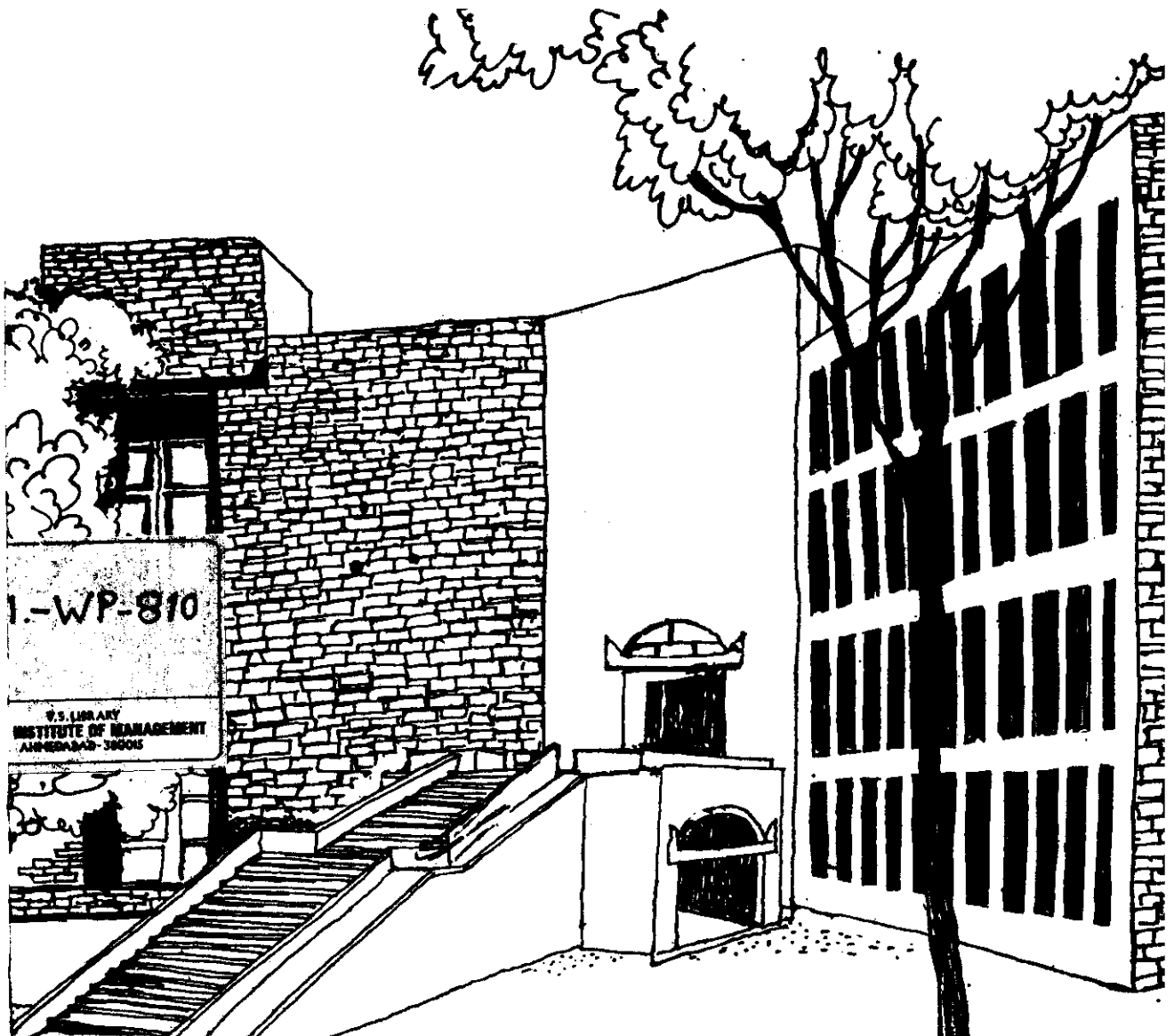




# Working Paper



PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGEMENT TRAINING  
OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN AFRICA

By

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PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGEMENT TRAINING OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN AFRICA

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Paper written for International Labour Office  
Geneva  
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1989

## PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGEMENT TRAINING OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN AFRICA

### Abstract

This paper is based on a series of workshops and seminars held in Africa on issues of management training for women managers and trainers. Like many third world countries many nations of Africa have focused on economic growth through industrialization. Industrialization leads to creation of formal organizations. Opportunities of education provide women an entry into managerial roles in organizations. This entry confronts women with new interfaces with people and systems. The traditional processes are inadequate and insufficient to interface with structures, systems and people in formal work settings. Organizations employ women based on task requirements. But they get caught with dilemmas of assigning women tasks and the expectations of their behaviour anchored in social structures and processes. Management training programmes require space to explore these new interfaces which both women managers and organizations face. This paper identifies some of the broader societal context of Africa in which these issues exist. It highlights some of the findings from the research and seminar with both men and women employers as well as women managers. It then identifies implications and directions for further research and training so that both men and women managers in organizations can evolve relevant models of learning.

## PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGEMENT TRAINING OF WOMEN MANAGERS IN AFRICA

### Introduction

Each culture and society provides space for its membership to belong. Similarly each era provides challenges and opportunities for the culture and society to unfold and create new directions. The twentieth century has been a century for dramatic changes for all cultures and societies across the world as well as individuals. This century has witnessed the technological and industrial era. It has witnessed two world wars. Countries and continents have awakened after years of slavery, subjugation and surrender to take charge of their lives and to give shape to their nation. And this century has witnessed the awakening of women from induced sleep of socio-cultural traditions to take a serious look at themselves their potentials, capabilities and new roles. They have discovered their dreams, hopes and aspirations. And above all they have discovered their processes of choice making and action potentials.

The women across cultures have asked themselves the question -- what is it they can achieve and what is it they can bring if they but tried. The last four decades have been the momentum decades for women. They have entered areas of work where their mothers and grandmothers feared to even dream about. They have entered those spaces the women themselves did not consider was their space. And to their surprise they have discovered they have potentials and capabilities for performance. For long the women have lived with the universal frames of discrimination deprivation, denials, and experienced injustice, unfairness, and inequalities. However, they have discovered their resillience

and persisted in enlarging their vision as well as horizons. One of the major breakthroughs which the women have made is their entry in formal work organizations in capacity of managers. Women managers, women in management, women entrepreneurs, women supervisors and women as employees of industries and organizations is a reality which has come to stay. The simultaneous pulls and pushes from the environment, economic and monetary considerations, quality of life and aspirations of women has resulted in new roles of women.

The pull of the industrial era has catapulted women into formal work organizations and significant managerial roles across continents and across cultures. Nations and institutions across the world have been concerned with the issues of professional development of women. Management institutions have taken up developmental activity to educate and train women in the managerial roles. This paper focuses on the managerial and professional development of women in Africa in formal work organizations.

#### Background of the Paper

This paper is written at the request of Ms. Gretchen Goodale, Director, Women and Development, ILO, Geneva. It is based on series of workshops and seminars focusing on issues of Management Training with special focus on women managers and women in management. The first step with a series of follow-up steps was a workshop held in December 1987 in Douala Cameroun. It was jointly sponsored by UNDP/EDI/ILO. The objectives of the workshop on "African women, development planning and management" was to strengthen training Institutions in Africa with a view to accelerate the development, participation and professional orientation of women to work in the continent.

The specific objectives as stated for the workshop by Prof. Alfred C. Modjanagni, Secretary General, Pan African Institute for Development were the following:

- to identify the factors which account for the weak representation of African women in managerial posts and in training programmes as well as in advisory services aimed at developing management skills;
- to identify problems related to the development of women's management skills and the possibilities of enhancing the efficiency of the organisations which represent them and defend their interests;
- to identify reasons for the weak integration of women in economic planning and in training as well as advisory activities undertaken by African institutions;
- to identify priority target groups;
- to identify and promote mechanisms of collaboration between African training institutions, organisations and associations, such as the creation of networks and pooling of resources and expertise;
- to propose a plan of action specifying the fields of activities to be developed in collaboration with African institutions, within the framework of the UNDP/EDI/ILO project.

Arising from this workshop was a follow-up activity proposed by CESAG Dakar, Senegal and coordinated by Mme. Marguerite Dupuy. She prepared a proposal for a research study on women



managers and their employer. Madame Dupuy had designed a preliminary questionnaire and carried out a survey to identify the basic needs of training. Subsequently, to strengthen the research instrument a seminar was held in Dakar, Senegal for Women Managers and Employers in August 1988. Similarly, another workshop on Research on Women in Management was held at IDM, Mzumbe, Tanzania in December 1988.

