

THE LEADER

The official newsletter of the African Nutrition Leadership Programme



Is someone
following me?

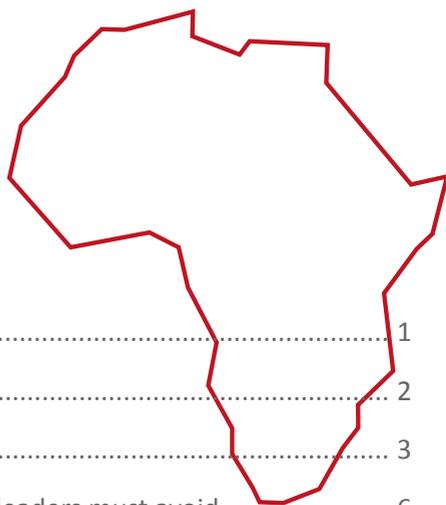
Toxic behaviors
leaders must avoid



November 2016 | Issue 4



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National Nutrition Congress 2016, South Africa



World Public Health Nutrition Congress 2016, South Africa



Micronutrient Forum Global Conference 2016, Cancun, Mexico

Foreword

BY CHRISTINE TALJAARD

I wish that I could organize an event where I could gather all African Nutrition Leadership Programme (ANLP) alumni to an evening of celebration. I envisage that for this evening of celebration there would be no budget restrictions, no flights that are delayed or cancelled and no visas that are rejected. Each and every person who has ever participated since the inception of the programme in 2002 will be present. It will be an unforgettable evening where individual journeys will be voiced and strides made within the nutrition sphere will be shared. An evening where we will embrace the diversity that being part of a network such as this brings.

Unfortunately, being the realist that I am, I quickly realised that such an event would probably not materialise anytime soon. However, while I was attending a number of congresses through-out this year (and observing some that I could not attend from a distance), I was astounded at what I saw.

Alumni of the ANLP are extremely proud to be part of this network. Most of them can tell you without thinking twice the year that they attended and the team that they were in.

Alumni of the ANLP are exceptionally loyal. Not only to the ANLP but also to fellow alumni. Furthermore, I found that they truly believe in the vision of the ANLP; to be committed to the development of both individual and organisational leadership capabilities in the broader area of nutrition on the African continent. I personally witness this as many new applicants are applying based on experiences shared with them through current mentors. Alumni of the ANLP have a unique way in which they embrace diversity. Not once at any congress have I seen that a single ethnic group are left behind or that a specific culture is not respected.

The articles in this issue are filled with difficult questions. Many of them that I do not have the answers for. When I look at the qualities, values and beliefs listed above, I have no doubt that we can move forward. I believe that we can respond to Jane’s article and say “YES” we will take up a cause. I trust that we will respond to Christopher Wild saying “YES” there is someone following. May we, in 2017, be even more pro-active in utilizing the ANLP network selflessly to its full potential and in doing so, advance the nutrition agenda in Africa.



Should THE LEADER continue?

(Please express your opinion by clicking on yes or no)

IS SOMEONE FOLLOWING ME?

BY CHRISTOPHER WILD



Researchers are not necessarily, or even very frequently, born leaders. Yet leadership is central to the success of a research team, group, or organization. The encouraging news is that leadership skills can be learned or at least honed. Management can also be learned. However, management, while necessary, is not sufficient for leadership. Indeed the conflation of leadership and management and the failure to provide both can be catastrophic for an organization. In this short article I limit myself to personal comments on leadership based on experience gained from a research career in the public sector. My views are not derived from or rooted in any theoretical framework or formal training and are undoubtedly limited as a result. Whatever I have learned and continue to learn is from trial and error.

A leader should create the environment where others can flourish. The “environ-

ment” in this context comprises: developing a stimulating and clear research strategy and vision, assembling top quality researchers with a collegiate attitude, providing the necessary infrastructure (buildings, equipment), enabling access to financial resources and ensuring a supportive and efficient administrative structure. The leader is a servant, not a master. Of course the leader, even as servant, carries responsibilities and must fulfil those responsibilities competently at the level of their appointment, promoting and protecting the interests of the organization. But leadership should not be a platform for personal aggrandizement. Colleagues will soon rumble a leader who is in it for self-interest. Such a scenario rapidly becomes a barrier to an organization reaching its full potential.

