



A Vision of Reform for Theological Education: *TEE*¹

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“By no means, Lord!” An educator hears in Peter’s reply that sort of over-confidence so characteristic of a person whose past experience with tests has left scars. As if aware that he may be in trouble again, for reasons he cannot quite put a finger on, Peter quickly adds an explanation intended to show that *this* time he has the facts on his side. “You know I’ve never eaten anything unholy and unclean.” Surely Peter must have wondered at the fairness of the test. He was being asked to do something that his people’s tradition and his own best judgment told him should not be done. Yet the Lord himself seemed to be doing the testing.

“No, Lord—right? I did give the right answer, didn’t I,” Peter seems to be asking. The feedback is loud and clear: “Wrong.” The voice offered an explanation that seemed not quite to explain: “What God has cleansed, do not consider unholy.” But that did not seem to cover the big issue. Around and around they went, the sheet came down again, the creatures were again visible, including those that surely God could not expect *anybody* to eat, and the voice again said, “Arise, Peter, kill, and eat.” “By no means, Lord.” Poor Peter, three times tested. “Let me get this straight—you want me to do *what*?”

A vision! It ultimately proved to be crucial. But at that time it seemed to clear up nothing. The major immediate outcome was that it put Peter into a pondering condition. Developmental psychologists today call this a state of disequilibrium, usually the signal that an important though perhaps uncomfortable learning is about to emerge in the person.

The vision recorded in Acts 10 had two immediate effects: it raised in Peter’s consciousness a formerly unasked question, and it held Peter in place while a drama unfolded. Through this dream God’s larger purpose became clear.

About a dozen years ago some theological educators received a vision as startling to them as Peter’s had been to him. The vision challenged them to leave the traditional forms of theological education based on university and monastic models and to pioneer in developing a model based on needs here and now. It called them to leave the comfortable professors’ chairs and sheltered walls of the seminary and to move the classroom out among the people. The vision was called Theological Education by Extension (TEE). The form was common and well established in secular education, but seemingly it was beneath the dignity of education for the clergy.

Other innovations in theological education were to occur simultaneously in New York, Sheffield, Hamburg, and Hong Kong, revealing the need for widespread change.² But they were viewed as only experimental and local. The general critique was that the seminary establishment had become ingrown and had trained its graduates to answer the arguments of theologians rather than the problems of the average person. Trends in the past century of theological education had been leading in the direction of increased institutionalization, increased clerical erudition at the expense of functionality, and increased emphasis on class and privilege within the church. The vision of theological education in a different form was jarring because no matter how much it might promise relief for these injustices and non-biblical trends, it was a threat to tradition.

¹ Unpublished, 1976

² See Theological Education Fund. *Learning in Context*. London: New Life Press, 1973.

Observers have noted that tradition is strong within any social institution. After all, the sociological function of institutions is to give stability to a society and to guard against whimsical change. And within *double* institutions (i.e., institutional forms serving larger social institutions, such as schools for the church), the tendency toward rigidity is overwhelming. Despite this rigidity, the pressure for change has built to an intolerable point.

Everywhere there are diverse, unorthodox, and occasionally controversial educational programs and experiments that have come to be labeled ‘non-traditional education.’ The label may not be exactly catchy, but it does serve to describe what is becoming a broad trend—one that is liberating conventional attitudes about what constitutes learning and how it should be credited.³

But theological education has been especially resistant to change. Except for its vulnerability to the winds of doctrinal shift—some would call them erosions—theological education has been stable and persistent. Institutional forms of education have enjoyed great prosperity until very recently. The prestige-seeking of church leaders and the sincere but inherently secular concern of institutions for “academic respectability” has held back the progress of theological education. The institutions of education have become more important than the organism of the church. And the whole has become stubborn.

So along came a vision. The vision took the form of an unthinkable innovation: take theological education out of the ivory towers into the markets, fields, courts, factories, and churches where people are engaged in ministry. Leave the theological language game in the tower and share the depths of truth in language the students will use when they minister. Teach ministers who are highly motivated to learn because of the demands of their people on them. Wed practical experience to theological education at the point of actual needs arising in normal pastoral situations.

Word about this innovation traveled rapidly. Unfortunately, one sure way to threaten those who uphold tradition is to over-promote change. Education is much noted for its faddish and fickle trends and reversals. Sociology is widely known to be pragmatic and circumstantial. Thus when this educational innovation was promoted on the basis of educational methodology and sociology, the negative reactions were predictable. While its supporters designed ever more elaborate ways and means to spread the good word, the skeptics dug in their heels.

Part of the problem lay in the defensiveness of those who shared the vision. The first reactions to TEE assumed that the critical question was whether or not it was academically respectable. Perhaps because religious educators were largely unaware of the nearly century-old tradition of extension programs in service-oriented fields of education, model programs and propagandistic arguments were designed to show that TEE could do everything that residential programs were doing.⁴ Professors with substantial careers invested in making campuses effective learning environments could hardly be expected to stand still for such extreme and, as yet, unsupported assertions. And the vision turned into several debates.⁵

Some have interpreted the TEE vision in an extreme manner. Identifying themselves with the frustration and disappointment that is being widely voiced about formal education, they seem unwittingly to join Illich in destroying schools.⁶ Though there is multiple basis for disappointment and some distrust of formal education, its “failures” may lie in its over-expectation and overconfidence of what schooling can accomplish. Schooling has been oversold as a generalized

³ Carnegie Corporation of New York. There’s More than One Way to Earn a College Degree. *Carnegie Quarterly*. Vol. XXIII, No. 4, Fall, 1975), p. 1

⁴ Evidence of this stance is seen in the “ALET debates” and in other documents recorded in Winter, 1969.

