



Types of TEE¹

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To those who appreciate the finer things of life, tea isn't just tea. There are Ceylon tea, Darjeeling tea, Oolong, Gunpowder, Jasmine, and so forth. One doesn't simply buy *tea*; one discriminates, considering the desirable features and the weaknesses of each variety.

Tea (it's pronounced "tee") isn't all the same. In some ways, tea is tea; but the more you know about it and the more experience you have, the differences become more important. So it is with TEE (Theological Education by Extension.)

For those who think of TEE as being all alike there are real dangers. An oversimplified view of TEE has led to many mistakes. Much good advice and sincere warnings, especially warnings from national leaders, have been unwisely ignored by those who see TEE as a "good thing." On the other side, many blockades and short-sighted stalemates have been created by those who simply "don't like TEE." People at both extremes would be helped by an understanding that there are many types of TEE.

Time will surely show that the descriptions following are too brief and too simplistic. We already can suspect that there are no true "types;" more than likely every situation is different, and something is lost when we attempt to classify any given program at any particular time of its development. The types of TEE are suggested only to provide a tool for thinking and analysis. Perhaps they will help to break down the twin myths: "TEE is a good thing" and "TEE is a bad thing."

Type I: Green Tee [Uncured Tee]

Green TEE is sincere TEE. Because it really hasn't been fully processed, some people find it thin and weak. Nevertheless it is TEE, sincere TEE. It wants to be everything any TEE can be, and if given a bit more time and money, perhaps it will develop beyond its present immaturity. Perhaps; but not likely!

Green TEE is seen in programs that are quick copies of other programs. There are few faculty people working together to help the programs mature. There are inadequate concerns for the deeper curriculum issues in theological education. The major concern seems to be logistics—getting the program out to more and more people, somehow. Green TEE is often quite pragmatic: short-term payoff is very important and being able to tell success stories very soon is a major objective.

The sincerity of Green TEE is commendable. Those who sponsor and create it are often doing the best they can with limited resources, unrealistic timetables and inadequate background in the planning, design, and development of educational experiences. Many sincere Green TEE planters are plantation operators of a previous generation, continuing to do what they have always done, making carbon copies do what they perceive to be the main features of educational programs and institutions in which they have participated or observed.

Ted Ward. Types of TEE. *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* 13 (2) 1977: p. 79-85. Used with permission.

Type II: Oolahlah Tee [The Glamour Tee]

Oolahlah TEE has great appeal to the appetites of modern people. It is a distinctive blend of workable concepts, effective use of machinery, and elegant promotion. It is especially easy to advertise. Among its buyers are those who want its distinctive appearance to grace their conversation centers and their trophy rooms. It often sounds better than it tastes and, most unfortunately, it tends to go sour in a relatively short time.

Oolahlah TEE is seen in the glamour programs, especially those that claim to solve all at once the difficult problems of effective leadership education for the church. Those who seek once-and-for-all solutions are especially attracted to Oolahlah TEE. What it is and what it does are less important than what it sounds like and what it promises.

Every human enterprise is subject to temptation. Every missionary enterprise is tempted to capitalize on appealing messages, even if they are not representative of the core of the true work of the mission and especially if they are more apt to stimulate financial support. For so many years, theological education overseas has had a poor record of costs and accomplishments. TEE, especially Oolahlah TEE seems to give relief. But although it makes a good story for the folks back home, it is often a phony sham on the field.

Type III: Gunpowder Tee [The Explosive Tee]

Gunpowder TEE is zesty and exciting. It will add flavor and heat to jaded routine, turning even the dullest field council meeting into a memorable incident. No one is sure just how to prepare Gunpowder TEE; it just seems to happen. For many people TEE of any sort is threatening, but in the teapot of those who are insensitive to the feelings of others, Gunpowder TEE produces quite a tempest.

In several situations, Gunpowder TEE has resulted from the failure to thoroughly discuss and prepare for institutional change. Educational institutions are among the most stubborn creatures on earth. To threaten to change them in any way raises all their self-preservation instincts to an explosive level. At the heart of any educational institution are people—galvanized into a status quo-maintaining unit. (Even the most discordant faculty operating the most inadequate sort of a school will demonstrate a perverse unanimity in the face of external pressure to force change.)

Theological education, perhaps because of the general assumption that its foundations are in Holy Scriptures, tends to sanctimoniously overlook the need for continuous curriculum development. Dealing with eternal truth, those who maintain the institution too easily assume that the forms of education are also unchangeable. To alter the forms threatens the orthodoxy. This writer's experiences as a curriculum development specialist have revealed no other variety of professional education with such a poorly developed tradition for in-service education and curriculum upgrading. Theological education seems largely to operate as if the world were frozen solid. Its fetish for standing still guarantees that it is always behind the times and out of tune with the needs of its clientele.

Into such a static institutional entity has come a vision of radical reform. When outsiders decide on the changes to be made and insiders, especially the faculty and the opinion leaders of the national church, are given little or no help in their own growing process, the result is Gunpowder TEE. Stand back! The fuse is it!

Type IV: P.I. Tee [A Pity Or a Pit?]

P.I. TEE is a bitter-sweet blend. Its motivations are pure, though some TEE-tasters find it hard to swallow. In general, it has a metallic taste and often it leads to indigestion. It is available only in TEE-bags, neatly pre-packaged and instantly ready to use—unless, of course, one wants to prepare the TEE-bags on location, in which case P.I. TEE turns out to be very demanding and

expensive. Knowledgeable observers have warned against importation of TEE-bags, especially across linguistic boundaries. Reloaded TEE-bags are especially hazardous for the health of students.