A leader should inspire. At times scepticism, borne perhaps of bad experience or bad luck, can result in suspicion from

colleagues about motives, making it hard for the leader to promote high ideals and values within an organization. Of course any whiff of double standards from the leadership will only reinforce such scepticism. These are natural and understandable, at times even valuable, reactions.

However, the vast majority of people do aspire to achieve good things and respond positively, if the vision is clear, shared across the organization and if the motives are genuine. In contrast, an organization that is not founded on values and the related principles on which to base decision-making, will not only be the poorer in terms of leadership and motivation but will also be vulnerable when times of difficulty and pressure come. All this said, inspiring is one thing, acting is another; the leader must also set an example by responding personally. It has to be a case of do as I do, not do as I say, or do as I say I do.

A leader should be an enabler, not a barrier to progress. This sounds like a truism but it takes work as a leader to achieve this. Simple examples include the cost of delaying decisions, signatures or approvals. Similarly, delegation is a feature of a mature leader. Delegation can be a powerful way to motivate and enable others by showing trust in their abilities and judgement. Lack of delegation creates a bottle-neck, which might flatter the one with all the authority but handicap the organization.

Why is delegation so difficult and effective delegation relatively rare? If you see delegation as handing over work to someone else, the exercise might appear attractive. However, it is not the work that is given up, it is the responsibility and this is challenging for

many in authority. Worst of all is the mistake of delegating and then doing the work anyway. This is disabling and demotivating for staff and is undeniably poor practice.

Relationships are key to effective leadership and yet for the most part little time is invested in cultivating them. Taking the time to meet, to understand something of the current challenges and successes of colleagues is time well spent. It is only through time that relationships are established and trust becomes embedded in an organization.

The importance of personal contact is heightened when working across countries and cultures. In such contexts, giving the benefit of the doubt to a colleague when the inevitable tensions do arise can avoid many an escalation. We need to recognize the influence of our different ways of reasoning, relating and expressing, often across a language that either or neither of us learnt from birth. Finally, in terms of conflict, insisting that people with a disagreement attempt to resolve things face-to-face or at least by telephone is important. Make a commitment now to never write another angry email.

A leader needs to listen more than to speak. Listening to people from all parts of the organization is vital but again takes time. Without this, however, one can become isolated and out of touch with how things are really working (or not!). Creating open channels of communication and encouraging people to speak and share is important, if action follows when valid points are made. But at times a leader also needs a keen ear to pick up the little hints dropped into conversations by loyal but

concerned colleagues, pointing diplomatically to something which is not right.

A key element of good relationships is fairness, visible fairness. Nothing undermines an organization quite like favouritism. People will put up with all sorts of hardships and privations if they see that others are in the same boat. I have witnessed researchers across the world achieve remarkable things with almost nothing. But inject inequality, deliberately or inadvertently, and even though a person's absolute position remains unchanged their sense of justice will be affronted by the real or perceived advance or preference of someone else they consider their peer.

Human nature also demands not only that justice is done but that justice is seen to be done. People address this through the word transparency, but I prefer for honesty. Transparency can at times content itself with information devoid of interpretation. Honesty explains, points out the caveats, exposes the hidden or obscure things.

Allied to visibility is the transforming power of bringing things into the light. I am not speaking here about laying aside confidentiality, which is critical to engendering

trust. What I am referring to are situations, for example, where there are problems between people or when plans and changes will affect more than one colleague. Sometimes a person will want "a quiet word" or a "private meeting" in order to help resolve things. However, much of the motivation, good or bad, will be revealed by a decision to open the meeting to those other individuals concerned. Shining this light more often than not reveals the underlying intent.

Finally, as a leader you need to open yourself to scrutiny and criticism. Crush criticism at your peril. A colleague recently brought me up short by saying "if you are going to be defensive at everything I say then I will just shut up". What a danger! Scrutiny might be formal, such as a 360° review within your own organization, or could come from outside. It can also be informal by conversations with trusted colleagues. But whatever happens never stop listening or learning. When you inevitably fall short of your ideals, try again. And occasionally look behind you, because leadership is not given but earned. Someone once told me the only sign of a true leader is not what title you have, but whether anyone is following you.



