underlie the material. They say that this is the opposite of a top-down approach that would use ready-made categories, and then look for instances fitting the categories. They provide some pointers about firstly, using the language of the interviewees rather than abstract theoretical language and secondly, moving beyond merely summarising content. They advise the researcher to “ think in terms of processes, functions , tensions and contradictions” (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999:141). Another useful comment made by them is that “Themes should ideally arise naturally from the data, but at the same time they should also have a bearing on your research question” (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999:141).

Step 3. Coding

According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:143) “coding means breaking up the data in analytically relevant ways”. Terre Blanche and Kelly provide some helpful hints “One way of checking your interpretation, is by discussing it with other people. Be sure to talk to people who know a lot about the topic as well as those who don’t, but are able to

consider it from a fresh perspective” Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:144).

Step 4. Elaboration

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:146) describe this stage as moving beyond seeing the data in a linear, chronological order. In the elaboration stage the researcher is able to see the data through fresh eyes and start seeing different possibilities for themes – sections that were previously grouped together may now regroup under different headings.

Step 5. Interpretation and checking

Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:144) say that this final step involves going through the interpretation more thoroughly and “fixing weak points”. It is an opportunity to look at where you might have contradicted yourself or your data, merely summarised, over interpreted or allowed your own prejudices as the researcher to influence your writing.

Reflection on the research methodology

I found it useful to do semi-structured interviews which were a combination of focussed questioning and open discussion. This allowed for the conversation to flow and for new ideas and issues to emerge which I may not have thought about when planning the interview and drawing up the questions. Thus new questions often flowed out of the ones I had written beforehand, or sometimes it did not feel appropriate to ask a question as I had phrased it and it had to be rephrased in the moment.

Even though women had agreed to be part of the focus groups, it was exceptionally difficult to get all of those who had committed to attend the focus groups regularly. There were many reasons why they were sometimes unable to attend: sometimes having to work; other times family responsibilities kept them from coming and then unforeseen, unfortunate events like having their house broken into, or having their roof blown off by the wind prevented them from attending. As much as I would have liked to have had the same women attend each session, this did not happen. Six women attended the sessions more consistently than the rest, and they were the constant, the women I could really observe and get to know over time. I got to know them intimately and noticed how they had changed and grown. Other women attended one or two sessions. Fortunately because

of the women having had such close relationships during the training programme, they were able to talk about the experiences of the larger group and of those who were not present.

These focus groups were spread over a long period, firstly because it was very hard to get the group together, and secondly, my own commitments both work and family sometimes took precedence over the research. The usefulness of the focus groups was that they allowed for rich exchanges and healing processes for the women, where they were able to reflect and talk about their lives. I saw the changes in them over the year, and observed how confident and assertive they had become. From the first interview where I observed in them a sadness, fear and vulnerability with the support programme coming to an end, to seeing them grow stronger and more confident with each successive session. It may also be that women were becoming more comfortable with me and eventually learnt to trust me and share openly and honestly. It was also an opportunity for them to talk critically about the training program, the achievements, the shortfalls and the challenges. The focus groups also offered a social opportunity for the women to reunite as a group who had previously shared so much and become so close. The training, whilst it was happening had allowed for the women to develop close links and form relationships. After the training and support programme ended, it became increasingly difficult for women to maintain the links, even though they had formed an organisation called WAIDS. So these focus groups brought them together again and they mentioned this as very valuable. The process of reflection was in itself a growth process because it helped women to see how they had developed over time and become stronger. During the focus groups great care was taken to ensure that the women understood what was expected of them and what the research was about. It was important that they also were clear about time frames and closure so that they did not have any expectations of my involvement with them.

During the first phase of data analysis, the familiarisation and immersion phase, I found the transcribing to be an excellent exercise in getting to know the data. I wrote by hand whilst listening to the tapes and then typed up my handwritten transcriptions and

handwritten recorded notes from the focus groups and interviews. The process of typing up also gave me the opportunity to familiarise myself with the data. At this stage I also organised my data into files so that I knew exactly where to find what. Photocopying the text onto colour paper further helped me to easily identify which was from which session.

During the second phase of data analysis, my first attempt at inducing themes was to go through the data and underline the themes that were emerging naturally, repeatedly and make pencilled notes in the margins of my texts. Another attempt was to use broad headings which were very close to the title of my research. These main headings were “The Women”, “The LEAD Programme and trainer”, “Social Action”, “Empowerment” and “Leadership”. I then had sub headings under the main ones, which included “women as participants”, “women as a group”, then further sub-headings which included “individual personal development”, “family commitments” “breaking racial, cultural and religious barriers”, “emotions and feelings”. Further themes emerging were “assertiveness, confidence, independence”, “trust, respect, conflict”, “economic/employment”.

For the third phase of data analysis, which is ‘coding’, I used the coding method of making several photocopies of each page of data text and then physically cutting them up and grouping the relevant sections under the themes mentioned above. This process was incredibly useful as it made me see my data visually and gave me an opportunity to stand back and look at it critically. I was thus able to gain more clarity, enhancing my capacity to see the data more meaningfully. I shared my interpretations with my supervisor, and asked another academic who did not know my topic to read it as well as engaging closely with a consultant at the writing centre. All of these interventions helped me to clarify my own thoughts more coherently. These happened throughout the data analysis phase.

The fourth phase of data analysis, which is ‘elaboration’, was done after I had taken a break from the data, and engaged more with the literature. I was able to make the connections between what the literature was saying and what the data findings were revealing. It was then possible to find the appropriate headings and structure for the data

analysis and emphasise the areas which I thought were important to make evident. I then went through a thorough process of extracting the pieces of data which were more powerful and could support the argument I was building and contribute to the areas I was highlighting in the research.

I found that during the final phase, ‘interpretation and checking’ I looked at my data anew having completed my literature chapter, and my interpretation was then able to be written from a more informed perspective, since my conceptual base was stronger.

Introduction into the community

I was very comfortable working in a community such as Delft, having had previous experience as a trainer working with community groups mostly in disadvantaged areas. The fact that I was introduced to the women by the trainer gave me a certain amount of credibility and allowed the group to accept me far easier than if I had entered on my own. However, I had to establish a relationship with them in order for them to allow me into their lives, and enable me to understand their situation. The trainer would only be present at the first meeting. Thereafter, I would need to organise the subsequent sessions on my own. I needed to be open and honest about the research, what it was about, why I was doing it, who would see the finished document and explain my role as researcher, so that the women were clear about my involvement with them, and what was expected of them. I also had to make clear the role that I would be playing and the time needed for these sessions.

The Context

It is important in feminist research that the context is described before analyzing the data. Barr refers to “contextualising the research” and she says that “no research text can be evaluated in abstraction from the social context of its production and reception...” (Barr, 1999:158).

The women who are focused on in this study live in Delft a previously coloured township. They are coloured and black women who are mostly unemployed and

struggling to earn a living.

Delft is an urban township located approximately 20kms from the Cape Town city centre. The dwellers are poor, of black or coloured origin, Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking respectively. They all live in one room brick houses built by the government's 'Reconstruction and Development Programme'. The area has minimal infrastructure but electricity is supplied to households and street lighting is ensured. The tarred roads are continually covered by sand blown by the wind. Unemployment and alcoholism have a devastating effect on the life of the inhabitants resulting in a high rate of domestic violence, crime and gang fights. AIDS is a plague familiar to the Delft people. (LEAD, 2000:17).

A number of NGOs worked in Delft. Amongst those the women mentioned were Protocol, SANTA and AIDS action groups. LEAD is one of the NGOs working in Delft with a specific focus on women. The women lived in very small low cost housing, and many of the homes had extra rooms built on to them with either wood or metal sheeting. The houses were not structurally sound and prone to being damaged by the elements. Many reports in the newspapers over the years had reported walls collapsing and ill health caused by insufficient heating, and overcrowding in small spaces. Despite this, the women had made the houses into homes and many shared their homes with extended family. Generally, there was very little sense of community and people did not always trust or look out for each other as the data will reveal. Racism was rife, blacks and coloureds normally accustomed to living in segregated communities now lived side by side. For these women putting food on the table was an ongoing daily struggle. Some managed to live more comfortably than others if their husbands had stable jobs or if they had adult children or relatives who contributed to the household income. Not all of them had spouses who supported them emotionally and financially. Marital problems often resulted in abuse, and some of the women had left their abusive husbands, either remaining single or remarrying.

Ten women participated in the focus group sessions which started at the end of 2001, approximately 6 months after the women had completed the LEAD programme. The final focus group was held in September 2002. Due to various circumstances, not all ten women were present at all the focus groups, and some had dropped out after the first and new ones joined. The first session was attended by 10 women, the second attended by

seven women, five of whom were at the first session. The final session was attended by four women, who had been the most constant. Three of these women had been at the previous two sessions, and one had been at the first session. So I ended up with 6 consistent women whose voices make up the data collected. Of the women interviewed, five were either divorced or separated with children. The other five were married with children and grandchildren. The ages of the women ranged from 25 to 58 years old. Before joining the group, most of the women were 'housewives', whose main focus had been to care for children and extended family, cook and clean and see to the needs of their husbands. Finding employment was not easy. Some of these women were involved in community issues, others not involved at all.

Possible limitations of this research

I focus on 6 women (the research sample) and concentrate on depth rather than breadth. The other women participants who were part of the LEAD programme are not included or represented explicitly in this study but the sample group and the trainer made several references to the Delft group as a whole. By only interviewing one trainer and a sample group, I exclude other LEAD trainers' and groups' voices which may have added to the data and provided other perspectives to this research. It means that the perspective of the LEAD programme is limited to one trainer and one group's point of view. One of the sessions with the women were not recorded and neither were the trainer's interviews – this may mean that I could have missed out on pertinent information. I was not able to observe an actual training session – the research is based only on the trainer and Delft women's interpretations of the training. The trainer did not document what she actually did with the women, so whilst the Training for Transformation manuals presents some of what she did, there are other areas which are not captured in writing. So I do not have a concrete curriculum and my study has not been based on that.

The findings and data analysis is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I commence with the LEAD organization's interpretation of popular education and feminist popular approaches. I then present the trainer's perceptions of the LEAD programme. Thereafter the participant's perceptions are presented. I then look at how women were empowered into leadership and how they took social action. Throughout the data, the women's voices, the trainer's voice and my own interpretations are interwoven. The chapter ends with an analysis of the key findings.

LEAD's interpretation of popular education and feminist popular approaches

It becomes evident that in its documentation, LEAD fully promotes a Freirean popular approach and states explicitly that it uses the participatory methodology of Freire. The document also states that the methods are empowering, and that active participation from women participants is encouraged, where they are allowed to give their views and make contributions to the material. According to LEAD, this results in the formation of new knowledge, a principle which is seen as central to feminist methodology (LEAD document, 2001).

Training Manuals

As previously stated in the description of the LEAD programme in Chapter 1, The LEAD Level One course specifically focuses on "Training for Transformation" – Handbook one and two (See Appendix 1 for the table of contents of Handbooks 1 and 2).

In the preface to Training for Transformation: Handbook one, which has been reprinted and revised since 1984, the last being 1996, Hope and Timmel say that

All the theories, codes and exercises in this book have been used effectively with groups in Africa since 1975. Most of the examples and quotations in these books come directly from our experience, which has been mainly working with church sponsored groups in Africa. There is therefore an African and Christian perspective throughout (Hope and Timmel, 1996).

Hope and Timmel (1996), continue in the preface of Handbook one, that there had been “...vast unpredictable changes in the world. On the global political level, it seems the world will never be the same.” They continue that it was important for them to rethink their analysis of the causes of global poverty and their understanding of hopeful guidelines towards solutions. Furthermore Hope and Timmel assert that there is so much talk of democracy, but few training programmes for leaders to help them ensure authentic participation at the grassroots level. They declare that this is what those using the Training for Transformation have appreciated most about the handbooks.

We are convinced that the fundamental approach, which lies at the core of the books, is as relevant and needed as ever. We have needed new insights, theories and exercises which have enriched our own practice in recent years (Hope and Timmel, 1996: Preface Handbook one).

Hope and Timmel state that “each book belongs with the other two”. In true Freirean tradition, they encourage and urge those using the Training for Transformation handbooks to adapt it to their contexts. They also state that they “have found that a dynamic approach occurs when integrating all of the elements of the three books. According to them “a piecemeal approach of just one element or the other does not have the same impact” (Hope and Timmel, 1996).

This may have some implications for the women since they have only completed Level one which has used elements of “Training for Transformation” Handbook 1 and 2. Only two women of the Delft group went on to do Level Two – they were chosen for their leadership potential and they were fortunate to have received the full benefit of the training programme since the Level Two programme covers “Training for Transformation” Book 3 and 4. It may be questioned whether it would be realistic to allow everyone the opportunity to do Level Two, but it may have placed the rest of the women at a disadvantage since they have received only the first part of the training. These would be questions for LEAD to consider for the future. One could also argue that it is the trainer’s responsibility to integrate all the elements of the books to present a holistic programme. It needs to be acknowledged that each group is unique and would demand a tailor-made programme suited to their needs and level of understanding. In the case of the Delft group, the trainer said that she effectively tailored the programme and

that a huge emphasis was placed on personal development.

The trainer's perceptions of the LEAD programme

Use of training manuals and emerging unfolding curriculum

The trainer stated that the materials had been in existence for a very long time and some of it may have needed to be adapted for the present situation. She could use some of the materials, but also wanted to explore other materials. There was some tension here, because the organisation mainly uses the "Training for Transformation" handbooks. The trainer felt that the programme should have had an experimental group with whom the organisation could try new things and different approaches. She said that this is what she did and that she tried different things. She used the manuals but also experimented with using other materials. The programme evolved largely out of the women's own expressed needs and the trainer discovering as the programme progressed that the women needed to work through their own issues before they could do any of the other aspects of the programme. This almost happened by default rather than conscious design – the programme thus unfolded in a very organic way.

Methodology, curriculum and approach

This next section relates to the trainer's perception of the programme in terms of methodology, curriculum and approach. The trainer mentioned that whilst LEAD believed in Paulo Freire's methodology, it need not have been the only approach used. Although the LEAD document, 2001 says that other methods can be used, the trainer felt that this was not sufficiently explored within LEAD.

Starting with women's own experiences

The trainer said that her approach was extremely experiential – she mentions how she started with and used the women's actual experiences. This posed a challenge because according to her, the women wanted to be told what to do – they wanted answers. They did not like her approach, because she wanted them to solve their problems and find solutions together. The trainer also said that she went too far in trying to be democratic

and that “*The women were irritated because I did not make decisions – I overdid it – democratised things too much*” (Interview: 22 November 2002).

