

# **CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY, TEACHING METHODOLOGY, AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

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## **The Situation in Papua New Guinea**

Missionaries, a century ago, often based their mission programme on the setting-up of schools. The younger generation were removed from village influences to learn the Christian way of life in the mission school, and to learn to read, write, and count. Sometimes, boarding schools were established, so that a complete removal from village life was effected. The very aim of the schools seemed to presuppose a Western-based education style.

From the beginning, the school approach was used by Lutherans in Papua New Guinea. Within months of their arrival, the missionaries' attempts to conduct classes completely failed. After three years, however, a boarding school had been organised. In the mornings, there was the normal school classroom routine. In the afternoons, the students worked under the guidance of missionaries at various manual tasks, using the new iron tools. It is interesting to note that Wagner evaluates the classroom routine as ineffective, while the work programme in the afternoon, and the example of community life, proved to be the most-effective teaching methods.<sup>1</sup> Already then, we see an indication of the importance of non-formal and informal education methods in the early introduction of Western-style education to Papua New Guinea. I define non-formal education as planned non-classroom activity, geared to

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<sup>1</sup> Herwig Wagner, "Beginning at Finschhafen", in *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea*, Herwig Wagner, and Hermann Reiner, eds, Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1986, pp. 31-83.

learning by doing. Informal education takes place in the dynamics of the learning community.

To this day, primary and high school education in Papua New Guinea remains modelled on Western styles. These areas of education have long been the responsibility of the government. Teaching positions have been nationalised at the primary level, and, to a large extent, at the secondary level. Yet, a basic Western-style classroom method of teaching is still followed, even in the remotest village schools. Teaching methods, materials, and curriculum remain largely uniform throughout the country, emphasising classroom routine, with a teacher-centred, theoretical programme, aimed at formal certification for higher education, or town-based employment. The non-formal afternoon work programme has largely been neglected.<sup>2</sup> It is considered irrelevant to the aims of formal certification. Yet, the majority of students have no opportunities for further education, or employment in the towns. They return to their villages. This is hardly accounted for in the Papua New Guinean education system.<sup>3</sup>

Theological training for indigenous Papua New Guinean Lutheran pastors, interrupted by the war years, became established only in the late 1950s, and early 1960s.<sup>4</sup> The Lutheran Highland's Seminary was established at Ogelbeng (near Mt Hagen), in 1961,<sup>5</sup> to train experienced men for pastoral work in Highlands congregations. The early training for ministry was done in close connection with practical evangelistic work in nearby congregations.<sup>6</sup> Initially, Kate was the language of instruction, but this was later changed to Tok Pisin. After ten years, a detailed three-year curriculum was introduced. Students studied Old and New Testament theology, dogmatics, church history, practical and pastoral theology, and spent one year on vicarage. Only the biblical

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<sup>2</sup> Hartley Hage, "Language and Schools", in *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea*, Herwig Wagner, and Hermann Reiner, eds, Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1986, pp. 432-434.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>4</sup> Helmut Horndasch, "The Church and its Ministry", in *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea*, Herwig Wagner, and Hermann Reiner, eds, Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1986, p. 389.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

languages were not introduced into the curriculum. The seminary had, therefore, evolved into one, largely patterned after its Western counterparts. A number of basic differences should, however, be noted initially.

From the beginning, all students, together with their families, and all staff, together with their families, lived on the seminary campus. Thus, the seminary community had the chance to live as a Christian community. The whole community formed a Christian congregation on campus. Worship, study, work, and everyday family life, are experienced within the community context.

Even though students and their families leave their villages to live at the seminary compound for some years, a village atmosphere prevails, to some extent. The most important factor here is that garden land is allocated by the seminary to each family unit, who must retain their subsistence agricultural life while at the seminary. Community work for the seminary, and private garden work, are part of normal seminary life in the afternoon programme.

