

CHANGING IMAGES OF "HOW TO TEACH" IN ZAMBIA

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TRAINING TRAINERS

Life has been '**one long learning experience**' for me. When I came to Zambia in 1989 my main objective in teaching the **Training of Trainers in Instructional Methods** was to teach a variety of **participatory methods** that would involve learners. I assumed the reason instructors weren't already using them was because they had not been taught them. So all I needed to do was **demonstrate** and **teach** them, and the instructors would go out and use them, and their classes would become more interesting and more effective. I learned, however, that it is quite a bit more complicated than that.

My first long-term contracts to conduct the Training of Trainers courses were with two Zambian colleges: the Coop College and the Natural Resources Development College (NRDC). I had an opportunity to go out and observe a variety of instructors before I conducted seminars. I remember being very surprised when I went to Coop College and found one of the instructors "dictating" his notes to the students for an hour at a time. I was totally bored in his class and outraged. What in the world could he be thinking? Why was he dictating his notes?

At NRDC an internationally funded project was helping the college to set up an In-Service Training Centre (ISTC) that would conduct short-term agricultural seminars for farmers. This meant that the seminar participants would be adults. The ISTC staff wanted to use the expertise of NRDC instructors, but they were concerned about their teaching style because they had a reputation for using the "chalk and talk" or traditional **lecture method**. I visited Munali Secondary School in Lusaka to see how the teachers taught. We went to five classrooms before we could even find a teacher. In the first four classrooms, we found a student copying the teacher's notes onto the blackboard, which the rest of the students were then copying into their notebooks. In the fifth classroom, we finally found a teacher giving a lecture and occasionally writing a word or two on the blackboard.

What makes teachers do what they do? What makes them laugh and tell jokes in class, or talk for hours non-stop without writing on the blackboard, or dictate to students from their notes, or conduct exercises and involve students in role-plays, or be late for class, or draw humorous pictures? Which of these would you do or never do?

According to Kenneth Boulding, it is **images** which make us do what we do. In the case of teachers, it is their images of themselves as teachers, of their teaching objectives in

general and their subject in particular, of the students, of how people learn, and of the worth of their efforts.

DEALING WITH NEGATIVE IMAGES

The Coop College is a national institution training cooperative members and employees in cooperative principles and management skills. It has two units - Residential and Extension - and the instructors teach in both units. The Training of Trainers included eight of the ten instructors plus another twenty Extension trainers from the Provinces. NRDC is one of the main institutions for training Agricultural Extension Officers, farm managers, and agricultural science teachers in secondary schools. Their training included 27 of the 32 NRDC instructors.

The training design has two weeks of in-class training followed by monitoring and follow-up; a third week of in-class training followed by more monitoring and follow-up. The content of the seminars included WHY Participatory Methods are needed in teaching, WHAT they are, HOW they work, and the APPLICATION of these methods.

The bulk of the training focused on the methods, themselves. The lessons included an explanation of WHAT the methods are, followed by an APPLICATION exercise. Throughout the seminars I constantly used the participatory methods, in order to demonstrate HOW they work. Therefore I was gratified to hear one of the NRDC instructors say, "I was hoping you would have some boring lessons so I could sleep this week, but you didn't." The methods I included were: Basic Workshop, Guided Depth Discussion, Improved Lecture, Visuals, Lesson Preparation, and a variety of other exercises. At the end of each seminar, the instructors were required to prepare and present a brief lesson using the methods learned.

