Non-Formal Education in Central/Eastern Europe

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Mission Statement
Common Ground Journal (*CGJ*) is a publication of the CanDoSpirit Network and is published twice annually as a resource for Christian congregations seeking to understand and faithfully live out their calling as the people of God in the world. The primary audience for CGJ is thoughtful Christians in congregations who are catalysts for growth within their own churches.

CGJ is devoted to the development of strong, faithful churches whose life and ministry grow out of the church's nature as the people of God. They are organized and led in a manner consistent with their nature and mission. They continually ask, "What does it mean to be a sign of the Kingdom of God in the world today?"

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- Articles based on responsible qualitative research designed to inform a local congregation's understanding of its life and ministry

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From the Editors
By Dave Patty and Steve Patty

The task of preparing church leaders from among the emerging generation in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe is fraught with challenges. Some are economical (e.g., how to bring education to those lacking financial liberty or discretionary mobility). Some are geopolitical (e.g., how to situate effective ministry training within regions long absent of and traditionally hostile towards the gospel). Some are cultural (e.g., how to assist a new generation of leaders to emerge healthily amidst an often obdurate culture of church leadership established under the communist era). And some are developmental (e.g., how to negotiate the rapidly changing psycho-social shifts of contemporary youth culture).

These, among other strategic issues, confront the church in its effort to provide future leadership. Non-formal education for ministerial development has been one innovative and effective response, gaining in momentum and scale of adoption in recent years. This issue of *Common Ground Journal* is dedicated to examining the philosophy, strategy, and current practice of non-formal modes of ministerial education throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

All but one of the contributors to this issue is of Eastern or Central European origin, providing an indigenous voice and style of communication from that region of the world. They represent a breadth of experience, from denominational and regional leadership to local ministerial activism. Each of the authors is a veteran practitioner. They offer perspectives from the front lines of non-formal ministry more than from the theoretical halls of the scholarly academy. Hence the articles have a less formal tone. Fewer citations are used. Instead, they draw heavily from experience and offer us a glimpse into the raw and unfolding practice of reaching and training a new generation for ministry.

In order to glean what we need from their experience, we have included an editorial introduction to orient the reader to each article as well as a brief commentary and set of questions to guide in reflection following each article. These are posed not to

define the learnings, but rather to help stimulate an analytical consideration and conversation among the readership. The models presented here are inspiring in the scale of their reach and the depth of their penetration into the hearts and minds of emerging leaders, but they also represent some of the complexities and challenges that confront all non-formal models. Those of us charged with the development of Christian leaders would do well to think carefully about the issues represented in these articles.

For the purposes of this edition of *Common Ground Journal*, we are using the term "non-formal" to identify a particular form, or "species," of education. We differentiate non-formal from both formal education and informal education. ***Formal education*** takes place primarily in a classroom (and now online) and holds to the classic structure of the academy (accreditation, terms, courses, grades, etc.). ***Informal education*** happens during life and along-the-way. It is what rubs off as people spend time together, what is "caught" instead of "taught." It usually has no organized curricula, but can be powerfully formative (take, for example, the powerful effect of a parent's influence on a child, causing learning to happen informally through normal, day-by-day exchanges).

Non-formal education, in distinction, has form, intentionality, and curricula, but does not depend on grades, tests, courses, terms, and degrees for its structure. As a result, it is highly flexible, adaptive, and practical. It often bears resemblance to the andragogical models of adult learning, but can be applied to all age groups. It usually has a beginning and end, someone who leads or facilitates, and some means to evaluate outcomes among the participants. But its actual form is unrestricted and imaginative, commonly responding to the pulse of current need and the impulse of contemporary social and spiritual milieu. Non-formal modes of education are most frequently grown out of practical need and tethered to present applicability for its constituency. Consequently, it is a powerful tool for churches in regions where there is a dire need for more leaders trained in ministry practice (for example, a new generation of ministers for the burgeoning church in Eastern and Central Europe) and where the classic mode of formal education is slow, limited, inaccessible, and impractical.

Innovative non-formal models are currently emerging throughout Eastern Europe and the regions of the formal Soviet Union as the People of God seek to develop leaders for the church among the younger generations. Some of these models have been received enthusiastically, are multiplying rapidly, and appear to be quite effective in developing a

new generation of Christian leaders. This issue of the *Common Ground Journal* is designed to capture some of the best of these as illustrations and advance the conversation about the usage of non-formal education worldwide for developing leaders for the Christian church. – *Steve Patty*

Benefits and Challenges of Non-Formal Education

It is a privilege to team up with my brother to prepare this issue of the *Common Ground Journal*. Having served for many years in academic and leadership consulting roles, Steve brings a keen mind and careful analysis to the questions of non-formal education. Since I have worked for the last 17 years as the leader of a leadership training organization with staff in 11 countries of Eastern Europe, my contribution will be from the view of a practitioner living and serving in the region. Non-formal education has been central to the leadership training strategy of our team since the beginning. The following are my brief observations about the benefits and challenges of such an approach.

Benefits

Integration of Content and Experience. In non-formal education students are selected because of their current engagement in ministry, and trained without taking them out of their ministry context and location. They are not preparing for future service that is vague and unknown, but grappling with current problems and applying what they learn to real world situations. This adds a powerful praxis dimension to learning, and allows them to take theory into application with no delay. Students in this context tend to be much more engaged in the learning process, and bring considerable personal experience to the content and discussion. This generally results in a much richer integration of information and experience than in a traditional school setting.

Accessibility. Because non-formal education is not bound by walls or institutional norms, it is by nature much more geographically accessible. Training can take place in homes, or churches, in a cabin up in the mountains, or even on the way in a car or train. It can also be better formed to the pacing of the students, allowing them to stay engaged in their church or local ministry while growing in their capacity and skills. Timing can vary according to local needs – moving faster or slower as the group is able. This paradigm opens non-formal education to many gifted servants who would not be able to make the geographical and vocational changes necessary to enroll in a typical school.

Student Motivation. Because of the perceived prestige associated with an institution or degree, some students study for the title or diploma rather than for personal growth in knowledge and capability. At times they enroll in school to please their parents, or because they have no clarity about their life's pursuit. Since non-formal education does not typically grant recognized degrees or credentials, students tend to be self motivated and personally committed to the outcomes that the program is pursuing. They are engaged primarily to learn and grow, and this shows itself in personal motivation and intrinsic desire. For a teacher, this makes working with students in the non-formal setting a very rewarding experience.

Character Development. Good non-formal programs build in ample time for informal interaction, around meals, on ministry exposure trips, at retreats, or in personal visits to their ministries. Modeling after Jesus and the disciples, they understand the importance of training "on the way", and teaching by engaging in ministry together. This offers many unplanned opportunities for instruction, as character tends to show itself most clearly outside of the normal classroom setting. Generally the teacher student ratio is higher in a non-formal setting, and a component of the program includes coaching and feedback. In this setting, character issues can be exposed and addressed, all in the context of community and relationship. Considerable life change can result from the careful attention to character development and the "iron sharpens iron" context of a learning community. Because long term ministry success is often more tied to character and walk with God than the ability to process information and perform well on exams, a non-formal setting can significantly increase the potential of subsequent fruit.

Teacher Selection. In an institutional setting, teachers generally must be qualified by advanced degrees and academic credentials. Many are employed full time in the academic world, making them more analysts and observers than engaged practitioners. In non-formal education the teachers can be selected from those who are most fruitful in the field and able to teach, regardless of their academic credentials. Because of the concentrated nature of non-formal programs, teachers can leave their current ministry for a focused block of time, and then return to their front lines setting. These kinds of teachers teach both by communication and the model of their lives, and inspire students with recent examples from their ministries. Generally this makes them better equipped to give practical answers to the relevant problems faced by students.

Ministry Fruit. Because students are recruited from those in ministry, and trained without taking them from ministry, we find that the long term fruit from our investment is very high. Most of them are still serving the Lord many years later, and the transformation and change they experience is generally quite lasting. Since they are applying as they go, the long term retention of content is quite high, as is their ability to integrate it into real life.

Challenges

Financial Sustainability. The stable and formal nature of an institution allows them to charge significant tuition, apply for grants from the State, receive subsidies from the government, or build long term funding sources such as endowments or estate giving. Though non-formal education is generally less expensive by nature, ensuring the long term financial viability of the programs is a significant challenge. Often foundations will give grants for a limited time, and then turn their attention to other emerging forms of training or new geographic locations. Individual donors do not always understand the strategic investment of non-formal education.

Sometimes the travel costs to bring in students or send teachers to their location can be significant. Living together for blocks of instruction add an important community dimension, but the cost of housing and food is then added to the overall cost of the program. If a long term and sustainable financial model is not discovered, non-formal programs spring up quickly, and just as rapidly die away, losing their potential long term impact.

Quality Control. Since non-formal programs are not accredited by an educational agency, they must internally build and maintain systems of quality control. Sometimes the program is built around a gifted individual or teacher. When that person moves on, others keep the activities of the program running, but without the gifted spark of inspired instruction. Other times programs are successful and then grow beyond their ability to maintain quality as they expand to new locations, or add new fields of instruction. Generally people vote with their feet, and a non-formal program that loses its edge will soon lose the majority of its participants. Maintaining this edge over time and through leadership transitions is one of the significant challenges of non-formal programs.

Vision Drift. Training programs generally begin with a clear outcome in mind, and attract participants because of the clarity of their vision. Over time this vision can become fuzzy and obscured by the details of executing the plan. New opportunities come along, and more personalities begin to express their particular view of the future. If a sharp focus is not maintained, over time the program becomes overgrown, like a bush that loses it shape, or an apple tree with too many limbs. Without constant trimming and refocus, the program can quickly become shapeless and unfruitful.

Outcomes vs. Activities. Generally a non-formal training program is begun by a visionary with the ability to respond to specific needs with effective activities that meet these needs. As they train up a team, the next generation often sees the activities rather than the outcome, believing that the proper execution of the current program will guarantee a fruitful outcome. They begin, in the words of Peter Drucker, to become preoccupied with "doing things right rather than doing the right things". Since students are constantly changing, and the context they are serving in continually shifting, steering a non-formal program is like captaining a sailing ship in the midst of constantly changing currents and weather. Without regular adjustments of the sails and calibration to the North Star, a program can quickly find itself missing the course or sailing in circles. This is particularly true when the pioneer who founded the program follows his or her pioneer heart into something new, leaving behind a team of practitioners who tend to focus on activities rather than outcomes.

The Quest for Legitimacy. Though the outcomes of non-formal education are very significant and appealing, sometimes the lure of recognition by the State and formal institutions proves too powerful. In an attempt to find "legitimacy" a program begins to seek accreditation at all costs, losing its unique calling and place. This is not to say that formal education (and informal for that matter) does not have its important and vital place. Many leaders engage in both formal and non-formal training, and find there are some kinds of learning that occurs best in an institutional setting. Sometimes, however, in an attempt to have the best of both worlds, a program ends up in a "no man's land" with the benefits of neither and the difficulties of both. Saddled with the requirements of academia it loses its non-formal edge, and trying to be non-formal it is unable to deliver the advantages of an institution. It is important to recognize that non-formal education is

not legitimate in its exclusivity (as in the only proper way to equip and train) but in its unique and special focus on life change and powerful integration of content and praxis.

Palm Trees in Norway. All soil is not the same, and plants do not perform equally in different climates. What thrives in a dry and hot environment will struggle for life in a place that is cold and wet. Coming from Colorado, I have for years tried to grow sweet corn at our home in Czech. The imported seed doesn't even sprout here – it rots in the ground. But I do have a wonderful lawn that never needs water. Grass grows well in the cool wet environment where we live. In the same way, non-formal programs often can't be directly "transplanted" from a location with significantly different conditions. A leader needs to carefully make adaptations to the local environment, looking for what naturally thrives in local soil. When people simply import without regard for the local environment, the resulting 'plant' is often anemic or unfruitful.

Dropped Handoffs. Leadership training is like a relay race. To go the distance, the baton needs to be passed into the hands of new runners, who then need to be able to pass it to the hands of others. The most critical part of a relay race is the handoff. If the baton is dropped, the race is lost. After 17 years of leadership training in the region, I have seen my share of dropped handoffs. Excellent non-formal efforts can be lost very quickly when the handoff doesn't do smoothly or the baton does not end up in the right hands. Leadership needs to be particularly sensitive to the crucial nature of these handoffs, and be willing to go back and try again when the baton is dropped. Sometime it takes several tries, and a series of painful conversations and confrontations with reality. Without this attention, however, the effectiveness of non-formal education can be quickly lost. *– Dave Patty*

About the Editors

Dave Patty is the founder and president of Josiah Venture, a mission organization focused on training next generation leaders throughout Eastern Europe. The vision that motivates Dave and his team is a movement of God among young people in Eastern Europe, one that finds its home in the local church, and transforms society. Dave lives with his wife Connie and three children, in Frydlant, Czech Republic. He attended Multnomah University in Portland Oregon, Colorado State University, and Wheaton Graduate School. Dave holds a BA in Theology and a MA in Education and has been involved in training young leaders in Europe for the past 25 years. Before moving to Eastern Europe he served in Germany with Cadence International.

Steve Patty, Ph.D. is founder and principal of Dialogues In Action, LLC, a consulting firm that helps leaders of organizations rethink the development of people. His background is in academia, serving as Associate Director of Doctoral Programs at the University of Monaco in the Principality of Monaco (in cooperation with the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis), where he continues to teach as an adjunct faculty member. He also held the department chair in Educational Ministry at Multnomah University in Portland, Oregon for 13 years. He has a Ph.D. from Trinity in Chicago, IL and has been trained at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, MA.

