



Teaching with IRA in the Mwanza Region Of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This is a descriptive self-study of my experience participating in IRA's Diagnostic Teaching Project in Tanzania. The paper describes the teacher educators with whom I worked, their responses to IRA's curriculum, and what I learned about Tanzanian people, culture and education. Data are derived from a Likert survey, an open-item questionnaire, and my own observations in teaching a curriculum based on constructivist theory and classroom-based assessment. I found participants to be very receptive about the literacies theories and practices presented, and I describe some of the cultural challenges I faced while teaching there. Although there are enormous obstacles to educational reform in this beautiful country, with such motivated people as those I met in IRA's project, there is much hope for a better future.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Peter McDermott is a Professor of Education at The Sage Colleges where he teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in reading and the language arts. He previously taught in Bosnia as a Fulbright Scholar, in Tanzania as a volunteer with IRA's Diagnostic Teaching Project, and in Kazakhstan with Soros' Open Society and IRA's Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking project (RWCT). He has a long time interest in urban education. He is currently interested in the new digital literacies and their effects in students' literacy development.

Introduction and Purpose

Tanzania is a long distance from New York, but the opportunity to teach there was one I would never refuse. So in spring of 2006 when the International Reading Association (IRA) invited me to teach for two weeks that summer in Tanzania with its Diagnostic Teaching Project (International Reading Association, 2006), I eagerly agreed. I had previously participated in another IRA project, RWCT in Kazakhstan¹ and found that experience extremely rewarding and enriching for me as a teacher educator. It certainly broadened my own thoughts about teaching and learning, and I would like to believe my work there contributed to Kazakh educators' thinking about classroom teaching as a participatory and democratic process. I believed the opportunity to teach in Tanzania would be equally stimulating and beneficial.

The Diagnostic Teaching Project is a professional development program in literacy education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

¹ The RWCT project (Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking) was a highly successful project funded by the Soros Open Society Institute. The project provided constructivist approaches to teaching and learning in former Soviet countries. Originally funded for three years, the Kazakh project received two additional years through US AID. I had the opportunity to travel and teach there nine times through the course of the grants.



funded it, and the International Reading Association (IRA) developed the curriculum, identified and sponsored teacher educators, such as myself, to present it in several regions throughout Tanzania. The rationale and goals for the project were to provide professional development in literacy education to selected groups of teacher educators and to stimulate development of a national literacy curriculum (Chediell, 2005; Chediell et al., 2005; International Reading Association, 2007).

In this paper I describe and explain my experiences with the IRA/UNESCO project. In particular I pose answers to the following questions:

- 1) What were the educational characteristics of the Tanzanian teacher educators who participated in the Diagnostic Teaching Project in Mwanza?
- 2) How did African teacher educators respond to this project and its teaching strategies?
- 3) Which cultural issues were most striking to me as an American teacher educator in Tanzania?

Background

Historians widely acknowledge that European colonialism exploited Africa, its people and natural resources (e.g., Gordon & Gordon, 1996; Oliver & Atmore, 1994). African children, who were fortunate enough to receive an education during the colonial period, learned European ways of thinking and acting in the world but little about their own cultural traditions and ways of knowing (Abdi, Pupilamu, & Dei, 2006).

Post-colonialism has been equally devastating to Africa. Instead of foreign states exploiting the continent, multinational corporations and corrupt governmental officials now exhaust its human capital and mismanage its natural resources. Many African countries, despite independence, are as poor and desperate today as they were under colonialism. Recent events in Kenya (e.g., allegations of a rigged election and ethnic killing) provide continuing evidence of the extent of how political corruption easily undermines these fragile African republics.

