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# Theological Education

Educational Technology and Distance Education:  
Issues and Implications for Theological Education

Volume 36  
Number 1  
Autumn 1999

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**THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**  
**Volume 36, Number 1**  
**Autumn 1999**

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## **ATS Communications Advisory Committee**

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*Theological Education*, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools, is devoted solely to issues and ideas in graduate theological education in North America. The journal supports the mission of the Association by: (1) providing a forum for scholarly discourse on current issues and trends in graduate theological education in the United States and Canada; (2) addressing the contemporary issues facing the community of theological schools; (3) sharing models of critical analysis and effective practice in theological education; and (4) recording the changes and advances in theological education.

# Introduction

*Daniel O. Aleshire*

*The Association of Theological Schools*

This issue of *Theological Education* experiments with a modified format of the journal by presenting a series of six articles on a central theme—the “issue focus”—and three articles that constitute an “open forum” for exploring particular topics in theological education that are unrelated to the theme.

The open forum articles were juried by members of the ATS Communications Advisory Committee, which serves as the advisory editorial board for *Theological Education*. This bifold structure of the journal, suggested by the Communications Advisory Committee, may be continued in subsequent issues to provide a cluster of articles around an identified theme as well as juried articles by the committee on a variety of other subjects in theological education.

The six articles related to the theme of this issue—Educational Technology and Distance Education: Issues and Implications for Theological Education—are described in the theme introduction that follows. In addition, the editors provide a historical background of extension education in the ATS standards and some current definitions of distance education from several sources.

The Association is grateful to the Commission on Accrediting’s Task Force on Educational Technology and Distance Education, the members of the ATS Educational Technology Advisory Committee, and to Katherine Amos, ATS Director of Accreditation and Extension Education, for their thoughtful and thorough work that has brought the resources, gathered in this issue of *Theological Education*, to bear on the current discussions of distance education in graduate, professional theological education.

The three “open forum” articles in this issue explore: (1) a general methodology for teaching and learning in theological schools, (2) the roles of fear in theological education, and (3) the genre of the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) dissertation.

Patricia Lamoureux of St. Mary’s Seminary and University reports on a work in progress in her article “An Integrated Approach to Theological Education,” in which she proposes a methodology for teaching and learning that integrates emotion, intellect, theology, and experience. Her integrative model draws on drama, film, and literature to facilitate theological reflection and provide what she describes as “a more wholistic educational experience.” Her methodology is grounded in theological education as spiritual journey in which the spiritual disciplines of study of sacred texts, prayer and contemplation, and the gathered life of the community play a central and formative role.

F. LeRon Shults of Bethel Theological Seminary explores theological and psychological understandings of fear in relation to theological education in his

article “Pedagogy of the Repressed: What Keeps Seminarians from Transformational Learning?” He begins by considering the problem of fear from a psychological perspective, and then moves to examining a theological understanding of fear as it relates to seminary education. He suggests that too much fear, understood psychologically, inhibits transformational learning in theological education, while not enough fear, understood theologically, also inhibits learning.

Timothy Lincoln of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary sketches the characteristic features of the Doctor of Ministry project as a practical document in “Writing Practical Christian Wisdom: Genre and the Doctor of Ministry Dissertation.” To further clarify the genre, he contrasts the D.Min. dissertation with certain expectations for a Ph.D. dissertation and then proposes a “tentative description” of the D.Min. project to invite future research and attention that might contribute to better supervision of students as they write their final D.Min. project documents.

# Theme Introduction: Distance Education and The Association of Theological Schools

The central theme of this issue of *Theological Education* is educational technology and distance education, and their implications for graduate, professional theological education in North America. The last issue of *Theological Education* devoted primarily to articles about extension education was twenty-five years ago in the summer of 1974. That issue examined theological education by extension as it was developing outside of Europe and North America, and pointed to possible uses by ATS schools in North America. For the most part, theological education by extension was understood by those authors as an educational practice in use in less developed countries. Some authors in the 1974 *Theological Education*, like Ted Ward and C. Peter Wagner, advocated for its adoption in North America for a variety of reasons. Collin Williams, responding as immediate past chair of the ATS Commission on Educational Strategy and Planning, was more cautious about the implications of the “deschooling” tendencies of theological education by extension.

The ATS discussion about extension education continued through the 1970s, and at the ATS Biennial Meeting in 1980, the Association adopted its first formal standard on extension education, including “Criteria for Extension/Satellite Credit Offerings and Degree Programs” (*ATS Bulletin 34*, 1980, Part 6, Biennial Meeting, 78-82). By 1980, extension education had ceased to be a speculative discussion among ATS schools and become an educational practice for many. Extension education, at this time, was understood exclusively in terms of off-campus courses or degree programs in which professors and students worked together in classroom settings. A dominant theme of the 1980 standard was that an extension program needed to be “demonstrably equivalent” to the seminary’s on-campus programs in a range of characteristics. Extension education was acceptable, for accrediting purposes, as long as the member school could demonstrate that education in extension was comparable or equivalent to education on campus. The 1980 standard provided no authorization for graduate credits to be earned by correspondence or other non-classroom based, off-campus study.

The 1980 standard lasted a decade, but by 1990, extension education had changed sufficiently that the Association elected a special committee to review the relevant standard. The Association adopted a revised standard in 1992 that differed from the 1980 standard in several significant ways. It distinguished among kinds of extension education programs and, for the first time, recognized what ATS called “distance learning,” described in the 1992 standard as “instruction for individuals outside the context of the classroom setting.” For

classroom education conducted at extension sites, the revised standard replaced the “equivalence” language of the 1980 standard with “appropriate” language, thereby shifting the basis for accrediting extension education programs away from their equivalence with the school’s on-campus program to appropriateness to the context of the extension programs. These were substantive changes in the ways in which educational quality was interpreted for graduate, professional theological education in extension. For the first time, the ATS standards recognized two very distinct forms of education conducted apart from the theological school’s primary campus: students and faculty together in classroom settings at locations away from the school’s main campus, and extension courses taken by individuals apart from the main campus, from other students, and from the instructor.

In the Association’s adoption of the 1996 redeveloped Standards of Accreditation, the standard with regard to extension education was modified somewhat, primarily to clarify language in the 1992 standard. One significant change introduced in 1996 permitted as much as one-third of the credits counted toward an ATS-approved degree program to be earned by “external independent study” courses. As part of the 1996 action to adopt the redeveloped standards, the Association requested the Commission on Accrediting to undertake a study of the emerging forms of theological education in extension and prepare a proposed revision to the ATS standard for extension and distance education.

Following that action of the Association, the Commission appointed a Task Force on Educational Technology and Distance Education to undertake the study that had been requested. Because the accreditation evaluation of extension classroom education had been relatively well established, the Task Force determined that the focus of its study should be the educational practice that the 1996 standards referred to as “external independent study”—what has been more typically referred to in higher education as “distance learning.” Four separate papers were commissioned: one to review the overall literature on distance learning/distance education; one to review the current status of accrediting standards of other accrediting bodies with regard to distance learning; a third paper to examine the influence of educational technology on pedagogical practices; and a fourth study to explore the issue of formation and distance learning.

In addition to these commissioned research papers, on-site evaluations were conducted of two experimental programs that the Commission on Accrediting had approved: (1) a Master of Divinity at Bethel Theological Seminary that uses intensive on-campus study and distance learning courses and (2) extension site course work conducted by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary by means of interactive video.

Finally, in cooperation with the ATS Educational Technology Advisory Committee, the Association included an optional survey as part of the 1998 Annual Report Forms in order to gather data on the member schools' current uses of technology in five areas: infrastructure, administration, library, classroom, and in distance education courses. The written survey was followed by telephone interviews with those schools that had reported providing courses by distance learning. Together, these various research efforts and activities provided the basis for the proposed redevelopment of the ATS standard on extension education that will be considered by the Association at the 2000 Biennial Meeting.

When the Association considers this proposed standard on "multiple locations and distance education" for adoption in 2000, it will be the fourth time in twenty years that the Association will discuss and vote on a standard regarding extension education. The increasingly brief half-life of an accrediting standard on extension education/distance learning likely reveals something about the attitudes of ATS member schools and the moving target that distance learning represents. While extension education—in both its extension classroom form and in its distance learning form—has grown steadily in theological schools since the late 1970s, the cleavage noted in essays in the 1974 *Theological Education* remains: enthusiastic advocates on the one hand and, on the other hand, those who worry that something fundamentally valuable to theological education could be lost. This difference of opinion has led to the adoption of subsequent accrediting standards that allow extension education, but only within the limits of certain parameters. Changes in the ATS student body (older and less mobile than earlier generations of ATS students), changes in North American higher education that encourage greater access, and changes in the technology available to support classroom extension education (such as interactive video instruction) and distance learning (web-based courseware and the availability of digital data and information) quickly make these parameters in the standards outdated.

## **Current Definitions of Distance Education**

Over the years, ATS has used a variety of words, reflecting a variety of definitions, to describe the educational practices associated with distance learning or extension education. Numerous terms and definitions have also been evident in the higher education literature. Linda Cannell's paper describes a range of these definitions, but as an introduction to the overall theme of this *Theological Education*, and the changing terminology that ATS has used, some preliminary attention to definitions is in order. Increasingly, the term distance education refers to a learning experience for students who are geographically separated from faculty and other students. The articles in this issue focus primarily on this understanding of the term.

The National Center for Educational Statistics conducted a statistical analysis of distance education in higher education institutions that resulted in a report in October 1997. For its purposes, distance education was defined as:

Education or training courses delivered to remote (off-campus) locations via audio, video, or computer technologies.<sup>1</sup>

The Center did not include in its study courses conducted exclusively via correspondence or courses in which the instructor traveled to a remote site to deliver instruction in person. Most definitions of distance education do include courses that use printed material or correspondence.

Anne Forster of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Certificate Program defines distance education in *Learning at a Distance* as follows:

Distance education involves the development of specially designed instructional materials and their structured delivery, with two-way communication, to learners separated from the providing agency by space and/or time. The “structured delivery” of “specially designed instructional materials” involves a wide range of technologies, such as printed guides, audiotapes, videotapes, telephones, computers, radio, and television. There is no single best technology or instructional design. Distance education, like other education or training situations, involves the design of a learning system that meets the needs of learners and teachers within human, financial, and strategic constraints.<sup>2</sup>

The term “external independent study” has been used in theological education, as reflected in the current ATS Standards of Accreditation, which define distance education as follows:

This type of extension education provides for-credit courses for individuals engaged in external independent study which includes any form of individualized study where regularly scheduled, in person conversations with faculty or other students are unlikely to occur. Such courses typically employ printed, audio, video, computer, or electronic communication as primary resources for instruction.<sup>3</sup>

Common elements in these several definitions include teachers and learners who are geographically separated from one another, uses of educational technologies and methodologies, and uniquely designed educational experiences because of the use of technology and the absence of face-to-face interaction in the same location at the same time.

## Theological Education and Distance Education

Theological education has not given the attention to distance education that higher education has given, and there is far less literature on the subject as it relates to graduate theological education than other areas of higher education. The subject was last addressed in this journal in 1996 by Elizabeth Patterson in her article "The Questions of Distance Education."<sup>4</sup> *In Trust* magazine has addressed the topic in several of its issues, most recently in autumn 1999, and in June 1999, the journal *Teaching Theology and Religion* published two articles that discussed uses of technology in the traditional classroom: "Webs of Connection: Using Technology in Theological Education" by Randy G. Litchfield and "Hebrew Exegesis Online: Using Information Technology to Enhance Biblical Language Study" by Steven Klipowicz and Tim Laniak.

The theme articles in this issue of *Theological Education* begin to redress this lack of literature on theological education and distance education, and they contribute substantially to the current discussions of the topic. They include the four articles from the research that was conducted for the Commission on Accrediting's Task Force on Educational Technology and Distance Education, an article describing the two programs that had been approved by the Commission as experimental, and an article highlighting some of the findings of the 1998 survey of ATS schools. Linda Cannell, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, surveys literature on educational technology and distance education so as to provide a basis for discussion concerning the role and responsibility of accreditation agencies in relation to the rapidly developing distance education programs. Samuel Roberts, Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University, summarizes distance education standards and guidelines of various accrediting agencies in the United States. Scott Cormode, Claremont School of Theology, addresses basic pedagogical questions concerning the use of educational technology, while Anne Reissner, the Center for Mission Research and Study at Maryknoll, considers how theological educators address spiritual, ministerial, and personal transformation in distance education. In pursuing these topics, Reissner refers to Bethel Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, two institutions that engaged in experimental programs, approved by the Commission on Accrediting, designed to assess the effectiveness of theological education using a distance education format. These two programs are described further by Jimmy Dukes of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Gregory Bourgond of Bethel Theological Seminary. In the final article in this section of the journal, Katherine Amos of the ATS staff summarizes the data from the distance education portion of the technology survey of ATS member schools. The complete survey data will be available from ATS on CD-ROM in early fall 2000.

*The Editors*

## ENDNOTES

1. *Distance Education in Higher Education Institutions* (Washington: National Center for Educational Statistics, NCES 98-062, U.S. Department of Education, 1997), 3.
2. Anne Forster, *Learning at a Distance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998), 5.
3. *Bulletin 43, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation* (Pittsburgh: The Association of Theological Schools, 1998), 86.
4. Elizabeth Patterson, "The Questions of Distance Education," *Theological Education*, 33:1, Autumn 1996, 59-74.

# A Review of Literature on Distance Education

*Linda Cannell*

*Trinity Evangelical Divinity School  
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ABSTRACT: The issues affecting the future of distance education are complex. Questions concerning accreditation and standards, evaluation and assessment, instructional requirements related to academic credit, admissions criteria, and control of instruction present a mine field of difficulties for decision-makers. Moreover, such issues as descriptions of experiential learning, cognitive processing, transformational versus transmissive modes of learning, and lifelong learning demonstrate one clear trend: some form of an instructional paradigm is inexorably shifting to some form of a learning paradigm. This review of the literature on distance education is to provide a basis for the discussion of distance education in relation to theological education, and the role and responsibility of accreditation agencies in relation to the rapidly developing programs of distance education in various institutional settings. Any review of literature on this subject is quickly dated. Literature on the topic is increasing exponentially, web sites appear and disappear seemingly overnight, and what was once considered "state-of-the-art" technology quickly becomes obsolete. Nonetheless, there are issues presented in this review that are important for the future of theological schools and agencies that accredit them.

*"The future is outside the traditional campus, outside the traditional classroom.  
Distance learning is coming on fast." Peter Drucker*

## **Distance Education: A Concept in Search of a Theory<sup>1</sup>**

A coherent review of the literature on distance education is hampered by a bewildering range of definitions, multiple opinions concerning purpose, varying perspectives on the relationship between distance learning and traditional modes, and the lack of a consistent theoretical framework. The trajectory from correspondence study to more contemporary, computer-enhanced modes of education-at-a-distance is relatively easy to trace. However, the issues affecting the future of distance education are complex. Questions concerning accreditation and standards, evaluation and assessment, instructional requirements related to academic credit, admissions criteria, and control of instruction present a mine field of difficulties for decision makers. Issues of access,

especially for persons in developing nations, the role of faculty and their development, the nature of the learning community in distance education, the internationalization of education, the role of libraries, the nature of instructional design and course development, and the effects of technology are among an increasing number of issues that preoccupy the literature.

Institutional and program patterns are also complex. Examples are given of universities that are solely Distance Teaching Universities, or Dual Mode, or somewhere in between. Various forms of consortia are emerging—not only between schools, but between schools, corporations, and public agencies. Faculty appointments are described in terms of extracurricular overload, joint appointments with a distance learning program, or specialized faculty assigned to distance education. The curriculum is seen as specialized adult education programs offered off campus, traditional curriculum simply transported to another location, individualized study, computer-driven interactive experiences, and/or various combinations of residential and distance offerings. It is also clear that the shifts to distance learning are forcing a debate about the nature of teaching and learning. As the field of distance education searches for a theory that will guide its development, descriptions of experiential learning, cognitive processing, transformational versus transmissive modes of learning, and lifelong learning demonstrate that the only clear trend in this debate is that some form of an Instructional Paradigm is inexorably shifting to some form of a Learning Paradigm.

This review is to provide a basis for the discussion of distance education in relation to theological education, and the role and responsibility of accreditation agencies in relation to the rapidly developing programs of distance education in seminaries. Theological schools have developed a range of extension education programs and are creating substantial systems to manage them. Some schools are investing in the technological infrastructure to support multiple forms of distance education—forms that will ultimately raise the question: “Why should students have to come to campus at all?”

In each institution, distance education will simply be the transference of old models to new sites, or it will die from the inattention of administrators and the disinterest of faculty, or it will flourish and be a productive impetus for new questions regarding educational process. These questions will inevitably expose fissures of difference within theological education related to the nature of teaching and learning. Traditional programs and distance learning programs are interfacing more frequently, especially as issues of organizational survival, the desire to accommodate the realities of today’s student, and pressure from competing agencies are straining formal programs and leading institutions to look at alternatives. Differences of perspective with regard to learning, control of educational process, nature of curriculum, role of faculty and learner, and patterns of instruction will become more obvious; the debates concerning accreditation and standards more intense.

What pressure can an accrediting association exert on theological schools that have substantial precedent from the field of higher education in general for multiple formats in distance education—some of which challenge existing standards? If institutions see ATS standards as too restrictive, the challenges occasioned by the experiments in distance education may fracture ATS—perhaps not fatally, but certainly seriously. Further, as theological schools discover the mechanisms and invest in the technology to connect students, programs, faculty, and resources internationally, accreditation agencies will be forced to interact at an international level. How can standards designed for institutions in one region of the world be applied equitably in the global network?

The succeeding sections of this report will give attention to the historical development of distance education, the problem of definition, the role of technology, the shifts in teaching and learning perspectives, institutional and instructional challenges, and implications for theological education. The literature presents an exhausting array of questions and issues. In order to focus this report around matters that would be relevant to accreditation association concerns, the following questions were used to guide the research:

- What conceptual variabilities are suggested by the range of definitions commonly used as synonyms for distance education?
- What commonalities and differences between distance education and traditional instruction are suggested in the descriptions of distance education? Is distance education applicable only to particular disciplines, courses, issues? How is distance education described in relation to particular media and/or approaches that may or may not be seen in traditional modes of instruction? Should distance education and formal education be seen as separate entities, or as collaborating modes within a common frame of reference or theory?
- What administrative issues important to theological education are identified in the development of distance education (e.g., finances, faculty deployment and development, standards, resource allocation, coordination, communication, accreditation, and so on)?
- What instructional issues important to theological education are identified in the development of distance education modes (e.g., the integration of distance education with formal programs; challenges inherent in rethinking instructional design and motivation in relation to experiential learning, life-long learning, nonformal education; faculty willingness to design new models of curriculum and instruction, and so on)?
- How will the internationalization of distance education affect theological education?
- In what ways, if any, is distance education reported to enhance or enrich ministry development? How will the development of distance education modes in theological education affect relationships between church and school?

## **Historical Development**

Some historical studies show that the contemporary North American distance education enterprise has grown in scope, purpose, audience, and in delivery systems since its British and European beginnings in nineteenth-century correspondence and extension programs.

Isaac Pitman offered shorthand by mail to students in England in 1840 (Holmberg 1960, 3). Charles Toussaint and Gustave Langensheidt initiated language teaching by correspondence in Germany in 1856 (Delling 1979, 13). "Cambridge University is generally credited with developing a formal university extension through the establishment of an extramural teaching program in 1873" (Rohfeld 1990, 1). Significantly, much of the development and growth of extension studies in England and Europe was in response to "demands from workers and from women" (Rohfeld 1990, 1; see also Wiesner 1983).

Through the 1800s, American universities and community groups adapted and created their own forms of distance learning. Distance education has precedents in the Chautauqua movement and the British Lyceum movements of the nineteenth century, where university professors, among others, found a ready market for their lectures in local communities across the nation (Rohfeld 1990, 2-3; Rossman 1995, 62). These movements made it possible for people to nurture an intellectual life based on touring outside lecturers and musical and theatrical presentations (Bender 1994). The establishment of a national postal service in the late 1800s provided university administrators and community leaders with another vehicle for reaching large numbers of people.

William Rainey Harper, the founding president of the University of Chicago, while preparing programs for Chautauqua, proposed a program of correspondence study for the university. The American people were ready for a system of education flexible enough to accommodate the frontier settlements of a rapidly developing nation. For Harper, correspondence study was the ideal organizational structure (Rossman 1995, 62). In 1892, Harper organized the university around "five coordinate colleges, one of which was the Division of University Extension. This division offered courses for college credit by lecture study, class study, or correspondence study. Hence, at the University of Chicago, extension was integral to the university's structure and mission from its beginning" (Rohfeld 1990, 10). Rossman suggests that the "claim that he is the father of distance education in the United States is credible" (Rossman 1995, 61). However, Harper was adamant that correspondence study was not a substitute for "oral instruction." He emphasized the inferiority of the correspondence model and the priority of the classroom and the direct encounter between the teacher and student. Not surprisingly, the correspondence program at the University of Chicago was disbanded in 1933 (Rossman 1995, 63). Unfortunately, some of Harper's attitudes and organizational strictures related to maintaining the superiority of the formal program over education-at-

a-distance persist as constraints on the continuing development of distance education.

Harper's vision and energy notwithstanding, the land grant universities were probably a more significant factor in promoting extension education throughout America. The signing into law of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 guaranteed land for the establishment of universities in each state. By 1863, thirty-one states had provided land for universities. ". . . [T]he main object of the colleges was to teach subjects related to agriculture and the mechanical arts, 'in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life' " (Rohfeld 1990, 12). The genius of the land grant system was, and is, service. As service institutions they could not escape their mandate to take knowledge to the people. This took various forms: expert consulting services to the State, public discussions, municipal reference bureaus, educational exhibits, conventions, and agricultural extension (Rohfeld 1990, 30-32).

World War II forced an upsurge in the need for adults trained in specialized knowledge, linguistics, and knowledge of cultures. In partnership with the military, universities established special classes and correspondence studies (Rohfeld 1990, 79). Following the war, the G.I. Bill made it possible for thousands of returning service personnel to go to college and changed forever the face of higher education. Through the 1950s, the demand for continuing education in the professions led to the construction of university residential centers and the development of conferences on a variety of themes related to professional development. "The Kellogg Center for Continuing Education at Michigan State University in East Lansing was the first such facility and opened in 1951. During the 1950s funding cycle, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation provided funding for a total of nine residential centers" (Rohfeld 1990, 87).

Community development emerged as the theme for the 1960s as universities sought ways to have an impact on urban environments. Finally, in 1965, Title I of the Higher Education Act, provided federal funding for continuing higher education, offering states a way to support efforts to encourage lifelong learning (Rohfeld 1990, 125). The various educational experiments spawned during the foment of the 1960s gradually consolidated into such programs as Walden University (1970), New College (1973), and the University without Walls (1974) (Rossman 1995, 3). Through the 1970s, a declining eighteen- to twenty-two year old college population, and an increase in adult students, "supported the development of non-traditional educational and credentialing programs. . . . These programs sought to recognize the learning acquired by adults as a result of life experience and to respect the complexities of their lives and schedules" (Rohfeld 1990, 153).

Charles Van Hise, president of the University of Wisconsin in the early 1900s, "declared a consensus among university leaders regarding the three functions of the university: instruction, investigation, and extension service" (Rohfeld 1990, 37). This effort was driven partly by the feeling of extension

leaders that their programs were marginalized in the university. Consequently, they sought to link extension education with what were generally recognized as the indisputable functions of the university: teaching, research, and community service. It would be eighty to ninety years before institutions of higher education would recognize, more substantially, the need for, or value of, distance education.

## **Factors Affecting the Contemporary Developments in Distance Education**

Advances in technology, the demands of an increasingly mobile and diverse population, economic realities, emphases on the democratization of education, dissatisfaction with traditional modes, are concerns for institutional growth and/or survival are among the issues that have sparked renewed interest in distance education through the 1980s and into the 1990s. Factors of schedule conflicts, costs, family responsibility, and professional commitments have encouraged the development of distance education options, especially as adult students are less willing to be uprooted from their jobs or families for extended periods.

Distance education, and its accompanying technology, is attractive to higher education because it seems to address the challenges of declining enrollments, increasing costs, the potential market of adult professionals, pressure from corporations, institutional competition for faculty or increased sharing of faculty, and increasing global access to technology. Clearly, the emergence of the university without walls has been one of the more dramatic changes in higher education since the 1990s. "What is truly unique about distance education is the site of learning is transformed from a place to a process" (Rossman 1995, 9). The tyranny of time, place, and curriculum is gradually being broken. Today, hundreds of thousands of students are enrolled in Internet courses, universities are offering entire degree programs through the Internet, students from different universities are interacting with one another and with a variety of professors through technology. The Internet is opening education to all ages and groups of persons. "From 1870 to 1970 most of the systems were proprietary and the field was known as 'correspondence study' or 'home study' or 'external studies.' Hostility from the education establishment was rarely far from the surface. Today, most governments in the world are supportive of providing or considering introducing distance education and are studying its role as a complement to conventional provision" (Rossman 1995, 6). Distance education has become "a valued component of many education systems and has proved its worth in areas where traditional schools, colleges and universities have difficulties in meeting demand" (Keegan 1996, 4). As data services become more sophisticated and user friendly, distance learning services can only increase in scope and variety.

The growth of distance education reflects the persistence of social change in relation to the excluded learner, the decentralized learner, the professional in the field, the growing insistence on different forms of education, networking, the growing familiarity with electronic forms of communication, global interconnectedness, the pressure of business, church and professional sectors that schools do better, the proliferation of resources and information, the postmodern insistence on community and pluralism. The pattern of collecting individuals in places where work, shopping, banking, school, and worship can be collective is shifting to decentralization—to “degathering” (Martorella 1996, 35). As a consequence of the phenomenon of degathering, schools could become smaller and more specialized; students will be able to “shop” at several schools, combining options from the degree programs of several schools to make one degree; and learning modes will become more various—including various modes of distance education. Gates envisions that learning will be found in the connections among all the agencies that can contribute to learning (in Martorella 1996, 37).

Certainly, as information becomes more readily available, seekers no longer have to go to one agency that is postured as the source and controller of knowledge. Seekers can become shoppers (Patterson 1996, 61). We have witnessed in the past few years, a substantial proliferation of knowledge-based industries: training and development, market research, software development, consultant services, and research and development companies. Institutions of higher education do not have a monopoly on knowledge. The increasing interconnectedness and the developments in distance education mean that there will be an increase in the variety of things to be learned, an increase in the variety of ways to learn, and an increase in the variety of learners. To the extent that schools and faculty no longer enjoy a monopoly on knowledge and instructional services, and as a variety of agencies become involved in education, the roles and functions of educational providers are increasingly blurred. Traditional modes of higher education can no longer “claim the full-time commitment of students” (Morrison 1989, 7). Even a casual visitor to today’s campuses can see that the student body is no longer young. Conversations with these students would reveal that few are full-time and many, if not most, are not in residence. Morrison (1989, 8) asserts that there are six challenges facing distance education in light of these factors:

1. The need to broaden the concept of distance education in order that it can enhance not only access to but success in learning
2. The need to move from an institutional to a systems level in planning, needs assessment, and delivery
3. The need to develop a learning approach to organizational ethos and management
4. The need to develop a model for the appropriate use of technology

5. The need to globalize its vision
6. The need to balance quantity with equity in its contribution to development.

Amid predictions of availability of best faculty to everyone, networks of interdependent agencies, democratization of education, global learning communities, universal information access, and despite the long history of distance education, the field of distance education is still emerging. Distance educators still feel marginal in institutions where the priorities tend to focus on classroom-based models, preparatory modes of instruction, and the expectation that students and faculty will be full-time. However, as the numbers of adult professionals in education increase in the institution as a whole, as institutions become more interdependent, as faculty roles change, programs will change, and lines between traditional modes and distance education modes will blur. In a pragmatic environment where suppliers of instructional technology want to serve the learning enterprise and where institutional planners are competing for students, quality issues and the need to develop a guiding theory for distance education will become increasingly important.

## **Definitions and Characteristics**

Keegan credits a group he called "The Tübingen Group" (Keegan, 1996, 13-14) with clarifying the problems pertinent to the emerging field of distance education. Members of this group published more than sixty research studies that reputedly laid the foundation of the field. The group dispersed in the mid-70s (Keegan 1996, 14), but the problems of definition and theory remain. Keegan (1988) admits that distance education remains a field without a theoretical framework. It would seem reasonable to assume that there are linkages between distance education, experiential learning theory, nonformal education, and the various efforts to define adult learning theory. However, it is more difficult to define distance education as a separate field that has more in common only with other nontraditional modes of education. As early as 1988, Keegan called attention to the possibility of the blurring of the boundaries between traditional and distance education (Keegan 1988, 4). More recent literature suggests that a longstanding Instructional Paradigm (teacher and institution centered) is shifting to a Learning Paradigm (student and learning centered). If true, distance education and traditional education are more appropriately understood as modes within a more holistic theory of education that embraces a rich array of learning outcomes and contexts: from information acquisition to information processing, from assimilation to inquiry and decision-making, from the development of cognitive ability to the maturing of the whole person, from individual to collaborative experiences, from classrooms to community centers, from regional to global interactions. Conceivably, as the

boundaries become less distinct, both traditional education and distance education will be changed. Much of this development is predicated on the reality that students are at the center of the learning process, that learning is social and not just intellectual, that all of life is involved in learning.

Relatively little space is given in the literature on distance education to the issue of theory building. The shift from an Instructional Paradigm to a Learning Paradigm is variously observed and described, but the theoretical grounding is not well developed. Perhaps this contributes to the evident and considerable confusion over terminology and definition in the literature. Many terms are used, some claiming they are interchangeable, others claiming there are subtle but distinct differences between them: distance learning, distance education, open studies, remote instruction, correspondence study, home study, extension education, independent study, teaching at a distance, off-campus study, open learning, flexible learning, continuous education, distributed learning. "In the usage of the 1980s the term *distance education* covers the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which, nevertheless benefit from the planning, guidance, and tuition of a tutorial organisation" (Holmberg 1989b, 127). In 1982, at the Vancouver conference of the International Council for Correspondence Education, the term distance education was adopted as a universal term indicative of a recognized field of theory and practice (Thorpe 1995, 154).

If it were just a matter of synonymous terms, one could simply chose one. However, there are claims for subtle differences in usage that make each of these terms slightly different in application. These differences are affected by the relationships of the institution with the learners, the relationship of the faculty with the learner and the institution, the focus of the program (rural development, university without walls, corporate training), the types of material used (print media, computer-based, Internet-based, satellite delivery), the context (home, workplace). While Kaye feels that the terms need to be disentangled, "One thing is certain: the enormous diversity of systems, projects, and institutions that teach 'at a distance' makes it very difficult to furnish a definition other than in terms of a contrast to conventional face-to-face, classroom-based instruction" (Kaye 1988, 45). The following attempts at distinction illustrate the complexity and tension that still exist in the field.

- Holmberg notes that contrary to established perception, distance learning and open learning are not synonymous. Distance learning can, in fact, be closed learning—where choice and control are exclusively in the hands of the institution. Distance learning is generally based on two factors: pre-designed courses and noncontinuous contact with professors and students (Holmberg 1989a, 2-4; 1989c)<sup>2</sup>. Open learning stresses learner autonomy, learner contracts, and learner controlled instruction. Open learning technically implies freedom from restrictions related to goal setting, access, and assessment.

- Distance education and open learning are described by Maxwell as two different concepts. "Distance education refers to a mode of delivery with certain characteristics that distinguish it from the campus-based mode of learning. Open learning refers to a philosophy of education providing students with as much choice and control as possible over content and learning strategies" (Maxwell 1995, 45). The burden of Maxwell's article is that distance education is often not student-centered (evaluation and attendance policies managed by the institution and preplanned courses) and should be. By incorporating the open learning philosophy a stronger model could be created.
- Correspondence education is generally defined as the relationship of an institution with an individual student who receives print material at home. Remote instruction, on the other hand is defined as the relationship of an instructor with groups of students not necessarily in the same location.
- Garrison (1989), reviewing the variety of definitions that existed for distance education, proposed three criteria that would define the field but also allow sufficient flexibility should the field develop. "(1) Distance education implies that the majority of educational communication between (among) teacher and student(s) occurs noncontiguously. (2) Distance education must involve two-way communication between (among) teacher and student(s) for the purpose of facilitating and supporting the educational process. (3) Distance education uses technology to mediate the necessary two-way communication" (Garrison 1989, 222).
- Swift (1992) proposes that distance education can be described in two modes: the "industrial model" based on pre-designed materials (print) and mundane technology, (broadcasting) and a model that uses sophisticated technology (telecommunications and computers) and encourages interactivity.
- Filipczak defines distance learning as "an event or a process that involves direct two-way communication between people; it doesn't include traditional correspondence courses or the CBT [computer-based] software you got in the mail. It *does* include audio-conferencing, video-conferencing and docu-conferencing, a relative newcomer to the distance-learning arena that allows many people to collaborate on a shared document via computers separated by a few feet or several time zones" (Filipczak 1995, 111).
- ATS (Standards, June 1996: 10.2.1.4) defines extension education in relation to independent study: "This type of extension education provides for-credit courses for individuals engaged in external independent study . . . where regularly scheduled, in person conversations with faculty or other students are unlikely to occur. Such courses typically employ printed, audio, video, computer, or electronic communication as primary resources for instruction. . . . [Not more than one-third of the total credit required for completion of an ATS-approved basic degree can be earned by external independent study]."
- Keegan's preliminary effort to define distance education included factors such as (1) the semi-permanent separation of student and teacher; (2) planning, materials preparation, and student support services still under the auspices of

an institution; (3) the use of technology to convey the content; (4) provision of two-way dialogue; and (5) the more or less absence of the learning group (Keegan 1988, 10). Rumble (1989) objected that Keegan's definition was too narrow, citing that the issue of separation is not necessarily a true distinction, technology is not the only delivery system, and the institution is a potent factor. In traditional education the teacher teaches, in distance learning the institution teaches. The materials, he argued, are prepared by a collective (Rumble 1989, 13-14). Rumble did agree with Keegan that distance education must have two-way communication in order for there to be integrity in the educational process (Rumble 1989, 15).

- Rumble offered a new definition: Distance education must involve a teacher, students, materials, and a contract that defines roles between teacher and students and the institution. Distance education can involve face-to-face (video in real time) or independent instruction; the student is given guidance, access to instruction in a two way communication; learners are separated from the sponsoring institution; materials can take several forms—not necessarily designed exclusively for distance education—the requirement is that they be suitable for the learning event (Rumble 1989, 18-19).

- Keegan's subsequent attempt at definition (1996) was based on his study of how the various terms have been used, a search for common linkages, present usage and concerns, and historical precedents. He favored the term "distance education" and called for a more precise definition characterized by the following:

- the quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process (this distinguishes it from conventional face-to-face education);
- the influence of an educational organization both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support services (this distinguishes it from private study and teach-yourself programmes);
- the use of technical media—print, audio, video or computer to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course;
- the provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue (this distinguishes it from other uses of technology in education); and
- the quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals rather than in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings, either face-to-face or by electronic means, for both didactic and socialization purposes. (Keegan 1996, 50)

Implicit in this definition is the assumption of teacher-learner separation—but not permanently; the assumption of individual learning and autonomy, but not exclusively; and the use of technology—but not exclusively, with

increasing variety and more often than not, interactive. There are also factors to be considered such as the degree and locus of control and authority (faculty, institution, or student); purpose (individual or social development); centralized or decentralized curriculum; loosely integrated into the university or an integral part; residential component required or not required. Rossman adds to the complexity by observing that “No longer can distance education simply be referred to as education that takes place when there is a distance between the learner and instructor. In this definition, the distance being referred to is geographic, but distance might just as easily be cultural or emotional, with quite different pedagogical implications” (Rossman, 1995, 3-4). Bewildering indeed.

Traditionally, distance education has been characterized by the separation of the teacher from students throughout most if not all the learning experience, the use of technical support media, the presence of an institution that prepares materials and establishes student services, and the general absence of a learning group (Curran 1992, 55-56). But is distance education a unique form of education in its own right, or is it a variation of the traditional mode? Holmberg suggests that if it is unique, it can operate on different principles with courses that fit the medium and greater diversity in target groups. However, if it is just the same as having students in a class, no matter how that class is organized, then that which applies to a formal class can apply to distance education (Holmberg 1989b, 128). Complicating matters further is the fact that distance education no longer has a distinct pedagogical format (typically correspondence study). The multivariate technological possibilities have greatly expanded the options available to distance education. A definition of distance education as a collection of e-mail correspondence courses clearly won't do. Most definitions of distance education stress the importance of mediated communication (technical support, print media, audio technology) between instructor and students. Distance education is no longer just a distribution of materials. It involves two-way communication of some form—forms that are increasing in variety. Nor is distance education simply a teacher driving 100 miles to teach a course. There is some hope that it will be characterized more and more by active student involvement, quality design, appropriate administrative support, and effective teaching and learning strategies (Laabs 1997).

Wilson suggests that a new paradigm is emerging around distance education. He uses the term “Continuous Education” to describe this trend and, in so doing, links distance education with lifelong learning (Wilson 1997). As business and industry recognize the need for a life-long commitment to learning and development, the notion of two-, three- and four-year degrees may become obsolete—reserved for those fields where continuing education is not mandated—fields such as pastoral leadership or theological education. “For ‘Continuous Education’ to be successful, it will have to replace the traditional modes of distance learning such as satellite video, teletraining

keypad response systems, and interactive video-conferencing with a much more robust educational model. The goal is to provide the distance learner with as much of the classroom experience as possible. In this model of interactive multimedia distance learning, one creates a virtual classroom with students connected together over a network that carries data, voice and video to the students' computers. Each student has access to multimedia materials created for the course and delivered via CD-ROM or across the network" (Wilson 1997, 13).

In summary, common components of distance education, variously defined, are: the majority of communication is noncontiguous, there is two-way communication between teachers and students; education is usually technologically mediated; the patterns of institutional control over the learner are changed; reflection is at the heart of the process; self-assessment of personal or professional development is expected; learners, in varying degrees, have a stake in the planning of their programs and the nature of the learning experiences undertaken. Of greatest importance is the fact that *current definitions affirm that distance education require interactivity, foster the development of higher order thinking skills, be grounded in one or more learning communities, and encourage the development of skills for lifelong learning.*

But we are not done yet. Chris Dede (1996b), an educational technology futurist, suggests that distance education in all its various terms is shifting to a new model called distributed learning which he describes as "the use of information technologies outside the school setting to enhance classroom activities" (Dede 1997a, 13; also Dede 1997b).<sup>3</sup> The definition assumes that no one institution can manage or afford the sophistication now possible in distance education. Course development and access to resources now require a distributed network of agencies. One supposes that collaborating institutions would provide quality resources, share costs through monthly fees, help with marketing, share existing clients, and deal with copyright issues as a consortium. However, higher education in all its forms is notoriously competitive. Consortia of seminaries, for example, are emerging but, for the foreseeable future, there will likely be greater collaboration between faculty and departments than institutions.

Dede argues that at least three developments are driving the emergence of distributed learning: (1) knowledge webs that allow widespread access to information and contacts, (2) virtual communities, virtual libraries, virtual classrooms, and virtual exhibits (e.g., virtual museums), and (3) opportunities to apply information learned in synthetic or simulated environments to real-world settings. Further, the literature suggests that this particular nomenclature implies both a structure (networked agencies) and a learning process.

Distributed education is not distance education, because it is based on the creation of a learning dialogue between participants in collaborative learning groups—no matter the

participant's locations or time in which they choose to interact. The method is based on creating and sharing documents among a learning group. While currently text based, it still incorporates multiple learning pathways, through the use of higher level activities, visually pleasing presentations, use of small group interaction, and multiple conversational opportunities (the 'Classroom' / the 'Cafeteria' / the 'Office', etc.). The course material is set out in modular form, each module with a set of readings, questions and assignments requiring response from individual students or from small groups. Students write their response and send them to the virtual class meetings by a process of database replication which distributes all documents to all class members, including the teaching staff. Each student is expected to comment constructively on approximately 20% of the other group members (sic) presentations as a means of promoting interaction and maintaining the teaching dialogue. (Seagren and Watwood 1997, 319)

Dede adds,

How a medium shapes its users as well as its message is a central issue in understanding the transformation of distance education into distributed learning. The telephone creates conversationalists, and the book develops imaginers who can conjure a rich mental image from sparse symbols on a printed page. Much of television programming induces passive observers . . . . As we move beyond naive 'superhighway' concepts to see the true potential impact of information infrastructures, society will face powerful new interactive media capable of great good or ill. Today's 'couch potatoes' . . . could become tomorrow's 'couch fungi,' immersed as protagonists in 3-D soap operas while the real world deteriorates. The most significant influence on the evolution of distance education will not be the technical development of more powerful devices but the professional development of wise designers, educators and learners. (Dede 1996b, 30)

Distributed learning advocates stress the need for educational experiences that will move students through the processes of access, assimilation, and appropriation. Learners must be helped to "make sense of massive, incomplete, and inconsistent information sources. Weaving constructivist usage of linked, online materials into the curriculum and culture of traditional educational institutions is the next stage of evolution for conventional distance education" (Dede 1996b, 26).

The catalogue of definitions suggests that, though the field is not coherent, there is nonetheless activity and development in distance education. However, it still remains, for the most part, the "Cinderella" of higher education.

## Persistent Criticisms of Distance Education

Primary criticisms of distance education are the lack of face-to-face interaction, reliance on technology, and superficial learning experiences. The persisting belief is that the only valid education is that which takes place on a campus “under the teaching” of a professor. “The common perceptions of extension education, whether called by its older name or by the newer categorical nomenclature, *distance learning*, are too often condescending. ‘How can we make our extension courses as close as possible to the high standards we have on campus?’ is a seemingly benign question. But it reflects an often uninformed presupposition that the campus standards must surely be superior” (Ward 1994). The literature shows the continuing frustration of distance education organizers concerning:

- Faculty. There is no good reason for faculty to be invested in distance education; they have poor understanding of what is required in distance education; faculty are less than enthusiastic for off-campus students and education at a distance.
- Administration. The administrative procedures remain bureaucratic and therefore hard to manage from a distance. In many instances, distance education is not well supported by the general institutional administration.
- Student Services. Institutional services are still oriented to the student on campus. Communication about programs assumes that students are on campus to receive that communication.
- Lack of creative funding. If the program relies on technology, the up-front costs in distance education are considerable.
- Purpose. The mission of distance education is not clearly understood. Do distance education programs exist to support the university, to serve the public, to bolster an academic elite?
- Lack of quality control and inferior programming. Formal modes may simply be exported to distance education sites. Technology may be used badly.
- Internationalization. Lack of understanding of the importance and the implications of the global reach of distance education.
- The university’s criticisms of superficiality. The image of nontraditional education is that students in distance education are “experience rich but theory poor; while students in traditional programs are theory rich, experience poor” (Miller 1987). Since many assume that one has to choose, the resources and time are given to the theory rich modes.
- The effects of program proliferation. Administrators may see distance education as forcing the university to extend itself too broadly and to lose its sense of identity as an elite center for those most capable.

In spite of the difficulties and often justifiable concerns for quality, Ward argues that:

In many situations extension education can provide learning experiences that are superior to the equivalent experiences on a campus. Distance learning can provide learning opportunities that are closer and more intimately linked to the practical applications and the realistic contexts which make learning more meaningful. Those who plan and manage distance learning should generally start with the assumption that what is intended is a superior and more intense learning opportunity—certainly not some make-shift substitute. (Ward 1994)

Dillon and Cintron (1997) cite studies that suggest that the mode of instruction does not substantially influence learning. However, they add, the conventional modes of education are limiting in that they are not as responsive to individual learners, they are bound by space and time restrictions, and they limit access to international resources. An inference from these observations is that educational experiences can be situational experiences. The argument is not which mode is better, but which mode will do the job in this situation? It is not the traditional over against the nontraditional. It is more a question of: Is the approach I am using the best approach for this subject matter, these students, this context, and these outcomes? The question of whether distance education can deliver the same quality of education as classroom based models is unanswerable, and probably irrelevant. The real issues are found in what distance education is responding to that is challenging longstanding notions of the nature of education and educational process.

What is the larger frame of reference that embraces both formal and nontraditional modes as part of a whole ecology of education? It is important to understand how distance education cuts across traditional notions of education; how, unless it is simply a duplication of the formal in a nonformal setting, it will challenge traditional notions. Paying attention to distance education in theological education is paying attention to a minefield, because many faculty in theological education operate in ways that suggest little appreciation for the complexities of learning, and the possibility that the “key” in education is really what students do, not what teachers do (see Beaudoin 1990, 21).

