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# MAASAI LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: AN EMERGING PROCESS

Edgar J. Elliston

Olarikoni ole Manyatta<sup>1</sup> usually spends his mornings near the Morijo bore hole with the other Maasai elders of his area. He looks like the other men. He wears his red plaid sheets and an old stocking cap. He is about 45 years old and can not yet read. The other local men call him their **olaiguanani** or spokesman. He became a believer recently along with many of his neighbors and extended family. The community considers him to be their key leader who is helping to bring people to become Christians. He is a Level 1 leader<sup>2</sup>.

Olpayian ole Ng'eno serves as an elder in his local congregation. He reads his New Testament regularly. He has been attending the "Evangelists' courses" for four years. He occasionally preaches for his local congregation and regularly witnesses to non-believers in his community. However, he still lacks the ability to go beyond the most basic skills in interpreting Scripture. While he wants to encourage new believers, his ability to teach them is limited. He is a Level II leader.

Olaretoni ole Laisiayiani began serving as an evangelist shortly after he was converted. Later, after participating in several years of "Evangelists' Courses", the church recognized his effective ministry by licensing him as a pastor. Since then, he has helped with the establishment of five new congregations. However, he still does not know how to both organize new congregations and to assure their continued growth without his being personally involved at every stage. He is a Level III leader.

John ole Ng'ida preaches well and serves as the pastor of a town church. He is a graduate of a higher level theological college. He is a popular and effective teacher in the training courses. However, as a pastor he portrays a poor image. He lives in a distant community and commutes to his congregation only on Saturdays and Sundays. Usually, only about 40 women and children attend services in the building which was built to serve 500. Few men participate. He spends his weekdays operating his small business. While he is among the highest paid pastors in the region because of his training, he still feels that he must work to supplement his income. He is a Level IV leader.

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1. All of the personal names have been changed.

2. E. Elliston, "A Paradigm for Maasai Church Leadership". Mimeographed Report, 1983.

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Dr. Edgar Elliston is the Leadership Development Co-ordinator for the Southern Region of the Africa Inland Church, Kenya.

These four church leaders illustrate several leadership related problems. We see the problems of inadequate or inappropriate training in the ministry of each one. Inadequate or inappropriate training frustrates the growth of the church at every level not only numerically, but in “organic” and “spiritual” growth as well. This training tragedy demands improvement as we see men give years to be trained and still be unable to function effectively.

All of these men feel the frustrations of not having enough trained leaders for the growing numbers of churches among the more traditional population.

In 1981 the Southern Regional Church Council of the Africa Inland Church recognized some of these problems and took the initiative to work through them. The SRCC asked a group of missionaries to build a coordinated leadership development programme on the already existing leadership development base.

A standard AIC Bible school curriculum exists for all of those who would be licensed or ordained. This curriculum, however, was designed primarily for a secondary school level. It is Western rather than African or more specifically Maasai in its orientation. We can see some of the problems of this curriculum as we observe the dislocation of its graduates from the people they seek to serve and their all too often ineffective ministries among the increasingly responsive pastoral population.

The growing churches need an innovative theological education programme in Maasailand which produces large numbers of functioning ministers for the many new churches. The Maasai churches need a theological education programme which produces many pastors who pastor, evangelists who evangelize and teachers who teach. The Maasai churches need a theological education programme which fits the available inputs including students and supportive resources **and** which fits the communities to be served.

Rogers suggests three domains which need our attention when we consider a new approach to such a problem. These domains include: the Antecedents, Process and Consequences of what is done<sup>3</sup>.

### **Antecedents**

The more than 210,000 Maasai living in Narok and Kajiado districts of Kenya range over an area of nearly 14,000 square miles (36,000 km<sup>2</sup>). The majority continue in a pastoral lifestyle and economy. About 11,000 Maasai claim to be Christians. The Africa Inland Church is one of the largest

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3. E. Rogers with F. Shoemaker. **Communication of innovations**. New York, Free Press, 1971:103.

of the twenty denominations represented among the Maasai. The Africa Inland Church is gathered into about 130 congregations with an average weekly attendance of about 5800. Eleven Maasai pastors and about 100 evangelists serve these churches<sup>4</sup>.

