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Games and feints as pedagogy: Using game theory and reverse logic to teach conflict reporting

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Abstract

This article presents a successful experiment in the use of two innovative pedagogic methods – game theory and ‘reverse logic’ – to overcome problems in the sustained adoption of good practices in reporting conflict during a workshop for broadcast journalists in Nepal organised by UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU). The article outlines how the strategy for using game theory and reverse logic was designed and implemented to

allow discovery of principles and to promote longer term ownership of the journalistic values that are consistent with conflict resolution and peace-building. It goes on to describe workshop activities and relates them to issues in transformative learning and value education. It evaluates student reactions and engagement and the extent to which the use of game theory and reverse logic led to the adoption of desired values.

Keywords

Game theory, reverse logic, conflict reporting, journalism, peace journalism, values, best practice, pedagogy, reflection.

Introduction

Inducing ‘deep learning’ of the values of good journalism to effectively bridge the gap between acknowledgement of their relevance and their sustained adoption in practice is often a difficult task. Among the many reasons for this is the manner in which these values are usually transmitted. To students in the classroom, guidelines and standards for good journalism are often presented in a prescriptive manner, arguably leading to a ‘surface’ adoption that often falters in the face of professional cultures, practices and constraints subsequently encountered in newsrooms. Similarly, those who train professional journalists can meet with resistance when encouraging the adoption of codes of practice: prescribed standards meet with active opposition both because they represent a criticism of existing journalistic practices and are seen to be externally imposed.

This article presents the results of an experiment with pedagogic approaches aimed at improving the coverage of conflict and post-conflict situations by Nepalese broadcast journalists. It centres on the use of game theory and ‘reverse logic’ to emphasise and inculcate the values that underlie ‘good’ journalistic coverage of conflict and post-conflict situations.

The approach described in this article was adopted before and during an intensive workshop conducted by the author in Kathmandu, the capital of the Himalayan country, Nepal, in November 2011. The workshop, titled ‘In-Country Workshop on Peace Building, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution’, was organised by UNESCO and the Asia-

Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU). It was a five-day full-time workshop, with workshop activities extending to approximately 35 contact hours. The workshop was attended by 24 participants. Most of them were journalists, but the group included two camerapeople and two video editors. Three participants came from two privately owned organisations, ABC Television and Sagarmath TV; the rest were from Nepal's two state broadcasters, Nepal Television and Radio Nepal. The participants ranged in profile from young reporters with a couple of years of experience to senior journalists, such as news editors with more than two decades of experience. The author was the sole trainer for the workshop. The workshop was conducted on the premises of Nepal Television and its management took a keen interest in the proceedings; the chair of Nepal Television at that time, Balaram Timalisina, a former Maoist guerrilla commander, attended several of the sessions and also provided inputs.

The theme of the workshop – the role of the media during conflict and in post-conflict situations – was especially significant because of the long period of political and armed conflict witnessed by Nepal since the movement for democratic reforms led by mainstream political parties gathered pace in the early 1990s. From 1996 to 2006, the country was wracked by an armed Maoist insurgency that grew into a civil war. Even after the war ended in 2006, political conflicts continued to rage, resulting in the unseating of the king and the abolition of monarchy. As a result, what was the world's only Hindu kingdom became a democratic republic in 2008. More than three years later, in 2011, several social and political conflicts were still being played out, manifest in the inability of any political party to form a stable government, the repeated failure of the constituent assembly to meet deadlines for framing a new constitution, disputes over the resettlement of Maoist guerrillas, and developmental and social conflicts. Even though the civil war was over, Nepal continued to be in a state of political and social turmoil.

Almost all the participants had covered social, political and armed conflict in some form and were thus practitioners experienced in reporting conflict. Some of the participants had also attended earlier workshops conducted by international trainers as part of various media development initiatives, including workshops on reporting conflict. The challenge, therefore, was to deliver a workshop that built upon the participants' experience, but did not disregard their social and political environment.

The workshop covered a variety of topics and themes over five days, including frameworks of understanding conflict; the role of conflict in society and individual lives; concepts of conflict resolution and peace-building; and the safety of journalists. A number of sessions were also devoted to discussing journalistic issues and practices, planning future coverage, reinforcing values, and developing conceptual and practical skills. This article, however, restricts itself to discussing game theory and reverse logic because they are examples of innovative pedagogical methods developed to encourage the adoption of specific journalistic values and approaches without being prescriptive. They were arrived at as a result of a reflective process.