Personal development: the self, identity and emotions

The focus on the self was not decided at the beginning or not a large area of focus of LEAD’s programme, although LEAD does mention personal development as an element of its programme. It did however become a large part of the LEAD Delft Level One course. Through the learning activities, the women learnt more about themselves, their context and how to express their emotions. The women found safe spaces in the trainer’s facilitation of the programme – spaces where they could delve into and talk about their painful pasts and share openly with others, space where they could talk about the struggles with their roles as women in their families and communities, and space where they could discover their identities. She felt that Level One should just be about ‘awareness raising’ and gaining a ‘sense of self’. For her, if people could be changed in that way, then it would be wonderful. The trainer saw the connecting of women on a personal level as valuable in that women gained a lot of trust amongst each other.

The trainer made several critical comments about the programme:

...the concept of a leadership programme is good, but LEAD did not keep it up – they kept the same programme for 8 years. Also, we had the same programme for urban and rural women. I felt we should look at a deeper level for women who are more advanced. Level One did not meet the needs of women. You see, we dealt with the emotions of women, and they were eternally grateful e.g. The Community profile was in Level Two, but I included it in Level One, because it just made more sense to be in Level One. We cannot be ambitious, and want to do too much, we should rather link up with other organisations. LEAD could play a co-ordinating role .

(Interview: 22 November 2002)

Support Programme

The trainer felt that LEAD was not able to deliver on the support programme and that LEAD should not have demanded ‘projects’ – there was an expectation that the women had to do projects after they had completed the training programme. She felt that instead, women should be supporting each other and coming together without the pressure of having to do projects. Thereafter support or further training could be provided by other organisations and perhaps projects would emerge naturally over time. That way LEAD

would be able to focus on the areas where it could deliver. On reflecting on the support programme which was supposed to last three months, the trainer said that after the support programme had ended, LEAD had officially ended its role in supporting the women. The model used by LEAD involved monthly support visits, but the trainer also mentioned that she continued in her own personal capacity to visit the women more regularly using her time on Sundays and Saturdays to re-energise them. She was unable to provide the support during the week because her time was filled with training the new group in another community far away from Delft. *“The women saw in me someone who was scattered.....since I was running all over from group to group....”*, Trainer (Interview: 22 November 2002). The trainer also attempted to set up a support structure which was supposed to be led by the co-ordinators (women chosen from within the Delft group – some of the women in this study were co-ordinators of specific projects), and then the trainer tried to link them to service providers. The trainer believed that the three month programme was too short and that it was too much to expect women to start projects after such a short period of training. The trainer was concerned that the organisation may have made promises that it could not keep: *“We create double failure for women, they already feel failures in their marriage and then they fail in the projects.....a few go on to shine like Valerie and Thandeka..... So five out of the masses.....what about the others.....”* (Interview: 22 November 2002).

On reflecting on the course the trainer felt that the course raised people’s hopes.

An impact assessment of the programme revealed that there were issues around how women perceived LEAD and how women experienced the end of the programme. The trainer felt that LEAD needed to follow up on women – ‘*to track them*’. The trainer said that there was an overall impact assessment completed on all the areas (not only Delft) and the main comment from women was *“LEAD left us in the lurch”* When she asked them what they meant.....they said the support programme! The trainer said that the criticism from LEAD was that trainers are *‘not letting go, we’re holding on’*.

(Interview: 22 November 2002)

These comments from a previous impact assessment confirm the sentiments of the Delft women who felt the same way. It raises the question about support programmes and how far and how long should a community be supported. It is also about empowerment and

learning and whether empowerment can be seen as successful if communities are still dependent. Yet, support is needed in these communities where resources are so limited and people really struggle with daily issues. This is a strategic issue for LEAD to consider in its work with women in poor communities.

Creating linkages and encouraging sharing and learning (interdependence)

Another strategy which the trainer initiated was to link the women with other groups. This idea was born out of an attempt to form a network of support where women from different groups could learn from each other. She brought together the four area groups whom she had trained over the years: Factreton (trained in 2002) ; Macassar (trained 2001); Delft (trained in 2001) and Strand (trained in 2000). The idea was to form an association, so the trainer brought the Delft women to Factreton as they had offered to help them because the Factreton women were better off financially and more organised. But this initiative struggled to get off the ground because the Factreton group was also under pressure to start their own projects, so it would have been hard for them to support the Delft women. The trainer also had an idea of inviting the co-ordinators from each group, to a week-end together to inspire and learn from each other, but LEAD said there was no funding and it was not part of the model, so she was unable to do this. The trainer felt that there could have been a 'resource person' from LEAD who could visit the women weekly not monthly. These were the trainer's attempts at interdependence, but because they were not part of the organisation's bigger strategy, it became very difficult to sustain.

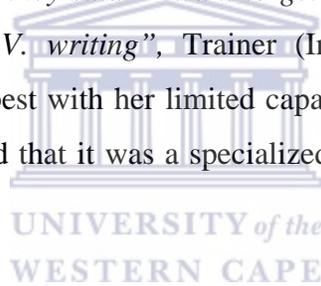
The trainer felt that LEAD's model with four programmes per year, two urban and two rural, placed the emphasis on quantity not quality, because of pressure from funders to prove that the organisation had trained so many women. Because of this the trainer is perceived as being scattered. This explains what the women were experiencing in their perceptions of the trainer not supporting them. The trainer made another suggestion for the support programme: *"I also suggested that we put the support programme in after Level Two....these are grassroots women, but we expect them to write proposals...when they fail it puts them back....."* (Interview: 22 November 2002).

Technical skills

The trainer made the following comment about the curriculum: *“I lost credibility several times.....in terms of curriculum, we can put the most incredible things in, but if they haven’t internalised it enough, it won’t succeed.....e.g. we added in business skills.....but it didn’t give them sufficient skills to start a business”*.

(Interview: 22 November 2002)

The other problem the trainer faced was in terms of her skill and capacity and whether she was adequately equipped and skilled to provide women with the skills they desperately needed: *“women want to do income generating projects, and I don’t have the capacity to teach them that. I tried.....When I asked them “Why are you here.....and I asked them to be really honest, they said “I want to get a job”. These women have real needs.....so then I put in C.V. writing”, Trainer (Interview: 22 November 2002).* Although the trainer tried her best with her limited capacities, very few women actually got jobs. The trainer recognized that it was a specialized area of skill which she did not have the capacity to do.



Gender

Another area which featured strongly during the interviews with the trainer is about gender and diversity. This is discussed in the next section.

Integrating gender into the curriculum

Many concerns were raised with regard to integrating gender issues into the curriculum. The trainer expressed a concern that only one day was set aside for gender. According to the trainer this did not make sense: *“If LEAD is a women’s organisation how can we have one day for gender! ”* (Interview: 22 November 2002).

A further concern for the trainer was that LEAD was supposed to be the gender specialists, but it did not come through in their programmes. The trainer said that she was looking at each module e.g. ‘assertiveness’ and she asked herself: *“How are women*

assertive, and link it to models of abuse.....With personal development, I asked – How are women developing” (Interview: 22 November 2002).

According to the trainer, LEAD was saying it is a women’s leadership programme but what she saw was just leadership. Her concern was that LEAD was not sufficiently emphasising the feminist aspect of the programme nor implementing the programme from a feminist perspective: *“When we quoted we quoted men!”* (Interview: 22 November 2002). The trainer was doing feminist studies and wanted to incorporate some of what she learnt to try to introduce different ideas and methods into LEAD. A further suggestion from the trainer was that when LEAD did research that it should use feminist research methodology.

Acknowledging women’s male partners

Another concern for the trainer was an acknowledgement of the women’s partner’s or husbands. The trainer felt it was important to include the men so they did not feel excluded. The trainer was concerned that the men may become threatened by their partner’s increasing confidence, knowledge and assertiveness. This could result in the men becoming more abusive towards their partners, who were being empowered through the courses. The trainer tried to get another organisation to speak to the men, but this did not materialise. She also brought the men into celebrations and thanked them – she did this with one group, but when she wanted to do it with all her groups it was frowned upon. Since LEAD was strictly a women’s programme, these kinds of initiatives to include men were not easily accepted. The trainer struggled with this, since she believed that by working with the men and acknowledging them, their relationships with their partners could improve.

Diversity

In the final interview with the trainer, she mentioned some of the elements that contributed to the diversity of this group.

The first element was the women’s reason for joining the programme which was varied and according to the trainer, some came to meet other women, whilst others wanted an

entry level course where they could *'learn in an easy way'*. The trainer also stated that those women who came just to socialise lost interest after three months. There were women who had come to network with other women whilst some preferred to stay a group on their own. The second element was the racial, cultural and class dynamics. She described the dynamics in the group as an enormous challenge because the dynamics were 'intense' and she spoke about how the tensions had built up over months, how conflict would happen and the tensions would be released. The trainer also mentioned that the issues were too deep and too hurtful: *"We had the most horrible problems – they used to make me cry...they said the most horrible things to each other"* (Interview: 22 November 2002). She quoted one of the women as saying: *"It is not the racial issues, but when someone pulls up their noses at a person's smell...and there are those mocking smiles"* (Interview: 22 November 2002). The trainer described the dynamic as 'coloured versus black' and that a further dynamic within that was the 'intellectual blacks' being linked with the coloured women. The trainer also highlighted social class as an issue, and she mentioned the fact that some women were seen as better if they owned better clothes, a house or a car in their family. The trainer said that she spent many hours on the racial issues, and highlighted the fact that the group consisted of older women who came from the apartheid era. She also brought the black women from another area, who were a 'less complicated' group whom she worked easily with, to gain credibility with this group. The trainer tried to be a role model and said that: *"I tried to practice what I preach in terms of racial issues and refused to side with any particular group. Sometimes the coloured women would try to say things to me about the black women but I refused to get involved"* (Interview: 22 November 2002). The trainer mentioned cultural issues, for example, *"the culture of black women, where the young women have to make tea for the older women"*, and how the young coloured women had difficulty accepting this (Interview: 22 November 2002).

The different 'levels' of the women was another element contributing to the diversity. The levels described by the trainer were in relation to literacy, language, educational levels, rationale and agendas for doing the course and emotional states. The trainer mentioned the difficulty for the women who were more literate who became impatient

with the slow pace of the course: *“for those whose home lives not just about families - they wanted to push forward, to push the course”* (Interview: 22 November 2002). The trainer also spoke about tension between grassroots women and women who did workshops regularly. Another issue according to the trainer was that there were different women driving the process, with different agendas and some women who didn't want to go through the whole programme.

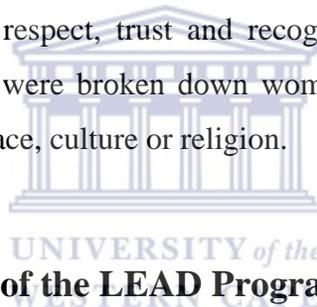
The trainer tried different approaches in terms of dealing with the diversity of the group. She told the black women to support and help each other when someone couldn't speak. She also tried not to impose her way – ‘being coloured’. For dealing with levels of literacy, the trainer tried to use examples familiar to women. Also, since it was not possible to employ a process observer, the trainer developed it as a capacity within the groups and gave the women guidelines. They had to start with the positives, and then feedback the negatives, but there was resistance to it – the trainer says: *“I forgot where some women were at - traumatised women can't take feedback – they personalise feedback”* (Interview: 22 November 2002). The trainer explained how she tried to meet the challenge in terms of language – *“with 3 languages , there were lots of arguments, lots of delays, but the issues needed to be dealt with”* (Interview: 22 November 2002). The trainer did not opt for the easy way out of this situation which would have been to refuse to do translations. But she was aware that she was working with grassroots women, and therefore she tried to do some basic translation on her own, and at times had to mix the languages. The trainer also stated that *“There were lots of explosive moments which retarded the process and I was never sure whether we would have a group...but the theatre project broke that and the women started to socialise and later the dynamics changed”* (Interview: 22 November 2002).

It does appear that the different levels of the women posed a huge challenge for the trainer. It was also problematic that women were attending for different reasons and this meant that the programme may have not met their needs at all times. The rationale behind LEAD's training is about ‘women leadership teams in action’, where these teams start projects which should contribute towards social transformation in their community. This

approach demands high levels of group interaction and group compatibility. The fact that such a diverse group was part of the programme in Delft, meant that extra effort needed to be put into making the group work together, and the trainer acknowledged that a lot of time was spent on this aspect – demanding extra patience and tolerance on the part of the trainer. On the other hand, the diversity provided a rich breeding ground for many prejudices and perceptions to be explored and unlimited opportunities for exchanges between groups who would ordinarily discriminate, avoid each other or have disputes.

Becoming a collective (supporting each other and working together)

In the words of the trainer: *“Eventually colour disappeared...they saw each other’s skills. They had a lot of problems and they realised that they sometimes shared the same problems”* (Interview: 22 November 2002). This was the point where the women could learn to work together and see each other from an unbiased point of view. It was also where women could begin to respect, trust and recognize each other’s strengths and weaknesses. Once the barriers were broken down women could begin to support each other regardless of their class, race, culture or religion.



Participants’ perceptions of the LEAD Programme

Impressions and experiences of popular education within LEAD

This next section deals with the way the Delft women saw the LEAD programme, their first impressions, how they experienced the LEAD model and course content, the trainer’s approach, methods and facilitation style, the LEAD support programme, and then LEAD’s exit. Many of the women had not had an opportunity to further their education, with some having only completed primary school education and others having completed some of their high school education. Having had their schooling during an era where education was largely the conventional type of education, women were not used to being welcomed into a course and having a ‘teacher’ figure or person of authority invite them to offer their opinions. This statement reveals much about how women were feeling, whether they had legitimacy to attend courses and whether they were allowed into meetings. It reveals that the trainer’s manner was welcoming, that women felt

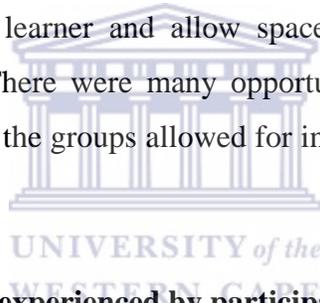
comfortable and that the environment was non-threatening.

This is a statement made by Doris. It encapsulates the first impressions of the LEAD Trainer:

First of all what was interesting to me when I get there I saw a lot of women sitting there – I don't know anybody- I just came from a march to Cape Town and the wind was blowing so I came out of the wind to sit here and in that very room I saw the ladies and I saw a lady in front (the trainer) and she said “come join us” and I said “no we leaving” and she carried on and then she said “come introduce yourself” and that is one of the strangest things – when you walk into a meeting – the facilitator in front will never say to you that don't belongs here come introduce yourself to people. And there I said something fishy is going on here, but the time is too short and I said eh, I think it was Tuesday – I'm coming on a Tuesday....everything's there I said...