Based on the research findings a seminar on Curriculum Development for Women Managers and Training for Trainers was held in CIGE Abidjan Cote D. Ivoire in March 1989. The objectives of this seminar was to design and develop curriculum for women managers and trainers. The objective was to design and prepare curriculum relevant to the women managers within the socio-cultural context, the formal structures, policies, strategies and tasks of the organization as well as the relevant managerial roles of women.

Traditionally, the need assessment programmes, workshops and seminars largely held in various countries focus on skill building. The conceptual inputs attempt to change the behavioural dimension of role taking in organizations. These programmes design training inputs on motivation, leadership, communication, management of meetings, project designing and planning and various dimensions of supervisory skills. At another level the focus is on inter-personal and inter-role skills. As such the needs identified are team building, conflict resolution, inter-personal skills and collaborative work. All these dimensions are relevant. However, often the conceptual focus on organization structures, formal tasks, formal and functional task based inter-depend relationships and dimensions of policy and strategy get ignored. Similarly, in the third

world countries where many of these programmes are held ignore the socio-cultural realities from where the women acquire role taking processes.

The special attention in this project was to go beyond the traditional designs of management training and inputs. It was to evolve a design and inputs based on research of not only the training needs but also the

- understanding of the socio-cultural context in which the organizations exist
- understand the level of organization structures, task and technology
- the degree of complexity of the country's business environment in which the organizations do business
- the quality of individuals employed and their understanding and clarity of their own roles both in the family and work setting
- finally to discover what are the strengths of the socio-cultural context, the organizations and the women managers, and

then to assess how much of the socio-cultural baggage and the role taking processes not relevant in the organizations were being carried over to the organizations.

It was in this overall focus that the three workshops/seminars were designed. This paper attempts to put together the processes and experiences of the workshops/seminars, the theoretical and the conceptual framework that emerged. It then

highlights what emerged from the findings of first designing the research instrument and the two special seminars with employers and women managers.

As African nations follow the path of industrialization, there is a trend to increase the number of formal organisations. These organizations are manufacturing based or service centered. As these organizations grow in size, their structure and complexity also grows. It then becomes necessary that both organizations and men and women managers move from a technical and skill-based orientation to a more managerial orientation. Both the external industrial environment and international businesses make inroads in African countries and influence the growth of organizations. It becomes necessary for management institutions, both national and regional, to develop expertise in providing the basic conceptual inputs for the development of a managerial orientation as distinct from a technical or administrative orientation. Conceptual inputs and a managerial orientation congruent with national, social, cultural and organizational realities are essential so that management institutions both at the national and regional levels can carry out comprehensive research and design appropriate training inputs.

The seminars/workshop reflected the attempts of the UNDP/EDI/ILO to initiate inter-institutional collaboration in Africa for generating, disseminating and sharing knowledge and information. This workshop/seminars focusing on research methodologies and the design of appropriate research instruments, was critical to identify the needs of new clients of management development institutions (e.g. women managers) and to design relevant and appropriate training materials for conducting

training programmes for this clientele and for trainers. Training for women managers based on such knowledge would add to increasing professionalism, a work ethos and a managerial orientation anchored in the reality of formal organisations and their country contexts.

#### Profile of the participants

The participants came from different management development institutions representing Eastern, Southern and Western Africa. These were women and men who were well-educated, intelligent and had professional skills in teaching and research. The women also represented an orientation to professionalism. They possessed experience and expertise of a varying nature and number of years. In addition to their professional orientation, these women also had specific social and cultural orientations which defined their being women and women faculty. With their education and experiences in institutions both abroad and nationally and as women, they articulated an organisational analysis which initially reflected a universal view of women being discriminated against, deprived of legitimate status and holding marginal and secondary roles in formal work settings. However, within the comparative framework, the conceptual understanding of formal organisations and managerial roles was blurred. The participants lacked a perspective of a broader managerial orientation and a conceptual clarity of formal organisations, complex structures, issues of policy, tasks and managerial roles. They were cognitively familiar with the research tools, and skilled in following the research format and data collection. However, their analysis was grounded in their personal attitudinal bases, rather than in a realistic appraisal of formal organisations and role interfaces. All the participants were sincere, and

committed to bring relevance and meaningfulness to the research methodology. What was needed was a perspective to understand the transition their countries were experiencing, and to move away from a comparative frame in order to discover the contextual realities of organisations and people working in them. It was equally important to understand what the women themselves were bringing to the organizations and institutions.

#### Profile of the resource persons

The resource group represented a multi-cultural and multi-national membership, which brought to the workshop diverse approaches and experiences to the issue of women managers, their training and research methodology on women in management. Their inputs provided a broad base for understanding the need for research linked to training. The participants also were of diverse nationalities and socio-cultural backgrounds, adding to the richness of learning, and broadening the scope of relevant areas of research. The resource persons worked as a team. Cohesiveness and collaboration increased as resource persons shared with each other their own choice of methodologies, orientation, values and beliefs about issues of women and training and management. The participation generated a clear understanding of the multiple perspectives, the impact of cultures, society and family, and impact of education, training and work experience. It led to an acceptance of differences and understanding of similarities. And above all it became clear that in designing research and training inputs understanding the realities of the context, country and people are critical for relevant programme design.

## Context of research in Africa

It is important to understand and identify the context in which the inputs are to be provided. Researchers have carried the frame of technological and mechanical mode of identifying problems and problem-solving to human behaviour patterns. The human beings behaviour emerges from processes of acculturation and socialization from within the cultural, social and familial structures. As such, any attempt to bring inputs to people for their behaviour needs to understand the context from which the behaviour emerges. As such, besides understanding the research methodologies it is critical to understand the social and contextual factors the organization structures, tasks and processes and the new role of women entering organizations in their managerial capacity.

In most developing countries, little or no time and effort have been spent to design research methodologies relevant in the country. The design of organisations, the research instruments, the research methodologies, the constructs, the definition and modes of interpretation and the analysis can all be found readily available from other countries (usually western industrialised countries). It is easy and simple to use the available frameworks. However, in so doing, skewed and biased answers emerge. Each research methodology is anchored in the ideological postulates and assumptions held by the researcher and the cultural context from which the researcher comes. As such, the decision to borrow research models to understand, interpret and analyse the African context may ultimately lead to an insufficient and often inaccurate understanding of what exists. A realistic appraisal of the context and processes existing in

the country needs to be made first. This process would then facilitate design of inputs for research and training.

In identifying a research methodology and designing a research instrument or tool or designing a training programme, especially for women in management and women managers in Africa, there are certain issues which need to be understood.

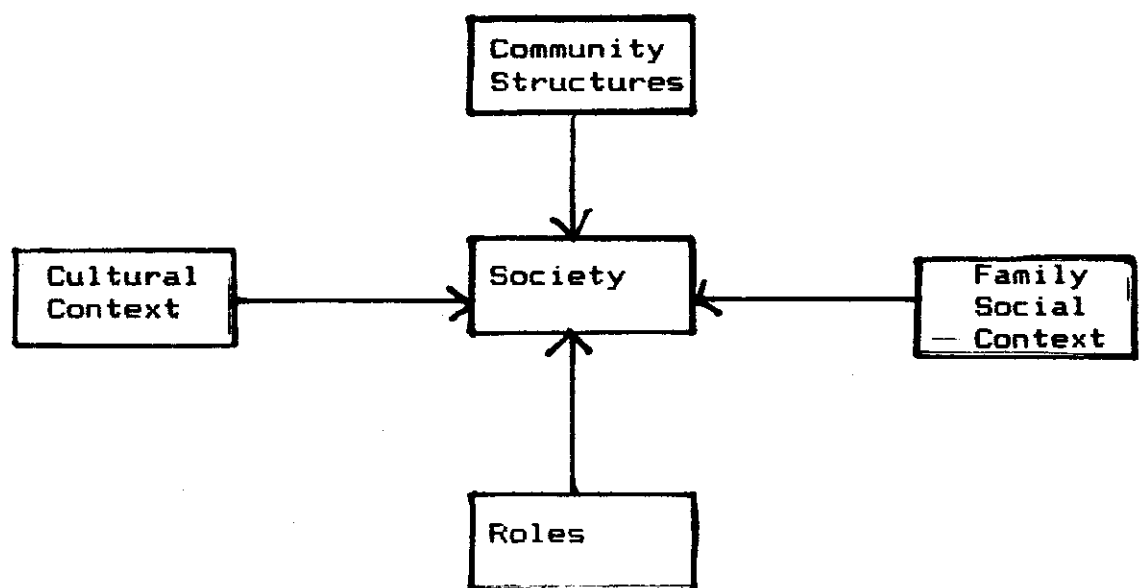
1. In Africa, both men and women and their social and formal work organisations, are in a process of transition. The nature of this transition and its impact on organizations, social systems, and role-taking of people within both systems need to be understood.
2. Formal work organisations are a recent phenomenon in Africa. To understand managerial roles, the dimensions of formal organisations, as designed, as emergent and operative, need to be understood.
3. The Government policies define the boundaries of growth, direction and development in industrial sector.
4. Organizations grow at differential pace in size, technology and complexity.
5. In Africa there are a large number of entrepreneurial, small and medium sized organizations. There are a very few large and mammoth organizations.
6. Women have been relegated to specific roles in society. As such, the socio-cultural context, as perceived by both men and women, needs to be understood.