LEADERS THAT FAIL: toxic behaviours leaders must avoid

BY LEON COETSEE

There are specific reasons why some people fail as leaders. Most of these reasons involve behaviours that have a toxic influence on the environment i.e. the team or organisation climate and culture in which people lead, and on the attitudes and work behaviour of the people they are supposed to lead. Here are six toxic behaviours leaders should all be aware of and avoid:

1. CONFUSING MANAGING WITH LEADING.

For an organisation or team to be successful it has to be both managed and led, while maintaining the right balance between these. However, the majority of organisa-

tions and teams are still “over-managed and under-led”.

There are significant differences between managing and leading and some of the most important differences are included in Table 1 below.

LEADERS	MANAGERS
Long term perspective	Short term perspective
Strategic and people focus	Tactical and organizational focus
Challenge status quo	Accept the status quo
Motivate and inspire people	Control and maintain systems
Build teams and develop talent	Allocate and support human resources
Empower and mentor team members	Instruct and direct subordinates
Establish principles (shared values)	Formulate policies
Inspire trust	Rely on control
Promote innovation and invention	Ensure conformance to standards and procedures
Lead team members	Manage subordinates

Table 1: Differences between leading and managing

The categories above also represent two frameworks or paradigms of dealing with people in work situations: the dominating traditional management/manager paradigm; and the modern leadership/leader paradigm. The dominant view today is that both management (but less of this) and leadership (more of it) are required. However, situations differ and each specific situation and environment requires that the correct balance between management and leadership must be found.

The implications of over managing and under leading are quite clear from Table 1: An over focus on short term outputs, maintaining the status quo by closely controlling and treating people as being “sub-ordinate”. It is also clear that shifting in the direction of **a leadership orientation is based on longer term perspectives and guiding principles such as individual and team growth, the unlocking of potential, stimulating innovation, and fostering commitment and motivation.**

Therefore, trying to lead by managing can be seen as a fallacy and a recipe for disaster.

2. TREATING TEAM MEMBERS AS SUBORDINATES AND AS MERE RESOURCES

In line with the explanation above, treating team members as subordinates is a result of the narrow emphasis of the management paradigm at the cost of a balanced managerial-leadership paradigm. The old Latin description of a leader as: “Primus inter pares” meaning leaders being first among equals, is still valid today and contradicts the view of workers as ‘subordinates’, implying workers are ‘sub’ (less than)

‘ordinate’ (ordinary beings). The popular concept of ‘human resources management’ also has its roots in this management paradigm. It reduces, limits and equals team members’ roles to merely ‘a human resource activity’ and implies that this ‘resource’ is of equal importance to any other organisational resource such as finances or technology. It does not recognise the truth that **people are any team or organisation’s primary asset.**

3. BEING A STUBBORN PERFECTIONIST

A “zero defect approach” is non-negotiable in some jobs or instances, for example, piloting passenger airliners, performing surgical operations, or making certain engineering calculations. On face value, this approach appears to be a positive and important quality. However, In a significant number of jobs and instances, tolerating no errors at all and expecting perfect work and outcomes from imperfect people carries a number of negative implications i.e.:

- Control is seen as the overriding and most important role of managers. Managers’ jobs are degraded to primarily enforcing rules and policing work behaviour and the quality of outputs.
- A stubborn perfectionist approach usually goes hand in hand with a punitive environment in which errors are punished. This stifles experimentation and, in effect, prohibits creativity and innovation.
- People tend to avoid behaviour and endeavours that may lead to errors and develop an attitude of “... I only work



here” and then only do what is required by their job descriptions.

In summary, the important team or organisational values of **growth, creativity and organisational citizen behaviour thus come to naught in a ‘zero defect’ punitive environment**

4. NOT TAKING RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY AND BLAMING OTHERS OR CIRCUMSTANCES

Leadership cannot flourish if the leader is not prepared to be the first to take full responsibility for his/her team members’ motivation and the effort they expend alongside the outputs they achieve. In contrast, the leader has to be the last to take credit for these achievements and must always fully share the successes achieved with team members. Effective leaders are not “I- specialists” but “WE-specialists”.

One highly toxic phenomenon is to blame others (e.g. top management, the board, competition, other stake holders) or circumstances (e.g. the weather, droughts, money exchange rates or other economic factors). **Good leaders are “in spite of...” people, for example, “In spite of the drought we...” or “In spite of the restrictions we operate in, we...” This inspires team members to overcome obstacles, to grow and to innovate** showing the hallmarks of genuine leadership.