Globalization is having few positive effects on Africa. While many parts of India and China are becoming increasingly prosperous, African countries remain the poorest in the world. Suarez-Orozco (2001) wrote that globalization consists of three main components: 1) the use of the new information and communicative technologies; 2) the growth of global markets, and 3) unprecedented levels of immigration and displacement. Sadly, African countries only experience the third component of globalization where many of its people, particularly those from northern African countries, are migrating to Europe and other parts of the post-industrial world. In Africa's sub-Saharan region there is large scale migration to cities even though the electricity in these urban areas is undependable, the communication technologies are irregular, and there is little employment and few economic opportunities. Despite passionate appeals for the richest countries to invest in the education of the world's poorest children, little of consequence is being actually being done (Levine, 2005). Education, which should offer hope for new generations of children, suffers from inadequate funding, poor classroom materials, and under-prepared teachers (Piper, 2007)

Tanzania's Educational System

Tanzania's educational system relies on policies enacted during the colonial era. The most striking similarities to that historical period are the current policies pertaining to school structure and the language of instruction. The Tanzanian system is based on a British model of schooling in which there are seven years of primary education, four years of lower secondary, two years of upper secondary, and three or more of university.



There is controversy about the language of classroom instruction (Arthur, 2001; Bgoya, 2001; Brock-Utne, 2007; Roy-Campbell, 2001). Currently, Kiswahili is used in the elementary grades with English taught as a separate subject. The reverse occurs in secondary education where English becomes the language of instruction, and Kiswahili becomes one of the subjects of study. Arthur (2001) argues that this issue of instructional language is very complex and is closely tied to the value Tanzania's place on social success in their society—namely, English fluency, not Kiswahili, is the passport to economic advancement in Tanzania. This language policy, which occurs in other African countries, such as South Africa, restricts children's access to secondary education, and for many it is a sad remnant of the colonial era (Arthur, 2001; Bgoya, 2001; Brock-Utne, 2007; Roy-Campbell, 2007). Many students, because they lack proficiency in academic English, fall further behind in their knowledge of the subject areas (Brock-Utne, 2007; Roy-Campbell, 2001) and are unmotivated to continue their education after seventh form. Compounding the problem with the English language requirement is that of tuition fees that make high school attendance prohibitive for most Tanzanian students (Sailors, Hoffman, & Matthee, 2007). Arthur (2001) claims that only 11% of Tanzanian adolescents actually attend secondary schools.

The historical background to Tanzania's educational system begins in 1961 when the country obtained its independence. At that time President Nyerere restructured the education system to be based on an agricultural model in which practical aspects of daily living, such as farming, were emphasized at the expense of the academic subjects. Initially, primary and secondary education were fee-based until 1973 when all tuition was dropped. In 1986 tuition was reestablished, and the near 90% participation rate in schooling dropped to less than 66%. Since 2002 there has been free Universal Primary Education for all children, but secondary education remains fee based at about \$10 per month. Today, most Tanzanians have not gone further than seventh grade.

A recent government report provides the following information about Tanzania's educational system (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001). In 2000 there were 11,600 primary schools and 927 secondary schools of which half were privately operated. The World Bank (1997) reports the literacy rate at 76% of the population with only 31% of its students going beyond 7th form. Tanzania's Ministry of Education and Culture (2001) further reports that half of the country's primary teachers are under-prepared to teach, and that there is a severe shortage of secondary teachers.

Research on teachers' professional development. The International Reading Association identifies on-going professional development as an important goal for all literacy educators. This concern is seen in its *Standards for Reading Professionals* (IRA, 2003) that require all institutions seeking NCATE accreditation to integrate ideas for on-going professional development into their curriculum for new teachers. Among IRA's recommended practices are that all literacy teachers participate in on-going professional development (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, Kehus, George, Hasty, & Highfield, 2001), and that they should receive opportunities for coaching (Moxley & Taylor, 2006), study groups (Lefever, Davis, Wilson, Moore, Kent, & Hopkins, 2003), and learning collaboratives (Parish, 1995). Professional development is viewed as a process where teachers regularly examine issues of teaching and learning in their own school communities and classrooms (Robb, 2000).

