

CROSS-CULTURAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

In an age of globalization we will continue to see increased cross-cultural¹ situations. In Brazil there have been clashes between culture and Christian education throughout its history. This paper is an attempt to look at how we can develop a theory of curriculum in such cross-cultural occurrences. A brief overview of four of the culture/Christian education clashes in Brazil will show Christian education done cross-culturally by transplantation, acculturation, syncretism and isolation, highlighting weaknesses in each. How then can we do Christian education and develop curriculum cross culturally?

To answer this a reexamination of Campbell Wyckoff's *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum* will be done in order to extract that which is pertinent for today's situation. He sees curriculum as a "...plan by which the teaching-learning process may be systematically undertaken... a curriculum is a carefully devised channel of communication used by the church in its ministry...designing a plan for communicative transaction..."² Because Wyckoff sees Christian education primarily as programmatic, for him curriculum would be a "blueprint" for educational programs. Cross-culturally, approaching education in the church as programs becomes risky since programs do not necessarily translate between cultures, as will be shown with the transplantation model.

More recently, Patrick Slattery suggests a shift in the definition of curriculum by reconceptualists from focus on design through organized goals and measurable objectives, to focus on actual experiences.³ For him curriculum development is about the "interconnectedness of all experiences."⁴ Cross-cultural curriculum then, is better seen as a channel of communication and a plan for making connections of experiences.

How do we go about this? In order to do ecumenical curriculum development in the 1960's Wyckoff asked six questions to get at the context, scope, purpose, process, organizing principle and organizing media. These six areas still aid in the development of curriculum, but his theory will need to be reframed for today. This will be accomplished through answering Wyckoff's curriculum questions via Patrick Slattery's post-modern proposals in *Curriculum Development in the Post-Modern Era*.

In addition, since we are dealing with cultural interaction, not simply lone individuals, a theory of cross-cultural Christian education curriculum development needs to consider education within a community as well as processes of social learning. Maria Harris's work dealing with curriculum in the community of faith from *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* will be used, looking at implications for Christian education in a community of faith. Processes of social learning will be considered from Daniel Aleshire's, *Faith Care: Ministering to all God's People through the Ages of Life*.

Introduction

Culture

In the past several years I have become increasingly aware of different cultures as I lived abroad as well as experiencing cultural diversity in the United States. Thinking about Christian Education and culture brings me back

¹ Cross-cultural may have different meanings, such as a group of students from various cultures or a person entering a different culture. My meaning here is colored by my experience of a Christian educator entering into a culture different than his/her own.

² Wyckoff, Campbell, *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum*, (Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1961), 20

³ Slattery, Patrick, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, (New York: Garland Publishing Library, 1995), 55

⁴ Ibid., 58

to the age-old problem of Christ and Culture. It is not my purpose to try to build on or rehash H. Richard Niebuhr's work *Christ and Culture*. However, he does give us a handle on what is meant by culture. He says:

What we have in view when we deal with Christ and culture is that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity to which now the name *culture*, now the name *civilization*, is applied in common speech. Culture is the "artificial, secondary environment" which [man] superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organizations, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values. This "social heritage," this "reality *sui generis*," which the New Testament writers frequently had in mind when they spoke of "the world," which is represented in many forms but to which Christians like other men are inevitably subject, is what we mean when we speak of culture.⁵

Culture as seen like this describes human life in society. That is, "Culture and social existence go together."⁶ Secondly culture is a construct of human activity, not a naturally given phenomenon. It includes such things as speech, education, tradition, myth, science, art, philosophy, government, law, rite, beliefs, inventions, and technologies.⁷

Third, culture is always in process. It is not a static state of a given society. This means it changes as the society changes. Culture is not a given except that it is passed to future generations who will then act on it; it may be "handed on" but not in a static state. Therefore, change is inevitable. When Christian education confronts culture change will occur in both Christian education and the culture. There is change in values creating a ripple effect through the attitudes and actions of people in the context of a culture.

Christian Education

The term "Christian education" may mean different things to different people. To some it may be religious instruction, transmitting the knowledge and practices of the Christian faith.⁸ Others see Christian Education as a socialization process or socialization process highlighting how a person becomes part of a community of faith.⁹ Christian Education may also be viewed as personal development rooted in developmental theory emphasizing nurture.¹⁰ Still others may see Christian Education as liberation through critical thinking and transformation.¹¹ Aleshire broadens the scope of the definition of Christian education which will be used in developing curriculum cross-culturally. He defines Christian education as:

...those tasks and expressions of ministry that enable people (1) to learn the Christian story, both ancient and present; (2) to develop the skills they need to act out their faith; (3) to reflect on that story in order to live self-aware to its truth; and (4) to nurture the sensitivities they need to live together as a covenant community.¹²

Cross-culturally Christian education is about these tasks and expressions in the context of the culture. The particular forms of these tasks may look very different as it is expressed in different cultures.