The African Inland Mission began to evangelize the Maasai in 1903. Church growth was slow until about ten years ago when receptivity began to increase. The accelerated growth continues into the present. The number of new congregations demonstrates this growth. Over the past five years more than 60 new congregations have been established.<sup>5</sup>

The growth of the number of churches parallels the growth in leadership development. Missionaries initiated the "Evangelists' Courses" in 1972 for both nonliterate and literate church leaders in Kajiado. These courses have grown to include more than 30 weeks of training in 1982 for a total of more than 250 local church leaders.

A typical course lasts from one to three weeks. After a course, the participants return to continue serving in their local congregations. The curriculum planners recognize the validity of Kinsler's statement: "Leaders are not formed by educational institutions ... leadership development takes place in society"<sup>6</sup>.

This nonformal educational approach to educating the ministry –

breaks down the dichotomy between the clergy and laity by encouraging all kinds of leaders to prepare themselves for ministry. It stimulates the dynamics of ministry at the local level by training those men and women **in the context** (emphasis added) of their own communities and congregations. It enables the congregations to develop their own leadership for ministry so that they do not need to depend on outside highly training professional clergy<sup>7</sup>.

With the present theological education structure we are training **in** ministry instead of preparing **for** ministry. All of the course participants are functioning leaders in their local congregations.

Missionaries constructed and started a Bible College in Narok in the late 1960's. However, they only conducted classes for three years for pastors

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4. K. Shingledecker, et. al. **Unreached Peoples of Kenya Project: Maasai Report**. Nairobi, Daystar Communications, 1982:20.

5. Christian Missionary Fellowship. **1982 Annual Report**. Indianapolis, Christian Missionary Fellowship, 1983:13.

6. F. Kinsler. **The Extension Movement in Theological Education: A Call to the Renewal of the Ministry**. South Pasadena, William Carey Library, n.d.:13.

7. Ibid, p. 8.

who had transferred from other Bible schools to complete their fourth year of training. The facilities have been used for nonformal training programs since 1979.

### **Process**

In the present period<sup>8</sup> several different but very important developmental processes are flowing together to form the present stream of leadership development in Maasai land. Some of the processes serve to multiply church leaders, whereas, others tend to cloud the stream.

Miller's definition aptly fits the cooperative leadership developmental efforts of the church and missions.

Development is a process by which people gain greater control over themselves, their environment and their future, in order to realize the full potential of life that God has made possible<sup>9</sup>.

Some of the more important current developmental currents affecting Maasai leadership education include: the nonformal education of Maasai church leaders, mission disengagement, the development of a more servant-based leadership, the formal education of church leaders outside of the Maasai culture to serve among the Maasai and the growth of church among the more traditional Maasai.

### **Nonformal Education of Maasai Church Leaders.**

One missionary assumed the initial responsibility of coordinating the diverse nonformal educational programs in 1981. He clearly saw his initial role to be a 'catalyst'<sup>10</sup> through which he could stimulate the more farsighted church leaders to think about needs, options and constraints in the whole area of leadership development. He pursued the basic strategies of "re-educating" the existing church leaders and "facilitating" the emergence of alternatives in discussion at first and in actual teaching situations later<sup>11</sup>. A working nonformal educational model was already producing church leaders in Kajiado area. This model served both as a focal point of discussion and as a base on which to build. The focus was

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8. For the purpose of this article I am dating the present period from 1981 when the Southern Regional Church Council of the Africa Inland Church requested the Christian Missionary Fellowship to coordinate leadership development in the region. I recognize some trends such as the increased church growth and nonformal training began before 1981. However, it was at that time that the church took positive steps to coordinate leadership development for the whole region.
  9. R. Sider (ed.). **Evangelicals and Development: Toward A Theology of Social Change**. Exeter, The Paternoster Press, 1981:19.
  10. R. Havelock. **The Change Agent's Guide To Innovation In Education**. Englewood Cliffs, Educational Technology Publications, 1973:8.
  11. G. Zaltman and R. Duncan. **Strategies for Planned Change**. New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1977:90-127.

and continues to be on short classes followed by supervised work among the villages. The learning is re-inforced in some of the areas by "end of the month fellowship" times in which there is reflection about the learning and activities.