7. Women are only recent entrants into formal work organizations. They bring to the organisations their roles of social systems, as well as their new aspirations. They hope to achieve a professional orientation.

Given the above context of growth let us look at the traditional model of society which existed in Africa. Let us then look at the nature of transition which emerged with the beginning and introduction of industrial focus of growth. And then let us look at the issue of entry of women in organizations.

The traditional societies reflected a slow and gradual change. The life space, living processes and the social design were anchored in the stability of the community and well defined relationships. Draeatic changes only occurred in times of war or natural calamities.

Figure 1. Traditional model of society

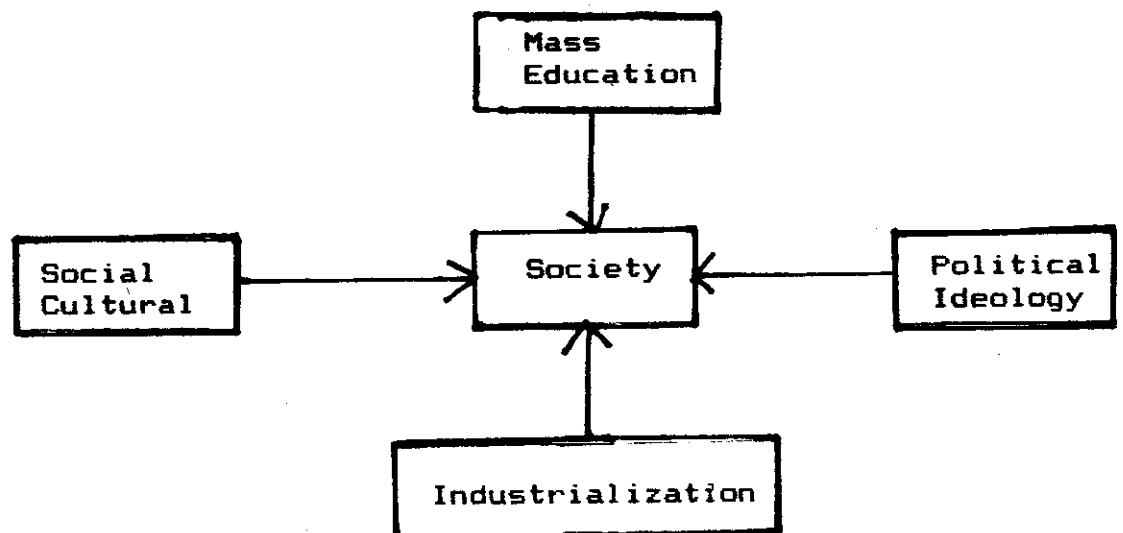




Within traditional societies, the role-taking of both men and women was integrative in nature. Boundaries of the community and "belonging" were clear, and men and women had their appropriate and legitimate locations and spaces. The expectations of role performance were clearly defined as per the social structure.

The twentieth century brought about dramatic and traumatic changes in the world order. Independence and industrial development took place, which combined to create a situation of industrial development resulting in transition. New dimensions were introduced in the socio-cultural fabric.

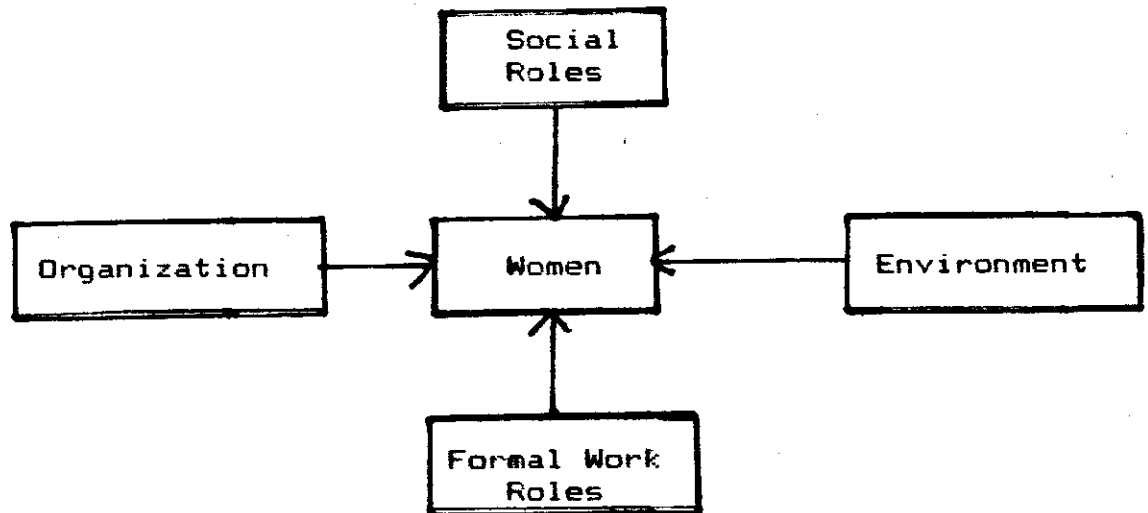
Figure 2. New variables in the traditional societal model



The independence of countries brought about political structures anchored in ideologies of nations. Countries focused on social development through mass education and economic growth through industrialization. Both education and industrialisation brought women into the settings of formal work organizations.

Besides holding roles as daughters, wives and mothers, women added a new role, that of employees in organizations.

Figure 3. Old and new role parameters of women in management



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Women's entry in formal organisations demanded new responses and modes of role performance. The social roles defined for women in traditional societies were inadequate in work organizations. In the initial phases of entry into formal work organizations (which were small in size and managerial role-taking had retained its personalized quality), it was easier for both men and women to carry over their social structures and modes of relating to formal organizations. The organisations also provided inputs for skill development and techniques for improving job performance. However, as organisations grew in size and complexity, the traditional modes of operating and role-taking were insufficient as well as limiting for both the individual as well as the organization. For men and women equipped and socialised only through their families and social

systems the adding of new role dimensions presented difficulties. Therefore, to understand the entry of women into management and their managerial roles requires an understanding as well as clarity of how women themselves experience and perceive their social as well as their work roles in the larger context of the society. Any research focusing on methodology, content, data collection, interpretation and analysis must clarify the assumptions operative within the social context and within the new working context to discover how the systems are held together by its membership, including women.

My experiences in many third world countries with both men and women managers, employers, owners-cum-managers and policy-makers suggest that managerial role-taking becomes difficult if there is a lack of clarity of the dimensions and characteristics of formal work organisations, formal structures and role-taking. Research methodologies and designs which are anchored in universal (e.g. western) contexts and general organizational frames can help identify the lacunae, the inadequacies, the insufficiencies and the inefficiencies of managerial role performance. They also help identify the problem areas within organisational structures and task performance, and can provide ready-made solutions (including training) related to the identification of the problem. But this approach does not necessarily add new or relevant responses for solving the problems which have been identified.

Let us now address ourselves to the nature of shifts and transition which have taken place in societies, organizations and women's role.

1. Shift from definitions of community design social structures and role-taking to the emergence of the context of industrialisation and wage earning society. Within this new context definitions of formal work organizations and their structures and role-taking processes are a new dimension and quality.
2. Shift from entrepreneurial, small scale home-based industry to formal, small and medium size production and manufacturing organizations. A further shift to large and mammoth organizations. In this process of transition it was easier to manage small and medium sized organizations. There was some degree of efficiency through the transfer of existing social structures and role-taking processes. There is a qualitative shift in the concept of quality and definition of role-taking in large and mammoth organizations.
3. Shift in affiliative processes of community living anchored in relationships to technological complexity, increase in the size of the organisation, its structure, hierarchy, levels of management and modes of relationship. New structures, forms and modes of relationship got introduced.
4. In Africa, there exists multiple definitions of organisations and meanings given to the levels of management. The same can be said of various levels and areas of responsibility.