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

The content and methods used by LEAD is a Freirean approach, where the trainer uses the learner's own experience to make meaning out of the learning. It is a liberatory model which hopes to empower the learner and allow space for the learner to voice their opinions and share learning. There were many opportunities for group work, and the method of continuously mixing the groups allowed for interaction across the class, racial, cultural and religious groups.



Feminist popular approaches experienced by participants

Emotions and feelings

The approach also focused on women's emotions and feelings, and tried to create a safe space for sharing. The literature supports the importance of recognising and acknowledging emotions. Both Heng (1996) and Freire (1972) acknowledge the crucial role of emotions in transformative adult education towards empowerment. Heng stated that it was “the supportiveness and emotional responsiveness of fellow participants, coupled with effective facilitation that elicited talk and enabled reflection” (Heng, 1996:221). Creative and artistic approaches were used making use of mediums such as art and drawing, drama and singing. The following anecdotes shared by participants during the second focus group are about the training programme and gives insight into the content and the methodology. One of the activities which LEAD used to surface

emotions and feelings was to allow women to say how they felt at the start of the session. It was an attempt to clear the air and for the facilitator to 'feel' the group and get a sense of how women were feeling and what were the issues which could be blocking learning or interaction amongst the women. Valerie related how this method works:

The first thing in the morning we share - the joys is 'what's making you happy' and 'concerns' is the problems you have. You share with the group –they will support you, give you a hug, tell you, you can go on...or sometimes we sing in the morning. The trainer is asking what our joy is for example: "I'm glad M is here cos I didn't see her last week". Or a concern is "N wasn't treating J very well last week and we not happy cos it's bringing conflict amongst us, we not happy cos it's affecting us". The trainer asks us what is making you unhappy, what must we do to resolve this.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Creative learning activities intended to surface life stories was another approach which enabled women to learn how to express themselves. It would have been difficult for women who were not accustomed to sharing their feelings and past to find the words to express themselves. This was where the creative learning activities were very vital and many of the women shared how much they enjoyed this part of the course. One of the women who attended only two focus groups, Anna, shares her experience:

I was drawing and cut out pieces of paper, then I showed my husband. I don't even know the meaning, then I ask questions and we connect to each other. It was so difficult but at the end it was helpful and feedback is so difficult. We put something back and we don't even know. Then the river of life- at the end we say what is this –then we supposed to talk – if you make a straight line life is straight, then I say I make a nice river but my life is not nice...then eh we had to pick a potatoe, look at your potatoe and see what is going on, describe it...then they ask us, do you like your potatoe ...it looks like you, then I say "haai it's got a hole , I say I'm not like that, this potatoe is like your life....it's from your roots....I say okay, I learnt so much, I have a secret and I used to cry...with the river of life, like the potatoe, what is wrong with this potatoe, it's like you, even though got difficult stuff...when I get home I feel strong and I say I'm okay, I'm going to look at them...

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

For many of these women, their lives were painful and difficult, so using creative methods like characterisation and drawing allowed them to explore these issues through a different medium which for some was easier. In fact, it allowed women to share, open up

and come to terms with their lives. Anna could see herself in a simple potatoe and it provided a useful analogy which was non-threatening but extremely powerful.

Becoming a collective (supporting each other and working together)

Group work was an important method used to counteract cliques forming and women not mixing with each other. The women spoke about how this helped them to get to know each other and work together. The group-work broke the barriers of race and helped the women interact better with each other. Doris relates how she experienced the group work:

What the trainer is also doing with us is group work so like when we are sitting together- Valerie on that side with her group and I on this side with the coloureds and Thandeka on that side. Then the trainer, she say we must all mix up and she breaks us up into groups –now we learn to work together and to handle things in a much better way –that’s how she was doing!

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Beginning the process of conscientisation and finding a sense of self

LEAD created many enriching experiences, learning and other opportunities for the women. One of these was a trip to ‘Kleinmond’. This story expresses many issues. It is about how disadvantaged the women were not being exposed beyond the boundaries of Delft (many of them hardly had opportunities nor could afford to go beyond Delft), it is about women who were not accustomed to mixing with people of other race and cultural groups, and finally it is about women having the courage to leave their families. The women were given the opportunity to go on a week-end workshop to Kleinmond which is a little town situated on the south coast about 120 km’s out of Cape Town. When told they were going to Kleinmond, the women heard incorrectly – they thought they were going to Claremont which is a suburb of Cape Town and probably a place many of the women would be familiar with. The story shows how the LEAD Training Programme opened doors for them to experience life outside their limited neighbourhood and meet other women. It also shows how they had to build up courage and be assertive to take the plunge and leave their families and homes. It is a reflection about how these women finally did something that was for themselves, a huge shift for women whose primary aim in life was to care for their families and husbands. The story reveals how the women were able to gain a sense of ‘self’ and see themselves as apart from their families, something which many of them struggled with but had taken the plunge to do – in fact in the story it

shows how they were not actually wanting to leave but were swept along by the whole experience and the misconception about where they were actually going and how far they would be from home. The last part of the story is about how the women had been able to implement what they had learnt at the workshop, how they appreciated this and an appreciation for LEAD giving them opportunities and lauding them for successes, so important for these women who were not used to being praised and affirmed. Here are some extracts of the story:

Doris: *Yes one day I got a call – Vanessa said to me “Aunty Doris, the trainer phoned, she says we must go to ‘Claremont’ I said ‘Claremont’ she said “Yes, Claremont!” (Laughter from everyone)*

Thandeka: *The same thing happened to me*

Sarah: *I was just going to say the same thing now.....*

Doris: *So she (Vanessa) said I must pack because we must leave at 12.00 o’clock. She said to me “they will pick you up” I said “ Yes, it’s fine!” Thandeka said I must bring money we going to Claremont.....but when the driver was leaving as he was taking the route, I said “where are we going to” and he said “No, I must still go to Macassar cause I must pick up that people...” Then later I said “ Driver, where are we going –he said “No, Aunty Doris, we must go to Kleinmond, and I said, “No, we must go to Claremont!” and you know me and the driver, we was arguing, and I said “Where is this now, it’s round the mountain!”*

Sarah: *I was busy doing my washing and they came to me and I said “where are we going?” and they said “we’re going to Claremont” and then the neighbour said “Ouma, leave the washing, I will do the washing, hang it up and fold it inside, it’s okay go!” They said “you’ve got lovely neighbours!” Within an half an hour I had to pack, she came to me at 12.00 and said we’re leaving at 1.00pm. So, I take it this way, okay if it’s not so nice I can just take the bus back, it’s not so far. I phoned my son and grandson and said “Listen here, I’m leaving.....they said okay.*

But when I saw Kleinmond, I nearly got a nervous breakdown cos I was thinking about the time- I can’t come home.....it was a terrible thing –ask Aunty Doris.

Doris: *You know what strikes me is that as we drive around the mountain, I said “Look at the road, you look down and you see the water down there, you know it was making me strong.....I could stand up to my husband and say “I’m leaving now!” even though it was to Kleinmond, “the kids is there, you must see to them, even if there’s a problem in the house you must face that problem cos now I’m going and I could just leave everything and say, “I’m going no matter where, but I’m going!” And that is what the LEAD Level one course did for me, is to stand up for yourself and do things for yourself and I realise that when we get over*

there it was anti- racism intercultural workshop and it was, it really man, it was good, co s what I learnt there you could come back and you could come and do a feedback for the ladies and that was the most important thing where LEAD is taking us- it don't leave you here. Like Thandeka and Valerie said they are doing Level Two now and it takes them a step further than where they've been with LEAD and it's from there that we as ladies decide what is going to happen. There was another thing – Valerie did the social worker course, another thing winning the Anne Hope Award, I was winning, Ouma and Aunty Joan also win an award and the group win an award and it makes you strong!

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

This example links to a key element of Freirean popular education, which is about conscientisation. The experience helped women to look beyond themselves, which is part of developing consciousness. They left their homes and neighbourhoods and were taken to a different place where they met other women with whom they could share. It was the start of a process of conscientisation which according to Freire, begins with the learners themselves and then moves to locate the learners within gradually widening contexts: within a community, a society, a nation and so on in concentric circles (Freire, 1972:75).

Support programme and sustaining social action projects

LEAD provided a support programme once the course had come to an end. This support programme was in the form of visits by the trainer which would be to follow-up on the women's progress in relation to the projects they had started. The trainer struggled with providing the support needed because she had started a new group and also needed to focus her energies with them. The Delft women interpreted this as unreliability, because she would promise to come, but then had been unable to keep to the appointments due to commitments with new groups. It was also felt that LEAD did not adequately prepare women for the end of the course and what would happen thereafter. The women had become very dependent on LEAD and the trainer, and then the course ended, and they were expected to carry on by themselves.

Valerie expresses her feelings about the exit of LEAD and the support programme:

In some ways it was also very hard. When you are with LEAD you become dependent, and then suddenly the course is finished and in some ways the facilitator don't prepare you for that finishing. It's very hard- the facilitator had to also start training in other areas, and then we became dependent on her, and when she don't come out we say – Oh, the facilitator didn't pitch and next time

she won't pitch. And when we come to the library, only two people are there and this is why the projects can't go forward because there's not enough people and we don't have resources. Like me and Doris is busy with 'child recreation' and we have to bring stuff from our houses and Doris must buy sweets out of her own pocket and her husband is not working and here you are trying to do good for other children and her children don't have a slice of bread on the table. So that is the problem – it's disappointing that LEAD don't support you.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

This extract says much about the realities the women faced as they tried to start their projects. It is also about the way poverty prevented the women from implementing what LEAD had taught them. Even though they had the will and commitment, they lacked the resources and this was the harsh reality.

Trainer's role in creating a safe and enabling environment

The women described the trainer in the following words: *she was good – a more people's person, she was kind.....* It became evident that the facilitator did find it hard to hold her boundaries because of her compassion for the women.

Instead of using her authority....so people step on her a lot and some people try to borrow money from her, or money for phone calls or do personal stuff for them like phone for them. So that is not what a facilitator supposed to do, but she took that on. She's a real person for the people – she cares.....accommodating.
Sarah

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Her very softness was a strength and a weakness. She had endless patience and the women felt free – she created a safe non-threatening environment for women to learn.

I think it was the way she did her work because like if I don't understand I was free to say I actually don't know what's going on –could you explain it again – she went out of her way to make everybody understand and to know what is happening in the class. So even though she was soft she still did her work.
Shamiela

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

When the women were further probed during the focus groups, they began to describe the positive aspects of their trainer and saw the merits of her approach and what it did for them. It is important to note that the way the organisation operated (where a trainer starts a new group whilst still providing support to an old group) did not help the trainer to be

completely focused on one group and it made the first group feel that she was not fully supporting them.

Impact of the LEAD programme at a personal and individual level

During the focus groups a theme that emerged very strongly was how the course had impacted on the women on a deeply personal individual level, giving them courage and strength to challenge their lives. In this section I will focus on this aspect and highlight the shifts that occurred during and after the course. Three key sub themes are prevalent – self and identity; emotions; gender and diversity.

Empowerment, learning, challenging traditional roles, self and identity

The majority of the women participants had been ‘typical housewives’ who were mostly being suppressed or abused by their husbands. This meant that they were not employed and had very few skills, having had limited education and no formal training. They spent most of their time caring for their children or grandchildren, cooking and cleaning. Many of the women had not been able to complete their schooling due to having left school early, either to work to supplement their parent’s income and poor households, or to have children. In a sense, these women were forced to sacrifice their own lives to look after children, other family members like aging or sickly parents and attend to their husband’s needs. *“Women have to be doctor, nurse, mother or play many other roles like caregiver. I made sacrifices by staying at home”*, Shamiela, 38 years old (Focus Group: December 2001).

The women experienced many personal problems which they had often kept to themselves. *“Big problems in my marriage, not comfortable to share problems. Since joining LEAD, I can be open”*, Thandeka, 35 years old (Focus Group: December 2001). The women also experienced loneliness, isolation, depression and frustration. These feelings were often associated with having moved from another place into the Delft area and not knowing anyone, and fear of venturing out into the unknown, into what was seen as a hostile, unfriendly environment. In addition the women were in patriarchal households and relationships where the husband would decide what they should do, or tell them what to do. Some of the women mentioned that their husbands had objected to

them doing the course. *“I wouldn’t stand up for myself. I read about the LEAD group. My husband did not want me to join. Two ladies came to encourage me to join the group – Now my husband supports me”*, Joan, 40 years (Focus Group: December 2001). The majority of the women had very little say in their homes, and as a result were not assertive or could not speak up for themselves. *“Feeling very depressed. Husband dictating –felt frustrated”*, Shamiela, 38 years (Focus Group: December 2001). Some women were involved in community work and social action like marches, so their decision to come on the course was as a way of learning new skills. Other women were recruited and encouraged to join by women who knew what LEAD was about and they came along because they were brought in by other women. *“A friend encourage me to join LEAD. She persisted until I joined. I learnt a lot regarding household problems. Don’t keep feelings to myself anymore.....”*, Sarah, age 52 (Focus Group: December 2001).

Doris spoke about her journey of empowerment:

Working in community housing, I wanted to empower myself first. I looked for an opportunity to do this...went on a march to town... I want to decide for myself. I was a housewife and community worker....I needed to be stronger which this women’s group did. We women always see to our husbands, community but not to ourselves – You have to first start with yourself.” I was trained by LEAD and I’m happy for it. It’s making me a strong women, and I’m taking my own responsibility, to stand up for myself, do things for myself and not to depend on my husband. I could stand up to my husband and say “I’m leaving now!” even though it was to Kleinmond, “the kids is there, you must see to them, even if there’s a problem in the house you must face that problem cos now I’m going and I could just leave everything and say, “I’m going no matter where, but I’m going!

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

On the question of women’s empowerment – the women were asked what they thought about women’s rights and women’s role in society: *“Empowerment meant nothing to me before, Now I can speak up for myself. I can stand up against my husband. I do challenge him – Husband says this is my house – then I say I own half!”*, Shamiela, age 38 (Focus Group: December 2001). For these women, a large part of empowerment meant standing up for themselves and learning how to be assertive about their rights. It also meant no longer allowing husbands to dictate to them. Many of the women mentioned that the course had encouraged and inspired them: *“It inspired me to help myself, you*

know they always say ‘God helps those who help themselves’, you know how we always sit back....., before I always believed that I can’t, but this course helps me to say – I can! It really inspired me” Joan, age 40 years.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Most of these women had had very little opportunities to discover their true potential, and some of them shared how they had learnt to become more confident:

Prior to joining LEAD, I wasn’t confident to stand up to people. I never shared my talents with people, but now I am more confident to confront people. Before, I knew how to make things, I didn’t have the courage to say okay I’m gonna do this or that, but I just kept everything for myself. Shamiela

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

“Very shy – didn’t talk openly to people. Trainer helped to give me confidence. Made a difference by being comfortable to deal with disabled people”, Valerie.

