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InSights Journal for Global Theological Education

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Defining Prophetic Voice as a Calling for the Theological School

Evan R. Hunter

ScholarLeaders International

Although they often practice theological research and reflection, many theological schools have not developed a prophetic voice – a sense of missional calling that addresses specific problems facing the Church and society. As an act of stewardship, the institution can develop this prophetic perspective on a set of issues that are particularly relevant to its cultural and social context and then mobilize resources entrusted to the institution to address them. The following article offers examples from nine Majority World seminaries that illustrate four ways theological institutions can develop prophetic voice to speak to the Church and society.

Introduction

When asked about the prophetic voice of their institutions, most school leaders answer hesitantly at best, illustrating that the prophetic task of the institution remains one of the more underdeveloped callings for a school of theology. The term *prophet*, of course, connotes Old Testament individuals such as Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah as well as the New Testament image of John the Baptist. However, it can also bring to mind slick preachers promising healing and prosperity to all who will only believe – and give a little more. Theological schools often find that they must simultaneously distance themselves from smiling faces on billboards and attempt to provide Biblical correction to weak theologies that tickle itching ears.

In the Bible, prophets called the people of God to live out the fundamental requirements of God’s Law (Wright 2006, 82). In his definition of prophetic voice, Brueggeman (2014) exhorts the Church to speak truth to a society that continues to live in illusions. For the theological school, the prophetic task can be viewed as a matter of stewardship. Uniquely equipped with resources through its faculty, library, and programs to provide sound teaching, the theological institution can guide believers to discern Biblical reality and then to apply that reality to the Church and society. While individual professors and graduates can have important prophetic roles in Church and society, the school as an institution can steward these same resources to bring Biblical truth to bear, to spark hope and transformation.
Defining the Theological School’s Primary Tasks

According to the Cape Town Commitment (2010), “[T]he mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the mission of the Church.” Theological education, therefore, fulfills a crucial role within the mission del. In doing so, theological education – whether offered at a seminary, Bible school, or school of divinity imbedded in a larger institution – has two primary tasks. (For more on the two-fold task of the institution and the work of the Vital SustainAbility Initiative, see “In Pursuit of Sustainability: Strategic Planning for Theological Education” by Smith (2018) and “Faculty Development in Service to the Mission of the School” by Hunter (2018).)

First, and perhaps most apparent, is the task of forming leaders for Church service. From an institutional perspective, formation includes structured teaching and mentoring, the impact of the community in which education takes place, worship (public and private), and ministerial practice.

Prophetic voice – the theological institution’s other task – has not always been an obvious calling. When a school decides to apply its capacities for Biblical understanding and theological reflection to issues its leaders deem pressing in the Church and society, that school steps into this prophetic role of analyzing reality in light of God’s truth. The school’s academic environment provides space and a process through which leaders may “test, develop and share their prophetic insights, to encourage and at times correct the church and society” (Smith 2018, 14). Within the community of scholars, individual professors often take on prophetic roles. (The prophetic role of the individual scholar warrants further development at another time.) Graduates also expand their school’s influence as they carry their school’s values, ethos, and causes into positions of Church service, whether in ordained ministry or as Christian leaders throughout society.

The theological institution, therefore, plays a critical role as the “house of prophets” where women and men gather as a community with institutional support to hone their work. The faculty of the school (and by extension the students and graduates) are the most important resource for achieving institutional mission. An institution’s ability to attract and retain professors whose work contributes to the good of the Church and society (through teaching, mentoring, and research) is crucial to its sustainability. However, in addition to individuals’ labor in the community, an institution has the opportunity to own a set of issues that are rooted in its particular mission and that respond to its particular context. By taking a proactive approach to a specific set of topics and by nurturing a group of citizens who speak to those topics (see Tiénot 2018), the theological school becomes champion and guardian of a shared prophetic voice.

Traditionally, seminaries focus on learning the truth revealed through God’s past
activity from the Bible and Church history. Yet that knowledge has implications for the Church in its current socio-political and cultural contexts. In calling theological institutions to address specific contemporary issues, Manfred Kohl writes, “[P]rophetic voice deals with the issues people face today and tomorrow, and how to deal with these issues in light of Christ’s message of forgiving grace for every new day” (2009, 78). More than simply embarking on a crusade for justice, the theological school grounds its voice in the Word of God. Furthermore, the institution’s prophetic voice becomes unique because it is located in a community of theologians who, from their personal and cultural experiences, devote special time and energy to Biblical application that calls the Church to action in light of the truth.

Developing prophetic voice is important to the theological school because it stewards the unique set of resources held by the seminary as part of the body of Christ. Through prophetic voice, the theological school can leverage its position as located within the Church and as, at times, speaking hard truth to the Church. Kelsey sums up this position as being simultaneously “about,” “with,” “for,” and “against” the Church (1992, 2007). Prophetic voices exhort God’s people to greater intimacy with Him. Prophets call the wayward back into alignment with God’s law. Thus, as an institution, the theological school shapes leaders for the Church, spurs it to good works and right theology, and offers correction when error emerges. The school can take a similar role in society. As it pursues the common good, it provides correction and challenge rooted in truth and love.

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Developing an institution’s prophetic voice requires commitment and work by school leaders. Pazmino observes, “Every faith community requires ongoing transformation and the nurture of prophetic voices to reveal forgotten information or new truth” (2010, 361). Theological educators commit to this practice of transformation and nurture by regularly engaging with one another, especially around the particular topics the institution has chosen. Pazmino calls this process one of “mutual formation with those viewed as disciples undergoing spiritual formation” (2010, 361). Through this process, educators form a perspective that expresses love toward the Church and society and that offers critical, Biblical reflection.

According to Almeida, the development of a prophetic voice and ministry within the school presupposes a commitment to Biblical notions of justice, sin, and grace, as well as the cultivation of the ability to observe and respond to needs with contextual sensitivity (2011, 45). Even so, schools must remember that, no matter how sensitive they are, prophetic voices are not always well received by the Church or society. Like the prophets of old, to adopt such a calling may lead to criticism and even persecution from power centers under critique.
Examples of Prophetic Voice in Theological Education

The following examples illustrate at least four ways that institutions can develop prophetic voice aligned to mission by drawing on the unique combination of resources (faculty) and location (context).

1. **Identifying Issues Facing the Church and Society that the School Should Address**: Most schools can quickly generate a list of problems about which the Church, and consequently the school, should exhibit concern. These issues result from the combination of the universal human condition marred by sin and the school’s specific context. Prophetic voice emerges as a school determines which items on that list fit the scope of its own unique mission and resources.

   For example, the *Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary* in Ogbomosho has identified a set of key issues in Nigeria that they feel called to address in their strategic plan. These issues include materialism and corruption, sexuality, creation care, peacemaking, urbanization, and ministry among Muslims (Smith 2018, 23). Addressing such a range of significant challenges will take time. In order to do so, they have created a research center and begun work on curriculum revisions that more directly engage their selected topics. In addition, they intend to develop faculty members able to resource each of these areas.

   In another context, the *Ukrainian Evangelical Theological Seminary* in Kyiv has identified the need for the Church to have a more robust theology of citizenship and national identity. Following the “Revolution of Dignity” that took place through the Euromaidan protests from November 2013 to February 2014, the school observed several changes and new needs within Church and society. They have chosen to address issues of what it means to follow Christ in Ukraine’s present context. Their faculty have begun to address issues of identity and public engagement from a Biblical perspective. They have included more traditional Ukrainian songs and instruments in their music programs and in their community worship. The faculty member responsible for teaching public theology is now completing a dissertation on how evangelical churches used Scripture to support their varied political responses during the revolution.

2. **Developing Faculty Expertise and Commitment to Address a Set of Issues**: In exercising prophetic voice, schools should develop their faculty as a community of scholars qualified to speak prophetically to issues in service to the Church (see Hunter 2018).

   In Lebanon, the *Arab Baptist Theological Seminary* has a particular set of values related to pedagogy and to Islam as it prepares Christian leaders to...
serve in Muslim-majority contexts. During the interview process, every faculty candidate must read and interact with a pair of articles authored by ABTS faculty that articulate the school's position. Because of its location in the Middle East, ABTS's approach to theological education is different from models developed in Europe or North America. ABTS particularly pursues a calling to help deconstruct the Church’s narrative of marginalization, to create a new paradigm of interaction with Islam, and to develop a new view of the faith community and its role within the mission of God (Accad 2019). This approach follows Brueggemann, who writes that the “task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us” (2001, 3). Through their purposeful recruitment and interview process, the school has assembled a faculty with a shared vision for their prophetic calling – to reshape the Church’s understanding of its place in Middle Eastern society.

Similarly, the faculty members at Servant of Christ Seminary located in São Paulo, Brazil have embraced a theology of holistic mission that they believe best prepares their students to lead churches and serve in Brazil’s urban society. To articulate this way of doing theology, the faculty will publish a monograph celebrating the school’s 30th anniversary. In this publication, they will call the Church to engage its urban context with a Biblical, holistic expression of God's grace.

3. Implementing Programs that Embody Prophetic Voice: Some schools have been able to develop curricula and structure learning experiences that act upon their prophetic voice and thus help the Church transform society.

Like the faculty at Servant of Christ, the faculty at South American Theological Seminary in Londrina, Brazil would articulate their voice as one centered on holistic mission. Yet from its beginning, the seminary has taken a different approach to curriculum development. Rather than structure their programs around a set number of courses from each of the traditional disciplines, they began with an approach to theology that engages context (see), Scripture (judge), and mission (act). SATS often points to its alumni as evidence of contextual prophetic action. Led by a SATS alumnus who has consistently relied on a faculty mentor, Refúgio began as an outreach to drug addicts and prostitutes that evolved into a church-based community center with after-school programs that disciple children so that they never reach the nadir of the streets. Started by another SATS alumna (who has worked as a tutor in their online program), Tok de Amor began as a course project for a SATS class. Now, the ministry cares for 150 people a day as it offers hospitality to cancer patients seeking treatment at the local hospital and to their families. In each case, prophetic engagement, developed out of a theological approach grounded in holistic mission, has empowered entrepreneurial ministry that meets specific contextual needs within society.

In Dimapur, India, Oriental Theological Seminary identified corruption as an
issue they felt uniquely called to address. In a region where Christians comprise more than 90% of the population, they lamented over the state of the Church, especially as a new round of elections approached. To call believers to Biblical integrity, the school implemented a 30-day internship in which 33 students traveled throughout the region to champion Biblical principles undergirding a clean election.

In Medellín, Colombia, prophetic voice has taken the shape of developing a unique community of care for students, faculty, and staff on the campus at Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia (FUSBC). (For more on the ministry of FUSBC, see the article “Serving the Seminary Community in a Country of Conflict: Five Lessons Learned at the Biblical Seminary of Colombia” (Peñuela, 2018).) In a nation ripped apart by violence and displacement, FUSBC has become an oasis of hospitality. This value has become a hallmark of the school’s alumni and a testimony of healing in a city and nation that bear deep scars from the recent past.

4. Convening Leaders to Address Important Facing the Church and Society:
As part of their prophetic voice, in addition to identifying important topics to address individually, theological schools can convene leaders to engage the Bible, theology, and society.

Asian Theological Seminary in Manila hosts an annual theological forum that draws up to 500 participants. Topics over the last few years have included the Church and Poverty; Creation Care and Biblical Stewardship; Christian Spirituality in an Asian Context; the Church’s Response to Globalization, Migration, and Diaspora; and Disaster, Resiliency, and the People of God. Each topic responds to the unique set of issues facing the Church in Southeast Asia. After each forum, the seminary publishes the papers in a volume so that the participants’ theological reflections can continue to influence the Church.

