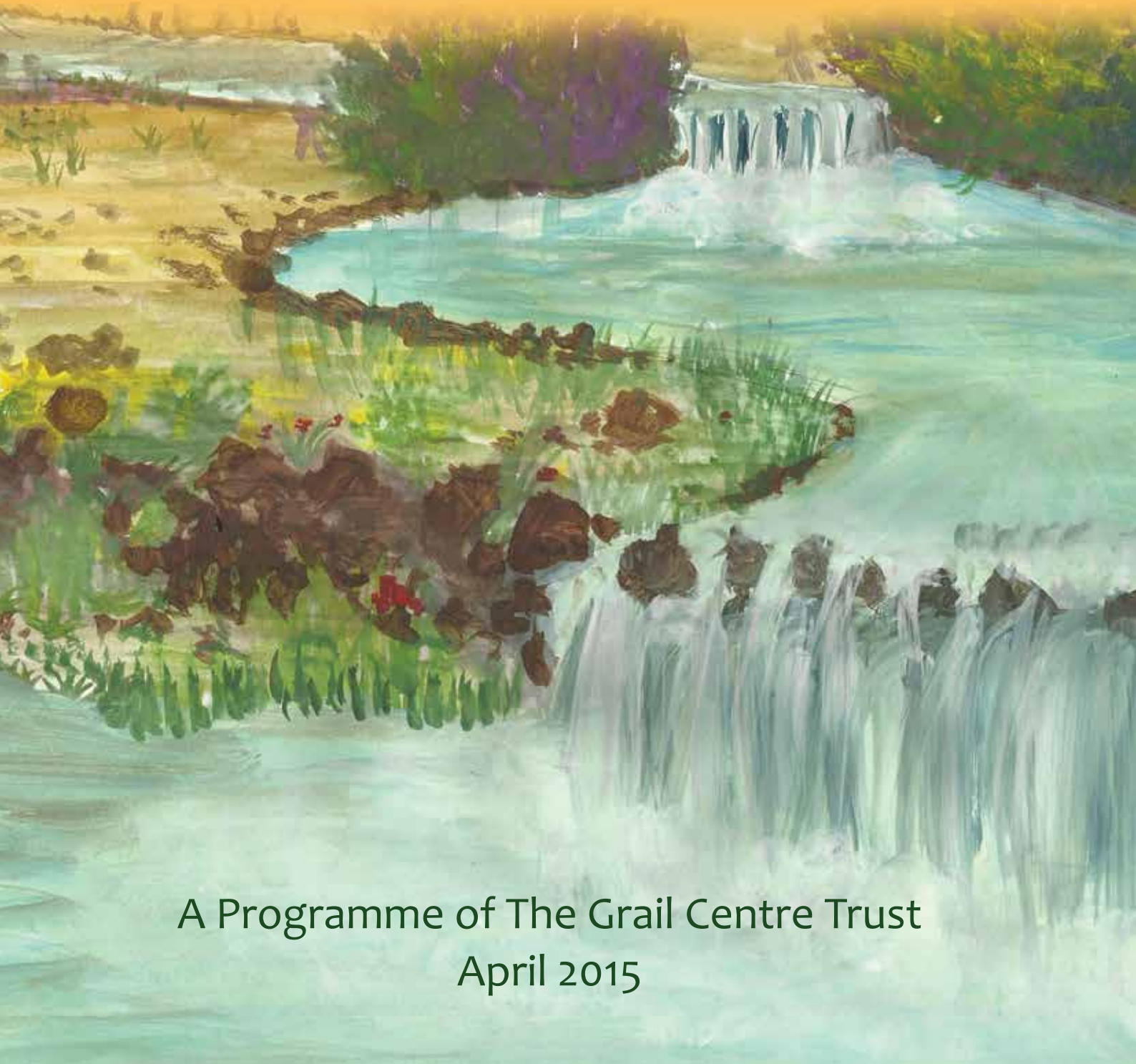




TRAINING FOR TRANSFORMATION

Impact Study 2009-2014

Summary and analytical report



A Programme of The Grail Centre Trust
April 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to present an analytical summary and an analysis of the main findings of the 3 sections of the impact study:

- Face to face interviews with participants and community visits
- On Line impact survey with participants and organisations
- Internal staff assessment

The questions used in the impact assessment were generated by the Impact study group attending the Think Well in 2013. Each of the 3 aspects of the evaluation was undertaken by individual evaluators who added and reshaped the questions. Almost 200 staff, graduates, organisational leaders and community beneficiaries were interviewed or participated in focus group discussions over a period of 6 months in 2014.