When curriculum was first discussed, several church leaders presented the approved church Bible school curriculum as the solution to leadership education problems. However, as they gave further attention to the churches to be served the leaders to be taught and available resources, they began to see that this curriculum was not entirely appropriate. It was inappropriate in terms of its targeted students (secondary level), the communities to be served (urbanized) and the goal of the kind of ministry it would produce (a professional clergy expecting a high level of support). The majority of Maasai church leaders now are either non-literates or have less than a standard 7 level of education. The churches to be served average about 30 in attendance. They cannot afford nor do they want highly trained pastors who would be out of place among them. The priority need for the Maasai churches is in the rural areas for men who will continue to be at least partially self-supporting and willing to work with rural communities in small congregations.

A "schooling approach" to theological education as represented in this curriculum contains all of the inherent weaknesses of a schooling approach to education in general. Ward lists some of these weaknesses which affect Maasai theological education in particular:

1. All learners are assumed to be similar in terms of needs, interests and abilities.
2. Learners are increasingly made more competitive at the price of cooperation.
3. Learners are expected to be receptors of learning rather than communicators.
4. The learners' part in decision-making is minimal and tends to be steadily reduced.
5. The content to be learned is justified in terms of future needs of the learner.
6. Rewards are symbolic more than real<sup>12</sup>.

Some of the church leaders along with the missionaries involved recognize the validity of Kinsler's criticism of the traditional western curricular approach to theological education and are trying to avoid its pitfalls.

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12. T. Ward. "Schooling As a Defective Approach to Education". Unpublished manuscript, n.d.:2-3.

Traditional training patterns reinforce the dichotomy between clergy and laity; they debilitate the dynamics of ministry at the congregational level; and they make the churches dependent upon highly trained, professional pastors<sup>13</sup>.

Theological education can in fact be a major obstacle to the growth of the church and the fulfillment of her ministry<sup>14</sup>.

Early in the process the missionaries and key church leaders spent much time in the building of relationships and confidence so that the issues of curriculum and possible changes in training could be considered openly. The Regional Church Council recognized the needs for wider discussion and so instituted a regional leadership committee of other missionaries and church opinion leaders.

TEE is another small branch of the nonformal educational process which is flowing to join the Maasai leadership development stream. Several of the Level III church leaders who know Swahili have been studying TEE courses and have begun teaching Levels I and II leaders in their local churches.

The church leaders and missionaries have consciously sought in these nonformal approaches to move away from the "western academic-professional model of ministry which is self-defeating in terms of effective leadership"<sup>15</sup>. Kinsler criticizes the system of theological education which "serves to select young, inexperienced men and women, separate them from the normal processes of leadership formation, and place them artificially over the other members"<sup>16</sup>. Planners are therefore giving attention to the training of older men whose leadership roles have already been acknowledged by both their churches and communities. By focusing attention on functioning leaders "there is far less danger that their training will serve (primarily) as a ladder for personal advancement"<sup>17</sup>.

Church leaders and missionaries have tried through these nonformal processes to move away from colonial educational structures by involving those being taught and those being served in the curricular planning process.

The thread that ran through all colonial education was the fact that it was offered ... without the input or consent of the colonized ...

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13. Kinsler, *Op. Cit.* p. 8.

14. *Ibid.* p. 12.

15. *Ibid.* p. 14

16. *Ibid.* p. 14.

17. *Ibid.* p. 17.

Colonial schools never held out the prospect of integration into indigenous culture to those who attended them; neither did they prepare the colonized for leadership in their own society<sup>18</sup>.