5. LACK OF EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL

Emotional self- control is one of the 4 or 5 foundational characteristics of emotional

intelligence (EQ). Some observers go as far as to state that EQ is significantly more important than other characteristics in achieving success in life and is absolutely fundamental to achieve success as a manager and a leader.

Emotional self-control means being in charge of your own emotions and not being “hi-jacked” by an emotion. It consists of two features:

- Being aware when any particular emotion arises, and being able to label the emotion correctly, i.e. as fear, or guilt, or sadness, or joy or aggression.
- Knowing how to handle the emotion and dealing with it properly and effectively.

Emotional control is thus firstly centred on the self, as explained above, and only thereafter on the other characteristics of EQ: recognising and dealing with the emotions of others; ability to postpone need gratification; avoiding obsessive negative thinking; not being overly self-centred; accepting responsibility and accountability; and having empathy and compassion. These **elements of EQ are all associated with successful leadership.**

6. PLACING MORE EMPHASIS ON PERFORMANCE THAN CHARACTER

Being profitable, winning and out-performing have in many instances become the most important considerations of many organisations and may come at the cost of ethical and moral conduct.

As previously discussed, when ‘managing’,

managers typically place the emphasis on control. In contrast, leaders inspire trust and lead by example in trusting people. One of the assumptions of the management paradigm is that cheating, cutting moral corners and corruption are all best countered by control, while the leadership paradigm holds that inspiring values like integrity and trust is the optimum way to build an environment with no tolerance for corruption and dishonest conduct. But what is the reason then that so many of us still want to control employee performance and behaviour through rules and regulations?

A number of reasons exist, but the basic answer is that one fundamental assumption underlying the management paradigm is that employees cannot be trusted. Frequently, it is assumed from the start that people: are dishonest; are always intent on promoting their own interests; are lazy; and will, as a rule, do their best to ‘beat the system’.

As human beings are then seen as inclined to be dishonest and unreliable, it has become common practice to apply rules and regulations (even with threat and force) to require that things are done according to narrowly prescribed ways, disciplining and punishing people for not abiding by these rules, while rewarding them for compliance. An important underlying assumption is that people can be “conditioned” to behave in these prescribed ways. (Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?).

However, an abundance of research and practice provides evidence that organisations less focused on rules and regulations, and more focused on aligning team members and obtaining their commitment by

means of a set of shared values, experience less corruption and other forms of morally deficient behaviour. These organisations are also more successful than their control-orientated counterparts.

The implication is not that we must do away with all rules and regulations, but that the **emphasis must shift from the rules and regulations to leading based on a set of shared values.** The reason for this is that **shared values** are also extremely valuable and effective instruments to positively influence people’s work related attitudes and behaviour.

A value driven organisational culture can thus be created by an incremental suspension of rules, regulations and control and replacing these with a shared value system. This then requires a change in management’s orientation from **getting people to do things by controlling them –to enable them to want to do things by instilling a guiding shared value system.**

To summarise, when analysing the above described six toxic behaviours that leaders must avoid, it becomes clear that these behaviours are rooted in the traditional management paradigm. This paradigm is not wrong but a strong case can be made that it is over used (and often abused). Organisational behaviour and leadership experts agree that most organisations are still over-managed and under-led. One can’t lead or assume to be a leader without accepting the leadership paradigm. In the movement from the management paradigm towards the leadership paradigm, we must find the optimum balance between the two depending on the specific situation in which we lead.



REFLECTING ON TAKING UP A CAUSE: A challenge to us all

BY JANE BADHAM

As I write this, South Africa stands at a cross road with students from universities across the country having taken up a campaign called #feesmustfall, demanding free tertiary education.

I don't intend to go into the merits of the campaign or my view on it, but I do want to highlight the way it has degenerated from one of peaceful, purposeful protest with an openness for dialogue; to tragic scenes of students burning down buildings and libraries with irreplaceable books, and of police firing rubber bullets and dragging students into police vans. I find myself asking what will all this achieve? Where was the plan – surely this is not the intended outcome? And if it is, then it is tragic.

It makes me realise just how important constructive engagement is and the power of advocacy and lobbying. Do you remember the skills you learnt about advocacy and lobbying at the ANLP? How have you positively applied them in your life since ANLP? And if not, I'm challenging you as to **WHY NOT?**

A reminder, **advocacy** can be defined as 'public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy' and **lobbying** 'to seek to influence (a legislator) on an issue.'