⁵ Niebuhr, H. Richard, *Christ and Culture*, (New York: Harper and Brother Publishers 1951), 32

⁶ *Ibid.*, 33

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Tye, 10

⁹ Seymour, Jack L. and Miller, Donald E. *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press) 53-71

¹⁰ Tye, 11

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12

¹² Aleshire, Daniel, "Finding Eagles in the Turkeys' Nest: Pastoral Theology and Christian Education," *Review and Expositor* 85 (1988): 701-702.

Cross-Cultural Christian Education in Brazil¹³

Christian Education by Transplantation

I arrived in Brazil in August of 1988. After a year of intensive language study in São Paulo I moved to Rio de Janeiro to begin my career as a Christian Education missionary. Visiting different churches each Sunday I began to notice something odd. Obviously the Christian education program of every church used the Sunday school as its foundation. The odd feature of these Sunday Schools stemmed from their practices. They all met on Sunday mornings at 9:30 or 10:00 A.M. This too, in and of itself is not very strange. What made it unusual was the fact that it didn't fit the Brazilian way of doing things. Brazilian culture in general involves "night life." The people stay up late into the early morning hours, especially on Saturday. This means that they will sleep in on Sunday morning, leaving the church less than full for Sunday school and morning worship. In contrast the Sunday evening services fill the sanctuary to overflowing. Why did the Brazilians convene a Bible study on Sunday morning with the faithful remnant and call it Sunday school? I decided to find an answer to this question.

Working with pastors and lay leaders I was able to get to the bottom of this church practice. The answer had century old roots. Protestant missionaries began arriving in Brazil in the 1880's. They brought with them their American mindset of educational and religious practice. This included Sunday school. The Brazilians learned their lesson well; "this is the way you do Sunday school." Of course this transplanted Sunday school struggled. Pastors and church leaders had the same attitude; "It doesn't work in Brazil." I zeroed in on a couple of churches to work with to help them improve their educational ministries. I made progress with one particular church getting them to look at their purpose for their educational ministry. I then asked them the best day and time of the week to accomplish their educational purpose. My heart soared when the unanimous response was Saturday evening. I had gotten through only to be shot down, "But that wouldn't be Sunday school."

They had learned to do Sunday school. But, what they learned was an American Sunday school that did not consider the Brazilian culture. The assumption made was that it worked in the United States it will work in Brazil. The result is a cultural clash. This raises the question how can we do Christian education cross-culturally?

Transplantation may be understood as in figure 1.

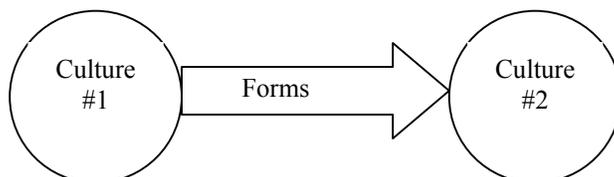


Figure 1

Christian Education by Acculturation

The early 80's movie *The Mission* depicts a different perspective on cross-cultural Christian education. It is Hollywood's version of the historical events of the São Carlos and São Miguel missions in Brazil and Paraguay.¹⁴

The discovery of Brazil in 1500 by Pedro Alvarez Cabral and its subsequent settlement was a joint endeavor of the Portuguese crown and the Catholic Church. The discovery of Brazil was believed to be a new era given to Christianity. With the expulsion of the Moors from Europe by the Portuguese, they believed God rewarded them with Brazil. It replaced the land taken by the Muslims. Because of this mindset the Christian religion was imposed on the new colony with all of society to be included in the church.¹⁵ Thus the Indians were forced onto *aldeias* (small villages) in order that they could be more easily incorporated into the church. But, it went beyond including the indigenous people, such as the Guarani, that were depicted in the movie *The Mission*. Mem de Sá, governor of Brazil in 1558, was interested in integrating Indians and Europeans¹⁶. However, the interest in a new

¹³ The cross-cultural models described in this section are from personal observation or historical documentation. They do not fit a typology such as Schreier's in *Constructing Local Theologies* due to the obvious weaknesses and shortcomings that are cited.

¹⁴ Bolt, Robert, *The Mission*, (Burbank, California: Kingsmere Productions) 1986

¹⁵ Brumeau, Thomas C., *The Church in Brazil: The Politics of Religion*, (Austin Texas, University of Texas Press, 1982), 11-12

Brazilian culture was not the case. As depicted in *The Mission* the apparent desired result was the establishment of the European culture in the Western Hemisphere. Bishop Stephen Neil contends that, “Europeans are beginning to think that their civilization is the only civilization in the world that is worthy of the name and to develop the strange complex of the superior people.”¹⁷ The Christian education by the Jesuits before their expulsion from Brazil in 1759 was more than evangelization and giving the Guarani people a reason to worship. They involved themselves in the acculturation of the indigenous people. The goal was to westernize them teaching western forms and methods of worship in order to Christianize this gift, given to them by God - Brazil.

Christianity was seen as equal to the particular culture - western. That means to educate is to impose the culture with its form and identity inappropriate as they may be..

The question here still plagues us today. Can we teach Christian education cross-culturally without acculturation? Or, is it possible to do cross-cultural Christian education keeping the cultures distinct and intact?

Acculturation may be diagrammed as in figure 2.

