

Curriculum Development in Context

What is our context?

- Local context: Pakistan / Korea / Cambodia / Kyrgyzstan / Russia / Mongolia etc
- Regional context: South Asia / Central Asia / South East Asia / East Asia etc
- International context: global

Our local context:

- Religious context: Non-Christian religions - majority religion e.g. Islam / Hinduism / Buddhism, with significant other minorities e.g. Sikhs / Parsis / Shinto. New heresies spreading among Christians. Religious fundamentalism, violence against minorities
- Cultural context: Many cultures, languages, traditions, even within one country
- Social context: Poverty, injustice, corruption, feudal system. Discrimination (against minorities, women, the poor, migrants). Growing population, with growing numbers under 15

Pakistan's population is increasing at the rate 2.1% per year, with an annual addition of 3 million persons. Estimated at 187 million (18.7 crore) in 2011, it is prediction that Pakistan's population will reach 210 million (21 crore) by 2020 (DAWN News, 31 October 2011). It is estimated that children under 15 make up 35.4% of the total (according to the UN Population Fund). What difference does this make to the time and value given to Christian Education as a subject in our institutions?

Pakistan is not alone facing such concerns. Ross Kinsler (one of pioneers of TEE in Latin America in 1960s) wrote an article in 2007 called "Doing Ministry for a Change? Theological Education for the Twenty-first Century." Ross Kinsler reflects on the global challenges we face today as theological educators and the new models that are emerging for theological education. The challenges, he sees, are:

- Racial, economic, gender & ecological injustice. Over 200 years ago, injustice was typified in the African slave trade, through which Europe & the Americas became rich at Africa's expense. Today's world still suffers oppression from 'pervasive economic & political forces throughout the globe that reinforce the division between rich & poor.' '30,000 people die every day of hunger, perhaps twice that die daily if we add curable diseases, contaminated water & other effects of extreme poverty'.
- Ecological destruction. Christians should have a concern for the environment, the integrity of creation, & sustainable development, to halt the eradication of species & the degradation of the earth in the name of 'progress'. Churches & theological institutions should work, locally & regionally, with projects struggling for justice, peace & the integrity of creation. This will require a shift away from the individualized concept of salvation to a collective, ecological understanding of the Kingdom of God.
- Integral wholeness, especially in terms of health care provision to the poor. Christians have always been prominent in providing health care services, but the vast majority of people in the Three-Fourths World lack basic, appropriate health care. The Millennium Development Goals for health & education and to reduce global poverty are far from being fulfilled. Grassroots movements are more effective than top-down solutions and churches can 'offer a message of integral wholeness, shalom, real human development'.

We move from Context to Content

- Should our context affect the content of our Theological Education Curriculum?
- How far should our context affect the content of our Theological Education Curriculum?
- In What Way(s) does Context affect Content?

To address the religious context

- Need an understanding of major religions in our country, including Folk religious practices
- Need an understanding of apologetics appropriate followers of major religions in our country, especially answers to commonly asked questions and common misunderstandings
- Need knowledge of theory and practice of methods of evangelism appropriate to reach the unreached peoples of all religions in our country and neighbouring countries
- Need motivation to reach the unreached peoples of all religions our country and neighbouring countries (biblical theology of missions – what is on the heart of God)
- Need a good understanding of Christian doctrine, especially regarding God, Trinity, Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation, inspiration of scriptures, etc.
- Need an understanding of current heresies, why they are wrong & how to refute them

