

Making Use of Nationals as Instructors in Our Worker Training Programs

Prepared for World Seminary Conference - 1982

The assumption that underlies the title of this essay is that every mission of WELS would, eventually, make use of the national brethren as instructors in its bible institute and/or seminary. This assumption is correct. It has to be done. It must be done if any of our mission churches ever hopes to stand on its own feet, if we ever hope to succeed in our goal of gradually reducing the number of our expatriate staff in a particular field. So, to use or not to use national pastors as instructors in our worker training schools is not included in the thrust of this essay.

However, there are other questions which come to mind regarding the use of nationals as instructors. The problems will vary widely from field to field, the type of school in each field, the national level of education in the particular country, the needs of the national church, the age of the mission, the long range goals, the number of national workers, etc.

Since I do not know very much about conditions which exist in our missions fields, I am going to limit this essay to what I have learned and what I think will apply to the work and needs of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa. Many of the thoughts that will be expressed in this essay are my own thoughts based upon a very limited exposure to this question. Other points raised in this paper are derived from reading past minutes of meetings, reports and other documents in the files of the Bible Institute and Seminary. Still others are the thoughts of men who have lived on the African field for a long time, men who have a lot of experience under their belts, men who have faced some of the problems, worked them through and men who have seen and felt the joys and sorrows of working with national instructors.

Combining all of these sources of information has made this essay possible. I say from the outset that I am not seeking to establish some set pattern or timetable that will be the guideline for all mission fields. What works in Zambia may not work in Japan. What is proper in Malawi may be contrary to social custom in Mexico. And we all realize that sovereign governments sometimes overrule all scheduling by establishing their own timetable for a national "takeover" of the operation of various social institutions.

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WORKING USE OF NATIONALS as INSTRUCTORS
Worker Training Programs
1982

I don't think that just because we are talking about a national worker as opposed to a missionary we necessarily have to look for any different type of person than we seek for our schools in America. Certainly, the Scriptural qualifications for the instructor in Africa or Japan or in the States would all be the same. All of the workers would have to be men who would stand up to Scriptural scrutiny. But this does not mean that every individual who could humanly speaking meet the requirements for teachers listed in Timothy would make a good teacher at the bible institute or seminary. There are many men in America who are pastors who would not do well as teachers at our worker training schools. On the other hand, there are also men who are not pastors who have the gifts to serve and serve well at our worker training schools. What I am saying is this. It is impossible to have a set mold into which all instructors would fit, and yet there are certain criteria under which all instructors would fall and be judged whether these men are white, black, or yellow. That is what we shall discuss in this paper. We shall list the special problems that enter the picture when seeking national men to serve in the mission worker training schools.

I should also say at the outset that this has not been an easy paper to write. It has not been easy because this paper is about men with whom I work, men whom I see almost daily and men with whom I have established a very good relationship, both professionally and personally. I do not like being in the position of having to look over the lives and work of these two men and then writing about these two men in this essay. What is said in this paper is not, in the very least, a smear on the abilities, the faithfulness, the desire or the faith of these two men. And yet to write this paper without these two men in mind would render the paper meaningless, without heart and without experience. Therefore I timidly plunge ahead in the hope that this essay will have an edifying effect on the church as a whole and that it will not fall into wrong hands were it might be misunderstood, misused and quoted out of context to be used against me to the harm of the Church.

The first thing which should be considered about a national as instructor would be his qualifications. It would seem best that he be a pastor, someone who had graduated from the seminary of that particular mission field. If there is no seminary, then the man would have had to have attended the Bible Institute. We certainly would want a man who had shown that he had mastered the course materials while he was at the seminary. Whether this would mean setting a certain grade point average or some other criterion of competency would have to be determined by the individual field. A higher academic standard would be especially desired if the instructor is going to be teaching in a seminary. The same would also be true if the man is going to be teaching full time at either the Bible Institute or Seminary. The man who teaches on a part time basis can be given courses that

are not so demanding. We also would want a man who had shown at least some ability to study on his own, who would not have to be led by the hand every step of the way. We would look for a man who would have the gifts to fill the immediate position of instructor but who could also in the future take upon himself more responsibility. This might involve administrative work, the writing of course materials and supervisory work. In other words, we would look for a man who had grown in ability in the past and who looked like he had the gifts to continue to grow and mature in the future.