Located in the West Bank, Bethlehem Bible College embraces a unique prophetic calling as the Church in the Land of Christ. Since 2000, they have hosted a biannual conference called Christ at the Checkpoint to promote dialogue and reconciliation among Christ-followers in the Middle East. The conference manifesto describes their primary purpose: “The Kingdom of God has come. Evangelicals must reclaim the prophetic role in bringing peace, justice, and reconciliation in Palestine and Israel” (Bethlehem Bible College 2019). Convening theologians, church leaders, and hundreds of participants, they speak prophetically (and sometimes controversially) to the Church out of their experience in the land of Jesus’ birth.
Conclusion

An institution’s prophetic voice offers exhortation, guidance, and correction to issues facing the Church and society. For many institutions, however, the idea is both new and relatively underdeveloped. For some, pressing needs and the lack of human and financial resources may make developing prophetic voice challenging. Nevertheless, schools can begin small—even by simply identifying the issues they see as especially pressing in their context. They can consider how, given faculty expertise and their socio-cultural situation, they might begin to lead the Church to transform society. In doing so, each institution may find more effective ways to accomplish its mission in service to the Church.

References

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Theological Perspectives on the Theological Education of Women in the Middle East and North Africa

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This paper discusses the importance not only of including women in theological education in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, but also of encouraging them to follow God’s call regardless of patriarchal contexts. It highlights the need for Arab women to be Biblically and theologically equipped, which will ultimately benefit theological education and the Church as it fulfills the Great Commission. To make these broader points, this paper argues that fundamental theological truths support the need to incorporate women’s insights for the effective advancement of theological education in the Arab World. (The term “Arab” will be used in this paper to refer to the MENA context.) Thus, this paper articulates two primary arguments: 1) women should be full participants in theological education and the Church; 2) theological truths about women’s vocations affirm this.

Introduction

A senior lecturer at a theological college in the UK recently asked me to describe my PhD topic. Confidently, I answered, “Theological education of women in the Arab World.” He responded, “This is a facetious question, but ‘Is there theological education of women in the Arab World?’” Actually, this is an excellent question because there is an acknowledged absence of theological education for women in the Arab World at postgraduate levels. Few Arab female students who are enrolled in B.A. programmes of theological education pursue postgraduate education or end up in academic employment. Because a systematic exclusion of women from theological education has developed, right from the Bachelor’s level, there is a need to have more women in all programs of theological education, and that need is especially acute in the MENA region.
By discussing the theological foundations for women’s theological education in the Arab World, I hope to open a way for theological education to accept more flexible approaches that include called and committed women.

It is encouraging to see experts in theological education who have already started to be involved in this conversation. Perry Shaw, having spent more than twenty-five years in Lebanon, rightly claims that the Global Church will be enhanced by being exposed to greater variety in methodology, structure, and requirements (2018, 89-108). Including women in theological education would contribute to this enhancement. However, Shaw admits that the opposite most often happens:

Sadly I have often observed that in the process of satisfying the linear-analytical requirements of the academy, many majority world and women scholars become increasingly westernized and male genderized, and so we lose the great potential gift of alternative thinking patterns they offer - in particular a level of holistic, multidisciplinary theological reflection desperately needed by a church whose “centre of gravity” is moving increasingly south and west. (2018, 103-104)

Shaw’s statement describes the sad reality in the Arab World concerning the involvement of women in theological education. Too often, where Arab women do enter postgraduate studies, they are trained to think in Western ways, rather than offering the gift of their own identity as Middle Eastern women. I cannot stress enough that, as Shaw says, women are indeed a “great potential gift” that should be invested in throughout the Arab World. The Church and theological institutions ought to increase their efforts to prevent this “great potential gift” from being lost. Even in the West, women are often marginalized in theological education. To develop the great potential of the gift of its total membership, the Church and its theological institutions must embrace the academic, Biblical, and theological gifts of women scholars – from East and West.

This paper will now give a brief definition of a theology of theological education. It will also discuss the concept of God’s calling in an Arab context and summarize the soteriological, pneumatological, ecclesial, and missiological foundations of women’s theological education. Other foundations – such as the Christological and eschatological – will not be discussed due to this article’s limited scope.
Although theological education is traditionally assumed to be a male prerogative in the MENA region, women’s theological education is not a new phenomenon in the global context. While it is not widespread in the MENA region, in the Western world, feminist theologians have emphasized the significance of women’s lived experiences in theology. A few feminist theologians include Mary Daly (1928-2010), Letty Russell (1929-2007), Rosemary Radford Ruether (1936-), and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1938-). Although these women theologians have a reputation for being liberal, their theological writing has helped women understand how their experiences of God can shape their lives, societies, and churches, as Grace Ji-Sun Kim points out (2015, 91).

Although it contributes to understanding women’s experiences, this Western feminist theology does not entirely define perspectives on women’s theological education. Non-Western evangelical female voices include Roula Mansour, Anne Zaki, Mimi Haddad, Mercy Oduyoye, Priscille Djomhoue, Isabel Apawo Phiri, Limatula Longkumer, Ruth Padilla de Borst, Melba Padilla Maggay, Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Havilah Dharamraj, Joanna Feliciano-Soberano, and Xiaoli Yang. Such Majority World women theologians are a counterpoint to Western voices. An African woman theology has developed as womanist theology, and there are Asian and Latina feminist theologies – but an Arab women’s theology has not yet developed. One reason for this is that evangelical theology in the Arab World puts very little emphasis on women’s involvement in theological education. Similarly, the MENA-region Church does not actively encourage women to participate in theological education. The Arab Church seems hesitant to be involved in such a dialogue since it would involve embracing change and welcoming women into leadership roles, which have traditionally been male-dominated.

A general theology of theological education has been discussed more widely in recent years – a discussion that can shed light on the specific issue of developing a call for women’s involvement in theological education. Bernard Ott claims that in the Evangelical world, ICETE (International Council for Evangelical Theological Education) has initiated the development of a theology of theological education (2019). ICETE’s manifesto declares,

Evangelical theological education as a whole today needs earnestly to pursue and recover a thorough-going theology of education...We must together take immediate and urgent steps to seek, elaborate and possess a biblically informed theological basis for our calling in theological education, and to allow every aspect of our service to become rooted and nurtured in this soil. (2019)
In 1993, Dieumeme Noelleste developed the concept more extensively with his book Toward a Theology of Theological Education (1993). His arguments mainly follow the same pattern as the work of Neibuhr and Stackhouse (1956, 1988). Robert Banks championed a Biblical rationale for theological education (1999, 79-82). And in 2018, Martin Foord proposed a methodology for developing a theology of theological education. He suggested that a theology of this kind would illuminate the topic of theological education from Scripture. For example, if the sub-topics of theological education are not discussed in Scripture, a theology of theological education would study related topics to ensure that theological education is in line with Scripture (2018, 29-42). He writes, “Firstly a foundation is laid upon the Gospel...Next, a theological rationale for theological education is developed along biblical lines, as any theology of theological education must have the purpose or end in view” (2018, 29). Ott puts this process differently: “[A] theology of theological education must speak to the questions that theological education is asking today and shed some light on them based on insights gained from study of the biblical texts” (2016, 170). As evident from these definitions, there is a certain challenge in arriving at a concrete definition of the theology of theological education.

To contribute to this conversation, in the following sections, I will develop theological perspectives on women’s theological education in the MENA region based on scriptural-theological concepts. This analysis will contribute to the development of a theology of theological education for Arab women in the MENA region.

**God’s Call on Women in the MENA Region**

Throughout my career as a lecturer in theology, I have rarely come across an Arab woman who acknowledges that God has called her into theological education. This fact contrasts with the many men I have met who feel “called” into theological education. “God’s calling” is a term with which Arab women are not necessarily acquainted. Reflecting on my own experience in theological education, I chose to study this field because I strongly felt God call me into it. In my early teenage years, I heard God’s voice clearly in my heart to pursue this path, and I obeyed it wholeheartedly. Growing up in an Evangelical family made this experience more achievable for me. Many MENA-region women may not have this early background and thus may be less comfortable with the idea of God’s personal call upon them.

However, recognizing this sense of God’s calling is crucial to the theological education of women in the Arab World. It is the starting point for women’s involvement in theological education, as Sharon Miller discusses (2014, iii). As I...
will demonstrate later, soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and missiology are important elements in the discussion, too. They all point to one of God’s plans: that is, for women to be involved in theological education. I suggest that a woman called to the field of theological education must understand the implications of that call for her Christian life, be grounded in the history of salvation, be equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit, be called to serve in the Church, and be called to embody the Church’s mission by serving outside the Church. Serving in the academic field of theological education is a natural step toward the goal of embodying the Church’s mission.

The first step for Christian Arab women is to realize their calling, as Deborah did (Judges 4), and carry it forward into the appropriate context. Yohanna Katanacho, a highly respected Arab scholar who encourages the theological education of women, wrote in a recent article about the role of Deborah in the Old Testament:

It is not easy for a woman to lead a society of men. It would have been a great loss if Deborah had not moved and obeyed her Lord. A woman called by God is a treasure that we should cherish. It is a divine gift. We have to place her in the right position so that we can overcome in our battle against evil. Let us think how we can support our mothers, sisters and daughters in the building up of our society and church. (2018, translation mine)

Priscilla, Phoebe, and Lydia are prime examples of women who acknowledged their calling in the New Testament. Women in the Arab World should tune their ears to listen to God’s call so that they can grow in their spirituality. They should attend Bible colleges so that they can master Biblical and theological content, and by doing so, overcome cultural patriarchal structures that claim that women should not be leaders in theological education or educators of men. During my several years of teaching, I have observed that many Arab Christian women who attend Bible colleges do not do so to be equipped for ministry. Rather, enrolling at a Bible college is often seen as their second choice after not getting into another university program. Because they have not been encouraged to explore this calling, many Arab female students do not feel the need to be theologically equipped, which is ultimately a loss to the field of theological education and to the world. As this calling is not prioritized within the culture, women are reluctant to pursue it further.

In the following sections, I will examine other theological foundations for women’s theological education in the Arab World.
Implications for Women’s Theological Education from Soteriology

Salvation occupies a preeminent place in theological education. Our cornerstone is Jesus – for salvation and for the study of God that comes from salvation. This salvation, although equally offered to men and women, was primarily fulfilled through a woman – Mary, Jesus’s mother. Further, in first-century Judaism, a time when women were not esteemed, Jesus’s lineage recorded in Matthew 1 includes five remarkable women: Tamar (Genesis 38), Ruth (Ruth 4), Rahab (Joshua 2), Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11), and Mary herself. Bauckham argues that the appearance of four women from the Hebrew Bible in the Matthean genealogy of Jesus is extraordinary, because women normally had no place in a patrilineal genealogy of this sort (2002, 17). Each of their stories demonstrates the importance of women (Jews and Gentiles) in Christian history, as God used these women to accomplish his purposes in their specific contexts.

The women in Jesus’s genealogy who are mentioned in Matthew 1:1-7 – and God’s inclusion of them – should have implications for Arab women’s theological education. Both Western and Arab commentators emphasize these women’s sexual history. The Bible, however, praises these women for their faith and theological commitment. By contrast, God does not approve of the attitudes of men like Judah (Genesis 28: 24) and David (2 Samuel 11: 27) toward women. Perhaps the rescue from humiliation shared by Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba makes these stories special (Firth, 2019). Regardless of their sin history, these women are able to play an important role in theological education beyond their patriarchal contexts, as both men and women in Jesus’s family tree receive grace through the salvation that Jesus himself offers.

Besides Mary, who is included in Christ’s lineage as his mother, the New Testament records examples of several women who proclaimed the message of God’s salvation. In Luke and Acts, as Clarice J. Martin notes, disciples include both women and men, and both women and men bear witness to the joy and truth of salvation in Christ (1995, 763-799). Therefore, a central implication from salvation history for theological education is that the capacity to learn and teach is not confined only to men. Instead, it is an explicit expression grounded in the efforts of both men and women to extend God’s Kingdom.