## **Shift from An Instructional Paradigm to a Learning Paradigm**

Higher education is facing a paradigm shift of historic proportions. The extensive development of the world’s telecommunications infrastructure . . . has placed powerful tools in the hands of educators, to access incredibly diverse global sources of textual, visual, and audio-based information on virtually every subject. Perhaps more importantly, the World Wide Web is beginning to provide a medium for faculty to offer their own

expertise and create Web-based courses for students anywhere in the world. (Barnard 1997, 30)

In spite of the criticisms and resistance, higher education institutions are accommodating distance education. They tend to do so, however, from within an “instructional paradigm.” One apparent effect of the emerging confidence of distance education is the shift in orientation from teaching to learning. Even the debates about delivery systems are increasingly oriented around the notion of learning. Adults who come with different life experience and professional backgrounds bring with them different expectations about teaching in relation to learning.<sup>4</sup> With an emphasis on learning comes an increased understanding of the role and purpose of experiential learning, the value of nontraditional and nonformal modes of learning, and prior learning. “The conception of distance education as product, where the teacher’s primary activity is to ‘package’ knowledge as course curricula, is firmly rejected in favor of a conceptualization of distance education as a process which facilitates self-directedness and perspective transformation” (Gibson 1992, 170).

The concern in much of formal education is expressed less in terms of these factors and more in terms of how to ensure successful transfer of knowledge, and concept formation. Until recently, higher education institutions and faculty could see themselves as the sole providers of the kinds of knowledge required by a discipline or service. However, “In the information-communication age, students must apply knowledge to solve problems instead of regurgitating memorized facts. For one thing, there is already too much information available to remember most of it. Faculty and students will need to know how to locate, retrieve, and analyze vast data made accessible through interconnecting networks” (Howard-Vital 1998, 196). Many of the models of choice for contemporary educational practice stress the importance of meaning making and reflection on experience, concept formation and critical thinking and, in turn, signal a shift from behaviorist notions of teachers as dispensers of knowledge and students as passive recipients.

Distance learning can force a shift in thinking about educational design. Questions such as what learners know now, what they need to know, and what conditions will facilitate learning are appropriate to a learning paradigm. An instructional paradigm typically will ask questions related to subject matter: what content is important, how can it be organized, how can it be presented (Freeman 1994, 9-10). One can only assume that it is becoming obvious that the walls between learner and information are breaking down, that the classroom is no longer the only place where education takes place. What follows when the classroom is no longer the sacred place for education? How do faculty redefine their role when they are no longer the sole holders and dispensers of knowledge? How do we form interactive communities of learning when the playing field is now so diverse? How do we conceive of resources, and how do we

evaluate resources? How is academic credit envisioned? How is learning assessed? How can we support and facilitate lifelong learning? The possibility exists for integration of disciplines in a way not previously possible. However, investment of time and money and different skills and attitudes will be necessary to bring this about.

Distance education is one factor that is forcing several issues which, taken together, could provide an outline for understanding the emerging learning paradigm.

1. *Learning as a social phenomenon requiring the development of learning communities* (Repman and Logan 1996). Students learning alone have no one against whom to measure their ideas and assess their insights. Some formal education is based on the notion that the student “sits under the teacher’s tutelage” to get the right perspective. In these situations, deviant or probing questions that go beyond a certain notion of what is right are unwelcome, discouraged, or responded to and dismissed. Teacher regulation or teacher shaping of knowledge is dominant in these forms of instruction. Freire’s critique of the “banking model” in this regard is well known. If education is a social process involving interaction for the purpose of personal development, concept development, understanding and meaning, then traditional and non-traditional modes could conceivably see themselves, not in competition, but in a partnership that supports a larger vision for education.

The ATS standards state that: “Theological schools are communities of faith and learning guided by a theological vision . . . . Their educational programs should continue the heritage of theological scholarship, attend to the religious constituencies served, and respond to the global context of religious service and theological education” (ATS *Bulletin 43*, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation, 52). “A theological school is a community of faith and learning that cultivates habits of theological reflection, nurtures wise and skilled ministerial practice, and contributes to the formation of spiritual awareness and moral sensitivity. Within this context, the task of theological scholarship is central. It includes the interrelated activities of learning, teaching, and research” (ATS *Bulletin 43*, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation, 54). If the intent of these statements is to embed outcomes in the context of communities of faith and learning, member schools that take these statements seriously will be forced to discuss the issue of learning as a social phenomenon and the attendant pedagogical implications.

Anderson and Garrison noted the seeming paradox that critical inquiry is a function of learner autonomy, but it is at the same time grounded in social and communal activity (Anderson and Garrison 1995, 186).<sup>5</sup> If critical thinking, reasoned discourse, and personal transformation are fostered in community, to what extent can distance education promote the development of learning communities? If teaching is the facilitation of learning, and if learning is fostered in social contexts, distance education must involve the student in a relationship that promotes learning.

Many educators tend to view the learning process in individualistic terms. Sometimes they even think of classrooms as collections of individuals who will be engaged in learning largely as independent and isolated experiences. Such educators make extremely poor distance learning planners, even for the designing of individualized instruction. Learning is essentially a social process that is facilitated and deepened through interactions with others. The difficulty, of course, is to plan flexibly and creatively and to be able to visualize the many interactive possibilities that exist in the learner's real world. . . . Content-related interaction with other persons (not necessarily only those who happen to be similarly enrolled) is almost always possible if the designers of the instructional experience are imaginative. (Ward 1994)

There is persistent concern that distance education does not promote community (see Carroll, et al 1997). Kemp (1999) observed recently that the real issue is how distance education supports and allows for the sustainment of the participant's real communities. Students are already in communities that the formal education experience either disrupts or ignores. Distance education experiences can maximize the benefit of the real communities of which students are a part.

"In the final analysis, the big question raised by *Being There* is *Being Where*? Traditional campus-based seminary education has a track record that includes much success. However, most of us live and serve in contemporary North America. If our institutions are going to be true to their missions, they must take seriously *where* they understand formation to take place. For example, is the church such a bad learning community that the campus community has to replace it? Why do we want or mandate 'family' or 'community' experiences on campus when students already have communities? Why not leave them in their existing communities and see the school in a partner role. When the attention shifts from the culture of the schools to the culture of the students, one finds that the concerns about non-traditional education become rays of hope for the effective accomplishment of the missions of our schools. If we stop insisting on students being *there* and give more attention to *where*, we are well on our way to greater effectiveness in ministry training" (Kemp 1999).<sup>6</sup>

It has been noted already that contemporary definitions of distance education include some form of interactivity or two-way communication. The criticisms of distance education as an individualized, depersonalized medium are no longer completely valid. Increasingly, technology is being developed that serves this intent (Garrison 1997; Wiesner 1983; Baron 1996; Holmberg 1985). In the literature, distance learning is seen as primarily technologically driven. This stimulates concern in relation to ATS's definition of theological schools as communities of faith and learning. It is not impossible to create communities apart from the campus, but it does require intentionality. In-

ingly, distance education is seen as a collaborative effort and the mechanisms now exist to make this possible. "In most distance-education programmes, there exist regular or occasional opportunities for group meetings with tutors, teachers, and fellow students, and great care is taken in planning the pedagogical objectives of these meetings, precisely because they are a costly resource which is not taken for granted" (Kaye 1988, 48).<sup>7</sup>

Computer conferencing software allows students to have their own password, their own "in-box" where they can receive messages from the instructor or other students, an account number by which they can gain access to courses (Norton and Stammen 1990, 26-27). Norton and Stammen (1990) reported on three pilot projects with this technology with satisfying results.

Seagren and Watwood (1997) describe the virtual classroom: students and instructors do not have to meet at the same time—their respective communications are stored and can be accessed anytime; students can communicate with one another—globally. Some actually assert that "Poor student performance cannot be disguised. There is nowhere to hide in the virtual classroom" (Seagren and Watwood 1997, 320). The virtual classroom ideal is to support collaborative learning among heterogeneous groupings employing problem solving and higher order skills. Other literature describes relationships in cyberspace under such terms as the virtual college or the virtual café—where a social environment is actually brought on-line. Linkages of several classrooms, even from around the world, are possible through computer mediated technology.

Community is formed in the interaction of persons with common interests and values. Interpersonal proximity, though desirable, does not eliminate the possibility of the learning community when learners are at a distance. Community can be found in different places and fostered through different means. At this writing, "The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL) is an online service that provides access to people and ideas, and . . . is considered by many to be the birthplace of citizen-based virtual community" (Rossman, 1995, 35)<sup>8</sup>. In effect, "electronic neighborhoods" are being created around shared interests (Rossman, 1995, 36). The concept of the community may broaden to include resources from outside the school—based on a network of scholars and other support persons.

A less optimistic perspective is presented by Brown and Duguid who argue that, though the Internet can facilitate the continued development of existing communities, it is not a good medium for the formation of communities. ". . . [T]he Net can provide a powerful impression of interactivity and exchange while in practice denying both. . . . A distal learner, for example, may achieve access to public forums used by a campus class, but the campus community's private, off-line interactions will remain both inaccessible and invisible. . . . We suspect that, though Net interactions offer profoundly useful means to support and develop existing communities, they are not so good at helping a community to form or a newcomer to join" (Brown and Duguid 1996,

17). An assumption undergirding this argument is that students' previous involvements in on-campus, off-line experiences provide the students with language, customs, and artifacts make the sustainment of a community of learners—even an on-line community of learners—possible. Without these prior experiences, they argue, a community cannot form on-line.

Obviously, it is a mystery as to how community is formed in classrooms. The fact of a classroom does not guarantee community any more than a distance learning chat room will. Vital elements in the formation of learning communities seem to be: people who assume responsibility for their own learning and who ground their learning in social contexts. Participation is essential—people must share ideas and values, reflect mutually on experience, form learning partners and cohort groups, even in cyberspace. Attention must be given to the quality of interaction. Facilitation will be required to move the interaction beyond chat to engagement.

In a review of literature on distance education, Patterson reported that,

Both affective and cognitive learning appear to improve when interaction increases. Participation in a learning group alone will increase cognitive learning outcomes; groups that are directed by a tutor or supervisor increase results even more. Even in computer-mediated courses, which are much more immediately interactive than other distance education mediums, a coordinator increases the persistence of discussion, and knowledge about network partners also increases interest in interaction. The best instructional motivator and the best instructional support for both cognitive and affective goals appear to be interaction with a teacher. (Patterson 1996, 67)

The literature is overrun with information about advances in technology. In the last decade, the emphasis has shifted from a preoccupation with hardware to educational process dimensions. Accessing information and delivering it effectively are not sufficient. Information must be shared, analyzed, and applied through dialogue and examination of differing perspectives. This happens seldom enough in face-to-face classrooms; there is evidence that it might be possible in distance education with the advent of interactive and interconnected communication technology.

2. *The role of technology in the learning process.* Many in formal education look at distance learning as the delivery of content through technology rather than seeing it as a system where attention is being paid to educational process. Is it sufficient to ask how technology can help me deliver my content? Or my lectures? Can technology actually help us rethink our educational processes? Enhance interaction? Promote collaboration? Enrich higher order thinking? Promote understanding? But clearly there is work to do in developing these processes. David Merrill, an outspoken critic of computer-based training,

while admitting that new technologies are promising in their potential, affirms that information is not instruction. "There is the belief that all you need for learning is information and collaboration: Put enough people on the Web, and learning will happen." The Internet promotes surfing, he says, which can generate shallow learning. "There isn't enough guidance and structure there for someone to learn a systematic body of knowledge" (in Zemke 1998, 37-38). A related problem to Merrill's complaint is the real or illusory feeling of being connected to "expert" knowledge sources. If the Internet is used unwisely, the student may uncritically accept the solutions and opinions of someone or a group deemed an "expert source." In effect, reliance on the Internet as a source of information could lead to the abandonment or underdevelopment of those processes that will lead persons to think through issues and problems on their own. Without these competencies the carryover into social action and social and organizational change is hindered.

Technology is not going to resolve the problems endemic in higher education. There may be interactivity, but to what extent is the interaction productive? Teachers will still need help in learning how to guide instruction and promoting higher levels of thinking. Students will need help in learning how to evaluate sources and interact productively. In short, students will need to learn how to learn as part of their experiences in distance education.

3. *Lifelong learning.* There still exists a basic incompatibility between the notion of lifelong learning and the structures of education in our institutions. "If taken seriously, the concept of lifelong learning is a revolutionary idea, perhaps the only significant educational idea of this century. Those who advocate it are arguing in favour of the implementation, on a systems basis, of a number of subsidiary ideas: accessibility, institutional openness, needs-based learning, competency-based education, co-operative education, mastery learning, paid educational leave, and credit for prior learning" (Morrison 1989, 6). If lifelong learning is accepted as an underlying presupposition in distance education, what are the implications—especially as seen by accreditation agencies—for the matters of residency, transfer of credit, credit for experience, and assessment?

4. *Active or experiential learning.* These terms among others are used to describe experiences where the role of the learner changes from being less passive to being more of an active participant. Adult learners become colleagues and responsible participants in the process. Jackson and Caffarella identify the main elements of participative modes of learning as: "Problems that people identify; people who accept responsibility for taking action on a particular issue; and colleagues who support and challenge one another in the process of resolving the problems" (Jackson and Caffarella 1994, 11). Students do more than listen, there is less emphasis on transmission of information, and greater emphasis on the need to develop higher order thinking skills and capacities. Students are part of a community where they explore ideas, implications from shared experience and their own attitudes and values. Of course,

once experiential learning is admitted as part of the learning process for adults, faculty and administrators are forced to recognize the validity of assessment of prior learning—credit for experience. To simply dismiss prior learning from a broad range of experiences as “watered down content” is now less educationally defensible. If prior experience cannot be dismissed, then evaluation criteria for its evaluation are needed. Not surprisingly, an industry has emerged around the issue of accreditation for prior learning (APL). In 1986 a Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) service was established to help students, employers, professional groups, and educational institutions assess prior experience in relation to receiving credit for that experience (see Forman and Nyatanga 1997, 8).

5. *The reflective practitioner.* Persons who are reflective practitioners are generally aware of major issues inherent in their field, actively inquire into the practices that shape their experiences in that field, and recognize that reflection on these practices fosters professional competence. Reflective practice, when a fundamental part of distance education experiences, employs such processes as: description and analysis of an experience in terms of what can be learned from it; evaluation of the values inherent in the experience; formulation of implications for continuing practice; generalization of the learning to new situations. As they do this, persons should become aware of their own learning processes (metacognition)—and aware of the variety of learning processes they can use in reflection on experience (see also Schön 1990, Burge 1996). In an academic setting, the reflective practitioner links the processes derived from research and inquiry to the processes of reflection on experience common in professional development. Part of the distance education experience will be the development of skills for the effective employment of these processes.

6. *Teaching effectiveness.* “Learning can occur without teaching, and teaching can occur without learning” (Holmberg 1989a, 17). The literature presents abundant evidence that faculty preparedness on several levels is essential for teaching effectiveness in distance education. Competencies are described in relation to a number of personal and instructional skills in education settings—regardless of mode. “Concerns about quality of instruction, unfamiliarity with distance learning, and misperceptions of the use and benefit of technologies are key issues” (Cullman, 1996, 2).

7. *Adult learning.* Seminaries are increasingly occupied with the education of adult professionals. Understanding learner needs (in both content and process), providing for active engagement in the learning process, integrating learning experience with adult social and professional roles, along with developmentally appropriate outcomes, informs instructional process in both formal and nontraditional modes. Adults have been passive recipients of predigested materials with the result that learning is often superficial and unconnected (Hayes 1990, 33-34; Kasworm and Yao 1992, 2). However, educational planners cannot assume that all adults are ready for learning that is participative, experiential, and characterized by higher order thinking processes. Adult

students looking for degrees while working may not respond to opportunities to participate in the planning of instructional materials and experiences, they may not welcome time-consuming engagement in learning community, and may actually favor the typical patterns of assigned reading, assigned writing, assigned tests and memorization. If we desire educational experiences to be more than content delivery, we will also have to help adults develop skills in group process, self-directed learning, lifelong learning, critical capacities, decision making, and provide experiences where they can participate successfully in a variety of opportunities in learning, interaction, and development.

8. ***Holism in the learning process.*** The literature of both distance learning and theological education describes education as more than content acquisition or skill development. The 1996 redeveloped standards of ATS also support a view of learning that is more than information transmission and simple application. A sampling of statements includes: "Learning should foster, in addition to the acquisition of knowledge, the capacity to understand and assess one's tradition and identity, and to integrate materials from various theological disciplines and modes of instructional engagement in ways that enhance ministry and cultivate emotional and spiritual maturity" (ATS *Bulletin 43*, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation, 3.1.1.3, 55). "Instructional methods should use the diversity of life experiences represented by the students, by faith communities, and by the larger cultural context" (ATS *Bulletin 43*, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation, 3.1.2.2, 55). "Theological research is both an individual and a communal enterprise, and is properly undertaken in constructive relationship with the academy, with the church, and with the wider public" (ATS *Bulletin 43*, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation, 3.1.3.1, 55-56).

Theological education that takes these holistic purposes seriously must strive toward effective concept attainment in its students, and must also concern itself with the elusive realm of noncognitive development. It is at this point that the findings of 'no significant difference' for distance learning falter. Distance education outcomes that deal with the noncognitive domain have not been studied. This is not a weakness of distance education research only; the affective domain is an elusive concept in the traditional classroom as well. Although there have been several attempts to develop taxonomies of affective learning, the difficulties in conceptualization, in definition, and in measurement continue to hamper such attempts. However, most educators agree that 'deep learning' involving values, attitudes, and beliefs does not occur unless the affective domain is also involved. (Patterson 1996, 66)

To limit these understandings of "deep learning" to either the formal modes of education or distance education modes limits the stated purposes of

theological education. Formal education and distance education will serve the enterprise of theological education better if seen as modes encompassed by a guiding theory of education that can support their mutual efforts. The shift in emphasis from an instructional paradigm to a learning paradigm seems a promising trend in the literature. However, the issues implicit in a learning paradigm will continue to be cause for much debate. Faculty who win tenure in the relatively stable structures of academia are not likely to move quickly into new modes of instruction; students who see the degree as a receipt for knowledge received will resist modes of instruction that may make degrees obsolete; institutions that view education as a delivery system and who need to have their “clients” close by, so that knowledge pathways can be controlled, will resist modes that disperse resources and learning all over the world (Brown and Duguid 1996). Yet, if the shift can be accomplished, educators and administrators will be able to use technology as a means or as an enhancement, rather than as a solution to the increasing number of problems threatening higher education, or as that which guarantees learning effectiveness.

## Emergent Technologies

It is not readily apparent how the human community will be changed as a result of diversified modes of education—whether or not they are supported by new and emerging technologies. Bork (1997) described persisting problems in education that tend to defeat any advantages from technological advances: the problem of universal education with an ever increasing world population; the tendency to prepare materials and learning experiences to fit some image of a universal student; continuing dominance of the lecture and the textbook; and the tendency to confuse information acquisition with learning. The literature offers abundant descriptions of technological developments in interactive software, two-way communication capacity, the ability to identify weak spots in learning as the program develops; but the increasing capability of computer-assisted instruction to address persisting problems in education may prove to be a utopian dream of the technologists.

As early as 1989, Mary-Alice White identified twelve trends in educational technology. Trends of continuing interest to this review include:

- The persistent gap between the technology of educational delivery systems and the design (or lack) of educational content. She coined the term TITO: trivia in, trivia out. “Metaphorically speaking, we have tigers in technology but mere insects in instructional content. We can use marvelous electronic systems for filing information, for storing information, for retrieving information—but they are no better than the information itself” (White 1989, 3).
- The need to change curriculum so that it can in fact integrate effectively with new technologies.

- The need to teach Information Age skills, while schools are being judged on nineteenth-century skills. White argues that schools are largely word centered, that teaching and evaluation are word centered. Schools will need increasingly to use both word centered and visual centered modes of instruction (White 1989, 5).
- The need for appropriate evaluation procedures. The emerging field of learning using new technologies will create increasing problems in modes of evaluation. What types of evaluation will fit a school system where the word is not the only delivery mode? What types of evaluation are possible through computer-assisted, computer-enhanced media?
- The pressure on schools from other sectors (e.g., business, churches) to deliver a better product for the dollar. Experiments in distance learning and the use of technology often accompany this pressure.
- The uses of technology to allow students the opportunity to participate in their own learning. White gives the example of a science program that works in concert with National Geographic Society where children work with teams from other schools to perform research—which is sent into a central data bank. Children in schools are being exposed to resources in unprecedented ways. Similar creative ventures will emerge in higher education.

Technology, it is suggested, may make the university as the place where information is kept and disseminated, obsolete. Communication links are becoming faster and the data transfer more legible. Audio-conferencing, video-conferencing (a closed communication system connecting computers each equipped with a camera), teleconferencing (one-way video with two-way telephone connection between participants and instructor), e-mail, chat rooms, Internet curriculum, Web applications, electronic messaging, real time group conferencing, video phones, speaker phones, electronic chalkboards, bulletin boards, listserv (a software function on the Internet that allows the formation of a discussion group related to a given course), accessible databases, on-line reference librarians, increasing transfer of existing print material to digital form, are changing the way knowledge is disseminated and utilized. Search engines are improving, information professionals have created information directories, and professional associations and information networks are forming around particular interests (Barnard 1997, 30; Sherritt and Benson 1997, 3). Today, consumer electronics makes it possible to have a “studio” in the classroom or anywhere. All that is needed is a video camera for the computer, a projection TV, “real time” software,<sup>9</sup> and one or more groups of people situated anywhere in the world where access to technology is possible and affordable.<sup>10</sup>

The technology that supports much of distance education has increased access to satellites; copper wiring is being replaced with fiber optic cable, and a worldwide Integrated Systems Digital Network (ISDN) is gradually being

implemented (Romiszowski 1993, 3).<sup>11</sup> The technology of distance education has moved from exclusively print media, to radio and television broadcast, to audio and video conferencing, and now into a fourth generation encouraged by developments in digital computer-based systems. This has fostered greater dependency on the Internet with attendant advantages and problems. Though it provides wide access to information, information on the Internet is often bogus. The instructional wisdom is to ask: Who created the Web site? When was it last updated? How does the Internet provider reference his or her sources? What bias or slant is apparent? What cross references with other sources are available?

Clearly, the emergence of better hardware and software is a relatively small piece in the issues confronting education. How we develop suitable resources for various modes of learning, the definition of an educational theory that can guide processes of instruction in many modes, the nature of faculty and student support, the evaluation of learning and instruction, effective management of any consortia that are created, and the accreditation of the various forms of education that will emerge are enormous challenges—probably greater than, and certainly preliminary to, the challenges presented in obtaining and using available hardware and software.<sup>12</sup> It must be ever remembered that “Technology does not change education, people do” (Ely 1996, 10).

Though there are those that dismiss technological advances as yet another temporary fad, Van Dusen and Ely reflect the positively cautious attitudes that are pervasive in the literature.

Will the infusion of technology make institutions more productive? The answer will lie in how these technologies are applied. If they are purchased as bolt-ons to existing processes, improvement in the ratio of output to investment is unlikely. If, however, they are purchased as part of a strategic plan to restructure the institution, improvement in the ratio is possible. (Van Dusen 1997, 4)

In many ways, it is the technology that is driving the distance education movement rather than the needs of educational problems that exist. The most successful distance education programs in the World are those that respond to real needs; that offer an alternative to learning which would otherwise be denied or would be prohibitive in terms of cost and time. . . . The least successful are those that embraced technology without a clear understanding of *who* was to be served, with *what type of instruction*, and most important of all, *for what purpose*. Many of the least successful programs have been in the United States. (Ely 1996, 2)

Dede is more blunt in his perceptions of the relationships between learning and technology.

As an educational technologist, I am more dismayed than delighted by how this enthusiasm about the Internet is being expressed. Some of my nervousness comes from the 'first-generation' thinking about information technology that underlies these visions. Many people see multimedia-capable, Internet-connected computers as magical devices, silver bullets to solve the problems of schools. They assume that teachers and administrators who use new media are automatically more effective than those who do not. They envision classroom computers as a technology comparable to fire: Students benefit just by sitting near these devices, as knowledge and skills radiate from the monitors into their minds.

Yet decades of experience with technological innovations based on first-generation thinking have demonstrated that this viewpoint is misguided. Unless other simultaneous innovations occur in pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and school organization, the time and effort expended on instructional technology produce few improvements in educational outcomes—a result that reinforces many educators' cynicism about fads based on magical machines. (Dede 1997a, 13)

Important questions need to be asked of the emergent technology: Does it make sense educationally and financially? Will faculty and students have access to it, be instructed in its use, and be given the necessary helps to design course materials for the medium? To what extent can it support a community of learners? How accessible will the technology and the education it serves be to developing nations? What is the responsibility of nations with access to those with limited access? How problematic is it that those with limited or no access are cut out of or cannot participate in the learning opportunities access may allow?

Dede asserts that "second generation" thinking in technology does not typically make the mistake of seeing computers as magical, but it still hasn't come to terms with the changes required in instruction. Computers too often reinforce teaching as telling and learning as listening. "In this view, the computer serves only as a fire hose that sprays information from the Internet into learner's minds. Even without educational technology, classrooms are already drowning in data" (Dede 1997a, 14). In a similar way, William Brody, president of Johns Hopkins University, cited several areas of change for universities in the twenty-first century in his inaugural address. Observing that uncontrolled information is a burden, the ways we organize and access information and the distinction between information and knowledge will become more important. What is needed is better access to knowledge not just

more information. This challenge will force changes in the ways in which libraries function, the structure of universities, and the patterns of educational process. Education will become a partnership between several sectors of society—serving a range of needs and interests.

The emerging technologies hold promise of enhancing all modes of education. But there are numerous issues that must still be addressed as distance education moves into the forefront of the thinking and planning of educators and administrators.

## **Specific Institutional and Instructional Challenges Related to the Development of Distance Education**

A number of specific academic issues are identified in this section related to the development of distance education.

### ***Finances***

Financial motivations for the development of programs of distance education include (1) escalating tuition and the perception that distance education is less costly for the student, (2) the perception that the massive student market available to distance education will generate substantial income for the institution, and (3) the perception that the generation of courses through distance education will reduce costs related to faculty and administration.

Bremner (1998, 16E), in a recent *USA Today* article observed that on-line courses are not likely to lower tuition because the medium is more labor intensive than the traditional modes. In other words, if educational administrators have to acknowledge and accommodate the extra time demands occasioned by distance learning—the nature of contracting and academic load will have to change. She noted that distance education courses are not necessarily less costly for students. The phenomenon that students will pay more for these courses is explained as students feel they get “more bang for their education buck.” Students feel they interact more with their professors and fellow students; faculty can incorporate visiting resource people to a greater degree because the boundaries of time and geography have been removed; and students can share ideas with other students from all over the world. Universities are now offering entire degree programs on-line. But the reality is, Bremner points out, that on-line education increases faculty work load, demands more time in course preparation, and increases the amount of time interacting with students. All these factors contribute to the hidden costs of distance education for the institution.

McCollum cautions that as institutions begin to use technology to enhance learning, costs will escalate. “. . . [T]echnology spending has increased so quickly in recent years—and so haphazardly, with faculty members, students, and technology administrators all participating in the chaos—that many

institutions have a hard time just identifying their costs, much less planning for them. The COSTS project (<http://www.its.colgate.edu/kleach/costs/costs.htm>), a survey of technology expenses at more than 100 institutions, is intended in part to offer administrators a look at how other colleges and universities are classifying their technology spending" (McCollum 1999, A27 - A30). McCollum observes that once technology spending was out of the leftover pieces of the budget pie; now such items as acquisition, service, and replacement of support systems are demanding more and more of the budget. Few universities actually have a plan for the development of the infrastructure for distance education, much less a plan for funding it (McCollum 1999, A28).

Green (1997) suggests that institutions treat developing technology as a business venture—one that pays close attention to real and recurring costs. "Only when educational institutions view distance education as a fully capitalized business will they begin to understand the options and opportunities, the real risks and real costs" (Green 1997, 1). The burgeoning nontraditional market is creating a demand for distance education—but with different expectations from the previous generation. In this market, technological mediation is expected. However, the field is still developing and real costs are difficult to predict. What is the actual shelf life of hardware and programs? How will faculty be reimbursed? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using students to defray costs rather than hiring on-site staffing for the support of distance education? What are the real costs of course production—employing a range of design options still not understood by most faculty and academic administrators?

Is distance education cheaper? As yet, this question seems impossible to answer because of vast differences in types of media and applications. Clearly, the initial investment in technology will be considerable and the inevitable and rapid obsolescence of technology guarantees that institutions will have continued costs in upgrading these systems. Costs related to the infrastructure for distance education may increase. Tuition may not decrease, but travel and living costs for the student could. Costs for faculty development and travel will increase. Effective course design will require funding. However, the returns from generated student income and donations may in time offset these costs—or maybe not.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Library Resources***

The library has been traditionally the provider of information resources for the curriculum. Implicit within the requirement is that these resources must be accessible to the learning community. Distance learning faces a challenge of accessibility. "One of the major obstacles to distance education has been the matter of providing library resources to dispersed students and faculty" (Rossman, 1995, 6). Cooperative arrangements with other libraries are possible—but the management of these arrangements can become onerous. State- or region-wide library cards, consortium membership, toll-free access, online

catalogue connections to other databases, using the Internet to gain access to resources, establishing specialized collections in various locations are already common alternatives (Rodrigues 1996). Kirk and Bartelstein observe that the vision for the Web as a free, worldwide library is a long way from reality (Kirk and Bartelstein 1999, 40). However, library professionals are becoming more involved in the planning and implementation of distance learning strategies. In 1998, for example, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) revised its guidelines for campus libraries to include stronger language related to the necessity to provide resources and services for distance education equivalent to those supporting on-campus programs (Kirk and Bartelstein 1997, 40).<sup>14</sup>

As libraries are digitalized, persons can have ready access and interaction with a number of different types of databases. What this will mean for the actual facility remains to be seen. Libraries may evolve into clearinghouses and distributors of information services (Targowski, 2007). Virtual libraries, where the print medium no longer dominates, may emerge to service virtual classrooms and virtual universities. Computer, digitalized holdings are seen as a solution to the problem of an exploding information base, but the problems of judgment of data, and useful and useable access remain (Kuhlthau 1996). Students will be connected to resources from multiple centers and may also use video conference links to access various multimedia terminals. "It may sound like science fiction . . . but what is first developing in North America, East Asia, and Europe can in time be extended to every continent: on-line access to all the world's important information by every scholar in the world. For some countries that may be a dream for a future century, but many students and faculty already participate in its beginnings" (Rossman 1992, 61). Terms such as World Brain, world mind, global encyclopedia, world university recall the efforts of Comenius in the seventeenth century to form the Great Didactic—the collection of all knowledge. Apart from questions of effective access and productive use of such a knowledge base, who would want to be the editor of such a project!<sup>15</sup>

This process is taking place in data bases dispersed in computers all over the world. As such data bases become interconnected and cross-indexed, the next step may be the emergence of a comprehensive organization of human knowledge that will continually learn and adapt . . . It may in time begin to take down the national and other boundaries between universities and scholarly disciplines, and also between the scientist-scholar and the average educated person, while at the same time cherishing the unique contributions of each culture and nation. We may thus stand on the threshold of an era in higher education when any educated student can be empowered to assume a more significant share in the testing and advancement of knowledge" (Rossman 1992, 81-82).

The difficulty created for libraries in distance learning are the numbers of students who use libraries not at their host institutions. Formal contracts and borrowing arrangements become more important as the need for access to resources increases. Different experiments are underway to deal with problems of access. An increasing number of databases offer journals on line. Many libraries have the capacity to access electronic catalogues—sometimes worldwide. Libraries can now purchase from an on-line serials library only those journal articles that faculty are using (Kiernan 1998, A21). As books become prohibitive in price, students will be able to access chapters on-line and on-line texts at a reduced cost. Some publishers offer a service where faculty can tailor a text from several texts, and create an on-line package of materials (Rossman 1992, 103). The goal for most libraries is seamless and easy access to resources. The challenges in achieving this goal relate to speed of access, protection of intellectual property and other copyright issues, providing instruction not only on access systems but also on evaluating information (see also Derlin and Erazo 1996). “Library activities that focus on specifics, where students can find the right answer if they follow directions, don’t prepare them well for real life. A few generic principles coupled with some regular experience in making choices and evaluating information are much more effective” (Weisburg and Toor 1996, 88).

How do students know where to begin in a world where massive amounts of data from thousands of libraries and other resource bases are accessible? Does our concern to “cover content” make any sense at all in the world that is emerging? What changes will emerge in the way we view and use resources in distance education as the power of search engines and the efficiency of indexing mechanisms increases? How will we help learners make needed judgments among data, and develop the capacity for critical thinking and judgment? In light of expanding resources and information, it is possible that learning assignments in the future will have to be more self-selected and not required by faculty.

It is said that “Henry David Thoreau won his argument with the president of Harvard to the effect that the invention of the railroad had destroyed the rationale for the strictly local library borrowing privileges imposed by the university, just as the invention of printing had made it unnecessary to continue chaining books to the walls” (Rossman, 1995, 6). The Internet may make actual libraries unnecessary.

Gates compares the current Internet to the Oregon Trail of the 1800s. It is evolving rapidly and will continue to evolve, becoming increasingly interactive (Gates 1995, 95).

On the information highway, rich electronic documents will be able to do things no piece of paper can. The highway’s powerful database technology will allow them to be indexed and

retrieved using interactive exploration. It will be extremely cheap and easy to distribute them. In short, these new digital documents will replace any printed paper ones because they will be able to help us in new ways. But not for quite some time. (Gates 1995, 113)

Gates speaks of the ease of use of books and their current computer accessibility, but predicts that it will be a decade before documents can be read easily from computer screens. “The first digital documents to achieve widespread use will do so by offering new functionality rather than simply duplicating the older medium” (1995, 113).

However, before we begin burning our library cards, a visit to one of several monster bookstores in any one of our communities will show that, even in an on-line world, there are still thousands of books available and desired on every subject imaginable—even on computers and the Internet! The world clearly isn’t quite yet ready to go completely on-line.

### ***Faculty Deployment and Development***

Peter Drucker, in a speech at the USC faculty club, noted that faculty had been tremendously inventive of ways to avoid the positive impact technology could have on education. He suggested that faculty had managed, through their reliance on the lecture method of imparting information, to nullify successfully the impact of Gutenberg’s invention of printing for 400 years! As faculty perhaps intuitively senses, a university without walls quickly becomes one in which the lecture method is made obsolete or, at the very least, radically transformed. Although laboratories and studios for the performing and fine arts may continue to be needed, the formal space of the large lecture hall will have limited utility in the future. For the social sciences and humanities, the most appropriate venue for teaching and research is the world beyond the campus. This is particularly true for the advanced-degree applied research that characterizes many distance education institutions. (Rossman, 1995, 6)

The expected retort, of course, is that institutions of higher education have outlasted many trends. Will the institutions remain long after the wave of technological innovation has passed by—that is, assuming it will pass by?

More faculty are being asked to participate in off-campus instruction. To what extent does this affect faculty and administrators’ perceptions of the roles of faculty in teaching, research, student advising, and so on? Caffarella et. al. studied twenty-two faculty from a western university to discover their perceptions of the effects of off-campus involvement on student interaction and learning, method used, and changes in responsibilities (Caffarella, Duning and

Patrick 1992, 157). The research findings were discussed under three headings: changes in role of instructor, professional and personal satisfaction, and the importance of support systems.

**Role.** Off-campus teaching was perceived as inherently different from on-campus teaching. Faculty noted the expectations of off-campus students that faculty be collegial. Students were generally seen as asking more aggressive questions related to professional roles. Cohort groups formed generally naturally and were viewed as a positive factor. They created a dynamic that called for more group participation and less lecture. In off-campus settings, faculty saw their role as facilitators rather than as presenters of information.

**Professional and Personal Satisfaction.** Faculty reported that satisfaction was diminished by continual involvement in off-campus instruction. It interfered with professional interactions with colleagues on the main campus and their own scholarly work. It upset their regular schedules and created a lack of personal time even though it was integrated into their regular load.

**Support systems.** Important support systems were identified as scheduling, help in getting equipment, and on-site services. Faculty in this study did not want the institution to have total control over the design and implementation of materials.

The conclusions offered in this study were: off-campus teaching commitments should be viewed differently from on-campus commitments and should be weighted differently in faculty teaching load. Support systems should be created to organize the details of travel and information about the location; technology should be user friendly; procedures should be in place for smooth handling of student administration; a staff member should be readily accessible for off-campus situations; and institutions should provide faculty development that deals with the specifics of off-campus instruction.

In a research study to determine the competencies required by faculty for distance education, faculty most often asked for training in the use of technology, ideas for course design (they learned that simply delivering lectures in distance education formats was not effective), and ideas to promote interaction with and among learners, how to give feedback, and collaborative skills in interfacing with site personnel, technical advisors, and learners (Thach and Murphy 1995). In another study, competencies were seen to revolve prominently around attitudinal and process dimensions (Wilson 1991). Clearly, the need in faculty development is more than in just how to use technology. Experiences need to be developed to help faculty understand and use effectively several different forms of teaching and learning.

In the lists of competencies identified for distance education, attitudinal or relational skills feature prominently (support of learner, enthusiasm for this medium of instruction, encourages learners, compassionate, available for questions, helpful, patient, and so on). The process competencies included: interactional capability, cooperative learning skills, conversant with a broad variety of teaching and learning approaches, communication skills, skill in

feedback, expertise in knowledge area, promptness in responding. Promptness and feedback from faculty were cited as the most significant factors for distance education students.

Kochery (1997) identified the predominate areas for faculty development at the University of Minnesota as strategies for interaction and feedback (such as questioning, discussion, active learning), and the design of lectures for television. Johnson (1985) found that faculty attitudes toward distance education were generally expressed in relation to the "real world out there," the need for different methods, the presence of different students, and diminished energy levels. In another study, faculty adjustment to distance education related to preparing material with a view to learning rather than transmission, guiding students into self-directed modes of learning, creation of learning experiences, feedback, and the necessity of dialogue. Teachers will have to be more alert to process, not just to the selection and dissemination of content (Beaudoin 1990). Olcott (1996) listed the issues for faculty as time investment, cost, energy, lack of training, and the fact that distance education experience was not included in tenure review. Olcott and Wright (1995) describe needs in faculty training, support and tenure issues related to distance education.

With the different role demands (the teacher in distance education becomes a mediator and mentor, a supporter of learning events), different time expectations, and the general lack of administrative support in many schools, it is no surprise that faculty resist involvement in distance education. The bottle neck in the implementation and growth of distance education may not be the cost of technology, but faculty adaptability.

Faculty support and development is necessary if institutions want them to be involved in distance education. There is general agreement that there has to be support from top administration for faculty development for it to be effective. Cook (1995) reports on action taken by the University of La Verne, California, to build support structures for faculty involvement: involve more full-time faculty (generally, part-time/adjunct faculty get these assignments); redefine faculty workload and assess the concept of service in relation to workload, tenure, and stipend; create new support positions (faculty liaison, department associates, senior lecturers to work with full-time faculty). Baird (1995) recommends hands-on workshops for faculty on distance education technology and procedures, and learning styles. He suggests peer "round tables" for distance education faculty and, possibly, web sites and listservs for the sharing of information and ideas (Baird 1995).

Cullman (1996) in a paper on faculty preparation for interactive television learning experiences, made the point that traditional classroom work does not prepare faculty well for distance education experiences. "In a traditional classroom setting, faculty usually work by themselves to prepare their courses. However, faculty who teach interactive television courses often have to update their skills in current technology, plan courses differently, and work with distance education staff to prepare and deliver courses" (Cuffman 1996, 1). The

problem applies broadly to distance education. The nature of course preparation is different, the technology requires specialized skill, the nature of the interaction is different, the expectations related to learning are not the same as the expectations related to teaching. Any institution wishing to expand its options in distance education will have to give serious attention to faculty development—and to the hiring of faculty who are able and disposed to this work.

However, faculty development in relation to distance education must not be consumed with training in the use of technology. The search for a theoretical educational framework to guide and embrace the various modes of instruction suggests a larger vision for faculty. Boyer, in noting that the history of higher education affirms three fundamental roles of the professor (researcher/writer, teacher, and public servant) suggests that contemporary society is not well served by institutions that define scholarship in one way, whether that be research, teaching, or service. Institutions must deploy the various talents of its faculty more creatively and avoid rewarding research and publication over teaching or service. “We believe that the time has come to move beyond the tired old ‘teaching versus research’ debate and give the familiar and honorable term ‘scholarship’ a broader, more capacious meaning, one that brings legitimacy to the full scope of academic work. Surely, scholarship means engaging in original research. But the work of the scholar also means stepping back from one’s investigation, looking for connections, building bridges between theory and practice, and communicating one’s knowledge to students. Specifically, we conclude that the work of the professorate might be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping functions. These are: the scholarship of *discovery*; the scholarship of *integration*; the scholarship of *application*; and the scholarship of *teaching*” (Boyer 1990, 16). Boyer’s model implies that education is about more than information, and that existing instructional settings and systems do not adequately support more comprehensive definitions of scholarship.

### ***Course Design/Instructional Design***

Course development in distance education is described almost uniformly in relation to technology.<sup>16</sup> However, though a powerful medium, the Internet and other computer mediated resources are still more often tools for conveying information. Ward’s observation from 1994, and the impression from contemporary literature, is that their use in distance education for learning and higher order processing and fostering of learning communities is still in its infancy.

Although electronic communication technologies offer whole new categories of possible learner interactions, the technologies are all too often employed in non-creative ways. The tendency to assume that teaching is telling causes the interactive communications to be a matter of questions-in/answers-out. (Ward 1994)

To what extent is it possible to conceive of course and instructional design that is not utterly dependent on technology? Certainly, contemporary definitions of distance education as interactive, and developments in technology that can facilitate two-way and/or group communication, are encouraging developments for those of us who view learning as a social process, express it in developmental and transformational terms, and encourage the interweaving of experiential and cognitive processing, or higher order thinking dimensions. But to what extent will technology ever be able to deliver on the capacity to promote interactivity and the processing of knowledge?

Contemporary literature in instructional design for distance education reflects the opinion that what makes a course good or bad is how well it is designed and delivered, not whether the instruction is in a classroom or at a distance, and articulates the conviction that education is about learning, about more holistic student development, about effective and informed access to knowledge, about the facilitation of learning communities, about the development of the capacities for both the processing and use of knowledge, and about responsible action. Though one wonders why these convictions could not apply equally well to both formal or conventional modes of education and to distance or nontraditional modes, representative comments expressed in relation to distance education include:

Distance education revolves around a learner-centered system with teaching activity focused on facilitating learning. The teacher augments prepared study materials by providing explanations, references, and reinforcements for the student. Independent study stresses learning rather than teaching, and is based on the principles that the key to learning is what students do, not what teachers do. It is a highly personalized process that converts newly acquired information into new insights and ideas. The institution's function, and the task of its instructional personnel, is to facilitate and enhance that process—despite the distance—to achieve optimum learning outcomes. (Beaudoin 1990, 21)

The curriculum is already overcrowded with low-level information . . . Using information infrastructures as a fire hose to spray more information into educational settings would make this situation even worse. Without skilled facilitation, many learners who access current knowledge webs will flounder in a morass of unstructured data. (Dede 1996b, 26)

There is no shortage of literature on studies related to course design and the use of various methodologies. Generally the studies reflect a need to demonstrate that distance education is not inferior in its results to formal education, and to demonstrate that distance educators, probably moreso than faculty in

exclusively formal educational contexts, accept the need for a design that promotes interaction and the development of conceptual skills.

Patterson (1996), in her article in the *ATS* journal, observed that studies of the effectiveness of correspondence education (since the 1920s) generally conclude that students perform as well as or better than their counterparts in more traditional settings. Studies of the effectiveness of radio, television, teleconferencing, and audiocassette delivery systems show the same result. She indicated that the research on computer-assisted or computer-facilitated learning is still emerging, though there seems little significant difference in learning effectiveness—except among students with reading and writing difficulties and poor study habits. Though students report that interaction using interactive technology is more satisfactory, there can be a sense of information overload and frustration with the triviality of much of the communication.

A study that compared students in distance education and students in face-to-face instruction at the National University of Mexico demonstrated a general trend that students in distance learning were more meaning-oriented and more involved in their learning; students in face-to-face courses were more utilitarian and instrumental—courses were a means to an end (Figueroa 1992).

The effectiveness of using audioconferencing in courses at the graduate school of education at the University of Toronto over many years, generated five principles (Burge and Snow 1990).

1. "The organization of the students' learning activities must be relatively detailed but also flexible." Flexibility was allowed in student choices and in opportunities for students and instructors to take time for interaction.
2. "Relationships between the learner and the professor, the learner and the librarians, and the professor and the librarian should reflect a learner-centered view and therefore be collaborative in nature."
3. "Responsibilities for the progress and success of a course should be defined at the outset of the course and then maintained throughout the course."
4. Technology should be chosen for reliability and ease of use.
5. Key learning processes should include analyses of thinking-in-progress, critiques of experience, written papers, reporting on small group activity, informed discussions with faculty and peers.

Thorpe identified experiential learning theory (Kolb) and the reflective theories of Schön and others as a more promising way forward in the construction of learning experiences (Thorpe 1995, 156). The need to process both the content and one's experience allows new learning to be related to a deepening structure of concepts and meanings (Thorpe 1995, 157). Thorpe reported on findings from two courses designed around a more reflective paradigm that demonstrated the positive benefit of having students step back from practice for reflection, that interaction with a tutor stimulated critical reflection, and

that assessment can provide a powerful mechanism for reflection. In the courses, students were required to pay attention to their own learning processes as well as the content. When reflection was emphasized, students reported that they read differently, took notes differently, and, in general, approached their learning differently.