5. Shift of women's role in the social system to women entering organizations equipped with formal education, skills and competence to occupy various managerial positions and designations. However, the degree of professionalism varies. There is also ambivalence in the meanings given to formal role-taking. The shift creates pulls and pushes of social and work structures influencing the emergence of professionalism in women.
6. Once in organisations and in managerial roles, both men and women transfer social structures, attitudes and role processes to the formal work processes. The degree and extent of this transfer also varies.
7. Within formal organisations, forms of social relationships are often transferred to work and functional relationships. Characteristics of both have to be clearly identified before new modes of relationships at work can emerge.

Shift in the concept of social authority and responsibility to concepts related to work, tasks, functions, structures, and authority.

It is important to understand these shifts to design relevant research and research methodologies, tools and instruments to establish a benchmark, and then to identify what new definitions of organizations and formal work structures need to be evolved. Conceptual clarity about organizational policies, strategies, goals, objectives, tasks and performance can then be achieved. If a professional role for women managers is to emerge, there must first be clarity of role-taking in two

distinct systems: in the home and work context. There also has to be clarity in the definitions of both the systems and the role performance required in each.

Given the state of transition which has already occurred in Africa, many existing research instruments developed and used can only provide partial data. New methodologies and instruments based on the realities of specific African contexts are now essential to carry out sound research to facilitate designs of management education.

### The Workshops/Seminars

The workshops/seminars provided an opportunity to raise and explore some of the above issues. The participants at length explored the issues of what it means to be women managers from their experiences as teachers, consultants and trainers. They shared their own experiences of role-taking in formal organisations with existing frames of women's role. Initially, the discussions highlighted processes of deprivation, discrimination, marginality and women relegated to secondary positions in the organizations and nation building. They talked of blockages, barriers and burdens. These statements and issues reflected the syndrome of women's subordinate and dependent role and position worldwide. The participants soon discovered that identification of these aspects alone however, would not lead to the removal or management of these lacunae. Each society and culture has also opportunity structures for new role-taking. Both aspects, opportunities and obstacles, need to be identified for a realistic appraisal of women's situation. Therefore, the participants struggled to identify these dimensions. They also examined stereotypes of men and society and stereotypes of their

own roles they held. They made attempts to explore how new dimensions could be identified and the definition of women's roles in functional and formal organizations.

Identification of these issues led to the designing of research inputs, teaching materials and inputs. There was definitely a shift in the way of working. Participants made a realistic appraisal of their own strengths, capabilities and limitations due to availability or lack of relevant inputs. They identified training inputs which women managers require for better performance. The design of the workshop, which provided for meetings with women managers from the organizations nearby and employers provided a realistic way of appraising managerial roles, organisational structures, policies designed by top management, strategies for growth of business, organisational goals, objectives, tasks, and processes of decision-making, and modes of evaluation, rewards and punishment. The questionnaires the participants designed were tested within the context of several enterprises (large) at different levels of the hierarchy and with both men and women. The findings indicated a clear need for a more innovative way of assessing work, tasks and role performance in the African context.

What the participants discovered while discussing with employers and employees both men and, to their surprise, was that similar feelings which they hold as women are also experienced and held by men managers. The discussions with employers and employees, both men and women, confronted the women participants with the need to examine issues of work ethos and culture in the African context which create certain work attitudes and performance, rather than just comparing men and women or women

alone as relegated to a marginal and secondary status. This encounter provided for a more realistic search for understanding formal work organisation as distinct from social systems requiring new responses from them.

#### Employer and Employee Seminar

As part of identifying the attitudes and orientations of both employers and women managers of organizations in the African context two seminars were organized. Similarly, to verify some of the assumptions of organisation functions, its structure and processes and women's role in it, the participants of the workshops/seminars visited the organizations. What emerged from these are highlighted below.

#### The Employers Seminar

There were both men and women employers in the seminar. They were interested in the results of the study and were concerned about women's entry into management positions, their roles, career aspirations, and the kind of jobs they were doing. The men employers were primarily concerned about the women's behaviour in the organisation. The women employers, however, were concerned with the performance of women and the social constraints they faced while working. However, both men and women employers made the following observations and statements:

- Employers by and large do not see whether the people they are recruiting are men or women.
- Employers tend to focus on the best aptitude and people for the job they are to perform.



- Organizations expect that a woman entering a job changes attitudes of her social position and consider herself as an employee.
- In Africa, very often social influence and relationships are brought to influence the organization. These need to be kept separate.
- A woman must learn to deal with male superiors, colleagues and subordinates in the organization differently than she deals with men in her other roles in social setting.
- Male managers face problems as well. Both men and women need to be given tools, techniques and skills of management.
- There are many activities in which women succeed better than men, and as such, organizationally it is an issue of ~~putting the right person in the right job.~~
- In Africa, an organisation is perceived differently from the society in which it exists. It is an artificial construct and behaviour has to be adapted accordingly.
- Organisations are also like societies. They tend to reflect the attitudes prevalent in the particular society, and they tend to reflect the social processes at work.

The women employers had some specific observations about women managers. They themselves being women shared their struggle and highlighted some of the dimensions which according to them were special for women.

- Women managers need to do better than men.
- Their personal lives have to be sacrificed for their careers.
- They have to either remain unmarried or end up in divorce. Women managers have fewer and spaced children.
- Women are responsible for all social occasions in the family and community. This responsibility takes them away from their jobs, career paths and professionalism.
- Social roles and participation are also important for women. Some women have to give up participation in social roles for their careers in the organization. This generates a lot of criticism from family and community for women.
- Women have to learn to be managers first and then women.
- Women need to be assertive and perform.
- They need to work longer hours to prove themselves.

These were the basic themes that emerged. The discussions focussed on the significance of social context, social hierarchy, social expectations, traditional roles, and that women need to adapt. At one level, the employers stated that there is a continuity between social processes and organisational processes, including the social role behaviour of women. At another level however, they expected women to be managers in formal organisations.

Most of the men and women employers who were in the seminar have been educated abroad. They have cognitive clarity about their jobs and tasks. They differentiate between social and organisational roles and yet, in the translation of cognitive clarity to implementation, they were at a loss as to define exactly what responses they expected from women. Performance and achievement were acceptable. But the accompanying behaviour was seen as aggressive, competing and against the social cultural parameters set by the society for women. The women employers were themselves successful women, harsh task masters on themselves, and had sacrificed marriage and social life to a large extent to succeed. They demanded the same from other women employees if they were to succeed. Yet the women felt that the sacrifice was great and they had missed out on something which was important in their personal lives. They live with a sense of loss and as such, work became more time consuming as a compensation to manage the feeling of loss. Another compensation was that once they had succeeded, these women were a financial resource for their family. They took pride in being such a support to their social context. They also acquired social status and significance which they valued.

The men employers found it difficult to accept emotionally women competing with men, being as aggressive as men, and becoming professionally oriented. At one level they accepted women's entry but what kind of a managerial role would be acceptable to them was not very clear. The employers emotively accepted the social role prescribed for women, yet they thought that social responsibilities, social demands, pregnancies, child care, and other social roles constrained the managerial role performance of women. At one point, the employers found it

difficult to accept that women had specific problems as women managers in organizations. Therefore, they believed training was training and a manager was a manager. Men or women need to play their roles effectively. However, the nature and dimension of effective managerial roles within the specific organisational structure available was not clear to them.

These discussions suggest that conceptual clarity is required regarding organisations and women managers and the differences between the two distinct kinds of belonging these women are a part of:

- social belonging anchored in culture, tradition, family and history; and
- participation in formal work organisations anchored in formal structures, tasks, goals, policies, objectives, managerial role and performance.

With such conceptual clarity, it would then become evident that role-taking in two systems is quite different and so are the relationships, concepts of authority, hierarchy and professionalism. Women need to be with a new orientation to their own roles as managers, and with a clearer understanding about these systems.

The employers seminar provided an opportunity for both men and women employers to reflect on their attitudes, expectations and orientations towards women's entry in managerial role positions. It identified insights that in the context of transition there exists expectations contradictions and burdens which are not easily managed. It did provide clarity about the

nature of lacunas, focus and orientation of inputs and the effort required to bring about emotive responses. It also highlighted the fact that women's entry inevitably would influence the men's role both in the home as well as organization.

One thing was clear, the major issue confronting organisations, employers and women managers was the transition taking place in African societies accompanied by a tremendous anxiety and apprehension about the emergence of new systems and roles. One of the significant inputs of training would be to facilitate this transition and arrive at an emotively acceptable role-taking which could be effective both in the social setting as well as in the formal work organisational setting.