(Focus Group: December 2001)

Learning, emotional growth and healing

The majority of the women in this study came from very painful pasts, and had been exposed to some kind of abuse. During the interviews women spoke about having kept a ‘secret’ inside of them which they had never shared before. The LEAD course gave women opportunities to think about their lives and how their pasts may have affected the way they were. LEAD showed the women alternative ways of thinking and learning and exposed them to other ways of approaching their reality. Many of these women kept their painful and difficult pasts ‘locked’ inside of them. Prior to the course the women had built up their defenses to such a degree that they were unable to look into themselves. Doris describes it very aptly as a ‘wall’

All these things that were mentioned it’s like a wall and the wall built up through all that and nobody can go over that wall cos it’s in your way and then LEAD put this training to us- it’s there where the wall starts to break. We were standing with our face to that wall but we never had the courage to turn around and say- I look at that four walls to where it stands now and I had to do something- it’s like a mirror that’s there –you look through the mirror but you don’t see nothing and now LEAD came in – it makes us see that we look in the mirror – you see yourself and you had to say to yourself, I can’t go on like that, I have to do something to myself and from there is where LEAD came in and give out their training and it did something for us and that is now the wall is there, we started to break that wall, but I don’t know if that wall is to the ground- that is what we must still see –

Is my wall to the ground – can I go over that wall – did I achieve something, did I reach out to something, do I got something to hold on to in my hand, that’s the most important thing!

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Another level of emotional support was from the trainer to the group. These extracts speak about the trainer’s impact on the group in relation to emotional support, how she encouraged women to be assertive and how she allowed for individuality.

You know what I can say about the trainer hey – she is a person that can have a lot of courage – she gives us courage – that’s now the honest truth and she makes sure that we stay together and that we are strong as a group –she don’t leave us there and now you must find your own way although sometimes she disappoints us a lot, but through that disappointment it carry us through...To get onto the other side of the trainer – she’s a good facilitator, what I’ve learnt from her, I can put into action and another thing she learn us is to stand up for yourself, that is what she learns us. The trainer’s not a person that talks a lot –she’s not a person that comes in and say – “Hey, I don’t like this nonsense!” Doris

(Focus Group: 28 September 2002)

She encouraged everyone to be themselves, all of us is not the same person and that is what.....and what she learn us is we must stand up and fight for something, we mustn’t wait till it comes back to you. We not happy with what she do – she say she will come then she phone to say she can’t make it. But otherwise she’s a good person. Valerie

UNIVERSITY of (Focus Group: 28 September 2002)

WESTERN CAPE

Impact of the LEAD programme at the group and collective level

Learning, relationships, race, culture, religion and class

During the interviews, another sub-theme that emerged was about race and class and how the women had developed and grown as a group despite being from different racial and cultural groups, with differing levels of poverty. Most of these women had not known each other prior to joining the LEAD programme. They were women of different racial and cultural groups, from different backgrounds and circumstances, with the ages of the women varying from youth to senior citizen. There were also women who developed strong sub groups within the whole group, and often the sub groups did not want to mix with other sub groups.

This next section examines the interpersonal relationships between the women, how they

learnt to build relationships and develop trust, how they learnt to deal with conflict, issues of race, culture, religion and class. These paragraphs say much about the interpersonal relationships. It talks about how the women did not trust each other at first and how there was a culture of 'talking about each other' or perhaps a perception that this was happening. This seems to be a kind of attitude that women brought in from outside where people behaved this way.

The focus groups revealed that trust, respect and negative perceptions were all issues that the women grappled with in their daily lives. These were the factors that prevented them from venturing out into the broader community, talking to their neighbours and forming links with other women. It also isolated them and made them live in fear, fear of the unknown, fear of standing up for themselves and fear of doing something for themselves. Many of the women had come from abusive backgrounds and had developed a culture of silence where they did not speak about their pain.

The trainer had a huge challenge in 'breaking the silence' and changing attitudes and perceptions and developing trust. In fact, she had to be the primary role model initially and gain the trust of the women by modelling the behaviour that women were not seeing amongst themselves. One of the women, Doris, highlights some of the issues relevant to this section:

Now this lady (the trainer) , I don't know you, and it don't take the first day to know each other, it takes a few months really to depend and support. You learn to know each other because during that time you don't know how to work with each other and that was bringing us nearer and closer to one another- and that was where the drama was coming in- but through the course it was a very strange thing you know, I dunno how to put it but, you were like afraid of one another, you were afraid of talking to one another, if Aunty Sarah's talking too much with Valerie, you watching, honestly you watching, you say to the person next to you, I wonder what Sarah's said to Valerie, but that was the kind of thing, coming from outside, coming with that attitude in here, and now you think it would be like that in here, but when the course was finished you were a different person at the end of the day it makes you stronger, it makes you stand on your feet, and it learns you to make from you a big grown up woman.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

The women seemed to have experienced a real sense of growth as a result of the course. They learnt to know each other and trust each other through working together on the projects. The women learnt to understand each other better and to be more open and honest about their feelings towards each other. This may have been a natural part of group development and growth, but it also had a lot to do with the trainer's facilitation of the women. The women learnt to develop a sense of community and started to care about whether someone was sick or support each other when there was a death. The interaction of the different age groups also resulted in the women learning to respect the older members of the group.

This group of women were a multi-cultural group consisting of coloured and black women who, as I have stated previously, might not have interacted with each other prior to the LEAD Programme. Even though the women lived in the same community, Delft was previously an area predominantly occupied by coloureds and it may not have been natural for coloureds to accept blacks easily. Because of past prejudices as a result of apartheid, women like these may not have accepted each other as neighbours. This programme thrust the women together and forced them to face each other in both large group and in smaller more intimate groups where they had to learn how to interact and also work together on projects. Through the course content, the women were expected to deal with all kinds of issues – race, gender, culture and religion. The trainer stated in her interview that this was by no means an easy task and often it was extremely difficult and unpleasant causing pain and tears amongst the women. Yet, there were successes and in these extracts the women share the experiences and how the training programme had impacted on the group positively in helping them to integrate. They give a coloured woman's reflections, a muslim women's experience and a perspective from one of the black women:

What the trainer is also doing with us is group work so like when we are sitting together- Valerie on that side with her group and I on this side with the coloureds and Thandeka on that side. Then the trainer, she say we must all mix up and she breaks us up into groups –now we learn to work together and to handle things in a much better way –that's how she was doing! Doris

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

I came in the last month – and for me it was a great challenge cos I was the only muslim and in fact I learnt a lot from each others culture and learnt a lot from everyone, and they learnt from me, I was always at home, every week it was exciting for me, I miss them if I don't see them. Shamiela

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Like it was the first time we are with coloured people and you know there was lots of conflict, too much separation there if you talk to the coloured person, the black people will say what is she saying or what language is she speaking, and then it was so difficult and at the end,share with somebody and then you will cry and they want to know what you are crying for... Well, now we are just friends, we can go to each others houses, I didn't go to people's houses before, now if I need a bit of sugar I can go to Aunty Sarah's house. I learnt a lot in LEAD talking with other women, although I was the youngest in the group I learn how to respect older women and I learn to work with other coloured people and they help me a lot and when I have a problem I go to my colleagues and then they help me and then I learn how to talk because I don't like to talk, sometimes Valerie laugh at me but she helps me a lot. Thandeka

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

LEAD seems to have restored a sense of community and neighbourliness in the women as they learnt to see each other as women again and not as black or coloured. The women were all living in the same area but there were differing levels of poverty and also the women came from different backgrounds or lived in different circumstances which may have caused some women to see others as being 'better off'. Some women were less poor than others, either through a husband who supported them financially or older children contributing to the household income. This placed them in a position to dress better, have a better house, material possessions and be seen in a different class. Some women had been exposed to an educated and cultured lifestyle, either through their upbringing and background or through work experiences – this may have also placed them in a better class than those who had not had the same experiences. One of the things women learnt through the LEAD programme was that being better off financially did not make a person happy – that women had the same problems whether they were poor or had financial support. Valerie shared her feelings about the class issue:

The way everything is going like Aunty Sarah now know that she also got problems like I have. I feel free to go into her house –even though she got a bigger house than me – she also got same problems although she lives a better life than me. When we share our joys and concerns we realised that we have the same problems.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

The methodology used by LEAD made women realise that they were all facing the same problems and the programme allowed women to share their vulnerability with each other. This seemed to have brought the women closer and broke down the class barrier that existed prior to the course. Observing the women during the focus groups, I did not see any visible signs of class prejudice – I saw women just being free with each other and treating each other equally no matter how they looked on the outside. The fact that the women had learnt to know each other so intimately through the course, sharing many secrets and past pain, meant that they had begun to care about each other deeply.

The programme also ensured that women were not made to feel different by virtue of their poverty, which was at varying levels. LEAD did not exclude women because they did not have fees. A basic need like food was dealt with in a dignified manner, so that women who were hungry could come to the course and be fed. Doris gives an example of how the trainer dealt with these issues:

What she (the trainer) also do with us –she collects a fundraising committee out of us and there we learn how to fundraise –we had to pay our fees- we had to pay late-coming fees. The other thing is, there was also something for the ladies –most of these ladies they were coming from home and they didn't even have a slice of bread but when they get there, they know they can eat something.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Learning, Empowerment, Leadership and Social action

LEAD's director states in the 2000 annual report that LEAD's primary aim is to empower women. The model of empowerment used by LEAD

...starts with the individual's consciousness, but to bring about social change, it must move from changing our personal ways of thinking and doing, to that of building and maintaining external relations. Empowerment therefore is a process that involves some degree of personal development but as well as moves beyond this into action. While individual empowerment is one component of the model, concentration on individuals is not sufficient as the context of development has to be taken into account. LEAD's model of empowerment appears to be placing considerable emphasis on awareness raising and participation. LEAD raises awareness about gender issues as well as conscientises women about their position in society and strongly encourages them to take leadership and participate in decision making processes." LEAD acknowledges that part of

helping women to become empowered is “to incorporate into the programme a strong business skill component so as to equip women with the necessary skills so as to control some of the factors that will help in acquiring economic independence (LEAD, 2000:3).

In LEAD’s course outline document 2001, LEAD states that “*many women have the potential to take leadership, to initiate and to develop themselves and the country as a whole, but they lack the confidence, access and opportunity*”. The document continues that “*women’s leadership, creativity and initiative can be seen in their home lives, but is not always evident on a broader scale*”.

The kind of leadership capacity the LEAD course was enabling women to learn how to build confidence and giving the women access to opportunities which they would under normal circumstances not have had access to. The leadership emerging out of the LEAD course was not overt leadership in the sense that women had begun to take positions of leadership on various forums. Leadership was evident in the way women had become more assertive in their homes where they had not previously been able to. Whilst before, women may have been playing very responsible roles in their homes, having to provide for their families with very little income, they were now realising that they could also stand up to their husbands and assert their rights. Women had also begun to play more active leadership roles in their community or initiate social action as a result of the LEAD course. For most of the women, the course gave them confidence and had allowed them to discover their potential. The women hardly used the word leader – in fact it was only once that I remember the word ‘leader’ being used overtly in relation to one of the women – when Thandeka said that she believed she was a leader. The term which the women most referred to during the focus groups was how the course had given them ‘strength’. This could be interpreted as courage and assertiveness, which could be seen as leadership qualities.

Women were involved in different projects at different times, and each project was assigned a co-ordinator who would lead it for three months and then pass leadership on to another person. This form of rotating leadership was set up to build capacity of all the

women involved. This system did not always work as women had various problems with it – for some women it was about getting used to one person as a leader and then having to adjust to a new person after three months. For others it was about not accepting certain people. Doris related that “ *and then you get that amongst each other we don’t respect although we go through LEAD Training we still don’t have respect – we say she can’t be my leader she’s not on the same level as me that is still there*” (Focus Group: 6 July 2002).

Racial dynamics also played a role here – the trainer mentioned that what black women saw as leadership was different to coloured women’s idea of leadership. According to the trainer, the rotating leadership was challenging and problematic. It seems that rotating leadership may have sounded empowering in theory, but in reality it took a lot of tolerance and getting used to. Also, it appears that three months was insufficient time for a woman to become used to the leadership role and find her strength as a leader. The structure put in place by the trainer was that two co-ordinators were given overall responsibility and four project leaders were assigned to lead each of the four projects: drama project, child recreation project, literacy project and sewing project. The focus groups revealed that once the programme had been through its process of rotating leadership, the ‘natural’ leader who was the person best suited to lead each project emerged.