Before each Training of Trainers I met with the instructors to get an idea what they thought about teaching and the methods they were already using. It was a way to find out their **current images of teaching**. I asked, "What are you trying to accomplish with a lecture? What is the purpose of using the lecture in teaching?" One instructor who had lectured for 17 years said, "Lecturing has nothing to do with teaching. It is just lecturing. The purpose is to give a lecture." Another instructor said, "Visuals should only be used in teaching children and illiterate adults who have never seen what you are talking about. If you use them with college students, you will dishonor them." Other negative images I heard were:

- I am not artistic or creative
- What I am currently doing is fine
- My job is to "give information"
- I am not responsible for motivating the students
- I am supposed to know everything

These **self-images** were not the only images blocking the learning process. There were negative images the teachers had of their learners as well:

- The caliber of students they send us is the problem
- The participants don't know anything about the subject, so I must tell them everything
- Some people are just "untrainable"

- Students' experiences are not valuable in the classroom

Not only did the instructors have negative images about themselves and the learners, they also had negative images about the subject and how to teach it which block learning:

- Learning is not supposed to be enjoyable
- To teach means to lecture
- If the students ask questions, it will just disrupt the lecture
- As long as I have delivered the lecture and all the data, then I have done my job

All of these "images" can inhibit depth learning. Therefore all of them need to be identified and dealt with when training instructors.

One of the key reasons why most teachers refuse to involve their students in discussions is because of the image, "You can't ask the students questions about things they don't know. You need to tell them first." Most trainers spend 95% of the class time "telling" the students (because they don't know anything) and maybe 5% of the class time allowing the students to ask questions.

One of the first training sessions focuses on "Adult Learning Theories." When asked about "Adult Learning Theories". The instructors said they did not know them. According to their image, I should have listed the theories and explained each one thoroughly in a long lecture, because "they don't know anything, until I tell them." Instead I divided them into four groups. Two groups discussed and answered the question "What Helps Adults to Learn?" and the other two groups answered the question "What Prevents or Hinders Adults from Learning?" The groups inevitably came up with the key elements of adult learning just from their own experiences.

We reviewed an article about "Pedagogy and Andragogy" to emphasize that pedagogical methods are more "teacher-oriented". Since the traditional lecture method is the "cornerstone and most used" pedagogical method, we also had a discussion about all the complaints about the method. Included in the "Adult Learning Theories" is the fact that people learn differently, and learn better when they are involved.

Another session included recent brain research revealing "how people recall and remember information depends on how the information is presented". This was to set the stage for why **participatory methods** are necessary for instructors to use, and that teachers are responsible to present material to assist the learners and not to show how intelligent the teacher is.

IMAGE AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

During monitoring and follow-up visits, I observed classes, took notes, and then met with the instructors individually. At NRDC, we discovered that most instructors were trying to implement the adult learning principles by using new methods. After the training, several agricultural seminars were organized by ISTC and facilitated by NRDC instructors. The head of ISTC informed me that the participants were pleased with all of the instructors, except for one. (It turned out that the one they were not pleased with

was an instructor who had refused to attend the training.) In talking with NRDC students, they said they noticed the instructors were more interesting, involved the class in more discussion, and used visuals.

However, this was not true for every instructor who attended the training. For one instructor the surrounding and supporting images he had about teaching were:

- **I am not responsible** for the students' learning, only for delivering lectures.
- What I have been doing for the past 17 years is fine. I am doing very well, thank you.
- Our salaries are so low, I must spend a lot of time "moonlighting" in order to support my family.

Although one of the Chair's images was that he should enable the students' learning, he had a "**limited**" image of how to accomplish this. He thought the only method available to him was the lecture method, which he tended to overuse. Through the Training of Trainers his image was **expanded** to include other methods to involve students. The instructor at NRDC had a variety of images which prevented him from "getting the messages" from the training. While most of the instructors after the training were actively trying out new methods in their classes, he was not.

Immediately after the Coop College training, one of the instructors tried to re-arrange the classrooms to enable discussions, but the students complained. As a result, the instructor put the room back in the traditional classroom style. Even students have strong images about how to teach! One instructor reported on changes since the training, "We no longer abuse our students. Before we went to classes late; but now we are early. When the students meet in groups, instead of reading the newspaper or going to the office or library, we stay in the classroom and go around to each group. We even managed to get the students to agree to set up the classroom in a seminar-style."

Another change that has taken place is **team-teaching**. Before the training each instructor was considered the ruler of his/her own classroom and no one else was interested in (or had any say in) what was done.

