

# Theological Education by Extension (TEE) as a Tool for Twenty-first Century Mission

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We live in a rapidly changing world: a world of fragmentation, inequality, environmental challenges, continuing disease and poverty, populations on the move. All this change and dislocation has created much human need to be met in the name of Christ. It also fuels new trends in church growth. This chapter discusses the contribution that TEE (Theological Education by Extension) can make, and is making, as a tool for twenty-first century mission in its different dimensions.

God calls the global Church to equip all her members for mission in this contemporary context. This call is above all *theological*, because it issues from the mission of God Himself. Then comes the *strategic* question, of how training institutions and local churches can best work in partnership to provide accessible training to all church members. There is also an *educational* dimension, so that busy working Christians can be trained in ways that fit their capacity, interests and learning styles.

In this chapter we show how these considerations helped to shape TEE's philosophy and methodology when it began in Central America fifty years ago and then became a worldwide movement. The story is continued up to the present with examples of remarkable fresh growth in contemporary TEE, especially in Asia. However, no movement can afford to be complacent, and the chapter concludes with proposed areas for renewal and development of TEE in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 1. A vision for equipping the whole Church

Jesus taught his followers to pray, 'Hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. Throughout Scripture, there is a close connection between the people of God and the hallowing of his Name.<sup>1</sup> A watching world sees the practices and character of God's people and either gives honour and praise to his Name, or feels free to mock, or ignore their God. The prayer that Jesus taught encapsulates the mission of God, in which God's people are intimately involved.

The Common Call issued at the Edinburgh 2010 conference recognizes the call of the church to share in God's mission:

..we believe the church, as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, is called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

For the church to play this central role then all church members, in all their relationships both inside and outside the church, are important.<sup>3</sup> Full-time church leaders are rarely on the front-line of missional opportunity because their main ministry is pastoral. Rather, it is the other members of the

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<sup>1</sup> See especially Ezek. 36.16-32

<sup>2</sup> Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Regnum Books International, 2011), 1

<sup>3</sup> Especially Eph. 4.11-16 and 1 Cor. 12

church who rub shoulders daily with friends, colleagues and family members of other faiths and no particular faith in the workplace, the market place and the community. These are ‘non-professional missionaries’, to recall Roland Allen’s prophetic phrase.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, as the Cape Town Commitment puts it:

We need intensive efforts to train all God’s people in whole-life discipleship, which means to live, think, work, and speak from a biblical worldview and with missional effectiveness in every place or circumstance of daily life and work.<sup>5</sup>

The report from the Parallel Session on Theological Education and Formation at Edinburgh 2010 agrees:

We can say together: Educating the whole people of God is a key to mission and Christian mission should be the organising focus and reference point of theological education.<sup>6</sup>

So any understanding of the church as comprising a passive membership supporting professional leadership, as in Figure 1, urgently needs revision. A better model is Figure 2’s inverted pyramid, with an active membership of front-line ministers, and a leadership committed to train and support them.

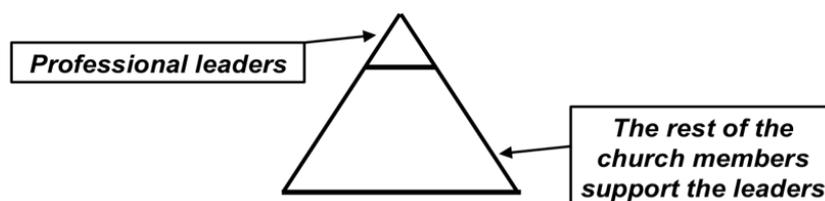


Figure 1.

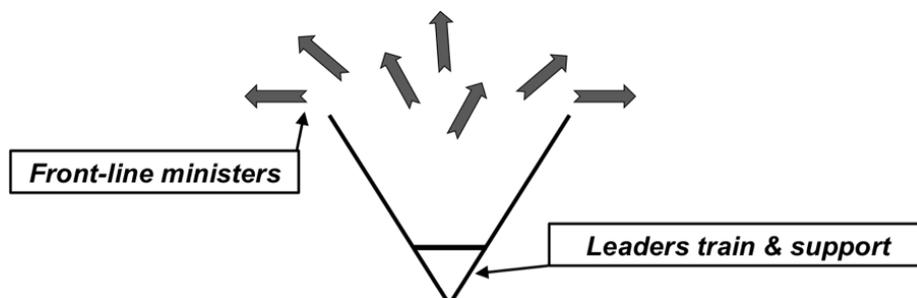


Figure 2.

Accordingly the Cape Town Commitment affirms: ‘We challenge pastors and church leaders to support people in such ministry – in the community and in the workplace – “to equip the saints for works of service [ministry]”- in every part of their lives.’<sup>7</sup> The question logically follows, as the Edinburgh 2010 Study Group on Theological Education and Formation put it, ‘How can every member of the people of God be motivated and empowered for mission?’. This question remains right at the heart of the challenge of Christian mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> R. Allen, ‘The Need for Non-Professional Missionaries’, *World Dominion*, 6.2 (April, 1928), 195-201; R. Allen, ‘The Work of Non-Professional Missionaries’, *World Dominion*, 6.3 (July, 1928), 298-304. Allen usually used this term for expatriate ‘non-professionals’, but equally had a vision for national churches mobilised for every-member witness.

<sup>5</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment* <http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>, Part IIA, 3. C)

<sup>6</sup> Dietrich Werner and Namsoon Kang, ‘Theme 6 Theological Education and Formation’ in Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Regnum Books International, 2011), 160

<sup>7</sup> *The Cape Town Commitment* <http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>, Part IIA, 3. B)

## 2. Approaches to equipping the whole Church

The above-stated vision and mandate answer the question ‘Why equip all church members for mission?’ But this immediately raises another question ‘How can this happen?’ This is a strategic consideration with educational aspects also. Clearly, to equip the whole church requires training strategies that are *affordable* financially, *accessible* geographically and educationally, *adaptable* to varied local contexts and *applicable* to ordinary working adults seeking to live and witness for Christ. Moreover, to hold these adults’ interest and commitment, the training should fulfil best practice in adult learning.