Reports also show the “darker” side of efforts in course design for distance learning. Kaye and Rumble (1991) summarized persistent criticisms of distance education teaching approaches: (1) The limited opportunities for discussion between students and instructors and other resource people. The diminished quality of discussion experiences can be exacerbated where the persons involved in facilitating the discussion are different from the persons who prepared the material. (2) Materials are often inflexible in relating to learner needs. Because they are designed for a wide range of learners, the material is too generalized, and once the teaching event has started there is little opportunity or willingness for change. (3) The materials tend to be costly to produce. This creates a tendency to enroll as many as possible in learning events, and to re-use the material for more years than suitable.

Instructional design, envisioned in relation to a more coherent theoretical framework of the “learning paradigm, is an emerging area in distance education. The traditional role of teachers who dispense information contained in textbooks is changing. The varied relationships of teachers and students, the relationship between students and materials and context and delivery systems are seen more and more as a systemic process—an interactive process. One would hope that the tendency to think that what will work with one group (or culture) will work with another is diminishing. The key to long-term effectiveness in course design for distance education will not be found in simply taking courses to new settings and replicating them.

The key fallacy is the belief that any learning experience can simply be picked up whole and transported to some other location and situation. The lively circumstances of the new context—a student’s personal and vocational experiences, for example—are thus ignored. The way we teach one place, we can teach anyplace seems to be the watchword. Distance learning becomes nothing more than transplantation of the most ordinary of campus-based instruction. (Ward 1994)

Common *design factors* in the literature included: more focused units of study, active participation, dialogue, procedures for discerning learner needs and assessment, instant feedback, advance organizers, learning guides, self pacing, interpersonal interactivity, tutorial assistance, practice and reflection, choices, alternate tracks, cross integration of content, contextualization, occasional integration with the traditional curriculum. *Learning activities* described for on-line use included: seminars, learning teams, small group discussions,

case studies, working groups/action teams, role plays and simulations, debating teams, peer learning/cohort groups, social interaction (the “online/virtual café”). *Approaches to design* included: problem centered—or active learning, case study/problem-based learning, cognitive processing, mutual inquiry, subject centered/structured curriculum, teacher selected activity and curriculum, scope and sequence developed from predetermined objectives, planned dynamically in context with teacher and students interacting, focused on the development of the student in a more holistic sense. *Communication factors* included: use frequent changes of pace, draw persons into the discussions, give concluding summaries and make use of advance organizers, control the “verbal traffic,” foster a democratic climate and create the sense of a “shared space,” give attention to the pacing of the interaction and the learning (Willis 1992, 37).

Weisberg and Toor aver that distance education practices established in the nineteenth century will not serve well schools that are part of the twenty-first century world. “Numerous library media specialists have already adopted resource based instruction as the most effective way to prepare lifelong learners. Regular experience with a multiplicity of resources is obviously essential to successful information management. However the enormous amount of recoverable data, the speed at which emerging technology becomes fully developed, and the uncertainty of what is yet to come require that these resource based units be represented as part of a new curriculum—the Information Curriculum” (Weisberg and Toor 1996, 87). The Information Curriculum will develop the skills needed to select, interpret, and use information, to move “effortlessly between subject disciplines,” and to access resources from a variety of formats. The Information Curriculum “needs to be incorporated into all subject areas as teachers and library media specialists collaboratively plan their resourcebased units to develop students’ critical thinking skills” (Weisberg and Toor 1996, 87).

The studies and the reports on efforts to design learning experiences for distance education demonstrate that human learning is a complex and holistic endeavor. The impression from the literature is that the next generation of instructional designers will have to deal with issues related to the articulation of guiding theory, the development of principles to guide the selection and use of learning approaches and technology, and the formulation of criteria against which to assess the planning, development, and implementation of materials and instruction.

### ***Copyright***

Within distance education, there is growing tension in relation to copyright—particularly in the interpretation of the Copyright Act of 1976 with regard to Fair Use. This version of the Act did not anticipate the various multimedia applications that would be developed in distance education. Technically, faculty are prohibited by the Act from distributing anything via

computer (because that inherently alters the photograph or image) without securing permission. This, of course, is time consuming (it is possible to use hundreds of pieces in one presentation) and costly. Publishers are afraid of losing their place as primary providers of materials to the Internet, faculty and students are frustrated, administrators are afraid of lawsuits. What is considered Fair Use in face-to-face classrooms is not allowable through distance education technology, according to the 1976 Act (Dalziel 1996; Stansbury 1996).

“The Fair Use Doctrine permits those engaged in teaching, research, scholarship, or criticism to commit technical violations of copyright when certain criteria are met” (Douvanis 1997, 1). However, Douvanis notes that copyright law creates problems in distance learning for several reasons, among them the provision that instruction be face-to-face and that it be conducted in a classroom (Douvanis 1997, 3). Further, violation of human rights concerns might require that releases be secured from all participants where courses are videotaped (Douvanis 1997, 4).

The 1976 Act is not clear on how technology is used in teaching. “For example, the Act makes it nearly impossible for faculty to produce their own comprehensive multimedia productions to streamline their course material, enhance the visual flow of a presentation, or transmit a course via computer to a distant student unable to attend an on-campus class. In order to create multimedia presentations teachers need to digitize images. However, the law requires one to obtain copyright permission if he or she duplicates or changes the quality of an image in any way—even if only 10 students see the final product” (Dalziel 1996, 24). Because of the confusion, schools interpret “fair use” in a variety of ways.

In 1994 the Conference on Fair Use (CONFU) was convened to deal with problems in the 1976 Act related to multimedia, distance learning, visual archives, and digital libraries. The reports from this ongoing conference are available as ERIC documents (ED405843. “Copyright in the Age of New Technology;” ED402920 and ED401881. “Fair Use Guidelines adopted in September 1997”).<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, a major factor in resource access and use is the necessity of copyright provisions. Collections are being digitalized. “From the Vatican to the Library of Congress to scores of universities, specialized collections are being reproduced in digital formats and made accessible to the world on-line. This expanding database of humanity’s history and knowledge base, combined with increasingly sophisticated search engines, will continually make more and more of our existing, but seldom seen, information available from anywhere there is a connection” (Barnard 1997, 34). However, this also creates the nightmare of paying copyright holders, writing licensing agreements, developing schemes for recording, and securing passwords and payment. To have this service one pays a high price in frustration related to copyright issues, but what are the implications for intellectual property rights when material can be accessed, copied, and disseminated without regard to copyright?

### ***Accreditation***

The ATS, AABC, regional accreditation agencies, the Distance Education and Training Council, TRACS (Transnational Association of Christian Schools), state licensure bodies, military higher education review programs, and international accreditation agencies involved with theological education are among those concerned about definition, principles, and standards pertinent to accreditation. Undoubtedly, these agencies need continuous, not periodic, input from institutions and services within the institutions in ways that will facilitate understanding and evaluation of rapidly developing new educational programs—especially those involved with distance education. How does one set standards for distance education, especially when there is no clear definition, no set format, and especially when institutions are going ahead with program development, sometimes without regard to accreditation guidelines? Some have observed that distance education is already becoming institutionalized. How can ATS, for example, set standards and procedures that recognize the diversity and potential of these programs, without ensuring that distance education will become rigid and time bound? To further complicate matters, as the distance education programs of institutions reach around the world, creating multiple opportunities for interaction and joint program ventures, will the different accrediting bodies that service theological education worldwide be forced to collaborate? Because distance education is already an interconnected global reality it would seem important for ATS to be in dialogue with accrediting agencies around the world. How does an accrediting agency, disposed to sending teams to do on-site examination, confront the reality of a program where students and faculty and learning experiences are scattered through an enormously large number of sites worldwide? How does one accredit a virtual theological seminary?

Crow reflected on the future responsibilities of the North Central Association's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) in light of the new problems posed by distance education for accreditation. He cited the case of an accrediting body trying to deal with different institutions: one offers its graduate program solely through satellite, another offers its master's program through computer-mediated delivery, another offers its graduate degrees through cable television. Is distance education so inherently different from traditional education that it requires a whole new set of standards? Or is it so different that it cannot meet existing standards and, therefore, should not be subject to standards and procedures? Crow suggested that "The basic operating assumption will be that the distance education enterprise takes place within a recognizable institutional context and that the quality of education provided at the sponsoring institution serves as the measure for the quality of education to be provided through distance delivery" (Crow 1995, 355). Operating on this assumption he suggested several criteria for the establishment of accreditation standards for distance education:

1. The institution's distance delivery programs have a clearly defined purpose congruent with the institutional mission and purposes.
2. The institution admits to its distance delivery programs students who meet the institutional admission requirements but who also have the capacity to succeed in the distance delivery environment.
3. The institution's financial documents . . . show sufficient financial capacity and commitment to support the distance delivery programs. That support includes appropriate administration for the program as well as development programs for faculty and others providing support services.
4. The faculty provide appropriate oversight for all distance delivery of education, assuring both the rigor of the curriculum and the quality of instruction.
5. The institution provides access to the learning and support systems necessary for the distant-learning student to succeed.
6. The institution evaluates its distance delivery programs on a regular and systematic basis and makes the changes necessary to improve their quality.
7. The institution assures that its distance delivery programs facilitate appropriate student-faculty and student-student interaction.
8. The program delivered through distance delivery has a coherence and comprehensiveness comparable to the program offered on the home campus.
9. The expected learning outcomes for courses and programs offered through distance delivery are the same as those used for comparable courses and programs on the home campus.
10. The institution's system of distance delivery includes appropriate back-up systems to compensate for short-run technological difficulties. (Crow 1995, 355-356)<sup>18</sup>

Reports from regional bodies add considerations such as: faculty support, facilities and equipment, procedures for evaluating quality, governance, advising and curriculum, planning and accountability, compatibility of distance education policies and procedures with institutional goals and mission, need for criteria where schools are part of a consortium, libraries and access to resources, interstate agreements, copyright, faculty workload (Gellman-Danley 1997).<sup>19</sup>

A task force sponsored by the American Council on Education and the Alliance: An Association for Alternative Programs for Adults proposed guiding principles for distance learning in a learning society (Granger, Gulliver, Miller 1996). Key insights of the task force were that we no longer live lives bounded by time and space, and learning permeates virtually all sectors of society—"therefore principles of good practice must not be applicable only to institutions of higher education" (Granger, Gulliver, Miller 1996, 6). In a utopian vision, the task force asserts that strengthening one sector of society will have a leavening effect on other sectors, ultimately benefiting society as a whole. Significantly, the report takes pains not to support learning at a distance

exclusively. The principles, though framed in relation to distance learning, are intended to guide planners from the various sectors of society involved in the development of people, through the challenges presented by the changing nature of the educative process. The principles are based on values supportive of lifelong learning in the service of society, diversity, universal access, mutual accountability and responsibility, and interactivity; and they offer guidelines related to attention to context, accessibility to learners, organizational commitment to quality, formulation of learner-oriented outcomes, a plan and infrastructure for the use of supporting technology. The underlying premise is that the roles of “providers,” agencies, and learners will change in the emerging learning society (Granger, Gulliver, Miller 1996, 11-18).

A group representing the Western states’ higher education regulating agencies, higher education institutions, and the regional accrediting community prepared the following “Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs.”

***Curriculum and Instruction***

- Each program of study results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
- An electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete.
- The program provides for appropriate real-time or delayed interaction between faculty and among students.
- Qualified faculty provide appropriate oversight of the program electronically offered.

***Institutional Context and Commitment to Role and Mission***

- The program is consistent with the institutions’ role and mission.
- Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of the technology being used to meet the program’s objectives.

***Faculty Support***

- The program provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system.
- The program provides training for faculty who teach via the use of technology.

***Resources for Learning***

- The program ensures that appropriate learning resources are available to students.

***Students and Student Services***

- The program provides students with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty / student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.

- Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning. Accepted students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to undertake the program.
- Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

***Commitment to Support***

- Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate consideration of teaching and scholarly activities related to electronically offered programs.
- The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree/certificate.

***Evaluation and Assessment***

- The institution evaluates the program's educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.
- Students have access to such program evaluation data.
- The institution provides for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course and at completion of the program. (In Johnstone and Krauth 1996, 40).

Distance education is gradually changing expectations about the nature of teaching and learning. Learning is not simply the acquiring of a body of knowledge—it requires the development and use of critical thinking skills, effective communication, and the ability to work well with others. Students are becoming consumers of the education they want, not passive recipients of what a faculty determines they need. Learning is not confined to a classroom and requires networking of resources. Campus boundaries have dissolved. Humpty Dumpty has fallen and will not be put together again. All of this has profound implications for accreditation. Crow, addressing the Commission, wrote: “The Commission inevitably will be called upon to provide leadership in defining quality in the new educational contexts. This task might sorely test the Commission’s historical commitment to peer review. In any period of significant transformation, those caught up in it are frequently the least well-equipped to understand the forces buffeting them” (Crow 1995, 358). What will be the role of ATS in setting standards in relation to new educational contexts in seminaries?

Accreditation is often seen as the guardian of conventional education—understandable since the membership of accrediting associations, particularly those related to theological education, tend to be more conventional in their orientation. Though it is unusual to find a major university without extensive and well-supported on-line programs, it is unusual to find a theological school

with one. The restrictions, perceived or actual, posed through accreditation standards may be limiting—but only for the short term. It is inevitable that theological institutions will embrace distance education in its several forms. The regional accrediting associations have already accommodated distance learning in their accrediting standards and procedures. The ATS will need to move quickly both to guide and inform the emergence of different modes of distance learning in theological education.

### ***Evaluation***

How is evaluation accomplished effectively in distance education? Should distance education be evaluated by the standards related to conventional education. One's understanding of "successful education" is related to the criteria one uses to evaluate that education. Criteria clustered around transmissive pedagogical models are different from criteria clustered around dialogical or process models. Is the education process described in terms of efficiency or artistry; closure or lifelong; passive or participatory; preparatory or developmental; teacher directed or learner centered; structured or structurable. Further, the factor of multisite evaluation presents difficulties for evaluation unless one assumes that one central program simply can be transferred to multiple sites.

Generally speaking, evaluation involves ongoing (formative) evaluation of support factors, demographic factors, administrative factors, design factors, program logistics, effect of facilities on the learning climate, intentions of the participants for the learning experiences, perception of how well program goals are being met, and instructional factors—leading to revisions, and summative evaluation at the end of the program to determine the effectiveness of the program in specified areas. Forest and Rossing argued that evaluation must retain the human value of people centered instruction while increasing the need for program evaluation and accountability. To this end, they advocate involving people in the evaluation process, using existing social relationships in the evaluation, and encouraging people to discuss the evaluation with others in their social groupings. Assessment techniques that are consistent with the character of the program are preferred; data from qualitative as well as quantitative studies are mandated (Forest and Rossing 1982).

Where possible, evaluation should be embedded in ongoing program development. Programs should be evaluated by studying the effects of the program on the participants and the surrounding community if necessary. Student performance can be examined to assess relevant dynamics of the learning experience or the program. In evaluative processes, goals should be seen as dynamic over time—and interdependent to a degree. The implication is that evaluative processes cannot be fixed. At some times and in some settings one procedure may be desirable over others.

Kemmis (1980) described four levels of evaluation: "(1) program evaluation, concerning general institutional arrangements; (2) curriculum evalua-

tion, concerning the educational arrangements of whole curricula and particular courses; (3) the evaluation of student learning, concerning the opportunities for learning created by a particular teaching/learning encounter; and (4) student assessment, concerning the outcomes of student learning" (Kemmis 1980, 5). Related to these levels are five models of evaluation. The movement of thought and emphasis in the five models he describes (the engineering model, the organizational model, the ecological model, the illuminative/responsive model, and the democratic model) offer nuances pertinent to the task of evaluation in distance education. The models move from a more "technological," utilitarian concentration on an instructor's design of objectives and outcomes, experiences and tests; to the managerial approach of gathering data that will help decision makers keep programs viable; to a "cultural approach that is conscious of the relationships between individuals and their surrounding environment; to an approach that deliberately seeks to address issues raised by participants; to an evaluative process that offers a way to disseminate information to all members of the group.

Dynamics within each of these evaluative approaches highlight the respective concerns of: How sufficient are behavioral objectives for the assessment of learning? What factors should be included in the evaluative process? To what degree is a consensus possible about what ought to be learned—and hence to what degree are objectives and reliable measurement possible? To what extent can an evaluative process give adequate feedback about why a program fails, and not just that it failed in certain respects? To what extent can the evaluative process be value-free, scientific, objective? Who fashions the objectives, decides what data are relevant, and who gathers and interprets the data? To what extent is it possible or desirable to use evaluative processes to control the complexities of educational institutions and processes? To what extent is it desirable to subjugate the perspectives of individuals to the goals and the ethos of the corporate entity? To what extent is it helpful to develop prescriptive goals and objectives at the front end of the evaluative process? What would a more organic, holistic, and contextual approach to evaluation look like? Is evaluation ever a completely rationalistic process? To what degree is an evaluation process that encompasses many audiences truly a focused and reliable process? To what extent can evaluation enter into the reality of the program in order to create conditions for responsible self-reflection—where an organization can learn from its own experience?

Knapper (1985) suggests that there is a difference between using lifelong learning criteria for the evaluation of distance education and employing standards from conventional education. The notion of lifelong learning received widespread publicity after the publication of Edgar Faure's book, *Learning to Be* (1972). "Subsequently UNESCO adopted lifelong learning as a guiding principle for educational reform . . ." (Knapper 1985, 5). The pedagogical criteria for lifelong learning that Faure proposed include: Students plan and evaluate their own learning, assessment methods are formative in nature,

active learning methods are emphasized, learning takes place in both formal and informal settings and focuses on real-world problems, learning strategies are tailored to the student's situation, the nature of the task, and the instructional objectives, material from different subject areas and disciplines is integrated, the process of learning is stressed at least as much as instructional content (In Knapper 1985, 6). Following these criteria the suggested procedures for evaluation included:

- Participation by a broad cross-section of the population
- Integration of general and vocationally oriented education
- Flexibility in the content and organization of instruction
- Credit for prior learning experiences in both formal and non-formal settings
- Close links between education and the world of work
- Use of non-professional teachers and resource people where appropriate
- Emphasis on self-instruction
- Provision of help with learning and study skills. (In Knapper 1985, 6)

Howard noted that the quality of the feedback given to students at a distance will be a major factor in the effectiveness of their learning experiences and in the achievement of learning outcomes (Howard, 1987, 24). She suggests that the more effective feedback is that which is "designed into courses on the basis of *instructional function* before various delivery methods are considered" (Howard 1987, 26). In academic learning two functions are important: the learning of concepts, terms, principles, and so on, but also the need to use this information in interpretation, analysis, and problem solving (Howard 1987, 27). Using this twofold approach to learning, feedback types are chosen.

### ***Internationalization***

How are distance learning programs prepared in North America for North Americans going to translate globally? What economic, political, and social conventions in other countries affect the development and use of distance education? What attitudes do other cultures have with regard to "power" in communication? What is the relationship of the individual to the group? How much interactivity can be tolerated in other cultural settings? How do we recognize language and subtle cultural cues? How much responsibility do we assume to reshape perceptions? Rossman drew attention to the difficulties created by time differences, language differences, differing cultural needs, the need to manage the logistics of accreditation and course selection across cultures, and lack of standardization of technology (Rossman 1992, 21-22).

The notion of interconnected, worldwide programs of distance education is a worthy idea. But the problems are considerable: limited infrastructure,

costly technology, lack of human resources, national and international regulations. In many countries the technologies of choice are still tape recorders, telephone, film, radio, and possibly television. Audioconferencing and teleconferencing using phone lines is becoming more accessible, but problems remain in lack of trained staff and speed of correction of problems that occur in transmission. The technologically developed countries are: Canada, U.S., Britain, Australia, and India, but pilot projects on the use of technology in developing countries were described by Kinyanjui and Morton in 1992. *Kenya*: the introduction of an audio-graphics system to link four public universities and three extra-mural study centers for the Bachelor of Education; *Namibia*: the establishment of telecommunication links between Namibian Distance Education College and regional teacher resource centers; *Mauritius*: installation of a teleconferencing network to link the University of Mauritius and four centers on the island and centers in Rodrigues; *Solomon Islands*: installation of teleconferencing links between the University of the South Pacific Extension Services and the College of Higher Education to provincial centers; *Guyana*: establishment of audio/teleconferencing capability in conjunction with the University of Guyana's Institute of Adult and Continuing Education and three distance education sites in order to upgrade students attempting the entrance examinations; *Brunei*: establishment of audio/teleconferencing facilities in conjunction with the Commonwealth of Learning's Brunei Distance Education Center to supplement video conference facilities already in place. These pilot projects were designed to serve as models for future projects in developing countries (Kinyanjui and Morton 1992).

Technology is not necessarily the total answer to the need for universal human learning, but it is allowing for the development of educational opportunities on a scale unheard of until a few years ago. Sharma (1996) reported that open learning and distance education systems are being established at an unprecedented rate in developing countries of the Asian and Pacific region. Driving concerns are to offer education to the vast numbers of students and especially to the poor, to enhance human development, improve women's status, foster peace and hinder, if not, eliminate terrorism! But there is still a great technological divide between developed and developing nations. Technology cannot everywhere supplement print and the capacities to use the skills of informed dialogue, problem solving, group process, application, and autonomy in learning can be underdeveloped. As on the local level, it will become increasingly important to help students develop capacities and sustainable habits in learning processes. Further, seminars in countries with an established literature base will discover problems in simply translating that literature for use in countries where an indigenous literature needs to be developed to reflect their own cultural realities. It is conceivable that one of the contributions of distance education could be to foster the collaboration of persons from one or more developing nations for the writing, evaluation, and production of literature.

As the World Wide Web (WWW) becomes more populated by seminars, greater attention must be paid to issues of contextualization. We cannot simply reproduce lectures and printed materials (“electronic page turning”) on the Internet for all the world to see without some sense of how the world sees! One’s impression at this point is that the nations that are most technologically advantaged tend to develop distance education delivery systems that are culture-exclusive or culture-ignorant.<sup>20</sup> Do we transport a curriculum “made at home” everywhere, or do we study each specific field and tailor the curriculum according to demographic and cultural factors? What will be the patterns of interagency cooperation in theological education that will support the development of effective distance education efforts internationally?<sup>21</sup>

### ***Institutional/Administrative Challenges and Responsibilities***

The long-term monopolies of higher education are giving way to multiple forms of education and multiple agencies involved in education. These trends and the emerging technology create challenges for administrators of higher education, and according to Roberts and Keough, new opportunities for distance education.

The literature describes various administrative models for universities involved in distance education: Campus Based Universities (CBUs), Distance Teaching Universities (DTUs), and Dual-Mode Universities (DMUs) (Rumble 1992, 31). The DTUs are facing competition from CBUs and DMUs who are now seeing the value of servicing the part-time and distance student. In the past few years, even in theological education, cooperative ventures between one or more schools have surfaced as a way to deal with matters of access, costs, faculty deployment, and course design.<sup>22</sup> As institutions of higher education develop consortia, one school can take the lead role in development and teaching and coordination of resources, one may develop materials for use by other universities, a number of universities may federate, mutually recognizing each others’ course credits and requirements (Curran 1992, 61). But questions of who decides what should be known and how, the nature of assessment, admission policies, and who participates in decision making can be hindrances to the effective implementation of programs.

The Internet is creating the possibility of another model—the virtual university.<sup>23</sup> The virtual university is a reality with millions of students studying at multiple sites and using multiple resources (Barnard 1997, 33; Van Dusen 1997; Latta 1996; see also Johnstone and Tilson 1997). There are also examples of corporations developing university access on-line. In the virtual university there is no expectation that students will ever come to a physical campus. Their university exists in the relationships, courses, and feedback mechanisms found in cyberspace.

Student support functions comprise another significant administrative responsibility for institutions providing distance education. Administrative procedures described as necessary relate to developing learner profiles, pro-

viding good information and orienting the learner to the program, establishing ongoing communication procedures through materials, telephone contact, and site coordinators (Ganger and Benke 1995, 23), communication concerning admission and registration and records, bookstore and library access, advising, tutoring, evaluation and assessment.

### **Access**

Some of the differences in the form of distance education reflect the degree to which a person has free access to learning opportunities, is able to shape the nature of the content, objectives, and assessment, and is free to determine how, when, and where she or he will learn. Typically, access is described in relation to programs that are accessible to people regardless of educational level—open admission, or in relation to regular programs made available at non-traditional times and places to accommodate schedule needs.

Distance education promises access to all. However, distance education programs that are heavily dependent on technology could be difficult to access by some minority populations and economically disadvantaged populations (Dillon and Cintron 1997). When access is described in relation to technology, the former difficulty of the slowness of the communication process (for two-way communication) is now not as much of a problem; access to technology and appropriate use of it is. Access is also affected by matters of contextualization, language and culture when an institution provides distance education for different international contexts.

### **Examples of Distance Education in Theological Education**

Schools and churches are developing nontraditional programs of theological education (our more complete understanding of developments in North American theological schools requires the data from the recently distributed Educational Technology Survey of ATS schools). This part of the report will simply give examples that may be suggestive of trends and patterns.

Moody Bible Institute established a program of correspondence study at about the same time as William Rainey Harper was establishing the program of correspondence education at the University of Chicago. More than one million students have been enrolled in Moody's program over the past 100 years. The historic, founding vision for the extension program was to train ministers in the gaps—those who wouldn't find a place in the traditional program: Sunday School teachers, those working in rescue missions, pastors already serving in churches.

Perhaps the most visible effort to do something comparable to correspondence or distance education in theological education centered around the emergence of the Theological Education by Extension movement (TEE)<sup>24</sup>. From its beginnings in 1962 or 1963 in Guatemala, and hailed by many as the savior

of theological education in developing countries, it has developed into a worldwide movement. Its genius was, and is, to take the seminary to the student—a decentralizing of theological education. Though the impetus of the model was no doubt related to concerns for institutional survival, the designers felt that by contextualizing seminary education, they could encourage pastors to stay in the pastorate and develop them while in the pastorate. TEE relies on home study materials and a traveling instructor. At its best, TEE envisions the education of the church leader as continued development in context and not as preparation for future ministry (a distinction that affects instructional design and one that is increasingly an issue for contemporary seminaries). However, the movement has been challenged by Ward, McKinney, Ferris, and others as flawed in that it took an excessively programmed approach to learning, that it was influenced subtly or not so subtly by behavioristic philosophy, that it became more formal than residential schooling ever was, that it failed to renew theological education, and that there were certain assumptions made that the programmed materials could be easily transferable from one country to the next—without recognizing the uniqueness of each new context. Persistent difficulties continue to be the unwillingness to get input from churches, the design of materials, the limited effectiveness of seminar leadership, the failure to lead students to deal with real problems in their own settings, uneven administrative supports, and the flawed attempt to create evaluation procedures that could be uniformly applied to every culture and context. Ward's concern that "technology," in the form of programmed instruction, began to drive the model was well-founded and forecasted contemporary concerns about the nature of teaching and learning, and the role of technology in education. His early emphasis on the need for trained seminar leaders and substantive interactivity between students, and students and teachers, remain valid concerns for the continued development of distance education. These concerns as well as the implicit warning that, though TEE served a purpose, it had also "extended the influence of the Western-culture church" (Ward 1974, 246) are valid issues for North American seminaries seeking to design various modes of distance education.

The Open Learning Centre established in 1928 in the Wesleyan Methodist Church (Britain) started as a correspondence school model. Their target audience was the laity of their churches. Currently, it services about 1000 students a year with about 200 volunteer tutors. The majority of courses are in biblical and theological subjects. They admit that finances limit their ability to prepare materials that allow for a greater variety of media—and, therefore, interactive experiences are minimal (Walton 1997, 42).

ICI University was begun by the Assemblies of God in 1967 and now serves many denominations (Flattery 1993).<sup>25</sup> They make an effort to recognize the multinational dimension of their distance education programs—asserting that their programs are for cross-cultural and worldwide usage, and that they develop courses for specific cultural groups. However, one wonders about the

significance of the statement that “We do encourage and permit adaptations for cultural reasons, although not much seems to be needed” (Flattery 1993, 57). The view of the transcendent nature of the Gospel seems to affect curricular planning—the message can be the same no matter what the language.

Vicente (1982) reporting on the Spanish Institute for Theology at a Distance (an institute formed in 1973 by the Archdiocese of Madrid in response to Vatican II to address the needs of continuing theological formation for priests and laity) stated, “Whereas older educational systems prepared people for relatively static social situations by transmitting to them an accumulation of knowledge, today education must equip people to face new changing situations by encouraging integral, ongoing personal formation. Human life can no longer be divided into a stage of preparation, formation, and acquisition of information and another stage of action, service, and maturity. Education must be a continual process” (Vicente 1982, 193). The courses are basically workbook driven and designed for working adults who cannot get together in regular classes.

In 1983, Kinsler listed several presuppositions guiding Southern Baptist seminary extension programs:

1. Every minister needs to engage in purposeful, planned learning as long as he or she is in active service.
2. Learning produces changes in how persons think, feel, and act.
3. Learning is facilitated when it is related to the problems and felt needs of the learners.
4. Learning is facilitated when it takes place in the locale in which application is to be made.
5. Learning is facilitated when the learner is appropriately involved in setting goals, planning processes, and evaluating results.
6. Learning is facilitated when the methods used are consistent with the goals and abilities of the learners.
7. Learning is facilitated when both course materials and the personal experiences of learners are used skillfully as resources in achieving the learning objectives.
8. Learning is facilitated when it is consistent with and improves the self-concept of the learner.
9. Learning is facilitated when the learner is encouraged and assisted in using what he or she has learned in real life situations.
10. Effective continuing education helps persons learn how to learn and commit themselves to life-long learning. (Rigdon and Hollaway, 181. In Kinsler 1983)

Recently, GlobalNet was established to serve schools associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. This service allows schools to

develop and access electronic courses without having to bear the cost independently. Cagney (1997) reported on the response of Christian colleges to new technologies. His concerns and recommendations were predominately pragmatic and programmatic. For example: If Christian institutions don't get on board, they'll be bypassed; they will lose students when it becomes increasingly possible for students to pick up courses on the Internet; schools that don't take advantage of technology will be bypassed by schools that will; Christian colleges are missing the huge market now accessible through the Internet. He stressed that colleges will have to learn or hire the skills required to use the technology appropriately; faculty will need training in the development and use of courses on the Internet. Colleges caught in the dilemma of not being able to finance the development of distance education may find their survival threatened if they don't. Consortia may be formed to manage costs and utilize resources. He identified benefits of Internet-based technology that could become part of the schools' offerings: missionary support, pastoral education, interface with evangelical not-for-profit associations, and professional development in any number of marketplaces.<sup>26</sup>

Walker, in 1996, reported that many of the larger evangelical seminaries in the U.S. were wired for the Internet and were moving ahead in offering technologically mediated courses. The trend toward greater use of technology will continue, but many schools will find the pace of development slowed because of costs, still limited resources to use in this medium, and limited technological support services on campus. In spite of these limiting factors, seminaries are moving ahead in designing and offering portions of degree programs on-line. Though accrediting agencies affirm these projects in principle, ATS, in particular, is cautious. ATS standards for distance education are currently being revised, but until quality course design has been demonstrated, until a greater number of primary resource materials for the theological disciplines are electronically accessible, and until the medium can prove that interactivity is possible and effective, ATS will move slowly in supporting such efforts. Bethel Theological Seminary (Minnesota) and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary offer programs that have been approved as experimental programs by the ATS Commission on Accrediting (see Thorkelson 1995 for an early discussion of Bethel's program).

A growing literature base advocates theological education of the laity and a return to the importance of education for the whole people of God. This emphasis implies the importance of nontraditional education and cites the rapid increase of church-based efforts in theological education. The preferred metaphor for theological education is that of the collaborative community characterized by a compelling purpose, collegiality, professional socialization, and interdependence (Richart 1996). Churches and theological schools in partnership ought to be seen as communities of mind, spirit, and service. Distance education might provide a way for churches and religious leaders to develop programs in conjunction with seminaries—or in place of seminaries

where the academy is not responsive. Many of these efforts center theological education around ministry, or around the development of leadership skills, and build on the reality that learning in these areas is more effective when based at a site where it is to be applied. However, it is possible that, in this movement, the seminary will be bypassed and marginalized, leading to a probable lack of integration between concept and practice and, thereby, weakening *praxis*.

Specific examples could not be found of North American seminaries developing modes of distance learning that included leaders in churches and educational institutions in other countries in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their programs. As theological schools and churches in North America develop programs of theological education utilizing distance education modes, they will encounter the world. They will either persist in designing programs based on Western models and concepts and deliver them to the world, or they will learn how to develop partnerships and systems of interaction and idea exchange between educators in a variety of countries and cultures.

### **Implications: Cues for the Way Ahead**

Keegan's assertion that "In the years 1996 to 2000 distance education will play a new and crucial role as a complement to schools, colleges and universities in many national education systems" has proven to be true (Keegan 1996, 4). Developed or developing nations in financial crisis may only be able to afford education and its resources if there is access to Internet-provided distance education. The interconnections of agencies (business, government, public service, private concerns) with higher education institutions create new options and new markets for all sectors. There is already significant decentralization of higher education as financial exigencies are forcing universities to develop smaller hubs of specialized programs, many of them in one or more distance learning modes, with the administration of these hubs scattered through business, education, and other agencies (Rossman 1992, 11).

As educational delivery systems become more pervasive and affordable, substantive connection and interactivity of the world's communities may be possible. "A rapidly growing new country . . . [called] Windownesia, will be added to the world, and international education will never be the same" (Daniel 1996, 38). One proposal for the "ideal university" is that of a high-tech center based in one location—but with electronic connections all over the world. "Millions of students [now] take courses electronically, many scholars use electronic networks for global-scale research projects, and other signs point to the emergence of a worldwide electronic university" (Rossman, 1992, 1). Are we about to see new mega-seminaries emerge? Is the future to be found in the virtual seminary—with cyberspace connections of millions of persons worldwide? Several writers described the signs of the emerging future university:

Students taking courses from multiple universities in multiple countries via the Internet; electronic catalogues connecting resources worldwide; international, Internet-linked faculty; professional associations via the Internet of administrators and scholars and professional resource personnel; electronic, virtual classrooms; guidance and counseling on the Net; electronic bookstores; electronic interaction of laboratories; special events, joint faculty meetings; associations of scholars; conferences; an electronic university press.

Seagren and Watwood (1997) detailed propositions from the Virginia Commission on the University of the 21st Century regarding how they see the evolution of higher education: Colleges will become networks, not places; as they do, students will be exposed to global perspectives; new technologies will improve the quality of instruction, allow for increased contact between faculty and students; living and learning will be more integrated; faculty roles will change; teaching will become more responsive to individual differences; universities and colleges will become increasingly interconnected with institutions in the public and private sector.

Will emergent modes of distance education threaten the existence of the physical institution? The costs of storing information in libraries is increasing exponentially. The demands of increasing specialization in proliferating areas of knowledge renders a residential faculty inadequate. Clusters of specialists are likely to emerge in cyberspace—and the step from the network to the offering of credentials by the cluster is an obvious one. The intolerance of adults for residential experiences that simply fulfill academic requirements will increase and institutions that can offer learning options in more comfortable and attractive ways will flourish.

Will access to resources, to electronic communities, mean the end of the traditional seminary? Will the advent of new technologies and approaches signal the demise of the campus-based model in the twenty-first century? Despite predictions to the contrary this is not likely. But the emerging challenge is how to create and manage new environments for learning. Disciplines are already groaning under the weight of information. Faculty and admissions officers no longer have the exclusive rights to the selection of what content will be delivered to what students. Education conceived of as learning will make different demands on faculty and administrators and students. Skills of acquisition will be less important than skills of accessing, processing, evaluating, and applying. The focus will be on how individuals and groups are enabled to design and redesign learning experiences. Some students will have access to the world and will be able to study with any university in the world without leaving home.

In the twenty-first century, there will be greater choice for learners, faculty, and researchers. As various sectors in society embrace lifelong learning, the learning population will become more diverse. The physical campus will be less the focal point for the learning community. Collaborative ventures will become more common (Daniel 1997, 103). What will credentials and degrees

come to signify in the future? What will the residential campus become? What will be the role of faculty? What will resource materials look like and how will they be accessed? What is a student in the world of the future? Answer: everybody, almost anybody, worldwide. Will anyone remember what a timetable was? Fifty-minute classes—they really had those? Semesters? Will the hierarchy of types of institutions make any sense in the future? Where there are interlinked sites, what purposes will classrooms serve? What will full-time equivalent (FTE) mean in the future? What will the future FTE Information Age, Post-Industrial, Post-Information Age learner look like? Will it be possible for a student to complete a degree and never set foot on the campus? What will ATS do if schools determine that this is do-able? How will accreditation systems be affected as well as policy and funding restrictions? When and if the dust finally settles, what will distance education and formal education look like? Wouldn't it be surprising if they didn't look a whole lot different?

“The gap between Higher Education and Distance Education is narrowing through training, further understanding of the philosophy and methodology in Distance Education and the cost-effectiveness of Distance Education for the expansion of conventional Higher Education” (Wilson 1991, 53). Wilson suggests that there are three developments that will serve to bridge the gap in traditional education's willingness to accept and participate in distance education:

1. The establishment of Study Centers. These are learning sites with faculty based at each center. They are community based and can be anywhere from a single to a multiple classroom facility. They allow easy access and interaction with faculty. They can provide for face-to-face interaction, but they can also use technological support services that will allow for video-conferencing.
2. The collaboration of two or more schools and/or other agencies for a specified period of time to accomplish agreed upon educational purposes. Collaboration can include the sharing of resources, improvement of learning materials, dealing with legal or political requirements, increased capability to respond to societal needs.
3. The emergence of new technologies—particularly those that facilitate interactive strategies (Wilson 1991, 54-58).

Advances in technology have created new possibilities for designing educational experiences that promote interaction, foster community, and allow for the development of higher order thinking skills. However, a sizable gap still exists between the computer literate and those who do not have access to the necessary technology. Distance education with a global reach is a desirable goal, but suitable infrastructures for the emerging technology need to be developed in many developing nations. Further, even though peoples are connected, the skills of interaction, group process, and information access and use will need to be part of distance learning. Interactivity does not guarantee

a *learning* community or quality of dialogue. Helping students make sense of information they have acquired but do not yet understand is a critical task.

The major problem in higher education is not excessive cost but insufficient learning. Learning productivity is and will continue to be a significant issue. Emphasis on the responsibility of the learner forces several corollary issues: learning is lifelong, responsible learners are change agents and involved in social process, education is organized around the learner rather than around institutional needs, the production of materials that combine learning effectiveness with content and technology will be a significant challenge, the re-engineering of delivery systems will become more important as paradigm shifts take place in institutional culture and an increased emphasis on learning. Apparently distance education as content delivery is not going to be effective.

Nor will it be defensible to think of distance education and formal education as two separate, clearly distinguishable modes. The presumption of two distinct student bodies: students in traditional settings and students in nontraditional settings is less appropriate. Students, increasingly, seek out education no matter what the mode. Both formal education and distance learning will realize the need to place learning in real life—taking advantage, as Kemp argues, of the communities that already exist in the real world of those students. Technology will serve both formal and nonformal modes of education, enabling students to make choices to a greater degree.

The need is for a view of educational process that does not focus on the distinctiveness on modes, but on the nature of teaching and learning and how various modes can be used in relation to teaching and learning outcomes, contexts, and relationships. Because this review is concerned particularly with distance education, however, observations from the literature suggest that the focus for the future of distance education is toward a process orientation in the curriculum and in learning strategies, to more precise assessment criteria (not to be identified as measurable objectives), and flexible, versatile assessment practices. Distance education will need well-designed learning resources, mechanisms for interactivity and feedback, and resources in place along with support systems.

The literature suggests that, at least for the time being, distance learning and technology are wedded—and some present this marriage as the promise for the future. However, the concerns in the literature are obvious enough to remind one that technology is ever a tool, not a solution. Learning options will use the tools, but learning is not contingent on the use of the tools. Concerns are expressed about the access, or lack of access, of minority populations and members of developing nations to technology. Statistics on the drop-out rate of students suggest that technologically driven learning options are not yet a guarantee of continued engagement (see Jones and Schreuder 1999, 6). It stands to reason that the key to the future of distance education will not be simply more and more powerful technology, but the synergy of educators, program designers, students, and community and church leaders.

What will be the values and criteria that will guide the revision of the standards related to distance education? Restricting distance education to one-third of the program is not, in light of the literature, a constructive way to manage distance education in relation to formal education. If the accreditation standards persist in separating the modes, the real danger exists that two different services will develop—and two separate faculties. Further, anything that fosters the perception that formal education is the preferred mode and distance education a convenience, will frustrate educational planners who are less inclined to accept a view of distance education as merely a delivery system for the formal courses. One leader in distance education recommended that ATS needs to allow for experimentation; that the thirty-three percent rule effectively cuts out experimentation in different modes of learning. Does ATS have a forum where nontraditional modes can be encouraged, resources shared, experimentation reported? Distance education, it is observed, is not represented at conferences, particularly in the “best practices” forum. Interinstitutional collaboration needs to be encouraged and a database developed of faculty and institutions engaged in productive efforts in various forms of learning.

One wonders if desirable modes of distance education can be developed in contexts where education is teacher-driven and curriculum-bound. One wonders if seminaries will be able to survive the future with a primarily campus-based, tuition-driven population? Will teachers accustomed to more traditional approaches be able to adjust? Will students? Will curriculum? Will distance education be able to overcome the problems that still hinder its development: inadequate leadership for planning and implementation; lack of faculty support; unwieldy bureaucracy; lack of emphasis on learning and lack of development in teaching effectiveness; limited production of adequate learning materials; inadequate funding; prohibitive interstate regulations; conflict between distance learning providers and accreditation requirements; non-parity in access to technology.

The literature overall supports the impression that distance education is evolving into new patterns of learning and relationship and application. Though the strong connection in the literature between distance education and technology is worrisome, the corollary emphases on interactivity, learning community, cognitive processing, and international collaboration—facilitated by technology—is a hopeful sign. We have been disappointed with educational trends and emerging technologies before. In general, institutions of higher learning, including seminaries, can be more resistant to change than welcoming of it. The same problems and abuses seem to litter our field. As we confront a new century, what are the questions seminaries need to ask: What technology should we adopt? How are we going to attract more students? What creative things can we do to attract the attention of donors? Or: What understandings of education will embrace both formal and nontraditional modes as parts of a whole enterprise? How do we provide theological education for the whole

people of God? How do we serve the continuing professional development needs of our alumni and other ministry professionals? What are the implications of conceiving education not as preparation for some future ministry but as the continuing development of the person and as continuing development in ministry? How do we address issues of authority and power and elitism in higher education? What are the social, multinational obligations of educational institutions? How do we use technology in ways that honor ethic and principle and community and a respect for all peoples? Do we understand enough of educational theory and process to use it to guide technological and program choices? Surely a right perspective is to see that education is indeed an art as well as a science; that students must become increasingly responsible for their own learning; that education is lifelong; that environments are negotiable; that faculty are not the sole providers of knowledge; and that education does not consist in the abundance of degrees that men and women are heir to.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. See Keegan (1988).
2. Asynchronous communication: a term that designates that teacher and student are separated in time and distance. Synchronous communication: a term that designates face-to-face communication with instructor.
3. Eleey and Comegno (1999) describe how University of Pennsylvania uses collaboration with external agencies to enhance its distributed learning programs.
4. Alley (1996) outlined ten features of student learning as opposed to instructor centered teaching: (1) Student discovery of knowledge rather than faculty transference of knowledge. (2) Continuous assessment of both student performance and the course. (3) Learning includes student episodes, not just scheduled class lectures. (4) "Student performance is observed by others versus private assessment by instructor." (5) Students and faculty work together to define the questions that shape the instructional process. (6) Students are active participants rather than passive recipients. (7) Students learn collaboratively. (8) Fulfilment of responsibility in the academic environment is a function of student learning, not just faculty workload. (9) Faculty guide students in the processes of discovery and problem solving through both helping them to structure pertinent problems and questions, and coaching them in how to address problems and questions. (10) The university support systems undergird and create all learning environments—within and beyond classrooms.
5. Anderson and Garrison (1995) reported findings from 160 respondents to a survey distributed at two Canadian universities, followed up with 18 interviews, and observation of 12 teleconference classes, completed by a focus group interview of seven participants concerning the perception of how well audio/teleconference courses stimulated critical thinking (the majority of courses were from the Social Sciences and Humanities). Comparisons with independent study courses revealed significant differences in perception. Not unexpectedly, the audio/teleconference courses, when planned to allow sustained interaction among teachers and students, could success-

fully support the formation of a community of inquiry to a greater degree than teleconference courses based on technology alone and manipulation of materials, without the intention of interaction. "It is the critical community of learners that can encourage questioning and skepticism. To take the risk to challenge ideas and explore new conceptions and perspectives requires encouragement and support. For most students, development of critical thinking abilities is not facilitated very well or efficiently during independent study" (Anderson and Garrison 1995, 197).

6. Kemp suggests that ATS sponsor a "being there" study and call it "being where." Researchers would observe how the distance education administration functions, visit extension sites, go to the homes of the students and watch them in their work, and ask how this learning experience is related to other aspects of their lives.