The analytical report is written as a response to these collective voices and as such is the perspective of one individual with its inherent shortcomings. It should not be seen as a detailed summary of each report but as a discussion document which integrates my reading of key patterns from the individual studies and what this might mean for the way ahead. This section of the report is a bridging document between the study itself and the thinking and discussion process which needs to happen prior to the strategy and planning session with partners scheduled for 2015.

Readers are encouraged to peruse each report individually for more detailed findings and the recommendations from each study.

2. ESSENTIAL FINDINGS FROM EACH STUDY

2.1 Face to face Interviews and Focus groups

The face to face interviews and focus group impact study was conducted with participants from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa. The outcomes of this study support and give depth to the trends noted in the online survey.

The study notes that the impact is made visible through the high demand for the course the sacrifices made to complete it and appreciation of the impact on participants from work colleagues, community members and family.

SUCSESSES

- **Personal Mastery:** the course engages participants on a journey of self-discovery, personal forgiveness /reconciliation and a growth of cultural and religious tolerance. This results in improved self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness and motivation. A key site for these personal transformations is outside the formal classroom in the contested spaces in the cottage accommodation and the learning environment at the Grail. Here participants are confronted with the challenges of inter-cultural living and interaction. It is through these challenges that participants are “forced” to reflect on personal behaviour.



Kudzai Makoni, face-to-face interviews facilitator, with Nobuzwe Mofokeng (graduate 2006) Kleinmond, South Africa, August 2014



Self-awareness or self-discovery

- **Transforming Thinking:** The course transforms the thinking of participants by opening up their thought processes to include multiple perspectives. Participants seem to move from narrow, limited and confused thinking to more rigorous and open search for knowledge. This generates greater energy, understanding and tolerance amongst participants.
- **Theoretical understanding:** The course content challenges participants' beliefs and assumptions about community development. It builds critical understanding of the context in which they live and work, as well as, the ability to see community members as subjects and central actors in their own process of development. This leads participants to practice community development in a different way freeing up space for community members to take control of the development process.
- **Improved technical skills:** The capacities of participants to facilitate, plan, research, communicate – verbally and written – undergo a substantial growth through the course.
- **Impact on communities:** The growth in capacity of participants has a direct impact on communities they serve through

increasing community ownership and involvement; widening the scope of projects to ensure a more holistic approach; empowering women and girls; building peace amongst rival groups; holding government and political party officials accountable for their actions. This impact increases the long term sustainability of programs / organisations that graduates support in communities.

These successes mean that after the training participants emerge with an attitude shift which leads them to champion new forms of community development, share skills with colleagues and widen their range and scope of activities. Graduates are able to make changes in the way their organisations are managed with respect to participatory decision making, accountability and transparency. However, the study highlights that this **potential** only becomes **actual** if the leaders of the organisations support the TfT approach, continue the relationship with the TfT and graduates are responsible for program formulation and implementation in the organisation.

CHALLENGES

- **Praxis:** The study notes that the course has a greater impact on individuals and their practices, in their personal and professional lives, than on organisations and their communities. While this is a self-evident fact as it is individuals who attend the course it does support the findings of the online survey that the impact of the course is more local than it is regional or national. As in the online study, this may be attributed to the lack of post training professional support from TfT or alumni/networks of graduates operating in countries or regions.
- **Ranking:** The study notes that often TfT graduates experience resistance in their organisations from directors or board members who are not familiar with the TfT approach.
- **TfT capacity:** The limited number of places on the TfT courses means that reaching a critical mass of trained graduates in an organisation or country is a long slow process. This will curtail the ability of graduates to influence organisational, institutional and country wide change. Linked to this is a difficulty with the quality of mentors and mentorship offered participants. The quality of this support is uneven and ability to implement learnings successfully seems

to be linked to the quality of mentorship on offer.