Reflecting on pedagogical challenges

The objectives and outcomes of the workshop were indicated in its 'Terms of Reference',

a document agreed between the funding agency, UNESCO, and the implementing agency, ABU. The specified objectives included increasing ‘understanding of approaches the media can take in peace building’ and ‘practicing these approaches’. The desired outcomes were that the journalists would ‘begin to construct their own approaches’ and ‘internalise the principles of playing a constructive role in a post-conflict situation’. This, it was expected, would contribute to ‘increased quality of coverage’ (ABU, 2011).

In the light of these objectives and desired outcomes, both content and methodology presented pedagogical challenges; the former in the selection of journalistic approaches that exemplified best practice but were relevant to Nepalese broadcast journalists, and the latter by the search for an approach that would maximise and sustain adoption. Both these challenges were considered simultaneously.

The workshop’s title and terms of reference indicated that it would be appropriate to discuss the framework of peace journalism. Passionately advocated by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005; Lynch, 2008), it is based on the Transcend approach of Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung (Galtung, 2004; Galtung and Jacobsen, 2000) and is posited as an alternative approach to overcome perceived shortcomings arising from the notions of objectivity enshrined in the norms of traditional journalism. Galtung, Lynch and McGoldrick characterise traditional journalism as ‘war journalism,’ that is, oriented towards war/violence, the elites, propaganda and us-them/win-lose scenarios. Peace journalism, by contrast, is defined as ‘conflict/peace-oriented, people-oriented, truth-oriented’ and ‘solution-oriented’.

Peace journalism is often criticised for being more akin to advocacy rather than reporting. Loyn (2007), for instance, considers some of its prescriptions ‘dangerous’ and strenuously opposes the idea that journalists should be ‘players’ rather than observers. Tumber (2009) describes it as being ‘a manifesto rather than a theory’ (2009: 395). On the other hand, Hanitzsch (2007) criticises it for being ‘old wine in news bottles’ and Kempf (2007) says it is no more than a ‘prerequisite of good journalism’.

This divergence of views about whether peace journalism embodies the values that underlie excellence in journalism or is antithetical to them captures the content-related challenge posed by the workshop. It was clearly appropriate to promote some of the elements of peace journalism, including the ‘desirable values’ of emphasising fairness and accuracy; focusing on peace processes, peace-building and structural underpinnings of conflicts; giving voice to the voiceless and ordinary people; and avoiding demonising language. On the other hand, it was imperative to avoid the traps of activism, interventionism, and the abandonment of the established traditional journalistic norms of objectivity and neutrality. This dilemma of deciding on a set of desirable values and other pedagogical challenges were resolved through reflective practice – the act of conscious reflection in a structured manner.

Many theorists have examined the processes of reflective learning, among them Kolb (1984), Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), Boud and Walker (1998), Hatton and Smith (1995), Cowan (2006) and Brockbank and McGill (2007). Despite important differences in their approaches, they agree that the central concept is that of revisiting and analysing one’s own experiences, ideas and concerns in a structured manner. The explicit aim is to recognise patterns, organise ideas, seek meaning and find solutions that will lay the foun-

ation for improved practice.

Moon's (2006: 37) description of reflection as a 'form of mental processing' applied to 'relatively complicated, ill-structured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding that we already possess' is, in hindsight, an accurate description of the process that led to the development of a pedagogical plan for the workshop.

Donald Schön (1991) structured the activities of 'the reflective practitioner' into 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (learning from the analysis of experiences and events *while* they are taking place and *after* they have occurred, respectively). A third category, 'reflection *for* action', is variously credited to Eraut (1995, quoted in Husu *et al.*, 2008: 39) and Cowan (2006: 51–52). The preparatory process *for* the Nepal workshop entailed reflecting *on* the experience of international journalism training workshops conducted in the past.¹ These workshops included several on reporting conflict.² Others focused on reporting HIV and AIDS,³ a theme which also encompasses strong elements of conflict manifest as discrimination and hostility.

Reflecting on past workshops also yielded methodological solutions. It led to the realisation that it was important to avoid disregarding the structural constraints of participating journalists or disparaging their existing practices. The participants, especially the more senior among them, would likely react adversely to being told – in effect – that they were not doing a good enough job. It was easy to predict their reaction – self-justification and defensiveness would form a barrier to learning. The optimal way forward was to treat the participants as competent professionals doing a difficult job in under-resourced organisations and demanding environments.