The newly promoted Head of Extension introduced 'Co-Coordination' of programs. He says, "Even in residential programs at the college now, we share courses. Rose and I teach together and she came to me yesterday to say that the class didn't get 'transactions' very well and asked if I might cover it again in a different way. Before, we never would have been discussing what was happening in our classes." He identified three major **Image shifts** for him since the training:

"I thought there was only one method to use in teaching - lecturing. I didn't think there was any other method. My teachers lectured, so I did too. But the Training of Trainers inspired me. I tried other methods and can proudly say I am now able to do things differently. If I lecture, it's because I want to, not because I have no alternative.

*Secondly, and probably related to the first image, I had assumed that **I was the custodian of knowledge**. I knew everything and the students knew nothing, so I had*

to tell them. My presentations now include participant experiences. From the class discussions, I discovered too that I could actually learn something from the students.

I assumed **I must strictly follow the syllabus because all information was equally important**. I even used to have the typists re-type whole books and give copies to the students. Now I am able to identify and emphasize key points. Before the training, the Cost Accounting test results were bad. After the training, using new methods to involve them in thinking and reflecting, only one student failed. This year **no one failed**. They were thinking on their own."

NEGATIVE TEACHING IMAGES

Earlier I asked, "Why do teachers do what they do? What images are behind this behavior and these teaching approaches?" One NRDC instructor told me, "Most of my lecturers at the University of Zambia tried to make the subjects difficult to understand. They liked to keep an aura of mystery about the subjects so that the students would continue to be impressed with how intelligent the lecturer was. The saying goes that they wanted to impress rather than express."

In the example where the students spent hours copying from the blackboard, as well as the instructor who dictated his notes, these actions are the result of a commonly held image in Zambia that "since there are no textbooks, this is the best way they can get information." The importance of doing this is supported by the two most important teaching images held by nearly every teacher I have encountered here in Africa:

1. What is most important is that information be given to the students.
2. Given the limited amount of time, the pedagogical methods are best to get all the information out, i.e., giving lectures to them, reading to them from the materials themselves, having the students copy material from the board, or giving reading assignments when books are available.

PROMOTING POSITIVE TEACHING IMAGES

To be able to teach for best student learning, a person needs a variety of positive Images:

1. **I am responsible** for inspiring and motivating the students **to learn at higher levels** than mere knowledge.
2. I must use a **variety of involving methods** which utilize the experiences, minds and imaginations of the students.
3. I both **know** and **can use** these methods effectively.
4. **I am creative** enough to figure out how best to present the lessons with the available resources.
5. **Anyone can learn** given the right motivation and methods.
6. It is **worthwhile** for me to teach the best I can.

If any one of these images is not present, it can prevent teachers from teaching effectively. The most common comment in Zambia is "I am not paid enough. I must spend my time earning money on side jobs because my salary is too low".

To be an effective teacher, one must be aware of how images affect learning. One simple "behavioral change" I hoped to see was for the teachers to both see the need for using visual aids and actually use them in their teaching. After the training, they KNEW the Adult Learning Theories and they KNEW that visuals assist in the learning process according to brain research. So why were some of the instructors not using them? What else was needed before they would actually use visuals? What other images were preventing them from using visuals even when they KNEW their value?

I didn't have to look far for the answers to this. In monitoring and follow-up visits I found the following negative images blocking the use of visuals, even when people KNEW their value:

- I am not artistic. I can't draw.
- We don't have the materials available. (paper and markers, a sample, proper aids, equipment).
- I don't have the time to prepare them.
- I am not paid enough to make the effort.

Even when people have the knowledge, they are blocked by images that prevent them from utilizing it. Unless the controlling negative images are dealt with, real learning and change does not occur.