Moreover, Peter states that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Acts 2:21). Since salvation is for both men and women, neither should be excluded from theological education, which is a primary way in which believers learn about salvation’s benefits. The most debated verse relating to this issue is probably when Paul reminds us: “But women will be saved through childbear-
ing – if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety” (1 Timothy 2:15). Salvation is by grace, not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8). In light of these verses, which seem to be in tension with the message of salvation elsewhere in the Bible, Yarbrough brings to our attention that

Woman's salvation does not lie in seeking to deny the terms of the fall, to reinvent herself so those terms no longer apply (if that were possible), or to relate to her husband in a proactively combative fashion in self-defense. It lies rather in Christ, who can make the “curse” latent in womanhood and fertile marriage eternally fruitful precisely “through [dia] childbirth” and its agony, the bitter medicine pronounced in Gen 3:16. (2018, 188)

In relation to 1 Timothy 2:15, Yarbrough further points out that Paul shifts to the plural “they” because his point applies to all women, not just the one woman mentioned in verses 11-15. A woman is not saved by having a child, but rather through believing and living out the practical message of the Gospel (2018, 188). While Arab societies emphasize the importance of women being mothers (and having children who are male), the Word of God shifts this emphasis to the significance of becoming children of God. Patriarchal societies are not concerned with the spiritual productivity of women but rather primarily with their physical productivity, namely that they bear male children. Since motherhood implies authoritative teaching and training (Proverbs 31:1-9 is an example of an Arab mother who teaches a king, Lemuel of Massa), might Paul’s words be applied to women theological educators (Hill, 2009, 381)? A lack of women in theological education leads to unasked questions or unrealized implications for women as they understand their full role as productive children of God.

God used Mary to make clear that women are equal carriers of the Lord’s revelation. When we think of soteriology in relation to theological education, we must ensure that our theology and doctrine are Biblically sound. Efforts in theological education are to be focused on teaching and preaching a soteriology that has room for both men and women and that is reflected in daily thoughts, writings, and actions. John Stott puts it this way: “If Mary had not given birth to the Christ-child, there would have been no salvation for anybody. No greater honour has ever been given to woman than in calling of Mary to be the mother of the Saviour of the world” (1996, 87-88). The women in the genealogy of Jesus who are mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel (1:1-7) and God’s inclusion of them should be considered as a strong demonstration of the soteriological implications for women’s theological education.
Implications for Women’s Theological Education from Pneumatology

The work of the Holy Spirit is an indispensable element in the development of a theology of women’s theological education in the Arab World. Banks argues that pedagogical approaches should be upheld by a perspective on the Spirit (1999, 181). Theological education should entail a fresh view of the Spirit to ensure that there is equality, innovation, and creativity in the doing of theology. Often, the Holy Spirit is not thought of as an active participant in Church and seminary life. Yet the Spirit is indeed a primary actor in theological education. In Ott’s words, “Theological education understands equipping to be about more than abilities and accomplishments. It will train people in powerlessness and dependency upon the activity of the Spirit of God” (2016, 197).

Acts 1 sets the scene for just how important the Holy Spirit is in Christian ministry. First, Scripture shows us that the Holy Spirit fell on both women and men. Acts 1:14 states, “They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” It is very poignant that Luke mentions women and the mother of Jesus, highlighting that they were also the recipients of this Holy Spirit.

Second, in Acts 2:17-18, Joel’s prophecy is fulfilled: “Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.” Both men and women are included in God’s universal plan; the endowment of the Spirit is a continuation of God’s plan for both men and women set forth in Genesis.

A third example from the book of Acts is that of Philip’s four daughters, who were filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). As a form of theological education, the gift of prophecy is carried out through anointed teachers of theology. Consequently, constructive theological education should assert the importance of transmitting the words of the Lord from Scripture to participants in theological education. Educators – God’s gifts to the Church and academia – should be nurtured and developed within the context of theological education regardless of gender. It is often said that the Church has lost its prophetic voice. But the Spirit keeps the Church and academic institutions vibrant for the continuation and extension of this academic and spiritual journey. Thus, Acts demonstrates that the role of women as prophets and the role of theological education in forming female leaders for a prophetic role in the Church is indispensable.

A Trinitarian approach to Christian education understands the cooperative work of the Godhead as a model for education that includes both men and women. For
example, Nels Ferré articulated:

The meaning of creation is centrally education. The standard for this teaching is Christ; the dynamic power and directing reality for this education is the Holy Spirit. Thus we see as central to Christian theology, at its most relevant educational efficacy, God as Educator, Christ as Exemplar, and the Holy Spirit as Tutor. (1967, 150)

With the three persons of the Trinity at the center of theological education, innovative approaches to theological education can help learners and teachers move forward in their pedagogies. The perfect partnership between the persons of the Trinity is a unique example of the partnership that can be between men and women in theological education without competition or hierarchy.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for the development of theological education, and these gifts are imparted by the Spirit, at his discretion. The Spirit gives gifts “to each one, just as He determines” (1 Corinthians 12:11), as Linda L. Belleville notes (2000, 41). As discussed above, Acts leads us to conclude that women are also recipients of the gifts of the Spirit. As such, they are expected to employ their gifts faithfully and actively for theological education. For instance, in Romans 16:7, Paul sends greetings to Andronicus and Junia. Not only is Junia a unique example of a woman who is named as outstanding among the apostles, but Paul says that she was in ministry before him. Paul’s praise of Junia can be an example for men to follow today. His testimony that Junia was a significant coworker in God’s Kingdom and that she preceded him in faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ shows her importance in the early church.

Could this principle be applied to the field of theological education in the Arab World, so that women faculty could be treated as sisters in Christ – rather than being seen as of lesser importance than male faculty? If so, women’s theological education would move forward to demonstrate the Spirit working through the body as all the members function together to their fullest potential. Following Paul’s example is of prime importance here and would mean including women as equal co-laborers in theological education.

The Church and theological institutions in the Middle East should emphasize the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in guiding, leading, equipping, and sending both men and women in theological education. By adding this emphasis to sermons, curricula, and lectures, learners and teachers will give greater value to the transforming input of the Spirit in their work. Like women in the early church, contemporary Arab Christian women can rely on the Spirit to unleash the potential of their God-given gifts. Pentecost, at which God poured out his Spirit on men and
women equally, was not the end of an era, but the beginning of a new one – an era in which the Spirit will continue to open new avenues for theological education. Spirit-empowered women have a necessary role in a robust theological education that will serve the Global Church.

**Implications for Women’s Theological Education from Ecclesiology**

Women have played an important part in the Church since its inception. Just as there are many well-known men throughout Church history, Christian women have made respected intellectual, diaconal, and evangelical contributions to the Church. These women have had a meaningful spiritual impact and authority. Some have achieved sainthood and received titles of highest honour. Within the Eastern Orthodox Church, a number of women are considered as “equal to the apostles” – such as Mary Magdalene, Thekla, Helena, and Nina, missionary to the Georgians (Weinrich, 2006, 263-279). Cohick and Hughes argue that a theological component is often missing in explorations of women in early Christianity (2017, xxvii). An exploration of their contributions is greatly limited by a lack of sources. This is largely because few documents from that time were written by women. It is essential to encourage women to put their thoughts into writing for the sake of future theology. Adding women’s perspectives to theology will enrich the Church beyond traditional ways of thinking.

In order for women’s theological education to flourish, churches and seminaries should work closely to promote women’s theological education in the Arab World. The relationship between the Church and the academy has to be defined. This is important to women’s theological education in the MENA because both churches and seminaries could promote women’s theological education. If churches promoted female leadership, this would create more of a culture for female training in theology and leadership.

David Kelsey stresses the significance of understanding the Church in order to comprehend theological education (1992, cited in Chopp, 1995, 45). The two are so interconnected that Ott claims that the Church is the home of theological education (2016, 197). Perhaps the Church can also be described as the incubator for theological education: it should provide a protective environment for learners and teachers in theological education. Marvin Oxenham, on the other hand, laments that the gap between theological colleges and the churches has been growing steadily over the last twenty or thirty years. Many pastors and denominational leaders are actually wondering whether seminaries and colleges are providing graduates with the kind of knowledge they need to fulfill their ministries (2018).
Beres, however, stresses that the gap between Church and academy is more of an opportunity than a problem (2014, 77-87). He suggests that “academia can enrich the church mostly by its theological efforts and innovations” (2014, 83). Yet even as the academy can enrich the Church, the Church itself has to be critical in its theological thinking, not merely spiritual. A solid partnership between the Church and the academy will enhance the theological education of women in the Arab World. This, in part, is because the Church is predominantly comprised of women. This is true in the MENA region, as in most of the world. If Church and academy engaged in partnership, then a robust engagement with the Church would have implications for women as active participants in theological education.

In our discussion of theological education in the contemporary ecclesia, the importance of women in the early church offers a clear foundation. Women like Thecla who helped construct the ongoing Christian movement and left their legacy in devotional practices and written texts. Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, declared her Christian identity boldly; Monica, the mother of Augustine, diligently prayed for the salvation of her son. Women like Paula and Melania the elder participated in theological debates and helped shape early Christianity (2017, xx). Intellect and devotion can be considered as solid components of theological education, so these women from the early church are not only examples for all women to follow. In particular, they are examples for women in theological education around the world to emulate.

Rebecca Chopp argues that, regardless of the cold shoulder the Church often gives women, women are determined not to leave. She states:

In my experience women with criticisms of the church, much more often than men, are told to love it or to leave it. But women, in the church and in theological education, have not so much left the church and formed new denominations as they have called for the transformation of present ecclesial reality. (1995, 46)

The Church does not have to apply feminist practices to involve women. As vital members of the Church, they should be addressed in discussions relating theological education and ecclesiology. Theological educators like Farley and Kesley have focused attention on the Church but without explicit reference to women in the Church. Women are there by implication, of course. But feminist authors should not be the only ones discussing this development. Rather, all scholars should highlight the important role of women as members of the Church, and therefore also as participants in the development of theological education.
An Application: Women in the Arab Church

The vision to fully include women in theological education and the Church is absent from Arab culture. The Church’s beliefs are often a reflection of the culture’s status quo. Many Arab churches imagine the Church without women in leadership. However, the body of Christ needs men and women equally. Imagine a body without hands or feet; surely there would be suffering and agony. How can the Church be complete if some parts are missing? Since the Church and the seminary need to work together, both need to include, respect, and honor women.

Currently, the Arab Church, culture, and theological institutions have narrow parameters within which women can participate. Farley argues that although the environment of Church lay education is different from that of theological education, “Church education should be theological education in the full and rigorous sense of ordered learning” (1989, 175). While many women occupy lay leadership roles, their participation in theological education is still important. Theological education has value beyond ordained ministry. Therefore, seminaries’ close alliance with the Church must mean more than just the preparation of pastors. Seminaries must prepare all Church leaders – men and women – for service in the broader Church – including, but not limited to, the pulpit.

The headship of theological colleges in the Arab World has been purely male, with the exception of Mary Mikhael, who was president of Near East School of Theology in Beirut from 1994-2011. An example from the global context of the need for women in theological leadership is a study that discusses the place of women in the Australian College of Theology. This study considers both faculty and students (2018, 160-174). It found that the most common issue for ACT female students was the lack of female role models, whether in lecturing, writing, research, speaking at college, or even mentioned in biblical studies or church history. Suggestions for enriching the experience of women in colleges included increasing the number of role models, especially the number of female lecturers (17 percent), allied with increased number of women in leadership roles (5%). (2017, 167)

These findings are significant and would be equally true in the MENA region.

Yet women’s full participation in theological education in the Arab World does not have broad support in the Church. An increased number of voices of men and women who support the inclusion of women in theological education...
could help expand women’s participation. This would provide a greater understanding of the realities evangelical Arab women are facing. Women Church leaders will naturally encourage more Arab women to be involved in theological education, increasing the enrollment of women and their participation in ministry.

Implications for Women’s Theological Education from Missiology

Missiology is an integral part of women’s theological education in the Arab World, because in Arab contexts, women have the best opportunities to reach other women with the Gospel. However, because of cultural constraints, few women have the opportunity to become missionaries. Although evangelical theological leaders like Banks and Ott have promoted context and praxis within theological education, not much has changed for women’s participation in the academy and in terms of curriculum design. Perhaps in the West, it is easier and more common for women to enroll in missional opportunities beyond the pulpit, including education, counseling, and social justice. In the MENA region, on the other hand, it seems that women are still trying to find their way into these opportunities.

Reflecting on the issue of missions leads learners to the truth that the world needs the contribution of both women and men in accomplishing the Church’s missional task, and that in practical terms, women can make a missional difference by their virtues, wisdom, ethics, and competency. A greater awareness of God’s theological calling on female students and faculty could provide well-trained workers to take the Gospel to places where no male pastors or Christian educators can serve. In the Middle East, only a theologically trained woman could reach Arab women in Muslim neighborhoods. Muslim women often relate better to other women than they do to men. However, Christian women must be theologically equipped before they can reach out to their counterparts (Kraft, 2018, 33-49).