School Without Walls and the Local Church: A Model of Informal Leadership Training in Post-Soviet Countries

By Mykhailo M. Cherenkov (former Soviet Union)

Abstract

Mykhailo Cherenkov describes an innovative model for developing ministry that is gaining traction throughout the regions of the former Soviet Union. School Without Walls (SWW) is a non-formal design that has gained inroads into some of the most remote, threatening, and intractable geo-political contexts of Eastern Europe. Of particular note in this essay is the positioning of SWW to work within, across, and in challenge to the established evangelical church.

Introduction

School Without Walls (SWW) is a non-formal approach to training potential Christian ministry leaders. The target audience is the younger generation of Christians in post-Soviet countries, who desire to develop within themselves leadership qualities in service of the church and the society around them. Unique teaching methods and relevant content attract youth to active participation in the seminars, questions and discussions, and, most importantly, prepare them to take their first steps in personal practical ministry. SWW offers a balanced program, which treats church traditions, respect for the older generation, and learning from their wisdom and experience, as well as growth, innovation, and relevance to modern society with importance. These seminars for youth help the church renew its vision and be more active and innovative in ministry.

School Without Walls (SWW) began in 2004 as an experiment. The fact that this experiment has lasted six years and in that time has expanded geographically to cover ten former Soviet republics[1] means that it can be considered successful. However, we prefer to talk about movement and growth.

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[1] According to Konstantin Teteryatnikov, director of SWW, in the 2009-2010 school year about 2,000 students from over 250 churches in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan participated in SWW. You may read more at Konstantin's blog: http://teteryatnikov.blogspot.com/2010_11_01_archive.html.

SWW arose as an attempt to offer a new, flexible format of training for new missionaries. It was preceded by a long-term project of the Association for Spiritual Renewal (ASR), which held a series of Church Planting Seminars (CPS). Over 5,000 missionaries were trained through CPS, who went on to plant thousands of churches. However by 2002 the program was on the wane: a decrease in support for professional missionaries—those fully engaged in church-planting—led to an even greater decrease in their numbers. By 2002 it was clear that the CPS movement would not become a widespread missions vision for the younger generation, and also could not become self-financed—the newly-planted churches could not support their pastors or send out their own missionaries.

Given this situation, SWW offered a missions vision for church laymen. The success of this program helped both identify and prepare new missions leaders, and also rethink the essence of missions.

The CPS movement treated missionaries as unique ministry professionals. In SWW almost everyone becomes a missionary. Missions is now understood not as a specific type of work (involving going somewhere), but as a worldview and calling, which become, naturally and inescapably, the lifestyle of every Christian in relation to the surrounding world.

Thereby SWW has expanded the understanding of missions and the circle of those involved in it. This has helped churches not only send traditional missionaries, but also discover in themselves, in regular church life, a missional character, and take a proactive stance in their social and cultural surroundings.

The Crisis of Christian Education in the Former Soviet Union

It has become common to hear that Christian education needs the church, but one rarely hears that the church needs Christian education. Yes, churches send members to study in Bible colleges and seminaries, and may even financially support some schools. That is probably why pastors speak from a position of authority about schools—as though they are in control of the human and financial resources which allow the schools to exist. But the church can't live in a vacuum either. The interdependence of various ministries has been instituted by God and is in accordance with human needs.

Academic institutions and programs help the church prepare leaders and intellectual resources for ministry, form doctrine, and authoritatively defend the faith. Education will always present a challenge to the wider church, her traditions, authority, and ministry format, but it is education which gives the church the systematization and dynamism it needs.

The system of Christian education in post-Soviet countries has undergone a difficult, though typical, evolution—from a fight for resources to a fight for people. Years have been invested in creating a physical infrastructure, but buildings empty quicker than their construction process can be completed. Those who wanted to study have finished their studies. Those in need of motivation to pursue studies have not received it.

With time, secular society has offered that which the church couldn't—a wide array of choices of various levels and types of educational services. In the early 1990s, tired of Soviet education with its communist ideology and atheistic worldview, people longed for the alternative of religious education. However, eventually it became clear that the quality of Christian schools did not meet the expectations of mature and motivated students. What is even sadder is that Christian education could not even compete with corrupt and technologically backward public schools.

Disillusionment with Christian academic institutions has created a situation where there are no aspiring students, while graduates of Christian schools find that there is no demand for the knowledge and skills they acquired.

SWW'S Response

SWW responds to these needs and problems, offering an alternative to the failing and ineffective system of Christian education currently in place in the former Soviet Union. SWW has several characteristics which set her apart from traditional Christian academic institutions:

SWW Cultivates Interest in Education

In the big picture of Christian education SWW plays an informational and motivational role. SWW expands the pool of potential students for Christian schools because it appeals to all youth, including those who never considered Christian education; it motivates the average young church-goer to study and prepare for active ministry. SWW provides an opportunity for practice for young teachers, seminary

graduates, and missionaries. It brings together teacher and student resources which were previously unused in local churches.

SWW's Structure Unites the Church, Education, and Missions

SWW is unique in that it operates entirely within the church. It grows from within the local church's situation and responds to her needs. Students grow in the church. Children and youth can be viewed as future students, missionaries, and pastors. An experienced church leader sees in them the future, but that future will not grow and develop on its own. If people were born leaders, there would be no need for education. However, as far as we have seen, that is not the case.

In most churches there are young people with leadership potential, but they need encouragement, motivation, development of their talents, and relevant knowledge and skills. Potential leaders need an education that can transform them from laymen into leaders.

Teachers also come from within the local church. About 80% of the teachers are local church leaders—pastors, deacons, and those responsible for teaching, service, or evangelistic projects. They are not always from the same church as the students, but they are nearby, visible, and accessible. The overlap between church life and ministry helps students and teachers create connections and relationships. Fellowship is not limited to time spent within classroom walls, but continues in joint ministry. Therefore all teachers are selected by the local coordinator in accordance with the needs of the local church.

When the two-year SWW program finishes, graduates remain where they are and continue to serve in the local church while expanding its borders, influencing society, and serving those around them. Church leaders, coordinators, students, and graduates make up one big ministry team.

SWW's Relationships with Churches Help the Wider Church,
But Also Contribute to Growth in SWW

The reciprocity of the relationship between SWW and the local church can be expressed in terms of response and influence. SWW responds to the needs of churches, but also influences the determination of those needs, as well as expectations, and opinions.

A recent study by Taras Dyatlik[2] revealed a disconnect between the expectations of churches and educational projects. It turns out that a majority of schools and programs don't meet the needs of pastors and their ideas of church-oriented education.

This raises many questions, but two stand out: First, to what degree are pastors' opinions representative of the church—how well do pastors understand the mission of the church and its connection with education, as well as education itself as an intellectual sphere? And second, should educational programs be oriented towards the predominant opinion of them in churches, or should they influence that opinion through informational work and lobbying?

Discussion of these two questions hasn't received much response, however, the questions can be raised at the Institute for Excellence sessions in Minsk, Belarus in 2009 and Kiev, Ukraine in 2010.

Based on our experience with SWW it seems only a few pastors of traditional post-Soviet churches understand the basis for and goals of Christian education; therefore orienting ourselves to their expectations would be inexcusably naive.

Pastors prefer to teach young people classes on "The History of the Baptist Union," and "Introduction to the Old Testament," as it allows them to control the situation and ensure that it is predictable. Open theological discussions, learning from the experience of successful youth clubs, internet evangelism, and ministry to at-risk groups seem dangerous, because they lead to change. In response to our offer to hold a seminar on ministry to the HIV-positive, one church leadership council responded, "The Old Testament says that such people should be isolated. We don't know if our church would even be able to help them, and they would definitely infect us."

It is clear that the opinions and expectations of churches need to be formed in partnership, dialogue, and mutual openness with educational institutions and programs. Otherwise a lack of commonality between the understandings and expectations of the two will remain unresolved.

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[2] Dyatlik, Taras. 2009. "What Expectations do Pastors and Local Churches in the Former Soviet Union have of Higher Theological Education at the Beginning of the 21st Century?" *Theological Reflections #10*. Accessed December 13, 2010. http://www.mediafire.com/?xdt10kizzg4.

SWW Makes Christian Education a Part of Church Life

The educational initiative for SWW comes from within the church, and is enriched by exposure to others' ideas, models, and approaches introduced to them by visiting teachers and put to the test through implementation and adaptation to the local context. Education brings dynamism to the local church and the missions focus of the program helps direct the activity of church youth into practical ministry. The church no longer sends its youth away to school, but the school comes to the church, helps her grow and develop her own outreach and missions. The focus on the church is reflected in the structure of the program, which always remains flexible and takes into account local needs. SWW offers a program which the church can justifiably consider her own and not imported. Such a program can be called home-made—out of a collection of seminars and general recommendations, and the youth of the church can choose their own focus, the topics that are most important to them, and the most effective leaders, teachers, and mentors.

SWW has become a concept and a ministry around which the most progressive leaders, churches and missions from different denominations and traditions unite and interact. It has aroused interest among churches in India, Nepal and Bhutan. A number of churches connected with SWW have even chosen to call themselves "Church Without Walls." This is a good name for a church model which is focused not on itself and its internal interests, but is instead open to ministry to the outside world.

Problems and Difficulties

SWW faces specific problems and difficulties with implementation of its strategy in the context of local church life. We have been discouraged by a lack of bright, charismatic leaders among the youth of traditional churches. In places where young people are given minimal freedom of self-expression and creativity, enthusiasm quickly dies and potential leaders, preachers, speakers, and musicians recede into the shadows. Through SWW we try to create parachurch ministries such as youth centers, sports leagues, and discussion clubs so that leaders can put their newly-acquired skills and knowledge into practice there. But conservative churches often see these kinds of ministries as a challenge to themselves and put pressure on the more visible leaders and bold initiatives.

It is also difficult to be responsible for almost 2000 SWW students and to further develop the project. It is difficult to support a single vision, to provide effective management and fulfill the budget. Therefore, we are working on redistributing financial and logistical responsibility to regional schools, coordinators, and local churches.

In its efforts to lend dynamism to ministry and activate church youth, SWW meets with many difficulties, the majority of which arise from the condition of post-Soviet Evangelical churches. A critical mass of youth has emerged from these churches and they are discontented with the passivity and traditionalism of their churches. Meanwhile church leadership is to a large degree copying Soviet-era Christianity—marginalized, counter-cultural, overly conservative, and hierarchical (even bureaucratic). SWW leaders are forced to take into account both the wishes of the youth and the opinions of the older generation, which is concerned with the fate of its traditions. This duality limits the qualitative growth of the program, the pool of prospective teachers, and the recommended reading list. Many effective models of church growth and missions are rejected by traditional churches. Taking into account the pluralism of theological approaches and church models, it is difficult to offer a unifying program for all SWW branches. But without one, many schools, under pressure from church leadership, turn SWW into a miniature seminary. Therefore the flexibility of the SWW program must be limited by clear conceptual boundaries, which, if crossed, mean the program is no longer accomplishing its purpose and mission.

Lessons

There is an encouraging lesson to be drawn from SWW's experience, both for us and for other Christian educators and church and mission leaders: the church has a huge, hidden, untapped resource of young leaders and their ministry initiatives.

We have refocused our vision through the SWW experience. SWW has become a new vision, uniting and motivating all of our ministries. All of our service, publishing, and missions projects are oriented towards SWW students. We publish literature to help them in their studies and ministry. We invite them to participate in our missions trips. It is through their hands that our community service projects are carried out. SWW students and graduates are our driving force and our target audience.

Historically, our mission (Association for Spiritual Renewal/Russian Ministries) has worked mostly with the largest Protestant denominations in the former USSR: Baptists and Pentecostals. However, our experience of the last few years has shown that those most receptive to new models are not traditional churches but newly planted congregations and groups. Today we prefer to work less with official structures and more with youth from various churches and denominations who show initiative, and who are in constant search of new approaches and creativity in missions. Recently, our circle of partners has become very diverse, and we are convinced that there are more and more independent missions groups, cooperation with whom holds a lot of promise, as they do not orient themselves around Soviet-era traditions, but around preaching in modern culture with youth as their target audience. We plan on constantly expanding our circle of partner churches through newly-planted groups. We have come to understand that our task is not to change older churches, but to help a new type of churches grow and develop new types of leaders.

Conclusion

SWW has become an innovative ministry training program for the youth of local churches throughout the former Soviet Union. It is challenging traditional leaders to renew their vision and strategy for reaching out to the young generation and reforming themselves into the missional church. SWW's experience has shown that the church contains unused and practically unlimited potential in its youth, which remains almost untouched by academic institutions such as colleges and seminaries. The flexible program of SWW seminars attracts youth with its format (one to two days a month are a realistic time commitment for youth who work or study full-time), the relevance of its topics, and its teachers.

SWW offers a balanced program, which treats church traditions, respect for the older generation, and learning from their wisdom and experience, as well as growth, innovation, and relevance to modern society with importance. These seminars help the church renew its vision and be more active and innovative in ministry.

As it turns out, the main problem of Christian education and ministry in the former Soviet Union is due not to a lack of interest among youth in their calling, but with an outdated format, and problems with educational and missions models. The idea of

SWW has stimulated a search for new approaches, and new formats of educational and motivational work with youth.

Reference List

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About the Author

Mykhailo Cherenkov, Ph.D**.** is Professor at Donetsk Christian University and a specialist in the social theology of Protestant churches and philosophy of religion. Since 2005 he has been vice president of the Association for Spiritual Renewal/Russian Ministries. He is a member of the board of directors of the Fellowship of Evangelical Students of Ukraine, and Saint Petersburg Christian University. To learn more about School Without Walls, you may visit the SWW website at www.bez-sten.com, or the websites of the Association for Spiritual Renewal: www.asr.ru, or Russian Ministries: www.russian-ministries.org.