A country's future depends on having a well developed and comprehensive educational system. India may serve as a model for how education can contribute to social reform. During the 1950's Nehru established math and science technical institutes throughout country, and now



only a few generations later India has become a model country in these subject areas. It is successfully reversing its agricultural economy into a high tech workforce that is the cutting edge and even the envy of many well-developed countries.

The goals of the Diagnostic Teaching Project are to improve literacy education throughout Tanzania and stimulate movement toward a national literacy curriculum. UNESCO's efforts for teachers' professional development are clearly linked to economic and social reform. Reasonable people would agree that social and economic reform in the 21st century can only coincide with a literate and technically skilled populace that can effectively participate in the global economy. The Diagnostic Teaching Project focuses on teachers' professional development with the assumption that it will improve literacy teaching in the selected regions and stimulate discussion for the development of a national literacy curriculum.

The Workshop

This descriptive paper is based on my experience with the Diagnostic Teaching Project I ran in the city of Mwanza. The project was designed to be delivered through a series of three two-week workshops in the 2006-2007 academic year. My workshop took place in August 2006 and simultaneously other workshops took place in two other regions, Morogoro and Iranga. Zanzibar was scheduled for another time. Subsequent workshops by other facilitators were conducted as late as February 2008.

Thirty-five teacher-educators from the western region of Tanzania participated in the two-week workshop that I conducted. All of these teacher-educators were affiliated with either teacher training institutes, universities, or the ministry of higher education. A few were novices with limited teaching experience, but the great majority had extensive educational experience, some had even traveled to Europe and the United States on other UNESCO projects.

The City of Mwanza

Mwanza is located inland on the southern shore of Lake Victoria. It is a city of nearly 3 million people in it and the surrounding area. Paved roads extend about ten miles from the downtown area, but then become gravel or packed dirt. It has some three and four story buildings but most of its businesses and dwellings are one floor cinder block or modest wood structures. The urban region extends for miles in all directions. People travel by foot for the most part. Mwanza's large bus depot occupies a full city block near the city's main open-air market. Colorful long-distance line the block waiting to convey riders to other parts of the country. My first impression of the city was of the great numbers of colorfully dressed people walking in all directions and on both sides of the roads. There are some cars and minivans, but almost all of them bear signs indicating that they are private taxis, owned by mining companies, or by United Nations officials. Very few Tanzanian private citizens actually own cars.

Teaching at Butimba Teachers' College in Mwanza. Butimba Teachers' College, where I taught, was built by the British in the early 1950's. The college is located on a rise on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria. It hosts a lab school for elementary and secondary students with many of the secondary students living on the grounds. When driving up the dirt road to the main entrance the school displays a metal casing of a bomb that Idi Amin had fired at the school during the Uganda-Tanzanian War of 1978; no damage was done, but the school kept the casing as an historical marker of that egregious event. Figure I displays a photograph of the main entrance to the school.



Figure 1: *Main Entrance to Butimba Teachers' College*



The Diagnostic Teaching Project

The Diagnostic Teaching Project consists of curriculum in theories of literacy processes and assessment. It was piloted in Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam in 2005. The project design was to have a Western teacher educator co-teach the workshops with an African. In my case, I co-taught with a Tanzanian teacher educator, Robert (pseudonym). At the time that Robert and I presented our workshop in Mwanza, other teams of Western and in-country facilitators presented the same workshops in two other cities in Tanzania. IRA's and UNESCO's expectation was the workshop participants would later incorporate the theory and methods of the curriculum into their own educational practices.

The Diagnostic Teaching Project is based on constructivist theory and emphasizes the use of classroom assessment data to inform teachers' literacy instruction. Interactive and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning are emphasized throughout it. The framework for the uses a three-part lesson structure consisting of what teachers do before, during, and after a lesson. The curriculum topics address ways to assess and teach oral reading, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, as well as model metacognitive strategies such as think-alouds. Other teaching strategies included "Every Pupil Respond" techniques, holistic writing assessments, classroom rubrics, questioning strategies, and many others. In the first week of the workshop Robert and I presented demonstration lessons from the curriculum. In the second week we observed and coached the participants as they presented similar lessons to elementary or secondary children from the lab school.