Some church leaders have not yet understood or accepted the nonformal educational structures. The overtones of the colonial education structures still emerge in discussions as the western schooling model is held as the ideal or goal to be achieved. "The essential structure of the educational system is perhaps the most dramatic example of the continuing impact of colonialism<sup>19</sup>.

The present leadership education processes have emerged them with significant differences in the purpose, timing, control, content, delivery system and costs from a western schooling model<sup>20</sup>. Education should not be simply equated with schooling. It has much broader potential structures and processes.

As the nonformal education of church leaders has continued, some traditionally minded church leaders have been applying pressure to increasingly "formalize" the programming and raise the entrance requirements. These pressures are closely tied to the issues of official church recognition through licensure and ordination.

The primary functions of accreditation – encouragement and protection<sup>21</sup> – are only beginning to be considered by some of the leaders in the nonformal training processes. Many present leaders fear the threat of a "traditionalist accreditation approach"<sup>22</sup> which would bring about what they would see as an irrelevant, ineffective training institution. Others are only beginning to see the positive benefits of an accreditation process which seeks to focus on the same "renewal agenda"<sup>23</sup> which the Maasai educational processes are seeking to address.

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18. P. Altbach and G. Kelley. **Education and Colonialism**. New York, Longman, 1978:2-3.

19. Ibid. pp. 30-31.

20. T. Simkins, **Non-formal Education and Development**. Manchester, University of Manchester, 1979:14-15.

21. E. Elliston. "Accreditation in African Theological Education". Mimeographed Paper, 1978:3.

22. P. Bowers. "Accreditation As a Catalyst for Renewal in Theological Education", **East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology**, 1982:1:11-21.

23. Ibid. p. 17.



Some of the questions related to the accrediting process such as the qualities of the educated functioning graduates have begun to be addressed<sup>24</sup>. However, the church in the region has only begun to consider such crucial issues as the financial support of the programming, adequacy of staffing, administration and learning resources such as library facilities.

### **Mission Disengagement**

Rogers suggests the final role in a developmental process is a “terminating” role<sup>25</sup>. The CMF has built into its policy of planning for all developmental processes the process of disengagement. The **CMF-Kenya Position Paper on Development** states, “That disengagement (but not necessarily termination) should be effected as soon as there is a self-renewal capacity in any sector of the community involved”<sup>26</sup>. The aim is to work toward a “partnership-in-mission” about which Engel writes<sup>27</sup>.

In order to achieve this goal of disengagement the missionaries have recognized that developmental processes follow the sequence of 1) giving, 2) helping, 3) teaching, 4) leading and 5) sharing. They have observed that only as the latter types of participation are engaged will the related problems of the earlier ones be overcome. Ward holds that all of the earlier stages of a developmental relationship have serious potential problems if the process itself does not proceed to overcome these problems.

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Related Problem</b>
Giving	Dependency
Helping	Oppression
Teaching	Hierarchy
Leading	Authoritarianism
Sharing	No associated problem <sup>28</sup>

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24. I have summarized in another place the more important values which undergird the concept of Christian leadership. They are summarized in the following propositions. “These criteria are assumed to be relevant and applicable inter-culturally when they are 1) translated in dynamically-equivalent ways ... 2) ... behave in ways which are beyond reproach in their communities ... 3) ... be distributed within the church with different persons ‘leading’ according to the particular gift he she may have ... 4) ... not base their leadership on their own rank, status or power ... 5) ... contribute to the purpose, fulness and functioning of the church. 6) ... reproduce themselves through others.” In E. Elliston. **Curriculum Foundations For Leadership Education in the Samburu Christian Community**. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1981:223-224.
25. Rogers, **Op. Cit.** p. 248.
26. Christian Missionary Fellowship. **CMF-Kenya Position Paper on Development**. Nairobi, Christian Missionary Fellowship, 1981:4.
27. J. Engel. **Contemporary Christian Communications: Its Theory and Practice**. Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979:284-287.
28. T. Ward. “participation — The Key to Development strategies”. A lecture delivered at Daystar Communications in Nairobi, Kenya, 1977.