⁵ For example, Our Readers’ Opinions, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, January, 1975, and *Theological Education*, entire Vol. X, No. 4, Summer, 1974.

⁶ Ivan Illich. *De-Schooling Society*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

means of solving a wide variety of humankind's problems. The effect has been a sort of naïve belief in schools as the omnipotent problem-solver—a sort of hallucination that clouds the thinking, especially of the poor and the oppressed.⁷ But it is unwise to answer an excess with yet another excess.

One may wonder what might have happened if the vision for a new form of theological education had been interpreted from the outset as the church's version of the outcry of those oppressed by authoritarian education. Indeed, it has been reinterpreted more recently in just such terms.⁸ But in those early days of TEE, Illich, Reimer,⁹ and Freire¹⁰ were rarely mentioned. Their arguments that formal education had lost touch with the practical realities of the common person were rarely voiced by the supporters of TEE. Perhaps their interpretation of classical theological education as the means to sustain the superior position of the clergy was even more abhorrent than the vision to broaden its base had been. But once again, as for Peter, a vision had drawn new attention to what had been a foregone conclusion: God might possibly be asking for the unthinkable and holding people “in place” so that they might not prematurely shrink from a yet greater challenge.

Even before Peter went to the housetop to pray, a startling act of God had been taking place. A high and respected Roman officer at the key military port of Caesarea had also seen a vision—a vision which gave him an easily understood message. The God of Israel, whom this officer had come to appreciate and revere, was offering to give him more light. “Send down the coast to the Jews’ shipping center, Joppa, and look up one Peter. He should not be hard to find. Tell your servants to follow their noses; he is at the seaside house of Simon, who runs the local tannery.”

Meanwhile back in Joppa, those who had had a lot of experience with Peter might not have expected him to stick around to ask questions. Once the three elegantly attired men on their magnificent horses clattered up the path toward Simon's house, Peter might have been expected to head off in the opposite direction. Why take a chance on getting arrested? And why else would Romans be coming down to this unlikely spot? “While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. But arise, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings . . .” (Acts 10:19-20). The vision had held him in place long enough to hear the unthinkable invitation.

Harbingers of Change

Just so, even while one vision was unfolding in Guatemala and TEE was emerging, God was giving complementary visions in certain other locations. In Indonesia, for example, Southern Baptist missionaries were deciding to close down the resident theological education program in Semarang. Several factors made it clear that the best interests of the church were not being served. The number of students was increasing dramatically in the wake of nationwide revival movements, but they were being trained to perpetuate a style of church life based on American theology and methodology. Subsidy had raised their expectations for an assured position pastoring a fully-equipped and functioning church on graduation. Now there were more graduates than positions of the kind expected, and they seemed unable to produce new churches that could grow and sustain themselves in the local environment. The dormitory pattern had extracted them from their culture, partially

⁷ John Hanson. *Imagination and Hallucination in African Education*. (East Lansing: Institute for International Studies, Michigan State University, 1965).

⁸ Ross Kinsler. Extension: An Alternative Model for Theological Education. *Extension Seminary*. No. 3, 1973.

⁹ Everett Reimer. *School is Dead: Alternatives in Education*. (New York: Doubleday, 1971)

¹⁰ Paulo Freire. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).

westernized them, and made them unwilling (or unable) to return to the villages from which they had come. The Western-style church insulated both pastors and members from the indigenous forms and natural lines of communication in the culture. The students had become victims, although willingly, of an institutional approach that made them dependent on foreign funds and expertise and which at best equipped them only to sustain an American model that was not viable in the culture.

Several attempts to reform the Seminary over the preceding years had proved to be more cosmetic than real. But still something had to be done to develop leadership for Indonesian Baptist Churches. To walk away was not the answer. The rigidity of formalized theological education, copied squarely from North American models, was obviously not the answer. Where could one turn for alternative models?

The situation re-enacted Peter's dilemma. To "kill and to eat" in defiance of tradition was threatening enough; but to accept the invitation of Roman representatives to go to the fortress to be interviewed by their commandant was too much. Had it not been for the vision on the housetop, Peter might still have tried to make a break for it!

In Semarang, as in Memphis, Chicago, Portland, Regina, Toronto, Cochabamba, and Floriano, God was at work suggesting that people reach out for more light. Long before the vision of TEE, dissatisfaction with the rigidity, formality, and ineffectiveness of theological education was reaching epidemic proportions.