The ongoing challenges posed by Islam in the Middle East make women’s inclusion in theological education imperative. In recent years, missionaries have been denied entry into or been expelled from many Arab countries. Palestine and Jordan are prime examples. As political instability continues in the region, local people should be encouraged to embrace the notion of mission in their own day-to-day faith. Walid Zaila of Lebanon claims, “Our geographical location and the era we live in shape our understanding of leadership and mission. For years, in our Middle Eastern context, Christian leadership remained synonymous with ‘authority’ and mission with ‘reception’” (2019). MENA-region women can help give new meanings to mission and leadership as they minister in everyday contexts. Since missionaries are being denied entry, Arab women who are already on the ground need to be better equipped for mission.
However, cultural values sometimes hinder the participation of Arab women in missions and therefore limit their need and opportunity for theological education. For example, in Arab cultures, it is considered sometimes shameful for women to travel abroad on their own. This is one reason why female students seldom have the chance to pursue further studies and are not involved in Christian mission.

Indeed, because women are not encouraged by the Church or the academy to move out of traditional roles, mission is not flourishing in the Arab World. Encouraging women to seek training will enable them to better engage in Kingdom work beyond their traditional roles. This might invigorate mission in the Arab World. We must never overlook the fact that, as Ott writes, “Theology and theological education can be healthy when breathing the air of mission... Theologizing belongs to the missionary task and must be taught and learned as part of theological education” (2016, 270). With this in mind, every effort to reinforce missions in women’s theological education must be made. The Church’s missional calling should drive women into theological education to reach those who may be unreachable by anyone else.

**Conclusion**

This article has argued that basic theological truths have clear implications for women’s theological education in the Arab World. The idea of women’s theological education has not been developed within the Arab Church and academy yet. However, the Arab World’s patriarchal confines require a culturally-specific outworking of the theology of theological education that addresses women’s roles. The Church needs to develop a theology that includes women equally with men in education.

This article has also argued that in practice, women should be full participants in theological education and that the Church must act upon this implication of the theology of theological education. Women’s theological education will only happen when the hearts, minds, spirits, and lives of dedicated women of God are supported by men of God – in the face of long-held cultural constraints. The Church and the academy can never be fully successful without investing in the spiritual, biblical, theological, and academic lives of Arab women. In light of the theological perspectives discussed above, seminaries in the Arab World must encourage and support women through higher education and careers in theology. The Arab Church should also consider seriously its position on women’s participation and should intentionally connect seminary graduates to Church leadership positions. For theological education, women’s gifts in Christ can be like yeast that a “woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33).
References


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Matrices for Understanding Pastoral Leadership and Implications for the Global Landscape of Theological Education

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Measurements of pastoral training would be of immense value to the Global Church. This paper attempts to create matrices that allow trainers to measure pastors’ needs for training based on their past leadership experience and context. The proposed matrices identify various stages in a pastoral leader’s journey and can be used as a guide when developing training curricula. This paper will also explore the implications of these matrices in relation to global needs for trainers and theological resources. This paper was first presented at GPro Japan, October 16-17, 2018, Mustard Seed Church, Nagoya, Japan.

Introduction

Knowing how to measure pastoral training would be of immense value to the Global Church. Imagine: If we could accurately evaluate pastoral leadership, that would make the task of training pastors much more efficient, as educational institutions and training organizations could design curricula that would be more reliably effective for pastors with different kinds of need.

Knowing what to quantify as primary criteria in measuring pastoral leadership is where the real difficulty resides. As Allen Nauss points out, “[R]esearch on ministerial effectiveness has not produced results of maximum value to the churches” for several reasons (1972, 142). One of those reasons is what he calls “the use of secondary rather than primary criteria” in measuring effectiveness (1972, 142). Primary criteria refer to “observable behavior” or internal factors such as commitment, diligence, and passion. Secondary criteria refer to “observable consequences” or external factors such as salary, life stage, and season in
Nauss mentions a third set of criteria when he uses the work of Mark May (1934) to identify “spiritual or mystical factors” (1972, 142).

In order to simplify our approach, we will take only two criteria for developing our framework: theological competence and pastoral leadership competence. Although these two factors measure only a narrow aspect of the pastoral leadership journey, they can be effective as a starting point for assessing the needs of a pastoral leader.

Before we consider these matrices, a brief overview of the state of pastoral training in the Global Church is necessary for context.

**Overview of the State of Pastoral Training in the Global Church**

Various studies have been done to understand the current state of pastoral training in the Global Church. Estimates of the ratio of trained pastors to congregants differ depending on variables and methodology.

During a plenary session at the Lausanne Consultation on Theological Education in June 2014, Thomas Schirrmacher estimated that “50,000 people that do not come from a Christian background and do not have basic Bible knowledge are baptized each day in Evangelical churches worldwide” (Richard, 2016).

On the other hand, David Livermore argued in his book Serving with Eyes Wide Open (2006) that “an average of 178,000 people com[e] to Christ daily around the world. Seven thousand new church leaders are needed daily to care for the growing church” (2006, 41).

In addition, Todd Johnson, research director of the Center of Study for Global Christianity, suggests that “More than 2.2 million pastoral leaders (and as many as 3.4 million by some estimates) presently minister with ‘only 5% are trained for pastoral ministry’” (2015).

These estimates paint a grim picture of the state of the Global Church in terms of pastoral training. Although questions have been raised as to the methodology and reliability of these studies, one cannot simply dismiss the fact that few Church leaders have proper training.

In his study, David Livermore estimates that the number of trained pastors globally is only 15%. He claims, “Eight-five percent of the churches of the world are led by people who have no formal training in theology or ministry” (2006, 41).
Furthermore, Livermore believes that the Global Church needs to raise from 2,000 to 7,000 (depending on what methodology we use) new pastors each day just to cope with the demands of the growing Church. Livermore continues, “If every Christian training institute in the world operated at 120 percent capacity, less than 10 percent of the unequipped leaders would be trained” (2006, 41).

This global reality motivated the Global Proclamation Commission for trainers of pastors (GProCommission), a ministry devoted over the next four years to mobilizing pastoral training institutions to increase their capacity in order to address the lack of training among pastors. The GProCommission was officially convened during the GProCongress for pastoral trainers held in Bangkok in June 2016 by various training organizations that conduct nonformal pastoral and theological training. This initiative was created by the president of RREACH (Ramesh Richard Evangelism and Church Health) Ministry.

Measuring Pastoral Training Effectiveness

The GProCommission’s work with ministries concerned with pastoral training (such as TOPIC (Trainers of Pastors International Coalition) and the Church Health Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance) requires that we develop a simple way of measuring pastoral leadership and training needs. Such a metric would inform our training strategies.

In 2009, Robert McKenna and Katrina Eckard interviewed 101 senior pastors from different denominations. Their study came up with 23 measures of effectiveness (2009, 303-313). However, such extensive analysis is beyond the reach of most pastoral trainers who work in limited contexts, let alone of pastors themselves. Therefore, a simple tool for assessing pastoral training effectiveness is needed – especially for those with limited access to research and theological education.

As a result, this article’s matrices are not as comprehensive as McKenna and Eckard’s, but they do help us understand, at a practical level, the national and global landscape of pastoral training needs.

These diagrams were developed to help the GProCommission, TOPIC, and similar organizations analyze and respond to the needs of their constituents. They were created to help trainers understand the journeys pastors make toward becoming effective leaders and eventually trainers of others. Perhaps these matrices will pave the way for others to develop better tools that will help us understand the intricacies of pastoral training around the world.
Pastoral Leadership Type Matrix

Based on informal discussions and interviews with pastoral leaders, we have found that in many cases, two dimensions affect pastoral leadership and thus are critical to our matrix. These are theological competence and pastoral leadership competence.

The matrix below shows four types of pastors, categorized as Novice, Lay Practitioner, Theoretical, and Seasoned. Pastors with sufficient theological training fall on the matrix’s top half, while those with limited training fall on the bottom half. On the other hand, pastors with sufficient leadership skills fall on the right half, while those needing direction fall on the left.

Some training groups place these categories in a hierarchy so that they can be more easily understood. In addition, these four categories may be renamed depending on context so that they can be more culturally relevant. For example, we could replace the names of each quadrant using terms from the local vernacular. During a presentation in Japan, these terms were translated as follows:

タイプ1: 熟練者 (seasoned)
タイプ2: フォーマル (formally educated or theoretical)
タイプ3: 信徒実践者 (lay practitioner)
タイプ4: 未熟者 (novice)

When using this matrix, a trainer could tailor questionnaires that would assess
where pastors might fall within this matrix given their cultural context and experience. Defining each category of pastoral leader and knowing leadership or theological needs would dramatically enhance the effectiveness of a leadership training program.

**Distribution of Pastoral Leadership Types: Three Examples**

In the absence of reliable global data, it seems prudent to test these types using statistics from three Majority World countries that mirror situations in other Majority World countries.

First, Overseas Council did a study on Evangelical churches in the Philippines 15 years ago. The study showed that only 5% of local churches are led by pastors with formal theological education. At that time, there were about 50,000 Evangelical churches in the Philippines. Today, according to Bishop Noel Pantoja and Philippine Crusade (PC), there are about 78,000 Evangelical churches in the Philippines (2018). Estimates place the number of trained pastors at less than 30% (though we have no hard statistics to support this estimate).

Most Filipino churches are led by people with secular training who have been mentored through campus ministries and other local initiatives – not seminaries. In our matrix, these would be Lay Practitioners and Novices. Of the 30% that have formal theological training, we assume that they are Seasoned or Theoretical and therefore, perhaps, more effective. However, many churches complain that seminary-trained pastors are too theoretical and therefore not actually effective pastors.

Below is an attempt to visualize the distribution of each type in the Philippines.

![Figure 2: Probable Distribution of Types of Pastoral Leaders in the Philippines](image-url)
Second, after a week in a restricted country in Southeast Asia in 2018, we learned that the vast majority of their pastors have no formal education, not even a secular college education. In this particular group, the only person I met who had formal seminary training and a college degree was my interpreter.

Using the matrix, the probable distribution of types of pastoral leaders in this region would look like the visualization below.

![Diagram of Pastoral Leaders Distribution]

Comparing these two diagrams could help global training institutions understand where specific needs are and strategize about how to provide services in these different situations.

Japan presents a third kind of context. Ninety to ninety-five percent of Japanese pastors have formal theological training because this is expected of them. However, as of 2019, the number of students entering Japanese seminaries has declined drastically. As a result, the Japanese church faces a grim future, particularly because most current pastors are in their 60s and 70s. One Japanese leader laments,

> I believe over 90% of Japanese pastor graduated from formal education. However, we are facing a challenge, which most of seminary struggling to get students [sic]. 89% of Japanese pastor is over 50’s age, and 47% is over 70’s [sic]. It means, the Japanese church would lose 2/3 pastors within 10 yrs. (Personal email, June 10, 2018)

During the GPro Japan event, we showed Japanese delegates the diagram below, and they unanimously agreed that it accurately represents their current situation.
These diagrams communicate where pastoral training institutions should be focusing their resources. However, the current reality is that most institutions are not aware of these needs and tend to offer the same type of training to every pastor who is willing to attend seminars.

For example, in the Philippines, most theological resources are written for the formally educated or those with seminary training, as the diagram below illustrates.

When the diagram of training resources is compared to the actual distribution of types of pastors, we can immediately see where the disparity lies.
Furthermore, most training materials available in the Philippines were created by foreign authors. Thus, the distribution looks like this.

**Pastoral Trainer Competence Matrix**

For those who train pastors, a different set of criteria is needed. Those who embark on this ministry must have a certain degree of training already before they can train others.

Two criteria seem to separate those who are effective in training pastors and those who are not: network of influence and ability to adapt or create training resources (adeptness). Using a similar matrix, we can classify each trainer as an Aspirant, Innovator, Networked, or Specialist.
Trainers with an extensive network of followers are in the matrix’s top half, while those with limited followers are on the bottom half. On the other hand, pastoral trainers with sufficient adeptness fall on the right side of the matrix, while those needing direction fall on the left side.