Traditionally, three main models of training have been favoured: residential training, distance learning and church-based training. To what extent does each model meet the criteria of being affordable, accessible, adaptable and applicable?

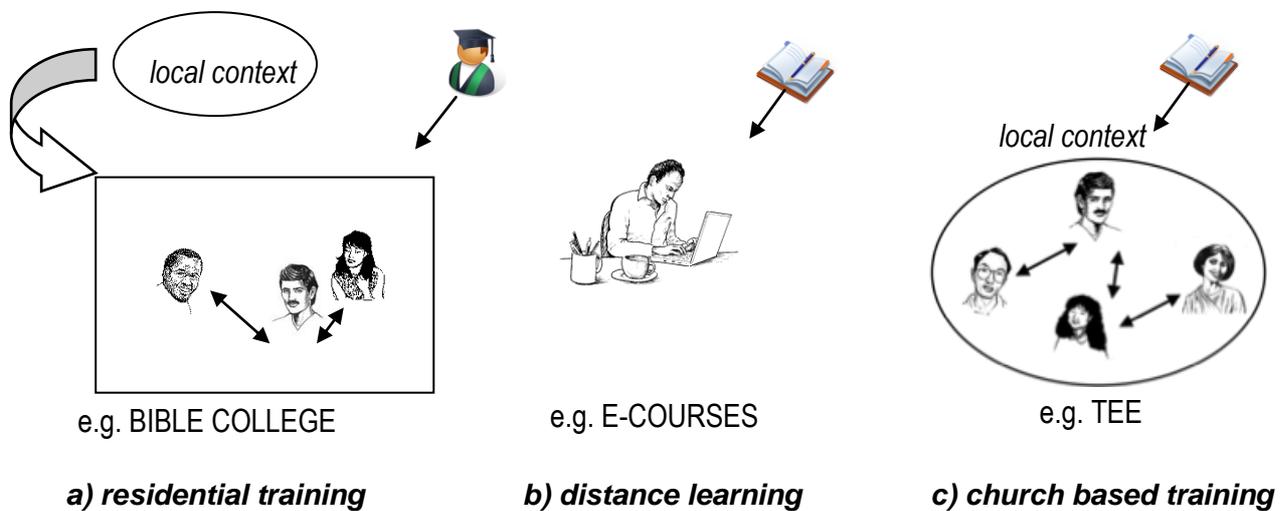


Figure 3. Different models of training

*Residential training* is designed for equipping pastors and scholars, but is not well placed to equip everyday Christians for everyday mission. Can all Christians leave their homes and jobs to attend full-time seminary? What about the daily wage-earner or the busy mother, or the person with insufficient formal education to meet seminary entry requirements? *Distance learning* courses overcome these challenges of affordability and accessibility, and in the internet age they offer a limitless choice of material. However they are not always adaptable to local contexts, especially when an e-curriculum is created in the West and is pumped out through cyberspace. Nor can the applicability of distance courses be best explored by an isolated student without learning partners. E-learning does an excellent job of transmitting information but this does not itself lead to application and transformation.

*Church-based training* potentially meets all four criteria. It is geographically accessible because local churches exist in nearly all countries, though this does not ensure that the curriculum itself is educationally accessible. Church-based training is relatively affordable because costs of infrastructure and faculty are already met. It is adaptable to local contexts and applicable to daily life, especially whenever the learning method includes group discussion. Well-designed church-based training, if it meets these four criteria, can multiply in a nation to offer the opportunity for

every-member ministry and every-member mission. It also provides a community context for spiritual formation and character development.

In fact in the 21<sup>st</sup> century these three traditional training categories are starting to be reshaped. New options emerge for blended learning and part-time learning. Many theological institutions which once functioned purely in residential mode now run evening classes (which may or may not use dialogical methods and reflective learning). Flexible blends of short residential courses, in conjunction with learning-on-location, offer more options for working people who don't want to leave their employment. Purely online learning is supplemented by virtual learning communities.

Nevertheless, while recognising these trends, we believe that the local church should be the natural place to equip *most* of its members *most* of the time. This is for both theological and strategic reasons. Educational considerations are also important. How do adults learn best, and how can training for whole-life discipleship and ministry avoid an over-emphasis on the merely cognitive? Few local churches have the capacity to create an excellent curriculum and methodologies from zero. Therefore many of them work in partnership with training providers, as shown in Figure 4:

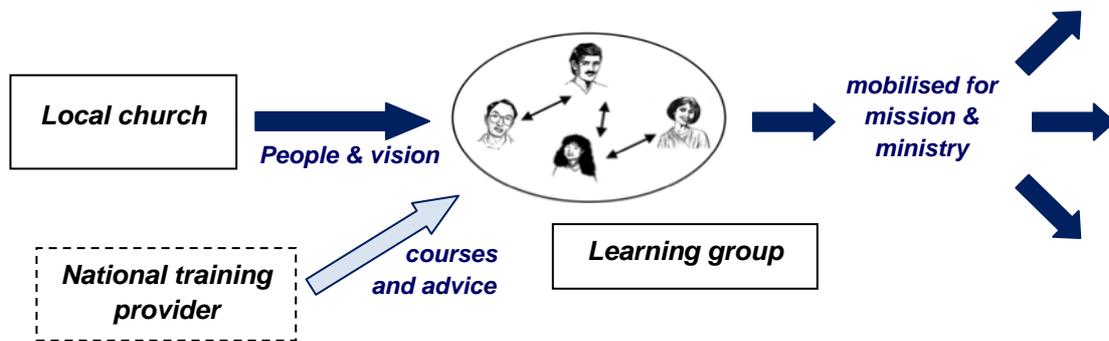


Figure 4. Training providers and local churches in partnership

Many providers help local churches to deliver church-based training in this way. TEE is one model among many of church-based training. It is not distance learning, since TEE students learn together in small groups<sup>8</sup>, not at a distance. Other ways to position TEE include ‘in-context training’, ‘learning on location’, or ‘community learning’<sup>9</sup>, though the methodology may be used in institutional settings also. TEE does not claim to be unique or perfect. But it is widely used, has stood the test of time and is still evolving. It is therefore helpful to review the TEE movement yesterday, today and tomorrow.