Today a radical evaluation is needed, considerable reform, and possibly a new movement that will call the church again to its task and its ministers to a complete renewal. When one considers the tendencies for the clergy to become absorbed in maintaining their rights and privileges, it is possible that any new movement for renewal and reform might have to come from the laymen again. The question is: can the people in the institutions of theological education become alert to the situation and initiate the radical changes needed in many churches around the world?¹¹

Most visions are preceded by distressing elements of dysfunction in the status quo. The disturbing circumstantial factors in Guatemala and in Indonesia were different, but the visions were complementary. A 1967 strategy conference in Indonesia uncovered problems lying beneath a phenomenal and apparently healthy church growth. The mission organization commissioned two research projects over the next four years. The first, involving 4,000 interviews of church members, pastors, leaders, and missionaries, revealed that the growth of the churches had begun to stagnate, both in finances and leadership because of dependence on foreign financing, methodology, and leadership styles. The second, in cooperation with 30 churches in the National Council of Churches, revealed that Baptists had failed to adapt to the social, cultural, economic, and religious background of the people. As a result, a holy dissatisfaction with missed opportunities and restrictive structures gave rise to a renewed study of the Biblical teachings on the nature and function of the New Testament church.

A vision was born as the Indonesian Baptist Mission engaged in a ten-day session to sum up their findings and to look to God for the next step. He gave them nothing less than the vision of a renewed church. The vision directed them to focus on the evangelization of the masses of Indonesia and the planting of thousands of New Testament churches that would meet in homes and be led by their natural spiritual leaders. It focused on the entire people of God becoming ministers. It visualized a multiplicity of elders functioning as the equipping ministry in order to build the church

¹¹ James H. Emery. *The Preparation of Leadership on the Pastoral Ministry: An Historical Resume. Occasional Paper #4.* Guatemala Center for Studies in Theological Education and Ministry. San Felipe, 1975. See also Ralph Winter, ed. *Theological Education by Extension.* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1969).

both quantitatively and qualitatively. It promised spiritual gifts and spiritual power to accomplish these God-ordained tasks. The result of such a vision was to be a contextualization of the church and theology to meet the actual needs of Indonesians in forms they could accept and assimilate. In so doing, the possibility of massive, but solid, church development would become a reality.

The Indonesian Baptist Mission decided to implement its vision by stopping or phasing out whatever was inappropriate in the Indonesian context and channeling its energies into appropriate directions. It did not phase out the resident seminary program, which had been very successful by ordinary standards, in order to implement a TEE ministry. At that time TEE was an almost unknown factor. The decision to phase out the current program was primarily a decision to begin a search for what was appropriate in the Indonesian context and to find a way for the seminary to help implement it. It was only after the Indonesian vision had been linked with the Guatemalan vision that God's fuller purpose was understood. Even then it was only the first step in a pilgrimage that was to lead to ever unfolding innovations.

The search for a different educational methodology to implement the vision demanded a look at a trial project in TEE that the Mission had started earlier that year in East Java. The Mission did not immediately adopt TEE, in fact, it pointedly avoided naming any kind of methodology. It redeployed several theological professors out among the churches to begin a search for a viable Indonesian program of Christian training.

The Seminary faculty and board used those two-and-one-half years, while phasing out the former program, to study the educational needs of the leaders of the churches in Indonesia.¹² They examined the "rice roots" and began to discover indigenous Indonesian expressions for Biblical truths. They experimented with new forms of church life that Indonesians could reproduce. They concluded that a broadened outreach of theological education could help mature leaders serve their people in their own locales. They began to wrestle with the theological questions that were arising in the churches rather than addressing themselves to imported theological problems that had arisen in American and European traditions. In short, they began to hunger for the sort of theological education that would serve the churches and produce the kind of graduates the churches needed. Such graduates would need to identify with the people and be willing to live on the level of those whom they served. They would need a strong Scriptural base and an intimate knowledge of the culture in order to participate in the formulation of a theology which is authentic and Biblical in the present Indonesian context.

Whenever one of God's people has a vision, as in Joppa, others are inspired to go along. "Sure, Peter, go ahead and act on your faith—go to Caesarea with the Romans. Indeed, six of us Jews will go along with you." Seeing and hearing the TEE story has been an encouragement to many. What particularly caught the imagination in Indonesia was the possibility of taking theological education to the entire people of God; the training of those who were actually leading the churches and who could not come to a residential school because of family and occupational responsibilities; the possibility of people of varying educational backgrounds studying at their own level, using

¹² Teng has pointed out that not only does a seminary serve the church, but it also has a responsibility to affect the direction of the church . . . the seminary should seek to find out, in the light of the Scriptures, the direction in which the church should go and the principles of church development, and instill them into the students' minds and mode of thinking, thus indirectly influencing the church and leading it forward along the right path. Regardless of the church's present trends and traditional ways, the seminary can, on the basis of the truth of scripture, offer criticism and correction and make improvements of a spiritual and creative nature. (Philip Teng. Church and Seminary: Which Should Influence Which? *Bulletin of the China Graduate School of Theology*. No. 16, January, 1976.)

educational technology that would achieve relatively uniform quality within various time and study patterns; the tailoring of instruction to conform to various ethnic target groups; and the ability to evaluate the training while in process.

Peter was the human link between the Joppa vision and the Caesarea vision. But what if Peter had gone to Caesarea to talk about his own vision rather than to fit into the vision that the Roman officer had seen? “Captain Cornelius, I’m glad to report that the orders of the day from God are that pork and shrimp are now officially on the menu.”

“So?” replies the startled centurion. “I don’t see what that’s got to do with anything.”

“Well, Sir, it’s like this; we’ve got this tremendous new program down in Joppa called ‘Housetop Sheet Visions,’ and I’m sure that’s what you need here in Caesarea.”