The course was a 3 month leadership programme. If one looks at conventional conceptions of leadership which is about taking the lead or holding a key portfolio, then very few women were able to do this. What actually occurred was that women developed individually and grew on a personal level which resulted in their increased confidence and assertiveness. Only two of the women became ‘successful’ leaders, Valerie became a facilitator and Thandeka was leading the literacy project. This may have been attributed to innate leadership qualities as well as the fact these two women were chosen to do the LEAD, Level Two programme. According to the women this was the course where they went ‘*deeper into leadership skills*’ as well as moving onto a higher level (Focus Group: 6 July 2002). Many factors may have determined whether women were successfully able

to lead a project. The nature of the project – for example the drama project was difficult to lead because of the challenges involved like generating income. Another factor may have been the women’s circumstances which may have prevented her from being able to lead – for example in the case of Shamiela who had not been able to get fully involved because she had to care for her sick mother. The rest of the women were playing leadership roles in varying degrees, whilst others were involved in projects but had not taken the lead. The LEAD course had been more successful at the level of confidence building, group building and strengthening relationships across class, racial, religious and cultural relationships. LEAD says that *“the linking of leadership skills with community development issues is at the centre of LEAD’s approach. LEAD strongly encourages women to organise themselves as a group as we believe that women’s impact in the community is greatest when they work together as a team”* (LEAD document, 2001). LEAD hopes that the training will lead to social transformation at a grassroots level. The first course is called the *“Level One Leadership Programme”* which is described as *“a basic course in empowerment and leadership, the aim of which is to release the leadership potential in women through a gender and empowerment programme that focuses on self-development”* (LEAD document, 2001). Most of the women came to improve themselves individually and were not too concerned with working as a team or becoming leaders. Some were already involved in community development and others were keen to become more involved. As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, the women hoped that the course would lead to employment, or help them in generating an income. The women struggled at times to work together as a team and to learn how to deal with group dynamics and changing leadership. With some projects there were successes, whereas with others it was difficult to keep the group together. The projects which were successful were the ones where the women were able to earn an income. The drama project, which was very valuable for the women’s personal development and interpersonal relationship growth, was not sustainable due to it not being able to bring in an income. Some women like Thandeka and Doris have successfully coupled their leadership skills with community development issues – Thandeka through the literacy project, and Doris through the community ‘block-making’ project she is involved in. Valerie is one exceptional example of a grassroots woman who through the LEAD

training had proven herself as a leader of the group and has since been appointed as a trainer. The women from the Delft group won several awards. This was an affirmation for the women about their leadership skills and abilities. Leadership emerged in different ways for different women. The first kind of leadership emerging was ‘assertive leadership’, for example in the home – where women were showing increased assertiveness and awareness of their rights as well as outside the home where women were standing up for themselves in small ways, for example – challenging, asking questions or speaking their minds. The second was ‘economic leadership’ where women were starting to see their role as providers and starting to create economic opportunities for themselves instead of waiting for their husbands to provide. A third kind of leadership was ‘community leadership’ where women were taking the initiative and starting projects or playing a leadership role in community projects and on various forums. Leadership skills of women were built through the LEAD course content and methodology and the trainer’s approach and style of facilitation. The first step was a healing process of getting women to talk about painful issues in their lives. Then the course built up their self-confidence and developed assertiveness. Next, it helped them to learn how to cope with group dynamics and learn to speak in front of a group. Creative methods like using drama to build self-confidence helped the women to lose their inhibitions and become less self-conscious. The trainer had built leadership by leaving the women on their own. This forced those who had been placed as co-ordinators to take control of the situation and gave them space to grow and practice their skills in leading the group. The Delft women were held up as a good example by LEAD. It seems that the trainer gave the women courage and made sure that they stayed together as a group. The trainer leaving the group on their own could be seen as both positive and negative. The positive results were the fact that the trainer had to identify leadership and appoint a co-ordinator from within the group to take over when she could not be there. This built the leadership capacity of Valerie who might not have had the opportunity to test her leadership. It also forced the women into independence and into finding their own strengths as a group. The women maintain that they learnt from the facilitator and that she was an example to them. Another important issue is that the trainer encouraged the women to be themselves and to express themselves in their own way. The trainer also strongly encouraged the women to

learn to be assertive. Women's individual and inherent strengths probably played a role here since the trainer also mentioned that these women were an exceptional group. The data proves that the trainer played a strong role in developing and building the group into a very powerful and strong entity, which made them stand out from other groups. These following anecdotes from the 2nd focus group, July 2002, reveal some of the remarks made around the issues discussed in this section – Delft as a model group, how the trainer gave the women space to lead and the group and individuals winning awards.

Yes we were like role models, because we didn't leave things, we can stand on our own feet and we went even so far like now we on our own. We did the constitution – the trainer got someone to do help us. The name of our group is WAIDS - Women Acting in Delft South. And this is taking us into the next session, that is what's making us strong and that is why I feel we as women are special because never mind all the problems we have we still together and through all that we still got respect for one another – it's a long road. Valerie

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

“Valerie is the co-ordinator –so she takes over, I'm the co-ordinator of the drama....so we continue on our own. She (the trainer) is telling us she has to go somewhere then she puts one of us in front to take over, to carry on – that is what makes us strong! Doris

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

“Like with the library we are friends now-we also won an award for literacy, so now we are going to undergo training as facilitator. So LEAD has done a lot”. Thandeka

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

One of the aims of the LEAD course is that social transformation will take place in the communities where the women live. LEAD believes that when women work together they are able to have a greater impact. In an earlier section of this document, I quoted one of LEAD's documents which stated that “ *empowerment therefore is a process that involves some degree of personal development but as well as moves beyond this into action.*” Learning social action is therefore a key outcome of the LEAD programme. Some of the Delft women were already involved in social action issues in their individual capacities. There were women who were involved in community work and those who were involved in other NGO activities, church groups, political and community forums. There were also women who had seen the problems in their community and wanted to become involved but did not know how to get involved or where to start.

Once women had completed the course, they were expected to form teams and start projects. LEAD played a strong role in initiating the projects, having taken the women through a process where they had to decide what projects would benefit their community. The projects started were: a theatre/ drama project – a play was produced and performed by the women entitled “Breaking the wall” ; a child recreation project – arts and crafts recreation sessions were implemented for children from primary to high school; a literacy project – teaching Xhosa and Afrikaans to senior members of the community; a sewing and designing project – making clothing and other items to sell for income generation. During the focus groups it was evident that the women gained enormous fulfillment and enjoyed being involved in the projects:

I'm working with children –that is what is keeping me alive. I like to work with children, I love children and in LEAD we are busy with 'Child Recreation' and that's keeping me going in the community serving in the community on different organisations! Doris.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

"I'm in the community teaching old people literacy in the library from Monday to Thursday. I'm also busy with the sewing project and busy with 'Response'" Thandeka. "I am busy with 'Response' and the aim of 'Response' is to start AIDS action committees within churches and that is what I'm doing at the moment" Valerie.

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

(Response was one of the other projects not related to LEAD which quite a few women were involved in)

The way LEAD operated was to start the projects towards the end of the programme. Once the coursework was completed, the support programme would begin, where the trainer would no longer be visiting the women weekly but rather on a monthly basis. The women said that this was not working, that it was precisely at this point that the women needed more support from LEAD. Valerie shares her feelings about this issue:

I would suggest that when we start with training we should at least start with projects, so that when the training is finished then we already established. It's very hard- the facilitator had to also start training in other areas, and then we became dependent on her, and when she don't come out we say "Ag man the

facilitator didn't pitch and next time she won't pitch". And when we come to the library, only two people are there and this is why the projects can't go forward because there's not enough people – we don't have resources – it's disappointing that LEAD don't support you. Valerie

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Another challenge faced by the women was the issue of individual and family needs versus projects and community needs. The women were keen to be involved but had to think about family commitments. There was also the fact that women needed to provide for their families as well as having to provide resources for the projects.

I also did the first course with LEAD, but not busy with any activities, just recently I lost my father-in-law, my mother is sick and I'm looking after her. Life is difficult for me now because it just up and down, up and down...ehm one of these days I'll be back in the group and do my part that I'm supposed to do. Shamiela

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

Like me and Doris is busy with 'child recreation' and we have to bring stuff from our houses and Doris must buy sweets out of her own pocket and her husband is not working and here you are trying to do good for other children and her children don't have a slice of bread on the table. Valerie

(Focus Group: 6 July 2002)

The drama project was a form of social action because it was dealing with a social problem, abuse of women, and using drama as a means to get the message across to the broader community. The trainer also felt that the drama project was an exceptionally powerful methodology to be used with grassroots women like the Delft group, and it brought out many issues and did much for the women both as a group and on a more personal level. However the trainer reflected that the organisation did not see the same value in the drama project and therefore the drama was not included in other training programmes. Some of the problems which the trainer identified was the marketing of the group and the fact that it could have been a successful income generating project if the women were managed properly and the right contacts had been made. Unfortunately, the trainer had tried to set up the contacts, but due to time she could not dedicate sufficient energy to this. The experience was profound for them in terms of healing and sharing the pains of the past and they benefited and grew out of it. The trainer, however, felt that whilst the drama facilitator had helped them with this play, the women now needed to

develop a new play. During the interviews, I sensed that the women did not have the energy nor the resources to continue in the light of the fact that they were trying to deal with daily survival issues. This project was sustainable whilst it had the support of the facilitator from CAP (Community Arts Project) and the trainer, as well as LEAD as an organisation, but it could not be sustained for the reasons mentioned above. The women were very proud having had a taste of fame, stardom and success through performing the play at two major theatres. They all spoke about the drama project very positively and seemed determined that when their lives got better they would revive the drama group. The drama project may not have been sustainable as a social action initiative, but it had left a lasting impression on the women. It had left them with increased confidence and boosted their self-esteem, which has taken them further into other initiatives and areas of their lives.

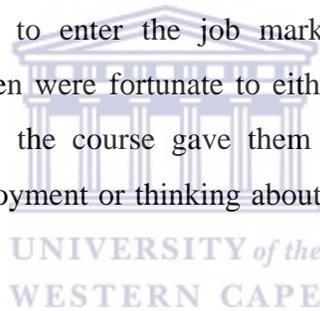
LEAD had a second course (Level Two), a more advanced course offered to selected participants of Level One whom LEAD felt had leadership potential to continue with further training. The women were very proud of their achievements, and spoke about the Level Two as a progression, a step up. Level Two seemed to be the course where women came into their own having grown much from Level One. It was also where they were able to put into practice what they had learnt from Level One. For women who had not had the opportunity to further their education, these courses were very valuable and empowering and were seen as a way of uplifting themselves and eventually becoming employed. It also seemed that some of the women, once they had completed the LEAD course, had gained the confidence to learn more. Some of the women went on to do other courses. Both Valerie and Thandeka who had completed Level Two, went on to study beyond the LEAD programme. Valerie completed an auxiliary social worker's course at the University of the Western Cape. Thandeka related that the Level Two course 'made her stronger' and believe that she could be a leader because it 'went deeper into trust building and leadership skills' as well as educating the women about how to write proposals, about government policies and gender issues.

Besides the awards that women won as individuals, the Delft group won an award for

being the best group. This did much for the women's self-esteem and boosted their confidence. The women were very proud of the recognition and affirmation they received and referred to this many times.

One of the women, Valerie, mentioned how her being involved in the LEAD programme had inspired her daughter who said: *"I also wanna be a LEAD lady because I notice LEAD learn you a lot and LEAD helped you a lot"* (Focus Group: 6 July 2002).

For most of the women who were part of the focus groups, money was an everyday struggle. With many dependents and often no husband to support them or a husband who was either retrenched or not earning sufficiently, it became very evident that all of these women wanted to be able to earn money. The trainer also mentioned that the women's main objective was to earn money. Finding a job was extremely difficult, since the women may not have had the opportunity to complete their schooling, or otherwise did not have the necessary skills to enter the job market. As a result of the LEAD Programme, some of the women were fortunate to either find employment or generate their own income. For others, the course gave them the confidence to seek further training and start seeking employment or thinking about generating their own income in the future.



Three women's stories of successful empowerment

Out of the ten women I had contact with through the focus groups, four had managed to either become employed or generate income. The four were Valerie, who became a trainer for LEAD, Joan, who started a home-carer agency with a group of women, Doris, who started a community organisation generating income for themselves and Thandeka, who besides running literacy groups in the library, had also started her own business. Of these four women, I was able to get detailed stories from three of the women in the final focus group session.

The next section reveals their stories of empowerment. Joan, Valerie and Doris were all very committed members of the group who attended the training sessions regularly. The trainer described them as exceptional women. All three of the women had had difficult

lives or faced adversity and had risen above it or decided to challenge themselves. Joan had been through a painful childhood and difficult marriage, Valerie had to prove herself despite having a physical disability, Doris had marital problems and was faced with extreme poverty. They all lived in Delft, and had all been involved in community work in some way before engaging in the LEAD Programme. It is difficult to measure who was 'better off' economically but from my interaction with them during the focus groups, I would say that Doris was struggling the most and seemed more disadvantaged since her husband was not stable and did not always work. Valerie and Joan at least had husbands who were working and supporting them. These women also came across as very caring and with a deep respect for their peers and concern for humanity. Doris and Joan spoke about their passion for children and senior citizens respectively, and Valerie had a concern for the community in general. The women all spoke about how prior to the course, they had not been assertive and how the course given them strength and taught them to become more confident. Valerie spoke about how the LEAD Programme had given her confidence: *"When I see a challenge I go for it, but that's also due to the LEAD training, they teach me....I was always the quiet person, never talk, like because I'm disabled I think I can't be like other people but through the LEAD training and the group I got confidence"* (Focus Group: 6 July 2002). Confidence seemed to be a huge contributing factor to the women's growth and success. Many of the women including the three who achieved success had come into the programme with low self-concepts and self-esteem. It appears that the course had given them the confidence which they needed to empower themselves and discover their potential. The women came to LEAD for various reasons but ultimately they wished to improve and better their standard of living and were hoping the course could help them. For Valerie it was her involvement in another organisation, Nicro, as part of the community crime forum, that led her to LEAD. She had completed her Level One in Mitchells Plain with another LEAD group, then she was asked to assist LEAD in recruiting for the Delft Level One group. She then joined the group but increasingly began to play a leadership role and eventually co-ordinated the group in the trainer's absence. So, Valerie's path to LEAD was because of her involvement in community activities, and her interest to improve herself through training courses. Joan wanted to empower herself so that she did not need to work for other

people but become self-employed. Doris was a community activist already and actually ‘stumbled’ upon the LEAD training whilst coming from a ‘protest march’ and looking for somewhere to shelter from the wind – she was asked to join by the trainer, she liked what she saw and so she decided to return the following week. Doris was very interested in doing community work and generating an income to support her family. All three women had a huge amount of self-motivation within them – the LEAD course helped to enhance this and unleash their potential. Valerie is one of the women whom LEAD had recognised as having the kind of strength of character needed to become a trainer. In this extract, Valerie shares why she thought LEAD had chosen her to be a trainer:

Well I recruited for them, two groups in Delft, and maybe it was that I was always busy with them doing something linked to LEAD....they said they admired my strength that’s why they chose me....the fact that I was always willing to do something, nothing was too big for me. Like when I had to come for Level Two and go for the interview they said ‘No but Valerie will never be able to manage the stairs, and the one lady said ‘No but I’m going back to tell them you can’ So they were actually discriminating against me, so I showed them I can and I think they admired that! Valerie

(Focus Group: 28 September 2002)

Both Doris and Joan came from patriarchal households: Doris spoke about how previously she would wait for her husband to provide for her but how she had since the course, become empowered. “Whereas before I would say I got a husband, he must bring in money for me....now, I’m earning my own money and I can go out there and see to myself. The other thing is this – I’m also in the organisation where I’m busy doing things, things have changed, we started new things”, Doris (Focus Group: 28 September 2002).

Joan mentioned how previously she had allowed her husband to dictate to her but since the LEAD Programme, she had become motivated: “Since I have done this training, LEAD has motivated me to continue. Before the training, I just used to sit at home and so on, and just listen to my husband” (Focus Group: 28 September 2002).