Previous encounters with journalists also indicated that prescriptive approaches would not be successful. Journalists are quick to question dogmatism if it is not backed up with convincing reason and prescriptive pedagogical methods could easily be construed as condescension and arrogance on the part of a foreign trainer. This would be a particular problem with peace journalism because of its doctrinarian dos and don'ts as well as their seeming conflict with established journalistic norms (see, for instance, Loyn, 2007). This perception also stemmed from the author's experience of attending a workshop on peace journalism a decade ago.⁴ The author, though swayed by the approach, vocally challenged several aspects of the normative tenets set down by the activist trainers, Jake Lynch and Annabelle McGoldrick, in order to help spark further discussion and debate.

This was the basis for a conviction that the workshop demanded an approach that not only avoided being prescriptive but also precluded any opportunity for it to be considered so. The ideal solution would be to find a method that would enable participants to discover

1 The author has conducted about four dozen journalism training workshops in 15 African and Asian countries, including Nepal, over the past decade.

2 A series of four two-week workshops was conducted for 'The EU-India Documentary Initiative on Diversity and Conflict Transformation' a large cross-cultural documentary project implemented in 2004–05 by The Thomson Foundation. Thirty-two radio and television journalists from 12 countries produced 24 documentaries comparing the dynamics of social, political, religious, environmental and economic conflicts in Europe and India.

3 HIV and AIDS workshops for journalists were conducted in Bangladesh, 2006 and 2009; China, 2010; India, 2005–2006 and 2011; Indonesia, 2011; Macau SAR, 2009; Malaysia, 2011; Mexico, 2008; Nepal, 2008; Sri Lanka, 2007 and 2009; and Vietnam, 2009.

4 The workshop, 'Reporting the World: The Role of Media Organizations and Journalists in Reporting on War, Conflict and Peace', was organised in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, from 4–6 December 2003, by Reporting the World, TRANSCEND, and the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR).

for themselves the values and approaches appropriate to their professional practice and environment. The trainer's role would be to subtly facilitate the discovery of values that combined the best of peace journalism with traditional norms of objectivity/neutrality and emotional distance.

The adoption and internalisation of discovered values was another challenge. In terms of the notion of 'deep learning' developed by Marton and Säljö (1976a), this translated to fostering deeper understanding, more meaningful engagement and the development of critical faculties (as opposed to the 'surface learning' represented by a mere familiarisation with best practices and frameworks of reporting conflict). Biggs and Tang's distinction between 'declarative knowledge' and 'functioning knowledge' was also useful:

Declarative knowledge is knowledge about things, expressed in verbal or other symbolic form; functioning knowledge is knowledge that informs action by the learner. [...] When students 'really' understand a concept – as opposed to giving verbal definitions and paraphrases of it, important as these are in their place – they behave differently, being able to carry out 'performances of understanding'.

Biggs and Tang, 2011: 83

The workshop's objectives would be met only if it was able to go beyond imparting declarative knowledge and was successful in fostering functioning knowledge of discovered values.

There are several debates around the teaching of values, going all the way back to Plato's *Dialogues*, but contemporary discourse tends to be located within the disciplines of law, medicine and education. There are differences of opinion on whether values can be taught, whether teachers are competent to teach values and how values can be transmitted via a 'hidden curriculum' that is implicit but often not acknowledged (see, for instance, Harland and Pickering, 2011; Lovat and Toomey, 2009; Halstead and Taylor, 1996; Garners, Cairns and Lawton, 2000; Bartlett, 1987; and Veugelers, 2000). Of particular relevance to the roadmap that emerged from the reflective process were the findings of Veugelers, who showed that students are averse to teachers who explicitly emphasise the values they find important; they prefer teachers who indicate the differences in various sets of values and indicate their preference for the values they find important in a more subtle manner (2000: 43–44).

Harland and Pickering (2011) describe values variously as the 'underlying rationale' and the 'overarching concepts related to all our ideas' (2011: 10, 51) (as an aside, though these two phrases refer to different directions – under and over – the idea is clear; they point to the surrounding conceptual framework and environment that guide the broad parameters of our thinking). Halstead (1996: 4) uses the term values to refer to 'principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision-making'.