7. Examples are given of telementoring and teleapprenticeship—peer tutoring facilitated by real-time technology which lessens the effects of distance and separation (Dede 1996b, 26).

8. Its address is [www.well.com/about.html](http://www.well.com/about.html)

9. SmartClass2000 IDL is an example of an interactive program that allows teachers to interact in real time with students at a distance. It works with live video and can support multiple remote sites. For information, access: [www.robotel.ca](http://www.robotel.ca)

10. Wilson describes his experience at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) where "the Studio classroom is one in which the emphasis is on the student's activity rather than on the professor's. Studio classes incorporate extensive use of integrated hands-on activities with small group problem solving and discussion sessions. The instructor takes on the role of a mentor in the Studio classroom, supporting the students as they learn interactively

11. ISDN technology is a telephone link capable of handling voice, data, and video transmissions. Subscribers receive signals on their phone lines—which are more generally available. The cost effectiveness of this technology is increasing as costs for fiber optics and cable drop, as computer networks have burgeoned, and as its availability increases (*The Economist* 1995, 54).

12. Gilbert (1996) identifies several obstacles to improving teaching and learning through technology. These include: (1) Inadequate access to equipment, software, and support services. (2) Institutional planning that focuses on technology rather than on teaching and learning. (3) Lack of coordination in support services. (4) Distrust and poor communication among all levels of institutional personnel. (5) Universal access may be limited if it means that the access is to information and specialized interests only. (6) Resistance of faculty. (7) Lack of information about and examples of good education mediated by technology. (8) Intricacies of legal use of intellectual property. (9) Lack of a comprehensive faculty reward system. (10) Expectations for the quality of products is higher than the product is able to deliver.

13. Apparently, \$30 million in federal grants (congressionally mandated LAAP grants—Learn Anytime, Anywhere Partnerships) are available for the development of innovative distance learning programs in higher education. The grants are available only to partnerships created among institutions, agencies, businesses and other organizations. For information, access: [www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/FIPSE/learnany.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/FIPSE/learnany.html)

14. At this writing, a number of Web-based resources were identified related to libraries: Journal of Library Services for Distance Education

<http://www.westga.edu/library/jlsde/>

ACRL: Guidelines for Extended Campus Library Services, 1998 revision.

<http://www.ala.org/acrlguides/distlrng.html>

## *A Review of Literature on Distance Education*

Library support for Distance Learning

<http://www.lib.odu.edu/services/disted/dersrcs.html>

Distance Learning Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries

<http://ecuvax.cis.ecu.edu/~lbshouse/home.htm>

15. Apparently this project is not simply a cyberspace fantasy. Rossman described what could become the greatest research project of all time. "Technocrats and scholars are now at work on bits and pieces of what may become the most important research project in history, one that may involve nearly every university and every scholar: the computerizing, indexing, and organizing of all knowledge. This massive scholarly project, underway but not yet systemized or coordinated, can provide one of the most important foundations for a new and more adequate system of global scholarship, research, and higher education.

This process is taking place in data bases dispersed in computers all over the world. As such data bases become interconnected and cross-indexed, the next step may be the emergence of a comprehensive organization of human knowledge that will continually learn and adapt . . . It may in time begin to take down the national and other boundaries between universities and scholarly disciplines, and also between the scientist-scholar and the average educated person, while at the same time cherishing the unique contributions of each culture and nation. we may thus stand on the threshold of an era in higher education when any educated student can be empowered to assume a more significant share in the testing and advancement of knowledge" (Rossman 1992, 81-82).

16. At this writing, sources that offer information on course design for the Internet are: WWW Courseware Development, [wwwdev@listserv.unb.ca](mailto:wwwdev@listserv.unb.ca); <http://database.telecampus.com> Sources giving ideas on how to develop courses for the Internet; or courses that use distance learning technology (Albrektsen 1995; Murphy, Cathcart and Kodali 1997; Dickinson 1997; Ellsworth 1997; Ehrhard and Schroeder 1997; Trentin 1997; Starr 1997; Graziadei, Gallagher, Brown, and Sasiadek. 1998; Mikovsky 1997; Findley and Findley 1997; Hannafin, Hill and Land 1997; Warschauer 1997; Cahoon 1998; Hall 1998; Hirumi and Bermudez 1996; Vassileva and Deters 1998; Kroder, Suess, and Sachs 1998; Kubala 1998; Barnes and Lowery 1998; Rose 1998; Gilbert and Moore 1998; Dede 1996; McLellan 1997; Gibbs and Fewell 1997; Kochery 1997; Ravitz 1997; Wilson 1996; *Educational Leadership*, 56:5 February 1999); Delivery systems described and evaluated (Chen 1997; Willis 1992b). At this writing, functioning Web sites that offer resources for distance educators include:

<http://www.educationindex.com/distance>

<http://www.usdla.org>

<http://www.nucea.edu/main.htm>

<http://www.caso.com/index.html>

<http://netways.shef.ac.uk/index.htm>

<http://www.csu.edu.au/education/library.html>

[http://edie.cprost.sfu.ca/~rhlogan/bm\\_dl.html](http://edie.cprost.sfu.ca/~rhlogan/bm_dl.html)

<http://www.westga.edu/library/jlsde>

<http://ecuvax.cis.ecu/~lbshouse/home.htm>

<http://www.salsem.ac.at:80/csac/progs/disted/progres.htm>

<http://www.cisnet.com/~cattales/deduction.html>

<http://www.access.digex.net/~nuance/de/index.html>

<http://talon.extramural.uiuc.edu/ramage/welcome.html>

<http://homepage.interaccess.com/~ghoyle>

<http://alabanza.com/kabacoff/Inter-Links/education/distance.html>

17. Kirk and Bartelstein (1997, 40-41) refer to the distance education portion of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act undertaken by the Copyright Office on behalf of

Congress. It appears that hearings are ongoing concerning changes that are needed in the Copyright Act (further information is not available at this writing).

18. Information on CHEA can be accessed at <http://www.chea.org>. Note particularly a document prepared by the Commission: "Assuring Quality in Distance Learning."

19. The Accreditation Handbook. Policies, Procedures, and Standards of the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council is available in an ERIC document ED 407566, 290 pages.

20. Wild and Henderson (1997) describe, in detail, a three-year project, begun in 1998, to assess contextualization of learning with the WWW as the distributed learning environment.

21. See Goodenow (1996) on the interagency cooperation/competition emerging in cyberspace.

22. Christian University GlobalNet was established in February 1998 to offer distance learning support for the colleges and universities of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. "Christian University GlobalNet (CUGN) exists to respond to the forces of change affecting Christian education and training worldwide. Under God's hand, our mission is to provide affordable and accessible Christian worldview distance learning opportunities to learners worldwide and services for collaborative distance learning for all interested campuses within the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU)." (From information brochure available from [info@cugn.org](mailto:info@cugn.org). Web site: [www.cugn.org](http://www.cugn.org)).

23. Contact Dr. Luis Alvarado, Vice President for Communications, for information on the Virtual University of Monterrey, Mexico. [lavarad@campus.ruv.itesm.mx](mailto:lavarad@campus.ruv.itesm.mx). Regents College, established in 1971 by the Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York, describes itself as America's First Virtual University. It is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Since its inception it has conferred more than 76,000 degrees. Web site: [www.regents.edu](http://www.regents.edu). The Graduate School of America, currently seeking accreditation with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges, offers master's programs on-line. Its stated purpose is to offer graduate programs for adult learners seeking to "integrate advanced study with their professional lives. Its mission is to deliver high quality programs that provide traditional and contemporary knowledge through flexible and innovative forms of distance learning" (from information brochure available through [tgsgainfo@tgsa.edu](mailto:tgsgainfo@tgsa.edu). In 1995 the Western Governor's Association approved the formation of a virtual university to service the Western region of the United States (Gilbert 1996, 12).

24. Snook identified three stages in the development of TEE: 1963-1974 (origination), 1975-1984 (rapid expansion), 1984 to the present (evaluation) (Snook 1992, 33). See also Harrison 1978; Kinsler 1978; Mulholland 1982; Ward 1974.

25. ICI has merged with Berean University, Springfield, MO.

26. Web site for Christian Distance Learning: <http://www.cccu.org/fac-admi/infotech.html>.

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# A Survey of Accrediting Agency Standards and Guidelines for Distance Education

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ABSTRACT: To ensure that an acceptable degree of academic integrity is preserved in contexts where distance learning is used as a tool to further learning and teaching, accrediting agencies have found it necessary to propose guidelines by which academic programs in member institutions are evaluated. A total of seventeen disparate accrediting agencies responded to a request for copies of their current guidelines. This study surveys the guidelines with respect to distance education. Because virtually all the agencies organize their guidelines into similar discrete sections, the discussion addresses such topics as the following: (1) mission and institutional purpose; (2) educational program and curricula; (3) students; (4) faculty; (5) library and learning resources; (6) effectiveness and outcomes assessment; (7) organization, planning, and human resources; and (8) facilities, equipment, and other resources.

American graduate and professional schools offer academic programs and courses of study consistent with their avowed aims of preparing persons for competent service in contemporary society. Recent advances in the field of telecommunications have expanded enormously the ways in which graduate and professional schools are able to fulfill these aims. Significantly, learners are now free from the physical confines of the classroom and are able to gain access to resources of the learning environment from a distance. However, in order to ensure that an acceptable degree of academic integrity is preserved in contexts where distance learning is used as a tool to further learning and teaching, accrediting agencies have found it necessary to propose and adopt guidelines by which academic programs in member institutions are evaluated.

This study surveyed the guidelines of seventeen accrediting agencies in the United States with respect to distance education. The agencies (and their corresponding acronyms) are as follows:

Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges (AABC)

Accrediting Commission on Education for Health Services Administration  
(ACEHSA)

American Bar Association (ABA)

American Dental Association (ADA)

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American Library Association (ALA)  
American Psychological Association (APA)  
Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools (AARTS)  
Association of American Law Schools (AALS)  
Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs  
(CACREP)  
Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)  
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS)  
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)  
New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)  
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS)  
Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NASC)  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)  
Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Of the associations polled, only the American Library Association and the American Psychological Association use the same standards to evaluate *both* on-campus and distance learning education programs. The Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools does not recognize distance learning education programs at all. The American Bar Association and the American Dental Association are currently studying the ramifications of distance learning education on their respective curricula.

The standards, guidelines, handbooks for evaluators, and related materials submitted by the various accrediting associations all addressed, and tended to organize their materials related to distance education, around the following categories:

Mission and Institutional Purpose  
Educational Program and Curricula  
Students  
Faculty  
Library and Learning Resources  
Effectiveness and Outcomes Assessment  
Organization, Planning, and Human Resources  
Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources  
Intellectual Property Rights

## **Mission and Institutional Purpose**

Three issues of evaluation relative to the mission and purpose of the institution include (1) consistency with institutional purpose, (2) the extent to which the operation of distance education is integrally grounded in the governance of the institution, and (3) whether the full faith and integrity of the institution is behind the distance education program.

Virtually all the accrediting associations affirm that distance education programs should be consistent with the mission of the institution. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools inquires of member schools whether such programs are “part of the purpose statement of the institution” and how these programs “fit into the overall plans of the institution.”<sup>1</sup> The “Policy for the Accreditation of Academic Degree and Certificate Programs Offered through Distance Education” of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges states that “distance education [should be] consistent with the institution’s mission and purposes.”<sup>2</sup> Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools requires that programs be “consistent with and central to the stated goals and objectives of the institution.”<sup>3</sup> The Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges states that “distance learning must be consistent with the college’s mission and be limited to those subject areas from which the parent institution has expertise.”<sup>4</sup>

The associations affirmed that not only must distance education programs be consistent with the mission of the institution, there must be evidence that such programs are operated in a fashion that is grounded in the governance of the institution. For example, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education asks, “are the design and delivery of distance learning programs... supported by a conceptual framework and knowledge base, guided by a long-range plan, and supported by adequate resources [of the institution]?”<sup>5</sup> The New England Association solicits assurances from its member schools that “the responsibility for distance education activities is integral to and vested in the overall organization and governance of the institution.”<sup>6</sup> The Middle States Association holds that “in the event that the distance learning program incorporates course materials or technology-based resources developed outside the institution, a process should be developed to validate the academic quality of those materials through suitable review procedures with the appropriate academic unit and ensure that the total learning experience meets the goals and objectives of the institution’s curriculum.”<sup>7</sup>

Finally, associations were careful to hold member institutions accountable to what might be considered a *moral* dimension of educational programming. The question goes again to purpose: is the purpose of the program primarily financial enhancement of the institution or the benefit of students? The Southern Association asks: “What is the rationale for having a distance learning program? Is it principally designed to better meet student needs or does it appear to be offered mainly to provide increased revenue for the institution? Does the institution’s rationale support the educational mission of the institution? What is the institutional commitment to distance learning activities?”<sup>8</sup> The Middle States Association affirms that “it is incumbent upon an institution to state explicitly the rationale for entering into distance learning and to modify its academic programs and support services as needed to reflect this new delivery system.”<sup>9</sup>

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Moreover, an institution should be able to marshal its full faith and integrity behind the distance education program with regard to the veracity of communications to the general public and its ability to ensure the full integrity of the degrees students ultimately receive. The New England Association seeks assurances from member schools that “in its advertising, recruiting, and admissions material, the institution provides distance education students with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technical competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.”<sup>10</sup> The Middle States Association insists that “the catalog, as an official publication of the institution, should clearly state the distance learning programs and opportunities available to students.”<sup>11</sup> The New England Association expects member institutions to be able to “ensure the currency of materials, programs, and courses,” and that “programs provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty, and among students,”<sup>12</sup> and that ultimately institutions be able to ensure the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees, certificates, and credits it awards. The Middle States Association recognizes that the moral integrity of an institution has pragmatic consequences for students to the extent that institutions can ensure that distance education programs are congruent with other curricula of the institution and “so that students, if necessary, may easily move from one program to the other.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, as evidence of an institution’s good faith, the New England Association mandates that the institution demonstrate “a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable students to complete a degree/certificate.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Educational Program and Curricula**

All the guidelines sought to give direction to member schools in designing educational programs using distance education technologies. The Southern Association suggests the following questions for evaluators of distance learning activities: “What types of distance learning delivery systems are being used? Why did the institution choose this (these) program(s) to be delivered in a distance learning mode? Are the programs appropriate for delivery in the selected distance learning mode? Are there advantages and/or disadvantages in using distance learning activity for the program(s)? How appropriate are these delivery systems for the programs being offered? Are admissions, degree completion, curriculum, and instructional design policies and procedures similar to those used for traditional campus-based programs? If not similar, has the institution documented why there are differences and is this rationale reasonable? Are goals and objectives, and skills and competencies, the same for

courses offered on the main campus as those offered through distance learning activities? Has the institution created a sound 'learning environment' for the students in the distance learning program? Is the approval process for degree programs offered through distance learning activities the same as for on-campus programs? If not, has the institution documented why there are differences and is this rationale reasonable?"<sup>15</sup>

To assist schools in relating aspects of traditional course activities with distance learning technologies, the Middle States Association offers the following examples:

<b>Course Activity</b>	<b>Distance Learning Technology</b>
Lecture/ Discussion	Video/Videoconferencing Computer Conferencing
Laboratory	Video/Hypertext Applications Software
Team Project	Computer Conferencing Applications Software
Seminar	Videoconferencing Computer Conferencing
Library Research	Online Database/Hypertext
Faculty Advisement	Computer Conferencing Electronic Mail Telephone
Assigned Homework	Applications Software Electronic Mail
Examination	Online Testing Electronic Mail <sup>16</sup>

The Council on Social Work Education mandates that any changes in curriculum sequencing "should be demonstrably based on sound educational reasons and appropriate learning theory."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Council expects member schools to demonstrate how the program assessed the appropriateness of any given type of distance education technology for any given course, and how each course subsequently was reworked to fit into a distance education mode (e.g., visuals, course handouts, study guides, interactive exercises, etc.).<sup>18</sup> The Council also asks its members "what provisions have been made for group projects, intersite interactions, and student initiation of classroom activities."<sup>19</sup> The Middle States Association stipulates that if an academic

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program “requires collaborative group learning activities, the technology should support the same activities in distance learning.”<sup>20</sup>

An interesting issue is whether or not accrediting agencies allow for the *entire* degree to be earned via distance education methods, or barring that possibility, what percentage of the coursework must be done via conventional campus-based methods. Several associations allow an entire degree to be earned via distance education methods, including the Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges, the Middle States Association, New England Association, North Central Association, Northwest Association, and the American Library Association. While the American Psychological Association allows degrees to be earned on-line, only one institution, the Fielding Institute in Santa Barbara, California, has availed itself of this allowance. The Council on Social Work Education also offers this opportunity to institutions but imposes a caveat: all coursework must reflect some degree of group or team interactive teleconferencing, thus disallowing purely individual on-line educational experiences. Other associations are currently studying the matter, including the American Counseling Association and the Southern Association; for the latter, at least twenty-five percent of courses must be taken in residence.

### **Students**

The ability of member institutions to meet the educational and support needs of students in distance education programs is a priority for the accrediting associations polled in this study. The associations were clear in their insistence that distance education programs be comparable to campus-based education in every respect. Moreover, a review of the guidelines revealed that associations were concerned that care be taken to meet student needs and interests throughout the educational process, and particularly at the point of admission to the institution.

Both the New England Association and Middle States Association mandate that the institution assess student capability to succeed in distance education programs and ensure that accepted students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to undertake the distance education program.<sup>21</sup> Middle States asserts that institutions should “assess whether students have the skills and competencies to succeed in a distance learning environment.”<sup>22</sup> The Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges mandates that “admissions standards will be the same for all students whether they study on campus or pursue their education by distance learning.”<sup>23</sup>

After requiring member schools to ensure that the quality of campus-based programs are equal to those served by distance education, the Council on Social Work Education requires that member schools orient students fully to distance education, to field practica, and to problem-solving procedures that are in place. “Evidence that students understand the potential implications of technological system failures for their education should be addressed.”<sup>24</sup>

The accrediting agencies recognize the importance of adequate support services for students while engaged in their course of study by distance education. The Southern Association suggests that accreditation evaluators address the following questions: "How does the institution provide student records for students enrolled in distance learning programs? Where are the records stored? Does the institution follow its own policies concerning what constitutes the permanent record of each student enrolled in distance learning activities?"<sup>25</sup> The Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges requires that "adequate support services, such as financial aid, guidance, and oversight must be provided for distance learning students. Records that deal with academic and other matters must be maintained and safeguarded."<sup>26</sup> The Southern Association further asks: "Has the institution made appropriate and necessary adjustments to ensure adequate student development services for students involved in distance learning activities? Are such services publicized so that students know about them? Are they described in the institution's publications? Do students receive adequate academic counseling and advisement from college personnel? What special arrangements have been made for course registration, grading, testing, financial aid, the delivery of textbooks and related academic materials, and other services associated with the distance learning programs? Is there a site supervisor responsible for ensuring such services? How does the institution evaluate its effectiveness in providing these services?"<sup>27</sup>

The Council on Social Work Education is concerned that adequate levels of personnel and support programs be in place to promote student retention. The Council is acutely aware of the link between students' financial conditions and the probability of student retention and therefore instructs member schools to ensure "student financial support and special means . . . to ensure comparable access to such resources."<sup>28</sup> The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education is concerned that distance learning candidates are "provided the same level of advisement and personal access to faculty, monitoring of progress, and assessment as is provided for traditional candidates."<sup>29</sup> The Middle States Association affirms that "support and advisement for the distance learner must extend beyond the instructor's usual classroom interaction. Access to computers, fax machines, and long distance telephone lines will be needed to aid the instructor or to contact students outside of the local calling area."<sup>30</sup>

In addition, the need is recognized to provide academic tutorial support for students. The New England Association asks its member schools to "provide appropriate aid to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology." It is also concerned that institutions "provide an adequate means for resolving student complaints"<sup>31</sup> about distance education programs.

## Faculty

The survey revealed that most important among the issues related to the faculty were faculty credentials, preparation, the role of faculty in the gover-

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nance of distance education, and student advisement. The Southern Association asks, "Are the academic qualifications of faculty teaching in distance learning activities similar to those teaching on campus? How does the institution orient and train faculty for teaching in this program? How does the institution evaluate faculty teaching in distance learning activities? How has the role of the faculty changed because of their involvement in distance learning activities? Are workloads similar to those of on-campus faculty? Are any special incentives given to encourage faculty to participate in distance learning activities? Is the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty similar in the distance learning program to that on campus? If it is different, what is the rationale? What access, either by live or electronic means, do students in distance learning programs have to faculty? Are any special arrangements made to ensure that there is a reasonable amount of regular access? Are faculty members involved in distance learning activities also involved in curriculum development? in coordinating syllabi? in preparing comprehensive exams? Are the policies regarding appointment for these faculty different from those for main campus faculty?"<sup>32</sup> The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education asks if "the balance of part-time and full-time faculty, requirements for scholarship and service, and evaluation are the same for faculty who teach via distance learning as for other faculty."<sup>33</sup>

The Middle States Association offers the challenge to faculty that "the conversion of existing college courses to an alternative format requires careful adaptation of the lecture format, assignments, and teacher/student interactions," and that "instructional methods that rely on assignments using equipment or resources located on-campus must be adapted using creative alternatives." Middle States further advised that those faculty with outstanding "presentation" skills and those with the willingness to consider flexible approaches toward student learning should be identified and supported by the institution.<sup>34</sup>

The Middle States Association advised that, in terms of compensation, "the notion of 'contact hours' or 'prep time' do not always translate well within the context of a distance learning model; therefore, policies addressing teaching load, class size, time needed for course conversion/development, and the sharing of instructional responsibilities should be reviewed."<sup>35</sup> The Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges states that "distance learning must not adversely affect the institution's administrative effectiveness, result in faculty overload, or cause financial stress or instability."<sup>36</sup>

### **Library and Learning Resources**

The accrediting association guidelines surveyed address the need for adequate library and learning resources to be made available to support distance education programs. They include the concern that appropriate

training for students (and faculty and other support personnel) be offered in library and learning resources. Moreover, the evaluation of student use of library resources should be done on a continuing basis.

Effective utilization of the new and evolving technology requires that institutions develop ongoing orientation or training sessions on accessing information. These training programs, while mainly devised for students, also should include faculty, staff, and administrators. The Middle States Association notes that "an orientation to library and other learning resources should be made available to students, and instruction in strategies that will enable students to develop information literacy (the ability of an individual to know when they have an informational need and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information) skills should be embedded across the curricula."<sup>37</sup>

Typical among the questions that member schools need to address were the following: What arrangements has the institution made for ensuring that students have access to appropriate learning resources? Are students making use of these resources? Are these resources made available through technological means? Are the resources adequate to support the program? Has the institution provided reasonable financial support for the learning resources and services to support the distance learning activities? Are students in the distance learning activities adequately informed about learning resources available to them and how to access such resources and services? Is training available for accessing learning resources? Are resources delivered within a reasonable period of time?

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education asks: "Are distance learning candidates assured adequate access to library and technological resources to support their research and learning needs on par with traditional students?"<sup>38</sup> The New England Association seeks assurances that the institution ensures that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library and information resources and that the institution requires that students make appropriate use of learning resources.

Virtually all the associations surveyed expect parity in the area of library and learning resources for distance learning programs as for campus-based programs. Typical of that expectation is the statement of the Council on Social Work Education regarding the "comparability of library resources; including on-site availability of books, journals, computer search facilities, etc., electronically accessed materials, inter-library loan (with cost and turn-around time indicated)."<sup>39</sup>

## **Effectiveness and Outcomes Assessment**

Institutional effectiveness and discernment of the outcomes of distance education were concerns noted by all the accrediting agencies surveyed. Typical among the guidelines was the position of the Accrediting Association

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of Bible Colleges, which mandates that “a specific plan, identifying purpose, objectives, resources, methods of implementation, and means of implementation for each distance learning form adopted (branch campus, extension class, or independent study) must be clearly stated, and outcomes documented to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program.”<sup>40</sup>

Within its guidelines for evaluating distance learning, the Southern Association asks questions such as: “Has the institution developed a reasonable plan for evaluating the effectiveness of its distance learning activities? Is there continuous systematic evaluation of the distance learning programs? Is this evaluation plan part of a broader institutional plan? Are the methods of evaluation appropriate for distance learning activities? Has the institution modified evaluation forms, etc. to adapt them to distance learning activities? Is there a method for evaluating support services for distance learning activities? How are the results of evaluations being used to strengthen the institution’s distance learning activities? Are staff identified with the responsibility for evaluating distance learning activities? Do students believe that the quantity and quality of the courses they have taken in the distance learning activities are equivalent to similar offerings on campus?”<sup>41</sup>

The Council on Social Work Education considers the following issues to be important in outcomes assessment: a discussion of evaluation focuses, including such aspects as impacts of the distance education component on the main campus program; before-and-after faculty and administration assessments; student characteristics; student assessment of program implementation; program impacts; student learning outcomes, with comparison to learning outcomes of main campus students; and an assessment relating the learning theory used to actual program implementation.<sup>42</sup>

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education inquires if the “evaluation instruments are tailored to the unique characteristics and needs of the candidates.”<sup>43</sup> In particular, do assessment measures ensure that candidates acquire the competencies that are set out in the model, and attainment of goals for individual courses? Moreover, Middle States Association suggests that “. . .institutions need to identify and employ multiple measures in order to assess student outcomes accurately.”<sup>44</sup>

The New England Association wants assurances that “the institution’s long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program.” In addition, the institution should provide for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course and at completion of the program. Additionally, the New England Association desires that the institution evaluate “student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction to ensure comparability to campus-based programs and that students have access to such program evaluation data.”<sup>45</sup>

## Organization, Planning, and Human Resources

All the agencies were mindful of the critical importance of effective organization in an institution, farsighted planning, and the presence of a full array of supportive human resources in order to achieve successful distance education programs.

The Southern Association asks, "Has the institution developed any special organizational restructuring for the administration of distance learning programs? Does the administrative structure work? Why? Why not? Does the institution maintain control over the distance learning activities? For individuals responsible for the quality of distance learning activities, do their titles and job descriptions reflect such responsibility? How has the governance structure been altered by these programs?" The Southern Association also asks: "Are there sufficient financial resources available and committed to support distance learning activities? Is there a financial plan for maintaining the support systems needed for the activities, including upgrading of systems currently being used? What arrangements have been made for required laboratories, workshops, seminars, etc., associated with distance learning activities?"<sup>46</sup>

Typical among accrediting agencies were the questions further posed by the Southern Association: "Does the institution contract for any or all of its distance learning activities with an outside party? If such an arrangement exists, what procedures are followed to ensure that the services are equivalent to those provided to on-campus students? Are there any special licensing agreements in the distance learning activities? If there are consortiums or contractual agreements with other institutions, have any agreements for services or programs been documented? Are there contractual arrangements for student services? Do the contracts provide for quality control by the institution awarding credit for the distance learning activities?"<sup>47</sup>

Within the planning cycle of an institution, the Middle States Association states that "facilities, equipment, and other resources associated with the viability and effectiveness of a distance learning program should be reflected in the institution's long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes." The Middle States Association also asserts that "administrators, managers and coordinators [should] possess not only technical proficiency in distance learning technology but a thorough understanding of how the distance learning activity is inextricably linked to the institutional mission and to the assessment of institutional effectiveness." Middle States further states that "a clear understanding is needed of the fiscal, technical, and human resource requirements of distance learning programs, as well as the ability to work collaboratively with learners and instructors alike in order to advance the overall goals and objectives of the distance learning activity."<sup>48</sup>

## **Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources**

By its very nature, distance education requires a type and range of technical facilities and special equipment that might not normally be a part of regular campus-based education. These programs require stable, continuing use of facilities (classrooms, office space, equipment, supplies, library access and resources, among others) and personnel (e.g., technicians, secretarial support, library staff) in order to succeed. Consequently, as Middle States Association affirms, "an institution must determine that the technological infrastructure is appropriate and supports the resource needs of distance learning activities."<sup>49</sup> The New England Association wants assurances that "the institution possesses the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education. The institution ensures access to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to its distance education courses or programs."<sup>50</sup>

Facilities, special equipment, and other resources were critical issues addressed by the various agencies. For example, the Southern Association inquires: "Are the technical arrangements, including necessary equipment, adequate and appropriate for serving the needs of the students at distant sites? Are the technological delivery systems appropriate for delivering the distance learning activities? How does the institution evaluate the effectiveness of the facilities and equipment? Is there adequate financial support to ensure the currency of the equipment supporting the distance learning program? Are the services for computing similar to those offered to students on campus?" Moreover, there should be the "availability of redundant and backup systems in case of technical or personnel problems."<sup>51</sup>

## **Intellectual Property Rights**

The telecommunications revolution, of which distance learning is so much a part, has produced new and oftentimes baffling problems for educational institutions. As the Middle States Association acknowledges, "the fact that distance learning requires new kinds of resource support and partnerships has prompted the higher education community to reassess its perspective regarding intellectual property rights and to address issues of 'fair use' of software and other multimedia products by faculty, staff, and students."<sup>52</sup> Therefore, serious legal and institutional morale problems can be averted if institutions have in place a policy governing intellectual property rights in distance education programs. While not all of the associations polled had clear and explicit policies in place relative to these matters, it is appropriate to note the importance of this issue.

The New England Association seeks assurances "that the institution has clear policies concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, tele-courses, or other media products." Moreover,

these issues “must be addressed by an institution prior to the implementation of a distance learning program.”<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

This review of distance education standards, criteria, and guidelines among these accrediting agencies has revealed a distinct degree of unanimity with respect to eight areas of concern: mission and institutional purpose; educational program and curricula; students; faculty; library and learning resources; effectiveness and outcomes assessment; organization, planning, and human resources; and facilities, equipment, and other resources. The issue of intellectual property rights, while not yet a universal concern, was noted by this writer because of its doubtless increasing importance as we move into the future. One suspects that if ATS is to serve its member institutions as they contemplate the bewildering choices that lie before them with respect to the implementation of distance learning programs, similar discussions concerning all the issues raised in this report will have to take place.

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## ENDNOTES

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3. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, *Guidelines for Distance Learning Programs*, (Philadelphia: 1997), 2.
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6. NEASC, *Policy*, 2.
7. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 2.
8. SACS, *Evaluation*, 3.
9. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 2.
10. NEASC, *Policy*, 4.
11. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 9.
12. NEASC, *Policy*, 2.
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14. NEASC, *Policy*, 4.
15. SACS, *Evaluation*, 3-4.
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17. Council on Social Work Education, *Guidelines for Distance Education*, (October 1995), 211i.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 3.
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22. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 3.
23. AABC, *Manual*, 58.
24. CSWE, *Guidelines*, 211h.
25. SACS, *Evaluation*, 4.
26. AABC, *Manual*, 59.
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29. NCATE, *Questions*, n.p.
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36. AABC, *Manual*, 57.
37. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 5.
38. NCATE, *Questions*, n.p.
39. CSWE, *Guidelines*, 211e.
40. AABC, *Manual*, 57.
41. SACS, *Evaluation*, 3.
42. CSWE, *Guidelines*, 211j.
43. NCATE, *Questions*, n.p.
44. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 6.
45. NEASC, *Policy*, 2.
46. SACS, *Evaluation*, 5
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50. NEASC, *Policy*, 4.
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52. MSACS, *Guidelines*, 10.
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# An Examination of Formational and Transformational Issues in Conducting Distance Learning, including Issues Related to Faculty Development

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the issues related to personal, spiritual, and ministerial formation in theological education programs that are conducted using distance education methods and technologies. The author first examines current definitions and practices of formation in traditional contexts. She then considers how formation is being addressed in distance education programs that ATS schools are conducting, with particular focus on the experimental programs of two ATS institutions. The author's survey of a group of ATS institutions and responses to the ATS-administered survey on educational technology inform this discussion of transformational education and the experience of community. The author concludes with observations on the critical nature of faculty development with respect to distance education and the formation of students for ministerial leadership.

*Jonathan graduated from Moody Bible School at age twenty-two. He thought he would take a traditional route by going to seminary and then beginning a ministry career. Instead, this third generation Canadian pastor is an Assistant Pastor at an Evangelical Free Church in Geneseo, Illinois. Ministry and M.Div. education are progressing hand-in-hand. Recently, Jonathan preached on a Sunday. In doing so, he fulfilled a requirement for preaching class. By adding a computer graphical presentation to the message, he completed another requirement for a computer class. Both classes are part of his M.Div. program.*

*Deb is a wife and mother of two teenage children. She has served as director of education and youth ministries for her church and was an educational consultant for the Synod of the Heartland (Reformed Church of America). Family responsibilities made it necessary for her to leave active ministry. Taking care of family, teaching piano, and singing in a Christian trio occupied her time but she did not give up her desire to go to seminary. This goal has now taken on a new meaning for Deb. She is enrolled in a seminary program but does her assignments in her own home and balances them with family responsibilities and church consultations.*

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*In many ways Jonathan and Deb are typical ministry students. Yet in one significant way they are not typical. Both are among the growing number of students engaged in theological education designed for distance learning.*

As theological education enters the world of distance learning, very few topics generate as impassioned a response as does the question—can distance education be transformational education? This study will consider how theological educators are attempting to address spiritual, ministerial, and personal formation issues in distance education programs. In an article entitled “The Questions of Distance Education,” Elizabeth Patterson notes: “Theological education has traditionally viewed itself as involving the formation of a specific chosen/called population. . . . Training has been understood to involve a formation component that seems antithetical to education at a distance. We are pushed to consideration of what is meant by formation—whether it does in fact occur in connection with traditional methods of theological education, and does not exist at a distance; whether it is an authentic goal or an excuse for outmoded authoritarian needs for control.”<sup>1</sup> Responding to the challenge offered by Patterson, this study will first examine current definitions and practices of formation in traditional contexts. Consideration will then be given to what is developing as theological distance education is being practiced within the current standards of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS). As well as reviewing what is being done across the range of ATS schools, the study will explore the relationship between transformational education and the experience of community, presenting an in-depth look at the experience of two schools that have been part of a pilot project related to theological education and distance learning. Finally, because the quality of any theological education depends not on the technology involved in its delivery systems but on the interaction of students with faculty, we will examine the issue of faculty development for distance learning.

Distance education represents much more than simply using technology in teaching. It also represents changes in the way we conceptualize education. For theological education it forces the rethinking of the “what” and “where” of formation. ATS defines distance education as “external independent study.” This type of education provides academically credited courses for individuals engaged in external study that includes any form of individualized study where regularly scheduled, in-person conversation with faculty or other students is not likely to occur. Such courses typically employ printed, audio, video, computer, or electronic communication as primary resources for instruction. The current ATS standards allow for one-third of a degree to be earned through distance education.

## Spiritual Formation

In an effort to clarify the language of the debate and to explore some of the assumptions that influence reactions to the question of distance education and formation, a brief survey was sent to twelve ATS schools inviting them to reflect on their current understandings and practices of “spiritual formation.” The schools selected were diverse denominationally and theologically. Most did *not* have distance education programs. There is, therefore, a basic assumption behind the responses that spiritual formation is, in some way, related to a student’s presence on campus. For the purpose of this study, it is helpful to examine these responses and then to ask if the same result can be achieved at a distance.

Those responding defined spiritual formation or formation for ministry as:

- growing in knowledge and love of God, others, self, and of God’s wider world. . . spiritual formation emerges as both a gift of God and some choices we make. It involves both God’s grace and our responsibility.
- holistic preparation for ministry.
- cultivation of a realistic and viable ministerial identity in which faith, skill, knowledge, and character are interwoven. It is a highly relational and communal process, rather than a process that is primarily individual in character.
- growth into Christlikeness by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal spiritual discipline and the support of caring friends.
- continuing work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to full maturity of faith.
- a process of maturing in one’s spiritual identity and calling to ministry—our perspective on spiritual formation is from the point of view of the student, rather than a spiritual director, resulting from the traditional emphasis in our covenantal denominations on spiritual growth as a personal, even individualistic process, within the context of a congregation gathered for holy living.
- the formation of Christian character is the heart of spiritual formation.

The methodologies used for achieving the goals of formation were comparable in the schools surveyed. When asked to illustrate the ways in which spiritual/ministerial formation is expressed in the curriculum, most schools listed particular courses in the spiritual disciplines. Some named spiritual directors/mentors as being important to the process of formation. Significantly, many noted that field education, ministry reflection groups, and engagement in the local church community play an important role in formation. In commenting on which practices in the life of the institution contribute to spiritual formation, the gathering of the community for chapel services on a regular basis was most frequently named. Some noted that a review process, classroom devotions, a retreat, or a covenant group played a key role.

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The fact that most of the responding schools explicitly or implicitly named community as being essential in the process of formation is significant. That formation takes place within community for the sake of community seems to be a basic assumption underlying current understandings of formation. The communities referred to by those surveyed include: the learning community—prayer and devotions take place in some classrooms; the institutional community—daily or weekly students and staff gather for prayer in chapel; and the local community—engagement in formative ministry with the community of “God’s wider world.” In exploring the question of distance education and formation, it will be helpful to examine the relationship between community and distance education.

### **Community and Distance Education**

In August 1998, 237 ATS schools were asked to participate in a survey concerning the use of educational technology. One section of the survey dealt specifically with the topic “Educational Technology and Distance Education.” Of the 201 schools that responded to the survey, fifty-three schools answered the question: “What method has your institution used to build community among your distance education students?” The same number responded to the question: “How does your institution address spiritual/personal formation issues in distance education programs?”

Looking first at the question of community building, the methods most frequently named include the use of e-mail, listserves, computer chat rooms, and computer discussion groups. Most noted that community was built through a combination of residency and distance learning opportunities. In some cases, the distance learning takes place prior to campus residency and is seen as preparing students for future integration into the life of the campus. More frequently, it was noted that orientation and intentional face-to-face community building takes place on the campus early in the process. Electronic communication then serves to sustain and build on the campus experience. One-on-one phone consultation and phone conferences as well as on-line newsletters also are used to foster communication and facilitate community. Several schools noted that for their distance education students, the local church community or a contextual learning site functions as a primary learning community. On-site and on-line mentors were named by some as contributing to both the building of community and to the personal formation of the students. Forming student cohorts and clusters that meet on-line or, in some areas, face-to-face is another approach to community building in some programs. One aspect of community building involves the faculty getting to know the students and vice-versa. Picture rosters, personal profiles, and home pages are used to facilitate this process. One school produces a video for the distance education students that introduces the program director and many of the staff and administrators with whom the students speak and exchange e-mail.

## Spiritual Formation and Distance Education

The responses concerning spiritual/personal formation issues in distance education were quite similar in content to the responses noted above concerning community building. A comparison of the questionnaire numbers and the answers given shows that in some cases the exact same wording was used to answer both questions. This seems to indicate that for some addressing spiritual/personal formation is equated with building community. This is further evidenced by the fact that the schools that noted that they had not yet begun to address the issue of community building also responded that they had not yet addressed the question of spiritual/personal formation in their distance education programs.

Programmatic approaches to formation issues in distance education are at a beginning stage. Of the fifty schools responding to the question concerning how their institutions address spiritual/personal formation in distance education, fifteen reported that they were not actively addressing the issue or were just beginning to discuss the question with faculty. Many noted that issues of personal/spiritual formation are addressed in traditional ways when distance education students are present on the campus to meet their degree program residency requirements. Some innovative approaches were also noted. One school makes use of synchronous streaming of their chapel services and another noted that they encourage the sharing of personal concerns and prayer in their electronic classroom. Contextualized Learning Components, where the students are required to complete spiritual exercises over a five- to ten-month period, are used in one program. Another distributes periodic surveys to its distance education students, which include questions that reflect spiritual concerns. More commonly, personal counseling either by phone or e-mail and the quality of the interaction between the staff and the distance learner are named as contributing to the personal and spiritual needs of distance education students. Several programs make use of or plan to make use of mentors either on-line, from local church communities, or at an extension site. In some cases, graduates of the school who are living in the same area as the distance education learners are engaged as mentors.

The responses to the questionnaire concerning understandings of spiritual formation and the responses to the ATS survey on distance education and technology suggest that the “what” of formation remains constant. Those who attend class in traditional classrooms, as well as distance education students, are required to take courses in the spiritual disciplines. At present, many distance education students participate in these courses while on campus. However, some spirituality courses are being designed for Internet delivery. Engagement in ministry and the opportunity to reflect on the experience of ministry with others are essential components in formation for ministry both for students enrolled on campus and for those learning at a distance. Practices that nurture one’s spirituality such as retreats, community prayer, and reflec-

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tive writing are commonly a part of programs designed for on-campus learning and are used in distance education as well. Relationships with advisors or mentors who guide individuals on their vocational and spiritual journeys are key in both circumstances. Worship is the most commonly noted way in which a school community corporately expresses its spiritual life. For distance education students, the experience of chapel when they are on campus may be an important part of their formation. For many, worship within the local church community is also significant in contributing to their spiritual and ministerial growth. At this point, it is the "where" and "how" rather than the *substance* of formation that is currently undergoing change as approaches to formation are being developed for distance education.

Because the experience of community is understood to be an essential influence on one's personal and spiritual formation, it may be helpful to look more closely at community and computer-generated distance learning environments. For many people, community traditionally has been the place where they live, where they worship, and where daily activity takes place. In theological education, community has come to mean those who attend class, participate in chapel and, in general, take part in campus life. However, for an increasing number of people, the experience of community is undergoing radical change. As early as 1957, in *The Community of the Future and the Future of Community*, A. Morgan described the future community as one where geographical proximity would not be a prerequisite. He noted that a core of shared common interests and values form the basis for community within or outside of geographic boundaries.<sup>2</sup> We are now living into the future Morgan described. It is not that community does not exist within geographic areas, be they local church or seminary campus, but that community is not limited to physical space. Today, people find community in different places and by different means. As the use of home computers becomes more and more a part of daily life, an increased number of people are getting on-line and connecting with people with whom they share common interests and values. The extent to which these people are experiencing community is a matter of debate. However, there is general agreement that cyberspace is playing an important role in bringing together diverse people and is contributing to the creation of "electronic neighborhoods" that bring people together bound not by geography but by shared interest.

Distance education transcends time and space. Some fear that it is a destructive force that will lead to isolation and greater individualism rather than community. Some see distance learning as "distancing" the students in more significant ways than simply geographic distance. This fear is often based on an assumption that all face-to-face contact will give way to computer activity or other forms of electronic communication. Thus far, this fear does not seem to be grounded in reality in theological education, nor, for that matter, in many distance education programs. Richard Schwier in reviewing contemporary and emerging interactive technologies for distance education states,

“Regardless of the approach employed in distance learning, human contact is, and will continue to be vital. Independent learning approaches will permit us to alter roles played by instructors in larger learning systems but they will not replace them.”<sup>3</sup>

While it is true that at present a computer-generated learning environment cannot duplicate the face-to-face engagement in the classroom, advances in technology are moving rapidly. Given the nature of theological education, it seems that a balance between face-to-face communication either on-campus or in a local area and the use of communication technology is desirable. Community in either case is not automatic, nor can it be mandated. Both in the classroom and at a distance, community requires people who look for others who share their values and interests, people who assume responsibility for learning, actively participate in life, and view new experiences as opportunities for growth.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that advances in virtual reality technologies and the increasing availability of them on the Internet allow for a broadening of our understanding and experience of community. The classroom can now be expanded to include groups of students, experts, and learning facilities from around the world, all with an interest in giving and receiving information and exchanging ideas. The lived reality of a global interconnected church is becoming more widespread, offering both a challenge and an opportunity for schools committed to the formation of church leaders for the twenty-first century.

## **A Pilot Study**

Responding to requests received and aware of the need to assess carefully the effectiveness of theological education using a distance education format, the ATS Commission on Accrediting approved the implementation of distance education pilot projects at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and at Bethel Theological Seminary. While differing in format, both schools have attempted to create a community of learning and to address issues of formation within their programs. We will now examine how questions of formation and community development are integrated into these programs.

### ***Bethel Theological Seminary***

Bethel Theological Seminary, a school related to the Baptist General Conference, is located in St. Paul, Minnesota, with a satellite campus in San Diego, California. The description of opportunity for theological education through distance learning on the school’s home page states:

Now you can complete your Master of Divinity without moving your family and disrupting your present ministry. Bethel Seminary’s In-Ministry program makes a Master of Divinity degree attainable for non-resident students who are already

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active in ministry. In fact, most students find the In-Ministry program has an immediate and powerful impact on their present ministry. Although most of your course work is completed at home, twice a year students attend courses on either the St. Paul or San Diego campus, taking two courses during each session. In addition you will take two distance courses each year. When combined, students are able to take seven courses a year and to complete the Master of Divinity in approximately five years. ([www. bethel.edu](http://www.bethel.edu))

Bethel's In-Ministry program began five years ago and was initiated as part of a curriculum redesign conducted by the faculty. The spring 1999 enrollment was 170 with a student body spanning thirty-six states and two countries. The program uses a multimodal delivery system including on-line courses, e-mail, and on-line discussion groups. The weekly course lectures are available in Real Audio. Chapel services and other addresses given on campus are audio streamed to the Internet and are accessible by students at any time. Along with the distance components, the In-Ministry students participate in intensive courses offered on campus twice during the academic year. One on-campus component takes place in February, which provides an opportunity for the distance education students to interface with the traditional student body. The second intensive takes place in the summer when the Doctor of Ministry students are also attending classes.