Reflections from the Editors

Principles of Non-Formal Education

- It is striking that only when the ministry efforts of the organization that designed School Without Walls, the Association for Spiritual Renewal (ASR), shifted from professional training to ministry education for the lay person, did it burgeon into its potential. This philosophical adjustment targets the whole people of God where "almost everyone becomes a missionary."

- One of the fascinating developments of this program has been its ability to work across denominations and unite the church. Even though it situates the education within the local church, it is designed to work among the various churches of a region, utilizing the combined leadership resources of the evangelical church, thereby bonding them in a common mission and process.

- Those leading this non-formal initiative have also had to wrestle with how to engage the old guard of the church community while still being able to target the development of the emerging generation. They have settled into a position wherein they seek for SWW to enrich, but not necessarily transform the old church, and simultaneously stir the development of new ministries relevant for a new generation.

Questions for Consideration

- One of the issues facing School Without Walls (SWW) is the need to protect the model from becoming simply a more accessible vehicle for formal education, thereby constricting the potential fluidity, responsiveness, and power of the model. As the program gains popularity and is adopted widely and over a vast region, it is susceptible simply to being a new structure to carry classic educational concepts such as lectures, papers, and grades—a lighter, more nimble version of the scholarly

academy. Cherenkov notes the challenge of embedding the non-formal philosophy among the leaders of the sites. How can non-formal principles best become embedded in second and third generation leaders?

- The success SWW has had in supporting and stimulating the established church to grow is remarkable. How can non-formal models act in partnership with the establishment in an enriching but nonthreatening way? Might there be appropriate areas to provoke and appropriately threaten the establishment? As the model gains momentum and popularity, what can be done to protect the essence of productive collaboration with the institutions of the church?

My Experience in Disciple-Making
By Maruška Kozlejova (Slovakia)

Abstract
Maruška Kozlejova suggests that one of the most remarkable features of non-formal ministry development models is their ability to create and sustain a purposeful process of disciple-making in environments where there are few resources, support structures, hierarchies of authority, credentials, and other accoutrements normally requisite for programs to be considered viable. They are, in other words, uniquely inventive, resourceful, and resilient. In Kozlejova's essay, we see how a 17-year-old, with no formal ministry training finds a way to penetrate her community with the gospel and develop a means to make disciples and multiply disciple-making. Notice how the model developed in response to urging of God, the example of Scriptures, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the unique setting, opportunity, and personality of a young woman who had a vision for her community to come to follow Christ.

Hearts Broken By God

I was quickly going through my notes while Denisa was sharing her experience and knowledge with a group of students. We were both asked to prepare a lecture on discipleship and I was so glad to work with her on that as Denisa wasn´t only an intern in Kompas, our Slovak training organization, but also my friend and I was again and again moved by her intelligence, energy and love for ministry, small groups, leading youth group and being part of eldership in her church.

I was listening with one ear when I heard a young boy asking Denisa a question, "OK, but how did you come to the point when you decided to start a small group? Did you hear some sermon on it and you were challenged and persuaded by it?"

Denisa thought for a little while and then she said, "Three years ago I went to the National Lutheran Gathering and there was only my classmate and I who wanted to go. Our friend knew some people that were taking a van and driving there, so she asked if we could come along. It was one girl and two boys from her church, from her small group actually. We didn´t know them so we observed them very well during that conference," she continued, "They were talking and laughing. They asked each other very deep challenging questions and shared about their lives and not only positive stuff. When the conference was over, we were on the way back home."

When it was time to say goodbye, this girl named Maruska said, "Do you want to come to my house for one extra night? We can play games, talk more . . ."

I couldn´t believe she would invite strangers to her house. But of course we went and it was an *eye-opener* – the way she talked to her parents, to her brother, about the ministry they both were doing, the extra pyjamas in her closet, the pictures on the wall, and the open door for everybody who would want to come in and talk and pray. I decided to live the same way. I had been a Christian for a few years now but nobody had ever told me I should live out my faith and share God´s love through my own heart until that moment when I could just see it in that room.

I was looking at Denisa, moved inside, realizing that God can use us the way He wants even when we don´t know about it. It was the first time I had ever heard that story.

When I met Denisa, she was seventeen years old and God chose a specific way and place in which to break her heart for discipleship. He did the same thing to me when I was exactly the same age. I was seventeen and experiencing overseas mission experience in America. For the first time I was in a culture I didn´t completely get with no language skills or comfort zone of my Christian friends. And there, outside of everything I knew and was sure of, I finally felt how it feels not to be in or cool or understood. Sitting on the curb in front of the church, I promised God, when I come back home, I will do anything, ANYTHING He desires for people to come to know Him. And as He usually does, God took my vow seriously and I was called to start a younger youth group in my church. I was seventeen and barely knew what I was doing. But I can promise you to have your heart broken by God is the best thing that could ever happen to you.

So I came back to my very traditional Lutheran church in a small village of 800 people in a poor area of Eastern Slovakia and prepared to start new ministry. I learned very quickly that waiting for young people in the church, even with an amazing program prepared for them, is not enough. As we prayed and made obedient steps of faith (like start playing soccer with kids in village yard even if you are *not* an athlete, teaching kids math after school even if you always hated math) God was blessing us with new students coming every week. Some weeks there were so many kids (60-70) that we had to meet in the cold, wooden church as all the rooms were too small for us. And very soon I learned

that it is not enough to just prepare a program for 60 kids. I could see in them a natural desire to know Christ more.

In many ways, our church is "weird" – there are 21 Lutheran pastors in a village of 800 inhabitants over the last 20 years (the period of post-communism). And there are many more men in the church, guys in the youth groups, and boys in the Sunday school than women or girls, so the future of our church seems dominated by the males. That is why I chose to take 7 boys and 2 girls to my first discipleship small group. I was seventeen and they were fourteen years old. We were living our lives together—learning, studying Scripture, failing, and encouraging each other, all of us living on my pocket money, meeting at my parents' house. They learned to count pairs of shoes to have an idea about how many people would be staying over the night. One of my wardrobes would be separated for their pyjamas and toothbrushes.

I didn´t read a single book about discipleship or go through training, I was young and I made a lot of mistakes. I learned how love covers a lot of sins and how important it is to let people learn by living together and observing. When Jesus said to two disciples who started to follow Him, "Come and see," (John 1, 39) he meant it. My kids have seen me making a lot of mistakes like arguing with my mom, but they also saw me coming back to her and saying I am sorry.

I learned the importance of being ready to give up your comfort when Jesus calls you to disciple, to be there for others and to share your strengths and weaknesses. Many times your heart, your life, your decisions are pointing the way to your God who is the only God they know. Make sure you are showing them GOD the way He is – merciful, loving, gracious, caring, forgiving, just, faithful, and true.

The first two years we spent only learning from the Scriptures, sharing our lives, being accountable, standing side by side and learning how to serve. After two years, one of my girls came to me one day and said, "You were my age when you started our small group. I would love to lead some other girls." She made me think. I realized that I had never led them to multiplication and naturally discipling others. The next year it became my focus.

Until then I was missing the strategy and a clear goal. But suddenly when I was in the position to lead others to discipleship, I realized it would take more energy and a system. Around that time I met Denisa and her friend Anka at the Gathering. They joined

our small group and quickly grew into amazingly obedient servants. I am proud to share that six of nine people from the small group kids plus Denisa and Anka started their own small groups or mentoring younger kids—four boys and four girls groups. God called them to this special ministry. Only He can extend the call. But when He does, then you can help. Here are the principles we were finding out:

1. *Principle of Observing:* Don´t hesitate to invite them to your ministry even if they already have their own. Let them be inspired, be honest about your victories and losses. Let them get really close.

2. *Principle of Training:* Train them, walk beside them and don´t hesitate to invest everything you can into them – your time, money, personal property, heart, knowledge, even your privacy.

3. *Principle of Sharing Responsibility:* Give them a place, so they would have certain responsibilities and guide them and trust them with it.

4. *Principle of Consistence:* Be there! Even after years, create a grandma feeling, so they know you´ve got their back and that no matter what happens, you are there for them even when they are leading other people.

Never too Old, Never too Busy!

I am not seventeen anymore. I am actually twenty-seven years old, and now God is teaching me that the process of discipleship never ends. For instance, last year I received a special calling from Him. After English summer camp, 50 out of 54 students wrote in a feedback survey that they would love to be part of a small group even if they were not Christians. I was already leading two small groups and was considering ending my leadership of one of them. But then during after summer party Andis, one athletic girl from camp, appeared by my side when I was cleaning tables with a very clear question, "Maruška, we have heard you are meeting with people and it is called small group. It seems like some people from camp are going there and it´s a cool thing to do. Well, we are not sure what it is but we want to learn about that God you talked about at camp. Can we sign up?"

I stood there for a while with tears in my eyes while God was breaking my heart for Andis and two other smiling girls behind her. *We have no idea who that God is but can we sign up to be discipled?*

Hearing a very clear calling there was only one answer to that question. So instead of giving up one small group of young ladies who are already doing a lot of ministry, I found myself leading 3 small groups with a total of 23 people. I know that sounds crazy.

It sounded crazy to me as well so I went to solitude and on my knees I asked God if it´s doable and if it really is His plan. And the Holy Spirit revealed very interesting ideas to me. Why don´t you connect those small groups and use this situation for training girls how to disciple and lead non believers to Christ and new believers to growth in faith?

At first, my two girls Anička and Laura didn´t like the idea of having new girls in *their* small group and they were jealous and upset until the Holy Spirit invited them to help lead that group. Suddenly there were 13 girls who wanted to be part of the small group. We divided them into two groups and one of them was co-led by Anička and Laura. I would regularly meet with them outside of the group and explain what we are doing. They absolutely got the importance of evangelism and multiplication. When we shared the gospel, Laura would share her story of what Jesus did for her just a year ago and how she trusted him and Anička would pray for the whole small group.

It is great to let your young students be involved, to let them co-lead with you:

1. To teach under your wings and with your help.

2. To give them smaller responsibilities from the beginning – so they can prepare food for meeting or icebreaker, game, welcome people at the door.

Become a Grandma or Grandpa of the New Beginning Small Group

Sometimes people who have never been discipled want to start their own small group and begin discipling people and come to me for help. It is an amazing opportunity to become "grandma" of their ministry and to help them with your knowledge and experience.

There is one girl called Bibka. She came one day with light in her eyes and a great desire to serve God by discipling young girls around her. She was willing to learn anything I could offer. So we went together through Christ Strategy, I gave her all my old notebooks and pictures, ideas, advice, and principles. We spent many hours only on the mistakes I had made.

I think it is an amazing possibility to have somebody who is older and stands behind you when you start mentoring or discipling others. For Bibka and me this means:

- We meet regularly and share and pray for her girls.

- I give her new ideas and materials she can use.

- When she is busy with school I am willing to be a special guest so the girls won´t miss small group.

- I pray for her and encourage her, ask her for feedback and celebrate the growth of her girls with her.

When you have more people who are starting small groups and even when they have been leading them for a longer time, we learned that it is a great idea to meet together once a month and discuss the progress or regress of the small groups, praying and sharing shareable things. The wonderful thing was that we could share the best topics, ideas, icebreakers, discussions that we had. And so we could leave with prepared small groups for next month. It was the best time of our youth group when everyone was part of the small groups and we could pray.

I have learned from mistakes:

- There are people from my first small group that I have never led to multiplication and understanding of the importance of making disciples. So before we start, it should be included in our discipleship plan or strategy.

- I very often led people more on the personal level than spirit level. We had great memories together, amazing times, strong friendship but sometimes I missed the challenges that the Holy Spirit was showing me because it was more comfortable to stay on the personal level.

- I was making Scripture fit my thoughts instead of having Scripture as authority for those people in all situations and all circumstances.

- When I look back, my kids would do anything not to fail me or to make me proud. I feel really sorry that I failed in explaining that only God´s point of view matters and how He feels about them is important.

I was listening to that boy´s question and Denisa´s answer. I had the answer somewhere in my papers. To listen to God ´s Word when it says: "We announce the message about Christ, and we use all our wisdom to warn and teach everyone, so that all of Christ´s followers will grow and become mature." (Col 1:28)

I remembered that night very well. We were sitting in the car and I was making all kind of plans in my head. I was so ready to get home after Gathering, to take a shower and relax. The girls were taking their cases out of the car very slowly, talking about how they didn´t want to go home yet. The Holy Spirit said very clearly, *"Take them home with you,"* thus crossing out all my plans. There were excited smiles, a long, long night full of pictures and stories, God´s power and two more pyjamas in my wardrobe. Obey when Holy Spirit says so. You don´t have to understand or like it. Really, most of the time it is not very comfortable. Denisa passed me the microphone with a smile. I smiled back, "Just trust Him. He knows what He is doing!"

About the Author

Maruška Kožlejová (1983) studied literature and aesthetics at University of Prešov. For the past 10 years she has been leading a youth group in her home church, now she works for Training Centre Kompas and leads 3 small groups (of 20 girls) as she pursues her Doctorate in Literary Comparatistics. Her passions are art, people, movies, discipleship and church.

Reflections from the Editors

Principles of Non-Formal Education

- Formal education, by most standards, tends to isolate the variable of learning from the messiness of life. This is understandable, since gaining deep and comprehensive scholarly knowledge requires hours upon hours of concentrated, unadulterated study. Hence, classrooms are cleared of distraction, students are removed from their normal lives, and the process is scrubbed clean of environmental contaminants that might threaten the expediency of scholarship. non-formal education, however, tends to happen right in the middle of life. It doesn't just spill over into life, like a jostling of the scholarly cup that might drip into application at one point or another. Rather, the fodder of non-formal is life—eating, working, relating, growing, coping, and such—the normal, everyday features. The objective is not scholarly knowledge, per se, but rather a transformed life. And if a different life is the intended outcome, then life becomes the "stuff" of process.