Data Sources

A variety of sources provided the data for this paper. On the first morning we collected background information about the participants' years teaching experience, their levels of education, and their prior coursework in literacy. We administered a 20-item Likert survey that was previously developed by IRA pertaining to literacy theory and methods; this IRA (2006) survey contained nine topics pertaining to participants' ability to define literacy concepts (word recognition and phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, motivation, grouping practices, instructional adaptation, assessment, instructional adaptation, materials) and their perceived professional strengths and goals. Participants completed daily "exit cards" that identified what they learned from the day's lessons and what questions they had about them. At the end of the two-week period participants completed a final questionnaire, that Robert and I developed, about the overall effectiveness of the workshop. It contained five Likert items and three open-ended



questions and asked participants to rate the workshop, the effectiveness of the facilitators, respond to whether they had expanded their knowledge of literacy, learned specific diagnostic techniques, and learned models and prototypes for inclusion in their work in their own regions. The open-ended items asked them to identify the most and least valuable parts of the workshop, and what they would like to learn more about in the future.

In addition to these data I kept a journal of my observations of the workshop and the participants' demonstration lessons. I took numerous digital photos of our workshops and their lessons. The initial background questionnaire, the pre/post literacy surveys, the daily exit cards, journal and photographs provided the data for this paper. As an example of the kind of data I gathered, Figure 2 is a photograph of children waiting for one of our lessons in the second week.

Figure 2: *Children wait for the beginning of one of our lessons*



Findings

Educational Characteristics of the Tanzanian Teacher Educators who Participated in the Diagnostic Teaching Project

In this section, the participants' backgrounds and previous study of literacy are first described. Then I share their perceptions about the strengths they bring to teaching and their overall responses to the two-week workshop. Next I present anecdotes and incidents that relate to cultural ways of thinking and teaching in Tanzania. In particular, I share events that challenged or surprised me as a Western teacher educator. I describe how the participants established their own system of organization and feedback for the workshop, and how a single classroom incident revealed the participants' thoughts about social change, particularly those pertaining to women's rights. I conclude by discussing their great sense of collegiality toward one another, my experiences co-teaching with Robert, and the children's eager participation in our lessons.

Participants' educational experiences. Nearly half of the participants indicated that they had 26 years experience or more. In fact, eight of the participants indicated that they had 31 years teaching experience. Table I (see next page) identifies the participants' years of teaching. An interesting aspect of the participants' life experience and knowledge is that many of them indicated that they had previously participated in a variety of professional development programs. Most of these programs were offered through UNESCO and included such topics as "Participatory Education," "Teaching Kiswahili," "Teaching Adult Learners," the "Reading, Writing, Critical Thinking Project," and "Cooperative Learning." All of the participants had a teaching certificate, even the administrators who had joined us. The participants' subject areas were Kiswahili, English, history, mathematics, home economics, and physical education.



Table 1
Participants' Years Experience Classroom Teaching

Years experience	# of participants
1-5	2
6-10	1
11-15	5
16-20	4
21-25	2
26-30	7
31-35	8

The teachers indicated they had little formal education in teaching literacy. On the second day of the workshop I asked them to complete the Likert survey about their understanding of teaching literacy. The participants were so conscientious about the survey that it seemed to take them forever to complete it. After about 20 minutes, I asked them to hurry and respond more quickly to each of the items. Most of their answers indicated that the participants perceived themselves in the middle of the Likert survey, ranking themselves a 2 or 3 on the 4-point scale. The one exception to this were the two items where they felt they had excellent knowledge of instructional materials but little knowledge of how to adapt instruction for learning differences. Table 2 illustrates the participants' responses to the pre-survey.