Since most books and resources are still written in English, we assumed that in countries like the US, Canada, Britain, or Australia, most pastoral trainers will have adequate funding and education. Thus, most trainers would fall under types 1-2.

However, regarding pastoral trainers in Majority World countries who have limited financial resources, we assume that most might come from the Networked or Aspirant categories, as shown below.
For instance, most trainers in the Philippines belong to the Networked category. Few local pastoral trainers have both the ability to create resources and the network of followers to run training programs. Thus, the usual strategy for training pastors is either to invite foreigners to teach or to use materials developed by foreign ministries.

There is nothing wrong with these strategies; however, we need to know how we could equip Aspirants and connect local Innovators so that they could train more local pastors themselves, using culturally effective materials.

**Needs Assessment Matrix for Pastoral Trainers**

Finally, one matrix that could help trainers assess the difficulty level of their situation is a needs matrix. Not every context is the same. Each training context presents its own level of difficulty based on economic capacity and language or literacy gap.
For instance, if a Filipino trainer starts a training program in Manila among local pastors using English materials, the difficulty level he faces will be low. However, if the same Filipino trainer decides to run the same program in a rural area where local pastors are at an economic disadvantage, the trainer will need to supply financial resources to help local pastors attend the training. The difficulty level in this case is raised to 2.

Or, if the same Filipino trainer decides to run the same program in Japan, he will face a higher level of difficulty because of the language gap. Although most Japanese churches could afford to address the economic needs of training, most could not benefit from an English-only presentation.

This situation is exacerbated when a Filipino trainer extends his program to Vietnam, where language, literacy, and economic issues all pose barriers to training.
Implications for Formal and Nonformal Pastoral Training

What then are the implications of these matrices for global discussions about formal and nonformal theological education?

1. Educational Limitations. There is an obvious difficulty in standardizing pastoral training (or theological education) to fit a wide variety of learners. No single curriculum could possibly fit the needs of all pastors. As we have seen, varying educational skills and exposure to training result in many types of pastors. By understanding pastors’ needs as they journey toward maturity, we may develop curricula that could guide (rather than impose upon) their development.

Overall, we need to take pastors’ learning skills into account when creating resources for their use. As mentioned earlier, most ministry resources have been created for the seminary. While this serves its purpose, we need to encourage the development of easy and transferable resources for pastors with limited learning skills. Depending on region, pastors have varying levels of education. A system that classifies ministry resources by level of difficulty would help pastors chart their own progress – just as elementary schools classify books by reading ability.

2. Technological Limitations. According to agencies that monitor internet access, most of the Majority World has limited internet access. So while digital resources are a welcome development, low-tech applications – books and printed materials – are still in demand in many places.

3. Language Limitations. Another issue we need to address is language limitation. While plenty of materials are available in English and Spanish, very few resources are available in Arabic, Mandarin, and Portuguese. While it may be impossible to have resources available in all languages, the Global Church must strive to have ample resources for all major languages, resources written by authors who not only know the language but who can write from the perspective of their own people.

4. Partnership Limitations. One problem that leaders of Majority World churches face is that they often feel coerced by Western-funded initiatives. They often feel that they have been forced into partnership to serve someone else's agenda.

The most common approach of Western mission agencies or pastoral
training ministries in Majority World churches is to package a program that local leaders are expected to implement. Often, these programs come in the form of training curricula that are given away for free or sold to participants. Funding is provided as long as local leaders stick to the script and meet expectations.

Decision making regarding curriculum, finance, and strategy is often limited to top Western leaders and is trickled down to local leaders for implementation.

While most are happy to be recipients of resources from their more affluent brethren, some cannot help but feel trapped – and, worse, used to promote others’ agendas. What needs to be reiterated is that one approach does not fit all. Often, local leaders know what is best for their context.

On the other hand, we have begun to see some Western-funded initiatives employing a broader approach to curriculum design and strategy. Asian Access empowers local leaders to make decisions about adjusting and revising curricula for pastoral leaders as they see fit. They also include local leaders in decisions regarding funding.

**Conclusion**

Bridging the gap between formal and nonformal initiatives undoubtedly creates suspicion between two very different teaching styles.

Those who teach in nonformal programs are wary of any form of accreditation. They often think that those in formal education are forcing their system on them. On the other hand, bogus theological degrees have flourished unchecked in many Majority World nations because of a lack of accrediting bodies.

All these issues demand that a global body of pastoral trainers be created specifically to champion pastoral training and connect pastoral trainers for mutual encouragement, support and accountability. This global body may be responsible for the following:

1. Advancement of pastoral training on a global scale.
2. Making theological education and ministry resources accessible to those in need.
3. Identifying local needs and connecting them with local content producers.
4. Building healthy ecosystems for pastoral trainers that minimize bogus degree mills.
Several more responsibilities could be added, but action must be taken toward the facilitation of a global body responsible for the health and growth of pastors worldwide. This global body could bridge the gap between formal and nonformal training institutions and find ways to create a seamless approach to theological education. Pastors who begin with nonformal training in church, campus ministry, or training organizations could pursue advanced education in Bible schools and seminaries without having to repeat courses.

This approach has already been adopted in the sciences. An electrician starts with a basic license but adds to his training and ultimately finishes a full college course by simply taking additional seminars. In the same way, pastoral leaders trained in nonformal institutions could choose to take advanced courses and build upon their previous training.

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Dr. Jason Richard Tan

Dr. Jason Richard Tan is a GProAssociate and is responsible for curating online pastoral training resources for the GProLearning website, a ministry of the GProCommission for Trainers of Pastors. He also serves as International Catalyst for TOPIC (Trainers of Pastors International Community) and as a member of the Church Health Commission of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches. He is president of the Great Commission Missionary Training Center in Antipolo City, the Philippines. Dr. Tan is a graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where he earned his PhD in Intercultural Studies (2012), and of the Asia Graduate School of Theology, where he earned his ThM in Systematic Theology (2004), and of the Asia Graduate School of Theology, where he earned his MDIV in Missiology (2001).
Not all leaders get to choose the time at which they will step away from their responsibilities, and not all transitions at South Asian Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) in Bangalore, India, have gone well. However, after twenty-four years of involvement at SAIACS, the last ten years with Ian as Principal, we have left India and returned to New Zealand. In April 2018, we handed over the Principalship to Dr. Prabhu Singh. The following reflects on some of the leadership lessons we have learned in ministry and through the season of transition.

First, some background. SAIACS is one of the premier evangelical theological educational institutions in South Asia. It awards Master’s and Doctoral degrees to a unique group of Christian leaders. We arrived in 1994 for Ian to study at the Master’s level. With our three daughters, we stayed for another four years on the faculty team. After completing more research in theology, Ian worked as Principal of Pathways College in New Zealand for five years. He then handed the baton to Craig Barrow. All that time, he visited SAIACS to teach for a month each year. Studying at SAIACS revolutionized our perspective on what God is doing around the world and on how ordinary Kiwis like us can play a part in that work.

One of the most important lessons we have learned about leadership in theological education: finishing well begins by beginning well!

For us, beginning well meant first of all respecting our colleagues. It was scary to arrive at these institutions without all the answers, but that was better appreciated than arriving with them! In every work setting our colleagues have much to offer. Good leaders look to draw from the team’s experience. For us this was vital to success.

Second, beginning well meant leading by forming consensus. In a land known for unchallengeable rajas and gurus, pursuing leadership through consensus is pretty counter-cultural. Just after we arrived, the whole team brainstormed for several days on what our vision and goals were. Not all the good ideas came from us! For
instance, a stakeholder consultation had already been planned before our arrival. Linking with a nearby government-recognized university was another suggestion. Management by objectives was suggested by an external consultant at the time, but we discovered it worked well because collective objective-setting built the team’s confidence. We were committed to transparency, not overruling faculty council decisions afterwards. Respect for colleagues meant taking delegation seriously. We were not micro-managing every task. This meant letting a team shape a leadership summit or team retreat. Heads of departments had responsibility for their course planning and communication with visiting teachers. Giving responsibility is a huge encouragement to team members.

Finishing well also depends on keeping relationships sweet – as far as it depends on us. At times, we had to decide consciously that keeping friendships was more important than achieving targets. Loyalty to family or tribe is a deep value in Indian culture. On the other hand, failure to deliver something expected can lead to personal enmities. We had to avoid being seen as favoring “our own tribe.” Facing someone with their disappointing performance in a private annual performance review so that they could grow could not be allowed to bring shame on their value as a team player. When the SAIACS Press Manager reported a profit for the first time, his achievement was praised; on the other hand, when the academic office omitted to consult a Head of Department before arranging a student meeting to clarify course options (which included options in his department), the failing belonged to us all and ultimately to the Principal. An early apology avoided deeper holes being dug! A brief daily communication and prayer built a sense of belonging in the team. We found that socializing with our co-workers was important, just as much as praying with them. A monthly prayer friendship with a local Indian leader helped Ian keep perspective. It is true that no matter how you try to build relationships, some people aim to criticize – even attack. However, we learned that God is well able to vindicate and that defensive maneuvers are best left to others.

Finishing well begins by foreseeing our replacement. As outsiders, it was important for us to say that we were privileged to be leaders among the local leaders but that our long-term goal was to replace ourselves with Indian leaders. For example, after stepping in during an emergency, Judith became SAIACS’s Chief Administrative Officer. Ten months later, she handed the role to a new recruit, Jonathan, who executes the role incredibly well. Judith also took responsibility for managing hospitality, especially for the forty or so international visitors we had each year. Eighteen months before we left, she identified a local faculty member’s wife as having the potential to take over. First, Sheela worked with Judith, and then Judith worked alongside Sheela. By the time we left, Sheela was confident being the Campus Hostess.
Finishing well depends on recognizing who owns the ministry. It is Jesus who owns the harvest, not us. Our identity did not come from our ministry; we are known to God. His smile on what we are doing is more important than doing it. When God led us to consider stepping down from SAIACS, that decision would have been much more difficult if by stepping down Ian felt he would lose his identity. Leaving the task is easier when we know that it is ultimately in God's hands.

Finishing well involved consulting widely. About two years before our visas were due to expire in May 2018, we began asking if God wanted us to continue beyond May 2018 or not. We were enjoying what we were doing, but circumstances were changing. The news that grandchildren (twins!) were arriving pulled our heartstrings. More soberingly, a religious nationalist party came to power in India, and this was beginning to stress the Indian Church. Having foreigners in charge of a place like SAIACS was increasingly provocative. (In fact, in November 2017, the internal affairs department investigated Ian, and our deportation was a real possibility.) We spent six months praying about the decision. Seeking to obey God's voice involved also consulting with our family and our (three) supporting churches. They all could see we were increasingly needed in New Zealand.

As the SAIACS leader, Ian was accountable to the SAIACS Trust. Therefore, we needed to give them advance notice if we decided to leave. In September 2016, he signaled to the Trustees that we were looking to conclude. Their first response was to request that he stay for another five years. In April 2017, we communicated a definite decision to step down. That decision gave the Trust time to set up a search committee and appoint a Principal designate, Dr. Prabhu Singh. The Trust had enough time to make their appointment and allow Ian six months to work with Dr. Singh before he formally assumed his role.

Finishing well involves leaving room for other decision-makers. It was tempting to nominate a successor, but Ian did not. Rather, Ian suggested to the Trustees that three colleagues were suitable for the role. They eventually picked one of those three. We felt content with their decision (and said so). But having created space for others to work minimized all sorts of power games. Being open-handed was important to finishing well. All three colleagues were open-handed too, none clamoring for the role. They were each ready to work with whomever was chosen. SAIACS's smooth transition has contrasted somewhat with the recent public turmoil at another Indian seminary when leadership changed. Dr. Singh agreed with us that the lack of competing rivals was important. He only confirmed his availability when the Trust’s decision became clear.

Finishing well involves decreasing while others increase. John the Baptist had it right! Dr. Singh’s appointment as Principal Designate was announced in
September 2017. As Ian worked with Dr. Singh, Dr. Singh increasingly made the major decisions. Ian had to reckon with increasing powerlessness as Dr. Singh shaped policy affecting the future. In such a situation, it is easy to be misunderstood as ideas and ownership of the ministry diminishes, but Ian found that it was important to be content with what God allows.