<sup>8</sup> TEE practitioners do not regard TEE as a form of distance education. The engine driving the continuing learning process is the weekly, local, face-to-face group meeting, not a relationship with some distant provider. TEE learning groups are usually church-based but can be inter-church or linked to an institution.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Cho’s doctoral research on ‘TEE community learning’ was carried out in Korean and will be published in English.

### 3. TEE as a tool for mission - Yesterday

#### a. TEE's philosophy and methodology

TEE was born as an experiment in response to failure. It is a wonderful example both of the grace of God in taking failure and making it fruitful, and of the power of prayerful evaluation. A residential college in Guatemala City discovered that the great majority of their graduates did not return to the rural, pastoral ministries for which they had supposedly been trained. Those who were in fact leading those rural congregations had received no training. What should be done? TEE was born from an experiment in bringing training to those rural church leaders who needed it, where they were, in their context.

In this chapter, we use the term 'TEE' to refer to the different streams that see themselves as descendents of that Guatemalan experiment of the early 1960s.<sup>10</sup>

These streams are united by a commitment to local learning groups - training in context, without extraction. They are also united by a methodology.<sup>11</sup> These are programmes based around a threefold pattern of:

- regular personal study using carefully prepared texts;
- discussion of learning and reflection on practice led by a facilitator in a local learning group with regular face to face meetings;
- and then intentional practical application.<sup>12</sup>

Ted Ward used the picture of a split-rail fence to show the necessity for each one of these elements and their interconnection.<sup>13</sup>

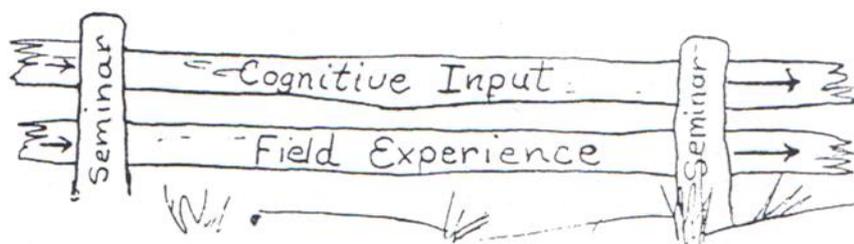


Figure 5a. Elements of TEE learning: the split-rail fence

Subsequently, other TEE programmes have developed the same point using a variety of illustrations, depending on their contexts and emphases. TEE in Ethiopia uses the three-legged stool, the Bethany Fellowship in the Philippines a cooking pot balanced on three stones, ITEEN in Nepal a bamboo

<sup>10</sup> See Kenneth B. Mulholland, 'A Guatemalan Experiment becomes a model for change', *International Review of Mission*, 71 (1982), 153-160 and references in Patricia J. Harrison, 'Forty Years On: The Evolution of Theological Education by Extension', *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 28.4 (2004), 315 - 328.

<sup>11</sup> Some training providers use the term 'TEE' for other methodologies. This paper works with the narrower definition given here.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, 'TEE is not a correspondence course, it is not a part-time night school and it is not a series of short seminars.' (Harrison, Forty Years On, 319)

<sup>13</sup> Ted W. Ward and Samuel F. Rowen, 'The Rail-Fence Analogy for the Education of Leaders', *Common Ground Journal*, 11.1 (Fall, 2013), 47-51. Originally published in a working document of Michigan State University in 1969 with a later version in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 9.1 (Fall, 1972) 17-27.

ladder, Mongolia TEE the railway track proposed by Fred Holland<sup>14</sup>, and the Christian Leaders' Training College Distance Theological Education department in Papua New Guinea a rope-bridge.

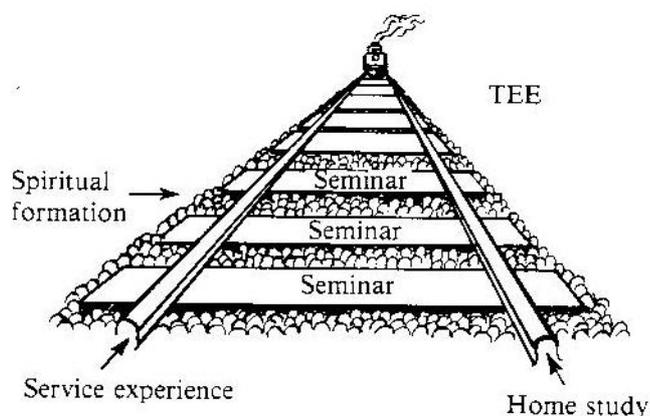


Figure 5b. Railway track (Fred Holland)

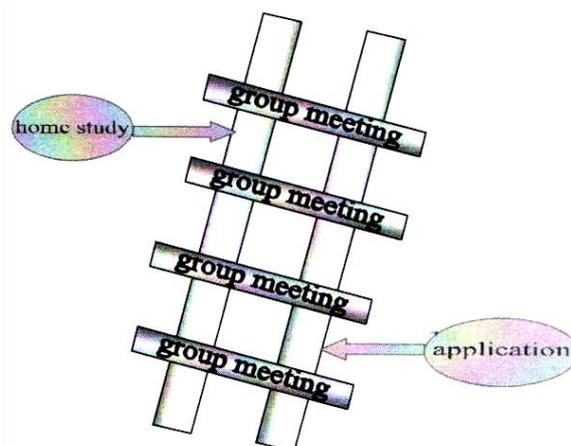


Figure 5c. Bamboo ladder (Nepal)