It has been a mistake to promote any particular model of theological education. To be fair about it, no one really says that there is only one way to reform theological education, but many have gained that impression and have been turned off by it.

Advocates of “nonformal education,” as the wider perspective is called in secular circles, are quick to point out that it is counterproductive to copy irrelevant models. Instead, the concern for nonformal education arises from an expanded view of education in which all sorts of learning experiences are valid. The form is less crucial than the substance, but the form should be consistent with the substance and should make application of the learning highly probable. Is there a message here for theological education?

Until the basic issues in a particular situation have been examined, there is no way to determine what sort of model or approach makes sense. Until servants of the church have looked seriously at the needs of the church, educational forms should likely be left alone or allowed to die a natural death. But when the needs of the churches are not being met by the seminary graduates, someone needs to spend some time on the housetop. Seminaries, as other institutions, traditionally prove the law of inertia—static ones resisting change and active ones continuing to run in the same ruts. But when the sponsoring body becomes convinced that the actual needs are not being met by its seminary, pressure for change can be applied.

In Semarang the Board of Trustees maintained the pressure on the Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary to begin the phase-down of its existing program. No new students were accepted. Faith that God would provide a better way, to develop pastoral competencies was all that was left. And in this extremity, God’s hand was clearly seen.

The visions of Peter and Cornelius were only the preliminary scene-setting for the real action. The visions cleared out some misconceptions and allowed new potentialities to be developed. The first response of both men was to follow obediently the directions given in the visions. After they had done this, it was God’s time to intervene. Without God’s sustaining hand in Indonesia, the vision would have led to no fulfillment. It was not easy to implement. The decision had caused misunderstandings among national leaders as well as the missionary-sending agency. Questions were raised about the wisdom of the decision. But because the mission believed that the current situation was thwarting the will of God, they obediently followed the vision God had given them and trusted him to lead from there. Their obedience opened fresh vistas in the form, content, and process of relevant theological education.

Plans to effect change in Indonesia began at the opposite end of traditional theological curriculum development. The key issue became how the graduates were expected to serve the churches and how the course of study was to relate to the development of New Testament churches. By beginning with the church and discerning the goals the institution hopes to achieve in the lives of church leaders, one gains a new perspective about the curriculum and avoids one of the most serious problems related to theological education—pedantic scholasticism.

Often Theological Education by Extension has fallen into the same trap, simply diffusing the content that had been taught in the classical seminary classroom out into myriad teaching centers. The Indonesian seminary began its curriculum revision by describing the kind of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that were needed by the graduates to enable them to minister effectively in the Indonesian context. This resulted in the formulation of five basic goals and the development of approximately one hundred and fifty specific learning outcomes. Subsequent experience has affirmed this basic direction, although the implementation of it has continually undergone alterations to fit the local needs. A study of the psychology of learning and the discovery of new educational technologies developed in recent years shed much light on how to achieve such goals and objectives. Once the seminary committed itself to achieve specific goals and objectives, it was obligated to provide resources for the learning experiences.

Shaping Change

It is relatively easy to tell why a change has occurred in an institution; it is not nearly so easy to create a change. Significant changes in institutionalized education can be explained after the fact in logical terms; but to stimulate constructive change is less a matter of outside initiative than of rationally consolidating gains that serendipitously and providentially occur. In other words, change may begin from spontaneous, unidentified, or even illogical stimuli, but to make the change positive and important requires rationality and deliberate skill.

Several practical suggestions based on steps taken in Indonesia may help others on a similar pilgrimage:

1. Research the situation adequately until the actual needs are discovered.
2. Consider all possible options before making a change.
3. Prepare the people for the possibility of change.
4. Involve them in the formulation of goals and objectives.
5. Discuss openly and honestly any possibilities of change.
6. Help the decision-making body to seek a consensus. Talk and pray until the group is confident of God's leadership.
7. Make definite plans that can be implemented realistically.
8. Talk about all possible reactions that might result from the decisions and determine whether the group is willing to abide by its decisions in case such reactions occur.
9. Provide adequate time to plan and experiment with pilot projects.
10. Begin the journey and look for further light as God affirms or intervenes.
11. Follow the spiritual insights that God has revealed most clearly rather than just the enthusiasm of a new idea.

Had the mission in Indonesia prepared the national leaders for the changes it was to make as well as it had prepared the members of the mission, some difficulties could have been avoided or at least minimized. Nevertheless, the decision-making body, in this case the mission, calmly affirmed its conviction in the face of direct threats and fervent pleadings.

Over-planning for change can be counterproductive if it does not recognize the inherent importance of a change-moment. Deliberate intervention of well-wishers and professionals with logical objectives has more promise for affecting the *direction* of a changing situation than it does for instituting change *per se*. Thus, during this time when TEE has sparked a wave of change in the *form* of theological education there is a great opportunity to raise important questions and to challenge the basic presuppositions of theological education in its current expression. Questions should be raised about the *content, processes, and consequences* of theological education—with the intention of affecting the course of change beyond the trivial toward the substantial. It is better to shape a reform than to start a revolution!

Responsible educational development and the reform of any educational institution should begin within the institution. A new vision or an approach seen elsewhere can be a stimulus, but lasting effects will not come from simple program-copying. Only through growth from within will the necessary changes be made in the people who *are* the institution. Until the faculty decides that something needs to change in themselves, the effects of fad, experiments, and apparent “trends” will be short indeed.

