



Power-Filled Lessons for Leadership Educators from Paulo Freire by Paul A. Kaak, Ph.D.



Paul A. Kaak, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Leadership and College Student Development and Assistant Director of the Noel Strengths Academy, wisely applies Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's theories to the teaching of leadership courses in his "Power-Filled Lessons for Leadership Educators from Paulo Freire" (Journal of Leadership Education, 10.1 [Winter 2011]: 132-144). Predictably, this approach will empower learners in "critical, creative, and liberating" ways while providing for the professor an important congruence between how he or she leads the class and the kind of leadership desired as the course's outcome. "Democratic values" will prevail in both realms with "dialogue and reciprocity" as key modes of instruction. Such a teaching style negates the following traditional perceptions of instruction: "Positional leadership is necessary for those who choose to use their authority to keep fol-

lowers in a quiet, submissive role; [l]eaders know the realities of their followers sufficiently and don't need to inquire about the needs, problems, or injustices they may be facing; [a]nswers reside in the expert-educated leaders; [e]mpowerment of others is unnecessary for strong leadership; [g]ood leaders neither negotiate with followers, nor encourage participation; [and] [e]xperiences, contributions, and the strengths of others complicate efficient plans that have been previously prepared by a leader." On the contrary, the Freirean teaching and leading mode requires great trust between the professor and student, plus a goal orientation of serving others rather than making as much money as possible. This trust is built through ongoing "problem posing" dialogue wherein "important situations are delineated, central concerns are expressed, and difficulties are identified."

This leads to personal and, hopefully, social liberation from "a closed world from which there [seems to be] no exit." Kaak provides a vivid example of the Freirean approach in action as he discusses his own studies as a participant in Andrews University's Leadership Program which proved to be "learner-driven" and "life-embedded," as it built "important bonds." He also highlights some of his Azusa Pacific University experiences as he has followed this model while teaching his own leadership courses. He concludes his article on a most realistic note: "to invite students of leadership into transforming (liberating) leadership requires that teachers be personally engaged in the causes of oppression. They invite students to struggle because they too have struggled. The other conviction, which must develop within the students, is 'the conviction of the necessity for struggle' [Freire]."—Carole J. Lambert



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Good Teams, Bad Teams: Under What Conditions Do Missionary Teams Function Effectively?

By David R. Dunaetz, M.A., Th.M., M.Div., M.S.



David R. Dunaetz, M.A., Th.M., M.Div., M.S., Assistant Professor of Undergraduate Psychology, analyzes what makes missionary team leaders and members successful in his “Good Teams, Bad Teams: Under What Conditions Do Missionary Teams Function Effectively?” (*Evangelical Missions Quarterly* [Oct. 2010]: 442-448). He notes that the warmth, respect, and high functioning collaboration of a good missions team can make up for the lack of physical comforts and social welcoming found in some missions locations. Crucial to success are the following key elements: “trust, task conflict, commitment to group decisions, accountability, and group goals.” He interestingly defines “trust” as “when one team member believes that another team member will do something that the first one believes is good and important even when the first one cannot monitor or control the second.” Trust results from recognition of both a team member’s competence and concern for other

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team members so that, after clear, honest communication, a task which is necessary to fulfill the team’s goals is willingly carried out.

“Task conflict” happens “when two different ideas are presented as solutions to a problem.” Unlike “relationship conflict” which can result in harsh remarks and hurt feelings, “task conflict” provides the opportunity for the evolution of a solution to a problem which is even better than either of the “two different ideas” initially proposed. Ideally, the team will “come up with a joint solution that responds to everyone’s concerns” rather than yield to “groupthink, a pattern of consensus-seeking when the desire to remain unified or to obtain approval from the team leader becomes more important than generating new ideas for accomplishing the group’s goals.”