The three elements reinforce each other educationally. The 'personal study' phase uses an active learning method to help learners grasp key concepts and to internalise them by reflecting on life experience in light of these concepts. In the 'group discussion' phase, learners externalise their own viewpoints, compare these with the viewpoints of others, and find their attitudes changed in ways which transcend mere head knowledge. The phase of 'intentional practice' then enables them to integrate learning and develop skills. These three elements in combination create a learning cycle which, repeated over many weeks, brings progress in each domain of learning. Volker Glissmann confirms the value of TEE's repeated opportunities for reflection and application. TEE is a 'system with a centrally in-built multi-directional reflection and application approach/cycle' and it has 'an inbuilt and ongoing conversation based on reflection followed by application.'<sup>15</sup>

There is much that unites different TEE programmes. But there is diversity of purposes among TEE programmes, with different target groups, different levels of study, and different educational objectives. TEE is a methodology, a tool to serve a vision. The vision of the programme drives the course offerings in terms of subject matter, academic level, length, presentation and administration.

## b. Different streams of TEE

The ongoing story of TEE over the past five decades has been documented at different points.<sup>16</sup> Theological Education by Extension, as the name suggests, was first seen as an extension of the

<sup>14</sup> Fred Holland, 'TEXT Africa: Programming for ministry through theological education by extension' in F. Ross Kinsler (ed) *Ministry by the People, Theological Education by Extension (1983)* 103-115. He proposed the model as early as 1978 in his doctoral dissertation.

<sup>15</sup> Volker Glissmann, 'What is Theological Education by Extension?', *The Theological Educator*, (2014) <http://thetheologicaleducator.net/2014/11/28/what-is-theological-education-by-extension/>

<sup>16</sup> See especially: F. Ross Kinsler, 'Theological Education by Extension Comes of Age: a Regional Survey', *International Review of Mission*, 71 (1982), 145-152; Kenneth B. Mulholland, 'TEE Come of Age: A Candid Assessment after Two Decades' in Robert L. Youngblood (ed), *Cyprus: TEE Come of Age* (Exeter: Paternoster House, 1986) 9-25; Harrison, *Forty Years On*; and with an African focus, Kangwa Mabaluki, 'Diversified Theological Education: Genesis, Development and Ecumenical Potential of Theological Education by Extension' in Dietrich Werner,

seminary, sharing the same purpose as the seminary and the same academic level, but using a different methodology in a different location. However, TEE programmes need have no necessary connections with a residential seminary.<sup>17</sup> They do not need classrooms and teaching faculty, may well develop different curricula, and can be governed by their own independent boards. So the word 'Extension' in Theological Education by 'Extension', is no longer relevant for many TEE programmes.

In addition, 'Theological Education' is understood in different ways. As the Edinburgh 2010 International study group on Theological Education noted in its Report some, especially in North America, will understand 'Theological Education' to describe programmes designed to prepare people for church-centred, 'professional' ministry of one form or another.<sup>18</sup> TEE has been understood in just this way. TEE has been viewed as an alternative to residential systems for training pastors and church leaders, both where there is, and where there is not, access to seminary education. Many TEE programmes still have this as part of their vision, and their graduates are recognised as having fulfilled churches' requirements for denominational recognition.

However, others, as the Report also notes, have a different understanding of Theological Education, as helping believers understand who they are in Christ, where they are coming from, and what in the world God is calling them to be and to do. Specifically, this understanding of Theological Education is to 'empower people for participating in the mission of God in this world'.

Many TEE programmes today would give a resounding, 'Amen!' to that description. Some explain 'TEE' as 'Tools to Equip and Empower' all believers for mission and ministry in their context. One vivid example of this comes from Pakistan in 2014. The question was put to a group of TEE students, 'How have these courses helped you?' At that very moment the Muslim call to prayer was sounding out loudly from the mosque next door. One woman explained, 'As we are living in a Muslim context, people ask us many questions about our faith. These courses help us to respond. They're very helpful.' Truly, here was a non-professional missionary!<sup>19</sup>

#### **4. TEE as a tool for mission – Today**

TEE may be used at different academic levels including leadership training for both church and society, at Bachelors and Masters levels. But this section will focus on TEE as a tool for grassroots mission. Most examples are drawn from Asia because of its missional context<sup>20</sup>. More people live in Asia than in all the other continents combined,<sup>21</sup> most of the world's poor are in Asia, Asia is the heartland of the great non-Christian religions, and statistically Asia is the world's least-Christian

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David Esterline, Namsoon Kang and Joshva Raja (eds), *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Regional Surveys, Ecumenical Trends* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 251-262.

<sup>17</sup> Most in Asia today do not, perhaps because there can be tensions in serving different target groups using different methodologies.

<sup>18</sup> The 2009 World Study Report. <http://www.edinburgh2010.org/en/resources/papersdocumentsf1e3.pdf>, p.18

<sup>19</sup> See ATA News, Jan - Mar 2014, 5-6 available from [www.ataasia.com](http://www.ataasia.com)

<sup>20</sup> Also, we are more familiar with Asia than elsewhere, having been involved with TEE in Asia for more than forty between us.

<sup>21</sup> Around 60% of the world's population is in Asia. There are three Asians for every two non-Asians in the world.

continent. To be relevant to this context TEE must help Asia's churches equip their people with tools for mission as well as ministry.

### a. Asian examples

TEE in Asia began in the 1970s and 1980s in the countries with established Christian populations (such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, the Near East and Papua New Guinea) and it served those populations with church leadership training. From the 1990s, and accelerating in the present century, the focus has shifted more to the grass-roots level and also to first generation contexts where believers are surrounded by non-Christians even in their own families (Nepal, China, Mongolia, Central Asia etc). This is not a total shift, since TEE continues to be used as a tool for ministry training. But it is an important shift since TEE as a tool for mission can equip, on a vast scale, ordinary Christians in their non-Christian environments in Asia.