Finishing well means *giving space for farewells*. Indian culture values formal welcomes and farewells. Kiwi aversion for “tall poppies” makes us uncomfortable in such situations! After ten years, our departure signaled big changes, and we had farewell conversations with many friends. They were generous – Ian ended up being given a bespoke suit! Though not always needed, such expressions of love are culturally impossible to refuse. A formal occasion of thanksgiving was a splendid campus occasion, though for us rather hard to endure! Eighteen months later, the SAIACS team proudly presented an astounded Ian with a festschrift in his honor! (The festschrift is *Theological Formation for Christian Missions, A Festschrift for Ian Walter Payne*, edited by Roji Thomas George and Aruthuckal Varughese John (SAIACS Press, 2019). The foreword is by Dr. Singh.)

Finishing well means *being ready to be no one*. Being significant in mission changes on return to the home country. New Zealand is a world away from India, and Christians here don’t appreciate mission priorities in quite the same depth – and that’s not necessarily a criticism but a statement of fact. In our home context, we were reminded of the need for humility and of our smallness in light of God’s whole Kingdom. Apart from a ten-minute report to the elders, no one asked for more than a one-line response about how we felt about our ten years in ministry in India. That’s hardly surprising given all the Kingdom happenings here. We really appreciated, however, a week-long debriefing opportunity our supporting churches sponsored for us. Of course, being unconcerned about your reputation is an important quality of Christian leadership. Peter advises, “Humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up.” Finishing well means looking forward the Lord’s “Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount.”

Finishing well means *waiting for another call*. We heard recently of a Christian policeman, who had served with International Justice Mission in India, returning with a passion for promoting justice system development in New Zealand. He already has a sense of the next door opening for him. Perhaps we too will be given another task. Jesus continued his encouragement to the faithful servant saying, “...so now I will give you many more responsibilities” (Matthew 25:21).

Are you keen to hear God’s “Well done”? Are you keen to take up the next task? That is finishing well.
Dr. Ian and Judith Payne

After leaving SAIACS, Ian and Judith Payne have resettled in Auckland, New Zealand. Ian is Executive Director of Theologians Without Borders.
Grassroots theological education should be viewed as an intrinsic part of theological education. It is part of a three-fold model of theological engagement: grassroots, ministerial, and academic. All three types of learning operate on the same continuum, yet each has a distinct purpose, distinct content, and a distinct audience. Refocusing on grassroots theological education will help the Church overcome some of the fragmentation of theological education, especially the grassroots/ministerial divide. It will help to integrate the three areas of theological education so that they inform and challenge each other. It will allow churches and their leaders to provide theologically sound answers to the actual questions of the grassroots Church.

Introduction

Grassroots theological education is part of theological education for the whole Church. The Church affirms that all baptised members are priests of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, everyone participates in the Church’s mission as well as in God’s mission on earth. The Anglican catechism highlights this when it answers the question “Who are the ministers of the church?” with a simple but striking summary: “The ministers of the church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons” (2019). The summary does not begin with ordained ministers or bishops but with the grassroots Church. The “priesthood of all believers” was the Reformation’s rallying cry and finds its key biblical expression in Exodus 19:4-6, 1 Peter 2:9, and Revelation 5:10. Therefore, one would expect that grassroots theological education would be seen as an important area within theological education.

Unfortunately, however, theological education is dominated by academia and ministerial training. One notable exception to this line of thought is C. S. Song, who argues that “lay-training should be a constituent part of theological education not as a replacement of the clergy but because all Christians equally participate in the mission of God” (qtd. in Esterline, 2010, 20). Along these lines, Roman Catholic theology acknowledges the priesthood of all believers. However,
as Thomas Hoebel and Stephen Bevans point out, Catholic theology distinguishes between the “common priesthood” and the “special priesthood of the ordained” (2003, 67-187; 2010, 7). Most Protestant churches maintain a similar distinction based on individuals’ function. These distinctions have become unbalanced, which results in a divide between education offered to clergy and grassroots education.

Academic theological education especially affects grassroots theological training. In my observation, theological training institutions (both grassroots and ministerial) seem more and more to align themselves with universities. Some may even seek to become independent universities themselves, as Robert Banks notes (1999, 7-8). This quest for academic recognition can result in an unquestioning acceptance of academic methodologies as the norm for theological education. This often leads to the assumption that there is only one way of educating students and only one setting for doing proper theology. (This mindset is especially problematic where universities follow the British tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries, in which higher education was a gentleman’s pleasure, detached from practical use.)

Through this trend, grassroots theological institutions depart from their founding vision of providing training to the Church. They transition from non-formal to formal educational models and from non-accredited to accredited programs. In some circumstances, this drive seems to be motivated not by theological considerations but rather by financial pressures. Many grassroots theological training institutions develop new programs under the assumption that theological education should be self-sustaining through tuition. They can charge significantly more for accredited programs, even though churches recognise the benefits of non-accredited programs. Thus, within grassroots theological training institutions, accredited programs grow, while non-accredited courses struggle.

If it is to equip all believers, theological education must encompass both non-formal and formal education as well as non-accredited and accredited programs. It must be able to reach believers who do not have the time, money, or inclination for academia.

In this article, I use the term “grassroots” for lay theological education because of how it offers a semantic link to organic imagery. Roots support the plant. Without roots, the plant dies. Damaged or underdeveloped roots equal underdeveloped or damaged plants. In human terms, “grassroots” refers to the main body of people in an organisation, the members rather than the leaders. Likewise, the Church is a living organism and is made up of the people of God and their leaders. Both groups have distinct training needs that should not be conflated. “Grassroots,” therefore, refers to the main body of the Church.
“Grassroots” should not be understood as a demeaning qualifier of this group’s intellectual ability – in the way that “lay training” is sometimes denigrated as being of lower quality and depth. Rather, “grassroots” theological education should be understood as life-giving training that nourishes the Church’s essential foundation – ordinary believers.

The starting point for my reflection is my experience of fragmenting theological education in an economically developing country in south central Africa. I am involved in grassroots theological education with accredited and non-accredited programs and with non-formal and formal ministerial education. Most non-formal theological education in my context happens due to lack of access to secondary school education. All contexts are different; however, the Church shares a global need for theological education. This need is particularly pressing because of increasing governmental regulation of theological education.

The Unity of Theological Education

Theological education operates on a continuum, with theological content as the unifying core. On this continuum are three distinct disciplines – academic education, ministerial education, and grassroots education. Some theological educators distinguish based on form of delivery – residential or distance education. Ross Kinsler uses the term “Diversified Theological Education” (DTE) for programs that combine these models (2008, 8-9). Graham Hill concludes that it is actually “difficult to define” DTE. Nevertheless, as Hill notes, Kinsler basically promotes grassroots theological education as a key discipline (2016, 308).

Each discipline uses an intellectual framework that is particular to it. At the academic level, thinking is predominately neutral, objective, and analytical; at the grassroots level, thinking is predominantly confessional, practical, and spiritual. Yet theology links all three disciplines. They influence each other through raising new questions or providing new answers to existing questions.

Academic education trains theologians to teach and research. Their education centres on gaining expertise in the academic theories and methodologies necessary to participate in theological discourse at the most intellectual level.

Ministerial training equips pastors and non-ordained leaders to work in the Church or in parachurch organisations. Their education centres on the theories and practices of effective Church ministry. It includes competence to assess contemporary ideas that affect ministry. These leaders have deep biblical and theological knowledge and the ability to exegete culture from that knowledge. Also, this training leads to personal development through self-reflection.
Ministerial education enables leaders to communicate God’s wisdom effectively to other human beings.

Ministerial education seems best achieved through an integrated curriculum where the discussion is not only about content but also about the use of the content in ministry settings and about how content personally affects ministers. The Church of England’s report, “Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church” (known as the Hind Report), stresses the three interconnected domains of being, knowing, and doing (2004, 56). An intrinsic element of theological ministerial education is a good understanding of human behaviour as well as the ability to reflect on one’s own humanity. Ministerial training also needs to include a comprehensive understanding of pedagogy (2004, 56-57; Shaw, 2014, 72; Lewis, 2006, 16).

Grassroots theological education refers to the process of equipping Church members with foundational competencies in their faith. Grassroots education centres on helping people gain expertise in biblical literacy, theology, discipleship, and contextual application. Biblical literacy refers to the ability to process biblical texts within an appropriate spiritual framework.

The table below compares the three (related and sometimes overlapping) types of theological education. Each has a purpose and core content that is different from the other fields.

Table I: A Comparison of the Purposes and Core Contents of Academic, Ministerial, and Grassroots Theological Education

<table>
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<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Core Content</th>
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| Academic | Preparing academic theologians for work in an institution of higher learning where they teach and research in the field of theology | - Academic theories and methodologies necessary to participate in the field.  
- Contemporary academic theological questions. |
| Ministerial | Preparing pastors and ministry leaders for work in the Church or a para-church organisation | - Theories and practises of effective ministry, including competence to assess contemporary ideas affecting ministry and arising out of other fields  
- Biblical and theological competence  
- Personal preparation, including cultural exegesis (Harkness, 2001, 104-105) |
| Grassroots | Equipping Church members | - Biblical, theological and discipleship skills, including contextual application  
- Biblical literacy |

Thus, the continuum of theological learning moves from the theoretical
(academic) to the practical (grassroots), from the abstract (academic) to the situational (grassroots), from the neutral (academic) to the personal (grassroots). Ministerial training lies in the middle, combining theoretical and practical, abstract and situational, neutral and personal.

The Problem of Fragmentation

The fragmentation of theological education into disconnected subfields seems to be continuing rather than diminishing. Edward Farley warns of this continued fragmentation because of the focus on models of abstract knowledge deprived of a concrete setting, although he does not explicitly mention clergy-laity fragmentation (2001, xi; Banks, 1999, 62-63). Overall, an emphasis on intellectual skills increasingly contradicts ministerial preparation. Critical methodologies replace personal spiritual formation under the pressure of academic excellence, as many have pointed out (Farley, Banks, Kelsey, Cannell, Shaw, Ott).

Theological educators must reflect on the implications of this fragmentation and ask how it can be overcome. Banks helpfully observes, “Seminaries have often adopted secular models of education, rather than subject them to rigorous theological or practical evaluation” (1999, 6). The main paths for overcoming fragmentation are, first, repositioning the aim of theological education to serve the mission of God explicitly; and second, rediscovering the vocational (versus the purely intellectual) nature of ministerial training as a way to serve God’s people. In general, though, theological education seems not to be overcoming fragmentation; in fact, the emphasis on accreditation enhances fragmentation.

All of this has significant consequences for grassroots theological education because the grassroots Church, a key audience of theological education, demands and deserves a contextual, relevant theology that addresses individuals’ actual needs (Chan). Yet a key fault line in theological education is still the clergy/grassroots divide, which is often amplified by a schism between situational grassroots theology and abstract academic theology.

An expression of this kind of situational need can be seen in the following observation. The church I worship in has a praise team that chooses the songs we sing. One of their favourite songs is called “Yahweh the Great Warrior.” The main idea in this song is that Yahweh will fight and protect, for Yahweh is always victorious. The context is one’s fear of the spirit world and of human conspiracies. The song reminds the Church to trust God’s power and protection. Unfortunately, in the preaching, salvation is only mentioned in terms of rescue from guilt (the Western theological paradigm), rather than in terms of fear or shame – the cultural
context that makes “Yahweh the Great Warrior” resonate so powerfully.

This divide is also unfortunately enshrined in the distinction between “theological education” and “Christian education.” “Christian education” usually refers to congregational training, while “theological education” refers to formal, institutional training (Cheesman). The distinction is based on audience and locality. But too often, that distinction prevents a proper theological engagement between these two connected fields and leaves both grassroots education and ministerial education poorer.