- **New visions:** As the training has a high impact on knowledge and motivation of participants many move to new organisations after the training which may make implementation of learnings more difficult.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Meeting the demand:** In order to meet the demand for more training places as well as post training support TfT will need to decentralise training courses into regions or countries and set up offices in selected countries to monitor quality and impact.
- **Growing the reach:** In order to expand the reach of TfT and thus expand the sphere of influence of its approaches to community development the course should be popularised amongst a wider group of professions.
- **More post training support** through alumni or professional networks giving access to ongoing professional development.
- **Improving quality of outcomes:** through dealing with difficulties of the quality of mentoring, shortage of computers at the Grail and the pressurised environment created by the need for producing 1 discussion paper a week
- **Making accommodation as a learning space safe:** TfT needs a more successful strategy and approach to dealing with the complex dynamics that emerge out of the living together of participants across age, gender and culture. The complex dynamics which emerge from this are a fertile ground for learning or conflict depending on how TfT manage the interactions.



Impact Study focus group, Kleinmond, South Africa, August 2014.

2.2 Online impact survey

SUCSESSES

The program is effective in assisting participants to develop their capacities to affect change within themselves, their careers, organisations and communities they serve. TfT has ensured that graduates become organisation workers good at organising, team-building and training.

- **Personal Mastery** and emotional intelligence leading to: more effective collaborative leadership and teamwork; building partnerships at local level; improved capacity for conflict resolution; learning to live in diversity and self-discovery.

- **Theoretical understanding** of society and how it changes through teaching conceptual and analytical frameworks e.g. Freire pedagogy for liberation, Manfred Max-Need human scale of development, organisational development.
- **Improved technical skills:** especially adult learning techniques e.g. codes; strategic planning; reading and writing; designing learning events.
- **Spheres of influence:** Post the training there is a growth in the personal power of TfT graduates and their opinions and advice are listened to. Graduates reach more people, are more skilled, work more effectively and get promoted resulting in many organisations and communities experiencing the impact of the learnings on the course.

CHALLENGES

- **Praxis:** Graduates find it difficult to know how to implement some of the concepts learnt e.g. economics and feminism in their everyday lives and at a macro level. Translating theoretical concepts into macro organisational, community and social change is a challenge. Participants need to be equipped with tools and techniques for transforming the dominant forms of power in order to reach a tipping point in their organisational and social contexts.
- **Ranking:** Participants are most often nominated by their directors to go on the training and are often not in decision-making /influential positions in their organisation and are unable to implement or influence internal organisational change based on their learnings and new capacities developed at TfT. This hampers the growth of the TfT approach in organisations.
- **Impact on communities:** Participants feel that they do not learn enough about how to mobilise financial resources and create economic opportunities for participants in their programs.

These findings tend to suggest that while the training is having high levels of impact on the participants' individual capacities, the change they are able to effect is limited to grassroots organisations and individuals in their sphere of influence. It also seems to suggest that the lack of regional/country or local networks of participants using TfT approaches results in graduates feeling isolated and unsupported. There is not a collective sense of the power to effect change on the part of graduates of the last 10 years. Consequently the ideas, concepts and tools learnt at TfT are not being institutionalised or entrenched as part of the dominant approaches to transformation in organisations, institutions and countries.



Need to create regional/country or local networks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Building up the capacity to influence change:** The course should teach participants approaches and tools to effect macro changes through mobilising social and economic power and using political, economic and governance channels to effect large scale transformation.
- **Developing alternative economic survival and change strategies:** The course should provide opportunities for learning tools and strategies for implementing Asset-Based Community Development, budgeting and money management, fundraising skills.
- **Post training support:** The graduates need more support to transform their actual every-day reality and entrench TfT approaches locally and nationally. Respondents are positive to growing TfT ideas and approaches through setting up regional cooperation, networking and training to enabling a wider spread of TfT ideas but more finances and time to build these structures will be necessary to achieve this. Such activity would also energize and resource local organisations and actors. It may also magnify the voices of TfT Practitioners beyond their immediate environments onto a national and regional stage.