In 2010, seventy-five TEE leaders, including sixty from more than twenty countries around Asia, met for a conference with the title, '21<sup>st</sup> Century TEE in Asia: Opportunities and Challenges'.<sup>22</sup> Their estimates indicate a total of around 100,000 active TEE students in Asia. Typically, these Christians are adults, without tertiary education, not engaged in full-time church work and having limited time for study. The great majority interact with friends, neighbours and workmates of other faiths or none and are on the front line of mission. Of the 19 TEE programmes represented, 13 had been established since 1990, (Fig. 6) and several more national programmes have been launched since 2010. So TEE in Asia has new growth, accompanying growing first-generation churches in nations with non-Christian majority populations.

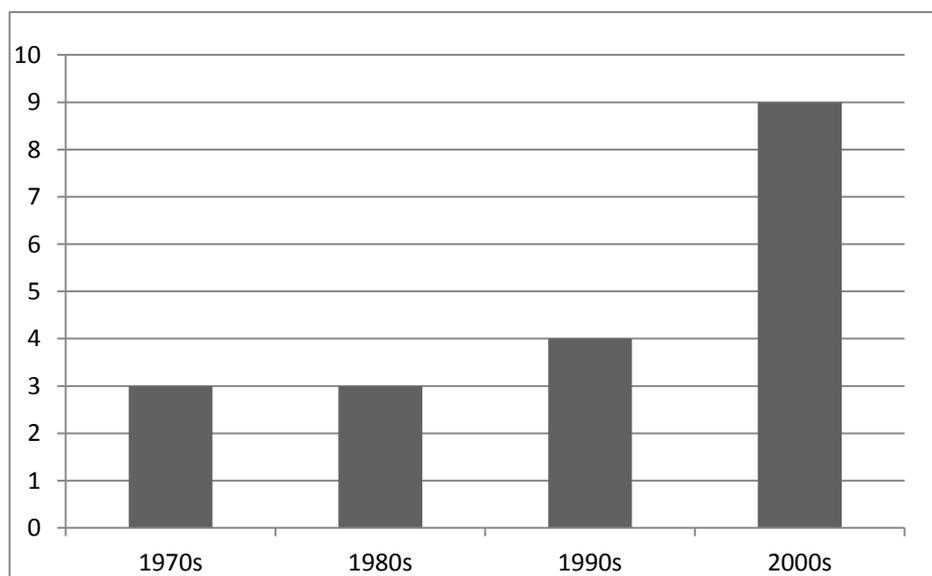


Figure 6. Founding dates of national TEE movements attending the 2010 pan-Asia conference

The conference statement expressed participants' strong belief that TEE is indeed a tool for mission today:

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.increasenet.org/about-increase/kathmandu-2010-press-release>

Above all, we believe TEE has the potential to equip all Church members as agents of transformation, moving them from being passive receivers to active servants, salt and light where they are. That's why we are excited about TEE!<sup>23</sup>

For example, the Institute for Theological Education by Extension in Nepal, ITEEN, serves rapidly growing churches among Hindu-background believers.<sup>24</sup> Every year, over 6,000 believers are being equipped for the mission of God through the local church, in a country where two generations ago the church did not even exist. In Mongolia the church is even younger. Before 1990 there was just a handful of Mongolian Christians. In the 1990s, as this tiny seed began to grow, Mongolia TEE<sup>25</sup> grew with it. Up till December 2014, more than 4,300 believers had studied at least one course; the great majority of them had found Christ in the previous ten years. TEE courses gave them not only roots in their new faith but shoots in pioneer mission. One blind believer mastered TEE texts so thoroughly that he was able to leave the city and lead groups of herders; and a single lady, after training with TEE in a city church, took her hairdressing skills to a distant countryside location, set up shop, gossiped the gospel while snipping the hair, and planted a small church.

Estimates vary of the numbers of Christian believers in mainland China, but this is the largest church growth movement in history. TEE materials have helped new believers to grow. Chinese Church Support Ministries distributed over one and a half million copies of the SEAN<sup>26</sup> foundation TEE texts *Abundant Life* and *Abundant Light* to church networks. Another programme trained over 1,300 Group Leaders during the period 2007 - 2014 by taking them through SEAN's six-part TEE pastoral leadership training programme. Most of these Group Leaders were pastors, many of whom are now training their church members using the same programme. In 2014, these courses began to be published for official use in the Three Self churches.

The Open Russian Theological Academy<sup>27</sup> began in 1994, with TEE church groups in the far east of Russia. Within the next ten years groups had been planted in many corners of Russia's vast territory across a span of 10,000 kilometres! The volunteer Group Leaders and their trainers show remarkable dedication. The countries of Central Asia offer other challenges. Anneta Vyssotskaia<sup>28</sup> characterizes the context as one of continuous persecution and chronic economic hardship. Yet TEE can function in this context, being based around small groups which do not attract hostile attention and can frequently change location, and because study materials are affordable. In very recent years national TEE programmes have begun in all countries of Central Asia, three of these resulting from

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.increasenetwork.org/about-increase/kathmandu-2010>; the Conference Statement was prepared in a participative way as a digest of responses to the question, 'What excites you about TEE?'

<sup>24</sup> [www.iteen.org.np](http://www.iteen.org.np) and see Peter Bisset, 'The Institute of TEE in Nepal', in F. Ross Kinsler (ed), *Diversified Theological Education: Equipping All God's People* (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 2008), 107-132.

<sup>25</sup> [www.teemongolia.mn](http://www.teemongolia.mn)

<sup>26</sup> SEAN stands for Study by Extension for All Nations. SEAN's TEE courses are widely used worldwide, and as of May 2014, at least one SEAN course was available in 99 languages. Translations take place through the demand of users, and not through any centrally-driven programme. See [www.seaninternational.org](http://www.seaninternational.org)

<sup>27</sup> See Michael Huggins, 'The Open Russian Theological Academy' in *Diversified Theological Education*, Kinsler, 269-295.