I ask why not, because there is just so much that has to be done in nutrition. There are

so many causes that we need to take up and get behind. And as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) now form the basis of the global development agenda, nutrition really has to embed itself into all the goals and associated targets. Nutrition is after all, at the core of the SDGs – it is either a vital precondition to achieving the Goal (1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 14, 16) or achieving the Goal will support nutrition.

The SDGs provide a golden opportunity to identify synergies where we can work together with new and different partners. Opportunities for positive engagement towards a positive outcome for all.

"The best partnerships aren't dependent on a mere common goal but on a shared path of equality, desire, and no small amount of passion." (Sarah MacLean – Author)

That means we need to advocate and lobby. We have to speak up and speak out more than ever before. We have to engage with new and different stakeholders and get under their skin, into their vocabulary and onto their agenda.

Sadly, one year on from the fanfare of the adoption of the SDGs and all we have achieved is, once again, all talk and no action. No action has consequences – Each day that we don't act, the WHO estimates that 21 000 people die! Each day that we spend talking more, we condemn millions

of children to never reaching their potential.

And this is not just my view. Recent research, carried out as part of the Global Burden of Disease Study collaborative network, investigated what progress had been made toward the goals in 188 countries.

The results headlined as "A novel global scoring system shows Africa falling behind on health goals". Articles citing the research used phrases such as 'Africa's performance has been abysmal' and reported 'Not a single African country featured among the top 10 countries that are making significant progress' and 'of the 10 countries at the bottom of the list, nine are on the African continent'.

The nutrition community (and we are a part of it!) is great at panels, presentations and policy development, but where are the associated actions, the success stories, and the interventions at scale? We, as the ANLP Alumni, should be different - because we are different. We have had the enormous honour of having been selected to be part of a transforming programme.

We embrace the concept of leading from where we stand in order to improve the lives of those living on our continent. Each year, as participants leave for home, I have heard, "This programme really has changed me" and "I leave here different". But nutrition in Africa does not seem to be 'different'.

We could fall into despair (and I am sure at times we all do), but **WE CAN LEAD THE CHANGE. WE MUST LEAD THE CHANGE** – Individually and Together. But we must lead

constructively and for sustainable change. Shouting, burning, beating will only grow divides. Honest engagement, with clearly defined rules, even with those we don't particularly like or agree with is the only means to unlock innovative solutions to complex problems.

Nutrition itself is complex and it forms part of a complex environment. But if we act together and harness each other's strengths, the chance of success is so much greater.

If we haven't already, then each one of us needs to find our cause and take it on. If you have, or you haven't, I urge each one of us as 2016 comes to an end to take some **TIME OUT**, and take out your **REFLECTION** diary and think about the nutrition cause that in 2017 you want to put your energy behind.

But in taking on a cause, I believe there are some things we need to include in our reflection:

- Who are all the stakeholders involved? The WHO is critical as we cannot achieve alone. Think outside the box, think broadly, don't only go with the same old names and organisations.
- What can we actually do? Don't try and take on everything and everyone. Be focussed. Perhaps look for low hanging fruit to start with. Be very specific.
- How can we actually do it? Take time to develop a well-structured plan of action (go back to your advocacy/lobbying ANLP notes) and engage others in the thought journey. The HOW is the key element and yet we often neglect it (seems

too hard) or hope things will just fall into place or that someone else will do it.

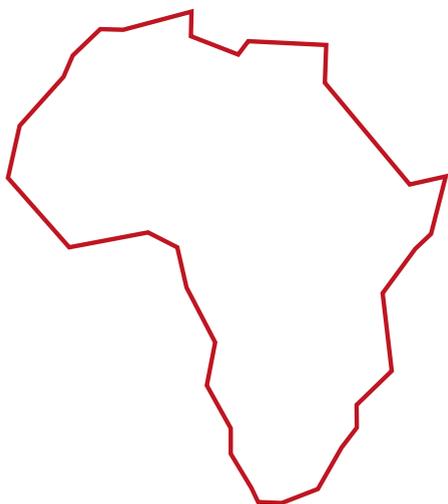
- Who will do what and when? If no one is allocated a task and held accountable for it, I can promise you nothing will happen.