The adjustments cannot simply be dismissed as surface changes, for they do significantly lodge the theological education programme within a rural Papua New Guinean setting. On the other hand, the emphasis at the seminary does remain on formal education, through morning classroom lectures. Here, the lecture method largely copies the Western models, under which the teachers (expatriate and national) taught. The available textbooks in Tok Pisin, the assignments set, the tests given, would not be out of place in any Western seminary. This is becoming more so as the seminary strives to improve its academic level, and looks to accrediting its graduates. Thus, in this sense, the seminary appears locked into the known Western system of seminary education.

### **Teaching Methods at Papua New Guinean Seminaries Reviewed**

Questions about the suitability of transplanting Western theological education methods to Papua New Guinea were raised by A. Erickson, in 1974. Erickson, a lecturer at the Senior Flierl Seminary, Logaweng, the coastal counterpart of the Lutheran Highlands Seminary at Ogelbeng, noted problems, both at the seminary, and in the

congregations. At the seminary, he noted that students did not absorb the lecture material, and that students' sermons were foreign to the village style of preaching.<sup>7</sup> In the congregations, he noted that recent graduates of the seminary were not able to adjust their style and approach to village situations, could not apply theology to village needs, concentrated on sacramental duties rather than preaching, and had difficulty communicating warmth and concern for congregation members.<sup>8</sup>

Erickson felt that these problems challenged some of the basic assumptions about training pastors for congregational work in Papua New Guinea. Firstly, he questioned whether the academic, institutionalised approach to training pastors was the best model for Papua New Guinea. Secondly, he argued that unhealthy authoritarian attitudes held by pastors, and the irrelevant nature of their teaching and preaching, were learnt, and reinforced, at the seminary. Finally, the lack of warmth and love, and the inability to apply theology to a village situation, came about because students had spent too long in an artificial, and isolated, environment.<sup>9</sup>

These observations have been highlighted in recent times, especially by K. Riecke, lecturer at the Lutheran Highlands Seminary, from 1990 to 1992. He was shocked at how true Erickson's observations were, in the contemporary situation, especially since they were had been made almost two decades ago.<sup>10</sup> Riecke realised that nothing much had changed in the way theological education was conducted in the Lutheran church in Papua New Guinea, in the time since Erickson raised the issue.

Reflecting on his experiences as a lecturer, Riecke made a number of criticisms, which, in sum, agree with Erickson's assessment. Firstly, he observed that the seminary was becoming even more of an academic institution than before. Attaining degrees, and accreditation for degrees, led seminaries to overemphasise the academic aspect of education, over

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<sup>7</sup> A. Erickson, "Search for Alternatives", in *Catalyst* 4-3 (1974), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> Kurt Riecke, "Why are Changes so Difficult to Make?", in *Catalyst* 23-1 (1993), p. 17.

against the personal growth of the student. Secondly, he noted that the lecture method persisted as the basic teaching method, despite the obvious poor learning results. Thirdly, he realised that students learnt not only what they are taught, but also how they are taught. The basic methods and attitudes used at the seminary were later perpetuated in students' ministries after they were ordained. Fourthly, he perceived problems in continuing to finance and staff the current system. Finally, he questioned the usefulness of students' studies being divided into separate subjects, following the traditional biblical, systematic, historical, and practical theology divisions. Riecke suggests that students would benefit from a more-integrated curriculum.<sup>11</sup>

It appears that, in Papua New Guinea, educators in general, and theological educators, in particular, have not learned the lessons very early taught to the first missionaries. They have ignored non-formal and informal education methods, and concentrated on formal education methods. Research has shown that the way that one teaches tends to mirror the way that one was taught.<sup>12</sup> Since Papua New Guineans have been introduced to institutionalised education, through Western instructors, or instructors taught by Western instructors, they perpetuate Western models of education, assuming that it is the way to educate. Education is perceived to be something Western. There is generally no serious consideration of how Papua New Guineans teach and learn. What are their teaching and learning styles? How can they be applied to the educational setting in Papua New Guinea today? Culture has an important influence on how people prefer to learn.<sup>13</sup> Insights from cultural anthropology can help here.

