

Third International Training Consultation
Emmaus Bible College
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WORKSHOP 2.4 NOTES
TRAINING FOR CHANGE
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Remit How can we best prepare people to be able to analyse our traditions and facilitate change in churches. What is the role of trainers and training systems in promoting positive change in our churches – the concept of training change-makers.

**ANALYSING OUR TRADITIONS AND FACILITATING CHANGE IN CHURCHES AND THE ROLE OF
TRAINERS AND TRAINING SYSTEMS – TRAINING CHANGE-MAKERS (ERNO NAGY)**

1. Introduction

Christian training should not only focus on imparting theological contents but it has always to consider as well the contemporary cultural aspects as the own denominational heritage.

2. Brethren heritage

This section will emphasise just a few aspects of Brethren movement heritage. It will point at the influence of or the link with social and cultural background. Some aspects are really progressive though and fit in social developments nowadays.

- Rationalism – its development in time is about similar with that of Protestantism. Its ideas are widely embraced in the Brethren movement from its beginning till now.
- Rejecting structures (generally), emphasising the independence of the local churches
- Division – a bad “DNA sequence” in our heritage
- Openness for new ways, new developments, new forms

3. Current challenges

What’s going on in (secular and religious) society, where changes have to be considered in Christian training?

- Transition from modern to postmodern society
- “Trendy” church movements and our reaction (Emerging Church, Hillsong, and the like)
- Technical development and its effect on our church life and training (especially young people)

4. Preparing for the future

- New training forms – not just passing knowledge, but pointing at the spiritual and psychical forming of students
- Training new forms – what may be saved from the past, what should we learn from other denominations?
- Forming new trainers – how should training institutes interact more effectively with the local churches to equip trainers for several areas of church life?

Thoughts on training for change (Frederick Walraven)

Below are some steps to coach leaders through a change process.

1) Analyse the problem

Do we see something needs to be done? Is there a sense of urgency? What worked 30 years ago doesn't necessarily work today. We live in a constant changing culture.

Do we understand these cultural changes? The motivation for change should be our faithfulness to the great commission.

2) Talk about objections to change

Most people don't like change. Reactions we can notice:

a) We don't want to change because you don't change the truth.

We need to distinguish between biblical principles (that never change) and the forms and structures (that have to change in every culture and generation)

We don't change the message (truth) but we do have to change methods, structures and ways of living out the principles. It's the difference between the wine and the wine skins.

b) Didn't we do it right up till now?

People feel accused because so far their traditional way worked well. But in today's world we need new paradigms to handle new situations.

c) We don't want to change because we want to remain faithful.

Faithfulness doesn't mean that we don't change. Faithfulness means following the Lord. If He tells us to move on we should make a step. Think of Israel in the desert.

d) If we give in to one step where will it end?

This is fear. Fear was never a good guide. Where the Spirit of the Lord works there is peace. We need to walk in faith not in fear.

3) Understand change as a necessary ongoing process.

Everything that's alive changes. The church is organic!

Change should rather be seen as renewal.

Renewal is a biblical principle. (Rom 12:2; 2Cor 4:1; Col 3:10)

4) Where should we be going to?

Do we have a clear understanding of the next step?

What has God shown us? Is there a vision?

Are we enthusiastic about this? Do we have a passion that challenges others?

5) Where are we now?

Do we have a clear understanding of where we are at this moment in regard to our heritage and convictions? Do we know what we defend as our convictions? What do we want to keep at all cost?

Do all share the same conviction? Or can we notice a shift in this area? How strongly do we defend the brethren heritage? How do we describe our identity?

6) The process of change

Change is not just a cognitive process. We cannot convince people just with facts.

As the greatest objection to change is fear leaders should coach people through the process to build confidence. This coaching process is crucial.

How do we get from A (where we are now) to B (where we want to go to)?

- A clear communication of the vision. It needs repetition!
- Listen to those who have objections. Take them seriously
- Ask if they are willing to try a step and involve them in the process
- Take enough time for prayer and reflection. Don't push or force decisions
- Distinguish early adopters and work with them so that they talk to the larger middle
- Set SMART goals along the way
- Coach the process by communicating and evaluating every small step.
- Learn to think in possibilities instead of a judgmental (right/wrong) attitude. Be open for try outs. Have a flexible open mindset. Learn from mistakes.

7) Be aware of losing people

Work with those who share the vision. Finally there may be people who object.

You may end up losing them. That's sad but it is their choice. They have the freedom to disagree. In that case they have to bear the consequences. Leaders cannot please all people. Their first concern should be to please the Lord.

Reality shows that in many change processes some people choose to go away while others come and join the vision.