The missions involved recognize the present dangers in the developmental process and are seeking to reach a genuine reciprocal relationship in the process of disengaging by engaging present church leaders in every aspect of the present educational processes. The goal of this disengagement process is for the missions to withdraw from supporting the church to join in partnership with the church to evangelize as yet unreached peoples.

As this process is being implemented with the church, the problems of "people greed", "personnel dependency" and "lack of personal commitment" along with their parallel problems of "money greed", "financial dependency" and the lack of "self-commitment" to which Reichenbach refers are being reduced<sup>29</sup>. Disengagement threatens some church leaders but the process is continuing to bring the church to be mature and reproducing in Maasai land.

### **Servant-Leadership**

Part of the stream of mission disengagement is being focused into the process of developing a more "servant-based" leadership among the churches. The following diagram is currently serving as a paradigmatic model for describing this process<sup>30</sup>.

#### **Leadership Paradigm**

**Level I** – Nonliterate, unpaid local leaders who serve within local congregations

**Level II** – Literate, unpaid local leaders who serve locally and witness outside

**Level III** – Partially paid leaders of small churches or groups of churches, STD 7 education, often licensed

**Level IV** – Paid, ordained pastors of town churches  
Bible school graduates

**Level VI** – National  
international  
with B.A.-

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29. B. Reichenbach. "The Captivity of Third World Churches". **Evangelical Missions Quarterly**. 1982:18:3:166-179.

30. E. Elliston. **Op. Cit.** 1983:2.

The inverted pyramid suggests that each succeeding level is supportive of the other levels and is teaching each of the preceding levels. The aim is to move away from status based on education or power and move toward increased serving with increased learning. This paradigm of five levels parallels the leadership levels described by McGavran<sup>31</sup> and McKinney<sup>32</sup>. A further aim is to move away from the professionalization of the ministry because "the ministry is not fundamentally a profession: it is a function of the body of believers".<sup>33</sup>

Jesus did not choose the status-based school models of the Greeks for his training programme. Rather, He chose nonformal or informal<sup>35</sup> modes of instruction to emphasize servant-leadership. Covell shows that the aims of the biblical models for successful teaching were not to impart knowledge, but to produce obedient disciples<sup>34</sup>. The current educational processes seek to emphasize servant-based-functioning leadership and to teach in ways which are both culturally appropriate and pedagogically effective.

### **Formal Education of Church Leaders for Maasai**

A fourth process flowing into the Maasai leadership education stream is the continuing formal education of church leaders outside Maasailand in western oriented Bible schools. Some graduates of these Bible institutes and theological colleges are serving in Maasailand. These graduates generally locate in the town churches which need higher level trained leaders. They are represented by the case cited above of John Ole Ng'ida. Unfortunately, their training often has been dysfunctional in crucial areas. Many of these men have been culturally, socially, economically and educationally dislocated from the growing edge of the church. They have come to expect to fit into a status-oriented church hierarchy. Often their view of the ministry is simply to preach on weekends, visit the sick, marry those seeking marriage, bury the dead and spend the rest of their time in their own money-making businesses.

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31. D. McGavran. "Five Kinds of Leaders". Lecture delivered at Columbia Bible College. Recorded and distributed by William Carey Library, South Pasadena, n.d.
  32. L. McKinney. "Leadership: Key to the Growth of the Church". In V. Gerber (ed.). **Discipling Through Theological Education by Extension**. Chicago, Moody Press, 1980:183
  33. Kinsler. Op. Cit. p. 14.
  34. R. Covell. "Biblical Models for Successful Teaching". In V. Gerber (ed.). **Discipling Through Theological Education by Extension**. Chicago, Moody Press, 1980:105-118.
  35. The following definitions are perhaps too simplistic, but they will serve to show the essential differences. Nonformal education refers in this article to out-of-school, planned learning experiences. Informal education refers to unplanned out-of-school learning experiences. Formal education refers to schooling-based learning experiences.