- The path to ministry multiplication in a non-formal model is edged by two cliffs that can easily and inadvertently send us sailing into an abyss. On one side, multiplication could lack any form, and learnings would be lost, accountability would be forfeited, and the spread of the ministry would be left to happenstance—the abyss of formlessness. On the other, multiplication could be codified into a system and structure, defined by the inaugurator, and refined for efficiencies—the abyss of formalization. Notice how Kozlejova intuitively understands the need to model and mentor new leaders. Notice how she invests in an incarnational approach to

discipleship multiplication by guiding others to find a way, informed by her own development, to make disciples themselves. This takes structure, but a structure focused on the development of leaders not the franchising of systems and workbooks and learning modules.

Questions for Consideration
- This essay is an inspiring illustration of how well the vision of a young person can effectively bear fruit. But what happens when it becomes corrupted by poor theology, the malignancy of self-aggrandizement, or a misapplication of youthful zeal? The world is fraught with frightening examples of zealous leadership gone awry. How can there be theological covering and ecclesial accountability without stifling the ingenuity and passion of young disciple-makers?

- Since non-formal education is best situated in real life, how can the complexities of life be navigated with a clear sense of telos (destination of maturity) and not get sidetracked by a reactionary immediacy?

Non-Formal Education as a Tool for Church Planting in Latvia

By Peteris Sprogis and Liva Fokrote (Latvia)

Abstract
Peteris Sprogis and Liva Fokrote describe the non-formal education model developed by the Union of Baptist Churches in Latvia (the Union). It serves as a tool for fostering church planting movement in Latvia. They explain how a non-formal way of thinking can pervade the ethos of a denomination's church planting strategy and mark the design and intended impact of a denomination's vision. This is an example of how non-formal sensitivities can unlock new ways of engaging the problem of leadership development throughout the churches of an entire region. Notice the nimbleness of thinking and the expansiveness of imagination as they seek to care for the leadership needs of the church.

Need for Change

When I (Peteris) was elected to the position of Bishop of the Union in 2006, I became keenly aware of the issues of our denomination and society. It would have been easy for the Baptists to continue living our comfortable denominational life. However, it did not take a prophet to see that, if we continued in the same manner, we did not have any future. What was needed was a daring recognition of problems and a vision worthy enough for me and others to live and die for. None of us would be ready to live and die for maintenance of a denominational system. We all want to life for something that is worth dying for.

The role and influence of churches in society was declining. Many churches continued to hold onto the mentality of holy, fortified fortresses which had helped them to survive the Soviet times. Their gates now were locked from inside and they had essentially turned into prisons. The Church seemed to live in a denial of the reality of its problems as well as those of our society. There were about 6,000 Baptists in Latvia with its total population exceeding 2 million: what is the point of our history, traditions and values if more and more people are not reached for Christ and discipled as His followers?

The initiatives of the Union were not effectively encouraging our people towards the Gospel centered life and ministry and church as a community living out the Gospel. Many young leaders chose to work for a parachurch organization or went into business instead of church ministry. Church was not seen as a place where to fulfill one's calling

and use one's gifts. The Baptist Theological Seminary in Latvia, established in 1922 and reestablished in 1991, had provided theological training for some of the Union's pastors. When it was unable to attract students – potential church leaders, in 2006 its leadership made a decision to move towards becoming an accredited Christian college with general admission programs.

It seemed to be God's timing for change which would help our denomination, each church and each believer, to be mobilized to follow Jesus in a renewed way. The first steps which I proposed were strengthening and renewal of existing churches, training of new ministry leaders and launching of church planting. The people in our churches welcomed the new initiatives for they had grown weary of living in denial. Everybody wants to be on the winning team – and, with God's help, that is what we wanted to invite them to join.

Baltic Pastoral Institute (BPI) was established by the Union in 2008.[1] It became a positive response to the situation with its mission to train, mentor and resource carefully selected men to share the Gospel, establish and lead high impact missional churches in strategic locations in Latvia, throughout the Baltic region and beyond. The development of BPI is intrinsic to the Union's goal to plant 100 new and healthy churches in the next ten years. At the same time we are eager to serve the believers of other Christian denominations in Latvia and beyond its borders.

Desired Outcomes

Our strategy at BPI (and the entire training model of the Union, see below) is to create a balanced environment that simultaneously emphasizes four key result areas: *Content*, *Competence*, *Character* and *Culture*.[2] We want to provide a holistic and balanced approach to human development and education. The first three result areas are not unique to BPI and they are often used as foundation for models of Christian education. We have added *Culture* as the fourth key result area to emphasize the need for cultural awareness and engagement which often is missing in ministry in Latvia and the Western world in general. These four areas and their specific outcomes are used to assess

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[1]To learn more about Baltic Pastoral Institute, visit our website at http://www.bpiriga.lv/en/news.
[2]Detailed description of four key result areas you can find at
 http://www.bpiriga.lv/en/About/progr_outcomes/.

each course, activity and aspect of BPI's everyday life as well as the entire program on regular basis.

Structure of BPI Training

There are several ways in which BPI's training is structured. Two most important ways are dynamic combination of studies and ministry and careful balancing of all four key result areas.

1. Dynamic Combination of Studies and Ministry

There are two ways in which the BPI program aims to combine studies and ministry. First, BPI is a three-year training program with one year of full time studies and two years of part time studies. During the first year students are involved in full time studies led by both visiting and local instructors—experts in their respective areas. Students are also involved in ministry in their local church or town and are expected to complete specific ministry tasks. During the second and third year students are active in fulltime ministry in their local church or town. They also continue their studies through independent work and monthly participation in seminars at BPI.

Second, a typical BPI training week involves training at BPI from Monday through Thursday, followed by Friday through Sunday spent by students in their respective ministries and resting. In Latvian context, most of ministry activities take place during the weekend and we adopted our training model to this cultural dynamic.

The combination of full time and part time studies as well as the weekly training and ministry pattern allows us to balance the time spent by students in classroom setting with actual ministry involvement. It differs from a traditional seminary approach by valuing the connection between training and ministry for which students are being trained. Thus the training is not just training *per se* but a realistic preparation for real ministry.

2. Careful Balancing of All Four Key Result Areas

From the beginning, BPI was intended as a rather practical training, not a traditional seminary program. Considering the issues the church was facing, we could not afford to invest God's given resources in purely academic training which is disconnected

from and does not lead into ministry (however, we are not against academia). For this reason, we have moved away from focusing on *Content* (or "head" knowledge) and strive to balance all four areas which metaphorically are called the "training for head, hands, heart and feet". It means that while certain courses and learning activities focus primarily on one or two of the key result areas, instructors are expected to teach in a way which takes into consideration all four aspects. It also means that chapels, accountability groups, mentoring relationships and community life are indispensable part of BPI everyday life. The program is regularly assessed by BPI's leadership in terms of the key result areas and, if and when necessary, adjusted accordingly.

Towards a Comprehensive Training Model

We believe God is blessing Latvia with a renewal and church planting movement. For the movement to exist and grow there should be shared vision, understanding and terminology. BPI has become a platform for a more comprehensive training model which supports and feeds the movement. Presently it involves the following:

- **Baltic Pastoral Institute:** a three-year pastoral training program has been preparing male[3] leaders for church leadership and church planting since 2008 (as described above). First twelve students graduated from the program in December 2010. Presently there are 24 students involved in the training. This year we have admitted the first student from a different denomination.

- **BPI DRAFT:** since 2009, two to three camps have taken place annually for teenage boys to prepare them for ministry, develop their character and help them to clarify their calling. We have come to believe that potential leaders should be identified early. It is important to help them understand that one day the leadership will be passed unto them. They should know that they are the best people to reach their generation. In unhealthy churches there is no effective identification, motivation and training of potential leaders. The Union and BPI cannot, like Snow White, sleep in a coffin on a mountain top and complain that there are no students, no pastors and no church planters. We have to speak to them in their teenage years and help them to have a dream and challenge.

- **M4:** since 2010, a two-year church planting training has been taking place. Its goal is to help teams and individuals to be trained in church planting or missional group

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[3]The Union of Baptist Churches in Latvia practices male eldership in church while acknowledging the value of female leadership in many church ministry areas. Weak men are a problem produced and faced by both society and church. We believe that ordination of women is a short-term solution to a long-term problem. The church should model the role of man in a family where man takes responsibility instead of hiding behind his wife's back.

ministry by focusing on important issues and by assisting them in developing common ministry platform for next three years. M4, we believe, is more than a program. It is a learning community where each team develops its particular and contextualized church planting model and the teams are mutually accountable. It is an environment which helps to lead church planters beyond mere dreaming and talking into strategizing and implementing specific steps by specific deadlines. In 2010 ten teams met for training four times a year. In 2011 twenty new teams from various denominations are participating in this training. In 2011, M4 is supplemented by **V4** leadership training which aims at providing knowledge and skills for leading oneself and his team or church. Both M4 and V4 are organized in cooperation with DAWN Church Planting Network (Norway).

- **IZAICINAJUMS (Challenge):** twice-a-year interdenominational church planting conference has been taking place, in cooperation with Soma Communities & Acts 29 Network (USA), since spring 2010. Its goal is to inspire and educate all interested believers in order to develop an environment supportive of church planting in Latvian churches, and to challenge potential and present church planters.

- **BPI SYNC:** This training will be launched in a form of six gatherings annually in spring 2011. We want to help people to redefine their mistaken ministry and church planting concepts, goals and perception of needs. We want to "synchronize" their understanding with the philosophy, strategy and values of the Gospel (as expressed by the Union and BPI) and help them to process and adopt these as their own. We also want to continually understand where they are and what problems they face in their ministries.

Lessons Learned

There are many valuable lessons we have learned in these years. Here are some of the most important lessons which, we pray, are helpful to others, too.

1. Shared problem, shared vision

A shared problem creates a shared vision. Once something is perceived as a problem, it is important to promote it (at times in vivid and dramatic ways) and help others to believe it is a problem. Even the most exciting vision will not help, if people don't own the problem. Nehemiah is our example here: first, he cries alone, and then he brings the problem before the people. Helping people to identify the problem and to identify with it is a basic leadership skill; however, it is often underestimated.

In our case, both the problem was promoted and the vision cast, first, by my (Peteris) speech in 2006 when I was first elected to the office. It was further developed

and formulated into a vision document by the leadership of BPI and the Union.[4] The purpose of the document is twofold: to explain how to implement the Union's vision of planting 100 new churches, and to help the members of our denomination believe in this vision and in possibility to fulfill it. It provides the rationale for church planting and suggests several models; it acknowledges several challenges we face and identifies a number of problems we are committed to avoid in the process. It also provides some practical guidance to help people identify their calling for church planting and lists a variety or resources the Union is committed to provide to its church planters.

The vision document was presented at the Congress of the Union in 2009 and was very well received by the representatives of Baptist churches in Latvia. The vision is regularly reinforced through various denominational venues. Most importantly, it is believed and lived out by the Union and BPI's leadership. One of the ways in which we own the vision is supporting the church planting activities financially. Over 50 % of the Union's budget is used towards church planting and training of new leaders.

2. Men Need "Manly" Challenge

Latvia, like many countries, struggles with challenging men to step up to leadership in ministry. We have learned that men need "manly" motivation in ministry, just like in other areas of life. Churches often fail to present the Gospel in ways which are relevant to men. While women better respond to the language of relationships, we have learned that men better respond to the language of challenge and responsibility. Where their challenge, responsibility and ministry are, there are their relationships. It is important for men to know that they belong to the same "tribe" with others who own the same vision, motivation and calling while they are at BPI and for the rest of their life. We believe that more important than BPI's diploma, is that students graduate with the sense that they belong to one "tribe" with shared mission of transforming church and culture, a "tribe" in which they can rely on one another, a "tribe" in which we all continue to grow together for the rest of our lives.

For this reason, BPI, in identifying new students, is constantly issuing the call for men who dare to hear Jesus' calling into ministry and dare to obey it; for men who, like

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4   The vision of the Union of Baptist Churches in Latvia is available at
     http://bpiriga.lv/data/LBDS%20vizija_EN.pdf

the first disciples of Jesus, dare to leave what they have to follow Him and help others to follow Him. We are not looking for men who just want to go to school and grow; we are looking for men who own the Union's vision, have at least some sense of calling into pastoral or church planting ministry, are ready to make sacrifices in their lives and to bring change to their church and culture. We want to prepare these men for their calling as well as we can, through BPI and other training opportunities, starting as early as BPI DRAFT camps.

3. Transforming the Whole Denomination

There are times when the whole system must be restarted. Leading a church is like growing a tree; leading a denomination is like providing for a climate change. Working in one isolated area will lead to division, not healthy change. If we desire to renew each believer, each church and the denomination in the Gospel, it is not sufficient to bring change to only some isolated areas of ministry.

There are many factors which affect the whole system. It is important to consider the climate in churches, what their healthy, ministry philosophy is and readiness to respond to the challenge. For example, BPI DRAFT camps draw many youngsters who have not had healthy ministry examples to learn from and be inspired by. If a church is not healthy, its pastor is not the happiest guy in the town and certainly not the most encouraging role model. And by that we do not mean superstars, but warriors. Thus, even if these young men recognized their calling to ministry, they would not want to become failures.

It is also important to provide believers and especially leaders with opportunities to renew their personal vision for life and ministry and to lead them to reevaluate and reshape their theology, ministry understanding and practice. Many still think church is only what takes place on Sunday morning, discipleship is for a few chosen ones and evangelism is pastor's business. We want to help people "synchronize" their thinking and living with the Gospel, its values and practices. Just as important is not just to prepare ministry leaders but also to release them for ministry and continuously support and mentor them.