<sup>28</sup> Anneta Vyssotskaia, 'Theological Education in the context of persecution and economic hardship', *International Journal for Religious Freedom*, 5.2 (2012) 111-122.

a remarkable training week in 2012. Vyssotskaia herself has a key ministry of connecting, encouraging and training these emerging TEE programmes.

In recent years Korean Christians have taken a strong lead using TEE as a tool both for making disciples and for mission. Korean church culture emphasises accountable, disciplined study programmes and this has favoured the spread of TEE. Several national programmes<sup>29</sup> equip between them tens of thousands of Korean Christians each year. Moreover, Korean church-planters in many countries have found TEE effective for discipleship and Christian growth, leading to a profusion of new initiatives in Asia and other continents. Koreans remain among the most vigorous exponents of TEE today.

TEE is long established in the Indian subcontinent. Chronologically its first wave has served to train church leaders, its second wave to equip lay people for active ministries and its emerging third wave to disciple new believers from non-Christian backgrounds. Actually each wave, while reaching more people than the one before, has not replaced it. Thus in India, while some study courses of TAFTEE (The Association For Theological Education by Extension) at Bachelor's level, around 8,000 students use courses at Certificate level in fourteen Indian languages<sup>30</sup>. Yet the greatest number of all could result from the discipleship level course *Abundant Life*. TAFTEE has a vision for 50,000 believers to have completed this course by 2020, and many of these will be new disciples of Christ.

Similarly the Open Theological Seminary (OTS) programme in Pakistan has trained church leaders since 1971 and continues to do so. However with the greatest needs at grass roots level, OTS responded with courses to equip everyday believers for everyday mission and ministry. The environment is quite hostile, including terrorist attacks which have directly impacted OTS personnel, yet the work continues to grow with around 4,000 students annually. A carefully designed curriculum at four levels enables even those with minimal background education to progress from foundation to certificate to diploma to degree. As the biggest developer of new TEE courses in Asia, OTS it has written many new courses specifically for the Pakistani context, including a whole curriculum for Christian youth.<sup>31</sup> In Bangladesh, believers from different backgrounds are served by two TEE programmes: the Shikkha Kalyan Trust (SKT) and the College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB).

Only some of the national TEE programmes in Asia have been described. The Program for Theological Education by Extension<sup>32</sup> has developed many new courses for the Arab world; so has the programme in Papua New Guinea for its context; the TEE Association of Cambodia<sup>33</sup> has a thousand active students. Actually, most countries of Asia have a TEE programme run by nationals for nationals. TEE is alive and well in the continent.

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<sup>29</sup> Including, for example, TEE Korea ([www.teekorea.org](http://www.teekorea.org)), KTEE Ministries ([www.ktee.org](http://www.ktee.org)), BEE Korea ([www.beekorea.org](http://www.beekorea.org)) and Train and Multiply.

<sup>30</sup> <http://taftee.thecross.in/about-taftee/>

<sup>31</sup> This ten-course curriculum was written from scratch based on issues faced by Pakistani teenagers. It includes such titles as *Me and My God*, *Me and My Identity*, *Me and My Family*, *Me and My Environment* and is a good example of a course which is not merely contextualised but created in a context and for a context.

<sup>32</sup> <http://ptee.org/>. Courses are created for Arab contexts but some are more widely applicable, including *The Art of Teaching* and *Christian Peacemaking*.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/TEEac/335787733225556>

## b. Brief examples from other continents

CIPEP, (Corporación Instituto para la Educación Pastoral)<sup>34</sup> in Colombia is an outstanding example of TEE as a tool for mission. CIPEP began in 1982 with about forty students. By 2010 over 18,000 pastors and leaders had been trained. About half of these were with the AIEC denomination, raised up as leaders for local churches whose number has quadrupled in the last thirty years! Recently CIPEP has started TEE among the Wayuu, an indigenous people whose pastors and leaders had very little training.

CIPEP made such an impact on the Columbian prison system that they were invited to minister in 23 of the 25 major prisons of the country. A guerrilla leader had been serving a sentence of 190 years for brutal and sadistic murder. But after turning to Christ his life dramatically changed. He enrolled in the TEE programme in prison, eventually completed it in 2005 and is now an active leader in the Prison Church. For his witness and continued good behaviour his sentence has recently been reduced to only 19 more years.

In Argentina, FIET (Facultad Internacional de Educación Teológica [International Faculty of Theological Education]) has provided TEE training for more than 35 years. In 2012 it had 7800 students in 40 active centres throughout Argentina and among Spanish speakers further afield. Its director Norberto Saracco wrote ‘We do not conceive theological education as a rigid model to which the church must adapt, but as something dynamic at the service of the church and the mission’.<sup>35</sup> This serving heart is exemplified in the new Masters level curriculum developed by FIET to meet needs perceived by the local churches, especially relating to contemporary issues.

Terry Barratt, director of SEAN International, reckons that 90% of Latin American countries have functional TEE programmes making a significant impact for Christ in their nations. Also, from many countries, Latin Americans of European origin have returned to their ancestral homelands as missionaries, many taking TEE with them as their tool of mission.

In Africa, TEE has continued for more than forty years. Some TEE programmes have failed, and it is instructive to ask why.<sup>36</sup> Yet others continue to flourish, using the TEXT Africa curriculum, or their own courses, or those from SEAN.<sup>37</sup> TEE Malawi (TEEM) offers a recent example of TEE as tool for 21<sup>st</sup> century mission. Finding that stakeholder churches were passionate to learn more about evangelism and mission outreach, including outreach to their Muslim neighbours, they are writing an introduction to Islam to meet this need. TEEM has also partnered with African Initiated Churches

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<sup>34</sup> [www.cipep.com](http://www.cipep.com)

<sup>35</sup> Norberto Saracco, ‘International Faculty of Theological Education’, in Kinsler (ed), *Diversified Theological Education*, 173-189

<sup>36</sup> See Stewart Snook’s useful study, *Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension: Case Studies from Africa*, (Wheaton, Billy Graham Center, 1992).