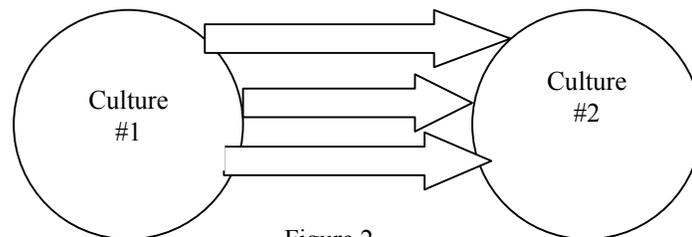


Figure 2

Christian Education and Syncretism

Another cross-cultural phenomenon occurred in Brazil as the country developed. Syncretism took place as Brazil became a “melting pot” of people and do to the relationship between the Brazilian Catholic church, African religions and other cultic practices.

The slave trade brought African natives to Brazil from Nigeria until the Abolition of Slavery in 1888¹⁸. These indigenous people from Africa brought with them their religion called Candomblé, which allows for the addition and assimilation of new deities. This paved the way for ongoing syncretism.

Spiritism originated in France by Allen Kardec. It consists of mysticism, healing through mediumistic powers, communicating with the dead, reincarnation and telepathy. It came to Brazil and has flourished since the 1860's.¹⁹

“Umbanda is a ‘non-Christian and syncretic’ religion that appropriated Christian elements in a ‘confused religious practice.’”²⁰ It is a syncretism of Candomblé, Catholicism, and native and European religious elements, predominantly Spiritism. Umbanda, then, is the result of syncretism between the native religions, Catholicism and Spiritism. African and Christian elements are combined with a parallel analogy between Iorubá gods of Nigeria (Candomblé) and Catholic Saints. Spiritism adds ritual sacrifices, gods, objects of nature, and African as well as European religious practices. Umbanda is considered Brazilian religion. This particular syncretism of different cultic practices, known as Umbanda, is probably not practiced anywhere else in the world. How and why did this syncretism take place?

¹⁶ Cohen, M., *The Fire of Tongues: Antônio Viera and the Missionary Church in Brazil and Portuga*, (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1998), 38-39

¹⁷ Neil, Stephen, *A History of Christian Missions*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), 176

¹⁸ Bastone, David; Mendieta, Eduardo; Lorentzen, Lois Ann; Hopkins, Dwight N. *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 102

¹⁹ Ibid., 108

²⁰ Ibid., 106

Multiculturalism in the form of multiple cultures coexisting, was not recognized as a possibility, in the attempt to create a Brazilian race, reducing the cultures to syncretism. The resulting syncretism in actuality excludes these cultures. They were swallowed up and thus controlled by the monopolization of Catholicism.²¹

The Jesuits that came to evangelize Brazil opened missions to minister to the colonists as well as the indigenous people groups. Because of political reasons they were forced out in 1759. Religion was imposed on those who lived in Brazil in order to form a Christian (Catholic) society, resulting in the lack of a committed laity based on conviction.²² Religion then, was based on social norms, not on conviction, in an attempt to make a religious society.

The result was religious confusion. The people do not know what they believe and why they believe it. Religious practices of all sorts are performed with the hope that they will obtain a better life. Candles of symbolic colors are lit on street corners, near running water or under trees. Sacrificed animals, especially roosters, along with fruit, money alcoholic beverages or cigarettes may be laying nearby. All of this is performed for the hope of gaining control of their lives or gaining what they do not have. Syncretism is unavoidable when cultures meet, because a certain amount of assimilation of cultures occurs.²³ But, in Brazil the syncretism is extreme.

Since Umbanda is non-Christian religion, Christian education is hard pressed to find a place within the syncretism. At best the Catholic Church continues with their catechism teaching the Christian elements of the syncretism. The other fragments of the syncretism are learned primarily through observation as the activities of the religions are played out.

Syncretism may be illustrated as in figure 3.