Table 2
Participants' Responses to the Pre-Survey

Item	0 No Answer	1 No confidence	2 Some confidence	3 Quite a lot	4 Excellent
Decoding	7	4	10	5	1
Fluency	7	3	10	8	1
Vocabulary	7	1	7	11	3
Comprehension	7	2	6	13	2
Motivation	7	1	13	8	1
Grouping for instruction	7	1	12	8	4
Assessment	7	0	7	12	4
Adapting instruction	7	6	11	5	0
Materials	7		5	11	6

Participants' perceptions about their professional strengths. The final item of the pre-survey asked participants to identify their strengths and goals as teacher educators. It seemed that their responses could easily have been written by American teacher educators. For instance, Augustine wrote her strengths were "ability to learn from others, a good university education, participation in various in-service seminars, and ability to use some of the participatory techniques." She said her goal was to learn "language teaching techniques and use of various (interactive) learning techniques." Luke wrote that his strengths were in "preparing academic documents (scheme of work, lesson plans)" and that his goals were to learn "teaching methods,



reading skills, assessment and evaluation skills.” Emanuel, our chairman, said his goals were to “improve my professional strengths as a teacher ...and to learn more on participatory methods rather than lecture methods.” Paulina indicated that her strengths were in knowing “teaching materials and learning, students, classroom desk, tests and quizzes, examinations.” Her goals reflect the challenges of teaching in Tanzania because they reflected the pressures she felt with the lack of resources. Some of Paulina’s goals were to have “100% of supply of learning/teaching materials, sufficient desks, and friendly examinations.” Others wrote about their goal for “teaching reading properly,” “ability to facilitate primary teachers,” “large classroom management skills,” “methods of teaching,” “modern teaching techniques,” “make my class more interactive,” “how to adapt for instructional differences.” Several teachers still wrote about “computer literacy” as one of their professional goals.

How African teacher educators responded to this project and its teaching strategies

On the last day of the workshop Robert and I asked the participants to complete a final survey, which we prepared, containing five Likert and three open-ended items about their responses to the two-week workshop. The three open-ended items related directly to the workshop goals of using Diagnostic Teaching in their own work in their schools and universities. The first item asked them to rate the overall workshop, and with this item 90% of them ranked it either a 4 or 5. The second asked them to rate the facilitators on this question, and 89% indicated good or excellent. The third item asked whether they expanded their knowledge of literacy, and here 79% indicated good or excellent. The fourth item asked whether they learned specific diagnostic techniques, and 84% again indicated good or excellent. The final question asked whether they had developed models and prototypes to incorporate into their work at home, but here only 63% indicated agreement. Table 3 depicts the participants’ responses to the Likert Survey.

Table 3: Participants’ Evaluation of the Workshop

	Poor	Not so good	Neutral	Good	Excellent
Rate the Workshop				17	15
Rate the facilitators				13	19
I expanded my knowledge of literacy			4	17	11
I learned specific diagnostic techniques			2	15	15
I learned models and prototypes for inclusion in my own teaching.			9	16	7

On the open-ended items participants indicated that they wanted to learn more about Cloze strategies, questioning (QAR’s), and Think Alouds; each of these strategies were demonstrated in at least one of our lessons. The participants expressed displeasure about the money they were paid to attend (there were conflicts about full and half-day payments), calendar scheduling issues (particularly with early notification of the workshop dates so that they could plan ahead), and the general timetable for arriving and leaving (apparently there were difficulties over the availability of public buses to Mwanza). Figure 3 is a photograph of one of the participants helping high school students participate in cooperative learning groups.



Figure 3: *Godfrey helps high school boys complete a learning activity*



3) Which cultural issues were most striking to me as an American teacher educator in Tanzania?