Substantial changes in educational institutions can result from a deepened concern of the faculty for its students. In recent years there have been several instances of deeply dedicated faculties being jolted beyond tolerance by the sobering outcomes of follow-up studies on their graduates. After being made complacent for so many years by the “success stories” that travel back to the *alma mater* with such enthusiasm, a careful look at honest data about the *whole* graduated body has been shocking. Perhaps seminaries wouldn’t be sleeping giants if every institution conducted scientifically responsible follow-up studies every five years. (The common procedure of soliciting voluntary feedback on a mailed questionnaire is absurd.)

Changes can also result from deepened commitment of faculty and students to the fundamental purposes of the institution. Most theological education institutions would be measurably improved if they took seriously the statements of purpose printed in the first few pages of their catalogs. And it is not enough merely to *try* to do these good things. There should be a deeply felt obligation to clarify the purposes and to continue to explore and rearrange approaches, procedures, and the content itself until the valid goals are being reached. In the final analysis, “We tried,” is a rather sad accounting.

Eight conditions have been identified as being important in fundamental change within an educational institution: (1) ready access to novel ideas; (2) capacity of the faculty to work together as a whole; (3) support of innovativeness from the administrators; (4) consensus on the decisions to innovate followed by renewals of commitment to innovate; (5) desire to work together, as a widespread reality among the faculty; (6) willingness to endure the pains of change; (7) acceptance of ideas from one another, even those ideas that produce anxiety; (8) key leaders of the innovation “on board” for at least two years after the innovations are implemented.¹³ Regardless of how needed or how valid a proposed change may be, the lack of one or another of these conditions often explains failure of an innovation.

Though there were many rough spots in the trail, Runkel’s conditions describe the Indonesian Baptist Theological Seminary. Five years after the 1971 decision to search for an alternative approach to theological education, the Indonesian Seminary has an enrollment of over 600 students studying in 59 teaching centers in seven regional branches. Of the 600 regular students, about 350 are active in any given term, reflecting the in-and-out pattern of alternating more intensive times of employment with the terms of study. Forty-one teachers are active in the program; almost half of these are Indonesians. Thirty people, including 14 Indonesians, are writing programmed textbooks and designing other types of learning experiences. Thirty-four out of a projected 120 programmed theological textbooks have already been published to teach the three educational levels.¹⁴ Over these past few years, 97 percent of the students have been specifically engaged in ministries in their local churches. Of this number one-fourth are active preachers in particular congregations, and one-third are engaged in evangelistic work. The course completion rate for each term is running over 90 percent.

¹³ See Philip J. Runkel. Conditions for Success and Failure of Organizational Development in Schools. CEDR: Quarterly of the Center on Evaluation Development and Research, Phi Delta Kappa, Winter, 1975.

¹⁴ [Over time, Ted came to reject the use of programmed materials. They degenerated to a level of standardization regardless of culture or situation, and were less than focused on learning.]

Theological educators and church leaders in North America still tend to make a distinction between what the church needs “on the mission field” and what we do “at home.” It is apparently assumed that there are functional differences—that somehow the same thing really isn’t needed here. Maybe it is a case of first class and tourist class. Or perhaps overseas theological education is done for some vague “them,” but at home we do it for the very real “us.” These distinctions are shallow. The church is all of one piece. The Lord is the same everywhere. The relationship among disciples is expected to be comparable in every nation. The distinction of mission sponsorship of theological education is an historical function and should be transitional, not permanent. Thus the argument that these theological innovations are helping “over there” because even TEE is better than what they had previously shows a faulty understanding of what God is doing. American chauvinism may have a hard time accepting the reality: God began the current shake-up of theological education overseas for reasons of his own choosing. But we see no less need for shake-up in our own North American seminaries and Bible colleges.

Perhaps we need to be more explicit: the need for reform in theological education is not just an overseas problem. In fact, mission-sponsored theological education is a sort of projection screen upon which we see a somewhat unsatisfactory image. Surely we can understand that the image on the screen is determined by the film in the projector.

It is not enough to rush to the screen with our touch-up crayons. Until we make corrections in the source, the same blemishes will continue to show up. People tend to teach as they were taught. And to this day, the training of Third-World Christians at the higher levels of theological education, particularly the doctoral level, is largely done in America. Thus we should be aware of the tragic effect of the continual infusion of a national leadership which is the product of a dysfunctional American education. Leadership persons in the third-world churches would be better off staying home and being essentially self-taught. Better yet, God is raising new forms of advanced graduate schools to fill the gap. One of the most promising is the China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong—with an all-Chinese faculty. North American theological education may someday find itself left out of the worldwide picture unless it is reformed.

The Shape of the Future

What lies ahead? What shaping should be imposed on the present fluidity? Before considering the possible emphases of theological education for the years just ahead, we must underline the conviction suggested earlier that it is absolutely wrong to think of any single model as being the only way to go. There will be many answers to the basic question: what should theological education do to contribute to the vitality of church servanthood in our denomination, our region, our country, our world? Fortunately the vision is holding us in place. These unthinkable reexaminations have suddenly become more legitimate!