To address the social context

- Need an awareness of and sensitivity to other cultures, and the ability to communicate the Gospel cross-culturally and contextually
- Need an awareness of social ethical issues – justice, development, poverty, child labour, bonded labour, sex trafficking, prostitution, corruption, feudal system, etc.
- Need an awareness of Biblical teaching on such issues, especially the prophets' teachings where social justice is not an optional extra but essential part of being God's people
- Need an ability to address personal ethical issues, e.g. Domestic abuse, child abuse, incest, abortion, HIV/AIDS, etc. In Biblical & culturally appropriate ways (Counseling)
- Need an awareness of national church history, including the contribution of national heroes and how the gospel came to your country and how it has taken root
- Need an understanding that persecution is part of Christian discipleship, by looking at examples of persecution in church history from the New Testament times to the present day, and being equipped to face persecution at it occurs here and now.
- Need an understanding of modern youth culture, including influences and dangers of media (Internet, cell phones, social networking sites), dangers of substance abuse (alcohol and drugs) and how to counsel addicts and their families
- Need knowledge and training in the theory and practice of effective Christian Education for children and youth, including modern (more interactive) teaching methods

At the ATA conference on Curriculum Development in Singapore in 2006, the South Asia group of delegates came up with a detailed outline for a course during our workshop. The group of theological educators from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, considered the major issues, challenges and problems that seminaries in South Asia should respond to, and proposed a specially designed curriculum on "Understanding Society".

1. What are some of the major issues, challenges & problems that seminaries in South Asia should respond to?

- Development – child labour, infanticide, adoption for sale. Child development
- Youth culture – identity crisis caused by Internet / IT industry (call centres → money), globalization, drugs / addictions, suicide (especially relating to economic factors, often dowry).
- Religious pluralism, communal harmony, integration, fundamentalism, terrorism, refugees.
- Women's studies – sex industry, human trafficking (200,000 Nepali girls working in Indian sex industry, 50,000 in Bangalore alone), HIV/AIDS.
- Psychology - Counselling – Ethics. Family Life - care of the elderly

“Understanding Society” was identified as a priority need that requires a specially designed curriculum

2.1. What kind of individuals does it want to produce? What are the learning outcomes in terms of head (cognitive), heart (affective) & hands (skills) of such an education program?

- Awareness of issues (from both theory & practice)
- Concerned – passion for change
- Capable to take action - counselling skills, youth work skills, social work skills, conflict resolution, career guidance, 12 ½ steps to freedom, training cell group / care group leaders for people at risk, management skills

2.2. What will be its learning content? What unique courses will it offer?

- Introduction to sociology – youth culture, effects of IT, sex industry, HIV/AIDS, globalization, addictions
- Introduction to psychology – suicide, youth / child development, family issues
- Introduction to politics – national integration, communalism, terrorism, refugees
- Introduction to religions – religious pluralism, communal harmony, intolerance, fundamentalism
- Introduction to economics – poverty, child labour, legal issues
- Counselling – Ethics – Conflict resolution – Career guidance – Management skills

2.3. What unique pedagogy will be used? What learning activities will be required of the students?

- Seminars / debates / visiting speakers
- Projects – empirical studies. Workshops
- Field experiences. Site visits – action / reflection

Bibliography

- Kinsler, Ross. “Doing Ministry for a Change? Theological Education for the Twenty-first Century.” In ‘Ministerial Formation’, no.108, January 2007, (pp.4-13), Ecumenical Theological Education Programme, WCC, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Kinsler, Ross, ed. Diversified Theological Education: Equipping All God's People. Pasadena CA, William Carey International University Press, 2008.
- SPARC. The State of Pakistan's Children 2002. Islamabad, SPARC, 2003.
- Wikipedia / Demographics of Pakistan. Wikipedia / Christianity in Pakistan

Implications for textbooks & other resources

- Books in English published in the west have a different context, and many textbooks in Urdu have been translated from English with the same issue, especially in some subjects, e.g. Church History, Apologetics, Ethics, Counselling, even systematic theology.
- E.g. Donald Smeeton's book on Church history 'Tarikh-e-Klissia; Pentecost se Islah tak' is a good general introduction but is western-oriented; similarly many other good church history text books are Euro-centric (details of the Hundred years War, medieval feudal system and rise of the Papacy, which have little relevance to Pakistani context, and have little coverage of Asian Christianity or that of the Church under Islamic rule, which would be much more relevant.)