Any training input which does not facilitate social redefinition by integration of the dynamic aspects of African socio-cultural settings would not be enduring. Its translation and implementation would be almost impossible, or at best, it would only bring about behavioural and cognitive responses, but would not be multiplied or utilised in the work setting.

The discussions provided clarity about the context and framework of organizational structures, tasks, relationships, managerial roles and responsibilities, expectations, evaluations and performance. In the redesigning of the research instrument a whole new section on organisational structure, size, policies, role, performance, and evaluation was added. Some organisational policy, strategy and value statements were added in the employers questionnaire as well, to provide baseline data. The redesigning of the questionnaires took extensive time. Every question was discussed in the context of Africa, rather than only

organizations or women's role. The attempt was to make it as comprehensive as possible.

#### Women Managers Seminar

The women managers seminar was held on 13-14 August 1988. About 25 women from a diverse range of jobs, roles and organisations participated. Some of them were on leave, while others participated despite their many other commitments. It was a lively group ready to participate and share experiences. The participants were divided into four groups to share and discuss the following two themes identified by the resource team:

- The role of women managers in the organisation and their expectations.
- Personal and professional "projects" and the constraints and opportunities women managers face in achieving their objectives.

The resource group distributed themselves among the four groups. Their role was largely to observe and facilitate the discussions and help the rapporteurs summarise them for presentation to the total group. The following issues emerged when the four groups returned to the plenary and made their presentations.

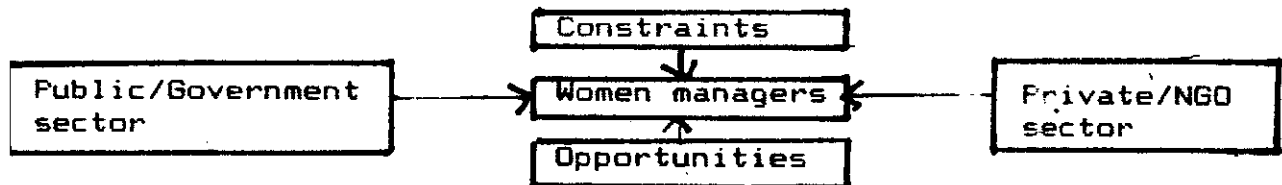
- There is a need for managerial training as opposed to technical and vocational skill training for women managers.
- Women are ambitious to learn and grow. Without new knowledge and information women would not develop further. They would be with a handicap or disadvantage.

- There is a need for clarity about the nature of formal organisations as distinct from social organisations.
- Women have to be creative and innovative to be effective.
- Women get stuck in routine roles in organisation, especially those in the public sector.
- An organisation is a place to get a salary.
- If you have initiative and wishes to act you discover that organisations are rigid, which leads to women feeling helpless and frustrated.
- Success in the organization gives women social status and significance.
- An organisation offers a context where individual assertiveness and potentials can be brought out. It also represents a means of making a good living.
- New relationships and contacts are developed in formal organisations.
- Women need to communicate, and have information and skills to grow in the organization.

The discussions were anchored in personal experiences, observations and analyses. The participants held a marked distinction between how public sector organizations and private sector organizations are perceived and held by employees. These are unverified perceptions and beliefs which often reinforces lack of efficiency and effective role taking in organizations. Systems are attributed certain qualities and then role holders

sit back and perpetuate the same equalities. From the presentations, we can identify the following dimensions:

Figure 4. The interface of women managers and organisations



The majority of the women stated that public sector organisations are rigid in structure, stagnant in ideas and large in size. All these factors operate as constraints on women managers. They cannot be promoted and cannot take initiative. Their motivation suffers, as the social evaluation of their entry into managerial roles brings criticism from the organization, as well as initially, from the husband and the family.

Private sector organisations are perceived as giving more space for achievement. They are flexible, provide room to participate in decision-making, and policy areas are clearer. However, women managers do not have much choice. According to the majority of the women they agreed that public sector organizations provide the most job opportunities. Women also agreed that men manage their organisational roles combined with their social roles. In the above perceptions the discussions revolved around what is limiting and constraining. There are other perceptions which can simultaneously exist. The perceptions also have to be verified with reality. For example,



- Can women identify opportunities in the public sector?
- What could be limitations in the private sector?
- What kinds of managerial roles are women taking in organizations?
- Can they create opportunities, given the stagnant and rigid structures of the public sector?
- In what ways could they be effective, given the existing social and work parameters?

The discussions that followed once again highlighted the fact that although women are aware of their jobs, there is little clarity about managerial role-taking in large and formal organisations. Some of the women had chosen to remain single as work demands all their energy. They felt that work and organisations were their first husband. A large number of women who had succeeded had ended in divorce and sacrificed many of their social roles and relationships.

This discussions led to the second task. The small groups discussed the second theme of personal and professional projects. The presentations reflected the following impressions as regards "professional life".

- In the first generation of women entering professions, some have given first priority to their work.
- Another set of women felt that their first priority is still the home, and work is a means of supplementing income.

- Success in professional life brings success in personal life.
- Women can succeed in professional work through good education and the motivation to achieve.
- Organisational structures are influenced by social structures and as such, they can be constraining, or they can be translated into opportunities.
- Training provides opportunities and is an important factor to promotion.
- Women's networks and powerful social relations provide opportunities.
- Awareness of one's legal rights can add to one's professional success.
- Femininity and being a woman is both a professional opportunity and a constraint.

The themes identified within the context of "personal life" reflected the following patterns:

- In personal life, marriage and children are an opportunity. African women want most to have successful personal lives.
- Women who succeed in professional life often have divorces, fewer children, conflicts and stress. Many women do not marry. It was also felt that some women marry young and later start their professional career. This leads to conflict and often divorce. But, "once you

find a second husband, both personal and professional life seemed to settle down". This was not a generalisation, but a personal statement.

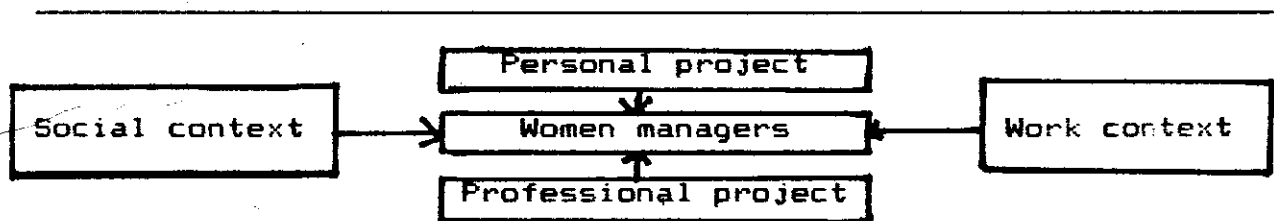
- There are personal constraints on achieving professional success. These are femininity, maternity leave, repeated pregnancies, children, demands from social relationships, sexual aggression and rivalry.
- The social demands of events such as births, marriages and deaths are heavy on women. They become major constraints on punctuality and effectiveness at work. Women are very often tired.
- Number of women felt that once women have more children, it stabilises them. However, a majority felt that it "holds them to ransom" in organisations. They are stressed.
- To be a woman in Africa, working in a modern organisation is to struggle against social and cultural traditions, stereotypes of women as sexual objects and subordinates, and against environmental marginality.
- Most women agreed that they have paid a heavy price to succeed in the organisations. However, they felt that they could easily handle more responsibility participate in designing policy and in decision-making and relate more effectively to superiors, subordinates and colleagues, if the organization and the environment were more supportive. The women were ready to take challenges, sacrifice and motivate themselves if rewards, recognition and achievements were forthcoming. Some women were definitely

asking themselves whether the price they had paid in terms of remaining single, divorced, or having no children was really worth it. Some of them reflected whether they would have been better off had they remained uneducated, married, and had many children.

The women shared their anguish of making these choices. As African "pioneers" and determined in their spirit, they are caught between the cross currents of a culture in transition. With their exposure, education and aspirations, they cannot fully function as part of the socio-cultural tradition to which their parents belonged, yet the new path they are taking has as yet no acceptable role models or directions. These women are forging a new culture and tradition, but with immense personal stress, anguish, sacrifice and a high personal price.

The above dilemma can be depicted to show the multiple context and multiple roles the African women face.