Conclusion

In the past five years the Union has seen positive change. BPI has been established to train pastors and church planters. The Union has developed a model of ministry leadership training. Church planting initiatives have been successfully launched. The denomination is slowly being transformed into a fellowship of Gospel centered communities. We still feel like beginners in most of these areas. By God's grace and under His leadership we have done what we have understood and believed He wanted us to do. We still have many lessons to learn, hindrances to overcome and battles to win to see our people, churches and denomination ever more transformed by the Gospel and ever more transforming the society of Latvia with the Gospel.

About the Authors

Peteris Sprogis has been serving as the Bishop of the Union of Baptist Churches in Latvia since 2006. In 2010, he was elected to the office for the second term. Through his leadership the Union is changing into a church planting movement with a goal of planting 100 new churches by 2020. Before becoming the Bishop, Peteris served as the Senior Pastor of Riga Matthew Baptist Church, the largest Baptist church in Latvia. He is one of the founders and the Director of Baltic Pastoral Institute. Peteris holds M. Div. from Palmer Theological Seminary. Peteris is married to Marta and they have three daughters.

Liva Fokrote is the Dean of Academic Affairs at Baltic Pastoral Institute since its foundation in 2008. She holds several Masters' degrees, including M. A. in Theological Studies from George Fox Evangelical Seminary. Liva has over 10 year experience in Christian higher education and ministry training development.

Reflections from the Editors

Principles of Non-Formal Education

- Their strategy places the development of skills in the practice of ministry into a much more prominent role than does much of formal education. Instead of an "add-on" approach to skill development (wherein ministry application follows the learning of content –a feature of much of formal education), their design provides of a "dynamic combination," a praxis of sorts (wherein the interchange between theory and practice finds a present and catalytic interaction). The design also keeps theory and practice from running concurrent but separate tracks (as can happen when formal education requires a concomitant, but disconnected practicum or internship that runs parallel to but independent of the course-based education).

- Their non-formal model allows them to reach into a longer, more durable developmental span in the lives of their leaders. They can think about the

identification and recruitment of younger men not yet ready for ministry training, and engage meaningfully in ongoing work with those who have passed through their modules of education. This provides a more robust life-span approach to pastoral development.

- Their approach engages the lives of their developing ministers holistically. It also encompasses the whole environment of church development and discipleship formation throughout the country. They eschew specialized education for scholarly departments in academia, and instead favor strategies that engage the whole system leadership development for the region's churches.

- They respond to the particular needs of developing male leadership for the church. Instead of merely creating a structure that can be accessed independently by the initiative of any among their constituency who have interest or means (as is customary in much of formal education), they deliberately seek to identify and engage the pressing need of the church—the raising of male, pastoral leadership.

Questions for Consideration
- Given the scale of what is needed to develop a new generation of leaders, how can the nimbleness of non-formal models stay protected through subsequent iterations of the non-formal structures that hold the training? Will these non-formal modes calcify into the new formal modes over time?

- How can the DNA of a responsive, holistic, ministry-centered program become embedded broadly enough among the constituency that the model is protected from becoming simply a creative, non-formal frame to hold formalize ideas of development.

- How can the whole church, and not just the positional leaders, become mobilized and infected with the excitement and responsibility of developing a new generation of pastoral leaders?

Non-Formal Education with a Movement in Mind
By Peter Hrubo (Slovakia)

Abstract
Peter Hrubo's essay gives us a view into the mind of a country strategist. In his role as the director of Kompas, a national Slovakian training organization, he frames youth ministry development for an entire region and people group. In doing so, non-formal sensitivities pervade his approach. Notice the emphasis he places on the life-development of the disciple. He intends to bring disciple-making out of a lifeless structure and into a life-filled experience of intentional growth and formation. As a country strategist, he must use structured programs as tools in order to attain scale and influence people broadly, but the structures he develops are decidedly relational and experiential. They are focused more on the formation of Christ-likeness in the actions of people and less on the teaching of areas of theoretical content. It is not a matter of jettisoning theological content, but rather of treating content as a catalyst instead of an end and adopting character development as the primary objective.

A Demographic Snapshot of Slovakia

Slovakia is located in the heart of Central Europe. With a population of around 5,400,000, Slovakia is a growing modern state. Having barely survived 40 years of Soviet occupation, its modern evangelical church is a very small minority. Together, the membership numbers around 10,000. This means that less than 0.2% of the Slovak population is a part of these churches. Historical Evangelicals (Lutherans) make up 6.9% of the church community and represent the largest Protestant denomination. The Roman Catholic Church is the most predominate in the country, with over 75% of the population claiming membership.

Focus on Movement and Not Just Activities

We live in the post communist environment where it is still clear (even though communism fell more than 20 years ago) that it is easier to change outward conditions than thinking patterns. In connection with Christianity and its tradition in this region, it's an even bigger challenge to assist the local churches and bring a new paradigm in the life of the church.

At the end of the last century, our organization (Training Center Kompas - TCK) focused on leadership paradigm changes. The first was "***From a one-man show to team work in youth ministry.***" Today we can say that in youth ministry we see a big change.

Most of the ministries are now led by teams of volunteers who desire to serve the Lord in the local church.

On another front, there were few interdenominational relationships among the country's denominational youth leaders. We were persuaded that it was necessary to connect and broaden these relationships, even though the evangelical community in Slovakia was very small and weak. The uniting of all protestant denominational youth leaders through a relationship network called SIET (NET in English) was successful and brought spiritual fruit to our country.

In the process of development, we focused on personal relationships and the development of trust. The result was a healthy program and interdenominational projects such as the National Youth Leaders Training Conference (KPM - around 700 youth workers), CampFest open air music festival, (about 4000 participants) and an online resource website for youth workers called Davka. Through these projects we have experienced some dimension of "movement."

But How Can We Keep the Big Picture in Mind
as We Think About the Nation?

It was always a temptation to focus entirely on ministry activities. Youth leaders, especially in their early stages, ask us to provide program materials, tools or just to join them in some kind of program of their youth ministry. Their main question was "how" rather than "why?" Their approach was to provide a fish (instant gratification), as opposed to learning how to catch fish, feed themselves and teach others how to fish for themselves. It is very easy to get bogged down in constantly showing "how," rather than asking and answering the "why" question. Behind "why" is often the opportunity for a big change. But it means spending more time together. It's more pain. The biggest task for our national training organization was and still is to keep *focused on the movement of "why" rather than on the "how" activities only*.

This question also touches the core of our (TCK) calling. It is not only about how to do something (teach, lead, etc.), but mainly to keep Christ's picture of the church in front of the leaders. We try hard to be involved in Slovak local churches and we establish the core purpose of our organization on this value. "To train, help and inspire youth workers who are raising up the next generation of Christ followers in the church".

Next, we believe that the answer to the question of keeping the big picture in mind is through purposeful*, **personal discipleship***. Even now in youth ministries across Slovakia, we can see the deterioration of ministry into traditional, mechanical habits. It's the repetition of unconscious rituals of the church. The leadership of the church models these habits in front of the church attendees, the members as well as the youth leaders. The habit is connected with the conviction that the church is not an organism but an organization.

The outcome of this theology is the conviction that the performance of the rituals is of primary importance. The parishioner's behavior during the week is not as important. The result is that church becomes a cold, impersonal place where people sit in heavy coats with almost no personal contact. The church is not real human relationships anymore. A ritual, a church building, and one handshake of peace cannot be the alternative for personal discipleship. The main challenge is to reverse this deterioration.

I believe that the best way to reverse it is through deliberate discipleship – life on life. It is almost an unknown concept in our current church because it is the antithesis of the ritual event. Moreover, it is commonly believed that personal discipleship weakens control over the church. So, it is suspect as a subversive concept. But "movement" goes against the rituals that are lifeless. Life-on-life is the opposite of ritual habits. It cuts through the traditional ways and classic understanding of church function.

Paradigm change in the traditional church is usually slow and requires a lot of endurance from leaders. I believe the faster path of change would be to start from the very beginning in a different environment than the traditional church. It was the biggest surprise to see that the shift of the Slovak church paradigm (for example mentioned above) took at least ten years.

Recently we had the training weekend for a Junior High leadership team in a small town. We were surprised how active and organized the team was. They organize many weekend retreats, gatherings, and miscellaneous events. We prepared the spiritual gifts and personality tests for the team members and worked hard to discover where each leader would fit best in the ministry. We felt that the event helped them better understand how they were "wired". After the training each team member expressed that their greatest need was to know each other (teammates) better. Even though they worked together regularly, everyone carrying out his assigned duty, their teammates still seemed somehow

unknown. Ritual activity cannot substitute for the deeper experience of the Lord's presence in the middle of real relationships.

How Can We Discern If We Are On the Right Path?

We can easily immerse ourselves in activities, but if they are not aligned with the ultimate goal, it is impossible to keep the right direction. A regular (at least once in 6 months) process of "dusting off" of the discipleship vision is necessary. *Keeping the big picture outstanding, is possible more through being and seeing rather than just through hearing (teaching)*. For our TCK staff, it practically means that each of us is obligated to be a disciple-maker and active member of the local church and not merely a trainer in a para-church organization.

The difference between teaching *about Christ* and *teaching Christ* is enormous. It's a challenge to be in His presence rather than just be involved in activities. Many times too many activities (given to keep us busy) and too many exhausting duties become the enemy of "movement." It can look like skillful climbing, but unfortunately on the wrong wall. We believe that the members of the God's awakening were very busy too. But they were busy sharing the good news rather than occupying themselves with rituals and buildings. The key to a "movement" is the ability of the Holy Spirit to bring Christ into middle of ordinary life.

This ***incarnational approach*** (modeled for us by Christ) is crucial for moving toward positive change. It goes hand in hand with intentional discipleship. For our situation after the revolution, it meant a sharp refocus on building relationships through the evangelical spectrum of youth leaders. We became friends and experienced the brotherhood of Christ, preparing ourselves to serve the nation, not just to a youth group in a local setting. The incarnational approach is described in John 1.1-18. Jesus became flesh to dwell among us. He invited us, "Come and follow me." But having no place of his own, we can see him in many places and in the lives of those who followed him: Levi's house (Luke 4.27-32.), at Zacheus' house (Luke 19), at Peter' house (Luke 4.38), etc. He was among them. Our tendency is to collect people under the roof of church building and call this discipleship. But Jesus dwelled among us. He was present first of all. He was close to people and willing to be vulnerable. If we want to reach out people with His gospel, there is no better way than His way.

How Do We Create Various Kinds of Events
that Shepherd People Through a Process?

We believe that a movement needs a healthy environment to spread. One of the environments we provide is the School Of Leaders. It is an eight month, non-formal program for youth workers and leaders. Ninety-five percent of these are volunteers in local churches. They are accepted only with a recommendation from their pastor or the elder of their church. They are chosen from multiple denominations and local churches.

In the first year we work hard in areas like character development, youth leaders' skills, systematic theology, worship, etc. Each student has a mentor who helps the student to implement the teaching into real life. The students are active in their local churches during the school year, which enables us to walk with them, observe them in their own local setting. This first year also includes an inspirational vision trip, which entails a visit to a model church somewhere in Central Europe. The second year of the school is focused almost entirely on application of the teaching from the previous year, but is done in each student's local setting.

During the creation of the School of the Leaders program our team realized that the biggest need of the leaders was not the lack of the information, but rather a need to see visible change in his or her own life. We decided to focus sharply on the students' character development through the mentoring. It gives us space to focus on the student rather than only on the teaching subject. It provides a lot of opportunities to ask deep questions and to see a student in real life situations. By seeing the student in ministry, family and school, it gives the mentor a wide space to address issues and interact with realities of the students' lives.

The National Conference for Youth Workers is one of the biggest youth leaders' conventions in our post communist region. It helps to keep the big picture of Christ's church in front of the youth leaders. It provides a snapshot of the volunteers involved from almost every denomination in the country. The conference utilizes about 100 volunteers in around 30 areas of the conference. It gives us the opportunity to lead participants and volunteers toward maturity in work ethics, organizational skills, character, endurance, among other qualities. The conference helps to mobilize and inspire Slovakia's youth leaders toward a movement.

After each conference we ask if it was worthy of the effort. The participant conference evaluation keeps us doing it again and again. We do not want to organize just another activity. It needs to be life-on-life experience. We always feel helpless and we are totally dependent on God's grace in it. We try hard to create the environment where the leaders can experience a "life" touch. For example they are given an opportunity during the conference to go out into the community with specific task, like asking the participants to do an interview in the city or a task of distributing Bibles or some manual for rock climbing. It provides many current experiences to share with the team or conference gathering.

Surely we have a long way to go in creating a movement in Slovakia. We are asking God to open our eyes to more and different movement methods for the spread of His church here.

About the Author

After four years of working as a business manager, Peter received a clear calling from God into youth ministry and also continued doing ministry with InterVarsity college students in three cities in Slovakia. Eight years later, in September 2003, the Lord called him to join the TCKompas (Josiah Venture's partner organization in Slovakia) team. Since January 2006, Peter has been the director of TCK.

Reflections from the Editors

Principles of Non-Formal Education

- If the intent is to change what Hrubo calls "thinking patterns" in an effort to produce a "new paradigm in the life of the church," then a refreshed form or medium, not just a refreshed message, needs to be developed. Impact is as much "caught" as it is "taught." Non-formal models provide a way to offer a revitalized means to produce a revitalize the church.

- Since formalized modes of ministry training are commonly associated with denominations and other ecclesial systems, they tend to splinter the Christian community into specialized training and the theological fortresses of various ecclesial factions. What is happening in Slovakia appears to be a unifying force, engaging the whole of the evangelical church across denominational lines in an effort to encourage a movement of God among the larger, interdenominational community.