Another thing which should be looked at is the experience of the man. I think it would be best if the man had at least three years of experience as a pastor before he would even be considered as an instructor at either the Bible Institute or the Seminary. Not only would that ensure that we would have a man who had put into practice what he himself had learned through his studies at the seminary thereby reinforcing his knowledge and dispelling doubts over any questions he had, but it would also make him more sure and certain about himself. There would also be the distinct advantage in Central Africa, and elsewhere I think, that a mature and experienced man would already have the respect of the students. If we would take a man just out of the seminary, one that is filled with only facts and figures, but has little practical experience, such a man would not be well received in Central Africa.

This is not only true of national pastors. The inexperience of men who come out the Mequon seminary and move right into the classroom of either the Bible Institute or the seminary shows itself in various ways. Some men cannot relate to people. They, too, have the misguided feeling that they know it all. They think they will set the world on fire with the vast amount of knowledge that they will impart to their students. There is a tendency among the young, whether national or expatriate, to treat students only as puppets who will regurgitate facts and answers which have been fed into them. The human element is all but forgotten and this is in part, due to the fact that the man has had very little experience in dealing with people, in learning how to discipline, in showing respect for the elderly yet maintaining the authority which has been entrusted to a pastor. In fact, the man has not yet learned how to be a pastor nor has the term seelsorge been etched onto his heart.

This whole area of respect and honor is something which must be considered very seriously when calling a man to be an instructor at the worker training institutes. We have to remember that many of the men who are students are over thirty years of age, some over forty. Most have wives and a number of children and have had to work hard to support their families. Many have

and, as a result, have had a number of experiences in applying the Word of God in a very practical way.

With this in mind we would certainly want to call a national who would be respected by his fellow national brethren. In Africa this would mean that we would call one who had gifts, one who had used those gifts faithfully for a number of years, and certainly one who was older, at least in terms of experience. I would especially like to underscore that the man called would have been found faithful to his calling for a rather long period of time. I would think that at least two years as a bare minimum would be needed to demonstrate the ability to keep at the task faithfully, not tiring easily, not jumping from one place to another or moving from one project to another. If a man were not 100% faithful, and the men at the seminary surely would know, he would by his very presence be teaching a lesson contrary to what is being taught in the classroom. Human nature is the same everywhere, and if it seems that a man can be rewarded and get ahead in life even though he does not do his work and is not faithful, there will be a tendency to follow suit.

We would want a man who had demonstrated leadership abilities to a certain degree. While it is true that not every teacher has to be capable of leading a country or being the principal to be considered as an instructor, a certain amount of leadership must be exhibited to take charge of a classroom, to discipline that class when necessary, and to teach in such a way as to show mastery of the subject. Experience of a practical nature would be the best guide in choosing a man who is a leader. We would want to know how he had conducted himself in the congregations or as a supervising pastor. If the congregation treated him as a doormat or if he ran the congregation like a concentration camp we would shy away from such an individual.

The man would have to be apt to teach and this on a very practical level. There are men who could preach a fine sermon but who could never teach others how to write or preach a sermon. There are men who know much doctrine but cannot teach it to others. We would want a man who had demonstrated in various ways that he has the abilities to be a good teacher, in other words, that he could teach.

This is not to say that every man would be asked to walk from the pulpit into the classroom and be an instant success. A good knowledge of the man's abilities could be ascertained through experience in working with the man. We can perhaps learn how well a man is able to teach if we sit in on an examination of confirmands, hear him teach a Bible class, give a paper for

a pastoral conference, preach a sermon at a Synod convention, or give a report for a Synod board or committee. A man might also be asked to teach a short course. This would enable the church to see how well a man is able to organize his thoughts and then present those thoughts to his students. This approach would have the advantage of having the man teach for only a short time if he did not work out.