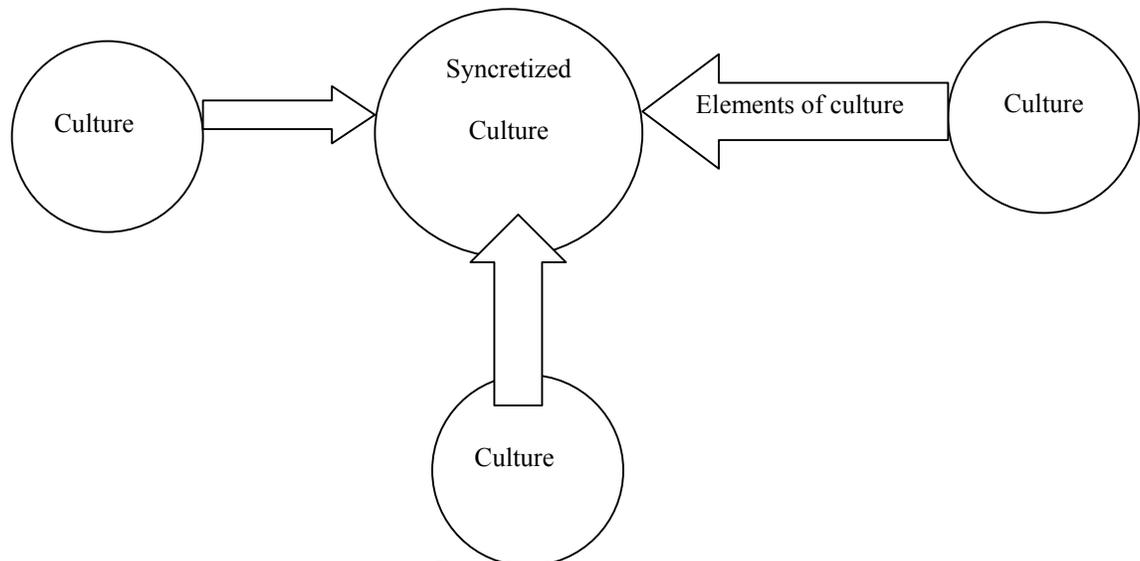


Figure 3

Isolation

The Brazilian government has created another spin on cultures meeting cultures. In an effort to preserve some of the remaining indigenous cultures in Brazil it is now illegal for foreigners to have contact with them. This isolation is imposed with the idea that the culture will remain intact if they do not have any outside influence of

²¹Ibid., 117

²² Brumeau, 12

²³Batstone, Mendieta, Lorentzen and Hopkins, 108

estrangeiros. Culture, though, is a process and will change as need arises. In addition the Brazilian government allows contact with this indigenous cultures by Brazilians. Inevitably, the indigenous cultures will change.

In this instance Christian education is accomplished by means of a third party. Brazilians who can legally have contact with the indigenous groups are educated and they then are able to educate these isolated groups. What occurs is a second generation transplant model, less effective than the original transplantation model.

The isolation model may be understood as in figure 4.

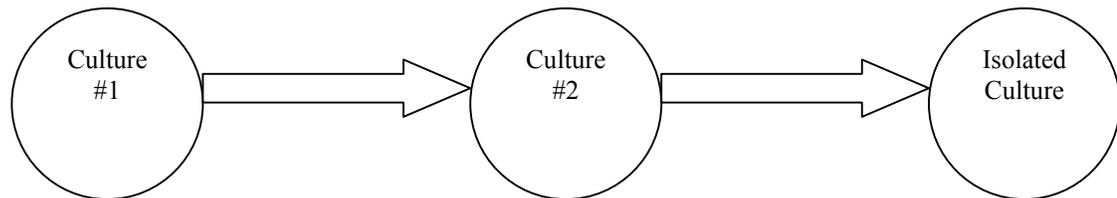


Figure 4

How can we do Christian education effectively in cross-cultural occurrences? Is it possible to do Christian education without transporting it from one culture and imposing it on another? Is it possible to do Christian education without the acculturation and “making them just like me?” Is it possible to do Christian education without losing your Christian identity because of the assimilation of various practices? Is it possible for cultures to remain distinct when influenced by Christian education?

Developing Curriculum Cross-Culturally

Why D. Campbell Wyckoff, Patrick Slattery, Maria Harris and Daniel Aleshire?

Wyckoff published his *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum* in 1961, as an ecumenical curriculum theory, growing out of his extensive work with the National Council of Churches in the 1950's. At that time, his theory needed to be able to embrace a diverse group of Protestant denominations.²⁴ Today developing curriculum cross-culturally needs to address a similar diversity, but it is a diversity of culture, not just Protestant denominations within one dominant culture. Because of this diversity, whether cultural or denominational, much of Wyckoff's theory applies to this question of developing curriculum cross-culturally.

However, Wyckoff includes in his curriculum theory eight requirements. These prerequisites no longer apply to the reality of today and are entrenched in an instructional model of Christian education. In order to develop curriculum cross-culturally Wyckoff needs to be reframed for today's reality and for education that goes beyond programs to living and being. Therefore it is necessary to look at Wyckoff through contemporary lenses. This can be done in dialogue with the work of Patrick Slattery, Maria Harris, and Dan Aleshire.

Patrick Slattery helps us to rethink how we can develop curriculum in the post-modern era. He believes that "... postmodernism regards the world as an organism rather than a machine, the earth as a home rather than as a functional possession, and persons as interdependent rather than as isolated and independent."²⁵ As cultures meet, cross and mix the result is similar to what Slattery describes. The cultures come out of their isolation. They are no longer independent entities, but become interdependent members of a global organism called earth.

The process of Wyckoff's theory is inviting persons into meaningful participation in the life of the church. Wyckoff emphasizes participation in the church, but Maria Harris gives a fuller account of this. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look at her work, *Fashion Me a People*.

Finally, Wyckoff organizes his curriculum around developmental learning tasks current in 1960. Today cross-cultural curriculum needs to draw on how we learn in community. Thus we turn to Daniel Aleshire and learning in the community of faith in *Faith Care*.

²⁴ Wyckoff, Campbell, *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 11

²⁵ Slattery, Patrick, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, (New York: Garland Publishing Library, 1995) 19

Developing a Cross-Cultural Theory of Christian Education

Curriculum may be different things to different people. It can be anything from printed classroom materials to all of life's experiences. In doing Christian education cross-culturally I see curriculum as a process of establishing the community of God in order for persons to know and respond to God in faith and love. This presupposes that Christian education is more than mere transmission of information. A faith response means that learning requires cognitive and affective learning as well as volition and behavior, action as well as reflection. In addition there is both a communal element and an individual element in Christian education.