“Our thoughts are causes. You sow a thought, you reap an action. You sow an action, you reap a habit. You sow a habit, you reap a character. You sow a character, you reap a destiny.” Shiv Kheera (Motivational Speaker)

YOUR CAUSE – YOUR EXPERIENCE

We would love to be able to share peoples’ causes and stories on their experiences taking up a cause. Remember how much we learn from each other and how sharing allows others to avoid the traps we have fallen into and even more powerfully empowers us.

If you would like to share your story, email us at christine.taljaard@nwu.ac.za



WHAT A REMARKABLE LIFE CHANGING JOURNEY: From Elgro River Lodge to PANITA- Dar es Salaam- Tanzania

BY TUMAINI MIKINDO

This is my own story of how I came to discover my new potential in life, how I learned that my own behaviour can bring about a change in people’s lives for a noble cause. This epiphany of mine is grounded in this strong leadership course, facilitated by passionate people keen to bring change to the African continent. The noble cause is to end one of the silent but devastating episodes in human history known as malnutrition. Essentially statistics from the Global Nutrition report (2016) show that one in every three people is affected by one or another form of malnutrition.

My personal journey started with a tweet and a link to the ANLP website where I found an advertisement for applications for the 2016 course. Indeed, after reading about the course, immediately I made my decision that I had to attend. I thank God this happened on my first application, as I later learned from Prof. Jerling, the Course Director that it is rare for someone to apply for the first time and be admitted.

However, I took this to mean that I was qualified for the course, not because I have high university grades and extensive experience, but because what I’m doing could make a difference once I return home after completion of the course.

At the time when I applied for ANLP, I had been employed by the Partnership for Nutrition in Tanzania (PANITA) for almost one and a half years, as their Executive Director. In essence, I was responsible for the management of PANITA affairs on behalf of its members. PANITA is part of the Scaling UP Nutrition (SUN) Civil Alliance in Tanzania, with over 300 members. Unlike many Civil Society Alliances, PANITA is managed by the Secretariat with full time staff, and has matured to become an independent entity.

Thanks to support from Irish Aid, UNICEF and Save the Children International (SCI), PANITA has made some remarkable achievements to date. While we celebrate this independency following three years under the SCI, PANITA has now made substantial progress in terms of capacity building with the formation of the secretariat and its organisational structure.

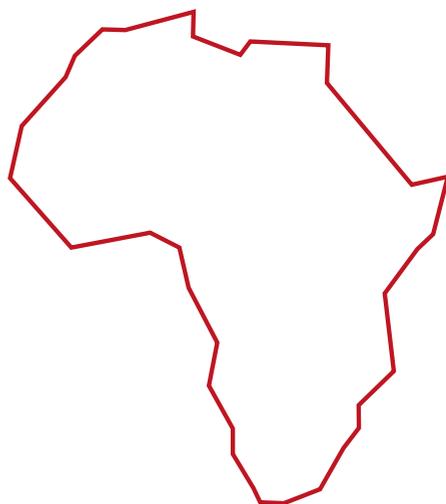
However, the journey to strengthen the capacity of the secretariat work force was just beginning, with a young and mostly new work force, delivering the PANITA mandate required many ‘soft skills’ such as team building, enhanced leadership capabilities, plus the requisite technical skills. This is where the ANLP course I attended at the Elgro River Lodge in Potchefstroom proved essential to me.

The journey to the Elgro River Lodge started with an early morning South African flight from Dar es Salaam to Johannesburg, followed by a road trip through Potchefstroom and further away to the country side alongside the Vaal river (which I later learned is the second largest river in South Africa).

The environment at the Elgro River Lodge, with its calm water, trees and cool weather was perfect for the course. I found the class activities and the team building program well managed by a team of experts with a wealth of knowledge and experience regarding the daily learnings around reflection, communication, advocacy and leadership, not forgetting the habit changing techniques, the differences between managers and leaders, and understanding emotional intelligence. Despite the fact that I have over 15 years of leadership experience with 80% of that in managerial roles at different levels, my daily reflection sharpened by skills and directed my focus to how better apply my skills? The wealth of knowledge shared by all participants also influenced the quality of the course.

For me, one key aspect that was very interesting was the way that the facilitators combined the theory into practice with outdoor activities. I remember one day when we were doing another team building activity and we had to move the ball by blowing across cups filled with water. I remember complaining that *“our table is slanted in one direction”*. Immediately one facilitator heard my complaint and responded *“that is external locus of control”*.