From these excerpts it becomes clear that once the women were able to break out of their traditional roles as subservient wives, they could discover their potential and find their strength. Once they started to believe that they could also earn money, they began to look for opportunities and perceived themselves differently. All of the women seemed to have

drawn from the strength of the group, from the other women and were largely inspired and motivated by LEAD to do something for themselves. It also appeared that the women drew strength from the collective energy of the group they were involved in and this contributed to them succeeding. All these success stories shared the element of the collective – either through starting an organisation like Doris and a few other community people did, or starting an agency, like Joan and some women had decided to do. Valerie having joined LEAD as a trainer also became part of an organisation whose success depended on groups of women working together on community projects. Most of the women had experienced isolation through their poverty and through being thrust into a community whom they did not know and trust. Once they had begun to form links or find support in the other women or other groups they had joined, they flourished and began to experience a real sense of community that had not been there before. Both Doris and Joan's stories indicate that the impulse to start something was driven by their need and not an outsider telling them what to do although they mentioned LEAD as having inspired, motivated and given them confidence. The women themselves had decided to start the groups and were part of the driving force. This may have contributed to the success of their initiatives. Doris is part of a community organisation that had decided to start income generation projects. She mentioned that this organisation was started by the community themselves, and that their aim was to start projects with the hope that it would empower people and generate income – the first one being a 'block-making' project to provide bricks for the building of houses. Joan's story related the same dynamic:

A few of us women came together and decided that we want to do our own thing, and I must say it works, it really works, we have found our feet and it shows that in life you can do something if you really want to and I must thank LEAD because before the course I could not stand up for myself. Joan

(Focus Group: 28 September 2002)

When I asked the women whether they had taken the lead or were playing a leading role in their groups, Joan mentioned that she was just part of the group not a leader. Doris said that she was one of the top five in the organisation. Valerie was one of the women that emerged as a leader of the organisation started by the women (WAIDS) and her role as a LEAD trainer could also be seen as a leadership position. It seems that whilst not all the women were in overt leadership positions, they were playing leadership roles in their

community groups and taking the lead in their home lives. At the final focus group, a question was posed about what would have happened if LEAD had not come to the community. The women all stated emphatically that they would probably still have been at home, or would not have been doing what they were doing. When Doris was asked whether LEAD had played a role in her being part of the community organisation, this was her answer: “ *A very big role, like sometimes if a thing don't work you feel like giving up, but what LEAD teaches you is don't give up - no matter how long it's taking...there will be a reward at the end of the day and something is waiting for you out there- you must just continue*” Doris (Focus Group: 28 September 2002). It seems that LEAD played a huge role in inspiring and motivating women and making them realise that they needed to be patient and persevere.

All the women interviewed mentioned how LEAD had impacted on their lives at various levels. These three women were the ones that had been successful in eventually earning money either through self employment or becoming employed. For most of these women, this was the ultimate goal. The contributing factors mentioned above show that LEAD played a huge role in helping the women to achieve success. It is questionable whether these women would have reached this point without LEAD, even though the women had inherent qualities and natural talents that helped them to do what they did. Another contributing factor is the strength of the collective, which LEAD had successfully revived in the women.

Many other factors may have played a role in determining whether the other women would be able to do what the three successful women did or whether those who are in employ will be able to sustain their positions. Factors and circumstances like socio-economic issues, poverty, family commitments, support from husbands and the educational levels of the women, will determine whether the women can develop further, even though LEAD has laid a good foundation of building the confidence of the women and helping them to challenge their traditional roles.

Analysis of key findings

Feminist popular approach

The literature says that feminist popular education:

... is a participatory, democratic, non-hierarchical pedagogy which encourages creative thinking that breaks through embedded formats of learning. It valorizes local knowledge, working collectively towards producing knowledge, the principal of starting from where people are situated, and working to develop a broader understanding of structures and how these can be transformed. It strives to foster both personal and social empowerment (Walters and Manicom, 1996:7).

The data reveals that feminist popular education was implemented to a large extent and the trainer's attempts to integrate feminist approaches into the programme were mostly successful. This happened despite many other factors like the fact that the organisation itself was not emphasising the feminist aspect sufficiently in its programmes. Also, LEAD's funding limitations as well as bigger socio-economic constraints and poverty hindered the women from taking social action. The feminist popular approach worked for most of the women in the research group and did lead to empowerment, leadership and social action as well as in some cases even income generation. The scale at which this might have been successful could have been vastly improved if it were not for the limiting factors. The feminist popular approach yielded triumphs mainly at the personal level and level of the collective, its impact at the social empowerment level was not as great.

Central role of the trainer

The trainer played a central role in ensuring that the programme was implemented from a feminist perspective. This yielded enormous impact at the individual and group level as the data has revealed.

The women seemed to have experienced a real sense of growth as a result of the course. They learnt to know each other and trust each other through working together on the projects. The women learnt to understand each other better and to be more open and honest about their feelings towards each other. This may have been a natural part of group development and growth, but it also had a lot to do with the trainer's facilitation of

the women.

The trainer provided these women with a safe space where they could share openly and honestly. The methodology used by the LEAD trainer took the women through various activities which were designed to provide them with a place to ‘offload’ and express their feelings. The ‘joys and concerns’ activity, used at the start of each session during the LEAD programme was very effective in helping women to recognise their feelings as well as deal with feelings amongst each other. It was a very good way of helping women to support each other in a constructive way. Part of the emotional support was that women had to learn how to solve problems amongst themselves and so this gave them an opportunity to grapple with problems arising in the group.

Personal development (Self, identity and emotions)

The area of personal development featured as fundamental throughout the findings.

The literature reviewed highlighted the importance of paying attention to the roles and identity of women:

We need to emphasise that women are not only victims of unjust societal structures and poverty but also agents of change, whether at the level of making choices in their everyday lives or in organised action aimed at confronting macro-structures. This entails questioning dominant messages such as that women are passive or suited to certain roles. Our education work should provide an environment in which women can reflect on this whole matter of identity, unpacking those aspects imposed by society and examining how they preserve such imposed identity within themselves, as well as in other women (Medel-Anonuevo, 1996:132).

In relation to the psyche/self, the literature argued:

... that the roots of women’s oppression are deeply embedded in the psyche and that for women to free themselves, an interior (as well as societal) revolution is necessary so that women are able to challenge their own oppression (Weiner, 1994:61).

Emotions featured throughout the data findings and validated what the literature says about the “centrality of emotion” and “the transformative potential of emotions” as stated by Heng (1996:204). Heng’s citing of Weiler confirms what the data exposed:

Emotions have constituted a very powerful resource for liberation in the women’s

movement. Feminist educators, particularly women in the early consciousness-raising groups, have explored feelings as a 'critical way of knowing', or 'inner knowing': the source of true knowledge of the world for women living in a society that denies the value of their perceptions. Weiler, (1991:463), cited by Heng (1996:205)

Like Heng who found that "it was the supportiveness and emotional responsiveness of fellow participants, coupled with effective facilitation, that elicited talk and enabled reflection" (Heng, 1996:221), my findings also showed how the trainer's effective facilitation as well as the personal sharing amongst the women created a safe space for women to begin to open up at a deeply emotional level. I observed through the focus groups that the women had begun to open up and reflect on their lives, but it was only the start of the process and for many it may be a lifetime journey acknowledging that it is very difficult to break old patterns of thinking or old ways of doing. The women's painful pasts had played a role in shaping who they are. The LEAD programme helped them to begin to face the past so they could see themselves differently. The trainer also helped the women through a process of unlearning, where they had to break old patterns of how they saw themselves and how they engaged with each other. The women gained enormous support from each other emotionally and the focus groups revealed that they drew strength from each other. This process of healing and emotional growth changed the women's perceptions of themselves.

Empowerment of women

The data showed that as the 6 women became more engaged in this programme they were breaking their ties of dependency on husbands to become independent. This was shown through assertiveness, taking initiative, self-control and confidence. During the focus groups I became more and more aware of how the women had learnt how to become more assertive, showing a strong resolve to take control of their lives and take initiative as a result of the LEAD training. All these shifts led to them achieving some measure of independence, which the women saw as a great improvement to the way they were before joining the LEAD programme. The data makes several references to women becoming stronger.

The power of the collective

The women in the research group found strength in being with other women in a group setting and were able to develop relationships over time and start examining both themselves and their communities more critically. Once they had done this they began to harness their collective power and see the advantages of taking action as a group.

The data revealed that the LEAD programme seems to have changed the women's attitudes towards each other and specifically the drama project had played a huge role in bringing them together. The course also provided a space for women from different groups to come together in a way that they may never have had the opportunity to do. Under normal circumstances these women would not have spoken or socialised with each other. Although it was not easy, the LEAD programme provided a well facilitated process and safe space in which women could learn different ways of behaving. The women seemed to have found this extremely valuable. The programme also allowed for women to break through many barriers and to dispel perceptions and prejudices that they had developed about each other. It does seem that the trainer's manner and the approach used helped to build the group and to ensure that group processes were encouraging women to learn how to integrate and develop trust and respect.

The issue of diversity featured throughout the data and whilst it provided a rich experience and opportunity for relationships across racial and cultural barriers, it took up a huge part of the programme and the trainer mentioned that it was very difficult and needed proper time and attention. It raises the question about time allocated to such a programme especially given the diversity in the group.

Nadeau claims that "social change involves transformation of the whole person and of the collective at the level of body and spirit". According to her, "it is this combining of feeling and rationality, or personal and political realities, of private and public that makes popular education feminist" (Nadeau, 1996:59). Nadeau's views reflect a convergence of all the feminisms and an acknowledgement that transformation of the whole person and

communities will need to bring together both the inner (self, identity and emotions) and outer (societal) realm of women's realities.

The Delft group had begun to do this to a degree, but it seems that it was only sustainable as long as the LEAD programme was in place. Once the infrastructure and support of the trainer was taken away, the women (despite their best intentions – even having started their organisation WAIDS) no longer met as a group, and most went their separate ways joining other groups or working on their own. The collective had a momentum and initiated social action but sustainability was a problem for a number of reasons – poverty, resources, personal circumstances. Perhaps this is the reality, that groups form for a purpose and then break up and new groups are formed and the learnings from each experience are passed on.

Problems with the sustainability of social action projects

The support programme was seen as not being adequate enough both in the length of time allocated and the quality of support provided by LEAD and the shortcomings in this area were the main reason why women were not able to sustain their projects. The fact that women become dependent on the LEAD programme may not make it a sustainable approach. This raises the bigger question of how LEAD's programme was designed and links to Batliwala's model of empowerment.

On the broader question of empowerment and linking to Batliwala's (1994) conceptual model outlined in the literature chapter, there are some areas where the LEAD programme needed to improve. Revisiting Batliwala's model above and some of the suggestions put forward by Batliwala in the literature chapter, Patel citing Batliwala (1996:97-98), it becomes clear that there are gaps in LEAD's model. One of these are forming alliances with other groups of exploited and oppressed people, or involving sympathetic men from their own communities and projects – this was attempted by the trainer but not followed through in LEAD. Another vital element missing from LEAD in the empowering process is the acquisition of practical skills that enhance women's individual and collective autonomy and power eg. vocational and managerial know-how,

literacy, numeracy and basic data-collection techniques for conducting their own surveys. It says that this will help women's collectives to then begin to seek access to their own resources independently of the NGO. The model concludes that collectives operating in communities may form associations at local, regional, national and even global levels – the trainer attempted to bring together different groups but she was not supported by LEAD as an organisation so these efforts did not develop – it might have helped the Delft group survive into the future. This links to interdependence – Kaplan (1990) and Taylor (2001) in their critique of Freire in the literature chapter, both stress the move to interdependence as completing the development and social transformation process:

In Paulo Freire's terms, development moves from dependence to a critical consciousness; the ability to analyse circumstance, to question existing reality, and to say no. This however, only corresponds to the stage of independence. I am saying that this is only partial development, and that interdependence is a phase beyond (Kaplan, 1996:22).

The concept of Ubuntu places social interconnectedness as the starting point for understanding human existence. The human individual can only be conceived of in relationship to others – never alone. 'I am, only because you are – we are, only because the community is'. This interdependence goes beyond people's mutual dependence on each other, to their collective dependence on the natural environment in which they exist (Taylor, 2001:1).

The data reveals this missing element through the women's lamenting on the support programme ending and the trainer's thwarted attempts to bring groups together and create linkages between different areas. LEAD may not have seen this as an important part of the process of empowering women, but the data exposes the dire need for this vital step in order for sustainable social transformation to happen.

Beyond conscientisation – the need for technical skills towards income generation

In the literature Fink (1992) states: ...the current economic crisis has prompted programmes to move beyond conscientisation and address women's immediate needs – “therefore to develop other skills, both analytical and practical that will give women greater control over their lives”. Fink portrays the tension between developing critical consciousness and developing technical skills as method vs. content (Fink, 1992:190). In the literature chapter I stated that this is a challenge which South African organizations

also face – the LEAD programme being one of those which had to incorporate an element of economic empowerment into their programmes. In reality, LEAD struggled to deliver on this element as the data revealed and the trainer stated that she did not have the skills to develop the women in this area. Whilst most women came on these programmes so that they may find employment as a result thereof, the LEAD programme did not provide women with skills to enable them to find employment or generate income. Although some of the women managed to create opportunities for either income generation or self-employment, these were a minority. The programme may have managed to empower women at a personal level and develop leadership capabilities and critical consciousness but it was unable to address women’s immediate needs and this was expressed vehemently through the data by the women who continuously highlighted their needing to provide for their families.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research and the literature reviewed brought me to important revelations and implications for LEAD's practice which may contribute to and inform the practice of other organisations involved in similar work. It will also inform my own future practice as an adult educator and development practitioner. My main research question was: *What are the conditions which led Community Adult Education, through the LEAD Programme, to empowering women in Delft to take social action?*

One of the key findings in this research both through the feminist popular education literature and data, is that the social transformation process starts with the 'self' (the individual) and the process of personal development (which includes the self, identity and emotions). The first revelation was that women could not learn properly nor be involved in effective and sustainable social action unless they had begun to examine their inner issues of self, identity and emotions. The second is that if women have dealt with their inner work but the societal conditions continue to constrain or limit them, they will not be successful in their social action initiatives. The third is that the personal (inner) and the societal (outer) are not mutually exclusive and both impact on each other – it is not a question of one follows the other, or first the one needs to happen and then the other, but rather a complex matter of the interrelatedness of life. This issue of inner and outer needs to be viewed in a holistic manner.

In the next section I highlight the conditions which became evident through the findings.

Conditions which impact on empowerment and social action

My revelation about the inner and societal conditions was triggered by Weiner who says "...the roots of women's oppression are deeply embedded in the psyche and that for women to free themselves, an 'interior' (as well as societal) revolution is necessary so that women are able to challenge their own oppression (Weiner 1994:61). Inner and

societal conditions cannot be seen as separate since they have bearing on and impact on each other.

Inner conditions

The most important contribution from feminist popular education is in this area of ‘inner conditions’ – the self, identity and emotions.

Emotions

My findings have shown that learning how to express emotions and being provided with the opportunity to talk about them became a key component of the LEAD programme and the women valued this immensely.