<sup>37</sup> Much more about TEE in Africa and further references can be found in Mabuluki, *Diversified Theological Education*. See also <http://www.eecmymys.edu.et/TEE/index.html> for the TEE programmes of Mekane Yesus Seminary with over 1500 students; <http://www.tee.co.za> and Michael Taylor and Craig Dunsmuir, ‘Theological Education by Extension - a Case Study on TEE College Johannesburg’ in Isabel Apawo Phiri and Dietrich Werner (eds), *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 958-965 for TEE College of South Africa with around 3,200 students; <http://teezambia.org> for TEE Zambia with more than 10,000 students all over the country.

(AICs) in Malawi, which because of cost are often excluded from more expensive forms of Theological Education.<sup>38</sup>

TEE has not become mainstream in western countries, though in some places there is more interest from diaspora Christians settled in those countries, including many Hispanic and Asian users in the USA.

## **5. TEE as a continuing tool for mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Our vision is that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Lord would use the TEE movement in Asia powerfully to strengthen churches, helping them to multiply, equipping all believers to bring transformation in all areas of society for the growth of His kingdom and the glory of His Name.<sup>39</sup>

This was the vision articulated at the 2010 pan-Asia TEE conference. Only the Lord of the Church can bring such a vision to reality, and the first need is for TEE leaders to be humble, reflective and responsive to Him. In this spirit, TEE educators in Asia are increasingly working together to critique their past, collaborate in the present and plan for the future. Their recent discussions, along with written materials from past decades, suggest that at least the following areas remain priorities for the renewal and future of the TEE movement.

### **a. the quality of relations between TEE programmes and the churches they seek to serve**

Some TEE programmes help churches provide new believers with strong foundations for discipleship and other programmes for leadership training. Still others offer a pathway of training from the first steps of faith through to active ministry, whether in church or society. In each case, strong partnerships with denominations and their local churches will surely be vital for 21<sup>st</sup> century TEE. As needs change and new challenges come, yesterday's relationships will not be sufficient.

21<sup>st</sup> century TEE programmes will work to stay in living relationship with the churches they seek to serve. This will include at least:

- developing and maintaining better processes for listening to the churches: collecting, processing and responding to comments churches make about their courses, and working together with churches to identify curricular areas not yet covered adequately.
- working together with churches to agree on appropriate criteria for choosing local learning Group Leaders, and to develop appropriate ways of recognising, encouraging and providing continuing training for Group Leaders
- helping to create 'a church culture' that gives great value to the ongoing growth, discipleship, and richly varied ministries of each and every church member.

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<sup>38</sup> TEEM Director, personal communication, March 2015.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.increasenet.org/about-increase/kathmandu-2010>

### **b. the training and support of TEE Group Leaders**

Regular group discussion is the beating heart of the TEE method. The Group Leader has the potential both to be TEE's greatest strength, and most serious weakness. A skilful, prayerful, servant Group Leader with vision and passion can bring even mediocre course materials to life, so that Group members cannot wait for next week's group meeting. By contrast, Group Leaders without understanding of their role can ruin the weekly group meeting, even when students have prepared for it using the most thoughtfully and effectively crafted of TEE self-study texts. So the choice, training, monitoring, support and continued upskilling of Group Leaders remain a priority for 21<sup>st</sup> century TEE.

Considerable energy has been devoted to developing effective Group Leader training packages in many programmes in Asia, including TEE Korea, ITEEN, TAFTEE, and ORTA. Since Group Leaders have a tendency to revert to a lecture style of leadership during group meetings, it will be important for TEE programmes to train Group Leaders using an interactive, group discussion-based approach. One major curriculum provider is preparing a document on basic requirements for Group Leader training.

### **c. innovation and contextual relevance of TEE course materials**

The early creative burst of TEE course-writing began in the 1960s and ran strongly for two decades. Courses were initially written for specific national or cultural contexts and were not intended for wider use. Over time, however, 'survival of the fittest' meant that the interesting, understandable and applicable courses spread widely because TEE students enjoyed them. Conversely, boring courses died a natural death. The outcome was educationally positive, but it led to some courses being used widely outside the contexts for which they were originally designed.

While recognising this homogenising trend, it remains true that TEE training is more easily contextualised than are distance-learning curriculum, because of its strong local dimension. Contextualisation takes place naturally when local Group Leaders and learners together apply the material to their local context. It is further strengthened when Group Leader guides are adapted or written for local contexts, recognising that there may be several 'contexts' in one country.<sup>40</sup> Many national TEE programmes already do this, as well as contextualising the learners' course books with local artwork, examples and sometimes deeper-level changes.

TEE national programmes have also created new courses to address particular contextual issues including community health, poverty and development, conflict resolution, folk religion, witness to other faiths and discipleship of new believers from other faith backgrounds.<sup>41</sup> Others would be helpful on such topics as alcohol addiction, creation care and cross-cultural outreach. Such courses demonstrate TEE's aim to be a tool for outward-looking mission in society. First-generation churches frequently express concern for Christian marriages to be established and the next generation to be nurtured, so national TEE programmes serve them by creating courses on these

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<sup>40</sup> For instance Bangladesh has both Hindu-background and Muslim-background Christians, Kazakhstan has Russians and Kazakh and Uighur.

<sup>41</sup> Just a few examples include *Poverty and Development* (TAFTEE India), *Folk Religion* (OTS Pakistan), *Deep Sea Canoe* (CLTC Papua New Guinea), *Taking the Good News to Muslims* (TEXT Africa).

topics.<sup>42</sup> Not all national TEE programmes have the experience and capacity to develop new courses. The Increase Association (see f. below) helps them to connect with each other to share course materials, course-writing skills and collaboration on new writing projects.