The online survey suggests that one way to proceed would be to use the web more to connect participants across Africa and Asia these could include online study groups, planned sms buddy support, inclusion of local colleagues and organisations in fun and easily rewarding actions. At the same time TfT at the grail could assist with growing regional capacity to hold face to face meetings and training programs. Such a strategy would also assist participants to stay in touch with TfT after the training and obtain support from each other.

2.3 Internal Staff Assessment

This study seems to highlight two key aspects of staffing which affect the impact of the training on participants.

SUCSESSES

- **The Learning Environment/Approach to leading and managing:** Over the last 5 years there has been shift amongst staff to implement approaches to leading and managing which reinforce classroom based learning. The TfT team are implementing participatory and cooperative management and learning practices in an intentional and focused way. Through this approach to the managing of the program, participants are able to see and experience the practice of people centred and developmental management.
- **Three stable strong leaders:** During the interviews it emerged that the changes in the period of 2009-2014, both in terms of management approach and number of participants, is in part due to having one strong visionary leader – Ntombi with support from two other committed and competent leaders – Ginoca and Lorraine – each able to manage and grow key aspects of the program. The growth in the number of participants would seem to suggest that stable, self-actualised staff able to practice participatory management is key to making an impact on the individual lives of participants.

CHALLENGES

- **Growth pains:** Through interviews and the focus group with the staff a picture emerges of TFT in a growth phase with human and physical resources under pressure as numbers have grown from 30 to 300 in the last 10 years. Office, learning and eating space are at their maximum of their capacity. (From 30 to approx. 300 per annum)

- **Participatory Management:** The mix of levels of self-actualisation, consciousness and experience in the team seems to create a niggling difficulty over scope of authority, work supervision and efficient completion of tasks. Sometimes this leads to confusion over responsibility for carrying out the task as well as who supervises work done. Other times inexperienced staff take on tasks that are beyond their immediate abilities and this means a drop in quality of tasks completed. This could result in interpersonal conflicts as tasks and responsibilities are understood differently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Building the consciousness of new staff:** Structured support systems for new team members which include coaching mentoring and ongoing professional development. It would be helpful for each member of staff to have a development plan for continuous growth of professional capacities.
- **Meeting the demand:** There is a need to expand office, learning and eating spaces in order to maintain the quality of the learning environment.
- **Making accommodation as a learning space:** The lack of a participant lounge or common room forces participants to socialise and relax in their houses which maybe cultural inappropriate for some participants. In addition this reinforces the participants to congregate in smaller cliques holding back cross cultural mixing which is a key aspect of the learning for participants.
- **Meeting the demand:** Given the growth in the number of participants and programs it is necessary to develop a strategic plan for internal growth of the organisation which will ensure future fitness for effectively and efficiently generating the ideas, programs and consciousness that TfT represents. Key to this plan would need to be a financing strategy which allows for stable and continuous growth amidst a tough economic climate.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE IMPACT STUDIES FOR THE ORGANISATION

In the terms of reference for the impact study TfT wanted to ensure that the research would provide them with a clear and practical guideline to strengthen the quality of the program. As a way to consolidate the assessment of where the main gaps in the program are I have read the studies together and evaluated them against TfTs stated vision, mission and aims.

3.1 What is transforming?

The 3 studies seem to suggest that TfT is achieving its **mission:** *To impart skills, methods and tools that empower teams from strategic organizations and enhance their capacity to organize engage with communities to own and control development programmes that impact their lives.*



Impact Study focus group, Zimbabwe, September 2014



Thelma Nkosi, Coordinator of Campaign against the mining in Mpumalanga. Impact Study, South Africa, August 2014

As the Tft course stands at present it is having high level of impact in growing participants capacities in reflection, knowledge of self, conceptual understanding of the world, communication, team work and ability to train other people. The personal change participants undergo is being modelled, encouraged and supported by the form and character of the participatory management style and learning environment practiced by the organisation allowing participants a space to “rehearse for reality”.