Wyckoff's view of curriculum is similar. He sees curriculum as a, "...channel of communication used...in order that the Christian faith and the Christian life may be known, accepted, and lived."²⁶ As long as we keep in mind that Christian education is more than "programs," Wyckoff's six curriculum design questions can get at the heart of the needed principles for understanding curriculum.²⁷ They serve as a framework in developing curriculum and will serve as a framework for cross-cultural Christian education.

Context

Wyckoff's question, "Where is the curriculum?"²⁸ gets at the context of Christian education. Context is the environment in which the learner is involved, or in other terms the culture of the learner. It shapes such things as values, attitudes and language and roles.

The previous examples of cross-cultural Christian education experienced in Brazil did not take into account the context. The transplantation of Sunday school falsely assumed that a North American context would be appropriate in a Brazilian context. Acculturation during Brazil's colonial history attempted to "correct" the context instead of teaching within the context. Syncretism did not value the cultures, that is the contexts, in order to preserve them. And isolation was an attempt of cultural preservation by insulating culture from outside influence.

The first step of cross-cultural curriculum must be exploration of context. This exploration empowers us to understand our "place," and therefore ourselves.²⁹ The worldview of the culture needs to be researched, to give insight into the attitudes, values, etc. of the culture. Language needs to be considered when investigating a culture. A meeting of language needs to take place. Which language should be used? Even when the language of a different culture is learned communication may or may not take place. At times meaning is lost when cultural lines are crossed. For example when a person living in a tropical climate is told that he/she will be washed as clean as snow there is no meaning. Therefore, within a cross-cultural context Christian education needs to explore the world, have open discussion to understand other's attitudes and values, and rely heavily on an observational learning method in order to bridge the communication gap between cultures.

Slattery points out that:

"...we have seen a concern for *interrelationships*, deep ecological, holistic models, and natural processes. This understanding of curriculum challenges educators to prioritize *global interdependence* and ecological sustainability in their postmodern curriculum development paradigms" (emphasis mine).³⁰

This means that Christian educators moving to other cultures cannot have a mindset of "I have the answer for you." Instead meaning is made when connections are established and an interdependence between cultures can be formed. This includes understanding of the educator's own primary culture, the adopted culture, and how they relate – making connections.

In addition, the educator must ask how does the Bible relate to these cultures? The Bible is coming out of a third culture and speaks to cultures differently. For example, biblical connections with a modern technological and industrial culture will look a lot different from biblical connections made with a South American indigenous people that are part of a culture that practiced sacrifices, including human sacrifice.

It may seem like an impossible task to make such connections with such differing cultures. But through the sharing of stories connections can be made, and interconnections established. Hence, the starting and ending point is careful observation and exploration of all the cultures involved.

²⁶ Wyckoff, 17

²⁷ Ibid., 83-84

²⁸ Ibid., 84

²⁹ Slattery, xii

³⁰ Slattery, 190

Scope

When Wyckoff asks the question, “What is the curriculum?” he is referring to the scope, the substance, or content of the curriculum. It may be limited to selected key elements or comprehensive, dealing with the field of relationships. For Wyckoff the scope was field of relationships - divine, human, nature or history in light of the Gospel.³¹ Note the primacy of the Gospel for Wyckoff as an objective content, in light of which all else is addressed.³² Post-modern curriculum includes a more eclectic and subjective understanding of hermeneutic interpretation and critical thinking,³³ due to the sense of interconnectedness that pervades post-modern thinking.³⁴

Cross-culturally, the scope of Christian education needs to be how people live and relate in relation to the Gospel. Instead of explaining the Bible to persons of another culture, it needs to be interpreted as it speaks to the particular culture. Interpretation allows for people to make connections from within their context which presumes that the people as well as the educator take part in the interpretation. Autobiographies and biographies as well as journaling are methods that can be employed to help interpret the Bible. Through this, recognition of connections with the past (in particular with Jesus) and imagining and creating future possibilities will result.³⁵

Purpose

The purpose answers Wyckoff’s question, “Why is curriculum?”³⁶ Wyckoff also connects the purpose of Christian education curriculum with meaning making. He sees meaning being made by making learners aware of who they are in light of God’s revelation, causing them to respond to this awareness,³⁷ the key to Wyckoff’s purpose is awareness and response.

In Slattery’s work, the purpose of curriculum development is also meaning making. But, this is done through building a community of interpreters (learners) that seek to understand lived experience and the self in relation to others.³⁸

Both Wyckoff and Slattery view the purpose as meaning making. However, Wyckoff sees the meaning making centered on the individual learner and coming to an understanding of who they are seen in light of an objectively understood biblical message. For Slattery understanding comes in the form of relating to others and how an individual is connected not only to God, but with others and with texts. Cross-culturally the interrelatedness between persons goes across cultural barriers. Answers must be found to the question, “How do I relate to people in culture “X”?” And, therefore, how can I express my Christian faith in that culture?