Theological educators have suggested new centers of unity (like the mission of the Church) through which to address this fragmentation, but the clergy/grassroots symbiotic relationship in relation to theological education has not received enough attention. Especially among ordained theological educators, the predominant emphasis is still on ministerial education. These educators believe that theological education will be available to the grassroots Church through ordained ministers. Though that intention is good, the idea is flawed, as it assumes that ministerial theological graduates will somehow automatically be able to apply their training to address the concerns of ordinary believers. Educators assume that the clergy’s cognitive learning will automatically lead to beneficial training for the grassroots Church.

Sadly, in most cases, this is untrue. Ministerial theological education has a deficit when it comes to practical application and communication. For the above model to work, clergy need a detailed understanding of the grassroots audience and of the differences between grassroots education and ministerial education (see section 5 below for more detail).

In fact, the clergy/grassroots divide is essentially a division of priority and hierarchy in theological education. Instead of overcoming this divide, the Cape Town Commitment of the Third Lausanne Congress, a key document for the Majority World Church, accepts it as the status quo. Overall, the Cape Town Commitment makes three important and valuable points about theological education. First, it stresses that theological education is “intrinsically missional” (2011, 69). Second, it affirms grassroots theological education as foundational to all theological education because it exists “to equip all God’s people” (2011, 69). Finally, it affirms the nature of theological education as concerned with empowering all God’s people.

Unfortunately, the document then goes on to introduce a hierarchy of the recipients of theological education: “Theological education serves first to train those who lead the Church as pastor-teachers, equipping them to teach the truth
of God’s Word with faithfulness, relevance and clarity; and second, to equip all God’s people for the missional task of understanding and relevantly communicating God’s truth in every cultural context” (2011, 69, emphasis original). The use of numbers indicates a division in importance. Here, ministerial theological education is higher in importance and prestige than grassroots theological education. I have heard this same sentiment many times from ordained ministers – that only the ministry of someone who is ordained counts and that spiritual blessings are only shared through the “man of God.” Therefore, it is not surprising that the ordained ministry is portrayed as spiritually superior to grassroots ministry. But ordination is a question of calling, not of a higher form of spirituality.

So what theological justification can be offered to support the view that grassroots theological education is done exclusively through the theologically trained minister? The answer is simple: none. It is biblically and practically impossible that all Church teaching will be exclusively done through an ordained minister. This, for example, would mean the collapse of all Sunday school activities, as very few (if any) ministers are involved in the Sunday school teaching that prepares the next generation of the Church. It would mean the collapse of youth ministry, women’s guilds, and prayer meetings and Bible Studies. In Malawi, for example, most pulpits on Sunday morning are filled with lay Christians due to a shortage of ordained ministers. The Malawian Church has lay training institutes and denominational Christian training departments, but the initiative to start church-based grassroots theological education does not come from the clergy. Similar situations occur throughout the Majority World.

Though the Bible’s “priesthood of believers” is divided into ordained and lay ministers, all members of the Church are priests. All members are called to participate fully in God’s reign on earth. Therefore, all members need to be equipped for their participation in God’s Kingdom. Hoebel reminds that us that “The whole people is a kingdom of priests, but it is only as a whole people. Thus, if the Church is indeed the new people of God, then it cannot tolerate tendencies that do not have the whole people of God as the fundamental principle in mind” (2003, 33, emphasis original). Actually, Hoebel’s assessment is very much in line with the overall spirit of the Cape Town Commitment, which stresses the whole Church’s full participation in the mission of God: “Our love for the whole church, as God’s people, redeemed by Christ from every nation on earth and every age of history, to share God’s mission in this age and glorify him forever in the age to come” (2011, 8).

In light of these truths, grassroots theological education should be part of the ministry of the local church. In my own context, during the introduction for a new
grassroots course, two members shared that they were unemployed but – independent of each other – were planting churches in rural areas. Grassroots ministry is happening! How much better would it have been if these two individuals would have been trained long ago in their own church?

Ecclesiastical prestige and funding usually go to academic theological education and to ministerial theological education. This is not surprising, as society and the Church attach great value to academic qualifications. Similarly, within the Church itself, the training of future ministers is a natural concern. But no biblical justification exists for prioritizing one form of education over another. No member of the Church can be denied the opportunity to grow in knowing God. The prophet Hosea speaks of the inclusivity of theological knowledge when he warned pre-exilic Israel that “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). A mature understanding of the Christian faith has to be a universal Christian right that is open to every member of the Church.

Therefore, grassroots theological education should not be an elective but a core subject of ministerial education. Trained Christians are stronger in their faith, more committed to their church community, and the Church’s current and future lay leaders. Some have joined the ordained ministry (after discovering their calling), or serve in para-church organisations. Recognizing how beneficial grassroots theological education can be, a number of theological educators have recently emerged to call for the need for a renewed emphasis on grassroots theological education (Conway, Martey, Raja, and Bloomquist and Sinaga).

The Schooling Analogy: The Relationship between Types of Theological Education

I would like to use a schooling analogy to explain the relationship between grassroots, ministerial, and academic theological education (Harkness, 2011). This analogy also highlights one of the major pedagogical problems of grassroots theological education, namely monologue education.

In the British system, schooling is usually structured in three tiers: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Learners need to progress successfully through each tier in order to reach the next one. Each tier is dedicated to a specific audience with specific abilities. There is an emphasis on reading comprehension, as this is the foundational skill for self-study. There is an emphasis on understanding each subject (rather than simply repeating facts about a subject) and on the ability to apply that knowledge to a new context. Furthermore, material that is learned at an earlier stage might be revised and deepened later on. By the end of secondary school, learners should be prepared either to seek a vocation or to continue the
pursuit of specialised knowledge at the tertiary level. At the tertiary level, learners are introduced to the current set of knowledge in a specialized field and to the questions and critical methodologies prevailing in that field. The overarching philosophy of education in this model moves learners from dependence to independence.

Theological education would benefit if a similar approach were adopted. The Church needs to recognize that theological knowledge and practise cannot be applied as though one size fits all. Rather, each level asks different questions and requires different skills. For example, at the tertiary level, theological discussions have been ongoing for nearly two thousand years and are far advanced in complexity, while at the grassroots level, questions respond either to the Bible alone or to its personal, contextual application. Yet each generation of Christians that encounters the Bible asks similar questions about the text. For example: who are the sons of God and the daughters of man in Genesis 6:1-4, or what is the relation between sickness and demons in the gospels? The academic discussion over the last century has moved on from these questions, so theological institutions don’t address them, even though they are being asked at the grassroots.

This metaphor provides an implicit warning to teachers in grassroots education, where intellectual monologues (lectures) are often the preferred method of content delivery. (“ICETE Manifesto”). There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the lecture – indeed, preaching often follows the lecture style. Yet the monologue style does not play a significant role in modern primary and secondary education. Instead, a variety of active learning elements are used, which include self-study, small group work, large group discussion, and question/answer sessions. Preaching still has a place within the church to challenge congregations, but it is one of many available tools, not the only tool. The best form of grassroots theological education engages in dialogue with its audience, as this significantly improves comprehension (Glissman, 2015; Jagerson, 2014).

The schooling analogy highlights the relationship between grassroots, ministerial, and academic theological education, in recognising that the audience matters and their questions and concerns matter. It also highlights that pedagogical methods need to be selected to support audience comprehension.
The Problem of the Hidden Curriculum

The schooling metaphor demonstrates a problem that arises when graduates of tertiary education, who do not have a background in pedagogy, enter grassroots education (Harkness, 2018). Academic or ministerial theological graduates only know one form of education – academic. Grassroots theological education may be implicit in ministerial education, but students will only absorb what is explicitly and actively included in the curriculum. Therefore, they do not absorb methods for grassroots theological education. The transfer of knowledge – from theory to practice, from general to specific, from one subject to another – does not happen automatically. It needs to be taught explicitly.

As Perry Shaw points out, grassroots education as a subject for academic or ministerial education is an example of the “hidden curriculum” (2014, 81-82). The hidden curriculum is the “unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives” that students in any education system absorb unconsciously (“Hidden Curriculum”).

Consider that the most common form of theological education is lecturing combined with individual essays and examinations. For ministers, coursework usually requires fieldwork (practicums or internships). However, fieldwork rarely follows the same rigour as the rest of a young minister’s studies, nor is it thoroughly integrated into the course of studies. As a result, by way of the hidden curriculum, this gives the impression that “real” theological education is academic, not practical.

Furthermore, in the classroom, course designs emphasize intellectual knowledge (which is assumed to lead to behavioural change). Classes often start with exposition of Bible verses or theological doctrine (which are then in some cases applied to current situations). This method might work for theological subjects, like Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology, but works less well for pastoral subjects that address human identity and behaviour. For this reason, pastoral study should engage other subjects in the humanities to help young ministers understand human behaviour.

Unfortunately, courses that prepare people for ordination lack this kind of contextual analysis and cultural exegesis. They do not prepare ministers to find adequate theological responses to daily challenges. Even worse, the academic
setting sidelines the integration of spirituality into the curriculum. In the end, theological graduates lack not only the tools to help their congregations grow personally but also the tools that will feed their own souls. Grassroots theological training urgently needs to be added to the curriculum of theological schools as an independent subject. Those called to minister to the grassroots Church need to have a clear understanding of the needs of the grassroots Church and need to understand how current worldviews affect believers, because only then can they give theological answers to the pressing lived situations of the grassroots Church.

For example, a theological graduate has been in education for 12-13 years. The emphasis throughout secondary school has been to prepare the learner with reading comprehension and academic writing. This is followed by a four-year undergraduate degree and perhaps a two-year Master’s program – a total of 20 years in the academy. Such a graduate will have lost touch with training the grassroots Church, as s/he has been trained to respond only intellectually to theological problems – and has been trained to ask only academic questions, which usually are not the questions of the grassroots Church. How does such theological education serve the grassroots Church as it faces persecution, war, corruption, or just the day-to-day wear of temptation and discouragement? How does theological education that does not offer training on how to respond to such issues serve those who must minister to the grassroots Church? How does academic theology enable the grassroots Church and its ministers to formulate adequate responses to these problems?

The Problem of the Non-Applicability of Academic Discourse to Grassroots Teaching

The purpose of theological education as defined by the Cape Town Commitment is “to strengthen and accompany the mission of the church.” (2011, 69). Similarly, The FTE Guide to Theological Education broadly defines theological education as “preparation – intellectual, experiential and spiritual – for serving and leading a church or community of faith” (10). The guide acknowledges that theological education is both formal and non-formal. Nevertheless, its sole emphasis is on formal theological education.

Allan Harkness offers a more comprehensive definition of theological education as “the processes adopted to encourage individuals and Christian faith communities to understand, appropriate, and express the Christian faith they espouse” (2013, 4). Ultimately, this purpose should guide theological education to evaluate its core methodologies. Practitioners of academic theological education, as well as
ministerial theological education, need to find ways to engage grassroots theological education, as the latter is essential for the Church’s wellbeing. Academically trained educators are used to intellectual discourse as a result of years of schooling with an emphasis on academic logic. They need to recognize that intellectual discourse is not the preferred learning method of the grassroots Church.

In fact, the ability to communicate with the grassroots Church is a highly specialised skill. Sometimes, educators look at the simplicity of grassroots training material and conclude that it is of lower quality. This overlooks the fact that grassroots education excels in communicating through artful simplicity. Through such artful simplicity, academic theological research should influence the grassroots Church. Yet the development and application of grassroots theology for the Church’s life and witness is still an exception rather than the norm. Most theological curricula focus on ministerial or academic theology, neither of which is simply transferable to grassroots education. Practitioners of grassroots education need to develop a comprehensive pedagogical framework, in the same way that academic and ministerial theological education already have.

Grassroots theological education has one major disadvantage in meeting this need: material cannot be offered for a price that will cover the costs of production and development. Accredited academic courses can charge their learners a significant amount to cover costs, but non-accredited courses will rely on Church funding. Despite this issue, theological and educational expertise need to be invested in grassroots education so that believers can fulfil their potential as members of God’s Kingdom.

Grassroots theological education needs to ask three questions for appropriate training:

1. How do people learn at the grassroots level, especially if they do not plan to earn an academic degree? How do we motivate them to learn?
2. How can we design a well-rounded learning environment that addresses Biblical, practical, and spiritual needs? What learning elements can be included in order to provide a lasting education?
3. What do grassroots learners need to understand? What are the theological objectives that learners need to practice and master?