EXPERIENCE IS THE STRONGEST MESSAGE

At NRDC, the instructors were teaching the future secondary school teachers of Agricultural Sciences. Two things happened to emphasize the importance of experiences in learning. In the training one exercise was for each to prepare and teach a short "lesson plan" (including the knowledge, skills and image-shift objectives). The Department Chair prepared a lesson to emphasize "Anyone can prepare a monthly timetable for teachers in a Secondary School". He involved the participants in preparing a timetable. Individuals in each group represented a teacher with a typical scheduling problem. What really happened to the participants because of the "exercise" was they had a new appreciation for the Headmaster and the difficulty of his job to prepare timetables. Although he was saying that the task of preparing a teaching timetable was easy, the participant experience creating one themselves was sending a much stronger message and telling them the opposite.

The second experience also involved the same staff. Although the Chair had received a Masters degree in education from a British university, he said he realized from the training that he and the NRDC staff were teaching everything "in theory". They were teaching the right information the wrong way. The "future teachers" they were teaching could give back information on written exams about how to teach and how to prepare a lesson; but they couldn't actually do it in a classroom.

I had an opportunity to see what he meant when I observed one of his classes. The students were presenting their "lesson plans". There were nine groups reporting and therefore nine lesson plans presented. In every report, they followed a set pattern of **Introduction, Lesson Development, Pupil Activity and Summary**. In every explanation of what they planned to do in their **Introduction**, each group reported that they were going to either "explain about, or tell the students something". The **Lesson Development**

and Summary were really lecture presentations. Although the **Pupil Activity** looked most interesting, the Chair said, "The classes are so short (40 minutes) that the planned Pupil Activity is what usually gets dropped."

When the students were asked, "What is the purpose of an Introduction to a lesson?", they all gave very good answers:

- to get the interest of the students
- to connect this lesson with previous lessons
- to help students see the importance of the subject
- to get their attention

When I asked the class whether any of the Introductions got them interested, they all said "No". When I asked them what the Introductions really were, they said "another lecture".

They asked me, "Well then, what would an Introduction look like that would get students' interest and attention?" The problem was that they had only been told what an Introduction was supposed to do; they had never seen or experienced one in their own learning situations. The staff were saying one thing and doing another. Teachers must pay attention to what the students experience more than information they are given, because it is experience that has a better chance to change images. In this case the strongest message was what teachers were doing, not what they were saying in lectures.

The reason we call our methods Imaginal Education Methods is because they are methods that are more conducive to changing images. And since EXPERIENCE has the best chance of changing images, the Imaginal Education methods are ones that involve the learners in experiences. Imaginal Education Methods are very participatory and try to activate the hearts, minds, bodies and imaginations of the learners.

In the Training of Trainers, I tried to create experiences that would challenge the negative images of the instructors. I tried to create all of the sessions in such a way that the instructors would experience being honored and being treated like adults. I wanted them to see teachers teaching without using the traditional lecture method and to experience themselves learning. I wanted them to experience the methods working, being helpful, and their own success in using them. As the department chair said, "We had heard about these methods, but we didn't think they would work. You showed us they do work."

The fact that ISTC immediately used some of the instructors to conduct short seminars for adult farmers enabled them to put what they learned to immediate use, which continues to make the case for experience being the key, because those who put the new methods into practice immediately, benefited the most from having their new images reinforced by the successful teaching experiences.

Seeing the need for change also enables images to shift. In both institutions where instructors were new or were never given training in how to teach, they felt the need to learn these methods and learning principles. Also, instructors experienced the need to learn because the students were doing poorly.

There were two other experiences that also encouraged the Coop College instructors to work together for the benefit of the students' learning. The first was the sudden death of a colleague. They discovered that no one knew what he had been doing or how to carry on where he left off. Secondly, the management actually encouraged the instructors to implement what they had learned in the Training of Trainers. The current management participated in the training and set up a timetable to observe how classes were being conducted and often met with instructors to discuss the results. The instructors were given an opportunity to analyze their own actions and create plans to deal with what they considered to be the negative aspects of their teaching approach.

As teachers, it is important to know as many images of the learners as possible, especially the ones that may prevent them from accepting and implementing what they are being taught. The more negative images that a person has, the more difficult it will be for him/her to change, because images support and reinforce one another. And because of what we know about "messages" that help to create, reinforce or challenge images, experience has the strongest results for teaching.