Recommended books

- Church History (with Asian / World perspective)
- Young, William G. Patriarch, Shah and Caliph: a study of the relationships of the Church of the East with the Sassanid Empire and the early Caliphates up to 820 AD. Rawalpindi, Christian Study Centre, 1974.
- Philip Jenkins. The Lost History of Christianity; 1,000 Years Golden Age of the Church. Oxford, Lion Hudson, 2008.
- Philip Jenkins. The Next Christendom?
- Lameh Sanneh. Whose Christianity is it anyway? Samuel Hugh Moffett. A History of Christianity in Asia. Vol. I, Beginnings to 1500. Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1998
- Samuel Hugh Moffett. A History of Christianity in Asia. Vol. II, 1500 to 1900. Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 2005

Apologetics

- Ajith Fernando. The Supremacy of Christ. Wheaton IL, Crossway, 1995
- Peter Kreeft. Handbook of Christian Apologetics
- Norman L. Geisler. When Skeptics Ask. / Norman L. Geisler. When Critics Ask.
- Norman L. Geisler. Come, Its reason.
- Norman L. Geisler. Biblical Errancy: An analysis of its philosophical roots . Zondervan
- Norman L. Geisler. Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics. Bakers Book House
- Josh mcdowell. A Ready Defense (Best of Josh mcdowell).
- Josh mcdowell. Christianity Demands a Verdict.
- Josh mcdowell. Handbook of Today's Religion.
- Josh mcdowell. Resurrection Factor.
- Lee Strobel. The Case of Christ / Lee Strobel. The Case of Faith
- Paul D. Wegner. The Journey from Texts to Translations. Grand Rapids MN, Baker Book House
- F. F. Bruce. The Canon of Scripture. IVP
- F. F. Bruce. The Real Jesus. London, Hodder and Stoughton

Ethics

- Bernard T. Adeney. Strange Virtues; Ethics in a Multi-cultural World. Leicester, Apollos, 1995.

- Christopher J.H. Wright. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. (A fully revised, updated and integrated edition of *Living as the People of God* (1983) and *Walking in the Ways of the Lord* (1995).) Leicester, IVP, 2004

Counselling

- Duane Elmer *Cross-cultural Conflict; building relationships for effective ministry*. Doerns Grove IL, intervarsity Press, 1993.

Contextual Theology / Asian theology

- *Reader in Contextualization*. OTS, 2009 – only book in Urdu from an evangelical perspective. Everything else is from a liberal and / or Roman Catholic perspective
- Siga Arles, et al., eds. *Biblical Theology and Missiological Education in Asia*. Bangalore, Theological Book Trust / ATA India, 2005
- Ken R. Gnanakan. *Kingdom Concerns; a Biblical exploration toward a theology of mission*. Bangalore, Theological Book Trust, 1993.
- Ken Gnanakan, ed. *Biblical theology in Asia*. Bangalore, Theological Book Trust for ATA, 1995.
- Marianne Katoppo. *Compassionate and free; an Asian Woman's theology*. Geneva, WCC, 1979.
- Bruce Nicholls, et al., eds. *The Church in a Changing World; an Asian response*. Quezon City, Philippines, ATA, 2010.
- Vinoth Ramachandra. *Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World*. Secunderabad, OM Books, 1999
- Vinoth Ramachandra. *The Recovery of Mission; Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm*. Delhi, ISPCK, 1996.
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- C. S. Song. *Tell us our names; Story Theology from an Asian Perspective*. Indore, Satparkashan, 1984
- Chris Sugden. *Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus; the Practice and Theology of Christian Social Witness in Indonesia and India 1974-1996*. Oxford, Regnum, 1997.
- R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed. *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology; Emerging trends*. Maryknoll NY, Orbis Books, 1994.
- Sunand Sumithra, ed. *Doing Theology in Context*. Bangalore, Theological book Trust, 1992.
- Hwa Yung. *Mangoes of Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology*. Oxford, Regnum, 1997.

Biblical Studies from an Asian Perspective

- Asia Bible Commentary series