The formation of community in Bethel's program is influenced by many factors. A key factor is the motivation of the students themselves. According to the staff of the program, it takes a certain kind of student to thrive in the In-Ministry program. In order to succeed, students need a measure of self-motivation, skill at time management, and discipline. In Bethel Seminary's experience, students in the distance education program take a good deal of initiative in getting to know one another. Relationships are initiated at the on-campus orientation and sustained both on-line and during the campus intensives. As one student remarked of the on-campus opportunities: "We know this is our chance to be together so we make the most of it."

Another significant factor contributing to the sustaining of community over a distance is the attentiveness of the staff responsible for the program. According to the staff at Bethel, they attempt to maintain regular, timely communication with the In-Ministry students responding within a twenty-four-hour period to e-mail and voice messages.

While student initiative and staff commitment contribute to the building of community, Bethel also recognizes the need to have programmatic features to encourage sharing among the students and with the seminary. Accountability groups are at times required as part of a particular course. Beyond course requirements, students are encouraged to participate in such groups on an on-going basis to foster the sharing of personal concerns and the offering of prayer

support to one another. Opportunity is provided for these groups to spend time together while on campus. In addition, a personal profile discussion forum allows students to introduce themselves, their families, and their ministry context. Picture Rosters are also posted on the Internet. In addition to addressing formation needs by providing opportunities for sharing, courses in the spiritual disciplines are included in the curriculum. Such courses are offered in the distance format as well as when the students are on campus. Theological reflection using a process that includes reflection on *being/thinking/doing* is incorporated into the syllabi of courses taught at Bethel regardless of delivery system.

Who are the students that enroll in Bethel's In-Ministry program? The staff of the program articulated several assumptions used as criteria for admission into the program. Persons must be engaged in full-time or bivocational ministry. They must have five years experience in ministry or be currently involved in ministry that includes a structured supervisory relationship. Ideally, the potential student is part of a peer support group and has the endorsement of church leadership. Academic requirements are the same for distance education students as for those attending traditional format programs at Bethel. The students interviewed via e-mail for this study met these criteria. An informal evaluation of Bethel's program was included in the comments of one student:

The In-Ministry program has been a huge blessing. I could not be pursuing my M.Div. degree without it right now. The people at Bethel have worked very hard to make the program not only accountable to academic standards, but also as user-friendly as possible. The fears about students not having community have been dispelled. The professors say that we seem much closer to each other than the regular students. I have developed friendships that I expect to last a lifetime. Most of the professors have been enthusiastic about this new style of learning, and they have bent over backwards to help make it work. At the same time, they have not lowered their standards. This is tough work!

Commenting further concerning the formational impact of the program the same student wrote:

The program has affected my life profoundly. The content of the courses is the least of it. The relationships and affirmation developed through the discussion folders and through on-campus contact have helped me have confidence in my call and gifts. As a woman in a denomination where female leaders in the midwest are rare, it can get a little lonely out here on the prairie. But my fellow classmates of both genders are only an e-mail away, and we support each other in prayer and friend-

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ship. I am a better person, because I can develop my gifts through a program that is both academically challenging and spiritually inspiring. I am especially pleased with the way the instructors encourage us to apply what we learn as quickly and practically as possible.

As noted above, at Bethel the decision to offer the Master of Divinity degree in distance format was made as part of a curriculum revision. Faculty were involved throughout the process. Technological support and training for faculty is provided. Bethel has given evidence of its commitment to this type of learning by engaging the support of a design team for course development on an on-going basis. Members of the faculty note that planning, organizing, uploading, and downloading course materials and assignments is time consuming. It was also noted, however, that the challenge of presenting the course content in a new format that calls for attention to sight, color, and sound has improved classroom teaching and has enabled faculty to engage different types of learners more effectively.

The distance education staff at Bethel is committed to providing for the personal, spiritual, and ministerial needs of their distance education students. This can only be accomplished if careful attention continues to be given to creating a supportive context both formally and informally while students are on-campus or at a distance where meaningful community and personal spiritual growth can occur.

***New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary***

Advances in video technology provided an opportunity for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), a school related to the Southern Baptist Convention, to link various extension sites to form a distance education network. Since 1982, NOBTS has offered master's degrees at extension sites located in Decatur, Georgia; Birmingham, Alabama; Strevport, Louisiana; Clinton, Mississippi; and in Orlando and Graceville, Florida. These extension sites were established to respond to the need of Southern Baptist clergy who were pastors of congregations but had little or no formal seminary education. Many of those who participate in programs offered at these sites in what now has become New Orleans's distance learning program cannot uproot their families or leave their churches to move to the school's campus in New Orleans.

On its World Wide Web home page, NOBTS describes its program as follows:

Through extension centers located all over the Southeast, we, at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary are pushing the campus out closer to the church field. This makes it possible for someone who may be in a ministry position to maintain that position and pursue theological education. To support excel-

lent teaching at these extension centers, we are using the best of modern technology, including Compressed Interactive Video (CIV). This technology uses live, interactive video to connect classes in multiple locations, allowing a professor in New Orleans to teach classes in several other cities all at the same time. The professor and the students are able to dialogue and interact with each other as though they were in the same room. Other classes are taught by commuting faculty from the main campus as well as adjunct professors who live near the center. Extension centers also offer non-traditional schedules to allow students to attend classes while holding down full time jobs. (www.nobts.edu)

The program at NOBTS is organized with some flexibility providing courses both in the distance format using CIV and in intensive academic workshops offered on campus. In the centers where the compressed interactive video is used, there were 325 students in the spring of 1999. To meet the current one-year residency requirement, students are present for on-campus offerings approximately fifteen times over the course of earning an M.Div degree. Intensives are ordinarily offered between regular terms at the seminary. One academic workshop is offered each year during a regular seminary term to provide an opportunity for students from the extension sites to experience campus life and to interact with on-campus administration, faculty, and staff.

At present, core courses are taught at the extension centers and electives are offered as intensives. An academic workshop entitled "Formation in Ministry" is offered on campus for all who are new to the program. Both faculty and students identified the extension video sessions as being lecture driven. Faculty, however, describe the students at these sites as active learners who constantly challenge the presenter to consider the application of the material taught to the context of ministry.

Because students gather as a learning community on a weekly basis, the local sites become a place where relationships are formed. Each site, according to the students, has its own spirit and identity. When the class meets, time is allowed for the sharing of prayer requests and, in addition to the video exchange, a time for small group discussion is programmed into each class. To further develop the students' sense of belonging and to enhance their learning experience at the extension sites, NOBTS engages a site administrator and provides student advisors. Students are able to contact the New Orleans campus using a toll-free number. More recently e-mail has facilitated on-going communication between faculty and students. Students also receive a regular "Friday Fax" and a newsletter from the school.

As noted above, the program is designed for Southern Baptist students who are already engaged in ministry within that tradition. Their formation needs are not the same as those of persons being introduced to ministry who

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may or may not have an established identity within the denomination they hope to serve. Because connections with the denomination are already in place and because the students have a positive experience of community at the local sites, the necessity to travel to the New Orleans campus is questioned by the students. Both the expense of travel and the time away from other responsibilities were named as problematic. As improvements in technology continue to provide multiple options for communication, theological schools will need to determine the most effective way to balance on-campus teaching with distance delivery. This is an issue that calls for continued reflection on the part of the ATS Commission on Accrediting.

Prior to the introduction of Compressed Interactive Video (CIV), the New Orleans faculty had to travel to the various extension sites. In evaluating the current program, the faculty highly valued the reduction in travel time. They also noted that presenting their course content in a new format has challenged them to stay fresh with their material in a way that preparing for a traditional classroom did not. As in all programs of distance education, the issue of faculty development and technical assistance is an important one for the faculty at NOBTS. Two workshops on pedagogy and technology related to the use of CIV have been held at NOBTS. In addition to providing training, the administration of the school is committed to investing in the equipment and the technical support services needed to ensure that the quality of the program is maintained. An important observation concerning the distance education delivery system at NOBTS was made by its president who indicated that this development in M.Div. education has brought to the fore the need to be more deliberate about the application of theology to the real world of the church. By providing this challenge, it has brought enrichment to the broader efforts of the institution.

### **Distance Education and Faculty Development**

Faculty development is critical to the success of any distance education program. Whatever the institutional motivation for moving toward distance delivery, it is important that administrators recognize that providing quality in-service training is the most efficient pathway to the long-term success of distance education programs. The nature of teaching and the role of the professor are different in distance education than they are in classroom teaching. Preparing teachers to adopt new approaches and providing the ongoing motivation and support needed are key. Barry Willis in discussing the topic of faculty effectiveness in distance education lists some of the challenges faced by the distance teacher:

1. Looking at the course content in a new way.
2. Shifting from the role of content provider to content facilitator.

3. Gaining comfort and proficiency in using technology as a primary teacher-student link.
4. Learning to teach effectively without visual clues provided by eye contact.
5. Developing an understanding and appreciation for the distant student's lifestyle.
6. Learning how to provide structure and motivational support that will help students to become actively involved in the process of learning.<sup>5</sup>

Many of these same challenges must be faced by theological schools offering distance education ministry degrees that include a formation component. Just as course content must be re-envisioned for effective learning at a distance, so too, “opportunities for growth in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness” (statement A.3.1.3.)—characteristics determined by ATS as necessary for a Master of Divinity degree—must be re-thought. For distance learners the primary location of formation may shift from the campus and school chapel to the local church community. This cannot happen effectively without the effort and support of both the faculty and staff of the school. Partnership between church and seminary is essential. For effective distance education the individual professors must shift from being content providers to content facilitators, so too, those responsible for providing formative experiences need to shift their focus to facilitating growth in the varied contexts where students live and engage in ministry. Understanding and appreciating the life circumstances of the learner is essential if distance programs are to meet the formational needs of the student. Finally, whether on campus or at a distance, staff can only motivate and provide support for the personal, spiritual, and ministerial growth of the student. Doing so at a distance calls for new forms and creative efforts. Care must be given to identifying components that can work well at a distance and those where face-to-face communication is essential. Faculty, staff, and administrators must work together in identifying and resolving difficulties that arise. By taking a holistic approach to the development and implementation of policies for distance education and by committing the necessary financial and human resources needed, including giving priority to faculty development, theological schools can provide distance education that is consistent with the standards set forth by ATS.

## **In Conclusion**

Although advances in technology and the increasing use of distance education formats in theological education provide many institutional possibilities, such advances create numerous challenges in the process. In a working paper related to a project entitled “Designing Distance Theological Education,” Andrew Grannell observes:

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The chances that 'distance' theological education—as the first major wave in the digital communications revolution—will achieve or exceed the new ATS standards for quality appear quite good. What is much less clear is how the promising exploration of what makes theological education 'theological' can be mined for ways to implement a transformative distance theological education.<sup>6</sup>

The schools reviewed in this study offer signs of hope that theological distance education can be transformative education. If it is to be transformative, it is clear that distance education cannot be seen as a "quick fix" to increase enrollments. It cannot be embraced as the latest discovery that offers significant financial promise in times of economic insecurity. Rather it must grow out of the shared wisdom of past experience and be consistent with the mission and values of the institutions offering it. Attention must be given to all of the standards that have been developed to ensure the quality of theological education for ministry. If the theological school of the future, or at least significant aspects of it, becomes a school without walls where the learning community meets not in lecture halls or classrooms but in cyberspace, then every care must be taken that it is a "good theological school" with all that the phrase has come to mean within ATS. We are at the threshold of what some have named a digital seismic shift. In a recent television ad campaign designed by a company offering communication technology on the Internet, children from around the world voiced a simple question: "Are you ready?" Those who seek to provide quality theological education to meet the challenges of the digital seismic shift must ask of themselves: "Are you ready?"

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#### ENDNOTES

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2. A. Morgan, *The Community of the Future and the Future of Community* (Yellow Springs: Community Service, 1957) as cited by Dale Cook, "Community and Computer-Generated Distance Learning Environments," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 67 (1995): 33.
3. Richard Schwier, "Contemporary and Emerging Interactive Technologies for Distance Education" *Distance Education: Strategies and Tools*, Barry Willis, ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Educational Technology Publication, 1994), 229.
4. Dale Cook, "Community and Computer Generated Distance Learning Environments" *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 67 (1995): 33-39.
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# Using Computers in Theological Education: Rules of Thumb

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ABSTRACT: There has been little systematic thought about the pedagogical issues that technology creates in theological schools. Addressed both to theological institutions and individual professors, this paper addresses basic pedagogical questions. What are the most effective ways to employ technology in the classroom? Are there guidelines for distinguishing productive activities from merely flashy ones? And, what “rules of thumb” exist for enabling novices to make the best use of computer technology for theological learning?

Theological schools have discovered computer technology. Professors now have, as a matter of course, personal computers in their offices on campus or in their studies at home. Students rarely prepare papers with typewriters anymore, and e-mail has become as necessary for some schools as the telephone and fax machine. It was thus only a matter of time before the computer’s influence migrated from the office to the classroom. It is no longer rare for enterprising professors to use computers, especially with PowerPoint, in creating teaching and learning environments. Computers are now embedded in the seminary landscape.

There has, however, been little systematic thought about the pedagogical issues that computers create in seminary classrooms. Despite the giddy claims of technophiles, wise seminary leaders are often uneasy about computer technology, and it is not just the cost that makes them squirm. The problem, in short, is that computers are a tool and—like all tools—they can be used well or poorly, depending upon the acumen and preparation of the tool-user. Thus, this paper addresses basic pedagogical questions. What are the most effective ways to employ technology in the classroom? Are there guidelines for distinguishing productive teaching activities from merely flashy ones? And, what “rules of thumb” exist for enabling novices to make the best use of computer technology in seminary learning?

Although there have been relatively few discussions of instructional technology as it relates to theological education, the paper does not speak into a vacuum. The discussions of seminary teaching and learning are rich—and far too diverse to enumerate in this short article, but a word about audience may be appropriate. The paper is addressed both to theological institutions looking for guidelines about employing technology and to individual professors seeking ways to improve their own teaching activities.

Please note also that the paper follows a format that scholarly audiences may find unfamiliar. The structure is intentionally schematic. Figure 1 provides an easily photocopied outline of the paper, and sections have bold-faced internal headers so that the paper is easy to skim. The intent is to create a set of guidelines that can be easily accessed and quickly disseminated.

### **Assign someone to ask the big pedagogical questions.**

The first observation about technology and teaching is that the most important pedagogical questions apply to all aspects of the curriculum, and not just to computers. Theological educators have been discussing the aims and purposes of our educational enterprise for some time now, and at least four major issues remain at the fore. If an institution is interested in using technology wisely (or if a professor wants to improve her teaching), these issues define the larger concerns of theological education. They provide the background for any discussion of technology and learning. As this is not the place for a detailed discussion of the so-called Aims and Purposes literature, it will suffice simply to name the issues with minimal commentary so that we can work off of a clear and specific foundation.

We know the importance of multiculturalism and globalization. They have given focus to the discussions in this journal for over a decade. They have become the short-hand educators use when they want to describe how the environment of theological education has changed in the last quarter century. The pool from which we draw our students and the world into which we send them has changed and continues to change with each passing day. It is a diverse and dynamic environment that demands professors and entire institutions to address multiple concerns and to learn from an array of constituencies.<sup>1</sup>

A more recent lesson for theological educators comes from the recently published ethnographic study of seminary life entitled, *Being There*. Its authors demonstrate how seminary culture teaches more than seminary classes do, especially about values. Students imbibe methods and soak up concerns from their professors. They emulate a school's faculty as they decide which questions to bring to a text and which lenses to employ when interpreting a situation. In short, students replicate in ministry the assumptions they absorbed from their professors.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the debate over the nature of theological education has taught us that fragmentation is our biggest pedagogical problem. The standard seminary curriculum treats each course as an autonomous and circumscribed unit. Rarely does the content of one course shape the experience of another course. Indeed, this is a by-product of the way that seminary professors are formed in graduate schools. The requirements for a Ph.D. socialize a prospective professor into a guild such as history or theology but the process often does not instill an appreciation for or understanding of other theological disciplines. Thus, we

FIGURE 1

**Teaching and Learning Issues on Instructional Technology  
and Theological Education: Rules of Thumb**

1. Assign someone to ask the big pedagogical questions.
  - a. It is easy to assume someone else has the big questions covered.
  - b. We know the importance of *multiculturalism* and *globalization*.
  - c. *Seminary culture* teaches more than seminary classes do, especially about values.
  - d. *Fragmentation* as our biggest pedagogical problem.
2. Technology is not a substitute for traditional teaching methods.
  - a. Innovations do not always supersede everything that comes before them.
  - b. It is particularly difficult to create community and inculcate values using technology.
3. Use technology to teach in ways that would be impossible without computers.
  - a. The temptation is to replicate methods that do not require technology.  
(e.g. television is different from radio)
  - b. Example: random access to artwork fosters free-flow discussion.
  - c. There is danger in creating over-produced courses that seem to teach more than they deliver.
4. Cling to the most cherished teaching goals.
  - a. What to teach and learn: Knowledge, Method, Skills, and Values.
  - b. Each requires its own teaching methods.
5. Explore the multiple routes to teaching and learning.
  - a. Different ways to learn: multiple learning styles
  - b. Different teaching roles for the computer
6. Focus on using technology to transcend the boundaries built into theological education.
  - a. Boundaries of time and space  
Activities: e-mail listserv, on-line syllabus, chat-rooms  
Models: World Lecture Hall <<http://www.utexas.edu/world/lecture>>
  - b. Boundaries between students and professors.  
Activities: reflection papers due before class, late-night office hours, collaborative projects  
Models: Samples <<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/curry/dept/edes/instrtech/products/product.html>>
  - c. Boundaries between students.  
Activities: e-mail student groups, class projects exchanged in advance
  - d. Boundaries between courses.  
Activities: shared case study, shared texts, collaborative commentary  
Models: Multimedia Case Study <<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/ITcases/Terry/>>
  - e. Boundaries between the seminary and the parish.  
Goal: create student resources that will also benefit parish leaders  
Model: Webmonkey <<http://www.hotwired.com/webmonkey>>

often ask our students to integrate the fragmented curriculum with very little help from the school.<sup>3</sup>

These four issues, although well-known within the ATS, can be easily neglected because there is often no one for whom pedagogy is a primary concern. Seminary presidents assume the deans are asking the teaching and learning questions. Deans often assume individual faculty members bear the responsibility. Faculty members, for all the effort they put into teaching, often find few opportunities to discuss pedagogical issues with their colleagues. In the end, an issue that each person cares about deeply gets surprisingly ignored in the communal discussions that shape a theological school. Unless someone bears particular responsibility for keeping pedagogical issues before the school, other concerns will dominate the discourse. Discussions about technology can become the occasion for reviving pedagogical conversations within our particular theological institutions.

### **Technology is not a substitute for traditional teaching methods.**

There is an odd temptation that sweeps all of us when we encounter a new perspective or way of acting. It is easy to assume a binary, zero-sum relationship. It is tempting to believe that a method that addresses one concern must therefore be the solution to all our problems. Such is, of course, not the case.

Innovations do not always supersede everything that came before them. Compact discs may have rendered long-playing albums obsolete, but television did not replace radio and the Internet did not obliterate the telephone. The enthusiasm of some technological advocates has led some professors to believe that they must make an all-or-nothing commitment to technology. They resist technology because they believe—correctly—that technology would provide a poor substitute to current practice on many of our most important activities. Some have received an inaccurate message that says that any use of technology is the first step toward replacing professors with automatons. This is a misnomer. In fact, for some teaching and learning activities computers would provide little improvement and may actually hinder a student's learning process.

One issue deserves particular attention because it generates considerable anxiety in some faculties. Discussions of technology seem invariably to meander over to the question of community. Eventually someone will say something to the effect that technology inhibits community by fostering atomistic, faceless, and sterile relationships. I believe that such statements beg the question. The very meaning of community is, in fact, the subject of heart-felt debate at most of our theological schools. Face-to-face interaction, for example, is crucial to a deepening of relationships, especially in relationships where core values and basic beliefs are at issue. If a technological method were to call for the

elimination of face-to-face relations, then we would, of course, have reason for concern. On the other hand, we certainly can point to ways that technology promotes the kinds of interpersonal investments that characterize most understandings of community. For example, many schools now have cadres of students who travel great distances to take courses. It is not uncommon now for those students to band together using e-mail, sharing messages that mix questions about assignments with family news and personal concerns. One pleasant by-product of these electronic cohorts is that they often endure beyond the seminary environment because they are built on a medium that they can take into far-flung parishes. Thus, we find that discussions about technology can become the occasion for more basic pedagogical discussions such as debate about the changing nature of community itself within theological education.<sup>4</sup>

### **Use technology to teach in ways that would be impossible without computers.**

Anytime a new technology comes along, it takes awhile to establish what it does best. The natural tendency is to replicate methods that are familiar in other media. For example, we now take for granted the notion that television shows must be different from radio shows because television incorporates sight as well as sound. Yet, in the earliest days of television, the first shows were simply radio shows that could be seen as well as heard. Likewise, the first radio shows borrowed heavily from vaudeville. In a similar way, the first uses of computer technology in classrooms have typically involved PowerPoint presentations that take transparencies created for overhead projectors and organize them into a choreographed presentation. Granted there are animations and additional colors to spice up the screen, but the basic teaching activity associated with PowerPoint is not all that different from lecturing with an overhead projector or a series of handouts.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of producing glorified overheads, computers should be used to teach in ways that would be impossible without computers. Let me illustrate what I mean. Not long ago, I sat with a colleague who wondered how new technological tools might enhance her own teaching. She was not really interested in PowerPoint and did not believe she was savvy enough to produce a web site. She therefore assumed that computers would not be particularly helpful to her teaching. As we talked, I inquired about her teaching. "Is there anything about the way that you currently teach that has always annoyed you?" I asked, "or perhaps there is something that you have always wished you could do." As a matter of fact, there was, she reported. She often uses color slides of artwork to illustrate theological concepts. She is especially interested in creating discussions in class around the artwork. The problem is that the technology of the slide projector inhibits discussion. It is very difficult to move

randomly through the slides. So when a student tries to connect the concepts from one art piece with themes encountered in an earlier piece—the very thinking that the lesson is designed to promote—it is often difficult to find the right slide from the earlier discussion. Anyone who has tried to locate one particular slide in a carousel appreciates the dilemma. There is often more fumbling and hunting than actual discussion.

So my colleague felt trapped by the slide technology because she had to move sequentially through the material. This defeated the whole purpose of the teaching activity, which was to promote discussion. We talked, however, about how projecting the same slides through a computer could offer her instant access to any slide in the presentation. PowerPoint has a feature that presents small thumb-nails of all the slides in a show on one screen. A simple click on the one of interest puts it up on the screen. She could now imagine a free-flowing discussion about the theological concepts embedded in artwork. The discussion could now take its form from the students' interests rather than from the professor's slide sequence. Here, then, is an example of how a computer would allow her to teach in a way that would be otherwise impossible.

Every school, I believe, needs to have someone who can initiate conversations such as the one I had with my colleague. Schools need persons who can inquire with faculty members about their frustrations with their own teaching and help them imagine ways to accomplish teaching activities that were heretofore beyond their reach. There is a tremendous advantage, of course, in starting with the concerns of the user rather than with the wonders of the new technology. Far too often the enthusiasts for technology sound like hucksters peddling some cure-all. Computers are not the solution to every teaching problem. But they can help in specific ways with specific problems. Every school needs a person who can help individual professors name their pedagogical hopes and then enable them to imagine a next step that will take them closer to that goal. Technology serves learning best when it allows us to teach in ways that would otherwise be impossible.

One final word needs to be said about PowerPoint. There is a danger when using PowerPoint. Sometimes we can create over-produced courses that seem to teach more than they can deliver. Because they are slick and sharp, brimming with straight margins and bright colors, PowerPoint presentations make ideas look complete, as if eliminating the inconsistencies in the form also eliminates the inconsistencies in the content. The problem is similar to printing out the first-draft of a paper on a laser printer. It looks sophisticated and complete—even if the sentences do not all have verbs and the argument is filled with holes. Sometimes the crisp form of a PowerPoint lecture promises more than the disjointed content of the lecture can deliver.

## **Cling to the most cherished teaching goals.**

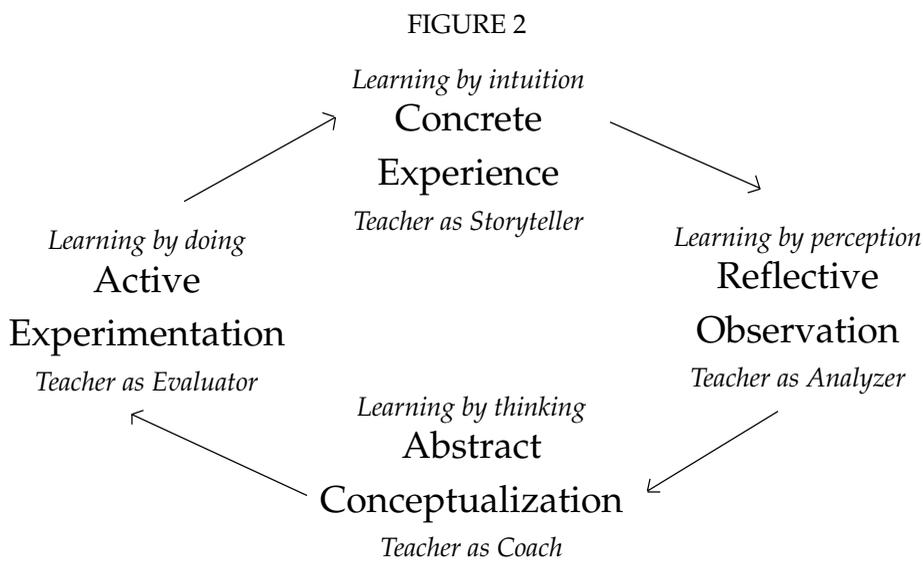
The mission of theological education is to prepare religious leaders for service and to nurture academic professionals for scholarship. There is more to theological education than the transmission of knowledge. We teach methods, develop skills, and inculcate values in our students. We do not simply dispense answers to questions but we also teach the skills in asking the right questions. There is a depth to seminary teaching and learning that comes as much from conversation as from lecture.

We must remind ourselves of the great value that seminaries place on this wholistic learning because computers can restrict the modes that professors bring into the classroom. For example, the most accessible first technological step for many professors is PowerPoint. Many people find it easy to transfer their teaching notes to PowerPoint slides for projection on a classroom screen, often summarizing the material in bulleted lists under bold-faced headlines. This medium often lends itself to transmitting knowledge (e.g., the dates surrounding Judah's exile) or describing methods (e.g., an exegetical plan). It can summarize large concepts quickly (e.g., the stages of grief), but the bulleted lists are only the starting point. A student who knows that denial and blame are often part of the coping process may or may not be prepared to sit with someone as they grieve. Knowing when to speak (and especially when to remain silent) and listening with compassion are far more important to pastoral care than being able to list characteristics about grief. If the medium of computers channels professors toward making lifeless lists instead of sparking engaged conversation, it does a disservice to theological teaching and learning. To the extent that it fosters deeper reflection and thoughtful action, technology serves seminaries well.

## **Explore multiple routes to teaching and learning.**

The decision to bring technology into the classroom can and should be a moment when the instructor assesses all of her teaching activities. We all know that different students learn in different ways. Some students find lectures a direct way to access large quantities of information, while others find them an over-whelming hindrance rather than a learning aid. In like manner, some of my students use the "reflection paper" I assign to work out their thoughts and to connect the reading with the ministering lives that they daily lead. Other students complain that they are "busy work." The point is that there are many paths to learning.

There is a wide variety of frameworks that describe these various "learning styles." Howard Gardner, for example, lists a family of "multiple intelligences" that describe the learning proclivities of school children.<sup>6</sup> I have found David Kolb's "learning cycle" to be a helpful way to think about classroom



pedagogy, especially as it relates to instructional technology. Kolb believes that there are four components involved in what he calls “experiential” learning: experience, reflection, abstraction, and experimentation (see Figure 2). Furthermore, he believes that every individual gravitates toward one or more of these modes as the best way to learn. Some people, for example, would rather watch someone change a tire before they attempt to learn that skill. Others have to get their hands dirty. We all know people who carefully read instructions and others for whom they are useless. Kolb argues, however, that eventually all of us proceed through a cycle in processing a new skill.<sup>7</sup>

Think, for example, of a preaching class. Every preaching class begins with experience in that every student in the class has sat through countless sermons before entering seminary. Then we give students a safe place to experience the process of creating their own sermons. For some students that experience is the most powerful agent of learning. Most of us, however, move to the next step. We reflect about the preaching enterprise in general and about the student’s sermon in particular. At most schools, an instructor discusses a videotape of the sermon with the students. Fellow students are often brought into the reflective process as well. Most preaching classes also include some more abstract form of instruction, usually a combination of a textbook and lectures on homiletics. This abstract conceptualizing creates heuristics and reveals patterns. The student then uses this entire package of experience, reflection, and abstract thinking to inform the next practice sermon. Thus experimentation yields another experience and the process begins anew. Homiletics classes follow Kolb’s learning cycle quite nicely.

Most seminary classes do not, however, have quite the “experiential” aspect that preaching classes do. This has as much to do with the proclivities of the professor as it does with the particulars of the discipline. For example, one normally thinks of Systematic Theology courses as being lecture-oriented and usually located in what Kolb would call the “abstract conceptualizing” learning style, but some professors have eschewed the stereotype of their discipline in order to build a strong experiential component into their courses. They integrate the writing of a personal “credo” into the other assignments so that students are continuously engaged in reflection about and experimentation with the abstract ideas that the course develops.

The question remains, however, what does this have to do with computers? The answer comes from Roger Schank, a leading theorist in the field of computer-aided instruction. Schank believes that there are four roles that a computer can perform in teaching. The computer can serve as a storyteller, an analyzer, a coach, or an evaluator. These roles map nicely to Kolb’s learning styles. A storyteller provides access to a wealth of experiences. An analyzer guides reflection. A coach (in Schank’s understanding of the term) conveys heuristics. An evaluator supports experimenting. In each case, Schank shows that computers can enable students to pursue whichever learning styles most appeal to them.<sup>8</sup>

### **Focus on using technology to transcend the boundaries built in theological education.**

There are a host of boundaries built into theological education. They are limitations that we often take for granted, as if they were unsolvable problems. I believe that technology’s most immediate advantage for theological educators is that it can give us a way to see those divisions with new eyes and transcend them with new tools. I will discuss each of the boundaries that I have observed (there are no doubt more) and then provide examples of how computer technology has been used to transcend them.

#### ***Boundaries of time and space***

When we theological educators talk about how technology can transcend boundaries of time and space, we usually end up debating the merits of distance learning. Passions often reign in this debate. Some proclaim that distance learning is a panacea that can cure all that ails theological education. Others see it as the first sinister step toward eliminating faculty and dispensing credentials by mail. I wish to avoid that entire debate for the time being for a very important reason. I believe it obscures the more important discussions that have to take place before we are prepared to evaluate distance learning. Only when we have established a set of general guidelines for evaluating all instructional technologies will we in theological education be prepared to evaluate the special case of distance learning.

There are a host of possibilities for transcending learning boundaries created by time and space, and most of these possibilities have nothing to do with distance learning. Listserves on e-mail, on-line syllabi, and course-specific chat rooms come most quickly to mind. Each of these, as we shall see, allow students access to one another and to course material outside of the normally circumscribed context of the seminary classroom and the theological library.

One of the best ways to learn about such innovations is to browse through courses where other professors have used these techniques, and the most accessible place to do that is at the World Lecture Hall <<http://www.utexas.edu/world/lecture>>. The World Lecture Hall is a collection of college and graduate school courses that use Web technology. They are usually not distance learning offerings, but on-campus courses augmented by technology. Among the topics available, most of the courses that would interest ATS schools are located under the heading of "Religious Studies." There are, for example, introductory theology courses, history courses, and biblical studies classes. Some are technologically simplistic, offering little more than an on-line syllabus. Others are more sophisticated. For instance, one of the oldest on-line learning opportunities listed at the World Lecture Hall focuses on Augustine of Hippo <<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/augustine.html>>. It contains texts of St. Augustine's work along with scholarly resources about the material. The site also records a series of e-mail discussions from a seminar on Augustine. Participants in the discussion "gathered" from well-beyond the borders of the University of Pennsylvania, where the seminar's host teaches. The site shows how technology transcends boundaries of time and space because it provides access to far-flung students and enables them to engage in a coherent discussion even though they are never together in the same room.

### ***Boundaries between students and professors***

Theological educators are often quite frank about the ways that teaching and learning pass both ways between students and professors. Teachers learn and learners teach at our schools. So we are constantly looking for ways to improve communication between professors and students.

Technology can help. For example, one of my own frustrations about teaching is that I want to do a better job balancing the static necessities of teaching a particular subject (i.e., there are certain topics that must be covered) with the ever-changing interests and needs of a given group of students. I feel cramped when I have to commit to a syllabus of readings at the beginning of the semester—indeed, before I know the students well enough to tailor my requirements to their situations and social locations. But a syllabus I must have, lest students think I am disorganized and lazy. So I have had to find another avenue for connecting the course requirements with the students' particularities. I ask students to write 500-word reflection papers describing how the

week's reading assignment addresses or fails to address their personal situations in life. Technology's advantage comes when I ask them to get the papers to me by nine o'clock on the day of class (an afternoon class). Most students use a fax machine or e-mail to transmit the paper, while a few simply slide it under my office door. Anyone for whom this creates a hardship because they do not have access to the technology can arrange in advance to drop the paper off an hour before class. Once I have the papers, I read the students' reflections so that the lecture and class discussion can address whatever gaps or misunderstandings became apparent from the reflection papers. I have thus found a way to take a teaching tool that is already well-known to students (the reflection paper) and enhance its usefulness with technology in order to accomplish a pedagogical goal that would be otherwise impossible.

Professors in other institutions have used technology to bring them closer to their students. A theology professor describes how he holds a late-night review session the night before he tests his undergraduates. This is possible because of his unique situation. Most of his students are freshman who are required to live in dorms, dorms which have all been wired into the campus computer network. He thus sits at home at ten o'clock in the evening "chatting" on-line with students who are suddenly motivated to ask the questions that he could not coax out of them during the regular class time. The technology at his school allowed him to make learning available when and where the students were ready to listen.<sup>9</sup>

A final example of technology uniting professors with students involves collaborative projects. It is no longer necessary to publish a book in order to disseminate the results of classroom cooperation. Many schools are making the best projects available on the Web, often after they have been revised to reflect the expertise of the professor. Having a tangible product that will be in the public eye can thus inspire both scholars and students.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Boundaries between students***

Anyone with more than a passing acquaintance with theological schools knows that the student population is becoming more and more diverse. Students come from varying ethnic backgrounds and reside in many different social circumstances. It has therefore become increasingly important to create avenues for communication among students.

E-mail has become a particularly effective medium for connecting students to one another. At our school, we have students who commute from great distances and are only on campus one or two days a week. They often stay connected with their comrades by e-mail. They transmit information about missed assignments and required readings, but they also find ways to support one another in ways that extend beyond the formal requirements of a course. It is not uncommon for there to be laughter at graduation as one student meets another's spouse for the first time. "I know so much about you," the joke goes,

“but you look so different from how I pictured you.” Far-flung students now have a means for staying involved in one another’s lives, even when they are only “together” once a week.

Another connection that ties students together involves exchanging projects prior to class. I have experimented with having students evaluate each other’s work prior to turning in a large assignment. The process has a number of useful effects. First, it encourages students to write more detailed first drafts. Second, it brings diverse perspectives into the learning process early enough to have an effect on the outcome. And, third, it encourages students to discuss questions among themselves—even after the one exchanged assignment is completed. There are many ways that computer technology can bring students together.

### ***Boundaries between courses***

Fragmentation remains one of the most pressing problems facing theological education. Biblical studies courses rarely interact with history classes, which in turn have little connection to homiletics. Pastoral care has surprisingly little contact with ethics and systematics, and ministry courses regularly stereotype one another. We educators have a hard time presenting a theological curriculum whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts. There are very few opportunities for students to see examples in seminary of the kind of integration that they will be required to do when they graduate.

One way to address fragmentation might be to share material across course boundaries, especially between classes that students typically take at the same stage of their degree programs. For example, entering students at our school often take introductory courses in history and in theology during their first semesters. The professors who teach those classes have in the past tried to coordinate the readings during some weeks so that, for example, a historical discussion of Augustine’s *City of God* might cohere with a theological description of the same text. Likewise, case studies have long provided one way for professors in the so-called “classical disciplines” to lend practicality to their courses. None of this requires technological sophistication.

There are, however, ways that computer technology can significantly improve the integrative possibilities that come from shared texts, overlapping discussions, and case studies. For example, one on-line discussion can exist for both classes—such as a theology class and a history course discussing Augustine. Both professors would then weigh in on every topic, especially the questions about how the material addresses the contemporary situation. There could even be dialogue between the professors themselves—carried out in the public (on-line) forum—so that students could see how one discipline might critique and/or support the other.

One particularly interesting example of these integrative possibilities is the multimedia case study. Putting a case study on a web site allows people to comment on it from a variety of perspectives. Moreover, the case can change

over time, with more information being added in response to inquiries from those who are using the case. This more closely mirrors reality, where asking the right questions is as much a part of interpretation as good listening is. A group of us at Claremont have been experimenting with just such an automated case model, particularly seeking to create opportunities for integration.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Boundaries between the seminary and the parish***

Professors regularly get calls from former students. Often they want to call about some vague memory of a class held years ago. In fact, it is not surprising if they are after some hand-out that they found particularly helpful or illuminating. Professors regularly create resource materials that they take for granted. They are not part of a research project nor do they represent material that the professor might someday publish. Often they are simply summaries of commonplaces within their disciplines.

One way to shorten the distance between the seminary and the parish is to put these non-proprietary resources on the Web, making them accessible to students while they are taking classes and to church leaders after they graduate.

This model also has the advantage of building on the latest work in learning theory. Scholars have recently become quite interested in how students appropriate knowledge for specific use in their lives. They have looked at what kind of teaching methods spark learning that affects action. The name they have assigned to this method is “just-in-time learning.” What they discovered is that people learn best when they need it most. Consider an obvious example. When I was a teen and my father first told me how to change a tire, I was mildly interested. My investment in learning soared, however, when I walked out to the driveway one morning and saw that I had a flat tire. I needed the knowledge, so I paid better attention, and I put it into practice immediately. I learned best when I needed it the most.

Scholars have applied the same “just-in-time” principle to teaching complex skills. They have found that if they can simulate a situation where the student needs some skill, then the student will be particularly ready to learn. Their methods rely heavily on computer technology. For example, a very large consulting firm invested in a system to teach management skills to their new employees. What they did was create a simulation where a new trainee was placed in a common situation and asked to figure out what to do next. On the screen he had access to two rather important sources of learning, however. First, he had a syllabus that summarized the classroom learning that we all recognize as fairly traditional. It was organized so that whatever lessons applied most clearly to his situation were at the top of the stack. We can see immediately how that might apply to parish pastors. One of the most difficult tasks of integration is knowing which courses apply to which situations. If we

can create scenarios where the connections are already close at hand, then we can guide our students in the integrating process.<sup>12</sup>

The pedagogical possibilities that computers bring to theological schools are enormous. But like the early days of television, we are still experimenting with the new medium. The experiments begin in familiar territory as we transfer well-known teaching methods to the digital realm. That familiar territory is not, however, where we will stay. Our colleagues will experiment with new methods and innovative means. How will we be able to separate the most effective ones from those that are simply flashy? The best uses of technology enable us to teach in ways that would be otherwise impossible. This is our standard.

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## ENDNOTES

1. The discussions of multiculturalism and globalization are too voluminous to reference here. Suffice it to say that they occupied most issues of this journal in the 1980's.
2. Jackson Carroll, Barbara G. Wheeler, Daniel O. Aleshire, and Penny Long Marler, *Being There: Culture and Formation in Two Theological Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
3. Edward Farley began the discussion of fragmentation in 1983 with the publication of *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). He continues to participate in the ongoing discussion. See, for example, Edward Farley, "Why seminaries don't change: A reflection on faculty specialization." *Christian Century*, February 5-12, 1997, 133-143. The best summary of the debate within theological education is David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).
4. On the question of community see, Rena Palloff and Keith Pratt, *Building Learning Communities in Cyberspace: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), esp. Chapter 2.
5. A provocative denunciation of PowerPoint's role in education is offered by Tom Creed, "PowerPoint, No! Cyberspace, Yes," published by the National Teaching and Learning Forum at <[http://www.ntlf.com/html/pi/9705/creed\\_1.htm](http://www.ntlf.com/html/pi/9705/creed_1.htm)>. Creed's premise is that "digital technology can enhance our students' learning, but only if our goals for our students' learning drive its use." He dismisses PowerPoint because he believes it places the emphasis "on the quality of your presentation rather than your student's learning."
6. *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); cf. <<http://pzweb.harvard.edu/>>.
7. The most accessible explication of "experiential learning" is found in David Kolb, Joyce Osland, and Irwin Rubin, *Organizational Behavior: An Experiential Approach*, Sixth Edition (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1995 [1971]), 41ff.; cf. James Anderson and Maurianne Adams, "Acknowledging the Learning Styles of Diverse Student Populations" in *Teaching for Diversity*, eds. Laura Border and Nancy Van Note Chism (San

Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 19-33. For a database of learning theory summaries, see <<http://www.gwu.edu/~tip>>.

8. It should be noted that Schank does not himself make reference to Kolb, nor does he use a cyclic model. What I have done is map his "learning waterfall" onto Kolb's cycle. The best source on Schank's work is his book, *Engines for Education* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, 1995) 69ff. (available on-line at <[http://www.ils.nwu.edu/~e\\_for\\_e/nodes/I-M-NODE-4121-pg.html](http://www.ils.nwu.edu/~e_for_e/nodes/I-M-NODE-4121-pg.html)>.

9. The syllabus for this particularly creative course and a description of its resources is available at <<http://www.nd.edu/~ktrembat/www-class/foundhome.html>>.

10. One library of samples that display varying levels of cooperation between professors and students is available at <<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/curry/dept/edes/inststech/products/product.html>>.

11. There is an interesting collection of multimedia case studies located at the University of Virginia <<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/ITcases/Site/Casebook/book.html>>. A professor there, Mable Kinzie, has studied the pedagogical usefulness that such cases provide. See, for example, Mable Kinzie, Elizabeth Hrabe, and Valeria Larsen, "An Instructional Design Case Event: Exploring Issues in Professional Practice," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 46/1 (1998) 53-71 (available on-line at <<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/ITcases/AECT97>>; also, Mable Kinzie, Valerie Larsen, and Todd Kent, "Online Learning via Real-Time Discussion of Web-Based Case Materials," unpublished paper presented to the Internet Society (INET) in Montreal, June 1996, available on-line at <[http://www.crim.ca/inet96/papers/c5/c5\\_1.htm](http://www.crim.ca/inet96/papers/c5/c5_1.htm)>.

12. A wealth of popular articles have been written about "just-in-time" learning and about Andersen Consulting's application of it. See, for example, Mickey Williamson, "High-Tech Training," *BYTE* (December 1994) available on-line at <<http://www.byte.com/art/9412/sec8/art1.htm>>; Christina Novicki, "Best Technology: Just-in-Time Learning," *Fast Company* (October/November 1996), 28 (available on-line at <<http://www.fastcompany.com/online/05/corpu3.html>> and "Roger Schank: End Run to the Goal Line," *Educom Review* 30/1 (January 1995) available on-line at: <<http://www.educom.edu/web/pubs/reviewArticles/30114.html>>.



# Summaries of Two Experimental Distance Education Programs

**ABSTRACT:** In the context of the ATS Commission on Accrediting's mandate from the ATS membership to undertake a study of the educational processes and outcomes of external independent study as related to graduate theological education degrees, described elsewhere in this issue, the Commission approved in 1997 two "experimental programs" using non-traditional methods of delivery. The program of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary uses an extension center delivery model at sites in Decatur, Georgia, and in Orlando, Graceville, and Miami, Florida. The program at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, is an on-line component of a Master of Divinity degree program using a distributed learning system. Brief reports of the two programs are provided here by the individual schools.

## Technology and Distance Education: The New Orleans Story

*Jimmy Duker*

*New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was established in 1917 by the Southern Baptist Convention. The school is one of six seminaries owned and operated by the Convention for the purpose of training ministers for leadership in the churches, agencies, and institutions related to the denomination. In 1997-98, the seminary had 659 master's level students on campus and 555 master's level students in off-campus centers. In addition, 212 doctoral-level students were studying on the New Orleans campus.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary provides a full program of on-campus theological education. Students who live on campus or commute may earn the Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, Master of Arts in Christian Education, Master of Music in Church Music, Doctor of Ministry, Doctor of Musical Arts, or Doctor of Philosophy.

We also have chosen to provide distance education to qualified students who cannot or will not move to the campus. The seminary uses the extension center model for delivery of distance education. Our extension centers are seminary classes in remote locations from the main campus that provide qualified students the opportunity to participate in regular academic classes on schedules that meet their needs. Students in ten graduate extension center sites are on a four-year cycle of classes. In addition to their study in the extension

centers, students must come to the campus in New Orleans for a minimum of thirty semester hours of classes.