Despite warnings that they were playing with expensive fire, a number of the early promoters of TEE insisted that programmed instruction (P.I.) was a necessary component of theological education by extension. The identification of this one particular educational technology as a necessity tended to confuse even the more knowledgeable and alert decision-makers of North American missions. The various curriculum development skills and educational delivery competencies needed for such a complex endeavor as TEE were neglected, with the single exception of P.I.

Programmed instruction can be very useful in theological education. The rigor and discipline necessary to so thoroughly reduce a course to the print format of programmed instruction is one evidence of having a professional grasp of the content. But there are many ways to compromise, to create a semi-program that does nothing more for students than to confuse them as surely as so many half-planned lectures. To create a good piece of P.I. takes time, thorough grasp of the content, and sensitive knowledge of the learner for whom the program is intended. Missionary educators are not uniformly given these three gifts. More's the pity.

A deeper danger also lurks in P.I. TEE. A basic assumption of behavioristic approaches to education is that the learner does not know what he or she needs to learn; it is the educator's part to decide what should be learned, to package it somehow, and to lay these demands on the student. As



Alfred Lord Tennyson sadly observed, "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die." Regardless of the debate over behaviorism in secular education—and there is one—education in and for the church ought to be asking careful questions about any further tendencies toward philosophical behaviorism in any of its many guises. After the publication of *Programmed Instruction for Theological Education by Extension* (Ward and Ward 1970) professional colleagues asked how we felt about contributing to the behavioristic trends in theological education.

The answer has proved to be less adequate than I had hoped: "Theological Education by Extension is a trend toward a humane and more functional leadership education for the church. We aren't concerned that those who advocate TEE might misuse P.I." But what has happened in so many cases is that the P.I. "tail" has wagged the TEE "dog." I still hope that the technologies of instruction will be made the servants of true development; thus I still hope that P.I. will be more a positive than a negative factor in TEE.

Programmed instruction is not the peculiar property of the behaviorists. As we stated in the 1970 training text, any school of thought in psychology can offer a cogent explanation of why and how P.I. works. But I wish now that we had offered several warnings and suggested guidelines. Belatedly, here they are!

1. No single mode of instructional technology should be emphasized as the central focus of a curriculum. The purpose of education is human development, not technological delivery of information.
2. Programmed instruction, or any other "packaged instruction" in which learning objectives are pre-determined, should be used only for a student who has arrived at the independent decision that he or she wants to accomplish the particular learning objectives in this mode. Excluding the learner from the decision-making process concerning his or her learning tends to create unhealthy dependencies; it can also lead to alienation. Programmed instruction, as a basically determined instructional approach, is particularly prone to create imperialistic relationships between the institution and the student. Safeguards must be erected.

3. To be effective, programmed instruction must reflect the thought-flow and logical relationships of the learners for whom it is designed. Thus, it cannot reliably be imported or transplanted; it must be designed with, and by, people who are intimately acquainted with the intended learners.

P.I. TEE is capable of absorbing vast human resources to no particular advantage. The only remedy for such programs is to turn them around, putting the primary focus on the curricular issues of purpose, kinds of *whole being* needed as servant/leader in the church, and composite relationships among the various curricular components; the cognitive input, experimental learning in the job-field, and integrative seminar experiences. The technologies of instruction can be employed to serve; they must be kept in their place lest they lead us into a bottomless P.I. TEE.

Type V: Lipton's Tee [The "Brisk" Tee]

With apologies to the owners of the trademark of this venerable British/American product, we borrow its key claim as an elegant expression of the best sort of TEE. A brisk TEE owes its full-bodied reality to the mixture of many components; all working together to create something that will endure. Its durability is not created by glamorous promotion, but by its substance and reality.

In many places throughout the world, TEE is a brisk reality. Many programs are liberating the church from the long history of monopoly by formal education. Church people of all sorts—the “big” people and the “little” people, as well—are becoming part of theological education. The TEE movement is involving many people in a brisk new search for more effective ministries. Priesthood of the believer is gaining renewed meaning.

The key features of the “brisk” TEE approaches are the following:

1. Theological issues are held to be foremost. What theological education should be and should do is derived from theological understandings of what the church is and what its leadership is to be.
2. Educational procedures, instructional technologies, and institutional forms are selected and shaped to faithfully reflect the value system of the Kingdom of God. History, tradition, and the values of the secular academic world are deliberately subordinated to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the revelations of the Word of God.
3. A developmental view of the Christian's experience dominates the concepts and procedures of the educational program. Particularly, education is seen as *facilitating development*, not as offering a series of informational acquisitions; education is understood to be a lifelong resource, not a once-only hurdle to be jumped in order to be “completed” and licensed. It is evaluated in terms of its capability to help people become more fully human, as God intended.
4. The role of the educational institution is disentangled from the Holy Spirit's work of calling people to ministries and giving gifts to the church, and disentangled from the function of the church itself in the calling and ordaining of pastors. In the most promising TEE the institution serves the church by furthering the development of men and women whose gifts are affirmed by the church and whose calling by the church precedes or coincides with the educational experience.

TEE is exciting stuff! We should learn that some types are better than others. And above all, we need to remember that TEE is a means to an end, not a valid end in itself. The development of the church is what really matters.