The shock waves in the theological world caused by Theological Education by Extension are but harbingers of much greater changes to come in the current revolution in theological education. The TEE movement dramatically changed the *form* of theological education. It set in motion forces that have begun to change the *process* of instruction. These changes can be expected to lead us to radical change in the nature of the *content* of theological education.

The Indonesian model incorporates a system of continual feedback and re-evaluation. It has not been content to change only the structure of the Seminary but also the form of the theological content and the way it is learned by the students. The following review of the Indonesian seminary’s philosophy for future development may give us some hints of the direction theological education reform could go.

Creative Use of Content

Significant changes in content result from allowing students themselves and the needs arising out of their social realities and culture to become vital factors in their education. In this sense, the student's major need is to grow as a person within the culture becoming more able to minister to needs of people within that culture, rather than merely to acquire knowledge that someone else says is important.

Theological education has paid lip service to the needs of the student, but in reality it has been more concerned with the student acquiring theological information than with the student developing as a theological person. A development-oriented goal has now come within reach. The student and his or her needs must become the focusing mechanism of the content to be taught and the learning procedures used, thereby greatly altering what is to be learned and how it is to be taught.

Miller predicts,

Theological education will, in all probability, become more field oriented. Experience in the field may even emerge as the center of the whole curriculum. It will concentrate on the actual problems facing people in the world. Students will be encouraged to practice their faith. Learning will then be organized around their experiences. As a consequence, the conception of 'training' for ministry may yield to one of ministry itself?¹⁵

Theology needs to be taught as an experience of faith and the Scriptures as truth about life in general and "about me" in particular. A holistic approach to education is necessary because knowledge should be viewed in terms of life as a whole rather than as a classified, departmentalized, academic corpus of information. To make such an approach, the student must in fact, not only in theory, become the center of the educational process. The goal is a person prepared and equipped to live and serve *wisely* in the real world. To accomplish this goal, theological education should help him or her develop a distinctively biblical point of view and a unique life-style based on it. As Adeney says,

The object is not to train solo performers but those who can share what God has given with others, e.g., teaching others to lead Bible study groups, training laymen to lead a small home church. For this reason there must be an emphasis upon practical experience.¹⁶

Seminaries need to dedicate themselves to a more creative use of content. Making the student the controlling factor in designing goals and objectives runs counter to the traditional practice of allowing content to control the learning processes. The change will be painful, but it is an inescapable next step toward quality.

Students learn best when they are involved in developing and testing ideas that enable them to better understand the world they are a part of and their role in that world. Ideas that have been tested and retested then become organized into the learner's knowledge. Formal education typically employs a process of information reprocessing: knowledge that has been organized over a period of time through the numerous experiences of many different people is tied as burdens on the backs of students. Students are expected to "learn" the knowledge during a short period of time within the four walls of a classroom or library. In short, formal education tries to take inductively-learned concepts and teach them deductively.

In order to be more true to a student-need-oriented approach to content, seminaries will have to move from education as information reprocessing and become places where learning is facilitated through a wide variety of experiences. Richard says that content, as we now use it, is a

¹⁵ Douglas J. Miller. Seminary Education Tomorrow: A Forecast. *Christianity Today*. February 14, 1975.

¹⁶ David H. Adeney. The Servant of God in a Changing Society. *Bulletin of the China Graduate School of Theology*. No. 16, January, 1976.

“reality-replacement system”.¹⁷ Theological education will need to move from using content as a replacement to using content for purposes of reality-reflecting and reality-integrating.

Content, then, will need to play a fulfilling role in reference to goals and objectives based on student self-perceived needs. Only that content which learners see as applicable in their content and culture can be meaningfully integrated into the learners’ person. Content should not be taught just because it is “nice to know.” (Even a sick person should not be given all the medicine in a drug store!)

For educational institutions the main issue is finding ways to help learners interact with a pre-organized set of knowledge in such a way that it will be applicable to their own unique situation. How can we help the student *experience* that which is otherwise abstract content? Putting it another way, how can the learner benefit from others’ past experiences? Given the limited scope of any *one* person’s experience, how can we provide that person with a “well-rounded” education that will prepare him or her for future experiences and needs?

The answers to these questions will be found in an approach to teaching that utilizes the learners’ natural inductive (or inquiry) process of learning. The inquiry process can be likened to the scientific method, and the learner likened to the scientist in search of new knowledge. The inquiry process begins with the recognition of a needs or problem usually through exposure to a particular experience. As with the scientist, the only information or knowledge that learners see as relevant is knowledge that helps solve problems in which they are interested. The second step in the inquiry process is the formulation of hypotheses. These are educated guesses about the meaning of the problem and some possible solutions. The learner, too, develops hypotheses of a similar kind.

The crux of the similarity between the scientist and learner is in the experiment and data-gathering. For learners, the “experiment” is their experiences. These experiences include all activities—even formal instruction. But lectures, for example, should be seen as little more than experiences where a teacher is exposing the student to raw material. Scientists do not “absorb” knowledge; they observe. So, too, learners cannot absorb knowledge; they observe experience. A list of facts, an outline of a concept, the sequence of a skill are all only raw materials which the learner may or may not be able to apply to needs. The raw materials that do help solve the needs then contribute to the learner’s fund of knowledge. The last step is concerned with drawing conclusions, as in the scientific method. Conclusions are based on how well the data help solve the original problem. For a good scientist the process is cyclical with the conclusions from one experiment becoming or leading to the problems/hypotheses of another experiment. So it is also with the competent learner.