We chose the extension center model of delivery for several reasons:

1. Students already involved in ministry have the opportunity to participate in an academic regimen of classes, reading, and writing while continuing practical application of their education.
2. The seminary's regular faculty and qualified adjuncts are involved in the academic experience of the extension center students.
3. The seminary provides in each center a significant community of students with a shared learning experience and collegiality as the students go through the cycle of classes together. Classes in the centers generally range in size from twenty-five to sixty.
4. Students who were not previously receiving theological education are provided with an opportunity to receive some training.

Instruction in the centers is provided in three ways: (1) on-campus teachers travel weekly to the centers, (2) qualified adjuncts in the local areas teach classes, and (3) on-campus teachers use compressed interactive video from the main campus to remote locations in Decatur, Georgia; Graceville, Florida; Orlando, Florida; and Miami, Florida.

### ***Our Purpose***

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

### ***Our Target***

The target of New Orleans Baptist Seminary is healthy churches. We believe that the role of theological education in producing healthy churches is to produce competent leaders to provide guidance to the churches.

### ***Our Motivation***

Because of the unique polity of churches in the Southern Baptist Convention, no denominational authority exists to impose educational requirements for pastors. Southern Baptist Convention churches do not require theological education before ordination. As a result, local churches often call pastors who have no formal theological training. Surveys in isolated areas of the Southeast continue to indicate that as many as forty percent of pastors in Southern Baptist churches do not have seminary training. The need for expanded and innovative delivery systems for theological education is obvious. For the past eighteen years New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has been engaged in a serious effort to provide practical and accessible theological education for these pastors.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has been involved since the 1994-95 academic year in the use of compressed interactive television between its New Orleans campus and its campus in Decatur, Georgia. The seminary has used this real time, fully interactive medium to provide classes taught by full-time, on-campus professors simultaneously in New Orleans and Decatur. The evaluation of these classes by students, teachers, and administrators has been positive. In 1997, the seminary began offering classes through interactive television in three locations in Florida.

### ***Our Choices***

In all of our sites we chose to purchase equipment rather than rent facilities and services from another provider because of the size of our classes and because of the frequency of use of the equipment. We purchased the following equipment for the on-campus site and the Decatur site where the seminary owns the property:

- Two 32-inch monitors for the professor
- Two 32-inch monitors for the class
- Two moveable cameras
- One document camera
- An MCU in New Orleans that enables us to connect to multiple points.

For the remote locations where we use facilities provided by others, we purchased portable equipment:

- Two monitors
- One camera (for class)
- One document camera (can be used for instructor)

We chose to use a technician rather than faculty members as equipment operators. This enables the teachers to focus on the students and teaching rather than on the technology.

### ***Our Proposal***

In 1997, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary proposed to the ATS Commission on Accrediting that the seminary be allowed to conduct an experimental program over the 1997-98 and 1998-99 academic years to study the effectiveness of the inclusion of interactive television as an alternate means of instruction in extension centers.

Classes are taught in the graduate extension centers in Decatur, Georgia; Graceville, Florida; Orlando, Florida; and Miami, Florida. The program was conducted over two academic years and evaluated as follows:

1. Each experimental class was evaluated using the seminary's Course and Instructor Rating instrument.
2. Special student surveys were conducted in each experimental class to evaluate the effectiveness of the alternative delivery system.
3. Special teacher surveys were conducted in each experimental class to evaluate the effectiveness of the alternative delivery system.
4. Focus groups, made up of instructors, students, and center administrators, were used to give additional evaluation to the experimental program.
5. A report on the evaluation of the experiment was submitted at the end of the program to the ATS Commission on Accrediting and the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Students took classes according to the following formula:

1. Thirty semester hours (15 courses) in classes on the New Orleans campus
2. Thirty-two semester hours (16 courses) in classes taught by teachers in the on-campus locations
3. Thirty semester hours (15 courses) in interactive television classes taught by on-campus professors

The advantages of the experimental program include the following:

1. Time and effort relief for graduate faculty members was gained because travel was eliminated to the extension centers involved in the experimental program. This time saved allowed faculty members to spend more time on campus in such activities as research and the mentoring of students.
2. Globalization was enhanced because of the inclusion of two groups in the class discussion and activity with on-campus students. One of the groups consists of students who are currently involved in the actual practice of ministry during the time they are completing their theological education. The other group is made up of students of an ethnic and national origin that is different from most of the on-campus students.

### ***Our Progress***

We began the multi-point classes at the beginning of the 1997-98 academic year. We have now completed two years of classes, teaching them in as many as five locations. We are continuing our ongoing evaluation through the use of surveys and focus groups. The reaction to this point has been generally positive from the perspective of our instructors and our students. Here are a few things we have learned:

1. Instructors adapt to the technology quickly and are able to promote interaction in the remote sites.

2. Students also adapt to the technology quickly.
3. Students will participate “across the wires,” but interaction must be consciously promoted.
4. Personal relationships between students in the remote sites and instructors can be developed with effort on the part of both.
5. Students have more ownership in the class if the instructor visits the remote locations in person at least once during the semester
6. Class size must be limited. We have added a second room in New Orleans to enable us to provide smaller classes.
7. Students in the remote sites will take advantage of breaks, pre-class, and post-class time to talk to the instructor just as they do in the on-site location.
8. Eye contact and interpersonal activity is just as important between the instructor and the remote site as it is in the on-site location.
9. The diversity of the classes in the remote sites contributes to the learning experience of the on-campus students because the remote students tend to have more practical experience in ministry.
10. Students in the remote sites perform as well on tests, and reading and writing projects, as the on-site students.
11. The diversity and size of the classes provide a richer learning community.
12. The diversity and size of the classes provide more opportunity for shifting the burden of learning from the teacher to the students.

As we continue to teach using this delivery system, we expect to learn more about the educational process, spiritual formation, and pedagogical techniques as they relate to the technology. We look forward to the coming year and the opportunity to involve more extension center students in graduate theological education and more faculty members in new methods of the teaching/learning experience.

*Jimmy Dukes is academic dean of the North Georgia Center of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and academic dean of the Extension Center System.*

# Quality Education Using Timely Methodologies

*Gregory W. Bourgond*

*Bethel Theological Seminary*

Bethel Theological Seminary offers an In-Ministry Master of Divinity degree for students who wish to pursue graduate theological education while serving in active ministry.

## *Delivery System*

The In-Ministry Master of Divinity degree uses a distributed delivery system. It is an assembled hybrid of media-based courseware, computer technology, the Information Highway, and an on-line faculty willing to adapt their teaching styles to meet the need of students. The purpose is to provide quality seminary education to ministry-active learners in remote ministry settings using friendly technology. Our goal is to meet them where they are and to bring them where they need to be. Our objectives are transformed leaders equipped for the year 2000 and beyond who are biblically sound, spiritually formed, transformationally active, and who possess enhanced technological skills for the ministry.

Available instructional technology and trained faculty provide learning experiences in four venues: (1) same location—same time (face-to-face on-campus intensives), (2) same location—different time (projects while on campus), (3) different location—same time (compressed video and audio conferencing), and (4) different location—different time (discussion forums and the Internet). The distributed learning toolkit is slaved to program outcomes and objectives, and it consists of Web Course in a Box® (authoring software and course conduct vehicle), audio conferencing, compressed video, Internet resources, streamed audio and video, discussion forums, email, print media, audio tapes, and video tapes.

## *Structure and Process*

Currently, Bethel has more than 200 students enrolled across forty-one states and three countries. Bethel began five years ago to offer a Master of Divinity degree using this delivery system. We have since added a Master of Arts in Children and Family Ministries and a church-based Master of Arts in Transformational Leadership to train interns and pastoral staff. In a five-year period, a student attends classes twice a year for two weeks in February and August, preceded by four weeks of pre-course work and followed by three weeks of post-course work. Four courses are completed annually by on-campus intensives. In addition, the student completes two additional courses entirely at distance in the fall and spring of each year. A contextualized learning

project is completed in the students' ministry settings over a ten-month period, supervised by a resident faculty adviser. If a student stays on track, he or she can complete an M.Div. degree in five years or a Master of Arts degree in three years.

### ***Program Uniqueness***

The program is unique for several reasons. First, most of the course work is accomplished by computer. In fact, assignments, student discussion, and interface with the professor is done via this medium, supplemented by telephone conference class meetings. Second, many on-campus intensives are taught in two separate locations; St. Paul, Minnesota, and San Diego, California. Third, these on-campus intensives provide intense community and spiritual formation opportunities to students that continue at a distance once they leave the campus. Fourth, all our professors are trained in the use of instructional technology and the distributed delivery system. Fifth, the program is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and is approved as an experimental program by The Association of Theological Schools. Finally, students who otherwise could not avail themselves of quality graduate theological training now have the opportunity to do so without leaving their ministry settings.

### ***Lessons Learned***

We began this journey more than five years ago. Several lessons have been learned along the way. With regard to faculty issues, faculty (resident and adjunct) should be technology-friendly and teach in the delivery system. However, not every faculty member will be enthusiastic about distributed learning initially. Replication of the traditional pedagogy using technology simply will not work. New methods must be adopted to reach students using this framework to access the combination of learning styles of students. "Sage-on-the-stage" must be augmented with "guide-on-the-side." Progressive and ongoing faculty development and support are essential.

With regard to student issues, distance learning is not for everyone. It requires self-discipline, focus, and organizational acumen. Expect students to "stop out" but not necessarily drop out. Technology orientation is crucial for entering students. Administrators and faculty should understand that students will assimilate knowledge through a matrix of learning styles including visual, auditory, experiential, and independent channels. Finally, ministry-mindedness brings pragmatism to the classroom but must be augmented with sound biblical foundations.

With regard to developmental issues, a team approach to course development is necessary. The team might consist of a curriculum designer, a media specialist, and the professor who has veto power over suggestions and recommendations. Content is important but so is organization and presentation,

centralized standards, and decentralized operation. Class sizes (enrolled students) must be limited to manageable numbers. The development process should think through cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning domains. Finally, community and spiritual formation is difficult but not impossible to establish. In fact, many resident programs have evolved into commuter campuses, making community and spiritual formation more difficult. On the other hand, students who spend four weeks together each year establish community and spiritual formation quickly because they not only study together, they eat together, pray together, share their problems with one another in a non-threatening environment, and support one another, which continues when they leave the campus.

With regard to administrative and technological issues, additional administrative support is needed. The administrative team must possess unique skills, which includes some technological aptitude. It is necessary to budget for periodic faculty/administration computer upgrades. Quality and service rather than quantity and complexity should rule. An institutional home page is critical to marketing, recruitment, information, and access to resources. Mission and vision should determine the acquisition of technology. Technical support and infrastructure must be planned to keep pace. Establish a baseline for computers and modems. Do not set the specifications too high. Technology-friendly administration and technology support are essential. Standards and protocols should be developed for using each delivery system component. Periodic technology resource upgrades are to be expected but should be phased in. A technology fee will help to defray institutional technology and infrastructure costs.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Technology is merely a means to an end and should be considered one of many methodologies. A distributed learning delivery system can extend seminary reach to international centers of learning. Mission, vision, and ministry philosophy must drive all decisions regarding the uses of technology in theological education. Timeless truth conveyed by timely methodologies can help us reach our cultures for Christ.

*Gregory W. Bourgond is dean of academic affairs and instructional technology, and director of in-ministry distributed learning at Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.*

# Report of the Survey of ATS Schools on Educational Technology and Distance Education

*Katherine E. Amos*

*The Association of Theological Schools*

ABSTRACT: In the fall of 1998, The Association of Theological Schools included an optional technology survey with its Annual Report Forms to the member institutions to gather data on the schools' uses of technology in five areas: institutional infrastructure, administration, library, classroom, and in distance education courses. This article summarizes the data reported by the schools in the distance education portion of the survey and information gathered by follow-up telephone interviews with those schools that had reported conducting courses by distance learning. A number of comments that schools provided in their survey responses are also included and reflect methods of delivery and technologies employed, program support and administration for distance learning programs, how the programs seek to address spiritual and personal formation, and issues of evaluation in distance education programs.

"In 1992 P.R. Shade reported that the Internet was expanding at an explosive rate, extending over fifty countries on all seven continents with approximately five to ten million users. By 1995, the number of Internet users was increasing by ten percent per month and was estimated at more than thirty million."<sup>1</sup> Current estimates suggest 200 million Internet users worldwide. "With this explosive growth in the Internet came a rapid increase in computer-assisted distance education with many organizations and institutions developing systems and networks for learner access to the Internet."<sup>2</sup> Greg Kearsley, in *Online Education: Learning and Teaching in Cyberspace*, notes "The 21st Century will be one in which society is dramatically transformed by computer networks."<sup>3</sup>

The rapid expansion of computer use in distance education is a recent influence on the growth of distance education. North American institutions of higher education have been offering distance education courses since the late 1800s through printed material and correspondence courses. In the twentieth century audio, video, television, compressed video, satellite, synchronous and asynchronous computer conferencing, telephone bridge, audio and video conferencing on the Web, and audio/video streaming (either real-time with casting or archival audio/video on demand) have been added to distance

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education courses so that now entire degrees can be earned at the undergraduate and graduate levels in many fields of study. *Peterson's Guide to Distance Learning Programs* lists distance education programs offered by 850 accredited North American institutions.<sup>4</sup> Five years ago there were fewer than 100 institutions listed in the guide.

Theological schools accredited by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) have used distance education courses in a limited way for a number of years, but little has been written and published about distance education in North American theological education. Almost no research has been conducted on the use of distance education in graduate theological schools, while numerous books and articles have been published about distance education in secular higher education.

Not only is there a lack of published material about distance education in theological education, but until recently it was difficult to provide the public or ATS schools with accurate information about the types of distance education courses being offered at the various ATS accredited institutions. This lack of information has not deterred numerous calls and questions to ATS seminaries and the ATS office in Pittsburgh concerning where a distance education theological degree can be earned or courses taken through distance education to assist students who cannot relocate to established seminary campuses. Current ATS standards permit students to complete one-third of a degree program through distance education courses.

In 1996, the ATS membership elected an Educational Technology Advisory Committee to provide counsel to the Association and resources to the schools in this area. The ten-member committee soon realized that there were no data from ATS schools related to the use of technology in any area of the institution. The committee agreed that such a study was needed and appropriate. The committee, in conjunction with ATS staff, developed a survey that was mailed to all ATS institutions with the fall 1998 Annual Report Forms. The purpose of the survey was to collect data regarding the schools' use of technology in five areas: infrastructure, administration, library, classroom, and in distance education courses. The survey, which was optional, was limited to questions about the availability and use of technology on campus and in distance education programs. It did not ask ATS schools to evaluate the *quality* of their use of technology in the classroom (whether traditional or distance education) or in other areas of the institution.

This article reports the data gathered in the "distance education" component of the survey, which asked questions including the offering of distance education courses; the formats, methods, and technologies being used to offer distance education courses; support services available to distance education students; and how the institutions were building community and providing personal spiritual formation in a distance education format. Following the receipt of the written surveys, ATS staff conducted telephone interviews with

representatives of most of the schools that had indicated that they offered distance learning courses in order to gain greater clarity about the programs these schools were conducting.

The definition of distance education used for the survey was the one provided in the General Institutional Standard 10, statement 10.2.1.4 “external independent study” as follows:

This type of extension education provides for-credit courses for individuals engaged in external independent study which includes any form of individualized study where regularly scheduled in person conversations with faculty or other students are unlikely to occur. Such courses typically employ printed, audio, video, computer, or electronic communication as primary resources for instruction.<sup>5</sup>

Of the 237 surveys mailed in August 1998, 201 schools (84%) completed and returned this optional survey instrument. It should be noted that the data from the survey are now more than a year old and, therefore, give only a “snap shot” of distance education methods and practices at that point in time. Because practices are changing rapidly in distance education in higher education, we can assume that there have been changes in ATS institutions as well. However, these data do provide a starting point to consider a broad picture of the role of distance education in ATS schools.

## **The Distance Education Survey**

### *How many ATS schools were involved in distance education in fall 1998?*

Of the 201 schools that responded to the survey in fall 1998, 62 (32%) reported that they were involved in distance education; 134 institutions (68%) reported that they were not involved in distance education. Because this was a higher number of institutions participating in distance education than had been anticipated, in the summer of 1999, the ATS staff conducted a telephone survey of the 62 institutions that had indicated that they offered distance education. One institution that had failed to respond to the written survey, but did offer distance education courses, was contacted in the telephone survey, bringing the total number of schools called to 63. The telephone survey posed several follow-up questions for clarification of the written survey responses.

Of the 63 schools contacted by phone, 42 schools confirmed that they offered one or more courses exclusively in a distance education format. At least nine of these 42 schools indicated that they participated in the program known as Institute of Theological Studies (ITS) or, alternatively, Independent Study Programs (ISP). Of those nine schools, four have developed their own distance education courses in addition to the ITS courses. It is unclear how many of the

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other schools may also participate in the ITS or ISP program because of the way in which the phone interview question was worded. Twenty-one schools reported in the follow-up interview that they did not offer all of any course exclusively by distance learning methods. It appeared that, while these schools had courses that employed some of the media and distance learning elements, the courses did involve some face-to-face interaction with faculty members.

The second question of the telephone survey asked if the distance education courses offered credit toward a degree program (as opposed to a certificate program or continuing education course offering). Of the 63 schools in the phone survey, 37 answered "yes"; these 37 schools were then asked "How many courses are offered in this manner?" The number of for-credit courses ranged from 20 or more to fewer than five: 16 of the schools offered five or fewer; 14 offered between six and 20 courses, and three schools offered more than 20 for-credit courses. Two schools reported offering portions of a degree program by distance learning.

The data from the 1998 written survey suggested that Evangelical schools are more likely to offer distance education courses than mainline Protestant or Roman Catholic schools, and mainline Protestant schools are more likely to offer distance education courses than Roman Catholic schools. The data also indicated that "independent" schools (those not affiliated with colleges or universities) offered more distance education courses than schools that are parts of colleges and universities. Schools with smaller enrollments were more likely to offer distance learning courses (76-150 FTE and 151-300 FTE) than larger enrollment institutions (FTE>301).

*What methods are used to deliver distance education courses in ATS schools?*

The 1998 written survey asked schools to indicate which methods they used to deliver their distance education programs. The choices provided on the survey were audio tapes, interactive video, video tapes, programmed texts, computer e-mail, television, World Wide Web, telephones, computer conferencing, print-based, and other. Some schools indicated that they used all these methods in their courses. The most often used method was computer e-mail, with 45 institutions using e-mail as a delivery method. Audio tapes were the second most frequently cited delivery method, with 39 schools reporting the use of audio tapes. Other methods of delivery used were print-based (35 schools), World Wide Web (29 schools), telephones (27 schools), and video tapes (27 schools). Television was the least frequently used method of delivery in the schools (seven schools reporting its use), even though it is still heavily used by other educational institutions and agencies in delivering distance education.<sup>6</sup>

<u>Methods of Delivery</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>
audio tapes	39	22	1
interactive video	10	51	1
video tapes	27	34	1
programmed texts	13	48	1
computer e-mail	45	16	1
television	7	54	1
World Wide Web	29	32	1
telephones	27	34	1
computer conferencing	12	49	1
print-based	35	26	1
other	11	48	3

Forty-six institutions reported that they were using a combination of the delivery methods. Below are some specific comments from institutions about combining technologies and methods.

1. Our courses combine all of the above in most cases. Using a printed study guide for direction, students communicate with each other and the instructor via phone, e-mail, on-line discussion. Approximately 10-15% of our courses do not require use of the Internet. We use a videotape during orientation.
2. WWW with software which integrates threaded discussions, print materials, etc. Faculty work with cohorts of 10-20 students in a virtual environment for 13-14 weeks.
3. Independent study courses utilize extensive syllabi coordinated with video or audio tapes. Each has an assigned faculty mentor as well as an ISP manager who can/does assist students as needed via telephone and e-mail.
4. Our delivery system employs compressed video for on-campus intensives only. In all cases we use America Online, computers, videos, audio conferencing, discussion folders, streamed audio, e-mail, telephones, print-based materials, and WWW.
5. Each of our courses combines audio tapes, video tapes, print materials supported by telephone and e-mail interactions. We are now adding WWW.
6. Our "tier one" offerings use audio tapes, videotapes, workbooks, and a passive web site. Our "tier two" offerings use CD-ROM technol-

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ogy along with “tier one.” Our “tier three” offerings are highly interactive.

7. We use Real Education as our service provider for web-based courses. We also have PictureTel two-way audio/video in three locations for interactive audio/video.

8. Most courses integrate some or all methods. World Wide Web is our chief tool and we work predominantly in digital formats. However, we offer students the option to purchase tapes and other formats when needed.

9. In each of our distance courses, we attempt to make our courses indistinguishable from the on-campus courses. All distance education courses utilize audio tapes, e-mail (to submit assignments, communicate between professor and student), Internet (post syllabi, course materials of non-published documents, video presentation, Power Point presentation), telephone, computer conferencing (to visually explain or discuss a specific point of a lecture or a paper), and print-based material (handout materials of a class, etc.).

***What program support and administration is provided for distance education courses at ATS schools?***

The written survey asked, “How does your institution provide program support and administration for distance learning programs?” In response, 47 institutions reported that they provided “program coordination and support personnel,” 40 provided “academic advising,” and 39 provided “a distance education budget” and “set tuition and materials fees that were the same on- and off-campus.” Twenty-nine institutions provided “instructional design support for and with each professor designing and teaching a related course,” and 26 institutions established a “regular student participant feedback process loop.”

Eighteen of the institutions provided “regular in-service training and support to professors, staff, and students involved in extension/distance education programs.” This low support for in-service training for faculty, staff, and students could signal a potential problem for theological schools because distance education literature consistently emphasizes the need for ongoing training for faculty and a thorough orientation and on-going support for distance education students. Only 17 schools reported that they “reward faculty and staff for innovative program design and delivery.” This is another indicator of weak support for faculty and staff involved in distance education.

<u>Program Support and Administration</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>
provided a distance education budget	39	21	2
provided program coordination and support personnel	47	13	2
provided academic advising	40	20	2
provided personal counseling	20	40	2
provided instructional design support for and with each professor designing and teaching a related course	29	31	2
established a regular student participant feedback process loop	26	34	2
set tuition and materials fees that are the same on- and off-campus	39	21	2
rewarded faculty and staff for innovative program design and delivery	17	43	2
provided regular in-service training and support to professors, staff, and students involved in extension/ distance education programs	18	42	2

***How do these courses/programs seek to address community and spiritual/ personal formation at ATS schools?***

Community building and spiritual/ personal formation continue to be two of the most significant issues for theological schools as they develop distance education programs and courses. The survey asked questions about these issues in the following ways: “What methods has your institution used to build community among your distance education students?” and “How does your institution address spiritual/ personal formation?” While there was considerable overlap in the responses to the two questions, some of the institutions had carefully focused on and addressed both issues.

Responses to both questions were varied, creative, and showed insight into the difficulties of “building community” and “developing spiritually and personally” at a distance. Some of the methods described by the schools included:

- Use of e-mail
- Sharing of personal concerns and prayer in the electronic classroom
- Training staff and faculty in “Christian nurture” and community building
- Synchronous streaming of on-campus chapel services
- Exchange by phone and in person when possible

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Retreats: one full day of faculty-mediated interaction regarding spiritual disciplines  
Personal profiles and picture rosters  
Web-based discussion group  
Tapes to Students (dean's messages) and newsletters (on-line)  
Regular contact with faculty for discussion in both academic and non-academic areas  
Cohort clusters  
Threaded discussion groups with mandatory participation  
Local alumni who serve as mentors and organize occasional gatherings  
On-line discussion rooms and printed study guides that include, at the instructor's discretion, theological reflection, Bible study, areas for personal concerns and responses, issues of formation  
Personal counseling for students through telephone and e-mail  
Contextualized learning components where students are required to complete spiritual exercises over a 5-10 month period  
Prayer partners  
Accountability groups  
Assessment tools: Myers Briggs, CPI, Thomas-Kilmenn CMI, Profiles of Ministry  
Mentored ministry component involving a local church in a structured spiritual/personal formation program  
Emphasizing the importance of vocational integration

Some schools acknowledged that they were relying on the campus experience to fill this part of the students' educational process or that they intended to address these areas in the future but had not resolved the question of community building and spiritual/personal formation at this stage in the development of their distance education course offerings. A number of schools had agreements with local churches or the diocese, presbytery, etc., to develop a partnership in assisting in the students' spiritual/personal formation and building community.

Some specific comments by ATS schools that were insightful in the process of building community and in spiritual/personal formation were:

1. Production of a videotape, available to distance education students, that introduces the director of distance education and many of the staff and administrators with whom they may be speaking/ e-mailing/corresponding. Use of a "discussion room" format in all Internet courses and "e-group" work. Encouraging the exchange of e-mail addresses among students. Production of a distance education packet, including an orientation booklet, that lets all students know how it works and whom to ask for help. Encouraging prompt responses from faculty.

2. Internet-based electronic classrooms of 10-20 students, coupled with one professor. Synchronous streaming of on-campus chapels. Sharing of personal concerns and prayer in electronic classroom. Two full-time support staff to monitor and intervene with any spiritual support needed.
3. All are “clustered” into local groups that meet either weekly or at a minimum of 2-3 times in a course.
4. A newsletter is sent regularly to students taking courses off-campus (at approved sites or independently). Students are in regular contact with on-campus student assistants (at least 20 minutes every two weeks). Students receive notice of short courses and special lectures on campus, which some attend. The Extension Office seeks to put students in the same area in contact with one another; some meet to listen to the lectures and to study together.
5. One of the most important benefits of distance education is that it allows students to stay in their community in which they are ministering, thus providing the needed support as well as immediate application of their learning. To encourage community among distant students, we have instituted electronic discussion groups.
6. Audio-course students are required to come to campus for one weekend. There they meet with other students enrolled in the course and the professor.
7. Each student is provided a personal web page for posting a photo and personal information of the student’s choice. Student and faculty web pages are accessible to all course participants. Telephone conference calls and on-line chat sessions have been used. Students are encouraged to address e-mail individually to one another as well as their more formal public course interactions at the course website.
8. We have a three-day, intensive on-campus, followed by a 12-week on-line course, concluded by another three-day intensive. During the on-campus time, students attend prayer, worship, and meals together. They are housed together and have opportunities for recreation and a social gathering.
9. Personal issues are addressed by the distant learning student’s advisor and/or the individual teachers by telephone, e-mail, or in person. Teachers in the program endeavor to make themselves available to students by scheduling regular office hours and by working diligently to make the distant education student’s educational experience as personal as possible. Constant and consistent communication is a critical activity to a successful distant education program. We also

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have a Counseling Center and Campus Ministry which are open to all students who seek their assistance.

10. Distance learning students are assigned advisors. They are counseled when requested via correspondence, e-mail, and phone. Periodic surveys of all of our students contain questions which reflect spiritual concerns.

11. In e-mail classes we have some assignments called "action points." Action points are designed by the instructor in consultation with the students and require local critique and feedback from someone who can observe the students' ministry situation and fulfillment of the action point.

12. None to date. However, beginning summer of 1999, the distance program will implement our Spiritual Formation Program. All distance students will be placed in cohort groups of 8 to 12; students will attend a 12-day seminar to develop community and take Profiles in Ministry Stage I. Students will be required to select a mentor in the field to account for the student's academic and spiritual goals.

*How is distance education being evaluated at ATS schools?*

ATS schools are using a variety of methods to evaluate distance education programs. The question asked of institutions in the written survey was, "What evaluation process is in place to assure that the learning objectives are being attained?" Evaluation methods reported included student self-evaluation, manager/mentor review of student performance, examinations, faculty course evaluation, oral exams, anecdotal evaluations, on-line evaluation, take-home exams, student focused group evaluation, proctored examination, end-of-course debriefing sessions, and a mid-point study survey. One institution reported that the dean, instructor, and distance learning coordinator meet for a formal review at the end of the course. Another reported weekly feedback sessions face-to-face with the students. At some institutions formative evaluations were conducted mid-course and summative evaluations were conducted at the end of each course. Institutions also reported that distance education course syllabi were approved by the Academic Affairs Committee or that they used the same institutional procedures for approval of course syllabi as used for courses offered through traditional methods.

Some specific statements related to evaluation from individual institutions were:

1. With respect to students, we have developed an extensive (6-page) form by which students evaluate themselves, the course, the

instructor, distance education services, and offer suggestions. This form is included in the printed study guide, available at the start of the course, is mailed out later, and this year we are testing an on-line version. Some instructors also use formative evaluation in mid-course. We are in the process of writing a similar form whereby instructors can evaluate courses.

2. Aside from common assessment tools used in the classroom (i.e., tests, papers, etc.), our assessment plan includes a junior assessment process using a variety of psychological assessment tools within the completion of the first eight courses. Secondly, we have implemented guided faculty interaction activities. Thirdly, we use contextualized learning exercises which require immersion activities over an eight-month period. Finally, Profiles of Ministry has been implemented in the senior year.

3. We use standard evaluative methods in distance courses (papers, exams, etc.) sent to the instructor via regular mail. Some peer learning and discussion are enhanced due to the specialized classroom environment of a distance learning classroom.

4. Students are required to complete the same graded assignments and examinations as students on campus. Student progress is carefully monitored by on-campus student assistants.

5. A process of continuous feedback is built into the first offering of a course.

6. Each student receives an evaluation form for each course asking them to rate various aspects of the course. Results are entered into a database and reviewed by staff and faculty for each course and for the entire program.

7. Student evaluations are done at three points: beginning, middle, and end. Faculty use the same assessment devices as used in the traditional section of the class.

8. We do evaluation interviews with faculty, focus groups with staff, and on-line surveys with students at the conclusion of every course.

9. We will use both a regular course evaluation and a distance learning course evaluation.

10. Semesterly comparative studies on 3 to 4 of our distance courses, evaluating syllabi, exam results, etc. We attempt to evaluate all courses within a year.

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11. Individual course design, student evaluation, ongoing assessment by distance learning program coordinator.

***What provisions have been made for training the faculty in the use of the appropriate technology to be used in distance education?***

Institutions are using a variety of methods to train faculty to teach in a distance education format. Some of these methods include technology workshops; in-depth consultation for design of courses; one-on-one coaching, as needed; training in Power Point, Learning Space (or other software); webpage design, course development; faculty mentor faculty; use of sabbaticals for more concentrated training in distance education; and outsourcing training. Many of the institutions responding realized that training of faculty was needed on a continuing basis and that faculty needed release time and staff support in order to develop distance education courses and teach using distance education methods.

***What educational issues have been identified through your use or experimentation with distance education technology?***

A wide range of issues were identified by ATS schools as they developed distance education courses. Issues that related to students included how to develop community and address spiritual/personal formation, how to motivate and retain students, how to identify students as potential distance education learners, how to assist students in creating conducive learning environments at home, how to provide adequate student support services, how to train students to be technically functional, and how to help students complete work in a timely fashion.

Issues that related to course development included how to design effective on-line courses, how to include group discussion on-line, how to keep course material updated, understanding the limits of technology for the learning process, proper selection of technology media, getting feedback on distance education courses (evaluation/improvement cycle), determining the cost effectiveness of using technology, faculty/student interaction, difficulty of educational design for distance education courses, and quality control.

Faculty issues included faculty training, the large commitment of faculty time to start a course, faculty need for staff support, making distance education a regular part of the faculty workload; compensation for faculty, faculty/student interaction, relating the teaching of distance education course to faculty promotion and tenure, and being tied to "our pedagogical past."

Other issues mentioned were communication of the institutional ethos, the need for library support, resource allocation (time, money, skills, personnel), and educational equivalency. Some helpful comments made by several schools were:

1. To what degree are computers to be cognitive tools with a distinctive pedagogy, to what degree merely a delivery system? What is the potential of on-line discussion groups? What are the best ways to design them? to train students to use them to their fullest benefit? To what degree are e-relationships enhancing to a relational profession?
2. Need for constant monitoring of electronic classroom to spot potential problems and intervene. Intentional efforts to address retention. Peer support among faculty. Actual performance of students, however, matches or exceeds that on-campus.
3. Proper selection of technology media. Training faculty in the use and incorporation of media. Finding faculty who are not intimidated by or suspicious of instructional technology.
4. Courses are often better in meeting objectives and in student interest. One reason is that the technology forces renewed effort at *traditional* methods (good preparation of materials, effective use of time, purposeful discussion). A second reason is simply the novelty—students have a high level of interest. Course objectives have been met at an equal or higher level than traditional courses so far.
6. Several issues have surfaced at our institution:  
Comparability within context: will students be able to complete the next level of study if introduced to the content by ITS programming?  
Time constraints: does the extra time for completing a distance learning course help or hinder student knowledge?  
Organization: can variously gifted learners benefit from auditory and visual learning only?  
Feedback: do students receive adequate feedback from their proctors on what they submit?
7. The issues that have most concerned us have to do with the lack of community-based interaction and face-to-face contact with mentors and professors. We have yet to use to the fullest extent chat rooms or other means of overcoming these liabilities.
8. Students perform as well if not better than on-campus students in the same course. Student satisfaction is high. Faculty who participate think the quality of the work is equivalent to that of campus students. Issues still to be worked out include making distance education a regular part of faculty work load and requireable for promotion and tenure.

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9. Questions of formation, educational equivalence, and learning community are very much on our minds, and we are not satisfied with our current progress in these areas.
10. Nature of the learning community (characteristics); administrative structure and process, decision-making, relationships, etc.; aspects of the school's mission statement are most prominent in the way the school actually operates
11. Students take longer to complete work. Students often have a more thorough grasp of basic materials. Demand on faculty workload not always evident. Clear communications between student, tutor, school not always maintained. Not enough homework on appropriate instructional design and infrastructure support.
12. The very issues addressed in the survey questions here: How do we work toward community and personal spiritual development? The technology is relatively simple. Educational experience is much harder.

There were several other questions on the distance education section of the survey that are not be addressed in this article because of the extent of the material involved; however, a detailed description and analysis of the distance education section of the educational technology survey is available from the ATS office.<sup>7</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Kearsley predicts a fascinating future for education in his publication *Online Education: Learning and Teaching in Cyberspace*. He states:

The world of education will be very different [in the twenty-first century]: what students and teachers do, when and where learning takes place, the nature of the educational experiences. Schooling, as we know it, will change dramatically; almost everyone will become a lifelong learner, continually engaged in some form of learning activity, either formal or casual.<sup>8</sup>

This statement will most likely apply to all areas of education, including theological education. With this survey data we begin to see what is already happening in theological education in the area of distance education. The implications for the future are increased collaboration with students, community, church, and theological institutions; increased student-centeredness; greater shared knowledge; and multisensory educational experiences, exploration, and connectivity. These imply significant challenges to both higher

education and theological education. ATS schools may currently offer one-third of a degree program through distance education, and the number of courses that may be applied toward a degree may increase in the future.<sup>9</sup>

Theological schools that intend to offer major portions of degree programs through distance education must take seriously the implications of distance education on the curriculum, faculty, students, administration, support services (including library), and institutional resources. Distance education courses will not be successful if modified only slightly from traditional courses. Faculty will need training, support services, technology, and a team approach to changing curriculum and learning new delivery methods. Students will need new skills, appropriate orientation, and support services to successfully complete distance education courses. Institutions will need to provide administrative support and have additional resources available.

Distance education in theological education has the potential to make theological learning available to students who have never before had the opportunity for theological study, but careful planning and evaluation must take place to organize a successful distance education program.

Finally, experimentation and research should be added to the list of important factors for successful distance education programs in theological schools.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Tina Joy Pitt and Anne Clark, *Creating Powerful Online Courses Using Multiple Instructional Strategies*, [http://leahi.kcc.hawaii.edu/org/tcc\\_conf97/pres/org/pitt/html](http://leahi.kcc.hawaii.edu/org/tcc_conf97/pres/org/pitt/html), refers to P.R. Shade (1992), *Gender Issues in Computer Networking*. Available graphs: [csp.colorado.edu/fimisa/shortpapers/gender.issues.in.computer.nets](http://csp.colorado.edu/fimisa/shortpapers/gender.issues.in.computer.nets), and J.A. Scigliano, D.L. Joslyn, and J. Levin, *An Online Classroom for the Non-School Learning Environment* (1988). Available at: [scigl@alpha.acast.nova.edu](mailto:scigl@alpha.acast.nova.edu).
2. Pitt and Clark, *Creating Powerful Online Courses Using Multiple Instructional Strategies*.
3. Greg Kearsley, *Online Education: Learning and Teaching in Cyberspace* (Wadsworth Thompson Learning, Belmont, CA, 2000).
4. *Peterson's Guide to Distance Learning Programs* (Princeton: University Continuing Education Association, 1997).
5. *ATS Bulletin 43*, Part 1, Standards of Accreditation, 86.
6. Thomas Cyrs, Professor Emeritus, Educational Management and Development, Center for Educational Development, New Mexico State University, Audio Conference Seminar, "Visual Thinking and Interactive Teaching/Leaning Strategies for Interactive Television Telecourses," University of Wisconsin at Madison, January 2000.

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7. A CD-ROM will be available in early fall 2000 from the ATS office that will provide a summary of the data from all five sections of the educational technology survey.
8. Kearsley, 2.
9. The proposed revised Standard 10, "Multiple Locations and Distance Education," will be acted upon at the 2000 ATS Biennial Meeting. If the revised standard is adopted by the ATS membership, residency requirements will conform to those specified in the ATS standards for the degree programs to which distance education course work is credited.

# An Integrated Approach to Theological Education

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ABSTRACT: This article proposes a methodology for teaching and learning that integrates emotion and intellect, theology and experience. Literature and drama are incorporated to facilitate a process of theological reflection that fosters integration. Because of the spiritual quest that motivates many students pursuing theological education, this approach draws insights for academic work from the spiritual tradition. Parallels to prayer, contemplation, the study of sacred texts, and the gathered life of the community can be made in teaching and learning, thus leading to a more wholistic educational experience.

*The time in Lake Wobegon is February. Unseasonably warm; thinking about spring, but it is only a trick to lure us out. Then in March, April, comes a blizzard. It is not really spring, it is like spring painted on a brick wall; when you reach in to pick the flowers you bust your knuckles. So you want to be careful.*

Garrison Keillor, "The Truckstop"

So begins Garrison Keillor's story of Florian and Myrtle Krebsbach, a couple in their seventies, who venture out on a trip to Minneapolis, something they would not ordinarily do. But the weather affects people in odd ways and it affected the Krebsbachs dramatically. Myrtle had become nervous, suspicious of some symptoms she was noticing like those she read about in a question and answer column in the newspaper. She made an appointment at a clinic in Minneapolis, not able to go to a doctor in town because she had already gone to all of them, and they told her she was all right. Florian was anxious about driving on the interstate, thinking that a truck might come up on them and eliminate them from the earth, and he was preoccupied with thoughts that Myrtle might die from the illness. When he forgets her at a truckstop after they had paused for a cup of coffee and a piece of pie, and only remembers her after traveling twenty miles on the highway, Florian cannot understand how he could have done such a thing at the very time when he was thinking about how much he would miss her if he lost her. After a series of surprising turns and twists, the story concludes with Florian's amazement that after forty-seven years of marriage there are still things to be discovered.<sup>1</sup>

As we listen to this humorous and poignant story, we laugh because Keillor has tapped into something about the human condition with which we resonate. Despite our love for and commitment to one another, we are forget-

ful, often preoccupied, affected by weather, riddled with fears; life is full of surprises, amazing grace, and much of the time the best we can do is respond with gratitude and humor. Good stories such as this are not only enjoyable and entertaining, but they carry insight and illumination into lived experience, revealing the profoundly symbolic and interrelated quality of our lives. The French literary critic, Denis de Rougemont called art a “calculated trap for meditation” because novels, plays, and movies snag our attention and entice us to penetrate the surface of things before we ever know we are doing so.<sup>2</sup> They can move people to examine values and attitudes, to look at things from a different perspective, and may even lead to changed behavior.<sup>3</sup> Thus, good novels, plays, and movies have the potential to foster the formative and transformative goals of theological education.

A review of the literature in the field of theological education, as well that found in the broader realm of adult learning theory, reveals a shift from a view of education narrowly conceived as gaining knowledge to a more holistic approach that affects and effects ways of being, thinking, deciding, and acting. This commonality among educators can be observed in stated pedagogical goals and methods that include conversion of mind and heart, fostering integrative thinking, character formation, promoting authentic discipleship, personal appropriation of faith and knowledge, and cultivating a spirituality of the intellectual life.<sup>4</sup>

In this essay, I propose an integrated approach to theological education that incorporates literature and movies in a process of theological reflection. Before explaining this methodology, I will put forth the model of education as spiritual journey that grounds the method. A model of education rooted in spirituality not only fits with the pedagogical goals noted above, but also addresses the spiritual hunger that exists among students pursuing degrees in theology or ministry. By way of conclusion I offer an evaluation of the project.<sup>5</sup>

## **Education as Spiritual Journey**

The model of education as spiritual journey has been developed by the educator and author, Parker J. Palmer.<sup>6</sup> Essentially, it is a quest for “wholesight,” a vision of the world in which mind and heart unite “as two eyes make one in sight,” for only as we see whole can we and our world become whole.<sup>7</sup> When education is viewed primarily as a system of ideas, Palmer maintains, the tendency is to focus on the eye of the mind with little concern for affectivity. So, first and foremost, education as a spiritual journey aims toward integration of head and heart.<sup>8</sup> This integration is necessary in order to heal what Palmer calls the “pain of disconnect” that permeates education. By this he means that “when the mind alienates more than it connects, the heart goes out of things, and there is little left to sustain us.”<sup>9</sup> This detachment is driven, at least in part, by Western society’s tendency to think in polarities, “to think the world apart.”

That is, we tend to look at the world through analytical lenses that differentiate and separate, viewing things as pro/con, plus/minus, a series of either/ors rather than both/ands.<sup>10</sup> This separation is most notable between emotion and reason. For most of the history of Christianity and academia as well, there has been a dichotomy between these faculties with reason perceived to be superior. And it is men who have generally been considered more rational and women the more emotional sex. The emotions tend to be viewed as blind impulses that build up and discharge themselves in bursts of energy or irrational forces beyond our control.

As Daniel Goleman persuasively argues in his nationally acclaimed book, *Emotional Intelligence*, the emotional/rational dichotomy, more popularly referred to as the distinction between “head and heart” not only inappropriately defines men and women, but it ignores the two fundamentally different ways of knowing that function in the brains of both men and women. Goleman’s research shows that IQ and what he calls emotional intelligence are not inherently opposing competencies, but rather separate yet interconnected ones. In a sense, we have two minds, two different kinds of intelligence—rational and emotional—which operate, for the most part, in tight harmony. In the “dance of feeling and thought,” the emotional faculty works hand-in-hand with the rational mind each with their very different ways of knowing guiding us through the world. How we do in life is determined by emotional intelligence and the appropriate development and interaction of both emotion and reason, not just IQ.<sup>11</sup> Rather than being irrational forces, emotions have their own reasons; they operate according to an intuitive logic and manifest constitutive judgments about how the world should be and how people should act. Emotions have a cognitive or “principled” aspect. That is, they are a source or origin of purposive action and also a guide to making judgments in accordance with which we tend to comply rather instinctively. There is a reason in war to be fearful and timid; there is a reason to cry at the loss of a loved one; there is a reason to be angry at racial slurs and bigotry.<sup>12</sup>

We can gain insight about how to integrate head and heart in the academic setting from the spiritual tradition. Palmer gleans from this tradition three “spiritual disciplines”—the study of sacred texts, prayer and contemplation, and the gathered life of the community. Each of these has their counterparts in education.

### ***Spiritual Disciplines in Education***

Spiritual communities developed daily practices to help people grow in love and wholeness, to enable the head and the heart to function more harmoniously. First, through the study of sacred texts, we maintain contact with the spiritual tradition, with sources of wisdom and insight that culture may obscure. We find companions for the spiritual journey who may form and transform hearts and minds. The presumption is that the sacred permeates all

reality which is potentially or, in fact, a bearer of God's presence and an instrument of God's saving activity. It is a sacramental vision, broadly understood; that is, to experience God's love and power in space and time. In academic study too, the learner—the whole person, not just the intellectual aspect—is brought into contact with the tradition of the particular discipline of study. Not only biblical texts and spiritual writings, but philosophy, theology, literature all contain clues about ultimate reality. These more academic texts contain images of self, God, relationships, and the world which are formational. Students are formed by the reading they do, by the views of self and the world that the reading presents.