“[C]ommitment to group decisions,” once they are made, is essential for the team’s success. Cooperation rather than competition should be emphasized, and having a voice in the decision-making, as described above when “task conflict” occurs, enhances the probability of accomplishing the team’s objectives. “[A]ccountability,” as defined by Jennifer S. Lerner and Philip E. Tetlock, is the “expectation that one may be called on to justify one’s beliefs, feelings, and actions to others.” Dunaetz cautions that the team leader must

watch out for “cognitive overload” which can happen when team members are overburdened with too much information and too little time to process it. This can result in anger, reduced personal motivation to achieve objectives, and the “groupthink” mentioned above. This decreases the power gained from setting good, specific, and even difficult “group goals.”

Dunaetz has researched these concepts in the field of organizational psychology as well as the Bible, and he has tested them when planting churches in France. He sagely concludes, “Making sure these [five] elements are present in our teams, accompanied with love and godliness, will make it all the more likely that we will accomplish the task given to missionary teams: to testify to the gospel of God’s grace (Acts 20:24).”—Carole J. Lambert



Has the World Grown Too Insane for [Thomas] Wolfe, or Is There Hope? by Joseph Bentz, Ph.D.



Joseph Bentz, Ph.D., Professor of English, mourns the loss of focused reading time these days, the “div[ing] in and stay[ing] awhile, tak[ing] your time, dig[ging] deeply into the lives of these memorable characters, and let[ting] your own life fade away for a time.” He chronicles his thoughts about this loss in “Has the World Grown Too Insane for [Thomas] Wolfe, or Is There Hope?” (*The Thomas Wolfe Review*, 34.1: 142-149). Bentz notes that even David L. Ulin, the book review editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, suffers from fidgetiness, distractions, and strange psychological pressures (“buzz”) when he finally sits down to read a good book: “I force myself to remain still, to follow whatever I’m reading until the inevitable moment I give myself over to the flow. Eventually I get there, but some nights it takes 20 pages to settle down. What I’m struggling with is the encroachment of the buzz, the sense

that there is something out there that merits my attention, when in fact it’s mostly just a series of disconnected riffs and fragments that add up to the anxiety of the age.”

Bentz tries to find hope regarding this serious situation where cell phone conversations, text messaging, television, video/computer games, e-mails, internet surfing, Facebook, tweets, and blogs, among other media, occupy the time which formerly might have been spent in reading quietly. He fears that “[t]his problem of a kind of electronically induced attention deficit disorder is getting worse all the time.” Such extreme measures as declaring one or more days of “media fasts” in some high schools and colleges result in “students unplug[ging] all their electronics and read[ing] books on paper and interact[ing] with human beings face to face.” Another approach to encouraging uninterrupted hours of focused reading is to use technology such as “the Kindle, iPad, Sophie, Nook, and Vook” so that books are indeed read, although on screens rather than paper. Vooks allow “videos that portray key scenes in a novel. . . . connect to other people reading the book via sites such as Facebook. . . [and connect] to Web sites, songs, maps, illustrations, and photographs as you are reading the book.” Purists

might argue that this returns the reader to the invasion of media into his focused reading time, wherein one “get[s] lost in the words,” but at least it provides the possibility of reading and actually finishing a lengthy novel such as Thomas Wolfe’s hefty tomes of seven hundred or more pages.

Sadly, Bentz acknowledges that Thomas Wolfe (and perhaps other authors of lengthy novels) is being read less and less. This is a great loss, for “[t]o experience Wolfe, you must immerse yourself in his prose, got lost in it, stay awhile. The cumulative effect of the work is what makes it so powerful.” He notes, “His work is anthologized less than it used to be. Popular awareness of his work has dwindled. Membership in the Thomas Wolfe Society itself has shrunk. . . . the last time I included *Look Homeward, Angel* in an American Novel course, I assigned only the first half of it, hoping the students would be compelled to continue with the second half on their own.” This is sad. Nevertheless, he prophetically concludes, “I think we are on the cusp of a movement toward more visual novels and a blending of genres and technologies.” We shall see.—Carole J. Lambert



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