I very quickly noticed my mistake and instead of complaining, I had to decide the best option for the situation I faced. As I



was the team leader, my brain immediately concluded that I have a duty to lead this team to win. I came up with a solution and explained this to my team mates (the Buffalos), showing how we could adapt our behaviour to take this slanted table into consideration. I remember that we won that part though we lost the first round.

The learning from this ‘game’ has now become embedded in my life and career. Several times I have witnessed employees giving reasons for failing to accomplish work. But the truth is, it’s often about our attitude and not going the extra mile to consider how we may circumvent the challenges that we face. This may be typical in our daily lives too.

As I progressed through the course, one of the difficult questions I faced was how can I best make this add value to my organisation. As I watched the videos that were part of the training, I was struck by footage of a 13 year old boy from Sierra Leone (AKA

Dj Focus) who, without spending a single cent, managed to make a small transmitter to broadcast music and other information around his neighbourhood.

Later he was invited to give his innovative story as part of a TED talk where he says *“an amazing opportunity came to me, and I became the youngest visiting practitioner at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology”*.

To watch the TED talk of DJ Focus please use the following link:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=4aQ2h3VaC3c

This is huge achievement from this young guy at one of the most prestigious technological institutes in the world! As a result of this lesson, one day during reflection time, I made a decision that I would show this TED talk to the PANITA staff. This was the start of my long and challenging journey...why?

Firstly, I had to figure out carefully how the knowledge would fit into the environment within my organisation. Secondly, being the most senior member of staff, I did not want employees to see this as something that must be endured because ‘the boss said we should do it’. I approached other ANLP participants from Tanzania (Naomi Saronga and Bariki Mwasaga) to discuss this.

Finally we decided to collaborate to bring some of the knowledge to the PANITA organisation. The course was divided in three sessions over different days to allow sufficient time for reflection. The aim was to enhance PANITA staff leadership capabilities and to promote a positive attitude towards ownership of and commitment to work performance and deliverables. Sadly,

Naomi was not able to attend but Bariki and I focused on the following key areas: locus of control; emotional intelligence; life career leadership and leadership orientation; changing habits; and common human challenges in life.

All of these were embedded under the main theme of leading from where you are through making a difference.

This endeavour has boosted the morale of the team and has noticeably improved staff attitudes towards work and work performance.

As an result, various employees have given the feedback that: *“the training has enhanced my leadership skills”*; *“I am more focused on my work now and able to make priorities of tasks in my table”*; *“the training has helped me to know that I can make a difference in life, irrespective of the resources at disposal”*; *“the training has helped me to recognize my performance challenge, and how to overcome it. Soon I will be joining a course to boost my skills in communication”*.

These are just a few examples from our PANITA staff, where we have seen a positive impact on team morale, cohesiveness and commitment to results. And this is my story; what a remarkable journey from the Elgro River Loge in Potchefstroom, to the beginning of a transformation within our PANITA, always with the end goal to change the lives of poor malnourished children of Tanzania.

Last but not least, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to Bariki Mwasaga, Naomi Saronga and entire PANITA crew; to make this a dream come true. To all, I’m indebted.

SO WHAT NOW ANLP... can we do more with what we have, where we are?

BY CHRISTINE TALJAARD, JOHANN JERLING & BIANCA SWANEPOEL

We often talk about the critical number of African Nutrition Leadership (ANLP) Alumni that have accumulated in African countries after 13 years of ANLP. In countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa, the number of alumni have reached 42, 28, 39 and 53 respectively.

People often ask “So where are these Alumni – why do I not see them...?” The easy answer is to say that we focus on developing leadership capabilities at an individual level – but the question made us think...

Earlier this year we posed the following question to South African alumni (2002 – 2015); “What behavior did you change based on your experience at the ANLP and what was the impact in your professional environment”.

Twenty one responses were received and summarized under two major themes, behavior change and personal or work related impact. Leadership development capacities that can be developed include capabilities such as self-awareness, ability to balance conflicting demands, ability to learn, leadership values, ability to build and maintain relationships, ability to build effective work groups, communication skills, ability to develop others, management skills, ability

to think and act strategically, ability to think creatively, and finally, the ability to initiate and implement change.