Figure 5: - Women's interface with multiple contexts



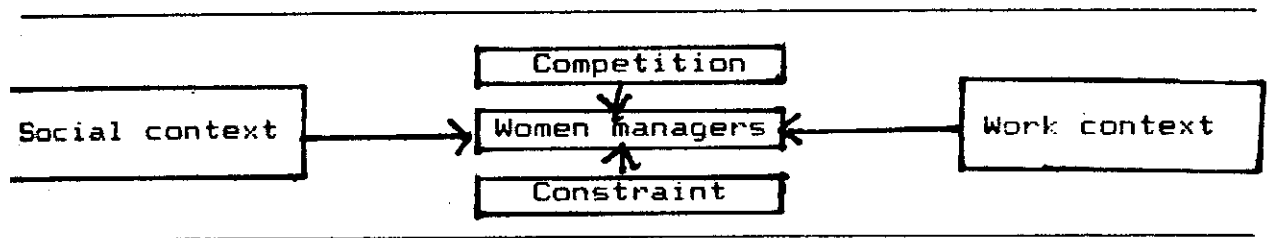
Women's entry into organizations and their career growth has made them part of two contexts. Their personal, social, and familial setting and network of relationships, and their work

context, with professional and career aspirations which demand a new orientation to structure, systems, tasks and relationships.

The women are pulled and pushed from the two systems and their own feelings of belonging and membership. They cannot give up their professional aspiration as it gives them the satisfaction of utilising their education and qualifications, a sense of meaning, economic autonomy and, to a large extent, self-reliance. It also gives them a voice in making choices and decisions. But at the same time, they lose some of the security which comes from being anchored in traditional belonging. Simultaneously, some women experience increased demands from their large families and extended kinship networks. They are expected to provide financial resources and assistance.

The discussions from the group and their personal sharing suggested that women are caught between two worlds. Sometimes, the two worlds compete with each other for the women's time, attention and quality of response. At other times, women are caught between the constraints and opportunities of the two worlds. At different points of growth, age, and professional career, women find their social context and roles as constraints, and escape into the world of work. At other times, the professional context becomes a dead end, and women experience stagnation, frustration and often, nostalgic memories of a "good old world". Their dilemma can be reflected in the following figure:

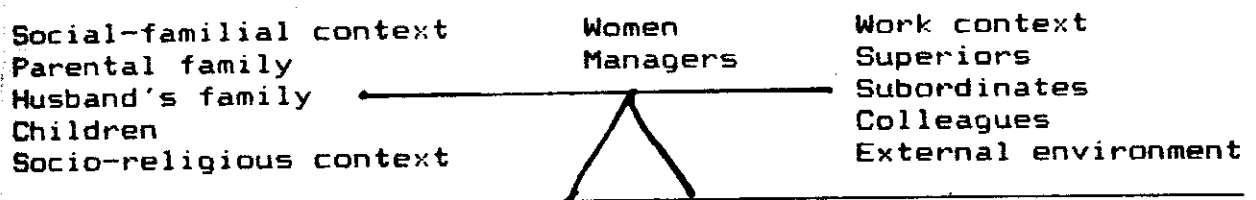
Figure 6: Women's dilemma in the interface between the contexts



The two systems of social and work become fragmented or compartmentalised, and women are torn between the two. The residual feeling is that she has lost out. She ends up with a conflict of choices and in determining priorities between the two. Whichever she chooses, she holds the stress and the onus of defiance or guilt. At the entry phase she experiences little support either from the family or from the work setting. However, women in Africa cannot give up their new roles and the world of work. For the world of work fulfills their need for economic autonomy and other important aspirations, and eventually gives her social status and a source of fulfilling her ambitions.

The struggle women face seems to be how to make the two worlds complimentary rather than competing, mutually supportive rather than constraining, facilitating rather than impeding, and an integrative process rather than one which tears them apart. The women seemed to want an understanding of how to redistribute their life space and redefine relationships. Parents, the husband and his family, plus one's professional life all seem to claim and demand, with equal intensity, a woman's time and space. If we put the social and work context on a scale, one can identify the woman's dilemma and her struggle to make choices.

**Figure 7: See-saw between two contexts**



One can see that centuries of tradition and religious belonging and the social familial setting where women have acquired certain roles require a large share of energy and emotive responses, while work demands largely intellectual capabilities. From the social setting there is a continuity which extends to the work setting, while the work setting is a discrete universe, with models of relationships which cannot be easily transferred to the social or family setting. As such, many women felt that they needed to understand the redistribution of time and space and the redefinition of relationships at both home and at work.

These women from Africa represent the first generation of women entering wage-earning jobs which demand orientations and attitudes that are unique to formal organisational structures and managerial roles. Africa has had a tradition of women being in business and trade. In fact, women are said to have considerable business acumen and success. These women have had the option to travel for business. They have been the source of economic growth, prosperity and have added to the quality of life of their families and themselves. The larger social context also provided support whereby children were looked after by an extended family or community network. In the social setting, women accepted their place and location and provided many children to the husbands.

Today, however, the processes of urbanisation have reduced the effectiveness of the extended family and the community support system. Some women keep their salaries as separate and do not contribute to a joint economy. Their children are managed by others, as is the home. With shifts and changes in the context of living, some women feel they have lost the privileges of both contexts, home and work.

The consensus was that if they received training on the above dimensions they would be better equipped to deal with the demands on them and to respond effectively. They wanted functional training and conceptual clarity about the nature and definition of their social and work contexts and their own roles in them. Many women felt that as they were in the world of men they needed to act like men. Some organizations expected it. Women were often expected to work until almost child birth, and to return to work at the earliest possible moment.

Similarly, if women brought their skills from the family setting to deal with their subordinates, they were reprimanded for "mothering" or "sistering" them. There are ways of dealing sensibly with men superiors, subordinates and colleagues. There are also problems and difficulties, but women feel that if intermediaries do not interfere, they can manage. However, they need some clarity about formal and functional organisational role behaviour. The main concern was that men are their superiors, subordinates and colleagues and are also from the same society. Therefore, they cannot help but bring certain attitudes to work. Like organisations in social settings, there are no formal rules and regulations. In the family, there are traditions and ways of relating with people, and they cannot be changed to new



modalities overnight. In their new work contexts, women need support to deal with their own social stereotypes of role-taking and learn new role modalities.

To some, the younger generation of women have better options and choices. If they take them, there would be fewer difficulties. Today, women know what they want, and they want to achieve it. But there are social as well as economic difficulties. On the whole, the women grappled with the issues of the transition of the African society and the emerging role of women as part of the wage-earning society. They realised the need and significance of training in functional knowledge, management tools and techniques, and the need to participate in policy and decision-making. They were ready to take the challenge and the responsibilities that went with it.

The workshops/seminars provided space and opportunity for rich and intense discussions. Their participation was personal, intense and assumed a sense of catharsis. They discovered there were other women grappling with similar issues, and as a result, did not feel as isolated. As the seminar was a residential one, it gave the women an opportunity to feel at ease. They discussed issues at dinner, lunch and breakfast. At the end of the seminar, there was a solidarity and sense of togetherness. As such, a residential seminar does provide women the space to feel free and share.

The programmes on management training have dominantly focussed on knowledge, attitudes, skills and management techniques. The programme designs rarely focus on organization structures, organization tasks and managerial roles as distinct from job efficiency. This is more so for programmes for women.

The women managers are aware of the existing hierarchy and the functions, but conceptual clarity is distinctly missing. Their focus on practicality masks their intellectual insights. Somehow, intellectualism has become synonymous with anti-femininity and as such, womanhood. Owning up intellectual clarity and conceptual abstractions becomes difficult for women. Often they do not see themselves capable of intellectualism and attribute it to men, or perceive it as non-practical. This is one area where women need to explore their own stereotypes about themselves. Secondly, there is a predisposition by women to focus on the social context as the source of their problems in work organisations. The social context contributes to difficulties in women's transition to work structures, but women themselves hold deeply internalised social stereotypes about men, about their environment, and about themselves, all of which makes it difficult for new roles and choices to emerge.

In most management development programmes there is a move to identify men as the source of women's problems. If men feel accused or guilty then deeper insights do not emerge. When men have shared their struggle to respond to the society under transition and its impact on their role that some women have become sensitive to the fact that it is a societal issue and a joint issue. Many men accept that their attitudes may be partly responsible, but it is not the totality of the problems confronting women. In a society undergoing transition, both men and women are undergoing changes. It was clear that identifying the source of the conflict exclusively outside the self would only lead to a dichotomisation and increased antagonism between men and women. Both men and women need to deal with the larger context and the stereotypes they carry about themselves and the

world. In the absence of such a process, the fragmentation and compartmentalisation would increase and no new responses for redefinition would emerge.