In one sense, values represent a 'threshold concept' and 'troublesome knowledge'. Meyer and Land (2003: 412) describe a threshold concept as 'akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something'. Comprehending a threshold concept can lead to a transformation in how people think, and how they view a

subject matter or the world, they say. A similar concept is that of transformative learning, whose primary spokesperson, Jack Mezirow, defines it as ‘the process of effecting change in a frame of reference’ (Mezirow, 1997: 6). The trick, then, lay in the method by which participants in the workshop could be helped to cross the threshold. Eventually, the option chosen was to minimise the use of the word ‘values’, but to concentrate on facilitating the participants in seeing new options, approaches and rationale and helping them make their own decisions.

In sum, the major pedagogical challenges were the need to: a) facilitate the participants’ discovery of a set of desirable values that were also appropriate to the Nepalese environment; b) achieve deep learning that would be transformative and exhibit the use of ‘functioning knowledge’ of these values – that is, lead to their adoption, internalisation and use.

The pedagogical tools that were eventually employed – game theory and reverse logic – were a direct outcome of the reflective process. Game theory was chosen as the appropriate tool to facilitate the discovery of values, and both game theory and reverse logic were used to promote the adoption and use of appropriate values in a manner that would reflect in newsroom output.

Of the two, game theory presented greater possibilities of impacting the outcome of the workshop. It could be central, even a showcase tool that would help to define the nature and feel of the workshop. The choice of game theory was partly influenced by the fact that it is often used in peace and conflict studies to analyse options and strategic possibilities. Journalists, however, are seldom familiar with it. Many have not heard of it at all and there are few, if any, who use it as an analytical tool. Of course, it must be said that there is no real need for them to do so.

The use of game theory was planned in a manner that the participants in the workshop would not be expected to fully understand its logical and mathematical intricacies; it would be used as a tool merely to establish the contours of conflict situations in broad conceptual strokes. It would be ideal for several reasons. It would have a novelty factor that would spur interest and capture the attention of participants, the first step to achieving deep learning. It would serve as a base for workshop activity, for presenting problems and puzzles that would help reap the benefits of a problem-based learning approach, lead to active involvement, and thus stimulate participants’ memory. It would lead to a basic – if distant – familiarity with some of the factors and conceptual tools used by experts who analyse conflict and its resolution; the feeling of growth represented by acquisition of this knowledge could potentially be motivational. Most importantly, game theory could be utilised to exemplify the importance of the role that media can play in a conflict.

Using game theory

Game theory came into prominence with John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern’s *The Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour*, first published in 1944. They described a game as any interaction between parties where the possible ‘moves’ for each participant can be identified and a set of ‘outcomes’ can be defined for each possible combination of moves. Game theory is used extensively in economics, political science, psychology,

mathematics, logic and many other areas (including conflict studies, war and security, and even biology) to model scenarios and evaluate the relative advantages and disadvantages of different combinations of moves and countermoves.

Game theory can also be defined as the study of strategic decision making. It is predicated on the 'players' being rational, being aware of the moves they can make, being aware of each other's actions, and taking others' actions into account when deciding strategy or making a move. Game theory is an involved logical – and often mathematical – exercise. Books on game theory can be full of abstruse diagrams and mathematical formulae. In-depth exploration of the subject was neither possible nor appropriate for the workshop in Nepal. The appropriate approach was to introduce the concept of game theory at a very basic level and use one or two games to further the agenda of the workshop, that is, to use game theory at a conceptual and logical level rather than at a mathematical level.

None of the workshop participants had heard of game theory. Thus, the first step was a short introduction of game theory (more or less along the lines of what has been encapsulated in the two paragraphs above). By the time the basic rules of game theory had been explained, bafflement was already visible on the faces of the participants and some of them were beginning to tune out, as had been anticipated. This was the right opportunity to segue into what is called an ice-breaker in workshop parlance. The planned activity was the game of Rock-Paper-Scissors.

Most of the group had not heard of the game, so it was necessary to explain that it is a two-person game where, on the count of three, each player brings forward a hand formed into one of three shapes, representing either a rock, paper or scissors. A clenched fist represents a rock; an open hand with fingers held straight out but touching each other represents paper; and a hand with two fingers outstretched and apart like a V-for-victory sign represents scissors. Scissors cuts paper, so a gesture of scissors wins against paper. Paper wraps rock and defeats rock. Rock, in turn, blunts and thus defeats scissors. The objective of the game is for each player to proffer a gesture and try to best their opponent. If both players make the same gesture, the game is a draw and the players 'throw' again. After a brief demonstration of the game, the participants in the workshop room were divided into pairs and asked to turn towards their designated opponent and play a few rounds of Rock-Paper-Scissors.