The majority (90%) of respondents reported that, following their leadership development experience at ANLP, a positive behaviour change occurred. Behaviour changes included practising reflection, adopting an internal locus of control, improving communication skills and active participation in other leadership development experiences.

These changes translated directly into positive and specific impacts on work and/or personal life. Reported impacts included participants making a positive career change, building and utilizing of networks, improved understanding of the value of diversity and improved international collaborations. It is interesting to note that only 21 of 53 of our South African alumni responded to the requests to participate.

What was encouraging, amongst those alumni that responded, was the frequency with which they reported a change in both behaviour and work related impact as a direct consequence of leadership capacity development.

Nutrition professionals are in agreement that the ability to lead is critically important

in their continuing professional development if Africa is to successfully address its ongoing nutrition challenges.

For countries with many alumni it seems reasonable to expect that “something” should look different. Do they have better nutrition outcomes, do they work more collaboratively, or are they more diligent in developing nutrition leaders for tomorrow? Generating a critical mass of leaders at all levels within countries SHOULD be playing a vital role in achieving nutrition related outcomes from community to international levels, and if not, we have to confront ourselves with the question: why is it not the case?

More often than not the nutrition community prefer to focus on technical issues and we either shy away from, or we are utterly ignorant of the impact of our leadership behaviour on the nutrition impacts we seek to achieve. The growth we experience as individuals only has meaning when it changes our behaviour. Leading from where we are should be a conscious effort and our evaluation of it should be part of our continuous growth plans.

What does this mean for the ANLP? Should we not do a more comprehensive evaluation of the ANLP to assess the nature of the impact it makes? Should the ANLP be more involved in setting up regional chapters or even country chapters? What would be the

purpose of those chapters? Could it be continued individual leadership development?

Could it be to develop the leadership skills to lead multi sector change at a national level? Should the ANLP not be more involved in supporting individuals who would like to start up initiatives in their own countries?

What about the more than 350 alumni spread over 35 countries? With such a vast network, could the ANLP not play a role in stimulating multi-country research?

How could we best capitalise on this unique potential that exists in the network? How could one best unlock this potential? Should one perhaps look into developing a more advanced leadership course with a completely different character and aims? Should we involve the employers of those who attend to a greater extent? Should we develop some distance learning material for ongoing support?

Whatever we do, one fact remains – as individuals we can choose to give and we can choose to receive and it is up to us to make the change.

If you have any ideas you would like to share or you would like to contribute in whatever manner please email us at either Christine.taljaard@nwu.ac.za or johann.jerling@nwu.ac.za

Contributors



CHRISTINE TALJAARD - EDITOR

Postdoctoral Research Fellow & RSA Registered dietician
Centre of Excellence for Nutrition,
North West University,
Potchefstroom Campus
christine.taljaard@nwu.ac.za



LEON COETSEE – LEADERSHIP ARTICLE

Extraordinary professor,
Centre of Excellence for Nutrition,
North West University,
Potchefstroom Campus
Leon11@vodamail.co.za



BIANCA SWANEPOEL

PhD student at the Center of Excellence for Nutrition, North West University
Lecturer at Life and Consumer Science Department, UNISA
biancaswanepoel.nwu@gmail.com



JOHANN JERLING – ARTICLE WRITING

Director Centre of Excellence for Nutrition, North West University,
Potchefstroom Campus
Johann.Jerling@nwu.ac.za



LISA WARE - LANGUAGE EDITOR

Postdoctoral Research Fellow & Registered Nutritionist Hypertension in Africa Research Team, North West University,
Potchefstroom Campus
lisa.ware@nwu.ac.za



JANE BADHAM

Managing Director JB Consultancy,
South Africa
jane@jbconsultancy.co.za



TUMAINI MIKINDO

Executive Director of PANITA
mikindo@gmail.com
www.panita.or.tz



CHRISTOPHER WILD

Director, International Agency for Research on Cancer, Lyon, France
<https://www.iarc.fr/>

THE LEADER is published and distributed as an electronic version only.

THE LEADER

appears on the ANLP's website (www.africannutritionleadership.org). Comments and success-stories linked to any of the focus areas of the ANLP are welcomed and can be posted on the ANLP LinkedIn site.

Please send any correspondence or initiatives to Christine Taljaard (africannutritionleadership@gmail.com).

Design by Graphikos:
graphikos@nwu.ac.za, 018 299 4232