This has a direct impact on communities served by graduates as they champion new development practices which allow communities members to empower themselves and take control of their own development practices. This alters the impact of development processes on the lives community members and their relationships with each other and the wider world [government, political parties, NGOs]. In this sense the Tft course is having the impact that is intended.

The attitude and capacity changes experienced by graduates also impacts on their organisations practices provided there is a supportive director and the participants ranking in the organisation allows them to make the necessary changes.



Learning environment



With the community. Impact Study Zambia, June 2014

3.2 What needs strengthening?

At present the course is meeting its stated goal of: *Developing a new level of leadership in the development education field that is grounded in good theory and practice.* However the 3 studies highlight key areas of performance that if improved could magnify the impact on graduates. These include:

Course Content

- **Macro Transformation:** The ability and capacities to turn personal growth in power, potential and skills into large scale organisation and social transformation. How can the content assist participants to enable themselves to make fundamental social changes in their countries and societies.
- **Resource mobilisation:** Financial Resource mobilisation at community and wider levels of society.
- **Lobbying and advocating:** The capacity to lobby and advocate for transformation beyond the micro level to ensure wider social change. This includes use of media, internet and social networking.
- **Out of the classroom learning:** Finding ways to assist participants to see the complex human relationships in the cottages as sources for learning and confessional moments rather than conflict and illicit sexual relationships.

Support for learning

- **Mentoring:** The quality of mentoring offered to participants as well as to new staff members who join the staff team. The quality of internal and external mentoring will have a direct bearing on the growth of consciousness and self-actualisation of staff and participants.
- **TfT resources:** Limited availability of resources such as computers and the pressure on size of the hall and dining room due to the growth in numbers of participants.

3.3 What needs special attention?

If TfT is to fulfil its aims of: linking local “community development efforts and ...wider national and global civil society” (www.grailprogrammes.org.za) and to build confidence, knowledge and skills to work with and challenge local and national governments to ensure macro-economic policies that are to the advantage of the marginalised then there are two areas that emerge from the studies as needing special attention:

- **Building networks of graduates and TfT Practitioners:** This would a) provide post training support for newly completed graduates; b) provide continuous professional development; c) develop and facilitate sub regional diploma and certificate courses. In addition, these networks could provide a critical foundation for ensuring that graduates find a collective voice and sense of national, regional and global agency. As these networks begin growing and “gel” they will expand the influence and reach of TfT ideas and practices. If TfT encourages leadership development and support in these networks they may well provide the platform for the global-local link and provide the necessary information and input to change macro policies. A key aspect of this strategy should not be limited to creating networks but should include expanding the training to ensure a substantial growth in the number of annual graduates. This will increase the numbers of TfT Practitioners in organisations and countries. Overtime tipping points could be reached in each partner organisation, country/region allowing TfT ideas to dominate at macro, global and policy level. This has the implication of needing to make the course more widely available sub regionally and in a form which is cheaper than at present for participants. This will require a growth in organisational infrastructure, human and financial resources in an organised sustainable way. If TfT continues to focus its recruitment on key partners in selected countries then increased output would also increase the chance of influencing macro- change as well as generated support for country/ regional networks.
- **Expanding the curriculum:** It would be necessary for TfT to re-examine its curriculum to ensure that greater emphasis is placed on understanding the state and ruling class alliances and their role and function in maintaining poverty and injustice. An aspect of this would include strategies for changing the state in different historical epochs for e.g. in established



Loretta Josephs, Director of “We Can” and Thandiswa Blie, Facilitator of “Mamelani Projects”. Impact Study focus group Kleinmond, South Africa, August 2014