- Hrubo and his team have designed and initiated programs like the School of Leaders and the National Conference of Youth Leaders which could, in time, become the new "lifeless structures." Notice how they strive to use these programs as vehicles for life-on-life discipleship. They will need to be constantly vigilant to retain the features of

the catalytic experience, the quality of relationships, and intentional character formation that have made them uniquely potent for life-change.

Questions for Consideration
- How can leaders protect the ingenuity and liveliness of a non-formal model without it becoming, in time, simply another version of the formal, with all of its constituent limitations? Should its non-formal nature be retained, or is there an appropriate life-cycle to any non-formal venture?

- How does one protect the integrity of ethos in a non-formal program when it goes to scale at a national level, or gets passed on to those initially uninvolved in the design but inheritors of the program, as must happen as a movement grows?

Non-Formal Education as a Tool to Equip and Develop a Team

By Josef Pavlinak (Czech Republic)

Abstract
In Josef Pavlinak's essay we see the fruit of a commitment to develop leadership both for the movement and from among a movement with an eye toward reaching a particular demographic in a country—university students. Pavlinak has thoughtfully addressed the issue of what it takes to raise leaders. In particular, notice his emphasis on character formation among those he and his team are seeking to equip. He envisions leadership development to be much more than the training of the mind, but the development of the whole person for the ministry of the gospel.

Introduction

There is no question about the need to develop and equip staff and volunteers of any Christian ministry. The question is "How to do it? Where to start?" I am sure there is more than one effective way of answering the question. What is described here is not *the* answer, but it is what we found effective in our context and situation and what can be effective in other contexts and situations if we apply the principles and adjust the forms and strategies.

In this article, I am not attempting to say that formal education of Christian workers is not needed any more. There are many fine training institutions (seminaries, Bible schools) that do a great job in certain areas of developing Christian leaders, but I do not think it is ideal to start and finish with the formal education.

Our context and situation is an indigenous, non-denominational ministry to university students in the post-communist country of the Czech Republic. It started with one person and God back in 1982, when the country was under communist regime and became an official ministry in 1991 and has grown into a movement that seeks to reach the university students with the gospel all across the country. We do it in a highly secularized, atheistic society and we have about 30 full time staff plus many more volunteers and key student leaders.

The Start and Context of the Non-formal Education

Before starting to think about the training and education of staff and key volunteers in the ministry teams, we need to consider where they come from and who they are. It is very closely connected with the recruitment process. What is the main pool that our staff is coming from?

I have a friend who is in a business. God blessed him and his company has grown in a significant way. He is constantly in need of new people to hire. How does he do that? He makes an announcement of the position he needs to fill and what kind of skills he thinks are needed. Usually he gets dozens of resumes. Then, he makes a selection and invites some candidates for interviews and hopefully he chooses the best one. The chance of getting the best person for leadership position he wants and needs is about 10%. Unfortunately, this is how it is done in many Christian organizations. Our own experience in over 20 years of ministry is this: The best workers come from the inside of the ministry, not from the outside. The vast majority of our staff came to know Christ through our ministry, have grown in it as Christ's disciples, and have learned how to share their faith. They recognized their gifting. They have helped a new Christian in his or her first steps of faith and have become involved in discipleship process of someone else. There are many advantages of "fishing in our own pool":

- We get people who have already shown character, commitment, competence and compatibility with the ministry – that keeps the level of risk very low.

- Because they have grown in the ministry, they already have the DNA of the ministry. Their heart is there and they resonate with its vision and mission.

- They have already gone through basic training as part of the discipleship process and in the context of their practical ministry.

- It is organic and not artificial and it is self-regulating. If there are no leaders ready to become full-time staff, it means that new Christians need to be discipled. If there is no one to be discipled, it means that new people need to come to know Christ and evangelism then becomes the most important activity of the moment.

It means that we must create some kind of "pool" of our own. It takes time, patience, skill and much effort to develop it. But if we succeed, there is nothing better. Far too often Christian ministries are fishing in somebody else's pool and the level of risk is great. The best leadership resource is inside your ministry, not outside. Unfortunately

we are influenced by our "instant" age – we want everything and want it fast. Yet the New Testament writers remind us we must have the patience and diligence of farmers if we want to see the crops. The shortcuts will not work long-term and will not produce the ripe Kingdom fruit.

Even Servant Leaders Have Their Needs

Our leaders and team members are addressing the needs of others, but who cares for their needs? Why are we seeing so many discouraged, depressed, lonely and burned-out Christian workers and leaders today? One reason would probably be that something is not working in the support system.

I first came to realize it when our ministry grew beyond the family size. We could not see each other regularly anymore as our teams started working in different geographical locations. As ministry leader, I could not simply ignore the responsibility to address the needs of our staff. No one else would do it. It meant that some of us had to reduce the frontline ministry that we loved and knew well in order to get more involved in serving the other staff. We have been trying to do that in three areas:

- The number one need is intimate relationship with God. It is primarily their responsibility, but they need to be reminded, encouraged, taught and given an example. Everything else comes out of this first relationship. Character, loving other people and serving them follow.

- Ministry core values, vision, mission, philosophy and strategy. It is about who we are (our DNA) and what God has called us to. What we do and what we do not do and why.

- Ministry skills

Addressing the needs of staff has been happening within the friendly atmosphere of Christian fellowship and encouragement as well as personal attention and accountability. Our goal is to have a united, attractive and effective ministry team who know what they are doing and whose confidence is in God alone.

What Are We Doing Specifically to Address These Needs?

1. *Small Group Leaders Training*. Small groups of 3-5 are the basic unit in our ministry. Every student involved with us is part of such a small group. There are several levels of these groups according to spiritual maturity and commitment to Christ. Every

group has a leader. The basic attitudes and skills are passed naturally from generation to generation. Once a year we have a weekend designed for training the group leaders. The content is different each year and it depends on the needs we see, trends that develop, mistakes that occur repeatedly, areas of growth and changes we need to make to keep up with the new generation of students. It is always connected with evangelism and discipleship. The format includes lectures, seminars, discussions, prayer meetings, worship, and is always based on the Bible. The student ministry leadership team is responsible for the content and the main themes. Feedback from the participants is encouraged and welcomed. Mentors discuss the issues addressed at the training individually as they meet with other participants in next couple of weeks (part of their regular meeting schedule).

2. *New Staff and Key Student Leaders Training*. It is designed for new full-time staff or the key volunteers (students and alumni). It is a two-year program that covers the three areas (spiritual, ministry DNA and skills) in 10 units. They meet together once a month on a Saturday or for the whole weekend while they continue their ministry. Our senior staff members do the teaching and lead discussions. There are practical assignments that trainees have to complete in the context of their actual ministry; their mentors are to lead them and help them with that. They also do some reading and individual study. After completing all of the requirements, they pass final "exam" and receive a certificate. The content and format of this training has been established through the years and is being regularly evaluated every two years. There are two senior staff members who are in charge of the logistics, planning, scheduling themes and speakers, printing hand-outs and communicating with the mentors of the trainees. This training is designed not only to provide information, but also to build conviction that leads to application in areas of spiritual disciplines, basics of theology, evangelism, discipleship, spiritual leadership, apologetics, strategy in building a spiritual movement, management, public speaking, Bible overview and Bible study methods.

3. *Staff Training Retreats*. Twice a year all of our full-time staff meets together for about 4 days. We usually invite an outside speaker/teacher to teach on a topic that we think is needed such as "Basics of Christian Counseling", "Spiritual Formation", "Ministry Dominated by Grace", "Passionate Love of God", Discovering Your Gifts and Abilities". The teaching times are the backbone of our retreats, but we are actually accomplishing much more. We meet as a family – people who are related as closest brothers and sisters in Christ that are called to be accomplishing certain part of His work on this earth. Our ministry teams and individual staff share their successes and struggles, and we pray for each other. People who serve in different locations have opportunity to meet each other and talk to each other. We also try to communicate the "Big Picture" – this is where we are and this is where we are going. These retreats give us also opportunity to communicate administrative things such as policy, finances, etc. We do special things to welcome our new staff or to send out a new ministry team to a new field or assignment. We found that it is much better to get outside of a city to a place that is in the mountains or by a lake. To allow mutual encouragement and relationships, there must be also some free time planned or time

to do something fun like sports, games, walks. If at all possible, we try to find funding for these training retreats so we don't burden the individual staff members (most of them struggle to raise enough funds for their basic salaries).

4. *Leader Development*. We encourage our staff to plan at least one week of a study leave or a modular course done by other Christian ministries or schools. Formal or informal, individual study or a pre-set curriculum, the idea is to continue learning and growing and developing.

Conclusion

The future leaders are inside our ministries, not somewhere else. We are responsible for creating an environment or a greenhouse, if you will, where the Holy Spirit can produce growth and fruit in their life. There is no better 'greenhouse' for growth than something called discipleship. It is the main thing in the Great Commission of our Lord. Discipleship is not a program, it is a process that happens in the context of intentional friendly relationships of mutual accountability and the goal is spiritual maturity in Christ and multiplication of this process in the lives of others. I see the staff or leadership training being part of this discipleship process, not something on its own. The goal is the life transformation. This happens best when there is an environment of transparent trust, the truth of God's Word and mutual accountability (Ogden 2003). We are intentionally trying to create these conditions as we work with our staff, student leaders as well as young new Christians. Yes, there must also be a clear pathway to maturity – some things are more basic than others. There are steps of trust and commitment to Christ and His purposes; there are even topics and materials available for every part of the road. Even though we have specialized teachers who speak on certain topics, there is also personal interaction among the trainees and times with those who are their mentors or discipleship partners focused on application of what is being learned. This aspect makes the training more effective and connected with real life and ministry.

I would strongly recommend this principle to anyone who is attempting to care for the needs of other servants of Christ. Non-formal education works best if it part of discipleship process. Times out together with our staff seem to be working well too. They bring much needed encouragement and equipment for the ministry. What we have not done yet, but see as a need, is to be more intentional about identifying areas for the further development of our staff after they come through the basic training and create

ways of communicating them – maybe using our staff retreats and doing specialized training sessions. The staff are the greatest treasure that ministry has and their leadership will determine what God can do through us in the future. It is the most resource that the Lord entrusted us with and ministry leaders will be hold accountable for their stewardship of this precious resource.

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About the Author

Josef Pavlinak is the cofounder and director of Christian Education and Life (KVZ) ministry that focuses on bringing the gospel to the university students in the Czech Republic, making disciples of them and equipping them for a life-long ministry. It started in the 1982 and was officially registered in 1991. Hundreds of KVZ alumni are now serving God all across the country in the existing and newly established evangelical churches and other Christian organizations. For more information, see www.kvz.cz.

Reflections from the Editors

Principles of Non-Formal Education

- Pavlinak wrestles with the challenge of passing on DNA. This is one of the most difficult issues facing formal education. If education is conceived primarily as the accumulation of a certain constellation of classes and attainment of a certified corpus of knowledge, it may have accomplished good but it has yet to change a person's fundamental DNA. DNA, of course, is a metaphorical concept for non-formal educators. They use the term to refer to a fundamental way of seeing and relating to the world. Content alone rarely changes people in these deep parts of DNA. They need more—more involvement of a disciple-maker in their lives, a fuller engagement with their whole personhood, a challenge more robust for their hearts and a fuller-orbed expression for their calling and vocation.

- Notice his peripheral vision and the attention he gives to seeing people before they enter his leadership development programs, and after they finish as they apply what they learned in ministry. Pavlinak understands the role of recruitment and selection, and tailors his training to the ministry outcomes he desires to see.

- As a leader caring for his staff, Pavlinak gives special emphasis to keeping his team healthy and growing. This may be more difficult in settings where non-formal education is offered to a broader range of people to voluntarily enter and exit the training process.

- Pavlinak uses the metaphor of a greenhouse to indicate a particular tension faced by those who engage in non-formal education. He recognizes that organic growth is not

something we control and manufacture (like a carpenter would craft a desk from wood), but something that is alive and developing (like a plant growing in a garden). This should not lead to a laissez faire approach, but rather a focused and deliberate effort to create the optimal environment for growth.

Questions to Consider

- In an organization where there is an emphasis on recruiting from within, how can one prevent "group think" or inherent weaknesses caused by a limited "gene pool" of ideas and experiences? Are there ways to keep the dialogue balanced and robust, while still maintaining the focus and unity that comes from growing your own leaders?

- Pavlinak has a particular emphasis on discipleship in his training programs. Is discipleship the same as non-formal education or different? Is education a subset of disciple making, or disciple making a category of education? Should we attempt at all to reconcile these Biblical and educational categories?

- Involvement in the lives of people takes time and extraordinary investments of energy and commitment. Pavlinak's model of leadership development depends on such investment. How can that be taken to scale and multiplied across an entire region without compromising the quality of engagement?

School Without Walls in Central Asia
By Ruslan Zagidulin (Kyrgystan)

Abstract
Ruslan Zagidulin suggests that one of the most crushing challenges facing the evangelical church is the problem of how to develop leaders in environments that are hostile to the cause of Christ. Throughout the world, inhospitable geopolitical climates create formidable backdrops for ministry training. Some cultural and political contexts are so severe and impenetrable that formal education is simply not an option. In the essay, Zagidulin describes how a non-formal model is finding inroads into Christian education.