One other qualification which we in Central Africa would certainly look for is the ability of the man to control his wife and family. More problems than can be numbered have been caused by wives whose husbands were not in control and children who were not disciplined. Obviously, any man asked to be an instructor who would live on campus must be able to set a good Christian example for the students. This is perhaps more true of the national pastor than it would be of a missionary. The missionary and his family live more on the periphery of the student life and we come from a different culture. Many of our weaknesses may be attributed to a lack of understanding of African culture or to our Western cultural habits. But, the national pastor who lives on campus in the midst of the students has many more eyes observing his day to day living. The wives of the students know the wife of the national instructor on a more personal level. Thus, if the national instructor has problems in his family, if his wife or children do something wrong, there is no question that the students will hear about it and make their own judgements. I am convinced that our African brethren set much more rigid standards for each other than they set for the missionaries and their families. Therefore, it would be of utmost importance that any national pastor who would be considered as a potential instructor would have a good report concerning his family life.

This would, naturally, include a good report concerning his wife. Although she does not receive a call, she would have a large role in determining how effective her husband would be in the school. She would do this by her support of her husband, by her dealings with the other women on campus, and by the over all Christian attitude she exhibits. It would be helpful if she could teach the wives of the students the courses in Christian doctrine or Christian living, but this is not essential.

To be able to determine whether a man has these qualifications would take a long period of time. This would exclude the man who had recently graduated from the seminary and one who had very little practical experience. Perhaps the best and brightest are the young men recently graduated, but this is not necessarily true. They may be the best and brightest when it comes to studying and retaining knowledge, but they almost certainly lack in what are perhaps the more important

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qualifications such as experience, empathy, faithfulness, love, kindness, gentleness and humility.

Once a man had accepted a call to teach at a worker training school it would be necessary to have a plan to introduce that man into his new role of instructor. This would not be an easy change for a man who has spent most of his time as a pastor in the supervising ministry. At school he would have to get used to the task of preparing daily lessons, accustom himself to teaching three to five class periods per day and generally learn to live a much more programmed life than he did in the pastoral ministry. I do not think this would be an easy change for a national pastor to make.

Therefore, the introduction into the training program would have to be a gradual one so that the man would not have the feeling that he was in over his head. Perhaps the first thing that a new instructor would do would be to observe some classes for a term, if possible. The second term he could take over one or two courses at the Bible Institute level. The courses that he would teach during his first year or two would be courses which had already been written and published. It would put undue pressure on a man to ask him to write his own course during his first year or two. There are excellent courses that are completely written, including worksheets and questions for discussion. One of these courses at the Bible Institute in Lusaka is the Pastoral Theology course. With this type of course the new instructor would have the basic course all prepared for him but he could add his own personal insights during the teaching of the course. The man could spend his time on learning how to teach instead of what to teach.

It is very important that the national instructor feel comfortable in his role as instructor. One of the ways to assist him in this regard would be to make sure that he was not given an overload of work during the first two years. The man might work up to a full load in two or three years. Too much work all at once might make the man feel he is being abused or under too much pressure and he will leave as a result. However, it would have to be clearly explained to the man that his responsibility and work load would be increased as time went on.

The principal would play a very important role in easing the man into the work of the teaching ministry. On the one hand, the principal would have to be careful that he not give the impression that the national pastor does not know anything and therefore the principal has to show him everything. Nor would the national instructor like to have the feeling that his every move was being watched and judged by the principal. On the other hand the principal would have to make sure

that he was always available for the national pastor if and when the national pastor needed him. Perhaps this could best be accomplished by meeting weekly with the new instructor to talk about any problems which might arise. These meetings would be beneficial to both principal and national instructor. Not only would they have opportunity to get to know each other better, this would be an opportunity to discuss methods of teaching, the operation of the school, student life, congregational responsibility, etc. This meeting might also be the place for the principal to instruct the national instructor in the area the national is to teach.

One obvious area where the national instructor would be of tremendous value would be in teaching women's classes. He would have the advantage of knowing the African language used in women's classes. He would be much more acquainted with local customs and traditions. He would be more aware of special problems which face the students and their wives. Perhaps because he would be more aware of the problems, concerns and needs of the students and their wives, the wives might be more open and receptive to his teaching than they would be from a missionary. A national instructor would also have the advantage of having a national wife who could help teach in those areas it would be improper for a man to teach.