However, dysfunctions do not cloud the whole picture. Some of these men now actively participate in the teaching of other church leaders thus putting their formal training into a multiplying mode. With the higher level of training they better understand Christian theology and are beginning to serve in key teaching roles. If the missionaries are in fact to disengage, these more highly trained leaders are needed to replace them in their various vacancies.

### **Maasai Church Growth**

The churches are growing among the traditional Maasai. Not only are many coming to know the Lord in many of the established congregations, but new congregations continue to emerge. Significant growth in both the number of new believers and new congregations is occurring among the Ilkosongo section near Loitokitok and the Ildamat section near Narok. Other Maasai sections are also experiencing increased receptivity. Even the Olpurko who were until recently considered resistant are seeing the conversion of new believers. This growth of the church increasingly emphasizes the urgency of the training needs. The training process is simply not keeping pace with the growth nor with the increasing demand for congregations to be established in new places. As the Daystar Communications survey documents, these new congregations are small and generally in remote areas<sup>36</sup>.

### **Consequences**

In spite of some confusion, continuing questions, occasional opposition and some dysfunctions, positive consequences of the present process are emerging. In the last five years at least 63 congregations have come into being. Without exception these new churches have been involved with the new curricular processes of leadership development. The number of Maasai church leaders-in-training has grown dramatically from less than ten in 1972 to more than 250 at the present. These men are nearly all in Levels I-III and are actively serving in the growing churches.

Another significant consequence has been the increased awareness of the need for developing more relevant curricula for the various levels of church leadership. More mature church leaders from each level have joined in the planning for courses around each of the training centers at Loitokitok, Kajiado and Narok. Church leaders from Levels III-V have joined in the teaching of both knowledge and skills which are appropriate for each of the leadership levels.

Local congregations and those being trained are increasingly supporting the training programmes both financially and through providing food and other supplies.

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36. Shingledecker. *Op. Cit.* p. 24.

The controlled cost of training for each trained, functioning leader is another encouraging consequence. Kinsler's comparison of formal and nonformal approaches is certainly being seen in Maasai land.

Traditional, residential theological schools are extremely expensive, especially if they attempt to reach the more mature leaders of the churches. And, they create a heavy financial burden for the churches, for they produce professional pastors at higher and higher support levels.

(A nonformal approach, however,) is capable of serving large numbers of students, particularly leaders of congregations. These students are certain to serve the church, whether they are paid a salary or not, and they generally do not raise their support level expectation by taking extension studies<sup>37</sup>.

However, some dysfunctional consequences continue to trouble the church. As many new congregations are emerging, the lack of adequately trained leaders is increasing. Inadequately trained leaders often lead the new congregations frustrating every aspect of church growth. The trained men simply can not make the rounds often enough. One congregation which averages more than 100 weekly for worship recently went nearly eight months without a visit by a licensed or ordained pastor.

While the church is beginning to help support the training programs, there has not been a proportional increase in church support to the growth of leadership training needs. This problem has been heightened by some missionaries leaving and others being transferred from the area.

## **Conclusion**

The problem of enabling nonliterate local leaders like Olarikoni Ole Manyatta to lead his community to Christ is partially being met by the increased training of functionally literate outward-looking leaders like Olpayian Ole Ng'eno. He is being encouraged to teach others like Olarikoni Ole Manyatta.

The problem of having adequate teachers for Olpayian Ole Ng'eno is being met in part by enabling licensed pastors like Olaretoni Ole Laisianiani not only to teach in courses, but also to visit and encourage in the villages. Such licensed pastors are increasingly being taught by those who have attended Bible schools or by their colleagues who study TEE courses together with them.

The integration of Level IV leaders like John Ole Ng'ida into the planning and teaching processes is serving to reduce their dislocation and to take advantage of their specialized education. Several of these men are moving from disillusioned nonfunctioning pastors to multiplying servant-leaders.

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37. Kinsler. *Op. Cit.* p. 21.