There was a formality to the workshops that I had not anticipated but increasingly learned to appreciate. One of the participants, Emanuel, was identified by the group as their workshop “chairman.” Apparently this happened as participants arrived and prior to my beginning the first workshop session. I learned that Emanuel’s responsibility was to call each day’s meeting to order, attend to business issues such as attendance, daily schedule, payment for participation, and daily reports about the previous day. Emanuel often wore a grey fedora hat and a sports jacket. He initially seemed quite serious about his responsibilities, but later his easy-going nature and good humor kept everyone entertained as he introduced each day’s activities.

On the second morning Emanuel told Robert and I that we needed to present a specific schedule on chart paper that contained the exact times of each of our lessons. Although on Monday we had listed what we planned to do on chart paper, the participants apparently wanted more detail. They wanted to have specific times for the beginning and ending of each lesson, the time of the tea breaks, lunch, and dismissal. So I learned that time was pretty important in this culture. Even though we had ended morning and afternoon sessions within times we had announced, the participants wanted to see it in writing and know exactly when breaks would occur. Certainly it was not an unreasonable request and we gladly obliged.

The “daily reports” took place in the following way: At the end of each day the chairman appointed a pair of participants to present a formal report for the next morning that summarized the topics and activities that were covered the previous day. These reports were quite formal and presented in both oral and written form. Promptly each morning the chairman would stand, announce that the workshop would begin after they received the report about the previous day. The two reporters would stand, distribute hard copies of their summary to everyone, and then read it aloud to the group. Sometimes the reporters appeared anxious about the accuracy of their summaries because apparently everyone viewed the reports as a serious responsibility. The reports were often very specific and detailed. The report for August 17th, for example, contained the following entry:

“The first session started at 9:20 am with warm-up from Group 4 and the chairman introduced three tutors from Katoke Teacher College. After the chairman introduced the new participants, we hear a report presented by Bunda Teachers College; some corrections were made by participants.



Later on the facilitators began to give response to the exit card which were given the day before, for example: (1) the difference between taboo and customs. (ii) Word knowledge/ vocabulary techniques (its importance) in teaching. Moreover the facilitators said ...”

(Excerpt from summary of August 17, 2006, Day Four).

The chairman then asked if there were any questions or revisions for the reporters. He asked whether the group accepted and approved of the report, and only then could we move forward with the day’s lessons.

Equity for Women

The most remarkable event of the workshop for me occurred after we had taught a reading comprehension lesson about “African taboos.” The text that we had read pertained to African cultural customs in which women were viewed as sex objects. According to one of these customs, the “Hyena” practice, a man could pay a family to have sex with a virgin daughter, and this could even happen even if the man were HIV positive. After discussing this and other traditional practices, Paulina stood up and challenged the group. She said, “We need to stop this practice as well as others. Tanzanians need to respect women and practices such as these do not give honor to their natural rights.” Immediately everyone in the room enthusiastically applauded her remarks.

As a Western outsider this incident surprised me because I thought the women’s treatment was very cultural and unlikely to change. In fact, however, I learned it was already changing. During break, I spoke with Paulina and asked her about the ideas that she had shared. Paulina said that several years ago she had spent two weeks in Chicago at a UNESCO conference on women’s rights. That conference, she said, helped her develop a voice about the rights of women. Through this incident I realized the influence ideas in bringing about social change - once an idea takes hold it has the potential to grow change occurs.

Tanzanian Collegiality

Tanzanians are exceptionally collegial and respectful of one another, far more so than one would find in the United States. The participants often referred to one another as “mother” or “father,” which I gathered is a term of fondness and/or respect. Participants often called the older participants by these terms. When leaving a classroom during a lesson, participants momentarily paused at the classroom door and bowed toward the presenting teacher.