To ask an individual from a certain culture to respond in faith to their awareness of God’s revelation may be interpreted as removing them from their culture and inserting them into another culture arbitrarily called Christian. This very well may be the concept that the Brazilian government is trying to prevent with their “hands off” laws concerning indigenous groups. Rather than this, the development of a community that is interconnected and seeks to understand the lived experience and their self in relation to each other as well as God meaning will be made within the culture.

Transplantation of the Sunday school did not take into consideration the lived experience of Brazilians. The North American experience was imposed across cultural lines. Acculturation assumed that the only meaning was a Western European meaning. Syncretism avoids the issue of interrelatedness and meaning making by assimilation - trying to include all. The result is the formation of something all together different with a loss of meaning.

The way to accomplish the interconnectedness and make meaning by response to a person’s awareness of who they are in light of God’s revelation is through the encouragement of self reflection. Reflection would take the form of autobiographical reflection, narrative inquiry, re-visioned interpretation and contextual understanding. This would give an opportunity to inform the present and make connection with the past providing access to the future.³⁹

³¹ Wyckoff, 127

³² Ibid., 121-129

³³ Slattery, 36

³⁴ Ibid., 35

³⁵ Ibid., 77

³⁶ Wyckoff, 129-131

³⁷ Ibid., 131

³⁸ Slattery, xi

³⁹ Ibid., 36

Process

“How is the curriculum?” Wyckoff asks to gain insight into the process and method of the curriculum. Wyckoff sees teaching as inviting a person into meaningful participation in worship, witness and work.⁴⁰ This process/method of Christian curriculum for Wyckoff is active participation in the church. Specific methods are activities for the learner’s participation to become richer, more meaningful and effective.

Slattery points out the need for cooperation to replace competition in the methodology of Christian education.⁴¹ Curriculum that allows for cooperation instead of competition will allow for a dynamic experience of sharing. A “we have always done it that way” attitude would be replaced with a wide array of concepts emerging. This also promotes inclusion. Cross-culturally this means that persons need to take an active part in the life of the community of faith in order to participate in a sharing experience. (I use the term community of faith rather than church because the definition of church is varied greatly between cultures. The term community of faith is a broader and more inclusive term).

While Wyckoff’s view of participation includes worship, witness and work, Maria Harris offers a fuller view of participation in the life of the community of faith. Maria Harris sees the community of faith as 1) fellowship/communion, 2) prayer and worship, 3) teaching, 4) proclamation and 5) outreach (ministry).⁴² Curriculum like this is the life of the community and individual. It is not individualistic in that it depends on how the person relates to the community of faith and world. Harris’s “forms of the church” can be interpreted for cross-cultural Christian education as follows:

1) Fellowship aids in the formation of individuals. In order for them to understand God’s love they need to be included. Inclusion means to be attentive to the individuals who enter and make up the community. What kind of language is used? What kind of program is offered? How are people treated? Do these aspects of the curriculum include or exclude? In a cross-cultural context attention needs to be given to the culture. What does an inclusiveness look like? How are people made to feel welcome within the culture?

2) Prayer and worship help to discover, affirm and deepen spirituality of the participants. Participation in worship means, providing multiple ways for individuals to be involved in the planning and expression of worship that fit the culture. Acculturation did not allow for any variation in the expression of worship. The western European worship style was a given. Syncretism took the opposite extreme allowing for the infusion of practices that caused a loss of actual Christian worship and connectedness.

3) Harris sees teaching as twofold. First, there is knowledge and behaviors that are taught. These are the doctrines or verbal understandings that form the “law and lore” of the church. There is also a set of processes through which the body of knowledge is communicated. These are the actions, processes and procedures of the community. Culture would be a strong determining factor of the knowledge and how it is passed on. It must therefore be seriously considered. Education then, needs to be concerned with cognitive learning to learn those things “passed on” and behavior and attitudes dealing with how faith is expressed. Cross-cultural curriculum adds another element to the education with the expression of the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors in the culture.

4) Proclamation or speaking the Word goes beyond preaching. It may be spoken by any Christian, revealed as it is lived out or listened to by any listener. A Christian lifestyle allows for this to occur on a daily basis through speech, actions and attitudes God is revealed to persons as the Christian is responding in faith and love. How is this done in a particular culture? This informs the question, “What does it mean to be Christian in this context?”

5) Ministry requires a compassionate reaching out to those in need. This is part of the Christian lifestyle that allows God to be revealed to others. God is revealed as the Christian responds in faith and love. This would be an integral part of being Christian in a certain culture – reaching out. The form of the reaching out may be very different between cultures. Some forms in one culture may be very offensive in another. The best solution is that this kind of service need be done “with” people of the culture and not “for.”

A process based on participation in the community of faith fosters an atmosphere of mutuality, interrelatedness and interdependence. In addition, a sense of belonging results. In a cross-cultural situation an interconnectedness between individuals is also accomplished. Each person is deemed important and has something of value to offer. In transplantation, acculturation and syncretism, power over the culture was imposed causing exclusion instead of fostering inclusion.