Care would have to be taken, however, that the national pastor not be given the impression that he was being used only in the "easy" subjects or in those areas where a missionary would be unable to work. The national pastor must be made to feel, and indeed must be, an important part of the entire school program. If a national pastor will not play an important role in the school, then it would be better not to call him in the first place.

Slowly, but steadily, the national pastor should be given more and more responsibility in the school program. After he had taught in the Bible Institute perhaps he could teach a few courses in the Seminary. The first few courses would again be prepared courses. The principal might suggest and order a few additional books to go along with the prepared course so that the man can study in greater detail the material covered in the courses. The next step might be for the man to rewrite a particular course to either expand or update it. Then perhaps he could write a course on his own. This would, of course, depend on the abilities and time of the national pastor and the needs of the school.

Along with a more intensive role in the classroom the national pastor should be given increased responsibility in areas outside the classroom. In Zambia this might include the supervision of the work programme. This would teach the man a number of things. He would learn how to organize men and materials. He would have

also learn to take pride in the appearance of the school and grounds. The man who supervises the work programme also works very closely with the principal, thus building on their personal relationship as well as teaching the national instructor the meaning of team work or working together toward a common goal.

The national instructor certainly should be given some responsibility in matters that pertain to student problems and discipline. His opinion should be sought in discipline cases which arise on campus. When decisions must be made that involve the proper understanding of customs, the opinions of the national instructor must certainly be taken into consideration. This involvement of the national pastor in cases of discipline must be done openly and with the full knowledge of the student body. Not only does he deserve the recognition as one whose opinion is respected, it is important for the student body to know that one who is familiar with custom and tradition was involved in the final decision. There is, however, a danger that we run to the national pastor only when we are in a jam, only when we may have already botched things up. This is unfair to the national pastor and will certainly not help build solid working relationships between nationals and missionaries.

We ought take great care to go regularly to the national brethren for help as a pastor to a fellow pastor, whose opinion is needed to help reach a decision or help settle some problem. We dare not go to him only when we have tried everything else or have foolishly gotten ourselves in over our heads and then expect the national pastor to explain it all away for us. We should make very sure that we do not give token responsibility to any man, but especially to a national pastor. This situation becomes all too apparent to that man and to his peers. But, we do not want to swamp the man with too many responsibilities so that he cannot handle them all. It is a very thin line that will have to be walked between not using the national pastor enough and using him too much.

The whole matter of turning over more and more responsibility must be done at a very slow pace. It must also be done in accordance with the wishes of the national church and the respective executive committee. The wishes of the national pastor himself certainly would have to be considered. Some long range goals ought be established for each school. It should be determined whether the final goal is that a national would serve as principal with full responsibility and authority over the faculty, student body and finances or whether a missionary would always take some of that responsibility.

Many more additional matters could be discussed here and a lot of additional questions would arise if there were more than one national instructor living on

would a man be chosen as principal without hurting the feelings of the other? Some of the problems which surely would arise from having two national instructors certainly would be difficult to solve. But these problems could be solved with a lot of patience, love and understanding and, perhaps most of all, a clear directive from the Board of Control as to the respective responsibilities of the men involved.

The above comments, suggestions, options and opinions do not, in every instance, reflect what has been done in Central Africa or what is currently being done. Therefore it might be advantageous to evaluate what was done in the past and what is now being done so that we might learn from these situations.

At present we have two national instructors at the Bible Institute and Seminary in Lusaka. One man, the younger of the two men, lives on campus and teaches full time at the school. The other man serves a number of larger congregations in the Lusaka area and teaches part time at the school. Most of the classes the part time man teaches are in the Bible Institute and women's classes. Both men bring with them special gifts and blessings to the school but both men also have some difficulties which have caused some problems in the past. The easiest way to discuss this would be to look at the problems that have arisen in connection with each man.

The full time instructor was called to serve in the Bible Institute as soon as he graduated from the Seminary. Two men who were involved in that decision are here today and they can best give insights and are in the best position to explain why this was done. From what I can gather, it was recognized that this was not the best possible thing to do, but that it was deemed necessary under the circumstances prevailing at that particular time in the history of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa.