Second, a central purpose of prayer and contemplation in the spiritual life is to see through and beyond the appearance of things, to penetrate the surface and to touch that which lies beneath. An essential aspect of prayer and contemplation consists in paying attention, orienting oneself wholly toward God. One of Simone Weil's keenest insights was to connect the attention that is developed in academic studies to an increased power of attention in prayer. By concentrating, trying to understand the text, to grasp the essential points, progress can also be made in the spiritual life. By attention, Weil does not mean spending long hours in study to the point of exhaustion. In fact, tiredness and an approach to study as a duty which must be done often impede attention. Rather, attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object of study; it means holding in our minds the diverse knowledge we have acquired. "Every school exercise thought of in this way, is like a sacrament."<sup>13</sup>

Third, it is through the gathered life of the community that people are drawn out of the solitude of study and prayer into communion and relatedness. It is in a communal context that personal biases and distortions are checked, that the meaning of texts is interpreted, that virtues and qualities of character are identified and formed. What is lacking in spiritual growth may be discovered in community through mutual encouragement and challenge. The best way to do this in the academic setting, Palmer suggests, is to center the attention in the classroom around a transcendent subject, not primarily the teacher nor the student, but the "grace of great things." By this is meant the subjects around which the circle of seekers (religious and theological) have always gathered—archetypes of betrayal, forgiveness, loving, and loss that are the stuff of literature; symbols and referents of philosophy and theology; the novelties and patterns of history; the artifacts of anthropology. "Great things such as these are the vital nexus of community in education. It is in the act of gathering around them and trying to understand them—as the first humans must have gathered around fire—that we become who we are as knowers, teachers, and learners."<sup>14</sup>

In sum, education as spiritual journey is a quest for "wholesight," an integration of head and heart. Education, thus understood, means more than

teaching facts, analyzing data, or providing argumentation for one's position or view of the truth. It means being drawn into personal responsiveness and accountability to one another and to the world of which we are a part. This prayerful and communal model of education has a formative role—to teach and to learn a mode of relating, a way of being in the world. That can be done in a variety of ways depending upon the particular gifts of the educator. As such, teaching is not primarily about technique; the integrity and authenticity of the teacher matters more than whether one lectures or prefers small group discussion or the use of technology.<sup>15</sup> The methodology that will be explained in the next section can incorporate any of these teaching techniques, although group discussion will play a central role in achieving the objectives of theological reflection.

## Methodology of Theological Reflection

Essentially, theological reflection is a process to help people learn from experience, from the events of life.<sup>16</sup> The starting point is human experience understood as the actual living of events and relationships, along with emotions, insights, and understandings that are part of this lived reality. Experience is an essential source of moral wisdom, for there we find God's presence and Spirit—not only in moments of tragedy and crisis, joy and exaltation, but in the sometimes mundane routine of daily life.

Reflection, as it is being referred to here, is a critical and intentional activity in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in conjunction with theology. Just having experience is not enough to gain insight and knowledge; we need to consciously reflect upon it—describe the experience, understand, discuss, and examine it, draw insights, and test them against the insights of others.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise, we can just keep repeating experiences, including mistakes, again and again. It is “critical reflection because theology is critiqued by experience and experience is critiqued by theology.”<sup>18</sup> This kind of intentional and critical reflectivity is at the core of transformative learning as it creates the possibility for identifying and correcting distortions in feelings, perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, and behavior.<sup>19</sup>

It is theological reflection because we are seeking to discover God's presence, clues to or signs of divine reality in human experience. God's word may be hidden among the details of nature and the deeds of men and women. To speak of the human is to speak of the divine and vice versa. As Karl Rahner describes it, God is the mystery and depth dimension of human experiences, such as love, friendship, death, and hope. Even loneliness, suffering, or disappointment can be graced and revelatory moments, opening us to the transcendent. The process of theological reflection helps us to consider what difference God's presence makes in our lives and assists in the “movement toward insight” about God's ongoing revelation in the world.<sup>20</sup>

There are three main parts to the methodology—engaging the story, interplay between experience and theology, and appropriating the learning. It can be effectively implemented in a course of study if there is opportunity for discussion and feedback provided after each part. Students can help one another to grasp the meaning of events more completely, analyze them, see patterns, draw conclusions, and check biases or distortions.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Engaging the Story***

The goal of this first “step” of the process is to reflect on human experience vicariously through narrative—a novel, movie, or short story. The starting point is engagement with the characters, relationships, and events of the story, seeking to discover clues to divine presence and to make personal and theological connections. For illustration purposes, I will refer to two stories used with some success in courses I have taught on human sexuality and the meaning of love: Mary Gordon’s novel, *Men and Angels*, which was selected because it contains a variety of types of love; and *Shadowlands*, the story of C. S. Lewis and Joy Gresham, which treats several themes related to love and sexuality such as pain, suffering, and hope.

The educator should select a story for its revelatory meanings, the “grace of great things” it contains, not simply because it happens to be one’s own favorite novel or movie. Nor should a selection be abandoned simply because a student does not like or enjoy it. For example, some of the male students responded negatively to *Men and Angels*. They did not like it because they concluded it was a “woman’s story.” Another student became quite disturbed about what she perceived to be a disregard for family values. Several people asked at the outset, “Where is the love?” These reactions and questions indicated to me that this novel was a good choice. As the students engaged the process, they came to better understand their reactions and to find “theological clues” that were initially obscured.

Two questions were proposed to facilitate the student’s engagement with this initial part of the process: (1) What character or aspect of the story (in relation to love or sexuality) are you affected by or do you find significant? (2) Does the story remind you of anything in your own experience or in the Christian tradition, i.e., Scripture, theology, spirituality, ethics?

#### 1. Significant aspect of the story

The selected issue or character should be described in some detail because before theologically reflecting on experience, we need to clarify the facts: who was involved, what happened? Dominant emotions, gender issues, as well as economic, cultural, and social factors that shape the setting of the experience or influence the character(s) should be noted. The learner’s feelings, reactions, and observations should also be included as part of the description. Paying attention to emotional reactions (or lack of) is important because they often provide clues to the meaning of one’s own experience; they may suggest

insight into a person's spiritual life, beliefs, or knowledge, and they can become a primary clue to theological meaning.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, feelings, which embody a wholistic response to our existence, are an important component of the movement toward insight. They carry questions, values, and wisdom that are central to a person's life and meaning-system, but may have not yet risen to consciousness. Initially, students may not be aware of why something strikes them as significant or why they are affected. The meaning of the experience that is signaled by an emotional reaction unfolds in the reflection process, often in group discussions with others listening and asking clarifying questions.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, students should consider images, symbols, or metaphors in the story because these convey significant levels of perception, feeling, and meaning. Often the symbolic is the only way to express reactions to love, death, suffering—the “great things.” For example, in *Shadowlands* the symbol of the rosebud carries understanding of Lewis's view of love. What does this symbolize Lewis asks his class? Someone responds that it is a symbol of love—untouched, unopened, or perfect. What makes it perfect, Lewis asks? “Unattainability—the most intense joy lies not in the having, but in the desiring. It is a delight that never fades; bliss that is eternal; it is only yours when what you most desire is out of reach.” The ideal of love is always out of our reach, something that we admire, for which we yearn, but can never attain. If we ignore the symbol of the rosebud, we miss the meaning.

While a description need not be all inclusive, students should paint as complete and accurate a picture as possible. Otherwise, theological insight may be overlooked. Moreover, while everyone in the class is reading the same story or watching the same movie, there are often discrepancies in description and interpretation. In dialogue with others, points of differences can be clarified and sometimes other relevant facts may be added.

2. What connections are there with personal experience and/or the Christian tradition?

The aim of this question is to draw upon the learner's own accumulated wisdom and to provide the opportunity to make connections with personal experience. No one reflects on an event empty-headed, but rather draws from a storehouse of experiences, knowledge, impressions, feelings, intuitions, and convictions. In one sense, we learn what we already know. In another sense we learn that we know more than we were aware of at the moment. As Robert Kinast writes: “Much of this is rightly called pre-reflexive or pre-thematic, meaning that it isn't always explicit or analyzed or critically thought out or put in coherent order. But it's already there.”<sup>24</sup> The student can draw upon and integrate knowledge from other disciplines of study, thereby correcting some of the fragmentation they feel when courses seem disconnected from their experience or unrelated to one another. This knowledge may be broadened, deepened, and synthesized in class discussion as others communicate what theological meaning the experience has for them.

Sometimes what the experience reminds us of finds expression in metaphors or images. Understanding comes from finding the right image to fit the experience analogically into our meaning schemes, theories, belief systems, or self-concept.<sup>25</sup> For example, in *Men and Angels*, almost every one of the characters dislikes Laura. Anne, the woman for whom she works as caretaker of the children, takes pity on Laura and performs some deliberate acts of kindness despite her own negative feelings. Students made associations with the image of the despised Samaritan in the biblical parable. And some conjured up their own negative experiences of being the object of demeaning pity.

In making these connections, more than the intellect is required. The imagination, that creative capacity to relate diverse experiences so as to make sense of our world, facilitates this associative task. As Northrup Frye maintains, we need an educated imagination because of its crucial role in combining emotion and intellect.<sup>26</sup> One of the best ways to educate the imagination is through the arts, particularly through story and drama. The artist is concerned with telling stories, not with working out arguments. Within narratives, imagination plays a dominant role bringing together images and ideas that give new meaning to the world to which the story refers.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Interplay of Experience and Theology***

The next stage in the process of theological reflection puts the selected and described element of the story into creative interplay with the course material. The aim is to understand the theory and its relevance for human experience. The first section provides the grist for the mill for the application of new learning. This is not imposing or conforming theology to every circumstance, but applying it carefully, thoughtfully, critically, and sensitively to the situation. At the same time, we let the experience impact the theology. It is a two-way process.<sup>28</sup> There are two interrelated questions that guide the learner in this section: How does the new learning apply to the experience selected and described? How does the story impact the theology?

During the course of study, or whatever portion is devoted to the process of theological reflection, the student selects the material for application. Obviously, not everything learned will be relevant and the student should not try to make the new learning fit. Only what pertains to the characters or events described in the “engaging the story” section should be drawn upon for application. The selection is, in itself, important in learning how to discriminate pertinent information from the irrelevant; in this case what is applicable. It also focuses the reflection in a manageable way. A few examples may help to clarify this part of the process.

Let us suppose that the following relationships in *Men and Angels* were selected for description in the previous section. Ed is an electrician hired to do some work for Anne. He is devoted and committed to his paralyzed wife, Rose. Remaining faithful to Rose, he rebuffs romantic advances made by Anne

whose own husband, Michael, travels a great deal and, in Anne's mind, has been unfaithful to her. Obviously, more needs to be said in describing these relationships, but with this brief synopsis, we can imagine at least one theme covered in the course that would be applicable, that of covenantal love. The student would first demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of the biblical notion of covenantal love and then explain its meaning in relation to the situation. That is, if covenantal love is the story of God's unconditional commitment to human persons and the story of the response of human persons to God, what clues or signs of God's love do we find in these relationships? In the covenantal context, God's steadfast love or loving-kindness (*hesed*) is a sign of God's fidelity. If we come to knowledge of God through human experience, what can be learned about commitment and faithfulness from the experience of the characters in the story? Not only does the theory impact the experience, but the characters or events in the story provide the context for understanding the theory. The aim is to let the story teach.<sup>29</sup>

Another possibility would be to explore the meaning of friendship and its importance for mature sexuality in relation to C. S. Lewis in *Shadowlands*. Before meeting Joy, Lewis's circle of friends were limited primarily to male academics with whom he remained emotionally guarded. In his book, *The Four Loves*, the chapter on friendship (*philia*) is focused on the companionship that goes on in the club house or taverns among men. Relations between men and women or female friendships are neglected or referred to only disparagingly. The love that developed between Joy and Lewis led to a gradual self-discovery of his avoidance of intimacy and to a broader understanding of the meaning of friendship love. Students would contemplate the meaning of friendship as defined by Lewis along with other interpretations such as that which draws people of both sexes into relationships of affection, mutuality, commitment, and intimacy. The task here would be to explain how friendship contributes to growth in sexual maturity and to identify ways such development is observed in Lewis's relationship with Joy. In addition, there are lessons about friendship to be learned from the story such as stereotypes or societal attitudes toward the sexes that impact views of friendship.

In this part of the process, the student is involved in a critical reading of the texts and is having creative conversation with the readings—reflecting on the selected portion of the story in light of what he or she is hearing and reading, looking at it from different angles, going deeper, and gaining more and more insight into the theological meaning of the experience. This is a beneficial exercise because adult learning studies show that critical reflection is strengthened when adults have the opportunity to return to the subject matter several times in different ways.<sup>30</sup>

The next and final step is to enact the affective and cognitive learning that emerges from the creative interplay of experience and theology. It has to do with some practical outcomes of the reflection process.

### ***Appropriating the Learning***

Learning is appropriated when the student is able to draw insights and implications for personal life, ministry, and/or theological understanding. The following questions were used to facilitate the movement toward insight. What insights have you gained that might impact your personal life or ministry? How has your theology been reaffirmed, rearranged, or critically questioned?

1. Insights for personal life or ministry

This refers to ways the learning has impacted the student personally, what insights are discovered about one's identity, feelings, values, motivations, attitudes, world view, or relationships. For example, in the class on human sexuality, a student came to the awareness that, like Lewis in *Shadowlands*, he was guarded with regard to emotions, fearful of developing intimate friendships because of the self-revelation such intimacy requires. At this point, there was no decision made about how and when to foster such a relationship, but the new self-understanding is in itself an appropriation of learning.

When the new learning is made one's own, there may be insights gained about what a person does at work or the skills needed for ministry. In theological education, in addition to the academic or ministerial degree being sought, many students have family commitments and work in various occupations, either as volunteers or professionals in church-related jobs or in the business world. In the case of those studying for priestly ministry, students are generally interested in how the learning in the classroom will be relevant for their vocations. When a student is able to draw implications for ministry, the interest level is higher and learning becomes more meaningful. For example, a student who is a pastoral associate in a parish as well as a single mother caring for a physically and mentally challenged child came to see that she had not learned the skills of empowerment and delegation needed for her professional job. The self-sacrificial love that guided the care for her daughter was carried over into her pastoral ministry, blurring the distinction between these different responsibilities. Reflecting upon the meaning of love in relation to the professional and familial roles of the women in *Men and Angels* led her to this insight and also to the determination to develop skills more appropriate for church ministry.

2. When theological learning is appropriated there may be a re-evaluation or re-interpretation of a person's previous knowledge or theological perspective. Formerly held ideas can be reaffirmed, rearranged, or critically questioned. When theology is reaffirmed in light of new information or a new situation, students may hold the same positions as before they engaged the theological reflection process, but with some modifications because of the application or integration. For example, a person could have been aware of the importance of friendships, but gained new insight into why and how they are significant.

When previous knowledge is rearranged, the priorities and relevance of various theological positions may be reoriented. There may be a shift in what a person considers important on a scale of theological truths or what is emphasized in a particular teaching. For example, a student could begin the course with a belief in the superiority of agapic over erotic and friendship loves because of the former's impartiality and analogy with the self-sacrificial love of Jesus. As these loves are examined in the Christian tradition, a different understanding might emerge that could rearrange the way they are prioritized.

Critical questions are those inquiries that address a person's outlook, values, way of relating, and being. They come from experiences that do not fit previous interpretations. Critical questions expose the discrepancies in a student's interpretation of things, the experience, and the new learning. This may be disturbing if one needs to have answers and matters resolved at a certain point or at the conclusion of the semester. The reality is, though, if learning is taking place, the student will not come out knowing everything there is to know about the topic, but will know something, and hopefully more than when he or she began. If the student has engaged the process well, there will be new questions, or perhaps old questions to ponder more deeply.<sup>31</sup>

The most profound expression of appropriating the learning is conversion. By conversion I mean a basic transformation of a person's ways of seeing, feeling, valuing, understanding, and relating. There are four kinds of conversion that this process can facilitate: religious, moral, cognitive, and affective. Religious conversion involves a personal appropriation of the faith formerly projected by one's family or community. In other words, the student personally appropriates his or her religious self-identity. Relatedly, in moral conversion, there is a movement from unthinkingly accepting the values and norms of others to those internalized by the moral agent. This refers to a person's recognition and appropriation of him or herself as the one responsible for value judgments and choices. Cognitive conversion consists in appropriating knowledge previously learned but not made one's own. That is to say, pre-conversion facts are memorized, data collected, information learned but not reflected upon or enacted. A quality of affective conversion is the transformation of the deepest life of feeling, not merely physiological feeling reactions, but rather emotions as sources of value, affective responses suffused with intentionality, meaning, and understanding.<sup>32</sup> All or any of these aspects of conversion may occur, if the student is seeking, or at least open to, such change.

In sum, theological reflection is a process of intentional and critical reflection upon experience, seeking to discover "clues" or signs of God's presence and ongoing revelation in the world. The use of the arts—short stories, novels, movies—enables the student to enter the experience vicariously at both affective and cognitive levels. The integration and synthesis of parts one (entering the experience) and two (creative interplay of experience and theology) leads to new insights into the subject matter and implications for personal life and pastoral ministry.

## **Conclusion**

By way of conclusion, I will assess this integrated approach to theological education by suggesting some strengths as well as challenges for teaching and learning.

One strength can be noted with regard to the methodology that addresses the spiritual hunger of students as well as the shift toward wholistic theological education with its formational and transformational pedagogical goals. The use of story and drama, intentional reflection on emotions and their reasons, the interplay between experience and theology, and the search for “clues” about ultimate reality are all aimed toward integration—uniting head and heart, sacred and secular, theory and experience. Furthermore, the process of theological reflection incorporates the three “spiritual disciplines.” First, through the study of sacred texts—artistic and theological—the learner (the whole person) is brought into contact with the religious tradition and the human drama. These texts contain images of self, God, relationships, and the world that are formational. It is the artist, though, particularly the good storyteller who is best able to penetrate the depth dimension of reality. Second, the prayerful and contemplative disciplines are indicated in the attention that is paid to the details of the story and the “great things” of the texts. And the process of reflection is not only a search for theological clues, insights about God’s presence and ongoing revelation, but also a time of “waiting for God.” Third, the classroom can be a space where the community gathers around the transcendent subject, listens to one another, engages in dialogue, and offers feedback. While there is a certain amount of individual reflectivity the process requires, it also anticipates communal or small group interaction. Thus, people are drawn out of the solitude of study into connectedness and accountability. A hoped for practical outcome is that the learner will be better able to make decisions and guide events according to the new understandings gained from the process of theological reflection. At its best, students will be led to conversion and transformative learning that direct the whole person toward changed ways of understanding, feeling, and relating.

In addition, an integrated approach to teaching and learning that facilitates the interaction of emotion and reason develops emotional intelligence. To begin the theological reflection process with a short story, novel, or movie offers a common touch point for experience and for further reflection and analysis. Thus, students are able to recognize growth, change, and new learning. Furthermore, works of art can widen the horizon of meaning in which the reasons of the heart can be better understood. The metaphors, symbols, and images of literature and film speak most clearly to the emotional mind.<sup>33</sup> They can be “trigger events,” provoking insight, self-awareness, and critical reflection. For example, students have made correlations with their own friendships, marital or parental situations. They have also made connections with and have

drawn new insights for vocational and work-related issues or goals. Some of the common remarks made on student evaluations summarize the strengths of this approach:

- “It was the most practical course I have ever taken.”
- “It transformed my way of viewing my relationships.”
- “It was enormously helpful in my ministry.”
- “I learned some skills of integration. I had not put theory and experience together before in this kind of a disciplined and reflective way.”
- “I have been able to address some difficult personal issues from a new vantage point, one that brings together faith and reason.”

Undoubtedly, for such a positive educational experience to occur, the learner needs to engage the theological reflection process with some openness and intentionality. Students may go through the activity mechanically without being affected by it. Furthermore, when people are engaged in transformative learning there may be some resistance or even rejection of contradictory new information. Adult learners bring with them to the classroom an acquired set of values, a way of seeing the world and of interpreting their experiences. They generally tend to accept and integrate experiences that comfortably fit their frame of reference and to discount those that do not. Thus, even if a teacher is well prepared and an expert in his or her field, these qualities may be insufficient to address the apathy, resistance, or even anger that can arise in reaction to this educative approach. Another challenge this educational approach presents is with the process of reflection that is in some ways counter-cultural. That is to say, in an information age such as ours, reflective skills and time needed for contemplation tend to be neglected. So a process that places an emphasis on such deliberation may be perceived as an unwelcome intrusion into time needed to gain factual knowledge.

To address some of these challenges, the rationale for using literature or a movie, for paying attention to emotions, and for engaging the process of theological reflection should be explained well. It is helpful to distribute a simple, clear outline or brief explanation of the process that the student can refer to throughout the course. The simpler the better, especially if this is the first formal experience of engaging in theological reflection. In addition, the story should be selected carefully in relation to course content and diverse perspectives of the theme (i.e., love, sexuality) as well as different ethnic, gender, cultural, and religious views. Even when chosen wisely, though, it is often a matter of trial and error to discover what works best. That is to say, after using a story a few times with different groups, we can better assess its potential for provoking critical reflection, developing emotional intelligence, and aiding the spiritual journey.

In sum, change can be frightening and threatening because it may involve not just cognitive conversion, but also transformation of affections, beliefs, and values. Self-identity may be critically questioned. But even though, like Florian and Myrtle Krebsbach, we may be filled with fears and doubts as we travel the spiritual journey of teaching and learning, if we have the courage to pursue the quest we, too, may be amazed that there are still things to be discovered, clues to the mystery of God's presence among us to be revealed.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. Garrison Keillor, "Love," *More News From Lake Wobegon*. Minnesota Public Radio, Audio Cassette (Minnesota: Highbridge Company, 1989).
  2. Anne E. Patrick, SNJM, "Imaginative Literature and the Renewal of Moral Theology," *New Theology Review* 11/2 (May 1998): 43-56 at 44.
  3. Maxine Greene, "Realizing Literature's Emancipatory Potential," in *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 251-267. See also, Carrie Doehring, "Using Literature As Case Studies," *Taking Care: Monitoring Power Dynamics and Relational Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 141-152.
  4. Elizabeth Nordbeck, "Introduction," v-vii; Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, "Conversion of Mind and Heart," 1-10; Bruce Shields, "Integrating Ministry and Theology: One Seminary's Story," 11-19 in *Theological Education* 33:2 (1997). National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1993), 333-347. Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., "Preparing Priests for Parish Ministry," *America* (March 20, 1999): 6-10. Gordon T. Smith "Spiritual Formation in the Academy: A Unifying Model," *Theological Education* 33:1 (1996): 83-91. Christine E. Blair, "Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education," *Theological Education* 34:1 (1997): 11-24. *Marks of a Sulpician Seminary*, Society of St. Sulpice, Province of the U.S.A., 1994.
- Among the writings in the field of adult education literature, notable for the emphasis on wholistic education and transformative learning are the following: Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991). Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994). Robert D. Boyd and J. Gordon Myers, "Transformative Education," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 7/4 (October-December 1988): 261-284.
5. This project was made possible by a Teaching and Learning Grant from The Association of Theological Schools.
  6. I am drawing from two of Palmer's more prominent works: *To Know As We Are Known: Education As A Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993) and *The Courage To Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Boss, 1998).

7. *To Know As We Are Known*, 1. Palmer draws this image from Robert Frost's poem, "Two Tramps in Mud Time," in *The Poetry of Robert Frost*.
8. It is useful to recall that the metaphor of "journey" implies at least two elements: the person making the journey, and the path or direction taken—the "way." It is a movement from here to there, from one point to another. For the individual, the way or direction is cyclical with emotional overtones. See Northrop Frye, "The Journey as Metaphor," in *Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays*, ed. Robert D. Denham (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 212-229.
9. *To Know As We Are Known*, x.
10. *Courage to Teach*, 52, 62-66.
11. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 28-58.
12. On the principled nature of emotions see William Spohn, "Principles and Passions," *Theological Studies* 51 (1991): 69-87.
13. Simone Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," in *Waiting For God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 111-112.
14. *Courage to Teach*, 90-104 at 107. The section on spiritual disciplines is drawn from *To Know As We Are Known*, 17-20, 70.
15. *Courage to Teach*, 9-34.
16. My emphasis is on the *process* of learning from experience. Research on learning from experience has tended to focus on the outcomes of such reflective learning. Obviously, outcome-oriented approaches are helpful for evaluation and for determining achievement of objectives, but they tend to neglect the importance of the process of reflection itself. On the importance of experiential learning conceptualized as a process, see Evelyn Boyd and Anne Fales, "Reflective Learning: Key to Learning from Experience," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 23:2 (Spring 1983): 99-117.
17. Robert L. Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach: A Guide to Theological Reflection* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 2, 17-20. See also, Patricia O'Connell Killen and John DeBeer, *The Art of Theological Reflection* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 21. David Boud, Rosemary Keogh and David Walker, "Promoting Reflection in Learning: a Model," in *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, eds. David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, and David Walker (New York: Nichols Publications, 1985), 7-40.
18. Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, xiii.
19. Mezirow, *Transformative Learning*, 15. Mezirow neglects the emotions in his transformative learning theory.
20. Killen and DeBeer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, xi.
21. I have integrated the various components of Robert Kinast's theological reflection method as it is presented in *Let Ministry Teach*. These three broad categories also resonate with the stages in working toward transformative learning. While not sequential, hierarchical, or consistent among learners, there seems to be a pattern to the process that consists of the following: some stimulating or "trigger" event that provokes self-analysis or examination, often accompanied by emotional responses; reflection, exploration, and questioning of assumptions; revision of assumptions, values, emotions, perspectives; reintegration or reorientation; and new cognitive, emotional, and behavioral insights. See Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning*, 77-91.
22. *Let Ministry Teach*, 12.
23. Killen and DeBeer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, 27-33.

## *An Integrated Approach to Theological Education*

24. Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, 70.
25. Mezirow, *Transformative Learning*, 80-81.
26. Northrup Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 135. See also Philip S. Keane, *S.S. Christian Ethics and Imagination* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 81.
27. Henk Loekstra and Marjeet Verbeek, "Possibilities of Audiovisual Narrative for Moral Formation," in *Mass Media And The Moral Imagination*, eds. Philip J. Rossi & Paul A. Soukup (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1994), 217-218.
28. Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, 8.
29. *Ibid.*, 97.
30. Blair, "Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education," 17.
31. Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, 13. I have adapted Kinast's section on "enacting the learning," 152-177.
32. Walter Conn, *Christian Conversion: A Developmental Interpretation of Autonomy and Surrender* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1986), 105-143.
33. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 294.

# Pedagogy of the Repressed: What Keeps Seminarians from Transformational Learning?

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ABSTRACT: The repression of various fears among seminarians inhibits transformational learning; developmental and educational psychology clarify these dynamics. When the object of fear is *theological*, however, the problem is no longer too much but rather not enough fear, as the biblical authors knew—“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” Defining fear as a response to the perceived inability to control an existentially relevant object helps us to understand how the dialectic between fear and love shapes the task of theological education.

## Introduction

In his celebrated book on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Freire helped raise our consciousness of the influence of social oppression on a student’s capacity to learn. Based on his experience working with illiterate peasants in South America, Freire called for transformed models of education that engage the whole praxis of the individual learner as an agent in a socioeconomic context.<sup>1</sup> In North American institutions of higher education, this has contributed to an awareness of the extent to which our cultural systems are oppressive for minorities and women, as well as for the poor. For those of us in the orbit of ATS, Freire’s emphasis on problem-centered education and linking praxis to critical reflection has strengthened our understanding of and ability to fulfill the task of preparing students for (and in) Christian ministry.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of many similarities, however, the barriers to transformational learning that hinder most ATS seminarians are quite different from those faced by Freire. In addition to sociological *oppression*, what keeps many of our theological students from learning is psychological *repression*. Of course these intercalated factors (along with others) cooperate to inhibit learning, and both are present in all learning environments; yet, repression often appears more dominant in our context. Or better: the particular forms of repression characteristic of North American culture present a unique challenge to seminary educators. While many students surely feel the weight of oppression, they also suffer from the pain of repressed fears. Without downplaying the former, the purpose of this essay is to focus on the latter—thus, the *Pedagogy of the Repressed*.

My method will be explicitly interdisciplinary, examining the complementary perspectives of psychology and theology on the role of fear in seminary education. I will begin by offering a definition of terms and setting out the conceptual framework (borrowed from James Loder) that will structure my proposal. The first major section treats the problem of fear from a *psychological* perspective, providing a brief summary of some of this discipline's salient contributions. The main task of this paper, however, is to explore a deeper *theological* understanding of fear in relation to education; this is carried out in the second major section. While we have done well at appropriating the research of educational psychology and other fields that help students adapt to their setting, perhaps we have not always done so well at remembering that we are engaged in *theological* education. When the object and context of one's inquiry is *theos*, the Holy One who is the transcendent source of all things, learning to adapt to one's culture and its patterns of learning (albeit necessary) may not be sufficient. Far from denigrating the contribution of psychology and other anthropological disciplines, I am suggesting (to paraphrase Einstein) that psychology without theology is blind, but theology wholly divorced from psychology is lame.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Repression, Pedagogy, and Transformation***

By adopting the term "repressed," my intention is not to weigh in on the intramural debate among psychologists (e.g., Freudians, Jungians, object-relation theorists) about precisely what qualifies as repression and how it is caused. Rather, my goal is simply to refer to the broadly accepted description of ego dynamics wherein a person's capacity to function is hindered by psychological defenses that the individual has constructed to deal with his or her fears. Repression seems to involve both external and internal factors—we see a reciprocal influence between the inner fears of an individual and perceived societal pressures and expectations. The general concern of this paper, then, is our pre-theoretic intuitions about individuals (seminarians) whose ability to learn has been blocked (or at least hindered) by their self-enclosure as a result of fear.

The key point for our purpose here is that repression in all its various forms is based on experiences of *fear*. But what do all experiences of fear have in common? Whatever the object of fear (whether related to class load, to ridicule by peers, to the future demands of ministry, or to being compelled to give up cherished beliefs), there is a sense that one cannot control that object. I cannot control my peers, so I fear they may reject me. I cannot control time, so I fear being overwhelmed and failing a class. I cannot control my parishioners, so I repress my true feelings of anger or anxiety. In order to capture this generic aspect of fear, then, I offer the following definition—fear is *a response to the perceived inability to control an existentially relevant object*.<sup>4</sup> From a theological perspective, this generic definition will allow us to ask how education is affected when God is the object of fear.

Although it is used to refer to educational practice generally, “pedagogy” literally means leading or facilitating change in children; the term is derived from the Greek *paid-* (child) and *agogos* (leader). Malcolm Knowles, a key figure in the emergence of the field of adult education, introduced the term “andragogy” in order to emphasize that facilitating learning in adults is different than in children. While the term itself has virtually dropped out of circulation (probably because “andragogy” is too... well, too androcentric), the stress on the difference between childhood and adult learning remains as a major theme in the field.<sup>5</sup> In a recent volume of *Theological Education*, Christine Blair offers a helpful summary of some characteristics of adult learners: they learn best when the learning environment feels safe and supportive, when their minds are engaged, when their learning is grounded in their experience, when they are self-directed, and when education speaks to mind, heart, and soul.<sup>6</sup> Despite its etymology, we will conform to disciplinary parlance and speak of the “pedagogy” of seminarians, with special attention to their unique needs *qua* adult learners.

The term “transformation” is quite popular in the field of adult education, for it serves to emphasize that the goal in adult learning is not merely *formation* (a dominant motif with children), but *transformation*.<sup>7</sup> While we should avoid a forced dichotomy (for working with children involves transformation, and adults are also in formation), this is a valid distinction that points to the qualitatively different mental structures that emerge through the various stages of life. Modes of learning continue to change throughout life’s stages, moving toward complexification of meaning schemes that render intelligible the self-world nexus. The relevant literature on developmental psychology has been summarized elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> In thematizing the pedagogy of adults, the goal of seminary educators is to appropriate findings from psychology as an aid to facilitating the transformation of seminarians’ sense of identity, so that they may function in the ministry contexts to which they are called as whole (psychologically integrated) and holy (theologically integrated) persons.

### ***James Loder’s Four “Dimensions” of Human Existence***

In order to highlight the differences between psychological and theological perspectives as we approach the topic of fear in seminary education, I am borrowing a conceptual framework developed by James E. Loder. In his book *The Transforming Moment*, Loder explores the human longing and drive toward transformation of the self, a dynamic process that operates within what he calls the four “dimensions” of human existence, *viz.*, the *lived world*, the *self*, the *void*, and the *Holy*. “Being human entails environment, selfhood, the possibility of not being, and the possibility of new being. All four dimensions are essential, and none of them can be ignored without decisive loss to our understanding of what is essentially human.”<sup>9</sup>

Loder uses the rubric of the *lived world* to stress the constructive, compositional character of the environment in which humans have their existence. Humans are conditioned by their composed situation, their cultural and historical embeddedness; they cannot completely rise above this situatedness and escape from the finite world in which they live. In what follows, we will adopt Loder's usage of the term "world" to refer to a particular, lived embodiment in a composed environment. The seminarian's "world" is the whole complex of systemic relations (physical, psychological, sociological, etc.) that constitute her existence. The second dimension Loder describes is the *self* that transcends the embodiment of being human in order repeatedly to recompose its "world."

. . . this is the knower; the self is embodied in the lived 'world' and at the same time stands outside it. By virtue of this duality of the self, it is evident that human being both *is* its environment and *has* its environment. . . . Ontogenetically the lived world is engrossing and very largely determinative of the ontic, or particular shape of the self; in this sense, the environment composes the self. Ontologically the self is primary in that (1) self-transcendence or openness to one's own being is universal and independent of the environment and (2) the lived world must finally be the self's own composition of the environment as given with birth.<sup>10</sup>

These first two dimensions, the *self* in its relation to the *lived world*, are properly the subject matter of psychology (and the other anthropological disciplines).

These two dimensions of human being are weak, however, when confronted with the third: "the possibility of annihilation, the potential and eventually inevitable absence of one's being." Loder uses the term *void* for this dimension, which is the end result of each human being, implicit in existence from birth and explicit in death. The void is understood as the ultimate *telos* toward which all experiences of nothingness point—these experiences (such as loneliness and despair) are the "faces of the void." In periods of anxiety, we glimpse the void, but the ultimate experience of the void is death. Death is something all humans face, an essential aspect or dimension of our existence.

Loder describes experiences of the fourth dimension, the *Holy*, as occurring when "being" is present not only implicitly in beings but explicitly manifest as "being-itself." This *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (which Rudolph Otto described so vividly) is not a privileged awareness, but a constitutive dimension of human experience. The various religions are responses to "being-itself" as it is mediated through language, culture, and community. It is essential to being a human, argues Loder, that one worships what is Holy. When the sense of "the Holy" is projected onto the profane,

“worship” (and this essential aspect of being human along with it) collapses into the embodied environment as idolatry and thence into nothingness. Loder suggests, however, that

at the center of transformational knowing in science, esthetics, or therapy the imaginative, constructive insight or vision is an undoing of nothingness; it is a proximate form of the ultimate manifestation of ‘the Holy’ in revelation. . . Faith sees that being-itself may be interpreted as ‘God’ and that the ultimate manifestation of being-itself is Jesus Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Theology is primarily concerned with these last two dimensions of human existence, although it is concerned with them in order to understand how they bring transformation to the first two dimensions.

Psychological adaptation is the attempt to control things and/or ourselves in reaction to things we cannot control, to “get a grip” on the *world* and the *self*, to overcome our fears. But what about the *fear of God*? The Holy is not something *we* grip, but that which *grips us* at the deepest level of existence. Just as all of our predicates are radically qualified when applied to God, so too when the object of fear is the Holy One who absolutely cannot be controlled. As we will see below, both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament clearly call us to fear God; moreover, transformational learning (“the beginning of wisdom”) is linked to this command.

I will suggest that the ultimate answer to the repression that keeps seminarians from transformational learning is to fear the only One worth fearing, so that they can overcome the fears of this “world.” For truly transformational learning to occur in seminarians, it is crucial for us to provide an integrative environment in which they see their intellectual task (gaining theological foundations) as inherently connected to their relation to God (spiritual and personal formation) and to their service of the people of God (transformational leadership). This essay, then, will follow the dialectic between the ultimate (theological) experience of fear and the proximate (psychological) experiences of fear and their repression, in order to identify that which inhibits transformational learning in seminarians.

## **Transformational Learning in *Psychological Perspective***

### ***Psychology and the Fearful Subject***

What keeps seminarians from transformational learning? The psychological answer is *too much fear*. The focus here is on the *subjective* pole of the fear experience, i.e., how the individual student handles experiences of fear. Whether it is *of failure*, *of exposure*, or *of rejection*, the psychological perspective illuminates the ego dynamics of the subject that allow the fear to prevent transformational growth. Loder’s first two dimensions, lived world and self,

are the conceptual arena in which most psychological analyses and prescriptions occur.

These dimensions figure prominently in Paulo Freire's work. He differentiates between a "banking" model and a "problem-posing" model of education. In the banking approach, students are viewed as containers, ready to be filled with knowledge deposited by the teacher. The student then masters the task of making withdrawals from the stored knowledge in response to the appropriate questions. This confirms in the student's mind that he or she has little or nothing to contribute in the "transaction." In problem-posing education, on the other hand, the learners and the teachers together explore and interact with conceptual reality (Loder's *lived world*). For Freire, pedagogy of the oppressed must begin with a raising of the learners' consciousness of their oppression, so that (after naming it) they can move toward changing it. In a similar way, we must raise seminarians' awareness of the debilitating effects that their fears (and their repression) have upon them, so that they too can move toward transformational change.

Several scholars have examined the psychological effects of oppressive ideology within the lived world of the *ecclesia*. R. K. Martin, for example, builds upon the work of Freire and others, calling for the inclusion of "emancipative rationality" in the analysis of congregational dynamics. He argues for a radical inclusion of Trinitarian thinking within a "theological rationality" that views the ground of ecclesial and all Christian praxis "ontologically beyond themselves in the Triune God revealed through Jesus Christ."<sup>12</sup> British religious educator John Hull accuses mainline churches of maintaining the pueralization of its members (keeping them childish in their thinking). While adults continue to develop critical thinking skills in other areas of life, many religious institutions retard this development in matters of faith, again out of fear that their members will think for themselves and become "uncontrollable." This can lead to boredom with church, or to an intentional avoidance of doctrine (as can be seen, for example, in the compartmentalization of beliefs about creation and evolution in so many parishioners). Hull claims that "the principal problem in the growth of consciousness is the *overcoming of fear*,"<sup>13</sup> a fear that we find (I suggest) on *both* sides of the pulpit or professorial lectern.

### ***Educational Anesthesia***

One unfortunate way of dealing with this fear is what I call "educational anesthesia." Of course few professors actually desire to put their students to sleep. And few students prefer an extremely passive (banking) model of education. However, fear on both sides can lead to a state of affairs in which boredom and irrelevance reign. Moreover, many students come to seminary apathetic, numbed by doctrinal wars, seeing theological education as something to be endured, like an operation (which makes the imagery of anesthesia

even more poignant!). The “anesthetic” metaphor has two functions here. First, it refers to the deadening or numbing of the learner prior to the cognitive surgical operation of the teacher. Most of us have experienced teachers who seem to prefer that students be anesthetized, discouraging questions and resisting alternative experientially oriented methods of learning.

Second, the metaphor points to the removal of the *aesthetic* (an-aesthetic) from the learning environment. The word is etymologically derived from *anaisthetos* (having no feeling). The aesthetic dimension in theological learning includes the pleasure and pain of the learner’s life story, her systemic and sensible relations to community, her emotive and optative investment in the whole history of humanity, and of course her experience of God. So “aesthetic” here is used in a general sense to refer not merely to the arts, music and literature but to the innate human longing for transcendence signified by these activities. Of all modes of human inquiry, theology above all should deeply integrate the drive inherent in these spiritual aspirations into its pedagogical practice.

A psychological perspective illuminates the factors in the self and lived world that hinder transformational learning, and provides resources and tools for helping to conquer the fears that inhibit the seminarian’s adaptation to the challenges of Christian ministry. Factors that contribute to overcoming repression include models of learning that enhance self-direction, problem-oriented strategies, and an environment that facilitates the student’s sense of belonging to a safe educational community. It is important to note that fear is not wholly negative; it can be a stimulus for growth in an educational setting. Even its positive function, however, is negatively mediated—fear is something to *conquer*.

From a theological perspective, however, even this delight in conquering repressed fears does not answer our deep longings for transformation. Theologically, we must speak also of the need to *remain conquered* by fear of God. This adds new dimensions to the pedagogical task: our goal should be to overcome educational anesthesia without inadvertently anesthetizing students to the dimensions of the void and Holy as these inevitably break into the learning environment. Conversely, we must be careful that a theological perspective does not ignore the essential psychological integrity that is crucial for thriving in the first two dimensions.

## **Transformational Learning in *Theological* Perspective**

What keeps seminarians from transformational learning? The psychological answer, as we have seen, is too much fear. The *theological* answer is *not enough fear*. Both answers are correct, but in our theological analysis we turn our focus most decisively to the *object* of fear. The question here is how fear of the “Holy,” which alone can ultimately conquer and transform the “void,” impacts

learning. Several scriptural maxims make the connection for us: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10) and knowledge (Prov. 1:7), in fact it *is* wisdom (Job 28:28). It seems that fear *per se* (and not merely overcoming it) is necessary for transformational learning! Ellen Charry has recently reminded us that theology is supposed to be *good for you*,<sup>14</sup> and I suggest this is clearly the case when dealing with the concept of fearing God. I want to emphasize again that the theological answer does not ignore the psychological answer, but buttresses and clarifies it. We see this too in Scripture, for it is precisely the (theological) fear of God that overcomes worldly (psychological) fears; e.g., Exodus 20:20, Psalm 27:1, Isaiah 8:12-13, Tobit 4:21. Before exploring some of the implications for overcoming the stultification of transformational learning in seminarians, let us carefully examine the biblical emphasis on the “Fear of the Lord.”

### ***Fearing God Is Good for You?***

We must first clarify the *kind* of fear under discussion: what is the fear appropriate to *this* existentially relevant object, the Holy One of Israel? Seminary professors might be tempted to mumble something about it being synonymous with “reverence” or “awe” and move quickly to the next doctrinal or biblical issue. Often we find the pendulum has swung too far in one of two directions. On the one side, the need for fearing God is diminished or denied—God is conceptualized as a user-friendly deity who helps us accomplish our “lived world” objectives. On the other side are those who so overemphasize the fear of God that we are led to imagine ourselves as sinners in the hands of an angry God who can hardly wait to punish us. While the former approach focuses only on predicating love (of a certain sort) of God, the latter seems to forget that God *is* love. Perhaps a review of the biblical data is the best first step toward finding a more balanced view. What did the ancients know about fearing God that we seem to have missed?

In the Hebrew Bible, the concept of “fear” (*yare*) functions as a comprehensive and summary description of the proper relation to God. “So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? *Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God...* You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship...” (Deut. 10:12, 20). The fulfillment of the law is tied to this fear; “The whole of wisdom is fear of the Lord, and in all wisdom there is the fulfillment of the law” (Sirach 19:20; cf. Sirach 21:11, Ps. 2:11, 1 Sam. 12:24, 2 Chron. 19:9). It is significant that one of the names of Yahweh, parallel to “the God of Abraham” is “the *Fear* of Isaac” (Gen. 31:42), illustrating the importance of this concept in relation to God.

One way to fill out the material content of “fear of the Lord” is to note its linkage to various ideas in Hebrew poetry. We see, for example, that this fear is the source of *life*: “The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, so that one may avoid the snares of death” (Prov. 14:27) and “The fear of the LORD is *life indeed*”

(Prov. 9:23). A second parallel concept is *righteousness* or (put negatively) overcoming sin and evil: "...by the fear of the LORD one avoids evil" (Prov. 16:6) and "...fear the LORD, and turn away from evil" (Prov. 3:7; cf. Prov. 8:13, Ps. 19:9, 2 Esdras 16:67). The ancient Israelite poets also linked the fear of the Lord to other concepts, such as *love*, *light*, and *true* judgment: "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning of love* for him..." (Sirach 25:12), "the fear [or, some mss., the light] of the Lord is their path" (Sirach 50:29), and "those who fear the Lord will form true judgments, and they will kindle righteous deeds like a light (Sirach 32:16; cf. 23:19, Wisdom of Solomon 17:12).

Observing the relationship of God to those who fear him is quite enlightening, and tells us more about the kind of "fear" that is proper when the Holy One is its object. "The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him" (Psalm 25:14). In relation to those with this fear, God "has compassion" like a Father (Psalm 103:13), fulfills their desire and saves them (Psalm 145:19), takes pleasure in them (Psalm 147:11). Finally, the psalmist insists: "*Happy* are those who fear the LORD" (Ps. 112:1; cf. Is. 33:6). For the Israelite, the fear of the Lord was a desirable thing, in fact the *most desirable* thing of all. Nothing compares to it in fulfilling the longing for transformation that all humans experience. This attitude is expressed eloquently in the apocryphal book of Sirach:

... *nothing is better* than the fear of the Lord, and nothing sweeter than to heed the commandments of the Lord (23:27). . . Fear of the Lord *surpasses everything*; to whom can we compare the one who has it? (25:11). . . Riches and strength build up confidence, but the fear of the Lord is *better than either*. There is no want in the fear of the Lord, and with it there is no need to seek for help. The fear of the Lord is like a *garden of blessing*, and covers a person *better than any glory* (40:26-27). . . The fear of the Lord is glory and exultation, and gladness and a crown of rejoicing... the fear of the Lord delights the heart, and gives gladness and joy and long life. . . the fear of the Lord is the crown of wisdom, making *peace and perfect health* to flourish. (1:11, 12, 18).