To the learner, knowledge organized by other people is raw material that may or may not contribute to one’s development. Its usefulness depends on how well the learner understands the data and how well the data intersect with needs and problems. These two criteria of usefulness seem to be represented by Bloom’s taxonomy.¹⁸ The first four levels of the taxonomy represent the process of understanding some previously organized knowledge and the fifth and sixth levels of the taxonomy represent the process of bringing this knowledge into contact with knowledge organized from past experiences and with the current need or problem.

The inductive (inquiry) process can be seen as the process of *organizing* knowledge, while Bloom’s taxonomy can represent the process of *using* organized knowledge (see figure 1). Unless the student encounters organized knowledge in such a way as to actually experience the first four levels

¹⁷ Marvin K. Mayer, et al. *Reshaping Evangelical Higher Education*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), p. 72.

¹⁸ Benjamin S. Bloom. (ed.) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*. (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1965).

of Bloom's taxonomy, that knowledge won't meaningfully contribute to his or her growth. Formal instruction which focuses on the first level of the taxonomy (acquiring information) has not and will not be enough to help the learner develop.

In the inductive process of using organized knowledge, students will be able to combine and integrate various processes of learning. They will be motivated by their own experience to learn more, to assimilate the experiences of others, and to apply the knowledge within their own contexts. The amount of content that they assimilate will be directly related to their own needs and anticipated needs. They will be trained to be life-learners (learning from life and learning all their lives). This process will enable them to meet new situations and solve problems that they have not previously faced. "Finishing one's education" will be recognized as the morbid concept it really is.

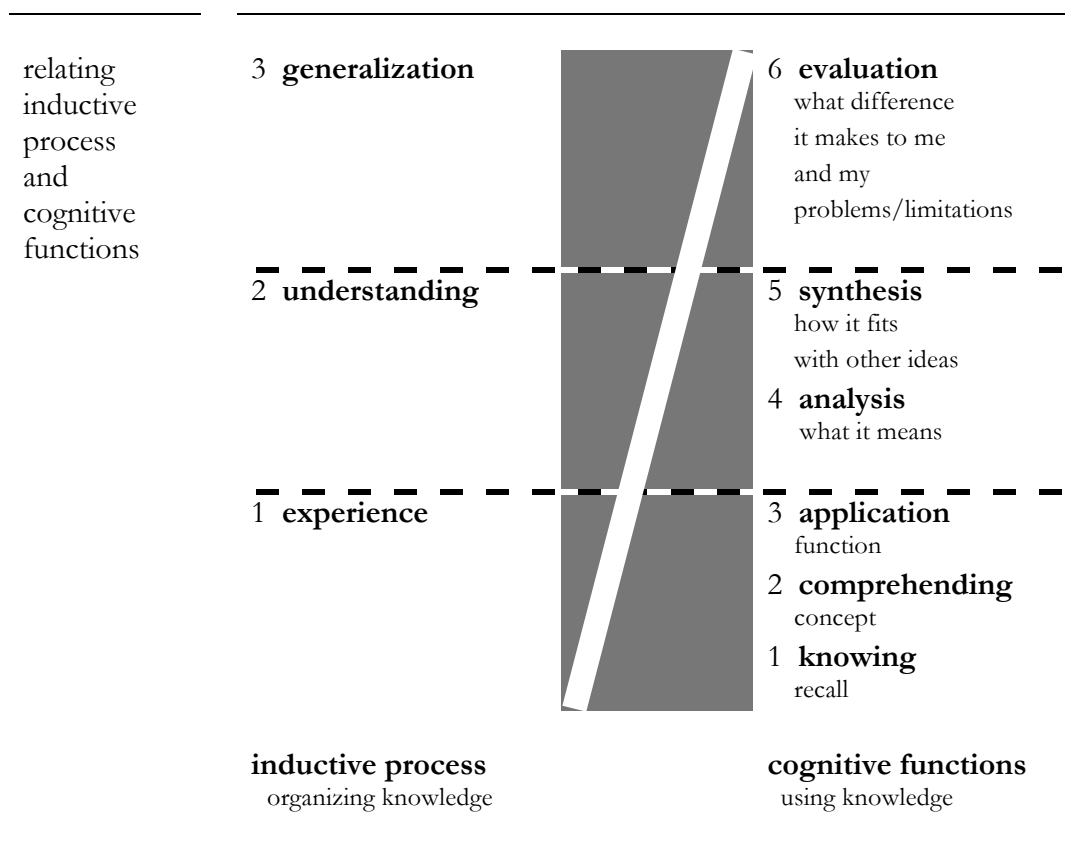


Figure 1, adapted from Bloom (1956) by Rodney McKean

Developmental Theological Education

Seminaries will need to take more account of what is known about human learning and social behavior. Within fields more cognizant of social scientific insights into God's sixth day creature, the following points are already widely accepted:

- 1) Goals and objectives of the curriculum need to arise out of needs of the students.
- 2) Learning activities need to relate to events of the student's life in his context, so that the natural "laboratories" of the home, the church, and the society are clearly recognized as adjunct to the curriculum in order to facilitate continued learning from everyday

experiences as a student and as a pastor. “New programs have emerged out of impatience with the notion that valid learning can take place only in the classroom.”¹⁹