In a short while, the participants began to get the knack of the game, and soon the room was buzzing with activity and a sense of competitive excitement. This, of course, was a central objective of the exercise – to wake them up and spark interest.

After several rounds of the game, the participants were asked to reflect on the process they had used to decide their next 'move', that is, the process by which they arrived at a strategy while playing against their opponent. They were interested to know that national and international Rock-Paper-Scissors championships are held in several countries. The idea that someone might consistently score well in a seemingly random game to emerge as a champion was an intriguing one. The point that emerged, with a bit of prodding and facilitation, was that human players are seldom truly random in choosing a move, and that an integral part of trying to defeat an opponent in Rock-Paper-Scissors is to anticipate the opponent's moves by trying to recognise patterns they were using. This exercise perked up the participants, got them involved, introduced them to the first level of game theory,

and prepared them for the more challenging bits yet to come.

Further explanation about game theory in general terms followed, including how it could be made applicable to almost any human and social interaction where the outcome is a result of the combination of one’s own actions and those of others. These broad principles can be applied to situations and questions as divergent as crossing a road, the misuse or theft of public or common property, business competition, whether to join in group activity, or whether to disarm unilaterally or not. The potential scope of game theory and its applicability as an analytical tool for a wide variety of situations came as an eye-opener to the participants.

The next step was to introduce Prisoner’s Dilemma, one of the classical games in game theory, which Hargreaves Heap and Varoufakis (1995: 35) say ‘appears to capture some of the elemental features of all social interactions’. In its two-player version, this game encapsulates a situation where both parties might win if they take a decision to cooperate with each other, but at the same time it explains why they might not cooperate even when it appears to be in their best interest to do so. A description of the game is:

Two members of a criminal gang are arrested and imprisoned. Each prisoner is in solitary confinement with no means of speaking to or exchanging messages with the other. The police admit they don’t have enough evidence to convict the pair on the principal charge. They plan to sentence both to a year in prison on a lesser charge. Simultaneously, the police offer each prisoner a Faustian bargain. If he testifies against his partner, he will go free while the partner will get three years in prison on the main charge. Oh, yes, there is a catch ... if *both* prisoners testify against each other, both will be sentenced to two years in jail.

(Poundstone, 1993: 118)

The outcomes are depicted in Figure 1. The first number in each box of the matrix shows the jail term for A and the second number shows the jail term for B.

Figure 1: Matrix of outcomes in Prisoner’s Dilemma

	B refuses deal	B turns state’s evidence
A refuses deal	1 year, 1 year	3 years, 0 years
A turns state’s evidence	0 years, 3 years	2 years, 2 years

(from Poundstone, 1993: 118)

While formulating a strategy in response to the choices available to Prisoner B, Prisoner A realises that the best option is to turn state’s evidence. If B were to refuse the deal (column 1 of the matrix above), A would spend one year in jail by refusing the deal but get away with no jail time by turning state’s evidence. Similarly, if B were to turn state’s evidence (column 2 in the matrix), A would again save a year of jail time by turning state’s evidence. Thus, the rational choice for A, whatever the choice made by B, is to turn state’s evidence. This is represented by the shaded row in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Preferred rational options for Prisoner A

	B refuses deal	B turns state’s evidence
A refuses deal	1 year, 1 year	3 years, 0 years

A turns state’s evidence	0 years, 3 years	2 years, 2 years
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Similarly, the rational choice for B is to turn state’s evidence, represented by the right-hand column of the matrix – this shaves one year off B’s sentence, whatever the choice made by A. Thus, the rational ‘solution’ for the game is the intersection of the bottom row (A’s preference) and the right-hand column (B’s preference), that is the bottom right corner of the matrix, where both A and B turn state’s evidence. This is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Rational outcome for Prisoner’s Dilemma

	B refuses deal	B turns state’s evidence
A refuses deal	1 year, 1 year	3 years, 0 years
A turns state’s evidence	0 years, 3 years	2 years, 2 years

The point of this game was that a better solution *was* available, represented by the top left corner of the matrix, where A and B, both having refused the deal, would have received only one year each in jail (instead of the two years each dictated by the ‘solution’ in Figure 3). However, this mutually beneficial solution could *not* have been reached while Prisoners A and B each separately rationalised their response to the other’s anticipated move. This, understandably, took the workshop participants some time to understand and absorb.