During the second week, participants co-taught the demonstration lessons to students at the Butimba School. In one of these lessons a male and female teacher co-taught together. The lesson went well enough but it was curious, at least to me, as to why the young female teacher only stood to the side throughout the lesson and never interacted with her co-teacher or children. When it was time to critique the lesson the participants commented on its various strengths, offered questions about it, but no one mentioned that the young woman had not contributed to its delivery. After the critique and when the presenting teachers sat down, as with the other lessons, everyone applauded. They seemed to smile more than they did with the previous lessons almost as if they were aware of what was left unsaid. When I asked my interpreter (the lesson was presented in Kiswahili) about the group’s inattention to the woman’s lack of participation, he explained that she was young and shy, and her co-teacher tried to compensate and protect her because he was more experienced. The interpreter said the male co-teacher did not want her to be embarrassed, and everyone understood his rationale. They admired and appreciated his generosity and kindness.



As a visitor to Tanzania there were many events and activities that required an insider's interpretation to what was happening. Cultural knowledge involves understanding the many nuances involved in verbal and non-verbal communication. Connotations involved with vocabulary choice, tone and intonation are all indispensable when trying to interpret a cultural event that is not one's own. Certainly I was always dependent on the frankness of my interpreters and hosts in sharing their interpretations of events that I had observed. Without their interpretations I may not have understood what I had seen.

Co-teaching

Robert was an affable and collegial person to work with, but one the most challenging aspects of teaching in Tanzania pertained to my learning to co-teach with him. In my own work in New York, co-teaching works best when my model of instruction is similar to that of my co-teacher. Typically we know and respect one another's knowledge and styles of teaching. Usually we have carefully planned lessons that contain agreed upon goals, activities, and time frames. Typically, there is a shared trust and respect for one another's insights and opinions. Co-teaching with a stranger, when there is little time to plan together and little understanding about each other's model of teaching, would be difficult at home. It is much more challenging in Africa where cultural views about education might be entirely different.

The Diagnostic Teaching Project was designed to have a Western teacher educator co-teach its curriculum with an in-country teacher educator. The idea is to develop local trainers who would continue the project long after funding had ended. I first met my co-teacher in the Dar es Salaam airport while we waited for the gate to open for our flight to Mwanza. Robert was taller than me, large framed, and always seemed to have a broad smile on his face. He was driven to the airport with his teenage son. Robert said he lived near his college which was about two hours drive from the airport. From this initial meeting to the day I left Robert was always gracious and friendly with me and the participants. The year before he had been involved in the project during its pilot run before UNESCO funding. He introduced me to his teenage son who seemed equally friendly and curious about the American his father would be working with for the next two weeks.

When we landed in Mwanza a driver from Barima Teachers' College met and took us to our hotels. I was not initially sure as to why Robert did not stay in the same hotel as I, but later inferred that it was probably because of cost. Although my hotel was only \$13 a night, Robert paid much less in a motel-like building that was near the college. My hotel was several stories high and contained a walled courtyard that separated it from the dirt street. The courtyard contained a restaurant where one could order a variety of dinners, including fried, baked, or boiled tilapia, chicken, and stews made with sweet potato or bananas. Serengeti and Kilimanjaro beers were plentiful and only about 30 cents a bottle. Throughout the two weeks that we worked together, and with the exception of a weekend and our final nights in Mwanza when we socialized, we lived in different parts of the city and could not easily meet and collaborate in planning. Although we tried to sketch our plans before I left the college campus each evening, Robert waited for my lead as to how the lessons were to be taught. I felt uncomfortable assigning him a lesson to teach, and he seemed hesitant to volunteer responsibility for teaching one. Although I tried to be open and allow opportunities for him to take the lead for any lessons that he wanted, he did not do so. He might have held an expectation that I would be the lead teacher, and his role would be to support me. On the other hand, I inferred that there might be cultural differences about my role, an outside Westerner, in teaching the workshop. Regardless of the reasons, for the first week I served as the primary teacher. The only exception to this pertained to



the morning warm-ups, business issues, and lesson critiques where Robert often seemed eager to lead. His relaxed manner, broad smile, and friendly manner worked very well with the participants.