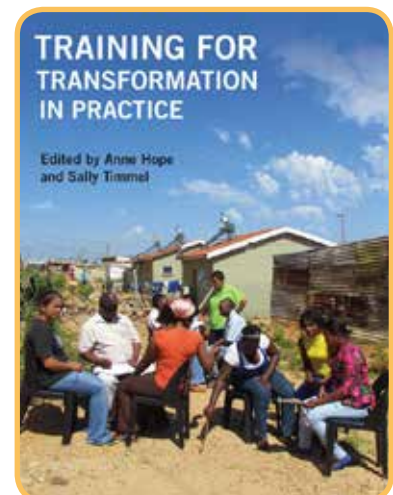
democracies or post conflict societies. Given the history and scale of failed states on our continent it may also be necessary to comprehend this phenomenon and develop understanding of how to rebuild a failed state. This should include learning about policy formation within the democratic state and how graduates, organisations and communities can input into this. In addition, there may be a need to introduce a module on new forms of organisation challenging state power which have emerged in the last 10 years e.g. social movements: what are they; how are they organised; what are the potential successes and challenges inherent in this form of organisation. As part of this review it may be worthwhile to study the development of African leadership and political science and its ability to meet the demands of social justice and new forms of domination.

4. DREAMING A FUTURE DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESENT: SOME THOUGHTS IN CLOSING

TfT vision: *A new level of leadership in development education whose theory is grounded into practice* (in www.grailprogrammes.org.za)

As I sit and write a conclusion I am struck by the richness of experience expressed by graduates and their organisational leaders in the impact study. If we add to this the many experiences of applying TfT approaches reflected in the recently published *Training for Transformation In Practice* (Hope & Timmel, 2014) TfT is able to claim success in achieving its vision.

A solid foundation has been laid BUT success for TfT has made graduates, organisations and communities hunger for more, continuously. This brings into focus the programs potential to grow and occupy a new role in development education on the continent. Supporting individuals and communities to build the organisational capacity to be critical transformational actors in the struggle for social justice is an acute development need on our continent. TfT is well placed to make a significant and qualitative input into capacitating a leadership to fill this need.



The empowering impact TfT is having on individuals and communities in over 11 countries on the continent and the cry for more encourages the TfT leadership to think in to the future a new vision. The impact studies seem to suggest a need for an expanded part TfT could play on our continent in ensuring development is empowering, people centred and based on social justice and equality. With this in mind the organisation seems poised at a crossroads with the choice of staying as is by continuing to run introductory, certificate diploma courses excellently or becoming the heartbeat of a different organisation with increased output and through which graduates have the capacity to link local and global struggles and influence macro policy.

If TfT it is to follow the process and meet the demands from graduates and their organisations for growth it has created then it will be imperative to develop an organisational model that is financial sustainable and has the necessary self-actualised leaders.

Should TfT decide to grow its output there seem to be three options each requiring different organisational models of growth:

Option 1: Centralise Operations: Bring it down south!

In this scenario the centre at Kleinmond is expanded both in the number of employees and physical infrastructure to meet the increased demand for training. As part of the increase in personnel staff would be employed to initiate, build and resource country and sub-regional networks of past graduates.

This option has a number of draw backs in that capital will need to be spent on improving infrastructure at the Grail [learning spaces, computers, cottages, office space] In addition this type of centralisation seems antithetical to TfT approach which seeks to build local and sub-regional capacities and agency of people to step up and lead their own development processes and organisation.

Option 2: Decentralise: Spread the spark!

In this option TfT would develop a model which decentralises training into specific organisations, countries or sub regions each part of a wider network. This option could reduce the cost of training as it would happen more locally for participants. The challenge here would be to ensure quality control of training programs, management of staff in far flung offices and adequate financing. A possible variation of the decentralisation option maybe to allow each region to develop independently with no central office for funding, resourcing and quality assurance of regional programs.

Option 3: Decentralise from the south!

In this option TfT would continue to operate from The Grail with no expansion in infrastructure but a change in the way in which the course is offered. In this scenario the theoretical aspects of the course are offered online through online study groups run from The Grail . The implementation of learning in organisations would be undertaken by ‘in the field’ facilitators who visit participants and provide on the job coaching and mentoring for implementing the theoretical concepts. If attention is paid to building strong country and sub-regional networks they would provide necessary support online learners. The Grail would then be used for more regular Thinkwells and meeting of graduates to refresh ideas and practices.

The impact study highlights the ground is fertile for TfT to grow. The seed has been planted and it’s popped its head above the ground. The challenge to TfT from these 3 studies is to follow the process of growth it has initiated, to dream again and to grow a new.



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