⁴⁰ Wyckoff, 132

⁴¹ Slattery, 54

⁴² Harris, Maria, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 26

Organizing Principle

The organizing principle bridges the gap between the scope of Christian education and the actual learning situation.⁴³ For Wyckoff it answers the question, “In what way is it organized?”⁴⁴ He approaches the organizing principle with caution. Although he would like to develop a curriculum theory organized around experience, he sees the danger in it. Disorganization and anarchy may result.⁴⁵ Therefore, for Wyckoff the organizing principle is subject matter and individual experience.

Today, Slattery organizes curriculum around community, cooperation and experience. He sees the educator actively engaged in a process of understanding text (subject matter) experience and self in relation to others.⁴⁶ In Christian education the text would be the subject matter, experience, and self in relationship. The learning process is organized around understanding the subject matter, personal experience and self in relation to others within a concrete cultural context.

Transplantation of Sunday school was organized around an instructional model of learning. It was impersonal by not considering the text of personal experience. Acculturation, too, did not allow for the text of personal experience. The goal was to teach the indigenous people the Western European experience of worship. Syncretism assimilated experience without consideration of the ramifications in the context. It ignored the text of self in relationship.

Cross-cultural connections need to be made. These connections link individuals of other cultures to the Bible as they see how their personal experiences fit within the biblical text and others. This is best accomplished within a community of faith as individuals gain understanding with who they are in relation to the others of the community and the world.

Organizing Medium

“By what means is the curriculum organized?” This is the question Wyckoff answers in order to get at the organizing medium.⁴⁷ For him, in 1961, the learning tasks are the organizing medium. They are the approaches to learning and to the teaching learning process. It is grounded in educational theory and in theology. Wyckoff’s organizing medium is listening and responding to God. The experiences this would dictate would include:

- Taking part in the life of the church
- Studying the Bible to understand the Gospel
- Praying
- Accepting the Gospel
- Depending on the Gospel
- Growing in the Gospel

Slattery emphasizes an individual’s own capacity to reconceptualize autobiography, recognize connections with other people, recover and reconstitute the past and imagine and create future possibilities.⁴⁸ These are the tasks for gaining knowledge in being.

Since we are looking at a cross-cultural context the organizing medium would look somewhat different. Since this Christian educational curriculum theory is based within a community of faith and largely depends on participation and cooperation, then the medium needs to be based on learning in the community of faith. Daniel Aleshire gives insight into learning in the community of faith in *Faith Care*.⁴⁹

Aleshire contends that learning in the community of faith goes beyond only cognitive learning. Affective and behavioral learning are also a part of the learning experience in the faith community.

⁴³ Wyckoff, 139

⁴⁴ Ibid., 84

⁴⁵ Ibid., 141

⁴⁶ Slattery, 118

⁴⁷ Wyckoff, 84

⁴⁸ Slattery, 77

⁴⁹ Aleshire, Daniel O., *Faith Care: Ministering to All God’s People Through the Ages of Life*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988)

For him affective learning better takes place when the learning is person centered⁵⁰. In order to accommodate person centered learning small groups or even individual attention will be necessary. The student learns emotions through personal contact giving rise to experience. For example, love is learned by being loved. Experiences like these are not bound by culture and therefore important and effective in teaching across cultures.

Behavioral learning is also an important part in the community of faith. Modeling, says Aleshire, accomplishes this.⁵¹ Modeling is always taking place. It becomes much more effective with the closer the contact with the model. This is much like the discipleship model in the New Testament. In the community of faith this needs to be intentional through a mentoring, discipling or apprentice ministry. This can be very effective in teaching how a truth may be interpreted and expressed in that culture.

Cognitive learning is best accomplished when the learner is actively engaged in the teaching/learning process.⁵² The learner needs his/her interest aroused and invited to reflection and response. This means an active participation in the community of faith is necessary. An arrogant “we have the answers for your culture” attitude would short-circuit the cognitive learning reducing the culturally bound experiences of the learners to unimportant.

Conclusion

It is possible to see from these theorists that it is feasible to do effective Christian education cross-culturally. First the context needs to be considered. Research needs to be done to learn and understand the cultures of the learner and teacher. A cultural immersion experience would give the best results. But historical and sociological inquiries will also give information in order to contextualize the curriculum.

Since this is dealing with a Christian curriculum theory the Bible is central. But, the scope needs to go beyond cognitive Bible knowledge and include biblical interpretation and interpretation of life. The interpretation is to give understanding to the Christian role. In other words the scope is not static knowledge. It would center on an application level of learning. Scripture would be searched in order to understand not only what it means to be Christian, but what it means to be Christian in the given context.

The purpose of this cross-cultural curriculum is to raise awareness of who individuals and communities are in light of God’s revelation. This purpose goes beyond knowing with the idea of, “what does it mean to be Christian?” This is the meaning making that cross-cultural Christian curriculum fosters.