#### Recommendations for research

Very often in third world countries complex research designs are used. Similarly, the research instruments are a juxtaposition of many research questionnaires borrowed from existing research. Most researchers from management or training institutions are familiar with the concepts, the content and the various steps of collecting, interpreting and analysing data. They are also familiar with the objectives and goals of research. But in conducting the research very often their own experiences of being women in their respective societies influence their decisions concerning the content of research. For example, a large number of the questions in women's research highlight the processes of discrimination and deprivation of women in significant positions in organisations. They also focus extensively on attitudes, values and beliefs of men about women in the society, family and formal organisation. These personal experiences, real as they may be, block the possibility of an objective appraisal of the situation under research.

In interviews also both the employers and the employees (men and women in both the categories), there was a predisposition to ask questions which reinforced social stereotypes about men and women. Even when confronted with new data where men talked of their own experiences of being discriminated against, not adequately rewarded, unfairly punished, and other organisational and structural realities, the women continued to focus on men's attitudes towards women. It was only when women were confronted

with this blind spot of theirs and their attitude that the women struggled to design new questions free from personal bias and evaluation, e.g. gender free role performance questions. They then focused on issues of women.

In the context of Africa, a society under transition there are organisational, structural, task and performance realities for both men and women irrespective of gender issues. These also need to be identified and understood in the research. It became clear that for an effective instrument to be designed, it cannot be based on personalisation, but on clarity of the issues, the context and the organizations.

Some of the researchers already designed a questionnaire to identify the training needs of women in management. Many of these questionnaires highlighted attitudinal, social and cultural processes. They served to reinforce the known, without discovering either the sources of the problems or findings which could provide new directions, alternatives or choices. It is important that research methodologies offer the possibility of seeing new directions in dealing with problems, rather than merely reinforcing existing realities.

Whatever research has earlier been done in Africa is done through validating mode of research. In the context of Africa most validating research identify the lacunae and by comparison negative findings. The research most appropriate is the discovery mode of research where realities of the country, its culture and its social structures in which the organizations, management practices and managerial roles are embedded. The research differentiate between small organisations and large, mammoth and complex ones. The research design would be different

for each. Similarly, the situation would be different from that of developed countries in that both employers and employees would be confronted with a small number of women managers, rather than the relatively greater numbers of women managers found in the western context. Therefore, research methodologies and instruments need to be modified to suit the conditions of the new context.

To adopt or adapt research methodologies and instruments, the basic assumptions and ideological postulates of the design need to be understood. Many African countries are in the initial stages of industrialisation. Large formal work organisations are a recent phenomenon. The concept of wage earners and women entering organizations in managerial roles is a new reality confronting both men and women.

Initially, in any research where primary data is not available it is important to have a broad base and a perspective. It is important to explore and identify the ideological postulates and the assumptions of the researcher just as much as the design, statistics and rigour is important. A country beginning to understand its context and growth of organisations, management and womens entry into managerial roles may consider the following dimensions:

1. That an overall research orientation be developed which envisages a broader perspective such as philosophy and assumptions of research, rather than using existing complex research methodologies anchored in a statistical mode alone. This research orientation needs to incorporate diverse fields of enquiry, rather than highlighting specific need-based instruments. In the

initial stages of research, there needs to be a discovery mode of research rather than a validating mode of research.

2. In the initial phases of a discovery mode of research, we need to identify a benchmark. A qualitative and an open-ended approach would provide a more realistic appraisal than a quantitative instrument. A qualitative approach would identify and open up new dimensions and categories which would provide answers and directions for designing inputs and training material. A quantitative instrument followed by a qualitative findings would provide the kind of substantive information required to plan training inputs.
3. There needs to be an introduction to the research which includes the social, cultural and emerging organisational and managerial realities. The introduction to the research may attempt to familiarise the researcher with relevant research methods and techniques. In the workshop, the participants were familiar with complex research methodologies. But the realities of women and organisations require a unique understanding which entails new research instruments. In evaluating issues of women in organisations, the participants were restricted by the attitudinal dimensions within the systems, and their own contribution to role-taking was ignored.
4. A fundamental understanding of statistics should be an integral part of research.

5. There is also a need for an understanding of functional areas of organisations rather than only gender or attitudinal issues, in order to provide a better perspective of these organisations as a whole. As such, research needs to focus on organisational structure, behaviour, and functions of marketing, finance, economics and production, etc.
6. It is important that women and men involved in carrying out basic research on women in management in the African context ask questions, review and examine the realities of the context, and come up with a research methodology and design of an instrument which is unique and relevant in the African context.

#### Issues of training

Based on the questionnaire data, employers and women managers seminars, some issues can be raised about training:

- Training inputs need to distinguish between characteristics of social structures, systems and relationships and formal organisational structures, systems and relationships.
- There needs to be clarity as to the definitions women hold of organisations, and the implications.
- Women's definitions of the organisation would determine their role-taking, and as such, contribute to emerging structures, systems and relationships in organisations.

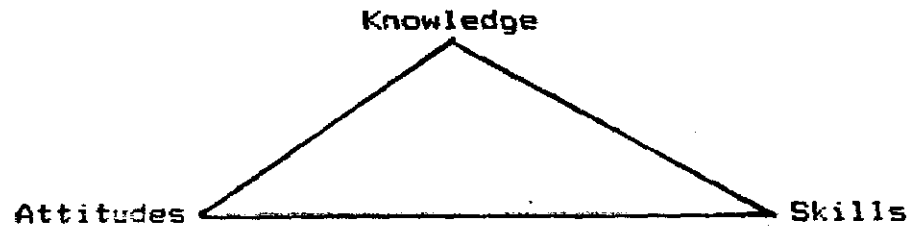
- Functional skills, an understanding of the structure of an organisation and its function, and an awareness of existing opportunities and constraints, all need to be better understood by women managers.
- Women do not see their role in policy-making and in influencing decisions as part of their managerial role. However, they expect to be included and consulted. How their participation in policy and decision-making is part of the structure is definitely not clear to women. This needs to be focussed.
- With regard to social structures and authority, women want to be recognised and to be given recognition. Clarity about functional and collegiate authority is unclear and needs to be included as part of training material and strategy.
- Women managers need time and space to explore their role dimensions and to identify the processes of work in their interface with structures, systems and processes.

#### Implications for training

Training designs have largely focused on knowledge, attitudes and skill dimensions. These concepts have their impact, albeit limited. The participants who attend training programmes often receive the same conceptual inputs in the form of structured exercises or role-plays. However, the increasing complexity of the environment does not serve to broaden their vision only through inputs of knowledge, attitudes and skills. There are other factors at play.

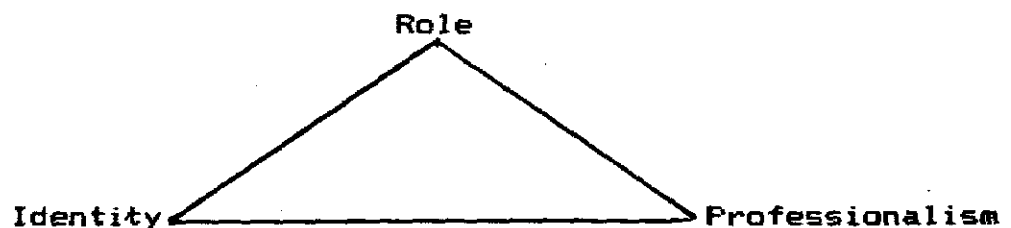


Figure 8. KAS model of training



The Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills model is the most prevalent model designed for management training and inputs. It is anchored in the conceptual and knowledge based approach utilising existing tools, techniques and concepts which provide participants tools for managerial effectiveness. In my experience, this model is not sufficient to contribute to a discovery of new attitudes, responses and action choices. A cognitive understanding may be possible, but new actions and responses do not emerge. This model provides an understanding that new knowledge, skills and attitudes are important. However, this model does not release the energy which is frozen in old meanings and definitions of ones own role taking and systems. In my view, another three dimensions are necessary.