The Geopolitical Situation and the Protestant Project

Many political changes have occurred in Central Asia during last decade. These changes have not produced tangible results in terms of improving the socio-economic circumstances. One reason, according to political analysis, is "an identity crisis and lack opportunities to design their own development projects due to the weakness of the elites."[1] The identity crisis of the whole region as well as certain Central Asian countries is not merely a result of weakness among the political elites of the nations. Central Asia has also become a place of clashes among different ideological projects: "the Russian neo-imperialist project, the American project of geopolitical control over the Asian mega region, the Islamic expansion project, the Chinese resource-trading project and the European Central Asian strategy." [2]

These ideological schemes have their own religious dimensions. Some of the projects are relatively indifferent to other religious beliefs and play a minor role in terms of human resource management. For instance, the Chinese resource-trading project is not concerned with the personal beliefs of the particular individual. At the same time the project is profoundly concerned with the institutional growth of the religious groups. Some of the projects, for example the Islamic expansion project, perceive nations in its influence as religious resources. The attempt of governments to toughen control over the religion issues in 2008-2009 is an attempt to gain influence over the projects in relation to

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[1] http://ipp.kg/en/analysis/875/.
[2] Ibid.

religious issues. Unfortunately, new legislations have led to various modes of administrative pressure on religious expression.[3]

Use of legislation by the officials is usually motivated more by cultural issues than by political ones. There is growing pressure on "non-traditional" religious groups such as Christians as "new" Islamic movements display xenophobia. That pressure is most explicit among rural communities. Some Christian organizations and churches are welcomed until the Christian organization or group is identified as a public-assistance organization. Then, any expression of religious experience is perceived as cultural expansion.

In fact, the public religious expression is one of the distinguishing characteristics of evangelical churches at Central Asia. No doubt, different denominational groups have different ways of doing the mission. The different means of evangelism is one of the more recent paradigm shifts within the church concerning evangelism. In the 1990s, mass-evangelism had a huge success. As a result, many new churches and Christian groups were established. Churches and Christian organizations had an exigency for trained missioners and evangelists.

Practically every evangelical Christian has faced the problem of an adequate expression to his or her convictions in strange environment. Christ's disciples find it challenging in everyday life to follow him while living among people who are not sympathic with Christianity.

Thereby, religious issues have three dimensions: political, cultural and spiritual. Because evangelicals are a minority in Central Asia, the church must focus on spiritual issues. Sometimes evangelical churches deal with cultural questions if they correlate with the spiritual issues. Most evangelicals do not concern themselves with political issues, however.

One can see the religious changes in Central Asia and the response of the evangelical churches that goes in different directions. Political projects have an influence on the cultural shaping of the nations and the different ethnic groups in Central Asia. The cultural settings affect spiritual practice. The evangelicals still believe that spiritual

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[3] http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/B9HC2-5032NPX-5/2/172af1398ef312cae68b1224fa6b745c

experiences of people can make changes in cultural settings of the nations. And, as a result, the political changes will follow.

Church-Based Non-formal Education as Response
of the Churches on the Changes

During the first decade of the new century the evangelical community in Central Asia and within the Former Soviet Union faced the need to make disciples. It needed to make changes in theological education.[4] Churches, as well as Christian organizations, needed a wide spectrum of differently skilled people rather than narrowly trained specialists within the Church. Obviously, most new believers were not willing to enter a course of full-time study in a theological institution. Clearly the church needed a non-formal model of education.

Security is another important reason for the adoption and success of non-formal education. As stated above, the evangelical churches face administrative pressure. New religious laws in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have significantly restricted religious education. Any official evangelical theological education is practically impossible in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Even though Kazakhstan still is less restricted, most theological institutions have faced difficulties of official registration. In such circumstances, non-formal church-based education became uniquely necessary, rather than just optional.

Evangelical churches have faced a new wave of immigration during the last few years. In some cases, a leader of certain ministry has decided in very short term to immigrate. In such situations there is no time to prepare a new leader in a seminary. Participation in some non-formal training is the only way through this situation. Of course a new leader can get formal education as a part-time student, but that form of education for some leaders with his or her workload is often more complicating than helpful for the ministry.

Most training programs which we are doing in the region deal with skill development. School Without Walls (SWW) is also aimed at developing the motivation

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[4] Ruslan Zagidulin, *Missiology in Theological Education of Bishkek Bible School,* Submitted to the Course Leader of Contextual Missiology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Magister of Theology in Biblical Studies on Introduction to Contextual Missiology, 2009, IBTS, Prague.

of young adults. As Michael Cherenkoff has indicated "it motivates the average young church-goer to study and prepare for active study".[5] This is helpful to us in our situation, for it spurs into action a large number of church members who are de-motivated because of their difficult circumstances.

The philosophy of SWW is based on the idea that every young adult has the possibility and should have the opportunity to improve the gifts which he or she has received from God. The purpose of SWW is to help the local congregation find appropriate ways to develop the young person in concrete ways for the common good within the church as well as outside the church.

Strengths and Weakness of SWW in Central Asia

Most programs aimed at developing the skilled minister for the church begin with the narrow task of preparing Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, evangelists, etc. Young adults who matriculate into the training program are forced to choose among one of the offered programs. He or she is presented with a list of available courses. Often, they do what someone else wants them to do. It might be pastor or youth leader. From very beginning every potential student faces the problem of de-motivation. In our SWW model, we start from the point of willingness of the young person. From very beginning, the program is aimed at developing individuals broadly for God's Kingdom. The curriculum of SWW deals with potential possibilities of the student, rather than the possibilities of the congregation.

One problem might arise with such an approach. Who can give assurance that such a student will self-develop for the common good? We don't want students to self-develop any way they would like and without guidance. Our response has been to require that, in almost every seminar, the student is obligated to represent his or her own idea (sometimes with confederates) to the pastor. The student needs merely to have an idea which is correlated with the topic, but represent the idea in an appropriate way. In so doing, a teacher (the pastor) and a disciple (the student) struggle with the challenge facing them, and not against each other. It starts not immediately after the lecture, but during the actual training. There is an advantage in this model because the pastors are

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[5]Michael Cherenkoff, *School Without Walls and the Local Church: A Model of Informal leadership Training in Post-Soviet Countries.*

actually involved in the pedagogical process. They do not relinquish the education to pedagogical professionals. They cannot stay outside the educational process and simply evaluate from a distance. Their involvement is intimate in the developing lives of the students.

At least two strengths of the strategy of SWW are obvious: the high motivation of students and the involvement of pastors. The main challenge facing SWW is one of evaluation. How one can adequately evaluate successes of the certain student? The content of the education is just a tool which could or could not help the student to achieve success as a disciple. On its own account, mastery of the material is not a criterion of success. The student's knowledge in and of itself cannot be the primary sign of success under such conditions. This means that the usual assessment system for formal education is not a good fit for such a task.

If the program is aimed at developing the person, the person can be the criterion of achievement. It is necessary during the program to take certain measurements of personal development. To that point, SWW has been extensively utilizing questionnaires. The content of the questionnaires follows the values of the program: self-confidence, participation in different ministries within the congregations as well as outside the church, the development of meaningful ministry projects.

The task of SWW correlates with the reasons of the success of non-formal education in general and SWW in particular: the necessity of developing discipleship within the churches, a safe and secure way of engaging in religious education in a formidable geopolitical climate, the need to promptly educate the replacement leaders, and a means to motivate people to Christian service through education. The non-formal model of SWW fits well within the Central Asia context.

I have to note here as well, that this non-formal approach works best in the level of personal spiritual interaction. Such approach is successful because it emphasizes personal peculiarity of the individuals. Non-formal education is not as adequate for working on the structural level of society because of the lack of strong institutionalism. It makes the educational approach flexible from one side and vague from other.

For successful working on the level of cultural change and prompt reaction to cultural challenges, it is important to keep networking among different evangelical structures. It is necessary that every learning circle be integrated in a coherent system and

coordinated to retain a unified community of evangelical Christians. For that reason, SWW in Kyrgyzstan cooperates with the workgroup of Association Evangelical Churches of Kyrgyzstan which is working on development of the Social Concept of Evangelical Churches of Kyrgyzstan.

Conclusion

SWW became a partner with the local churches in Central Asia. Socio-political changes in Central Asia have driven a growing interest in non-formal, church-based education among the churches of that region. Many churches are forced to go underground. For such congregations, especially in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, non-formal education became one way to train a new generation of church leaders.

The difficult circumstances and hardship in this region force many people to leave the region, leaving it depressed. Such a public mood is penetrating the framework of church communities. People are de-motivated and need more than competence; they need to be inspired for ministry. Also, because of the increase rate of turnover among church personnel, there is a growing necessity for short, practice, and meaningful modes of developing leaders.

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About the Author

Ruslan Zagidulin has received training from the Bishkek Bible School. He has served as trainer for church planting of Bible League Kyrgyzstan and coordinator for the School Without Walls project in Kygyzstan. He is married and has two boys.

Reflections from the Editors

Principles of Non-Formal Education

- Whereas formal education is overtly threatening to a cultural and political establishment toxic to the Christian church, a non-formal model can find a more subtle and effective entree. Such a strategy is critical for Central Asia, but perhaps this principal can be transferrable to other contexts in which the established institutions are bent on self-preservation and antagonistic toward institutional threats—such as highly developed ecclesial structures or highly fractured community/ethnic structures or other highly politicized intra-agency cultures even in the West. Non-formal education modes that exhibit a strong DNA but a fluidity and malleability of form can penetrate where no formal education can.

- Zagidulin identifies student motivation as a force in the non-formal model. This idea of self-direction, or at least self-initiative, is a fundamental feature of many non-formal models. The notion that student interest, inclination, and gifting are taken as a starting point and ongoing priority of the educational process can increase a sense of desire for learning. Zagidulin makes a point of noting that self-direction, apart from the intent and guidance of a spiritual leader, could lead to malformation. Self-direction, in the SWW model, is moderated by the interaction with others ("confederates," he describes) and with a spiritual authority (the "pastor" who is serving as the educator). This keeps self-direction productive for the ministry and away from a self-serving, self-oriented, self-absorbed, selfishness.

Questions for Consideration

- The importance of finding the right means of evaluation, which Zagidulin conscientiously raises, cannot be understated. The standard, content-based test is inadequate to judge how lives are being developed. SWW uses questionnaires to evaluate non-content related features of discipleship. Could there be other, more sufficiently qualitative means, to achieve sufficient formative and summative assessment?

- Zagidulin differentiates between non-formal education which affects individuals and formal education which engages systems and structures. However, must institutions be used to transform institutions, or could non-formal models also be appropriately and intentionally subversive in transforming the structural contours of a region? If so, how might they be marshalled to such an end?

Moving from an Expert-Oriented Pedagogy to an Object-Oriented Learning Strategy: Teaching Biblical Truth in a Post-Communist Eastern European Context

By Ed Murray (German Democratic Republic)

Abstract
Ed Murray's essay provides a Western-oriented perspective on the opportunities and challenges in developing leaders for Eastern Europe. In this article, we also see the evolution of a non-formal model of ministry development—from a schooling orientation that is re-packaged and administered in a non-standard way (in response to the environmental challenges) to a non-formal learning orientation that is a re-forming of the fundamental assumptions of what it means to teach and learn.

> *And don't let anyone call you 'Teacher,' for you have only one teacher, the Messiah. The greatest among you must be a servant. But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. – Matthew 23:10-12 (NLT)*

Introduction

In 1973 my pregnant wife and I boarded a plane with two small children ready to take on the challenge of bringing the vision of Campus Crusade for Christ for personal training in evangelism and discipleship to the peoples of Eastern Europe then trapped behind the "iron curtain." I had a fresh ThM degree in my hand from Dallas Theological Seminary and realized very soon that I had answers to questions that no one in Europe was asking! In the years that followed we learned German, began working among the students and young people of Austria where we lived, and made several trips a year into the German Democratic Republic (GDR) which represented only one-third of Germany, was hardly democratic and was a republic in name only. My vision and my gifts were teaching. I had been trained by Howard Hendricks and Gene Getz; men from whom I learned a great deal and who contributed to making me and us who we are even today. Their challenging and innovative views on education and teaching became a springboard for learning whose influence has never abated.

Certainly one of the most significant truths I learned in the late 60s from my distinguished professors was that the focus of education and teaching was always the learner, never the material and certainly not the teacher. If no one learns, no one has taught!

In the course of the next twenty years God worked in ways that none of us could have ever predicted. Movements of young people who wanted to serve God no matter what the cost, whether financial or prestige, began to develop. In the face of godless Communism they were willing to stand up and give strength to the voice of Christ in difficult situations. In addition, we found ways to bring missionaries into these countries to live and model Christianity. Americans became business people, teachers, students, athletes and scientists all with the goal of devoting most of their time to the cause of bringing the gospel to Eastern Europe. Discipleship and evangelism was the primary focus for what was done behind the "iron curtain". Slowly, but as surely as faith tears down mountains, movements began to grow, materials were printed, training sessions were held and people were called to give their lives to a cause greater than themselves. No one knew where it would lead, but that didn't make any difference because everyone knew their leader was Christ and what He was doing was good and right.

Developments After 1989

Then chinks in the wall began to appear. In 1989 the wire fence between Austria and Hungary was severed, East Germans began pouring over the border never looking back on what they were leaving. The fall of 1989 saw the collapse of government after government. Suddenly there was freedom, no longer it seemed was someone watching, no one recording things in a secret file. Disorientation was everywhere. Who's in charge? What do we do? What can we do? In the wake of the collapse of what societal stability Communism had provided, those who had declared themselves ready to spread the gospel found a new platform, a new openness, and a new responsiveness as well as new challenges.

In the decaying and disintegrating German Democratic Republic (GDR) we had begun a training program in 1986 with approximately 30 people. The program was designed to establish a group of people ready to take the vision of Campus Crusade for Christ for personal evangelism and training in discipleship to their country under a name

that they had chosen (Die Mattäusarbeit), and within a structure they had built even within the restrictive limits of their government. They were daring and courageous people with faith to believe God. In contrast to live-in opportunities in other countries, we were unable to live in the GDR, but a team of us who had learned German in those early years in Austria had been traveling into the country since 1976 teaching, encouraging, and modeling life with Christ in a way that was attractive and that God used to influence lives. In the fall of 1989 we finished that training course and fourteen people had responded to the call to give their lives to full-time service no matter what it meant. Little did they expect that just one month later they would be free to travel to visit us in the west; something which we had hoped for, but for which we hardly dared to pray. They found an unprecedented openness for the gospel and over the next months took advantage of many open doors to bring the good news of Christ to their culture and land.