In the second week the participants co-taught lessons to the Butimba children. On that Monday Robert offered to facilitate discussion of the demonstration lessons. It was very clear that he had the respect of the participants, and he was very knowledgeable about teaching. He seemed to enjoy summarizing and emphasizing key learning points contained in the lessons.

I do not know why it took so long for us to reach the point where Robert felt sufficiently comfortable taking over the role of co-teacher and not deferring to me. Perhaps the nature of critique, in which response and reaction was required, suited his thinking about his role in the workshop. Looking back on all the teaching I had done in the first week, we would have been a better team if we had shared the teaching more than we did. This may have been my error not to be more direct and frank with him. On the other hand, it takes time to construct mutual trust and respect. It might have been part of his cultural way of thinking to step back and let the outsider share information. Two weeks in Tanzania certainly did not give me sufficient time to answer this question validly.

Children's Participation in Demonstration Lessons

Analyses of my experiences of teaching in Tanzania would be incomplete with describing the children's level of participation in the demonstration lessons. An American educator would be jealous to see the intensity of students' attention, respect, and eagerness to learn. A number of issues were particularly surprising to me: 1) The extent of their politeness and respect for one another and the adults at the school; 2) Their ability to sit in uncomfortable seats for long lessons without becoming inattentive or disruptive; 3) The eagerness with which they actively participated by contributing to discussions and showing their work; 4) The conditions in which their classrooms lacked regular electricity, books, and learning materials. Figure 4 displays a photo of children as they participated in one of the demonstration lessons.

Figure 4: *Children Sharing Seats during a Demonstration Lesson*



Discussion

Certainly the experience of teaching in Tanzania has broadened my understanding of education in this beautiful country. I learned that Tanzanian education is in great need of reform and has changed very little over the decades. Few resources are being invested in it, and many of their classroom teachers are under-prepared to teach literacy. The majority of children do not attend school beyond the seventh grade. Schools lack literacy curricula, and their teachers have



not studied theories and practices for teaching it. Despite many natural resources little of the income derived from it ever is used to support Tanzania's educational system. The lack of strong national leadership for education, inadequate funding of schools, and poor structural resources such as dependable electricity and highways, are limiting Tanzania's participation in the globalized world. It is no wonder it remains one of the poorest places in the world.

Despite all of these challenges, one could not find a more eager group of people to work with than the group I taught in Mwanza. The participants expressed appreciation for the workshop, and they eagerly completed tasks and engaged in the classroom activities.

I found it frustrating to see the very limited educational opportunities children received in Tanzania. While social, economic, and educational opportunities are improving for many children in India and China, little is changing in Africa, and certainly not in Tanzania.

When I previously taught in Kazakhstan I saw the effects of extensive Soviet investment in its educational system. The Soviets placed tremendous pride in educating its young, and their math and science curricula, in particular, were rigorous and demanding. Sadly, the educational opportunities in Tanzania bear no comparison with the former Soviet states. It is frightening to think that with the great wealth in many other parts of the world, there are so many Tanzanian children who are only receiving an elementary education. This situation offers little hope Tanzania when other children throughout the world are benefiting from extensive and richer educational opportunities than their children receive.

The Tanzanians with whom I worked were very knowledgeable about European history and culture, and less so about the history and culture of the United States. The geographic distance between our two countries serves as a significant communication barrier between it and other parts of the world. For instance, one day the principal of Butimba Teachers' College spoke to me about terrorism in the United States. He could not name the World Trade Center or Pentagon sites, but he knew there was an attack in America. His lack of specificity surprised me, but later I discovered that I could not recall that there had been a terrorist attack on the U.S. embassy in Tanzania, either. So there remains much to be learned about one another.

The Tanzanian teacher educators with whom I worked were remarkably positive and eager to learn. With such motivated people, who are eager for educational and economic reform, initiatives such as the Diagnostic Teaching Project may eventually trigger social change in Tanzania.

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