We need to determine what theological truths/skills should be in grassroots curricula and how to divide them between essential and topic-specific. We must include some essential lifelong learning strategies so that grassroots learners can go on to teach themselves and can communicate what they know to others.
In my experience with designing grassroots theological education here in Malawi, the most effective educational tool is a combination of home-study material and group discussion. Nowadays, this approach has been rediscovered and called “flipped learning” or “flipped classroom.” The flipped classroom uses self-study material for content delivery, then replaces the classroom with tutorials. Tutorials are usually small, less formal, interactive groups that apply course content.

Our assessment of over 30 learners who joined a newly designed course shows that all picked a combination of home study and group discussion as their preferred learning method (both in urban and rural settings). The reasons they gave were similar: home study allows learners to reflect on material in their own time. Then, discussions allow them to refine their thinking as they engage ideas raised by others that they had not initially prioritised.

The courses that we are designing are integrated, story-based biblical literacy courses, which motivate learners as they seek a deeper knowledge of God. One goal is skill-based education with an emphasis on mastering biblical literacy. Another goal is application of practical skills through integrating biblical content, hermeneutical tools, and reflection on spiritual themes – including worship and prayer (Glissmann, 2017). Some issues that arise for discussion from biblical texts are universal, while others are determined by the local context (such as “albinism in Malawi and the image of God”).

Conclusion

Grassroots theological education is vital for the Church. Individual members of the Church have a right to know their faith deeply. Grassroots theological education is a very exciting field of theological engagement, as it helps to make theology relevant to the lives of ordinary Church members. Grassroots education in its core content is contextual; it addresses worldview issues and trains the Church in sound theological reflection and action. In its delivery, it must respond to learners’ contexts and use methods that are appropriate for non-academic audiences.

Grassroots theological education also needs to be integrated into ministerial training. Most Sunday schools that I know of rely on workbooks written by practitioners. They include both theological content and suggestions for exercises, drawings, and songs. Bible study workbooks are also widely used. Such materials free clergy to concentrate on their area of strength, rather than trying to develop material on their own.

Among the practical challenges for grassroots theological education are the
development of theological and pedagogical materials and the costs required to do so. Unlike formal systems, grassroots training does not have a funding mechanism (i.e., tuition) for recouping cost. Funding for grassroots education would greatly improve if churches would take seriously their mandate to equip all members of the body (Ephesians 4:12).

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A Philippine Reflection: Asian Theological Seminary and Two New Programs

Timoteo Gener
Asian Theological Seminary

Two key strategic priorities – vocation formation among the diaspora and communal spiritual formation – emerged from consultations with global partners and the Vital SustainAbility Initiative. These two priorities are translated into new programs fulfilling the seminary’s mission of quality theological education for the Asian region and beyond.

Introduction

In 2012, Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) and two other Majority World schools partnered with consultants from ScholarLeaders (SL) and Overseas Council (OC) U.S. to write comprehensive faculty development programs. This first project led to a series of interactions that have shaped the strategy and future of our institution. Through this consultation, ATS created a faculty plan for 2014-2018. Our work also led to the development of plans for online learning and a doctoral program in contextual theology.

We continued the partnership with SL and OC under the Vital SustainAbility Initiative (VSI) for Majority World schools. Consultations in 2016-2017 helped ATS review previous plans and reconfigure a new plan for 2017-2022.

A focus on vocation unifies the new plan, a focus which was previously articulated in the planning back in 2013 but not fully realized. In essence, this focus means serving students’ training needs without detracting from their current vocations. It entails a shift from merely offering academic degrees to meeting students in their ongoing work, from a teacher-centered orientation to a learner-centered orientation.

The new strategy or plan includes a ministry training center for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), revitalized spiritual formation, maximized use of campus property to meet training needs and raise third stream revenues, and increased partnership with alumni, churches, and organizations.
This brief reflection will focus on the first two aspects of the new plan: the ministry training center for OFWs and the initiative for communal spiritual growth. The former concerns an outward missional direction. The latter offers a prophetic contribution to the life of God’s global people and a way to renew vocation formation in the Church and the seminary through loving relationships.

Vocation Formation in the Diaspora

Shifting educational, cultural, and vocational realities often seem to impinge on the development of Christian leaders. For ATS, these realities include an increased number of bi-vocational students, distance challenges, changes in digital technologies, government pressures, geopolitical and interreligious threats, and the demand for flexible delivery formats. Yet such realities actually enhance the local, contextual strengths of theological education. For ATS, responding to these realities is integral to furthering God’s mission. Equipping Christian workers while accounting for such complexities enables ATS to contribute to God’s kingdom outreach.

For example, one major group within the Filipino Evangelical constituency that needs ministerial training is the Filipino diaspora, especially OFWs. Such training is not extraneous to ATS’s mission. Although OFWs do not live within the geographical Filipino context, ministering to them fits with ATS’s mission of teaching for transformation beyond the Philippines. For instance, many Christian OFWs working in cross-cultural settings are thrust into preaching, evangelism, teaching, and leading small groups, even churches, without any in-depth training in pastoral ministries.

Conservative estimates say that OFWs around the world number about four and half million (Sicat, 2012). Around 10 per cent (450 thousand) of OFWs are Protestant Christians. Thus, one study concludes that OFW Evangelical believers are a “potential significant force of Kingdom workers” (Tira and Wan, 2009).

One of the questions that ATS asked during consultations was, “How could the seminary facilitate ministry training for these potential Kingdom workers?” ATS also needed to identify the qualities of the ideal graduate of such a diaspora-focused program. Regarding the former, what will be the means of training this dispersed population? Regarding the latter, do we envision ideal graduates to be church planters, evangelists, or influencers in the marketplace?

To answer the second of these questions, the seminary settled on a philosophy of ministry that reaches beyond the organized church. A narrow definition of ministry does not honor the actual professions of OFWs as what they are. For instance, engineers who work to build oil plants and railroads are themselves doing acts of spiritual service and worship through their professions. Therefore, ATS’s broadened definition accounts for a diversity of ministerial expressions and steers away from a sacred-secular divide. ATS envisions the following ideal
graduates: Christ-like servant leaders who are equipped to live and work reflectively in their ministries among the diaspora.

As to the question of strategy, ATS consulted its partner organizations. ATS recognized the need to consider the weekly workload of OFWs as skilled professionals. Most of them, even if they desire to train for ministry, can only give limited time to study. Moreover, face-to-face classes would require overseas travel and thus would be difficult for ATS to sustain financially. Rather than the traditional, face-to-face approach, hybrid and fully online settings can facilitate learning for greater flexibility and financial viability. ATS has actually launched a pilot training program this year (2019) particularly for OFWs in the Gulf region. This involves flexible training formats – online certificate and graduate diploma programs conducted via short videos and video conferencing – for OFWs with varying degrees of involvement.

**New Initiatives for Communal Spiritual Growth**

In the seminary context, spiritual formation of Christian workers and leaders is “not the shaping of a compartment of a Christian’s life, but the rounding out of his personality, his self, in Jesus Christ” (Clemmons, 2004). Through spiritual formation, the seminary becomes a place where God brings about personal and corporate transformation as people come to know, love, and serve Christ.

ATS has put personal spiritual formation at the top of its training objectives: “To pursue and foster personal spiritual formation, which is demonstrated by integrity, loving service, and holistic discipleship” (Asian Theological Seminary Catalogue, 2010-2013). At the heart of spiritual formation is the goal of Christlikeness through the head, heart, hands, and habits of community members.

Why do we need to revitalize spiritual formation in our current setting? First, even if spiritual formation has been stated as a training priority, ATS has not attended to it in previous planning, especially as compared to the attention given to academic and ministerial skills. Second, most of ATS’s spiritual formation practices center on individual spirituality (an inheritance from the West), often neglecting any communal dimension. Finally, while small group discipleship is becoming a more common tool in most churches, small groups often serve to increase local membership rather than to promote spiritual formation.

In 2016, in an effort to revitalize this area, ATS’s chaplaincy committee developed a program for spiritual formation. Adonis Gorospe, a professor of theology and spirituality and a member of the chaplaincy, used part of his sabbatical at Asbury Theological Seminary to chart a proposal for the program. Gorospe suggested that the program take holiness as an overarching framework, center around ATS’s missional priorities, and this began last Fall. He offered the following vision:
Depend on and generously and lovingly serve God and others[.]
Effectively witness for Christ in diverse cultural contexts[.]
Study the Word of God diligently, handle it responsibly, communicate it effectively, and obey it wholeheartedly[.]
Be a multicultural community that celebrates... unity in Christ and... diversity as God's people[.]
Strive for excellence that glorifies God in all areas of life.
Value participation and accountability and... seek each other's mutual benefit.
Seek to be... wise, good, and faithful steward[s] of creation and of the gifts and resources God has given. (Gorospe 2016)

To attain these goals, Gorospe advocated for the Wesleyan model as especially viable for ATS (Watson, 2013, 41, and Wesley, 1984, 9:69-75). Charles Wesley believed that holiness is essential to the life of every Christian. According to Wesley, God raised up preachers “To reform the nation, and in particular the Church, to spread scriptural holiness over the land.” By holiness, Wesley meant loving God and neighbor in all practical ways. The “General Rules” of Wesley were in fact practical guidelines to living a life of holiness, i.e., a life of loving God and one’s neighbor. The Wesleyan model emphasizes such holiness attained through community – specifically, through small groups. The emphasis on small groups, not individual spirituality, fits well with the relationality of ATS's Filipino cultural context.

ATS adopted specific guidelines for small groups. Rose Mary Dougherty uses the phrase “group companioning” for this practice. As she writes,

The process works best with a group of four people, though the number can be as few as three or as many as five. Sufficient time for prayer together and sharing each other's understanding of spiritual companioning must be provided in the beginning to allow for discernment by each one as to the rightness of being part of the group. It must be noted that the more the diverse the faith perspectives of each member, the richer the collective wisdom of the group will be. (Dougherty, 1995, 10)

Also, it is important that each be aware of each other's faith experience and familiar with one another's faith language before initiating the process of group companioning.

This practice may continue long-term, depending on group members’ desires, as Gorospe stated:

The group may agree to meet for a period of ten to twelve months. They may continue to meet for the same duration if, after a review of the past year's sessions, the group deems it right to continue [to] do so. (Gorospe, 2016)

Gorospe, along with the chaplaincy committee, suggested other concrete steps for enhancing communal spirituality. Chapel times and the celebration of communion
will be held more often, and the seminary will embrace more community events such as spiritual emphasis week, community prayer day, and the daily office – all of which are geared toward deepening communal spiritual growth.

More could be developed from Gorospe’s proposal. Tying this program to existing courses on spiritual companioning and spiritual formation, ATS could develop a new academic focus on group companioning. Indeed, group companioning as a central feature of spiritual formation at ATS and as an area of study might actually present a prophetic critique of the use of small groups as a church growth tool in other contexts.

In terms of the program itself, the Wesleyan model could be enhanced with a sharper Christological focus, with a concern for creation, with application of the doctrine of the priesthood of every believer, and with consideration of the role of academic study in spiritual formation. Beyond the Wesleyan frame, spiritual formation could draw from multi-denominational practices of spirituality.

Moreover, the proposed program could be supplemented by strategies that would cater to students’ personal formation, as well as spiritual development of faculty. These include courses or subjects on soul care and facilitating spiritual retreats. Such courses reinforce the personal formation of students existing through community-wide care groups in the seminary.

**Conclusion**

ATS’s mission involves equipping Christian leaders who will transform Church and society within and beyond Asia. Our new focus on vocation enhances this mission. Indeed, the socio-cultural particularities of vocation formation highlight the contextual (Asian) and missional nature of theological education at ATS. Under its new initiatives, ATS will educate members of the Filipino diaspora for ministry in workplaces around the world, and it will deploy a uniquely Filipino emphasis on community for richer spiritual formation.

Admittedly, the program still lacks strategies for spiritual formation via ATS’s new online platform, which would be crucial for ministering to the digital generation and especially to OFWs. A new hybrid program on spiritual companioning is on the way, and perhaps the hybrid platform will be better for the dynamics of spiritual formation training. Our conversations continue.
References


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