The fear of God continues to play an important role in the New Testament. Jesus urged his listeners not to fear those who can kill the body, but "rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:26, Luke 12:4f.; cf. 4 Maccabees 13:14-17). The whole of Jesus' ministry reflects the anticipation expressed by Isaiah: "The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD..." (11:2-3a). Paul summarizes the status of unbelievers by noting "there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18). In 2 Cor. 5:11, he describes his relation to God: "...knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others." Picking up the theme of its link to righteousness, Paul urges the Corinthians to

make “holiness perfect in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). The secret to church growth also appears to be related to fear of the Lord: “Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it [the church] increased in numbers” (Acts 9:31). Peter puts it bluntly in 2:17 of his first epistle—“Fear God”—and calls his readers not to fear what the world fears (1 Peter 3:14, 18). In the book of Revelation, John writes that the eschatological reward is for “all who fear your name” (Rev. 11:18; cf. 19:5). Clearly, the “fear of the Lord” is a central dynamic that must be inherently related to transformational learning among those who are called as ministers of the Gospel.

### ***Theology and the Object of Fear***

In spite of all this, many may still feel uncomfortable with the idea that God is the proper object of *fear*. Perhaps a heuristic analogy will help; let us reflect on the dialectic between fascination and fear among *human* lovers. Human love too is characterized by *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, although the “other” as object of love is not “The Other,” who *is* Love. In human love, the lover is unable to control the beloved (as other). However, the true lover does not desire to control the beloved; the lover rejoices in the freedom of the beloved to respond to love. The beloved is the beloved precisely as an uncontrollable existentially relevant object (of a special kind); if controlled, the beloved ceases to be the object of *love*. Fear (as we have defined it) is an essential element of love. Part of the ecstasy of human intimacy is the delightful trembling (*tremendum*) that derives from not being able to manipulate the beloved. True love does not eradicate the element of fear, but takes it up into itself, transforming it so that it becomes a trembling delight (*fascinans*). This is indeed a “terrific” mystery!

When God is the object of fear (and so, in this sense, the beloved), we must move beyond the human analogy. When God is the beloved (and so, the feared), we have to do with the constitutive presence of the truly infinite and eternal Creator, whose love is the basis of the existence of the self and its lived world, whose creative activity *eo ipso* operates by overcoming the void (*ex nihilo*). When the divine source of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful is the object of fear, recognition of the unmanipulability of *this* object evokes faith and hope. Human love of God includes the element of fear, but it is transformed infinitely into the terrific delight of worship, not merely a worship that is ritualistically compartmentalized, but a worship that constitutes the whole of one’s identity in the lived world as it is offered to the Holy (Romans 12:1).

While this vision of life fascinates us, we are tempted to ignore or bypass the third dimension of our existence—the void. True transformation by the Holy is always mediated, however, through the overcoming and negation of the void. Superficial forms of psychotherapy and pedagogical practice may succeed in patching over the cracks in the lived world through which the void is seeping, but while this way of adapting the self to the world may temporarily

camouflage loneliness and depression, it is only at the price of cutting off the self from the only One who can ultimately conquer the void.

We cannot overcome the void through the repressive capacities of our ego structures; we can only conceal the widening fissures of nothingness with the wallpaper of our psychic busyness. Carl Jung claimed that after age thirty-five, all psychological healing that occurs is inherently religious. Such healing is not simply religious in *content* but involves an existential confrontation of that which is beyond Loder's first three dimensions. This is probably because by this age most people are beginning to face their inability to conquer the void; the youthful naiveté that hopes to stave off death indefinitely is quickly vanishing. Interestingly, the average age of seminarians is now approximately thirty-five.

Abrogating the need to deal with the void and Holy may remove some of the pain (anesthesia) of the lived world, but it hinders true transformation. Ironically, some approaches to overcoming *educational* anesthesia may result in *theological* anesthesia if they deaden the learner's sensitivity to the third and fourth dimensions. Loder notes that humans long for more than simple adaptation to the first two dimensions; existential transformation of the self "works to redeem the significance of the whole sequence, including the depression, as a passageway to centeredness in the Holy."<sup>15</sup> Only from the side of the Holy can we hope for the gracious act of reconciliation that provides infinite life unthreatened by the void. *Finitum non capax infiniti*. We long for unity with the infinite source of new being, yet we turn away from that source and attempt to establish on our own the conditions of our existence. It is this two-dimensional ego-controlled life that we must lose in order to gain true life; *dying* to the lived world, we are linked to Christ's death and resurrection through which the void was conquered. We find ourselves radically and robustly embedded in the same lived world, but now everything has changed—now our lives are hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3), which is the only peaceful place to be.

The theological search for wisdom as transformational learning takes up and includes within itself the psychological task of *conquering* fear of the world; it does so by orienting the whole self to God through a holistic act of worship that is a *being conquered* by the love of the Holy. This occurs within community, for as we fear God truly, and share in the Trinitarian life of unity and peace, that peaceful unity shapes our life together (John 17:20-23). For the seminary classroom, this implies that professors and students may explore together all four dimensions of human existence as they bear upon the conceptual and practical problems involved in redemptively transforming the lived worlds of family, ecclesia, society and the whole of human culture.

### ***Perfect Fear Casts Out Love***

1 John 4:18 tells us that “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. . .” This appears to raise yet another objection to my panegyric on the fear of God and its salubrious effects on transformational learning. But about what *kind* of fear is the apostle writing? Not fear of God, but fear of worldly things. Perhaps we could say with equal truth that *perfect fear casts out love*, i.e., the perfect fear of God casts out the love of the lived world, the self-love that hopelessly endeavors with its two-dimensional strength to control the void. Only as seminary students are spiritually transformed by true fear of God will they fully overcome the fears of the lived world that keep them from transformational learning. This whole-hearted singularity of vision is captured in Thomas Merton’s query: “Why should I fear anything that cannot rob me of God, and why should I desire anything that cannot give me possession of him?”<sup>16</sup> Kierkegaard argued that purity of heart is to will one thing—and only the Good may be willed purely as one thing. Similarly, I suggest that purity of heart is to *fear* one thing—and only the Holy may be feared purely as one thing. This willing and fearing (which is also a resting and a loving) set one free *from* repressed fear of the world, and set one free *for* works of love in the world. The pure in heart shall see God, and surely *that* is the goal of *theological* education.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1985). See also the articles collected in Freire’s *The Politics of Education—Culture, Power and Liberation* (South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey, 1985).
2. North American theological educators who have appropriated aspects of Freire’s thought are too numerous to mention here. Some important examples include Robert K. Martin, “Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy in Theological Perspective” *Theological Education* 33:2 (1997): 121-146; Michael Welton, “Seeing the Light: Christian Conversion and Conscientization” in *Adult Education and Theological Interpretations*, edited by P. Jarvis and N. Walters (Malabar: Krieger, 1993): 105-123; Russell A. Butkus, “Linking Social Analysis with Curriculum Development: Insights from Paulo Freire” *Religious Education* 84 (Fall 1989): 568-583; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Theological Education: Biblical Studies” in *The Education of the Practical Theologian*, edited by Don Browning et. al., (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 1-19.
3. I offer a more detailed analysis of interdisciplinary dynamics in “Holding on to the Psychology-Theology Relationship: The Underlying Fiduciary Structures of Interdisciplinary Method” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 25:3 (1997): 329-340 and in chapter 2 of *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
4. The modifier “existentially relevant” is added to exclude things like quasars in distant galaxies, which although we may not be able to control them do not affect our

response to the world. Thanks to David Clark for pointing out the need for this qualification.

5. See, e.g., Stephen Brookfield, *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988) and Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).
6. Christine Blair, "Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education" *Theological Education* 34:1 (Autumn 1997): 11-24.
7. See, e.g., Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 3.
8. I limit myself to recommending James E. Loder's *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998) and Robert Kegan's *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1994).
9. James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989), 69.
10. *Ibid.*, 69-70.
11. *Ibid.*, 70-71.
12. Robert K. Martin, "Congregational Studies and Critical Pedagogy in Theological Perspective" *Theological Education* 33:2 (1997): 143.
13. John M. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1991), 165, emphasis added.
14. Ellen Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
15. Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 89.
16. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1961), 159.



# Writing Practical Christian Wisdom: Genre and the Doctor of Ministry Dissertation

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ABSTRACT: Final projects for the degree of Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) appear to fall into a specific genre. Based on ATS standards for D.Min. final projects and guidelines from selected seminaries, the article sketches the characteristic features of a “doctoral-level” project as a practical document and contrasts it with expectations for a Ph.D. dissertation in theology. Written for an audience of persons engaged in ministry, the project should address an issue arising out of ministerial practice, use an appropriate research model informed by the social sciences, and interpret itself from the point of view of a Christian minister. The project should indicate how it is pertinent to ministers in other ministry contexts. Thus, the project is an exercise in *phronesis*, practical Christian wisdom. The article concludes with suggested avenues for research to determine whether actual projects are shaped as the model presented here describes them and suggests how understanding the genre might contribute to better supervision of students as they write their final project documents.

## Introduction

Candidates for the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree produce doctoral project documents that degree-granting schools catalog and hold in their libraries. Although D.Min. projects appear to be a recognizable type of scholarly document, there appears to be a lack of clarity about what precisely they are. This lack of clarity is of long standing. In 1976, J. Randall Nichols, director of Princeton Theological Seminary’s D.Min. program, reported that a faculty colleague understood the final “thesis-project” to be something like “a Ph.D. dissertation combined with an organizational development report, all in the context of a full-scale self-analysis.” No wonder Nichols’s article in *Theological Education* was entitled “D.Min. Projects: The Horrifying End.”<sup>1</sup> At the level of hallway conversation and Internet discussions, I have heard D.Min. projects lamented by professors who supervise such projects and derided by the librarians who catalog them for use by patrons. Is this chorus, one wonders, sung because of unmeetable expectations for the projects?

## **Problem Statement**

What is a D.Min. project? What do The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) and the many schools that oversee the creation of such documents mean by designating these documents as “doctoral-level?” Is a thesis-project a management report cross-bred with a spiritual diary? Is a project a replica of a Ph.D. in theology? In short, what is the genre?

An answer to these questions would be helpful to four distinct groups that have a stake in doctoral projects. First of all, a better understanding of D.Min. projects would help theological librarians, whose vocation is to connect users with needed information. In the current flood of information accessible via the Internet and other means, it is important, as a 1998 editorial in *Library Journal* suggested, for librarians to move beyond neutrality about information (the traditional stance of the reference librarian) to become information advisors who consciously filter, evaluate, and interpret information for patrons.<sup>2</sup> Second, a better understanding of the genre of D.Min. projects can aid professors involved in Doctor of Ministry education as they seek to guide students through their degree programs. Third, presidents and deans of ATS schools will benefit from a more nuanced understanding of this last step in the curriculum leading to the granting of the D.Min. degree. Given the amount of resources that schools devote to their D.Min. programs and the obvious way in which D.Min. education serves the broader church, leaders of such schools who have a firm grasp on this dimension of their D.Min. programs can communicate more effectively with their boards and constituencies.<sup>3</sup> Finally, a better understanding of what D.Min. projects are will aid the community of church professionals whom D.Min. projects are intended to serve.

## **Literature Review**

Examining published literature about D.Min. projects, one discovers that virtually no scholarship has addressed the distinctive features of this genre. My search of the *Library Literature* database found no discussion of D.Min. project documents at all, although there were publications about the cataloging and use of other types of doctoral dissertations.<sup>4</sup> “Doctor of Ministry degree” is a distinct subject heading in the *ATLA Religion Database*. The articles indexed in *Religion Database* that were assigned this heading appeared primarily in *Theological Education* and *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry*.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the extent of published reflection about the final project documents is quite limited. J. Randall Nichols argued in 1976 that the project should be “a contribution to our knowledge about the operation of ministry in its various forms. It is a major piece of writing coming out of systematic observation and actual operation in some problematic, murky, or unresearched area of ministry.”<sup>6</sup> In 1985 James E. Dittes, in a review of a collection of D.Min. papers

published by Chicago Theological Seminary (*Spiritual Nurture and Congregational Development*), suggested that projects form a distinct genre of “professional paper.”<sup>7</sup> Dittes’s suggestion, however, referred to relatively short papers based on final projects, rather than to the “theses-project” documents themselves. Conrad Cherry’s recent *Hurrying Toward Zion*, a study of university-related Protestant divinity schools, barely mentions Doctor of Ministry programs at all.<sup>8</sup>

When Auburn Theological Seminary and Hartford Seminary’s Center for Social and Religious Research studied D.Min. programs in the 1980s, researchers found that:

The final project or thesis required for the D.Min. remains one of the most problematic features of the program. The problems attending the project are legion. There is little clarity and no agreement about what kind of research is appropriate to the professional doctorate in ministry. Some schools require a great deal of background library research, others very little. Some insist that an “action experiment” be part of the project, but a substantial number accept a long paper that has no experimental element. Requirements for the form of the final presentation vary greatly. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Theological educators, it seems, are not sure what sort of “long paper” represents an adequate project.

In this paper I focus on the D.Min. project prescriptively, that is, what does the community concerned with these project documents imagine them to be?<sup>10</sup> In other words, I am concerned with the question of genre. I analyze the genre by looking at what current ATS standards, research guides, and Doctor of Ministry handbooks imagine D.Min. projects should be. In this study I use handbooks or thesis guidelines from the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Fuller Theological Seminary. The Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools is comprised of Bethel Seminary, Luther Seminary, St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas, St. John’s University School of Theology, and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.<sup>11</sup> Thus, my reflections are based on guidelines from schools in the United States with affiliations to the Baptist General Conference, the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Church of Christ and (in the case of Fuller), Protestant evangelicals. Based on my findings, I sketch the characteristic features of a “doctoral-level” project as a practical document and contrast it with expectations for a Ph.D. dissertation in theology. Finally, I conclude with suggestions for research into the extent to which actual projects measure up to the proposed characteristics and raise questions for those who teach in D.Min. programs.<sup>12</sup>

## **Genre**

We begin with genre.<sup>13</sup> Thinking about genre (literary form) is important because genre creates a set of expectations in the mind of the competent reader.<sup>14</sup> Students of the New Testament learn, we trust, to expect St. Paul to identify himself at the beginning of his letters—contrary to the current North American convention—because this is the convention of letters in the Mediterranean world of the first century C.E. Genre functions to limit my set of interpretative possibilities so that I can better grasp what a text says without being unduly distracted by what the text (and the author implied by the text) has no intention of saying.<sup>15</sup> Thus, I am siding with Jonathan Culler in positing that readers with “literary competence” are capable of properly decoding language used in characteristic ways in a given genre. “To read a text as literature,” Culler argues in *Structuralist Poetics*, “is not to make one’s mind a *tabula rasa* and approach it without preconceptions; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for.”<sup>16</sup> In a similar way, I think, competent readers of the genre “doctor of ministry project” bring with them implicit and appropriate understandings of how the genre works so that they can know “what to look for.”

## **Doctoral-Level Projects According to the ATS Standards**

The ATS standards describe the final Doctor of Ministry project in three paragraphs:

F.3.1.3 The [Doctor of Ministry] program shall include the design and completion of a written doctoral-level project that addresses both the nature and the practice of ministry. The project should be of sufficient quality that it contributes to the practice of ministry as judged by professional standards and has the potential for application in other contexts of ministry.

F.3.1.3.1 The ministry project should demonstrate the candidate’s ability to identify a specific theological topic in ministry, organize an effective research model, use appropriate resources, and evaluate the results, and should reflect the candidate’s depth of theological insight in relation to ministry.

F.3.1.3.2 Upon completion of the doctoral project, there shall be an oral presentation and evaluation. The completed written project, with any supplemental material, should be accessioned in the institution’s library.<sup>17</sup>

Statement F.3.1.3 describes projects in general. The project must address “the nature and the practice of ministry” in such a way that it makes a contribution to the work of ministry. The project must not be so utterly particular that it bears no relationship to other ministry contexts. Judgment about the contribution of the project, that is, whether or not it is good work, is made using “professional standards.”

Statement F.3.1.3.1 elaborates the bones of the project. There are five parts: (1) the identification of a theological topic in ministry, (2) building a research model, (3) using appropriate resources, (4) evaluation, and finally (5) theological insight. Statement F.3.1.3.2 requires that completed projects become public documents by accessioning in the degree-granting school’s library. In the words of Christine Blair, the project “is a gift to the larger church. In designing and producing this final work, D.Min. students must develop a resource that could be useful to some other churches or to the candidate’s denomination.”<sup>18</sup> The requirement that schools accession final projects makes them public and useable in a way that “school work” is not. The project culminates a degree program that includes a qualitative advance over the work done for the basic ministerial degree, the Master of Divinity.<sup>19</sup> On the face of it, it would seem that a project that contains all five parts, robustly executed, is a “doctoral-level” project.

## Characteristic Features of the D.Min. Project as a Practical Document

Based on the standards, we can posit four distinctive features that should shape the genre of the D.Min. project: *audience*, the nature of the *contribution* that the work intends to make, *methodology*, and *voice*.

**Audience.** First, a D.Min. project is written for church professionals. The universe of imagined readers (beyond, of course, the committee overseeing the project) is comprised of other persons engaged in pastoral ministry in the Christian churches. Fuller Theological Seminary makes the audience for its D.Min. dissertation explicit: “The dissertation is written in a style and format appropriate to an audience of pastors or missionaries and other ministry professionals. . . .”<sup>20</sup> It is worth emphasizing, as persons involved in D.Min. education know, that authors are attempting to serve two distinct masters. They must write to please the teachers who will pass judgment on their work (even if a great deal of the project is geared for persons without formal theological training) and at the same time attempt to communicate with a second audience, the community of professional ministers.

**Contribution.** Second, a D.Min. project attempts to make a professional contribution to ministry. “The project should be of sufficient quality that it contributes to the practice of ministry as judged by professional standards and has the potential for application in other contexts of ministry.” [F.3.1.3] If we

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accept the distinction between practical knowledge (*phronesis*) and speculative knowledge, the D.Min. project clearly is an exercise in *phronesis*, the kind of “practical wisdom” desirable in the practice of ministry.<sup>21</sup> The practice of ministry may be well served by feminist literary theory, a nuanced awareness of the Council of Trent’s views on justification when describing similarities and differences between Catholic and Protestant viewpoints, or communications theory.

In the context of a D.Min project, however, such knowledge is in service of ministry “on the ground” in a specific context. Feminist literary theory, for instance, may inform the work of interpreting the Bible for preaching. Knowledge of different views on the doctrine of justification may inform the creation of an ecumenical adult education curriculum. Communications theory may inform how church members are trained to conduct person-to-person evangelism. Theological knowledge must serve ministry. Both are required in the project. It may not simply be a “how to” manual that lacks reasons for the activities described. The final project should be the work of a reflective practitioner<sup>22</sup> who both performs artful acts of ministry and at the same time is able to give theological and interpersonal (or systemic) reasons for her practice.

**Methodology.** Third, a D.Min. project addresses a problem in the church’s ministry using “a research model.” This requirement follows logically from the fact that the project is a phronetic exercise rather than a purely theoretical one. The research should relate appropriately to the ministerial practice or problem under consideration. D.Min. manuals and handbooks allow considerable variety, however, in the precise ways in which a project goes about addressing a problem in ministry. Austin Seminary’s handbook states: “Whether or not the project has an ‘in-ministry’ component will depend on the nature of the project itself. If it does not involve directly persons in the ministry setting, the project must still evidence the relation between the project and the candidate’s own practice of ministry.”<sup>23</sup>

*Research in Ministry*, William R. Myers’s handbook designed for use in D.Min. programs, advocates using a case study approach to problems in ministry. Such an approach, Myers argues, enables the researcher “to focus holistically upon particular practices of ministry with persons, groups, programs, institutions, or systematic mixes of such components.”<sup>24</sup> Such an approach begins with particular events or crises in the practitioner’s pastoral work, thus ensuring that the project be rooted in practice. Myers’s handbook moves the student from a ministry problem to its context, through a discussion of the role of theory to a consideration of research methods. He discusses three methodologies. The quantitative method “hopes to *control*”; the ethnographic method “hopes to understand by describing the meaning of certain contexts”; and the “pro-active” “hopes to transform individual and collective settings.”<sup>25</sup> Myers is restating some classic research methodologies of the social sciences. It is customary, for instance, to distinguish between quantitative approaches

that attempt to measure attitudes or learning and qualitative methods, including interviewing and “thick study.”<sup>26</sup>

One of the parts of D.Min. research that distinguishes it from other sociological or psychological research projects is that the project includes an explicit theological dimension. The pro-active research model, Myers contends, “sounds congruent with those implications of transformation most closely associated with Judeo-Christian conceptions of ministry. It more clearly fits . . . the theological claims made by most Doctor of Ministry programs.”<sup>27</sup> In a discussion of research methods in Doctor of Ministry programs, Myers and Bonnie Miller-McLemore question the assumptions underlying traditional, quantitative social science research in the Western tradition. “The controlled experiment of the quantitative paradigm is,” they write, “in large part, judged successful on the basis of how well it eliminates, rather than honors, the ‘mess’ associated with the lives of ordinary people.”<sup>28</sup> Having raised this question, however, Myers and Miller-McLemore uphold the necessity of standing critically apart from a ministry setting—what they call a “critical, value-laden evaluative stance”<sup>29</sup> that seeks to benefit from social science suppositions and methodologies without being co-opted from them. Thus, there should be an underlying set of Christian suppositions at work in a D.Min. project (for example, affirmation that God hears prayers) even when those suppositions clash with dominant social science paradigms. In line with Myers and Miller-McLemore’s desire to honor the messiness involved in studying some aspect of the Christian church, it should be noted, more naturalistic methods of inquiry may be applicable to Doctor of Ministry projects. These include the approaches of “congregational studies” and reflection on social and theological settings of sermons.<sup>30</sup> Such approaches appear to be in keeping with a current shift in interest among self-defined sociologists of religion to “map” small areas of the territory of American religious life on the grounds that the traditionally large-scale maps of sociologists “too often fail to account for the diversity and complexity of everyday religious life.”<sup>31</sup>

**Voice.** Finally, the ATS standards suggest that doctoral-level projects require a certain voice. The task is not simply to conduct an experiment in which the objective observer notes the behaviors of certain persons in response to certain experimental interventions. Rather, in a doctoral-level project the minister consciously reflects on her own personal involvement with other Christians—her ministerial work. According to the standards, the project “should reflect the candidate’s depth of theological insight in relation to ministry.” [F.3.1.3.1] In Fuller’s “Thematic Guidelines for the Ministry Focus Paper,” the emphasis is placed on a real-world ministry setting: “The concrete situation of ministry is itself intrinsically *theological* and becomes the proper context of ‘doing theology. . . .’ As a result, the controlling factor for the ministry focus paper is the place and experience of ministry.”<sup>32</sup> In a similar vein Austin Seminary’s handbook for D.Min. projects states:

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Because the Doctor of Ministry is a ‘professional’ degree, the doctoral project includes specific theological reflection on the work of ministry. The candidate should specify the relation of the topic or problem to ministry in general *and to his or her own doctrine of ministry* [emphasis added].<sup>33</sup>

The Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools’ guidelines on the final “thesis-project” state that the project must include “a chapter or clearly denoted section outlining the writer’s theology of ministry” and a further chapter or section that suggests “further directions for the writer’s own ministry elicited by the Thesis-Project.”<sup>34</sup> A colleague of mine once commented to a D.Min. student that a draft chapter did not make it clear enough where the viewpoints of theological authorities ended and the opinions of the minister-writer himself began. It is not enough, then, for a D.Min. project to wrestle with the problems that American society or the members of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church have with hospice ministry, for example. The project also must include the explicit theological commitments of the minister her or himself.

In fine, ATS standards envision a doctoral-level project with a distinctively theological voice that makes critical use of methods born of the social sciences.

## **The Doctoral-Level Project: A Tentative Description**

Prescriptively, what should a doctoral-level project be like? Written for an audience of persons engaged in ministry, the project should address an issue arising out of actual ministerial practice. Using an appropriate research model informed by the social sciences, the project should not simply describe, but explicitly interpret itself from the point of view of a Christian minister. The project should indicate how the strategy, experiment, or issues dealt with in one particular context are of interest to ministers in other ministry contexts.

Doctor of Ministry handbooks stress that all of these elements are needed, although the elements do not form an invariable outline of the document. Fuller’s guidelines say it well: “It is not assumed that these. . . components will actually provide an outline for the structure of the project paper (although in some cases there may well be some general correspondence), but rather they should be intrinsic to the paper’s thematic development.”<sup>35</sup>

## **The D.Min. Project versus the Ph.D. Dissertation**

At this point, I think, it is appropriate to make a comparison between the D.Min. project and a Ph.D. dissertation. There are significant differences in audience, in the nature of the contribution that the work intends to make, in methodology, and in voice. The differences are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Comparison of D.Min. Final Projects and Ph.D. Dissertations**

	<b>D.Min.</b>	<b>Ph.D.</b>
Audience	church	academy
Contribution	practical ( <i>phronesis</i> )	speculative or practical
Methodology	social sciences in conjunction with Christian convictions	scientific methods
Voice	values self-disclosure	values objectivity
Bibliographic Exhaustiveness	unknown	yes

The first difference lies in the *audience* for the documents. While in very real terms, both a Ph.D. dissertation and a D.Min. project are written in the first instance for the committee supervising the process, a Ph.D. dissertation is written for the *academy*; a D.Min. project for the *church*.

Second, the documents differ in the nature of the contribution that the work intends to make. D.Min. projects are conceived as having real-world consequences for the practice of ministry in a way that many Ph.D. dissertations do not. This is not to say that Ph.D. dissertations do not make an impact on the lives of the churches—clearly K ung’s dissertation on Barth’s doctrine of justification<sup>36</sup> has had a positive effect in Catholic-Protestant relationships—rather, many Ph.D. dissertations are free from being tied to such practical considerations. I would expect that Ph.D. dissertations in pastoral counseling attempt to be phronetic.<sup>37</sup> The academic community interested in Jesus research or Theodore of Mopsuestia’s Christology is not concerned with practical consequences of such research.

A further word, perhaps, should be said about the difference in contribution expected of a D.Min. project and a Ph.D. dissertation. Despite the position of the Council of Graduate Schools that “the [Ph.D.] dissertation is the beginning of one’s scholarly work, not its culmination,”<sup>38</sup> Bowen and Rudenstine found in their study of Ph.D. programs in the arts and sciences in the United States that expectations for the originality, depth, and significance of doctoral dissertations have been on the rise since the 1960s. Responding in part to a shrinking job market for academics, they suggest, many involved in Ph.D. education now “conceive of the dissertation not as the first step in a long scholarly career, but as the significant, ground-breaking work that will secure

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a rewarding position at an institution that encourages scholarship as well as teaching."<sup>39</sup> If this same rising tide of expectation for originality and brilliance also holds true for Ph.D. dissertations in theology, then I venture to assert that another way of understanding the difference in contribution expected of Ph.D. dissertations and D.Min. projects is that few institutions insist that D.Min. projects will, in the regular course of events, evince the same level of originality and "ground-breaking" reflection that many schools expect of Ph.D. dissertations.

Third, as a direct consequence of the D.Min. project as an exercise in *phronesis* of a Christian kind, its methodology may well differ from a Ph.D. dissertation in traditional theological disciplines. To pursue only one example, a Ph.D. dissertation in biblical studies may involve a rigorous, close reading of a text through one or more interpretive lenses (be it historical-critical, feminist, or deconstructionist).<sup>40</sup> Such an approach would not be acceptable for a D.Min. project. The objective methods valued by much of the North American scholarly community do not reach the point of practical wisdom.<sup>41</sup>

Fourth, Ph.D. dissertations and D.Min. projects differ in *voice and self-disclosure*. Authors of Ph.D. dissertations in theology typically reveal nothing about themselves beyond their ideas about the topic at hand, because the dissertation is driven on close reading and argument. As one Ph.D. student put it when discussing her dissertation proposal, saying perhaps more than she intended, at her institution students were taught to state their own opinions only in footnotes. By contrast, D.Min. projects reveal the passions, both pastoral and doctrinal, of the authors.

Finally, there appears to be a difference between the two in terms of bibliographic exhaustiveness. I confess that this is a hunch. The Ph.D. student in a theological discipline is expected by the academy to have read a tremendous amount of scholarly literature and to demonstrate familiarity, if not digestion, of all material by appropriate citations. Thus, the Ph.D. dissertation includes an extensive review of related literature, footnotes, bibliographies, and appendices. Pertinent literature in ancient and modern languages is not only fair game for one's bibliography, it is essential to demonstrate to the academy that one is a competent, serious scholar and understands what one is writing about.

Ph.D. programs in theology typically require competency in two modern languages on the grounds that such competency is needed to become a capable partner in the theological conversation. The language of Princeton's catalog is common: "All candidates [for the Ph.D.] must be fluent in English and must demonstrate reading knowledge of two modern languages, normally German and French."<sup>42</sup> The imagined audience for Ph.D. dissertations, then, is a group who can read at least three modern languages, and in the case of Biblical studies, probably two or three ancient languages as well. Academic librarians know that Ph.D. students make heavy demands on library services, including

becoming habitues of the inter-library loan office. They need to read everything.

What do we know about the degree of bibliographic exhaustiveness required in D.Min. projects? I am not aware of any D.Min. program requiring competency in a second modern language as a condition of admission. This would immediately seem to limit the scope of literature that D.Min. students would be required to read when crafting a personal doctrine of ministry or research design. Project guidelines and handbooks do make some general comments about bibliographic exhaustiveness as a necessary part of the final project. The Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools' guidelines, for instance, call for "an analysis of work previously done in the field."<sup>43</sup> Fuller Theological Seminary offers two tracks for "final ministry project design." Track A, the "ministry focus paper" track, gives no hints about bibliographic exhaustiveness. On the other hand, track B, the "dissertation" track calls for a dissertation that maintains "doctoral level scholarship through use of extensive research and critical footnotes or endnotes, documenting sources."<sup>44</sup> One suspects that there may be a wide variation in the level of exhaustiveness expected by different schools.

In fine, a D.Min. doctoral-level project does not appear to be a clone of a Ph.D. dissertation. By design the D.Min. project addresses a different audience, encourages personal expressions of a doctrine of ministry, and seeks to contribute to the reformation of ministerial practice.

### **Directions for Future Research and Questions for D.Min. Faculty Members**

Based on my interpretation of the ATS standards and the working documents from several seminaries, I have proposed that a D.Min. project addresses an issue arising out of ministerial practice, uses a research model drawn from the social sciences, and interprets itself from the point of view of a Christian minister. As an exercise in *phronesis*, the project seeks to communicate with other persons involved in Christian ministry. A project documents practical Christian wisdom. Stating what we imagine D.Min. projects to be is clearly the easy part.

Research is needed to test whether this description in practice has created a distinctive genre of document. Such research entails examining doctoral project documents themselves to see to what extent actual documents live up to the ideal genre. I propose that researchers examine the following sets of questions. First, how do thesis-project documents distinctively speak to their implied audience of church professionals? Do the documents disclose a pastoral yet critical voice? Second, how do social science methods inform the documents? Is there a clear statement of a research design, and are readers given a rationale for the approach used? Both the standards and handbooks

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clearly expect this whenever social science methods are employed. Are such methods embraced wholeheartedly, or with critical judgment arising out of Christian convictions? Finally, how rigorously are social science methods applied? If one can measure the effectiveness of a sermon or a program, do projects attempt to measure effectiveness according to objective norms, or not? In assessing whether or not two different forms of a test covering the same content in a Sunday school curriculum are equivalent, for instance, the Mann-Whitney U test could be used to assess if there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of two groups taking the tests.<sup>45</sup> Finally, what level of bibliographic exhaustiveness appears to be required in doctoral-level projects? Traditional bibliometric methods (the attempt to quantitatively assess the use of source documents) would seem to be useful here. Is there any consistency across institutional lines in the requirement for engagement with pertinent literature? Do project authors appear to be aware of other work that is relevant to their projects?

In my view, these questions may be helpfully addressed by analysis of a representative sample of doctoral projects.<sup>46</sup> Sampling is needed, because hundreds of D.Min. projects are accepted each year. In an arena with such large boundaries, anecdote will be the enemy of truth. If the challenge of determining a valid sample<sup>47</sup> and acquiring copies of project documents can be overcome, the North American theological community will be in a position to determine the extent to which D.Min. projects are like the “doctoral-level” projects that we imagine them to be.<sup>48</sup>

While this study focused on the final project documents, theological educators know that a carefully designed process undergirds D.Min. students as they read, conduct research, analyze results, reflect theologically, and write their final project documents. If the sketch of the genre of D.Min. projects presented here is accurate, then it raises questions for faculty members as they teach in D.Min. programs, most especially as they supervise students working on their final projects. I conclude with two such questions. First, how do faculty members guide students to distinguish the practical from the speculative? Given the divide between the churchly and the phronetic on the one hand and the academic and speculative on the other, this distinction is fundamental for the design of D.Min. projects. In programs where supervision of final projects is shared between a member of the “practical” department and a member or members from other departments (biblical studies, for instance), it is especially important that all professors involved share a common vision of what is required. Second, how do seminary professors teach social science methods to their students? Such methods (whether quantitative or naturalistic) seem to be required. If professors have not themselves been trained in such methods (and I see no reason to assume this, given the highly specialized and distinctive nature of inquiry in such disciplines as systematic theology and biblical studies), how do members of theological faculty evaluate claims made by

students that, for instance, confirmation students actually learned more because of teaching method A than they did from teaching method B? Reflection on questions like these will help professors honor the limits of the D.Min. genre and aid students as they write practical Christian wisdom.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. J. Randall Nichols, "D.Min. Projects: The Horrifying End," *Theological Education* 12:4 (Summer 1976): 264-270. The quotation is found on page 264. The table of contents page to this issue gives the title as I have written it. On the article's first page, the text shows "D.Minn. Projects." I take this as a misprint.
2. John N. Berry III, "Risking Relevant Reference Work," *Library Journal* 123:9 (May 15, 1998), 6. The need for an improved understanding of D.Min. projects is sharpened given the degree of bibliographic access now available to potential readers of such projects through such indexing and abstracting services as *Dissertation Abstracts*, the *Religion Database*, and the *Theological Resources Exchange Network* (TREN).
3. Early in the life of D.Min. programs, Kenneth R. Houglund attempted to calculate the discrete costs for such programs ["How Much Does a D.Min. Program Cost?" *Theological Education* 12 (Summer 1976): 246-252. Schools use a variety of strategies for staffing the teaching of their programs, ranging from a heavy reliance upon the core faculty who teach in the M.Div. program, to appointment of professors who teach inclusively in a D.Min. program, to heavy reliance on part-time adjunct faculty.
4. For instance: Janet Lee-Smeltzer and Debra Hackleman, "Access to O.S.U. Theses and Dissertations in Kerr Library: How They Are Used . . . Or Are They?" *Technical Services Quarterly* 12:4 (1995): 25-43; Patricia O'Brien Libutti and Mary Kopala, "The Doctoral Student, the Dissertation, and the Library: A Review of the Literature," *The Reference Librarian* no. 48 (1995): 5-25. Libutti and Kopala focus on the development of the literature review section of Ph.D. dissertations in the social sciences.
5. See, for instance, George Brown, Jr., "A Select, Annotated Bibliography for D Min Education," *Theological Education* 28 (Spring 1992): 91-103; William R. Myers and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore, "Can One Be Faithful While Teaching Research Methods to D.Min. Students?" *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 12 (1990): 15-29; Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and William R. Myers "The Doctorate of Ministry as an Exercise in Practical Theology: Qualitative Research with Living Human Documents [pt 1]," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 11(1989): 5-24.
6. J. Randall Nichols, "Horrifying End," 265.
7. James E. Dittes. Review of *Spiritual Nurture and Congregational Development* (Perry LeFevre and W. Widick Shroeder, eds. Chicago: Exploration Press of Chicago Theological Seminary, 1984) in *Review of Religious Research* 27:1 (September 1985): 88-89. In his positive review Dittes stated (p. 89) that the volume "is not addressed to an academic or research audience, although social science sophistication is abundantly evident, not just paraded. (Theological concerns are more scarce except in the four Catholic papers.)"

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8. Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 149-150, refers to the University of Chicago's Master of Theology-Doctor of Ministry program in the 1960s and 1970s.
9. Jackson W. Carroll and Barbara G. Wheeler, "Doctor of Ministry Program: History, Summary of Findings and Recommendations," *Theological Education* 23:2 (Spring 1987): 33.
10. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 52nd annual conference of the American Theological Library Association (Xerox Conference Center, Leesburg, VA) June 18-20, 1998. I wish to thank Gerald Turnbull (Librarian, Vancouver School of Theology Library), Dianne Reistroffer (Director of Graduate Studies and Continuing and Lay Education and Assistant Professor of Ministry, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary), and Christine Eaton Blair (Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program and Associate Professor of Practical Theology at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary) for encouraging me to continue reflecting on these issues.
11. The comments of my colleague at Austin Seminary, Christine Blair, have strengthened this paper at a number of points. Citations to materials from seminaries refer to the documents that the institutions sent me in the first half of 1998.
12. My primary concern is for the final, written documents that D.Min. students produce and not for the entire process of designing, running, and evaluating a D.Min. project. I recognize that the relationship between process and product is complex and that both process and product are important to D.Min. education.
13. On genre in literature see Heather Dubrow, *Genre* (London: Methuen, 1982) and Paul Hernadi, *Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Classification* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972). In English "genre" encompasses aspects of *Form* and *Gattung* in German biblical scholarship.
14. I am indebted to Stephen B. Reid, Professor of Old Testament Studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, for the deceptively simple phrase "competent reader."
15. I enter a wide and deep minefield in attempting to make any global statements about the working of language, as Derrida argues with alarming success (e.g., *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). Nevertheless, if we focus attention to the narrow case of technical literature (instructions for starting a lawn mower or the warranty on a washing machine), experience shows that authors and readers can successfully set aside much of the ongoing *différence* inherent in language so that reader and author can adequately communicate. In important respects, I think, D.Min. projects are technical literature in this sense. Thus, Derrida can learn how to operate his video recorder and D.Min. students can communicate with readers about theologically rooted strategies for children's sermons.
16. Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1975), 113-114. He argues that literature is a "second-order semiotic system" and that it is possible to understand all of the words of a poem, for instance, but not understand the poem as poetry at all. Thus, one must develop through experience literary competencies in order to decode a given genre of literature successfully.
17. The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, "Standards of Accreditation," *Bulletin* 43, Part 1 (1998).
18. Christine Blair, "Gifts to the Church," *Windows* (Austin: Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary), May 1992, 2.

19. In the ATS Standards, statement F.2.1 requires D.Min. program goals to include “advanced understanding of the nature and purposes of ministry, enhanced competencies in pastoral analysis and ministerial skills, the integration of these dimensions into the theologically reflective practice of ministry, new knowledge about the practice of ministry, and continued growth in spiritual maturity.”

20. Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, “Thematic Guidelines for the D.Min. Dissertation.”

21. Aristotle distinguished *phronesis* from speculative/theoretical knowledge in *Topics* VI, 6, and discussed *phronesis* in *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 3-10. Speculative/theoretical knowledge is sought after for its own sake, not because it influences action. *Phronesis* is knowledge that is pursued in order to shape one’s actions. *Phronesis* has been discussed significantly in contemporary hermeneutical theory by Gadamer and Habermas. [See, for instance Jürgen Habermas, “A Review of Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*,” in *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften*, 251-290 reprinted in *Understanding and Social Inquiry*, ed. Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, 335-363.] The term and its cognates has also been important in North American conversations about practical theology. Don Browning (*A Fundamental Practical Theology*, Fortress Press, 1991, 2), for instance, calls upon Christian communities to become not only communities of memory but communities of “practical reason and practical wisdom.” On the history of American divinity school’s ongoing attempts to fruitfully relate theory to practice in theological education, see Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion*, 127-155.

22. The phrase is Jackson W. Carroll’s. See his *Ministry as Reflective Practice: A New Look at the Professional Model* (Alban Institute, 1986).

23. Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Handbook 1995-96, “Guidelines for Doctoral Projects,” 15.

24. William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1993), 5. See also Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Designs and Methods*, 2nd. ed., (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994).

25. Myers, 25.

26. On qualitative methods see, for instance, Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd ed., Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990) and David A. Erlandson et al, *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1993). Browning (*A Fundamental Practical Theology*) uses the term “thick study” to describe attempts to understand Christian congregations as complex social/theological realities without winnowing them to discard odd or apparently idiosyncratic elements in favor of supposed “core” elements. Some D.Min. final projects may appropriately use history as the primary methodology rather than a sociological or psychological approach. For instance, a project on worship may trace historical reasons why a congregation has or has not employed a certain form of corporate prayer.

27. Myers, 32.

28. William R. Myers and Bonnie Miller-McLemore, “Can One Be Faithful While Teaching Research Methods to D.Min. students?” *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 12 (1990): 19.

29. Myers and Miller-McLemore, 21.

30. On congregational studies see Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Handbook for Congregational Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986) and Shannon L. Jung and Mary A. Agria, *Rural Congregational Studies: A Guide for Good*

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*Shepherds* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997). Marsha G. Witten, *All is Forgiven: The Secular Message of American Protestantism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) analyzes the way that several preachers exposit the story of the prodigal son. See also Donald E. Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (University of California Press, 1997); Wesley Carr, *Handbook of Pastoral Studies: Learning and Practicing Christian Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1997); B. Allan Quigley and Gary W. Kuhne, eds., *Creating Practical Knowledge through Action Research: Posing Problems, Solving Problems, and Improving Daily Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997); and finally, Nick Johns and Darren Lee-Ross, *Research Methods in Service Industry Management* (New York: Cassell, 1998)

31. Peggy Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland, *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1997), 16.

32. Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, "Thematic Guidelines for the Ministry Focus Paper."

33. Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Handbook, 15.

34. Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools, *Doctor of Ministry Program: Thesis-Project Guidelines*, 8.

35. Fuller, "Thematic Guidelines for the Ministry Focus Paper."

36. Published as Hans Küng, *Rechtfertigung: Die Lehre Karl Barths und eine katholische Besinnung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1957).

37. See Howard W. Stone, "Briefly Noted: Training the Pastoral Counselor," *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* 5 (1982): 7-11.

38. Council of Graduate Schools, *The Role and Nature of the Doctoral Dissertation* (Washington: The Council, 1991) cited by William G. Bowen and Neil L. Rudenstine, *In Pursuit of the Ph.D.*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 258.

39. Bowen and Rudenstine, 257. See also P.D. Isaac, S.V. Quinlan, and M.M. Walker, "Faculty Perceptions of the Doctoral Dissertation," *Journal of Higher Education* 63:3 (1992): 241-268, and William M. Shea, "The Future of Graduate Education in Theology: A Clear Sky with the Possibility of a Late Afternoon Thunderstorm," in *Theological Education in the Catholic Tradition: Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Patrick W. Carey and Earl C. Muller, S.J. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 131-144.

40. The unrelenting questions of post-modernity have riddled the comfortable certainties about the character of knowledge and research in many of the humanities. See Alvin Kernan, ed., *What's Happened to the Humanities?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) and Roger P. Mourad, Jr., *Postmodern Philosophical Critique and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Higher Education* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1997).

41. I am, no doubt, overstating the divide between "objectivity" and "subjectivity." I would suggest, however, that one may write a wonderful Ph.D. dissertation about early Pauline churches while never letting on whether or not one believes in the God revealed in Jesus that Paul wrote about.

42. "All candidates must be fluent in English and must demonstrate reading knowledge of two other modern languages, normally German and French. It is strongly recommended that students enter the program with a reading knowledge of both languages." Princeton Theological Seminary Ph.D. Language Requirements (<http://www.ptsem.edu/climb/reqs-phd-lang.htm> downloaded March 1, 1999).

43. Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools, *Doctor of Ministry Program: Thesis-Project Guidelines*, 2, 3.

44. Fuller Theological Seminary, "Thematic Guidelines for the D.Min. Dissertation." The distinction between two tracks for the final project, one with no statement about documentary exhaustiveness and the other containing such a requirement, seems to encourage speculation about whether both tracks are equally rigorous.

45. See the example in Peter Herson, *Statistics: A Component of the Research Process* (Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1991), 126-127.

46. Such analysis may be aided by word-frequency lists, key words in context, and other procedures of content analysis. "Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the text." Robert Philip Weber, *Basic Content Analysis* (2nd ed., Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990), 9.

47. In June 1998, there were 115 theological institutions offering Doctor of Ministry degrees approved by ATS. *Dissertation Abstracts* and *Religion Database* index hundreds of D.Min. projects per year. The 1996 volume of *Research in Ministry* (whose data is included in *Religion Database*) contained indexing to 421 projects from 50 schools. It may be difficult for researchers actually to read the projects, because not all libraries holding them will lend them. The Theological Resources Exchange Network (TREN) provides a helpful service by microfilming and archiving D.Min. projects at modest cost. However, not all ATS schools that produce D.Min. projects send copies to TREN.

48. Two further areas of possible research raised by my exploration here are, first, the phenomenon of the "publishable article" summarizing the doctoral project and second, the recasting of projects as published monographs. The rationale for a publishable article is to distribute the results of research more broadly: "Although D.Min. Thesis-Projects are deposited in seminary libraries, not many people will have opportunity to read them. For this reason, a candidate is required to submit. . . a publishable article written for a specific journal readership, based upon the findings of the Thesis-Project." Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools *Doctor of Ministry Program: Thesis-Project Guidelines*, 8. Obviously, recasting a D.Min. project into a published book also increases its reach. One example of such a reworked D.Min. project is Joseph Phelps "The Hope of Dialogue: Defusing the Christian Culture War," accepted at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 1996 and later revised and published as *More Light, Less Heat: How Dialogue Can Transform Christian Conflicts into Growth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