But our model in the GDR was not the only one. In country after country, nationals had chosen to dedicate themselves to Christ and His work. When the walls of political resistance began to fall in 1989, there were some 200 American missionaries living in the Communist countries of Europe, sharing their faith and living life with an increasing group of nationals dedicated to bringing the life-changing message of Christ to others throughout Eastern Europe and Russia. When political freedom finally came in late 1989 and early 1990 these people knew language, knew culture and were ready to take advantage of unprecedented open doors to reach out with the gospel of Christ.

But now with political openness came new responsibility. With an increased group of eager and vibrant workers how could we train them and equip them even better for their task of sharing the gospel, building strong spiritual structures, helping to start new churches and being a clear testimony in a dark world? This was the task that we considered as we shifted the emphasis of our ministry to biblical training in 1993-1995. What came into being was the Institute for Biblical and Theological Studies. What came into being was the Institute for Biblical and Theological Studies.

Our mission statement was clear and our structure to reach the goal was sound on paper. Yet the reality was that we were often more concerned about presenting our material than clearly thinking about how to affect change in life and thinking. Our focus was the growing number of national full-time staff with the organization now called New Life Eastern Europe and Russia. Though Campus Crusade staff workers are not required

to have a Bible school or seminary education, the importance of good training and solid foundations is a high value of the organization. But now in Eastern Europe and Russia we encountered people who were used to a very different model of education. People used to listening, taking notes, trying to regurgitate on the exam exactly what the teacher said or wanted to hear, and who were used to cheating because the pressure to "get it right" was more important than the need to truly learn and grow. One of my first experiences teaching a group of pastors and Christian leaders in Romania ended with an exam. My expectation was that each would take his or her own exam. I was totally unprepared for the buzz of sound and flurry of cross examination that ensued. The important thing was to look good for the professor! Cheating was expected! On the surface there would have been no question about the theoretical reason we were together. But on the subliminal, subconscious level an old pattern of education tended to hold sway in the minds of our staff and others as we attempted to bring not just new information about theology and Christian living to people, but a new way of thinking about life in the Spirit.

I saw the need to create a new atmosphere in the teaching environment. One of my first major tasks was to return again to some of my basic pedagogy and consider carefully why I was doing what I was doing. The student was the goal, not my desire to look good or present a fine finished product. The mind, the heart and the will of the student needed to be my focus. Was my goal to impart knowledge, strengthen or change convictions, or encourage the change of behaviour? We had developed a 12-course curriculum for our staff that we felt would give them a well-rounded foundation for ministry. Were we reaching our goal of influencing the way people thought and behaved, or were we simply presenting our material, and then receiving the perfunctory gift at the end of the course with appropriate applause? I had to admit that the latter was more often the case than I desired.

Expert Centered Model for Learning

Somewhere around the turn of the new millennium I was exposed to the writings of Parker Palmer. [1] He belongs to a Quaker community, but has become a strong voice in

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[1] Even if only in a footnote, I would also like to acknowledge a second person who has helped to shape my educational philosophy in later years: Jane Kathryn Vella's concept of "Dialogue Education" flows very easily into Palmer's concepts. Her twelve steps of course construction have become a part of standard procedure in my construction of courses. She has a wide range of

the field of education. In his work entitled *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, first published in 1997 by Jossey-Bass he introduced two models of education which I have adapted somewhat for my own purposes. The first model is "expert-focused." Let's assume that the object of learning is spiritual life; how to make Christ more relevant and evident in our personal lives.

The important focus of this model is the expert who does the superb job of conveying truth through good media presentation, good communicative skills and persuasive argument. The assignments move people in the direction of what they are supposed to learn and there is usually an exam to confirm that the expert is still the expert. The material is brilliant, the expert is just that—the expert. He or she knows the object of instruction better than anyone else and the student, here called the amateur, is asked to understand the object through the mind and thought of the expert. Students or amateurs are evaluated in relation to their ability to convince the expert that he or she has done a good job of teaching and that information has been conveyed. There may be little concern or evaluation of the true impact of the material. In the end the amateurs often remain amateurs and the one-way barriers of communication remain in place. The subliminal effect is that the expert remains the expert and the student remains intimidated.

The Object of Learning as the Focus of Learning

The second model is much different and reflects more beautifully the model of our Lord Jesus who went so far as to place a child in the midst of his disciples[2] and asked them to reflect on what this child had to teach them. He did not set himself up as an expert, but rather directed the attention of his students/disciples to the object of the learning; in this case the metaphor of a child compared to the kingdom of God.

In this model the object of learning is the focus of learning. The students-disciples gather around the object of learning and the role of the teacher/facilitator is to engage the

experience in many countries and cultures of the world, albeit not specifically Christian. See Jane Vella. *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults.* (Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, 2002). For a summary of the 12 steps see: www.luthersem.edu/mhess/vella.pdf.

[2]Matthew 18:1-6

students with the object itself. There are several advantages to this model: First, the students have direct contact with the object of learning. There is no middle person. No one specific expert. Certainly the teacher will know more, be better acquainted with the object and have other advantages over the students, but the focus is to put the students in direct contact with the object. A second advantage is that the students are encouraged to enter into dialogue with the facilitator/teacher in a way that allows the life of the teacher to speak more clearly. Transparency becomes an important value and integrity of character, a seminal value for Palmer (and for the Christian teacher), becomes an agent of education as well. The students no longer have to impress the teacher, and the teacher can allow the students to see into his or her life, to experience the questions and challenges that the object of learning might present, and to discover that learning never stops. A third benefit of this model is that the students are able to learn from the insights of one another. As the students interact with each other over the object of learning, they discover new facets of the object that become apparent because of a different personality or a different culture, or a different history of another student in the group. The corollary of this third benefit is that the presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the learners allows God to speak through every person engaged in the learning experience. A fourth positive side of this model is that the students are given confidence that their questions, thoughts and contributions are worthwhile and worthy of expression. There is no dumb question and personal discovery because of the contribution of another becomes a high value. Lastly, this model allows the teacher to set up a cognitive dissonance in the minds of the students without which they can never really feel the challenge of new ideas and constructs. In this safe context this dissonance, which can be a very threatening experience, is able to bear its good fruit in making the student reflect on new ideas or even new paradigms that need to be considered and possibly accepted.

Introducing this second model both into my own teaching experience as well as into the midst of the groups of students I teach has had a dramatic effect. I reassure students that my goal is not to prove that they know less than I, but rather to help them discover what they know, reflect on what they need to learn, and help them find strategies to accomplish the learning goals they themselves set. In order to accomplish this goal, I often start a course with my own story making sure that vulnerability and transparency are present as appropriate for the audience.

Just today I have finished teaching a 20-hour course on three points of doctrine, a course with every potential for the expert to wax eloquent. Yet from the beginning the course was structured around discussion. Articles were included in the student notes for reading and group interaction, open-ended questions were a part of each day's assignment and the answers were talked about in class. My experience has shown me that engaging the students in meaningful questions and discussion during the class sessions can allow adequate time for my viewpoints to be shared, and also provide time for students to learn from the insights of others. Meals were taken together during which personal questions were discussed and in lieu of a final exam, shorter interactive quizzes were used to reinforce the important points of the previous day. A final project was required of the student's choosing that reflected an aspect of the content of the course, but was developed in a format that either would be useful to the student later, or would express the creativity and/or different learning styles of the student. My goal as a facilitator/teacher is that of helping students discover and correlate truth in ways that are motivating and that connect to the lives they live and their ministries as full-time staff members of Campus Crusade for Christ. Ultimately my goal in teaching is to help people think more biblically.

Three Lenses

I often introduce a course with a picture of three lenses through which we view life: The lens of our personality, the lens of our history and culture and then the lens of biblical truth or theology. The three lenses cannot be easily discerned or separated. Our personality affects our theology as does our culture and history. We return again and again to this idea in order to ask the questions, where do I find God in my life, in my relationships, in my responses? It is ultimately the best theology when students are able to see that which influences their lives and can bring God's truth to bear upon them. That is theology. Unfortunately the opposite is too often true: My personality or my history and culture are brought to bear on my thinking about God and thus my picture of God is determined more by those factors than it is by God's revealed truth. Paul's words in Colossians are apt:

> Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of

this world, rather than from Christ. For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.[3]

Empty philosophies and theological nonsense are born in my oft-distorted way of looking at things through my personality, or by messages I have heard repeatedly from my environment whether it be culture, school, or family. True theology is learning to discern where the messages in my mind come from and to bring them under the lordship of Christ and His Word. Helping students to be aware of these lenses has been a very profitable exercise in their increasing ability to bring God's thoughts to bear on their lives.

It is gratifying to meet students, even years later, who reflect on a time when their interaction with me and their student colleagues around a particular subject made an impact on their lives and thought.

> I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about: *students who learn are the finest fruit of teachers who teach. . . .* teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. *Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions . . . .* (emphasis added). [4]

> *. . . truth is an eternal conversation about things that matter, conducted with passion and discipline* (emphasis in text).[5]

Further Resources from Parker Palmer and Jane Vella

Palmer, Parker. 1999. *Let Your Life Speak: Listen for the Voice of Vocation.* Jossey-Bass: San Francisco. A short autobiography of the influences that have shaped Palmer's life. See also Palmer's official website with a number of resources including videos and podcasts http://www.couragerenewal.org/ and for a good summary of Palmer's work see http://www.miracosta.edu/home/gfloren/palmer.htm#exs.

Palmer, Parker. 2007. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (10th Anniversary Edition). Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Palmer, Parker. 2008. *The Promise of Paradox: A Celebration of Contradictions in the Christian Life*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Vella, Jane Kathryn. 2000. *Taking Learning to Task: Creative Strategies for Teaching Adults*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

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[3] Colossians 2:8-9

[4] Parker Palmer. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life, 10th Anniversary Edition*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), p. 7

[5] Ibid. p. 106

Vella, Jane Kathryn. 2002. *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Vella, Jane Kathryn. 2007. On *Teaching and Learning: Putting the Principles and Practices of Dialogue Education into Action*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco. Jane Vella's official website is http://www.globalearning.com/index.htm.

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Parker Palmer, Parker. 2007. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life, 10th Anniversary Edition*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

About the Author

Ed Murray is an American who has lived in Europe since 1973. He is a trained teacher and educator with a theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in education from Kansas State University. As an adjunct faculty member of the Institute for Biblical and Theological Studies, he and his wife, Coralee, have travelled and taught in many countries of Eastern Europe. In addition to teaching, they began and directed the ministry of Agape Austria/CCC Austria, living there for a period of 19 years while at the same time helping to start the CCC ministry in several Eastern European countries then under Communism with a particular focus on the former German Democratic Republic (DDR). Beginning in 2000 they gave direction to the work of New Life Moldova, and turned that ministry with 60 full-time Moldovan staff over to Moldovan leaders just a year ago. Ed and Coralee have been married for 43 years, have five grown children and 13 grandchildren and reside presently in Hungary. Dr. Murray can be contacted at ed.murray@ccci.org

Reflections from the Editors

Principles of Non-Formal Education

- In a non-formal model, the centrality of learning instead of teaching, often forces a rethinking of the entire frame of educational reference. Murray describes what many educators wrestle with: the strong reference points of formal education from our historic models that restrict our assumption of what education should or should not be.

- One of the more prominent notations of Murray, as he self-reflects on the development of his ministry, is the shift in the educational culture from an authoritarian to a more cooperative and interactive culture. Creating space for a collegial ethos is often a hallmark of the non-formal approach. It does not mean that expertise is veiled or diminished, only that all of those partaking in the learning (including the expert or the teacher) are assumed to be of equal value to the process.

- Within his non-formal strategy, Murray finds that he can provide an education characterized by elusive qualities such as cognitive dissonance, a capacity for ongoing learning, and interdependence among students. These features, among

others, are often difficult to establish and maintain within a formal educational context.

Questions for Consideration

- A danger facing educators who are moving from a formal to a non-formal mode is the temptation to swing from authority or expert orientation to a position so thoroughly collaborative that authority and expertise are excessively diminished or abandoned. How can an engaging environment of co-learning become nurtured without compromising the contribution of scholarship and the benefits of a position of authority? Can there be expertise without arrogance and authority without autocracy? One of the astonishing attributes of Christ's teaching is that he is said to have spoken with authority unlike that of other teachers. Murray's diagram of preference places the teacher in no special role of expertise or authority. Must this be the approach of the teacher in all non-formal models?

- Another potential difficulty for non-formal practitioners is the assumption that a change in the form of education dictates a change in undergirding philosophy. Just because a course is taken out of the classroom does not make it non-formal in its essence. Murray's article is both an example of how the fundamentals of the educational process can be re-worked to a non-formal mode and also how formal frames (e.g., a 20-hour course in theology) can pervade non-formal efforts and inadvertently saddle it with limitations. How can we keep thinking afresh about the possible frames for theological education?

- This article in the only one in this issue written by a westerner. To what extent are the views of learning and teaching shaped by the language, culture and practice of western culture—even if that westerner has been located in another country for a number of years? Is a research project indicated that encourages scholar/practitioners with most of their life and practice and schooling in their own cultural context to design and conduct an inquiry into the nature of learning without the western overlays? What might students say about the differences between learning in this way, and just as effective practices of learning that were derived from their indigenous culture? While we admit that the nature of learning in any culture is flawed and influenced by the worthy and unworthy elements in human interaction, it is possible that insight from indigenous practices would be helpful.