Personal Development

LEAD believes that *“the programme should start with Personal Development because it is vital for all participants to know themselves before they embark on interventions with other people”* (LEAD document, 2001). My findings show that the women involved in the LEAD programme benefited from learning how to engage in self-reflection and being able to spend time on their emotional issues. The women were also able to learn how to critically examine their identities both individually and as a group. The women grew in confidence as a result of it, had increased self-esteem and self-worth and generally a better self-image. The exploration of identity and self took up most of the time the women were engaged in the programme. They were not even able to examine broader societal concerns since they had to first come to terms with their own issues. My findings have shown that those women of Delft who were successful in moving into social action and positions of leadership, or generating their own income had been able to do so because of the contribution of the extensive work by the LEAD trainer in the area of personal development. Those who were not able to move into social action could not do so because the outer conditions hindered them. For instance the women may have been more than ready to take action having deeply reflected and dealt with their personal issues, but then were confronted with issues of their own poverty, lack of resources and support, abusive husbands etc. This is a complex area to fathom as some women were

able to challenge and rise above their circumstances and others were unable to break out of the cycle of poverty and abuse.

From the personal to the collective

Linking empowerment to the process of social transformation, the idea is that women cannot be empowered merely at the individual level – it has to move beyond to the collective. Hughes says that “Consciousness raising might well empower women on an individual level, but unless the critique feeds into social action for change, which moves beyond individual awareness, the structures which maintain oppression remain intact.” (Hughes 1996:104). Hughes is saying that personal development is an absolute prerequisite for social action and social change. Medel-Anonuevo points out that “this is not easy in a movement where societal analysis has been the primary focus of analysis.” She also adds that “looking for ones identity or searching for one’s self is a preoccupation of women in northern countries” (Medel-Anonuevo, 1996:132). The women in my study were not from the north and yet they did not object to the opportunity for self-reflection, in fact they relished it, said they had grown in strength from the experience and had found that it made them see themselves differently. Fortunately the trainer was open to the concentration on the personal and was not strictly focusing on societal issues. Certain conditions like poverty were beyond the women’s control and were harder to change than inner conditions. It is important to note that some societal conditions are part of bigger issues like globalisation and neo-liberal policies (not discussed in this study) but nevertheless impacting on a local level. Conditions of poverty come up repeatedly in this study and have also impacted to a great extent on the women’s inner conditions. The societal conditions will be dealt with in the next section.

Societal conditions

Impact of Poverty

My findings showed that poverty was a huge inhibiting factor and that many women spoke about their own poverty, lack of resources and support. They tried to take action and start social action projects, and were excited about initiating these, but were unable to sustain these due to women not having money to buy resources e.g. In the case of the

child recreation project, the women wanted to keep school children busy and prevent them from being on the streets, but did not have materials to keep the children occupied. The other issue was around women having to deal with putting food on the table and being torn between finding work that could buy food and doing social action projects that could not sustain them financially. My findings have found that outside factors hampered the women from sustaining their projects e.g. lack of resources, having to care for their families, personal setbacks, and insufficient income generation from projects. My conclusion is that if a woman is poor, working on her inner conditions may help her in many areas of her life, but it will not help her to move beyond herself if she faces adversity on a daily basis and has to struggle with the basics like putting food on the table.

Economic empowerment

The women spoke about the tension they held between providing for their own families which was a daily struggle and taking action in communities which may be seen as a luxury they could not afford to indulge themselves in. These women were fighting ongoing battles around issues of abuse, crime and poverty and for them social action was about tackling the basic issues which would ensure their survival in communities fraught with social problems and overwhelming poverty. For most of them, projects needed to generate an income, which explains why the drama project could not continue despite the fact that it was an excellent project that did much for the women in their personal transformation. It could have been a powerful tool to take to other groups of women. The literature and data both reveal the tensions between attempting to bring about social transformation through popular education and facilitate economic empowerment. It becomes evident that it is very difficult to do both especially if an organisation does not have the expertise to facilitate economic development. My conclusion is that social transformation is severely hampered by economic disempowerment and makes the challenge of transforming society through social action more difficult.

This next section deals with those conditions which were largely due to LEAD's intervention and the conditions which LEAD created.

Other conditions

The collective

The LEAD programme brought a group of women from the Delft community together as a collective. A key outcome of the course was that women would become “leadership teams in action”. In addition, women realised that unless they stood together against issues like poverty, crime and abuse, they would be isolated in their fight. Unfortunately the very problems that the women wanted to fight against prevented them from taking action e.g. In the case of the two women who needed to provide for their families and therefore could not continue with the child recreation project. It seems that the lack of resources to run projects and the women’s own circumstances of poverty severely hampered them from being involved in projects that they were clearly committed to and enjoyed being a part of. My findings have shown that most women may have been empowered on an individual level but this did not mean that they automatically became a collective and took social action. This may have happened in the early stages when the trainer was still providing support and the women had to implement projects. Later these projects were not able to be sustained and the women struggled to remain together as a collective. There were various reasons for them not staying together. For some the reasons were poverty and the projects not yielding an income. For other women, they had moved on to different projects which were more interesting to them e.g. Response (AIDS action groups), Housing project, Home care group. The reality is that although women were committed to taking social action to bring about transformation, most of them were hoping that the LEAD programme would result in them being able to sustain themselves financially either through projects, or finding employment. Another aspect of the collective was related to LEAD bringing together different racial and cultural groups. This opened up many opportunities for women to begin to understand each other and learn to know each other regardless of race and class. The data reveals many success stories in this area, and it appears that women were also able to work through their own prejudices.

Support and sustainability of social action

There were successful social action projects like the literacy programme run in

conjunction with the library (but largely driven by one person – Thandeka), some failed projects like child recreation and the sewing project (ceased due to lack of resources) and the drama project which was the most talked about one (involving most of the women). It seems that when the social action project was in the form of a creative expression i.e. the drama project, and allowed the women to express and deal with inner pain and trauma, it was clear that many of the women involved were excited and energised since they enjoyed and benefited so much from it emotionally. The women spoke about the drama project as something which they enjoyed tremendously and my observation of their play confirmed this. The drama project received support both in the form of the CAP (Community Arts Project) facilitator who helped the women with the play and the LEAD organisation who set up all the infra-structure at the start to get it going. The performances at the Artscape and Baxter theatre (two major theatres in Cape Town), was phenomenal and did much for women's self-esteem and self-confidence. Once the support from CAP and LEAD ceased, this project could not sustain itself. Support became a big issue for the women and they saw LEAD as having deserted them. The LEAD trainer felt that the programme had created false hope for the women. My conclusion is that programmes like LEAD need to be careful of playing too strong a role in initiating social action projects nor putting too much effort in supporting projects if they do not have an exit plan or alternative plan for the continuation of such projects which can be driven by the communities themselves.

Women-only group

The fact that the LEAD programme was a women-only group allowed women to become empowered in a safe space where they could grow and develop without male dominance. The exclusion of men was important for the LEAD programme since it created the conditions for women to find themselves at a deeply personal level, which they might not have done in the presence of men. The women-only group also provided a supportive environment that enabled women to feel cared for and loved, hugely lacking in many of the women's home and family lives. The course had been very successful in developing leadership amongst women who may not ordinarily have had the opportunity had they been in an organisation where there were men. The LEAD course allowed for the 'softer'

less assertive women to become leaders and gave them recognition which affirmed and encouraged their leadership qualities in the social action projects.

LEAD and the trainer's roles in facilitating learning, empowerment and social action

The LEAD trainer played an integral role in creating conditions that were conducive for women to learn, become empowered and take social action. She provided spaces for individuals to become empowered on a personal level. They were able to grow through reflecting on their past, opening up and dealing with pain. In their relationships with family they became empowered in the sense that they realised that they did not only have to be subservient housewives. The trainer also provided spaces for the women to develop as a group and this helped them in developing relationships with women across racial, class and cultural groups. The trainer precipitated this through her methods and facilitation of processes in a sensitive manner. The creative methods and approaches of the "Training for Transformation" handbooks used by the trainer added to an enriched experience for the women enhancing their learning and providing opportunities for empowerment. The trainer's feminist methods which she brought through her feminist studies, also contributed to the women's learning and enhanced LEAD's popular education approach and methodology. The trainer also brought her caring personality and humaneness into her facilitation. There was enormous value in the processes facilitated by the CAP drama facilitator who managed to unleash a lot of pain and emotional blockages through the drama. The process of individual empowerment can be triggered by outside forces like the LEAD trainer or CAP facilitator, through their creating conditions which helped the process and significantly facilitated learning. As for the collective taking social action, it was even more complex, since taking action was not something that someone else can facilitate. It may have been triggered, but the sustainability of the collective taking action was subject to the individuals involved and their inner issues as well as outside factors like poverty, crime and violence. My conclusion is that one of the key roles of the trainer can be to facilitate personal development and work on the inner issues of women. In the case of Delft this is what LEAD did very well, and it is the area which showed the most impact.

Interdependence – the missing link in social action?

The last phase of the process towards social action, which is about the collective reaching out and connecting with other collectives, is where many organisations lose momentum. There is also an element about organisations being afraid of linking with others for fear of other organisations stealing their ideas or donors, or a worry that other organisations could replace their role in a community. This is what happened in the LEAD programme. The LEAD trainer did attempt to create interdependence by bringing various groups together but she was unable to sustain it since it was not part of the practice of the organisation. Her brief was to start new groups once her support phase with her previous group had ended. It became evident that the support phase was needed for much longer than 4 months and that the forming of alliances between groups of collectives, or involving other NGO's to support the Delft group could have greatly contributed toward social action and social transformation.

Having examined the conditions that impacted on empowerment and made social action possible, I move to implications for practice where I put forth key findings revealed through the literature and data and present recommendations for LEAD.

Implications for practice

Dependence, Independence and Interdependence

In the LEAD group the women were 'conscientised' and expected to collectively start taking action in their communities, which actually did start happening, but once the NGO withdrew, many of them did not have the capacity to take it further. They felt that they needed to link up with other community based organisations but they did not know how to and also they lacked the resources to do this. Most of the women had begun to lose contact with each other when the course ended. Some of the women moved from dependence to independence on certain levels, since many of them did carve individual paths either creating work for themselves or starting other projects. They became self-assured and more confident, stronger and learnt to see themselves in new ways with new developed capacities. Moving to interdependence which is what successful collective social action needs, required of the women another level of capacity and capability which

the programme was not able to provide them with. There does appear to be a gap in terms of what more could have been done to ensure this interdependence and the sustainability thereof, because it actually did start to happen initially, but only as long as the trainer was around to support and help sustain it. Once she left, many of the women as a group of interdependent members ceased to exist. The next step of interdependency would be to have linked these women up with other organisations that may have been able to support them or other women's groups like themselves. LEAD may have to examine how it can take women beyond what its programme offers, how it prepares women for when it exits and how it can link women with other groups or other organisations. Kaplan (1996) spoke about Freire's methodology as only partial development, therefore LEAD may have to expand on its use of Freire's methodology.

Leadership

I began my study thinking that leadership would be a key outcome of the LEAD programme since it presents itself as a leadership programme. What I found was that generally women did not emerge as leaders nor did they take up positions of leadership with the exception of a few. Also women did not place as much emphasis on leadership as men do. My findings did not yield many references to leadership and it seems that whilst the programme did attempt to develop leadership capacity it was not one of the main areas of development for the women. Natural leaders did emerge, but leadership was not seen as an aspiration for all the women. In fact one woman who was more aggressive in wanting to be in control was rejected by the group, and she eventually left the group. The kind of leader who emerged as the groups' chosen leader, was a more softer facilitative type of leadership – a woman who had herself risen above adversity, was caring and considerate and did not see herself as 'above the rest'. "As a result of gender-role socialisation, men often pursue leadership positions for personal advancement, while women normally demonstrate a deeper commitment to community goals" (Moser, 1987) quoted by (Brohman, 1996:296). This is what my findings revealed – that women were not part of the programme and part of social action for leadership positions, but rather because they wanted to improve themselves and their community. I thought that leadership would feature and become a key aspect in the research. Instead, it

has not been as strong a feature as I had surmised. As I state in the section under leadership, what emerged through the data were leadership qualities being developed and women's resolve being strengthened. Only two women emerged clearly as leaders in the overt sense, whilst others were expressing subtle leadership in a more supportive, behind the scenes manner as members of committees or groups. The data showed that women found different ways of incorporating their leadership skills and that some women may have preferred to follow whilst others were natural leaders. The difference between 'leader' and 'leadership roles' is that a leader may refer to a position but a person may not be in a leadership position but still exercise leadership in what they do or show some qualities of leadership. So it may be that only two women took up positions of leadership whilst many others expressed leadership qualities in the ordinary things they did whilst not being in leadership positions.

Curriculum issues

According to the document the LEAD course is "*flexible and allows women to add to the curriculum if they feel an issue relates to them specifically*". How this happens in practice is an issue which needs to be clarified, since the trainer found that she was not able to be as flexible as she wanted to. The questions that arise then are: How does one truly embrace flexibility and allow an unfolding emerging programme? and Where do training manuals, preset objectives and course outlines fit into this? These are questions LEAD would need to further interrogate.

One of the critiques by the trainer of the programme was that it did not sufficiently promote feminist approaches or integrate gender into the curriculum – this is an issue for LEAD to examine since it is a women's programme. This extract from the data, Chapter four says that: The trainer expressed a concern that only one day was set aside for gender. According to the trainer this did not make sense: "*if LEAD is a women's organisation how can we have one day for gender!* " This may be the trainer's interpretation, but it is an area for LEAD to examine – to look at how individual trainers interpret gender.

Women's only courses

This study focuses on women and the LEAD programme was a women's-only course. LEAD may want to explore how it can more consciously incorporate feminist popular education into its programmes. The key issues emerging here have been how women have benefited from this exclusively women's programme. The LEAD programme has made an immense contribution to women finding their power and through dealing with issues of emotional pain they have been able to become stronger and more confident. This has then empowered some of them to be able to move beyond themselves into making a contribution in their communities and taking social action.

The trainer was however, concerned about the exclusion of the women's husbands and tried to find ways to bring them in. She was not successful in bringing these ideas into LEAD who were very strict about their policy about being a women's only programme. There is however a broader societal concern that men have begun to lose their voice, particularly in poor communities where men have become abusers to others and to themselves. The feeling is that excluding men might be doing more harm to the process and that there is a need to create spaces for meeting men and working together. A question for LEAD to consider is: How does one include men in a way that they do not take over the processes, but become partners in it? "The opposite of patriarchy is not matriarchy but partnership" (Eisher, 1988) in (Hope and Timmel, 1996).