However, things became clearer when we moved on to a variation of Prisoner’s Dilemma, a strategy game modelled on the Cold War. It depicts two nations – or two parties in a conflict – which can choose either to acquire new weaponry or spend their money more productively.

Figure 4: Matrix of outcomes for ‘Cold War’

	B does not buy arms	B buys arms
A does not buy arms	+1, +1	-1, 0
A buys arms	0, -1	0, 0

If both parties buy arms, they reach a military standoff, represented by the ‘0, 0’ outcome in the bottom right corner of Figure 4. If A buys arms, and B does not, A has a military advantage over B (represented in the bottom left corner by a 0 for A and a -1 for B). The top right corner represents the reverse of this situation. However, if both do *not* buy arms, they both have financial resources available to spend on other activities such as welfare or development, and both parties benefit. This is represented in the top left corner, with each party getting +1. This is the best possible outcome but, analogous to Prisoner’s Dilemma, it is ‘logical’ for each party to arm itself. This matrix was much easier for the workshop participants to grasp.

The participants were asked what they thought was lacking in each situation – what was it in each case that prevented movement from the mutually disadvantageous bottom right corner to the mutually beneficial top left corner? In other words, what could be added to the mix in each situation to reach a better solution? With a bit of prodding, the answers emerged, and it was gratifying not to have to supply them. The answers were: communication and trust. If the two prisoners could communicate, they would have been able to ensure a better, mutually beneficial, deal for both of them. Similarly, if the two parties to the conflict could trust each other not to acquire weaponry and stick to a deal to this effect, they could both benefit from the resulting win-win situation.

From here, the next step was to ask the participants to think about whether they, the media, had a role to play in providing channels of communication and building trust between different parties and, after a bit of deliberation, the answer was a resounding yes. This was a critical moment in the workshop, the moment that all the previous exertions were leading up to. The participants began to think of how they could play a role in various social and political contexts, and what they would have to do differently. These elements were tackled in various other sessions, but it was obvious that a threshold had been crossed and we were at a transformative ‘Aha!’ moment.

This exploration of game theory was a gamble that paid off, which was fortunate because it was risky to have taken this somewhat abstruse approach in a room full of journalists. However, once the participants understood the basics, there were many aspects to discuss, ranging from the film *A Beautiful Mind*, which depicted the life of the game theorist and Nobel laureate John Nash, to using game theory to analyse the behaviour of drivers on Kathmandu roads. There was a sense of involvement and excitement, and the participants felt they had achieved something. Perhaps it was a sense of intellectual growth, perhaps it was a sense of inspiration, but whatever it was, it rendered the mood of the workshop decidedly positive.

Using reverse logic

The other innovative pedagogical approach used during this workshop is the one referred to in the title of this article as ‘reverse logic’. The term is used here to refer to the paradoxical approach of encouraging the adoption of best practices through the method of asking participants to showcase bad practices. The credit for suggesting this approach goes to Will Whitlock,⁵ who conjured it up during a discussion while the author was preparing for the workshop.

The idiosyncratic thought of reverse logic struck a chord because past experience had shown that declarative knowledge of good practices does not easily translate to ‘functioning knowledge’. It is suggested that one element responsible for this may be the fact that learning by example can be patchy. In an earlier series of workshops, the author realised that appreciation and analysis of good documentaries did not translate into improved documentary making skills. In that instance,⁶ radio documentary makers analysed the best of international documentaries during a workshop, but their own skills failed to show the expected improvement. This was an important lesson about the gulf between learning by example and learning by doing, or declarative and functioning knowledge, and it led to a change in teaching methods used in subsequent workshops of that series. However, in making radio documentaries, the question was one of imparting practical skills, which could be developed by closely supervising the performance of discrete production tasks. In the case of the Nepal workshop, the need was to foster the adoption of values rather than skills. It was possible to supervise the production of stories, but it was unlikely that it would be possible to cover the full range of relevant values whose internalisation was

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⁶ Radio workshops conducted as part of the media development project ‘The EU-India Documentary Initiative on Diversity and Conflict Transformation’, 2004–2005.

Social and cultural differences – including professional culture – were another reason for using reverse logic. Conflict has strong social and cultural roots and best practices in reporting conflict from an alien culture would likely fall on fallow ground, much as externally imposed dos and don'ts would.

Asking participants to write reports that embodied the very worst practices they could think of was a successful experiment. It allowed a detailed critical examination of a larger range of issues and values than would have been possible with examples of good practices. It also remained locally grounded.