#### **d. the educational methodology underlying TEE self-study courses**

TEE's classic methodology, combining personal study, group discussion, and intentional practice, has proved effective and transformative in many thousands of lives. However, does it stand up to the scrutiny of educational theory? A recent paper<sup>43</sup> identifies six strands of educational theory that influenced the origins of TEE fifty years ago. Five of these six are still strongly affirmed by modern theorists: open access education, principles of andragogy, domains of learning, critical reflection leading to transformative learning, and the importance of small group dialogue. Moreover, new theories including 'blended learning' and the 'flipped classroom' affirm what was already embedded in TEE methodology five decades ago!

However, in the one area of 'mastery learning using programmed texts', educationalists today diverge sharply from the behaviourist theories fashionable at the time of TEE's origins. Programmed instruction is often seen as indoctrinating and paternalistic, stifling critical thought. This is a serious point because many (not all) TEE courses do use programmed textbooks. However, programmed texts are not necessarily shackled to a rigid behaviourist philosophical foundation. Also when reflective questions are used alongside didactic ones in a well-designed TEE lesson, it leads to an appropriate combination of formative and critical education and hence to the possibility of transformative learning.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, for learners whose previous education was limited or based on rote-learning, programmed texts provide the secure bottom rungs of a ladder which takes them toward the higher cognitive levels of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. These higher cognitive skills may be honed gradually by moving away from strictly programmed texts as learners progress through the curriculum.

#### **e. appropriate use of digital technology**

Rapid advances in digital technology are changing the ways that many people approach learning and education. 21<sup>st</sup> Century TEE programmes will make use of the opportunities that digital technology is opening up, while being careful that technological innovations should serve to enhance learning. Technology does not need to replace what is already fruitful – but it can make it even better. Possible ways include delivery of interactive personal study materials on mobile phone or online; supplementary capacity-building and training materials for Group Leaders available online; connecting Group Leaders in remote situations with other Group Leaders for mutual learning and encouragement; and making available resources to support new Group Leader training in remote situations.<sup>45</sup> TEE programmes may also expand ways to serve 'oral preference learners' including courses where the teaching input is video-based rather than text-based.

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<sup>42</sup> Courses on Christian marriage and family life have been written by several providers (TEXT Africa, TAFTEE India, Mongolia TEE, SKT Bangladesh, CLTC Papua New Guinea). A comparative review of existing materials would be beneficial.

<sup>43</sup> Tim Green, 'Should TEE in contemporary Asia be rejected, renewed or merely repackaged?', an unpublished paper available from [tmwgreen@gmail.com](mailto:tmwgreen@gmail.com).

<sup>44</sup> Tim Green makes this case from philosophical, educational and biblical perspectives. See his TEE in contemporary Asia and other unpublished essays. [tmwgreen@gmail.com](mailto:tmwgreen@gmail.com).

<sup>45</sup> Increase, 'Technology & TEE', *Go*, (July, 2014), 8-11 accessible from: <http://www.interserve.org.nz/RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS/GO+MAGAZINE.html#Mission>

### **f. fruitful collaboration with other TEE programmes**

21<sup>st</sup> Century TEE programmes will value networking for peer evaluation, sharing of resources and mutual learning and encouragement. In Asia, the Increase Association has these aims. Within the last five years Increase has:

- co-hosted the 2010 pan-Asia TEE conference;
- trained a cohort of twelve reflective practitioners, known as the TEE Equippers, who can act as consultants to national TEE programmes across Asia;
- supported the initiatives in Central Asia where four additional countries have started national TEE programmes since 2012;
- in 2013 organised a Curriculum Consultation, and supported a Translation and Contextualisation workshop;
- run a conference in 2015 'Exploring New Horizons: working together for church-based training in Asia' to address cutting-edge issues.

The relationships nourished through these various events have led to many joint initiatives and much blessing. Increase seeks to foster in the TEE movement a spirit of peer-learning, constructive self-criticism, openness to renewal, cooperation with other church based training programmes and exploration of new horizons. Increase's website<sup>46</sup> may serve as a platform for these initiatives.

Increase connects with similar networks in other continents. In Africa the All Africa TEE Association serves as a forum for TEE programmes in Africa, and has been effective in helping TEE programmes work together in response to common challenges.<sup>47</sup> In Latin America a 2012 conference brought together TEE leaders from across the continent.

### **g. partnership in the mission of God with other forms of theological education**

21<sup>st</sup> century TEE programmes recognize the potential benefits to the Church and to the mission of God when they work with others to respond to contemporary challenges in Theological Education. Theological associations such as the Asia Theological Association (of which Increase is an affiliate member) can play an important role in connecting residential theological institutions with church-based training programmes.

### **h. serving the needs of diaspora Christians**

The peoples of the world are scattered abroad as never before, including Christian populations. This creates a need and opportunity wherever diaspora churches seek a way to disciple their own people and grow their own leaders using mother tongue materials. Such materials often already exist in their countries of origin, wherever national TEE programmes have created them. Challenges remain for sharing of information, supply of course books and training of Group Leaders. But these can be overcome, and the use of TEE by Christians 'from everywhere to everywhere' is likely to grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is also a tool for mission, supporting the outreach of diaspora believers to non-believers in their own ethnic groups.

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<sup>46</sup> [www.increasenetwork.org](http://www.increasenetwork.org)

<sup>47</sup> Mabuluki, Diversified Theological Education

## **6. Conclusion: TEE tomorrow**

Jesus command is to make disciples of all nations. Now that there are indigenous churches in most of them, the question remains, 'How can every member of the people of God be motivated and empowered for mission?'

As we described in this chapter TEE is proving to be one answer to that question. TEE serves churches with a 'Tool to Equip and Empower' and hundreds of thousands are being equipped for mission.

We long to see many more, and more relevant, courses available through a range of delivery mechanisms, so that many more can prepare for local learning groups effectively.

We long to see more national TEE programs providing the vital framework of training, encouragement and accountability.

We long to see to see TEE programmes networking effectively, strengthened and empowered, so that many millions are discipled and equipped for mission and ministry.

Where are those who will invest their lives in the strategic and fruitful ministry of TEE?

May the Lord of the harvest call many more!