Donors' pressure to increase delivery

The trainer felt that LEAD's model with four programmes per year, two urban and two rural, placed the emphasis on quantity not quality, because of pressure from funders to prove that the organisation had trained so many women. Because of this, as the data revealed '*the trainer is running all over the show*'. This explains what the women were experiencing in their perceptions of the trainer not supporting them. This highlights one of the issues of concern which NGOs dependent on donor funding face. It is worrying how this simple demand from donors to increase numbers of people trained, can impact so profoundly on an organisation's practice and then more disconcertingly on the women participants of the course. It is the women who then suffer because the organisation is unable to provide them with sufficient quality learning nor proper support or at least see

them through to the next phase of development which is interdependence. My recommendation is that the organisation become more conscious of what it can effectively and realistically do without forgoing quality for quantity and then express this to the donors. I believe that donors may even be aware of this and if an organisation can provide evidence which shows the damage that is done when the focus is on quantity, then the donor may be more flexible in allowing the organisation to work in a way that will benefit women and communities.

Training groups as ‘therapeutic’ support groups

The Delft women saw the training sessions as support groups where they could share their problems and be supported by other women. It did not matter what the content of the training was, in fact most of the women hardly ever referred to what they learnt in terms of content, as long as the trainer provided a conducive and safe space for sharing. A concern expressed by the trainer was that she did not always feel equipped to deal with some of the deeper emotional issues that arose. This is an issue for LEAD’s practice – whether trainers are equipped to deal with issues at a deeply psychological level and how far can a trainer go, before a session becomes like group therapy. A recommendation would be for LEAD to examine this area of their practice.

Popular education as income generation training

The training that women became part of in LEAD was never meant to have a huge emphasis on income generation, although it was said that it should be a component of the programme. Due to the women being unemployed, there was a huge expectation that they would be able to become employed out of the training or generate an income through the projects. This may not be the focus of what popular education is meant to be about, yet it is the reality of many programmes faced with poverty – where earning some money is more important than social action campaigns. Some projects manage to bring the two together successfully whilst others find that there is a mismatch in terms of values and aims. In the LEAD programme most women did not achieve this aspect successfully with the exception of a very few who went on to start income generation projects or become employed. The trainer admitted to having struggled with this and not having the capacity

for this kind of training i.e. business and entrepreneurial skills training. For ordinary grassroots women it was even more difficult to implement income generation projects which require a specific skill. It is noble of an organisation to say that it does income generation, but whether it has the capacity to implement it is questionable. LEAD would need to examine their capacity for this aspect of its programme since according to the trainer, this was one of the main reasons why women attended the programme.

In Closing

I return to my topic which reads “*Community Adult education: Empowering women, Leadership and Social Action*”. Having examined the LEAD programme through this study, I have found that this was possible and the main reason for it achieving some measure of success was because ‘feminist popular education’ proved to be the ideal vehicle for community adult education in the form of the LEAD programme to facilitate the empowerment of women to take leadership towards social action. The trainer played a central role in ensuring that feminist popular approaches were used effectively as the LEAD programme already espoused an underlying Freirean philosophy, and she also had to create the kind of conditions that would ensure women remained in the programme. I believe that an individual cannot be empowered by others – empowerment can be facilitated or initiated but it is a process that begins from within at the level of the self, and this is why feminist popular education was so successful – because it sees personal development which delves into the inner realm of self, identity and emotions, as vital – the power lies within the person themselves to begin to make the changes from within and thus be more effective in taking social action. It is further the dynamic interaction between the self and the collective, and both self and collective as part of a holistic system of life that ensures empowerment and social transformation happens. Nadeau’s statement captures this succinctly when she says that “social change involves transformation of the whole person and of the collective at the level of body and spirit...it is this combining of feeling and rationality, or personal and political realities, of private and public that makes popular education feminist” (Nadeau, 1996:59). My final statement is about the sustainability of social action and the need to encourage interdependence as most programmes are only successful as long as the NGO is involved. Programmes

implementing community adult education should ensure that part of their intervention strategies include processes of firstly encouraging ownership of projects driven by the communities themselves as well as fostering interdependence so that social action projects in communities are sustainable – these would greatly enhance the impact of these programmes on disadvantaged communities.



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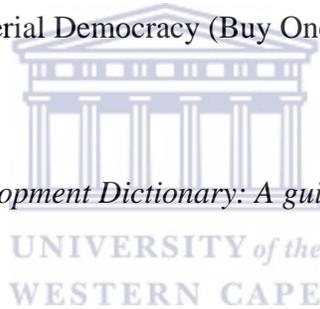
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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

First Focus Group: December 2001

Second Focus Group: July 2002

Third Focus Group: September 2002

Interviews with LEAD Trainer: December 2001, June 2002, November 2002



APPENDIX 1:

CONTENTS OF TRAINING FOR TRANSFORMATION BOOKS

Book 1

Chapter 1. Roots of this Method

- Purpose of these books
- The five streams of the DELTA River
- Paulo Freire's work on critical awareness
- Human relations training
- Organisational development
- Social analysis
- Christian concept of transformation

Chapter 2. Survey for Generative Themes

- Survey of community themes
- Survey method
- Critical analysis of themes
- From the survey codes and discussion outlines
- Surveys for workshops



Chapter 3. Problem-posing materials

- Preparation of codes
- Digging deeply in discussion
- The 'but-why' method
- Codes and exercises on:
 - Development
 - Approaches to basic needs
 - Identifying some root causes
 - Practical projects: A beginning, not an end
- Development is the new name for peace

Chapter 4. Adult Learning and Literacy Training

- How adults learn
- Education for what?
- Literacy and development
- A demonstration of literacy class
- How does it feel to be illiterate?

- A guide for developing a literacy programme

Resources

- Poetry, readings and prayers
- Films
- Simulations
- Bibliography

Book 2

Chapter 5. Trust and Dialogue in groups

- Group skills needed for conscientisation
- The learning climate
- Introduction exercises
- Listening exercises
- Trust building exercises

Chapter 6. Leadership and Participation

- Leadership
- Content and process
- Shared leadership
- Self and mutual criticism
- Exercises on co-operation
- The group as the place of forgiveness



Chapter 7. Simple decision-making and action planning

- Decision-making exercises and theories
- Action planning
- Exercise on how to organise a workshop
- The planning kit

Chapter 8. Evaluation

- Participatory evaluation
- Evaluation exercises for workshops

APPENDIX 2:

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First Focus Group (December 2001)

Questions by interviewer

1. Can we talk about your lives before you joined LEAD? Can you describe what you were doing and how you were feeling?
2. How did you feel about yourself – were you confident, shy or quiet, did you feel comfortable to talk in front of others, stand up for yourself ? How were you feeling about yourself – your role on your family?
3. Did you know any of the women in this group – were you a part of any other group? If so, which groups and what was your involvement? Were you involved in your community in any way? If so, how?
4. Did community issues concern you? Were you able to do anything about them?
5. Before joining LEAD, did you know about women's empowerment? What were your thoughts on women's rights and women's role in society?
6. Are there any other issues you would like to talk about in relation to yourself as a person before you joined LEAD?

Second Focus Group (July 2002)

Introduction :

Interviewer thanks everyone for making time to come, introduces herself and the research assistant, explains the reason for this focus group discussion and explains what the research is all about. The interviewer also explains why it has taken six months for her to organise the second focus group session. The interviewer recaps on the previous session from December 2001 and what was discussed there – the themes that emerged and describes what this session will be looking at.

Interviewer recaps themes emerging from the previous session:

In the last session I asked you to share about your lives before joining LEAD.

Some of you spoke about lack of confidence, others were shy, scared to talk to people, some couldn't stand up for themselves, others were keeping feelings to themselves, some were frustrated. There were some of you doing community work, others were housewives, being suppressed by husbands – did not stand up to or challenge husbands. There was also a sense of loneliness and isolation – not mixing with others in the community, being depressed, empowerment meant nothing to some of you, others knew very little about it, also not knowing about women's rights.

Questions and comments made by interviewer

Tell us who you are and what you are currently doing, what has happened since we last met in December 2001?

What we're going to do now is to think back to the course. When did you do the course? *Group's response: February – June 2001.* So it's actually a year ago since you finished the course. It might be difficult to remember everything.....but I'd like you to just think about what the trainer did with you, how she shared the information.

What did you get out of the course? What did you like or not like?

In the next session I'm going to ask you about the drama and projects and I'm very interested to hear more. Can we just find out if there are any other people who wanted to talk –anything else about the course. People have shared about the exercises, courses, government policies.....Is the anything else, that still stays with you today...

The trainer said you were like a model group – tell me about that...

So you've come a long way – you are now an organisation with a constitution and I think that's quite an achievement!

Can we talk about the trainer, because she was the person that came here, she was the person that ran the course. What did she bring as facilitator, that made you come back here every week.

What was it about the trainer - Doris said when she first came in to introduce herself....she felt welcome.....I just wanted to know more about the trainer.

Silence

This is confidentialI know the trainer would be very appreciative to receive feedback, but I would be very tactful about what I write in my thesis, in this way you can trust me. So lets start with positives!

Some people just have a certain personality. Can I ask in terms of facilitation, I know there were problems, but it sounds like despite that people did learn. Was it because of

her way of doing it- the way she ran the workshop, or was it that people were just hungry for knowledge, I mean... I'm just trying to find out.

Third Focus Group (September 2002)

[The Following layout was used with bigger spaces for writing in the blocks]

Date:

Location:

Number and Description of Participants:

Recap by interviewer – Checking Key Themes from previous session

Responses to introduction question about what has happened to people since we last met:

Community Work that people are involved in, other groups they are involved with, further training which people are doing, attitudes have changed, personality change – coming out-increased confidence, Being a role model in family, Disappointment of facilitator who let the group down.

The LEAD Course

- How people were warmly welcomed onto the course,
- Building trust within the group –formation of healthy relationships by working through problems and being honest in dealing with issues, people not scared to say how they feel, cleared misconceptions of how people see each other, working together as a group.
- Sharing –joys and concerns and realising that we all have problems.
- Racial, religious and cultural barriers were broken down, people learnt from each other.
- Helped and supported each other through problems.
- The course built confidence in people to stand in front.
- Empowered people through formation of fundraising group.
- Learnt respect –especially for the eldest – for each other.
- Activities – River of Life / Potatoe exercise – Learnt much about yourselves, to open up and examine deep secrets for the first time.
- Leadership skills –public speaking, drama helped people to perform on stage.
- Going to Kleinmond – breaking away, being assertive, exciting event....LEAD took women further.....
- Winning awards, being the role model group for LEAD.

- Formation of WAIDS – Feeling special, strong women, working together.
- Working with the library – friends with the library.

Trainer

- Kind, Peoples person
- People took advantage of her
- She went out of her way –the extra mile.
- She made people independent –stand up alone express themselves, they had to carry on without her when she let them down.

Q 1 Motivation factor

What made YOU return each week, what was the main reason/s for your coming to the training course?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q. 2 Impact of LEAD on personal life

How has LEAD made a difference in your personal life – has it helped or made things more difficult?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q.3 Life without LEAD

What if LEAD never came to Delft – What would have happened – what do you think you would have been doing now?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q. 4 Empowerment

a) What does the word empowerment mean to – what does it mean to be empowered?

b) How has this course empowered you?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q.5 Leadership

- a) What has LEAD taught you about leadership?
- b) How has the course helped you to take the lead – assume leadership ?
- c) Would you have taken the lead before you came on this course?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q.6 Leadership Teams

- a) Leadership Teams in Action – How do you understand this?
Do you think it works – to work as a team /group?
- b) How do you feel about the rotating leadership?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q.7 Can we talk about the projects you are busy with:

- a) How do you decide on a project?
- b) How do you decide on a leader?
- c) How have the projects been working so far? What have been the successes and the problems – and what have been the reasons for these?
- d) What would help these projects to work better in the community?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q.8 LEAD COURSE – OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES, TOPICS, SUPPORT PROGRAMME

- a) If we look at the objectives and outcomes of the course – can I just read them to you..... Which ones do you think were successfully achieved and why?
- b) Read out the topics – Ask which ones were most useful and most relevant? What is missing from the LEAD Programme – What other topics could have been added?
- c) About the support programme –what worked and did not work?
- d) Did LEAD at any time talk about what would happen when they exit- Did you imagine a time when you would carry on without LEAD? Are you expecting anything else from LEAD? Are you still dependent on LEAD now – is this a good thing or a bad thing?
- e) What did you think about the joint meetings with other groups?

a) Objectives and Outcomes

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

b) Topics

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

c) Support Programme,

d) Expectations of LEAD now / LEAD's exit,

e) Meetings with other groups

f) How are women selected for phase 2? What do you think of this process?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Q.9 Life after LEAD – The future of WAIDS.....Where do you see yourselves going in the future

- a) As individuals in your own lives as women and community workers, leaders
- b) WAIDS as a group building an organisation ?
- c) What do you see your future needs being as individuals and as a group?

| Brief Summary/ Key points | Notable Quotes |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| | |

Interview with LEAD Trainer (November 2002)

Date : Friday 22 November 2002

Place: Starke Ayres Coffee Shop, Rondebosch

Time: 9.00 – 12.00

Interviewer: Desiree Paulsen

Interviewer: The last time we spoke about LEAD's support programme, which was supposed to last three months. You also mentioned that after the support programme ended, LEAD officially ended its role in supporting the women. But you also mentioned that you continued in your own personal capacity going on Sundays and Saturdays to re-energise the women. You also spoke about the support structure which you try to set up which was supposed to be led by the co-ordinators, and how you tried to link them to service providers. How did the support programme work and what were some of the difficulties you experienced. How did the co-ordinator support structure work?

Interviewer: The last time we met you also spoke about how you brought the four area groups together that you initiated this idea in an attempt to form some network of support where women from different groups could learn from each other. You brought together Factreton (trained in 2002) ; Macassar (trained 2001); Delft (2001) and Strand (2000). What was the purpose of these sessions and what did the women gain from them?

Interviewer:

Tell me about the training materials you used- Did you use the 'Training for Transformation' manuals?

So what do you think should change or do you have any recommendations?

Interviewer: Previously you were concerned about whether a three month programme can set out to do what it supposed to do – You said LEAD's goals are unrealistic and that you cannot realistically set out to achieve so much in three months. You questioned "How is it possible to take up issues and start a project"

Yet Delft women did start some projects in fact some are still busy with them and Delft was held up as a model group for LEAD.

What was special about this group and how does it compare to other groups?

Interviewer: In our last meeting you spoke about different levels of the women – women come in at different levels –and that your challenge as the trainer was to ensure that they move along together –you said this was not easy –some were still withdrawn, whilst others were ready to move into starting projects.

How did you deal with the differing levels? Is it something that LEAD should consider in the future – How could this be dealt with?