In one of the sessions using reverse logic, a role-playing exercise was created around the deaths of four people in a hypothetical clash between Maoist guerrillas and the Nepalese Army in a remote village. Participants volunteered to play different roles – a local police official, an Army spokesperson, a shopkeeper who witnessed the clash, the family member of a villager who died, and a villager who was an active sympathiser of the Maoist guerrillas. Each 'witness' and 'spokesperson' was briefed privately about the kind of partisan, self-serving and obfuscatory statements they were expected to make, and asked to cast their minds back to situations they had witnessed as reporters to reproduce charged emotions and realistic touches.

The 'witnesses' and 'spokespersons' participated in a series of mock press conferences and interviews, with other participants playing the role of journalists. Those playing the roles of witnesses and spokespersons entered into the spirit of the exercise, making ardent pleas, outrageous statements and presenting biased and incomplete information. The 'interviewers' also played their role well, attempting to dig deeper and reconcile different accounts through pointed and aggressive questioning.

The instructions to the journalists were to write reports exemplifying as many bad practices in reporting conflict as they could imagine. When they read out their reports, it was clear that they had managed to do a good job. Their reports included examples of misreporting of facts, sensationalism, bias, incendiary language, inappropriate adjectives, callousness and lack of sensitivity, highly opinionated writing, emotional appeals on behalf of one party or the other, and jumping to conclusions – in short, an eye-popping catalogue of how not to report an incident.

Although there was a lot of hilarity in the room when the participants read out their reports, the point was well made. It was interesting that there was no need to point out what was 'good' journalistic practice and what was 'bad'; the nuances of this distinction were exercised by the participants with scarcely any prompting or guidance. When the session finished, many of the journalists looked sober and contemplative. It was apparent that this experiment provided a lot of deep learning that is likely to stay with the journalists.

Results and discussion

The two innovative elements used in the workshop – game theory and reverse logic – were central to the pedagogical decision to adopt a non-prescriptive approach, but they represented less than one-fifth of the workshop. They were supported by a host of activi-

ties in other sessions aimed at further developing the creative and critical thinking skills stimulated by the use of game theory and reverse logic. The participants were encouraged to analyse various journalistic approaches and paths of action that were available to them, evaluate their relative merits and demerits, make choices and justify them.

One activity analysed journalistic output by breaking it down into its elements. Each element was evaluated in terms of the conflict-sensitive (or -insensitive) values it exemplified, a choice was made whether to keep, discard or modify the element, and then a revised report was presented to the group. Boden (1996: 6) defines creativity as the mapping, exploration and transformation of 'structured conceptual spaces' (i.e., a discipline). As the conceptual space was mapped and explored in this manner, it also began to be transformed.

The critical and creative choices made by the participants were actively interrogated. Creativity has received far less academic attention than it deserves (Sternberg and Lubart, 1998); in the absence of structured approaches on teaching journalistic creativity, the workshop took the approach of examining the elements (and the sum of the elements) of the participants' creative output. If creativity is conceptualised as a combination of novelty and quality (Sternberg and Kaufman, 2010: 467), the workshop concentrated on the quality element, while creating the potential for novelty.

Elsewhere in the workshop, care was taken to present a choice of frameworks and perspectives, and the participants were encouraged to discuss their relative merits. In this manner, various international examples and debates were considered, including the embedding of war correspondents, news management by governments, the effect of media attention on a conflict, televised wars and revolutions, the 'oxygen of publicity' argument, 'national interest', and Martin Bell's (1998) notion of a 'journalism of attachment'. Local parallels and counter-examples were frequently sought and discussed to encourage engagement and to conceive of various creative and value-based choices that participants could make in practice.

Overall, the participants found these elements both interesting and relevant. This was apparent from their evaluation of the workshop. Of the 24 participants, 20 completed and returned the feedback form that was distributed at the end of the workshop. Some of them did so anonymously, while others had no hesitation in giving their names.

The questions on the feedback form required respondents to grade elements of the workshop on a scale from 0 to 5. A score of 0 represented a negative outcome (no), and 5 represented positive feedback (strong yes). The questions and the mean scores awarded by the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Feedback provided by workshop participants

Q. no.	Question	Mean score (0=no; 5=yes)
1.	Did you clearly understand the course objectives?	4.65
2.	Was the workshop beneficial to you for your future work practices?	4.53
3.	Were the trainers aware of your problems?	4.30

4.	Were the subjects for the sessions well selected?	4.35
5.	Was each subject adequately covered?	4.05

(n=20)

In addition to the questions that required a numerical score, there were some that allowed the participants to write short remarks. Some extracts from the responses to the question: ‘What was the most useful part of the training?’ are given below. It must be mentioned that most of the participating journalists do not work in English; their journalistic output is also in their first language, Nepali. However, their responses are presented largely un-edited because they adequately convey their meaning.