The process of this meaning making is active participation in the community of faith. In order to best encourage participation in the community of faith spiritual gift discovery would be appropriate. This would aid the learner to know who they are and how they are best connected to the community of faith. The learner would also need to be given experiences that would aid in the use and development of those gifts. The experience will need to find a balance between challenge and level of development that the gift is expressed. If the learner is overly challenged he/she will become discouraged. If he/she is overly developed for an unchallenging experience he/she will become bored.

The organizing principle of the cross-cultural curriculum is experiential learning through participation in a community of faith. Not only will connections be made within the community, but cross-culturally and worldwide as well.

With community, cooperation and participation are important elements in the cross-cultural theory and a social learning theory is needed for the organizing medium. This will be done through observational learning by means of a mentor or apprentice program. The mentor or apprentice leader would invest his/her life into new members of the community. It would consist of a close association both within the community as well as during the week. Some instruction would occur, but the learning would be based on hands on experiential learning through close contact with the more experienced person. The gifts of the individual would be considered when paired with the mentor or modeler. The mentor would have the responsibility to assist the observer to develop these gifts, demonstrate how they may be expressed and give opportunities that can be used to develop them.

Christian education can be done across cultures. It needs to be done in ways like this in order that the people of a culture can become interconnected with other cultures and not assimilated. Like this we as

⁵⁰ Ibid., 59

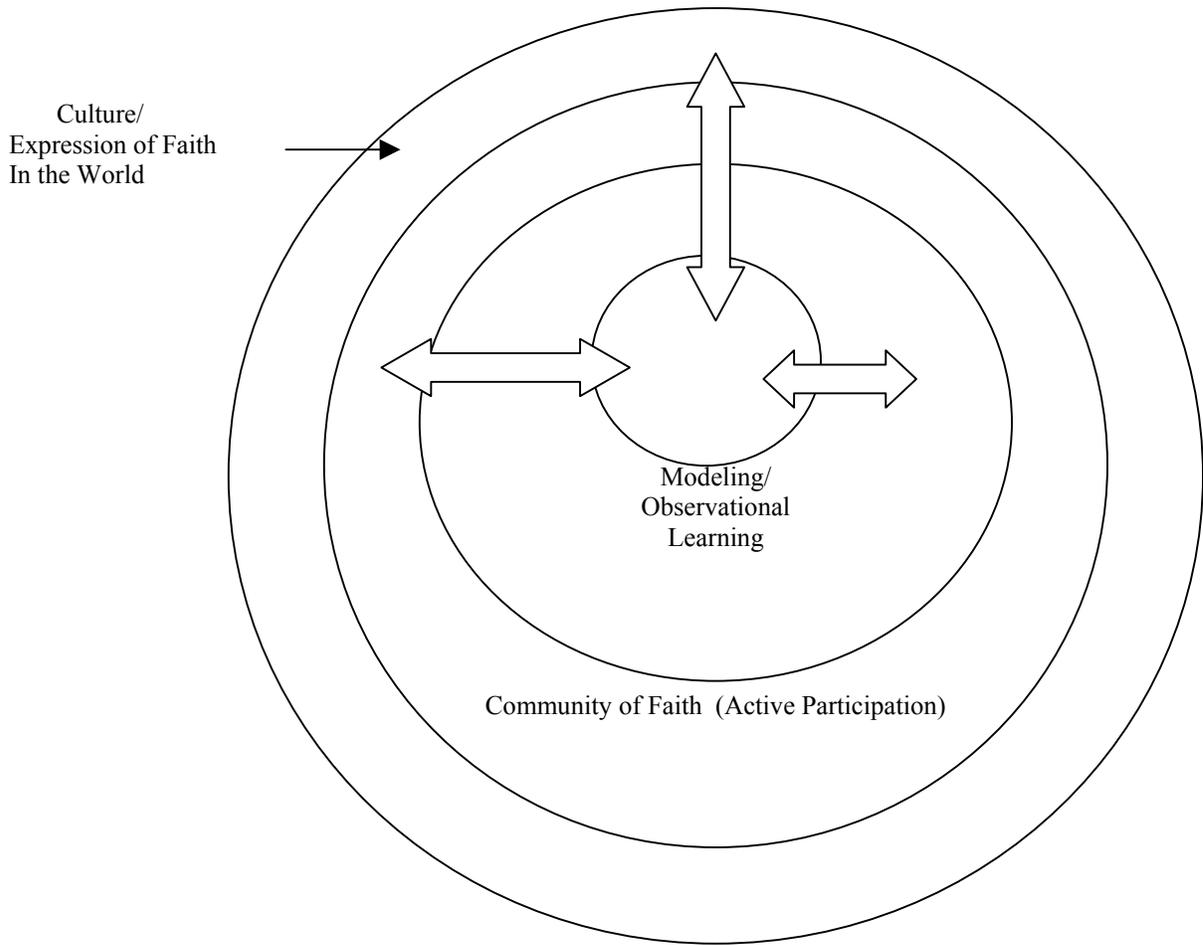
⁵¹ Ibid., 63

⁵² Ibid., 67

Christians can become more interrelated with others and have a greater understanding of what it means to be Christian and how to respond to the revelation of God in faith and love.

Putting it all Together

A diagram to express developing a Christian education curriculum cross-culturally may look something like figure 5.



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