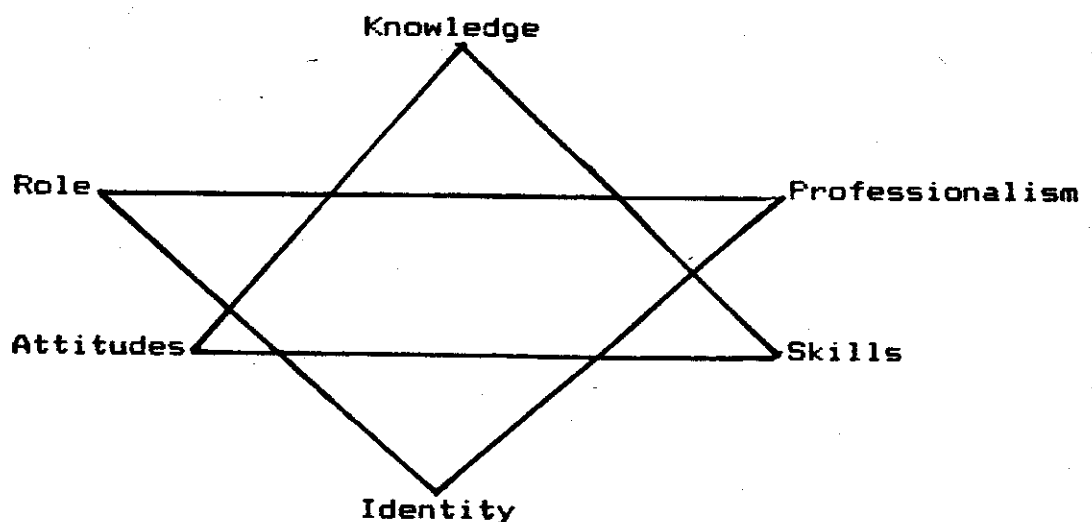
Figure 9. Model of role and identity



The role and identity model would provide an orientation to locate oneself in one's professional identity which incorporates the social identity and, as such, new responses and action choices emerge for the individual. For a relevant response to emerge it is important that participants identity processes whereby they can give new meanings relevant for situations and tasks. It is also important that participants identify the processes through which they have learnt to give meanings, take roles and make action choices. Sensing these processes would free the energy and help identify new responses.

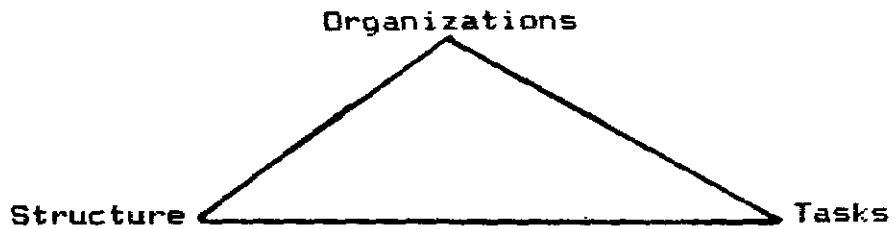
Both these above models of learning are significant. Both these have to be integrated in the context of emerging formal organizations and structures.

Figure 10: Integrative model of learning



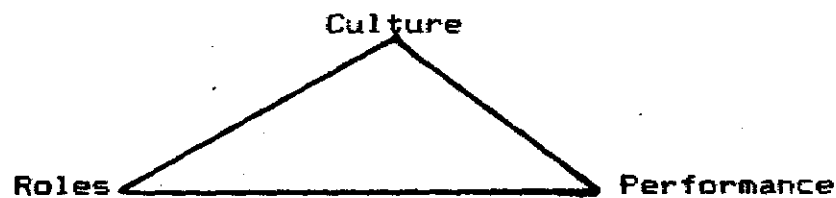
This integrative model of learning is anchored in systems and structures of formal work organisations. Therefore, it is equally important that formal work structures are also understood and included in the learning model.

**Figure 11. Characteristics of formal work organisations**



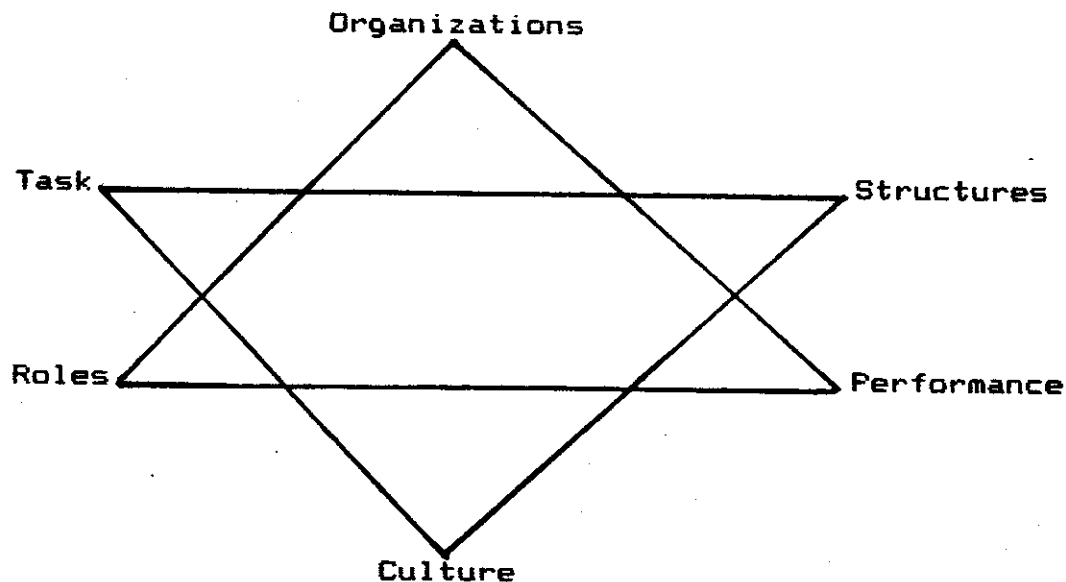
The above dimensions of organization structure and task are linked to the individuals role taking within the framework of organization culture. As such, an integrated perspective of the organization in a cultural context becomes an essential unfolding which provides an individual to give shape to his/her role taking and performance.

**Figure 12. Organization performance**



The understanding of the simultaneous dimensions influencing an individual is important. These dimensions cannot remain fragmented. As such, a multi-dimensional learning model of organization design becomes essential.

Figure 13. Multi-dimensional learning model of organizational design



Put together, this model of learning in formal work settings can provide a direction and insights and provide inputs to training design which would have an enduring impact. These insights could provide the deployment of individual actions and mobilisation of resources of individuals and systems simultaneously. The new dimension of role taking which emerges is the deployment of resources held by men and women. Both men and women as part of belonging to systems of family and work need to replenish both the systems. The replenishment process is of commitment and investing in tasks of the organization and people of the familial system. In the society undergoing transition and flux it is the commitment to mobilise individual resources and replenish both the systems which would bring synergy to individuals and systems in the cultural context of the society.

Another way of looking at the same dimensions is through the matrix model designed by Garg and Parikh in the Indian context.

Figure 4. Task, interaction, and value-centered organizational analysis

	Individual	Dyad/Groups	Structure	
Task				Task Centre
Organization				Interaction Centre
Culture				Value Centre

Source: Adopted from Garg, Pulin K. and I.J. Parikh, Value Centred Approaches to Organisation Development. IIM, Ahmedabad

Research identifying the existing definitions and task performance of individuals and organisations would provide insights into the future direction of research. The findings would facilitate the design of teaching materials and models of learning. These models could give us an inside understanding of cultural and societal ways of decision-making, management of superior, subordinate, and collegiate relationships, modes of communication and cultural meanings of communication and information sharing, meanings given to processes of evaluation, rewards and punishment, concept of planning and policies and

diverse other aspects of managerial roles in organisations. We then would have insights as how to deploy the strengths of the culture into managerial role performance more effectively.

My proposal would be that once the research provides relevant data, training programmes be designed to include provisions for discovering other relevant inputs which can contribute to effective performance of both women and men managers, and to the growth and development of organisations and institutions. There is much more to learn. It is only in the process of learning that relevant inputs will emerge. Societies, organisations and individuals need space to unfold new action choices and new responses. For this process to occur, a concerted effort is required. The workshops/seminars provided one such setting to explore and discover relevant issues for both individuals and institutions.

The focus of any training programme should be an integrated approach whereby multiple issues would converge into a coherent whole. The focus needs to be both on personal growth and professional growth converging into a wholesome identity which could bring congruence to the multiple roles and multiple systems on which the women are simultaneously a part. It is clear that both conceptual and experiential inputs are important. It is also clear that understanding organisations is significant for managerial role-taking. And equally important, in the development of training curricula and materials, men, society, culture and the environment cannot be attributed the villain's role and the source of all problems. A shared perspective between men and women needs to be evolved so that both men and women can belong to formal work organisations and familial social settings as a wholesome collectivity.

Developing training/learning programme is an uphill task. What will converge is not clear. It has to be reviewed, assessed and decisions taken. The women are determined and their spirit resilient. They have the capabilities to persist and design new role dimensions. One can only begin with a hope to create new structures, systems and processes which would dignify both men and women in their journey to discover the best potential in themselves as well as the systems they are a part of.

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