It seems that problems developed because this man was young and did not have at least a few years in the pastoral ministry before he began to teach. However, it is clear that the problems were not insurmountable. It also seems that some very positive things came out of the decision to call this man directly from the seminary. This man was able to work directly with the (then) principal in many aspects of his work, such as teaching classes, administrative work and writing courses. With this very close contact the national pastor was able to increase his knowledge to a much greater degree than his classmates.

There is no questions concerning the gifts of this man. Perhaps because he is so gifted there have been times when too much was expected of him too soon. He has felt pressured and has thought of leaving the teaching ministry on at least one occasion. But this seems to have sorted itself out as the man gained in maturity. I have worked with this man for two years and I see him as a tremendous blessing.

to the whole school program. He does a very good job as an instructor. He has been a great help to me when I have turned to him for help and guidance. He has shown an increasing willingness to discipline and make difficult decisions. He is presently serving as acting principal while I am on furlough. I do not think there is another national worker who can do what this man is doing right now.

This does not mean that there is no room for improvement. This man still teaches the courses for which a text has already been prepared. I think it would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to write a text book on his own. And, it does not seem that he goes into much more detail in the prepared courses than what is already written down. The course then become like a classroom-taught TEE. Perhaps as he gains more confidence he will study more and be able to expand the course materials and subject matter. I might also encourage him by offering to purchase background books for his courses.

The other national instructor is, in many ways, totally different from the full time instructor. He does not have nearly the same mental capacity as the other man, but he does have a lot more practical, loving congregational approach to teaching and the work of the ministry. He also has a tremendous capacity to work and his desire to spread the Word of God through personal evangelism is outstanding. His love and his compassion for his fellow Christians is more mellowed and tempered by years of dealing with Christians with a sinful human nature. He understands better the frailties of sinful man and the wonderful grace of God. The strong faith of this man shows in his words and his actions. He is a man dedicated to serving his Lord with whatever gifts that Lord has given him.

However, this man does not do nearly as good a job in the classroom as does the full time instructor. His courses must be almost totally written out so that the students can, in effect, study the materials on their own. Classroom presentations often consist of discussion sessions whose topics range far and wide. In spite of his drawbacks it is good to have this man in a classroom because his love for the Lord and his dedication to his work shine forth so brightly when he speaks. From this man the students can learn the meaning of dedication, evangelism and humility. This man can also bring in some very practical way to deal with various situations an evangelist or pastor will face.

Both men have given good advice in faculty meetings. At times their opinions differed with the result that one particular case of discipline was debated at great length by these two men. The result was that the older man was able to temper the feelings and inclinations of the younger men on the faculty, including

school.

What happens when a national pastor does not "work out" as an instructor? How could he be eased out of his role without losing face? Is it possible to ease a man out? Perhaps he could receive a call to serve in the parish ministry. But, perhaps the more excellent way would be to teach him to be as good a teacher as humanly possible. This would involve spending a lot of time with the man, helping him to writing daily lesson plans, working on the text or even teaching the course on a half and half basis. It is my personal opinion that almost every national pastor could be taught to be a good instructor in the Bible Institute and Seminary.

I have written mainly about the problems that can arise through having national pastors as instructors. The problems do come just as problems arise with certain expat instructors who are too young, too inexperienced or just not qualified to be instructors. But, there are many joys and positive aspects of having national instructors, not the least of which is the training the expat missionary receives through associating with the national pastor. One begins to look at life more from a Zambian rather than an American perspective if one has opportunity to discuss and compare notes with a national pastor. It is a very positive thing for the students to see a member of the national clergy take a leading and responsible position in the Church. The students benefit from having a national brother to go to in case of a misunderstanding due to the ever-present cultural gap.

I personally feel that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages of having national instructors. I have had a very good relationship with both national men on the faculty. Those who served as principals before me surely ironed out many problems and smoothed the way for me, but I believe they would also say that the effort has been worth it.

As I said in the beginning, the question is not whether to have national pastors as instructors; rather, the question is when and how many. I certainly have not begun to cover all facets of this subject. But I hope that this essay will provide a basis for discussing the more important of these points in greater detail for our mutual benefit.

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