Some responses to the question: ‘What was the most useful part of the training?’

Camerapersons’s role for peacebuilding. Cleared the image about conflict in society and its management.

Analysing approach of conflict.

Art of finding common ground and analysing opponent’s mind.

Practical assignments were most useful. Trainer selection is right because he knows us and our culture problems, etc., very well.

We can change our perception and concepts. Way of positive thinking, how can we change concepts. It is always helps us in our professional life and our private life also. (Workshop participants)

Another question asked: ‘Will your approach change as a result of the training? If so, *how* will it change?’ All 20 participants answered this question in the affirmative. While some answered with a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘Yes, I will try’, many others, including senior journalists, were much more emphatic, using words such as ‘absolutely’ and ‘definitely’. Given below are some of the responses to this question, edited minimally:

Some responses to the question: ‘Will your approach change as a result of the training? If so, *how* will it change?’

Yes, it will change through confidence and communication. By applying knowledge of training in our daily reporting life.

Absolutely. I will not use sensational words in my news. My news from today leads to resolve the conflict, etc.

Generally we used to seek bad aspects of the story to create sensationalism. But this training taught me a lesson that even journalists are the part of society.

Ideas came in integrated manner. And they are systematised and I came to know what I’m doing and what I should do.

Sure change, because I working very carefully in future programme makings.

People in general are the most so let us consider them while reporting/ build up pressure to cover a balance reporting (in the newsroom). Yes, now I understand about a conflict. I can give resolution a conflict. It helps me not only in my profession but at society and home, etc. (Workshop participants)

Others clearly indicated that the ideas they were taking away from the workshop would be applicable beyond their professional activities. One respondent wrote: 'Training is very useful for my life.' Another remarked: 'It helps me to judge about the issue and solve them practically and easily. So it develops confidence of our inner power as well.' Another comment read: 'We want additional training which can change our professional life and social life, too.'

Conclusion

The participants' feedback established that the innovative pedagogical approach taken during the workshop had been successful in promoting deep learning, which was also transformative in many respects. The feedback underscored the conceptual growth the participants had experienced as they discovered a set of appropriate and desirable values through the use of game theory, and later adopted them in practice through activities such as those employing reverse logic.

The clarification of value structures or the identification and fostering of appropriate values is not an easy task, nor one to be undertaken lightly. Neither is this task free from the hazards of misdirection and even hubris on the part of the teacher or trainer. However, because so much of journalism is predicated on underlying values, it is a task that must be attempted, especially where journalism cultures and values are under social, political, organisational or market pressures. The pedagogical experiment discussed here shows that journalistic values need not be imposed externally as a rigid prescription. With appropriate facilitation, a viable set of values that is indistinguishable in most respects from the ideal can emerge locally. Local ownership implies both relevance and acceptance, and these are critical steps towards their sustained adoption.

This article presents the results of a process, but not a formula. There is no guarantee that a similar workshop undertaken by the same trainer with the same intent and approach will be equally successful. In a week-long full-time workshop, a lot depends on the interpersonal dynamics that develop in the workshop room. These dynamics affect not only the relationship between the trainer and the participants, but also the receptivity of the participants to the core messages and learning sought to be fostered.

The sustained and consistent application of the values discovered and adopted by the workshop participants has not been evaluated. At the end of the workshop, the author extracted a 'promise of performance' from the participants as a way of ensuring that the learning was put into practice. Some participants also maintained contact with the author on professional issues after the end of the workshop. The levels of motivation and ownership displayed during and after the workshop indicate that at least some of the values will persevere, but further research will be needed to identify which ones and to what extent.

However, it can be said that game theory and reverse logic present not only a poten-

tially inspirational pedagogical approaches but also a viable preparatory tools. Even on relatively difficult terrain such as the inculcation of values and fostering of creativity, the elements of reflecting, evaluating alternatives, anticipating responses and strategizing an approach can result in an uplifting learning and teaching experience, of which numerous elements can reasonably be expected to endure.

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