- 3) The curriculum needs to be designed around various projects, contracts, and learning exercises that provide a rich combination of resources to achieve the objectives of the student and the seminary.
- 4) The teacher needs to be a facilitator of learning rather than a manager of instruction. In this role, he or she designs learning situations and uses varied resources to enable the students to reach their objectives. He or she interacts with the students as a participant in the learning experience, not merely as a dispenser of information.
- 5) Students need an active role in determining that which they need to learn. They should choose the learning activities in which they will engage to reach each objective. They should manage their own learning processes in regard to time, place, and depth.
- 6) Evaluation and validation of the students’ learning should be a cooperative effort on the part of students and teachers.
- 7) Deliberate experiences in self-discovery should be more specifically incorporated into the curriculum. A person who lacks self-understanding or who has a low self-esteem is unlikely to be a “doer”; nor can he see clearly how new ideas might relate to himself.

The practical implications of these principles will result in instructional systems being developed as “packages” including such diverse instructional media as programmed literature, videotapes, recordings, real-life simulations (including “programmed” actors who give a stimulus to which the student must respond), field trips, library research, group dynamics, simulation games, and other modern educational technologies as they develop.

One practical illustration is the Life Situation Learning Model now being developed by the Indonesia Seminary. A Life Situation Analysis of the student (largely a guided self-discovery) reveals the problem and its context. It (1) describes the conflict faced in the problem, (2) identifies the issues involved in the conflict, (3) discovers the values reflected in the issues, (4) explores the cultural and sociological context which conditioned the values, and (5) determines the importance of the problem to the student in the context of the ministry.²⁰

The results of the analysis are used to assist students (1) to face a choice between issues and values embodied in a specific problem that is important to them; (2) to discover the options and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each; (3) to choose a solution from the available options; (4) to experience the application of the solution in the context of their home, church, community, or society; (5) to evaluate the experience by interacting with other students, professors, and the people among whom they minister; (6) to teach someone else what they have learned while adapting it to the new learning environment, and (7) to plan further projects to complement their knowledge, self-understanding, and development.

Theological learning centers and laboratories need to be established. Their primary purpose should be to do research in culture and theology to develop a contextualized theology. A second major purpose should be to participate in scholarly research on how adults learn. These two basic purposes lead to a third: development of alternative instructional models to achieve the basic goals and objectives of theological education. A fourth purpose should be the development of leadership on a graduate level. Graduate students need to participate in these activities and also in the designing of instructional packages in collaboration with resident professors. They should do library and field

¹⁹Carnegie, 1975, 2

²⁰ See Ron Stadsklev. *Handbook of Simulation Gaming in Social Education, Part I: Textbook*. (Institute of Higher Education and Service, University of Alabama, 1972).

research and develop instructional contacts or modules for specific objectives to be reached by undergraduates.

Short-Circuiting Future Shock

The vignette of Peter and Cornelius traces God's line of action to break through prejudices and traditions in order to achieve his purposes. Those dramatic events initially changed the lives of the participants but their larger purpose influenced the course of the church's history by beginning the cross-cultural missionary movement. The experience initiated the acceptance of a new missionary order when Peter related it to the Jerusalem elders; it prepared the way for the Jerusalem Council to accept outreach as the norm when Paul and Barnabas continued the saga. After the vision and the experience in Caesarea, Peter faced a time of challenge and of calling to account. He made a willing and fearless report, as recorded in Acts 11. Peter knew what he had seen and by now he knew what it meant. He accepted the fact that the Jewish Christians were shocked and threatened. After all, that which had been exclusively theirs and which had made them distinctive was now in the process of becoming available far and wide. What would happen to their pride? But Peter does not complain, nor does he attack them for their narrowness. Instead he attempts to share the vision with them. The pattern he sets for reformers is a model of Christian conviction washed in humility. He explained to them, "In orderly sequence, I was . . . I saw . . . I heard . . . I answered . . . The Spirit told me . . . and I went, six others with me." And his ultimate response is the anthem of all Spirit-led reformers: *"Who am I that I should stand in God's Way?"*

The writers believe that present-day visions serve the two-fold purpose of helping theological education catch up with modern educational developments and putting them ahead of trends that will develop in the future. The vision we have described is but the first act in a drama that will continue to unfold in the decades ahead. Three current trends seem to be converging toward reform of the church and theological education: (1) the worldwide revitalizing movement of the Holy Spirit; (2) the renewed emphasis on the ministry of the entire people of God, and (3) new forms of theological education which equip all God's servants to minister in the Spirit.

In this paper, we have sketched the beginnings of the current reform of theological education, indicating the directions it will probably take, and we have suggested practical steps and models which can be used to encourage these changes. The central issue in theological reform is not which educational model one uses. The issue is the church and the need for effective education for the servants who led the church of Jesus Christ. Effective theological education provides dynamic, interactive, and relevant learning experiences that stimulate the development of ministers so that they are equipped to serve effectively in all kinds of real-life situations.

The living God reveals his will to those who will be obedient to the heavenly vision. He refuses to be boxed in by theological forms or overzealous reformers. Reform begins with a vision from God that meets a need, and it develops by progressive checks with the purposes of God. Theological education must be reformed or become a deformed anachronism. May we forever be liberated from the limitations of the narrow habits of the past!