### **Insights from Cultural Anthropology for Teaching Methodology**

Cultural anthropology encourages us to penetrate beyond the assumption that all people think and learn in the same ways. We need to

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Bowen, and Earle Bowen, "What Does It Mean to Think, Learn, Teach?", in *Internationalising Missionary Training*, William David Taylor, ed., Exeter UK: Paternoster Press, 1991, p. 204.

<sup>13</sup> James E. Plueddemann, "Culture, Learning, and Missionary Training", in *Internationalising Missionary Training*, William David Taylor, ed., Exeter UK: Paternoster Press, 1991, p. 218.

come to terms, not only with visible forms that are obviously different in other cultures, but also with the invisible thought forms, which receive, and interpret, messages in ways that may be quite different from ours.

Hesselgrave shows how understanding cultures, in terms of layers of culture, can be helpful. The model, Hesselgrave presents, is suggested by G. Linwood Barney. Material artefacts and observable behaviour are the outer layer of culture. In the next layer are the society's institutions. This is followed by the layer consisting of the society's values. The deepest layer of culture consists of the society's ideology, cosmology, and worldview.<sup>14</sup> This model helps in a number of ways. It shows that it is relatively easier to discover, and describe, another society's visible artefacts, forms, and institutions than it is to discover, and describe, its values and worldview. Making surface changes to a culture, though easier, will not automatically incur changes to the values and beliefs held by people of that culture. Hesselgrave argues that missionaries cannot be satisfied at communicating Christ cross-culturally, merely at the surface level. Missionaries also need to learn to communicate Christ to respondents in terms of their ways of viewing the world, and in their ways of thinking. Educators should also be aware that surface changes are of little use if the cognitive processes, the ways of thinking and learning, of their students are not taken into account.<sup>15</sup>

Earle and Dorothy Bowen, teachers in Africa for more than 18 years, noted that many missionaries felt similar frustrations as Erickson and Riecke: students in the two-thirds world did not learn in the way missionary educators expected them to.<sup>16</sup> The Bowens researched "learning styles", or "cognitive styles" (the Bowens use the terms interchangeably), and have stressed that, for effective cross-cultural communication, it is important to be aware of how people of other cultures think and learn.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1986, pp. 101-103.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164, 295.

<sup>16</sup> Bowen, "What Does It Mean?", p. 265.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

The study of learning styles, and the ways people structure their learning, is not a new field. The Bowens have done specific research in the area of “field-independence” and “field-sensitivity”, concepts developed by Witkin, in the 1940s.<sup>18</sup> These concepts refer to how students take note of their surroundings – how they seek meaning, how they become informed: sensitive to, or independent of, their environment.<sup>19</sup> In researching learning styles of students in Africa, the Bowens realised that the type of student, known as “field-sensitive”, was similar to the students they had been teaching in Africa. As well, a number of traits seemed to be characteristic of the majority of field-sensitive students. The following traits, the Bowens list as:

- being very sensitive to the judgment of others;
- being responsive to social reinforcement;
- being good with interpersonal relations, which are very important;
- like being with people; groups are very important;
- obedience to authority important;
- culturally-determined gender roles important;
- not analytical at problem solving;
- extrinsic motivation very important;
- autonomy not as important as social acceptance.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the diversity of cultures in Papua New Guinea, these traits broadly fit most Melanesians. Loeliger, for example, who writes generally about Melanesian societies, emphasises how ancestors, clan, and extended family are central,<sup>21</sup> right relationships within a community

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>21</sup> Carl E. Loeliger, “The Traditional Context”, in *The Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea*, Herwig Wagner, and Hermann Reiner, eds, Adelaide SA: Lutheran Publishing, 1986, p. 24.

are important,<sup>22</sup> and older men are respected, and hold considerable authority.<sup>23</sup> Oliver writes about the importance of collective action in the social-descent unit,<sup>24</sup> that authority status is ascribed in terms of seniority,<sup>25</sup> and that many Melanesian societies emphasise distinct gender roles.<sup>26</sup> McElhanon and Whiteman point out the Melanesian sensitivity to shame, in listing the avoidance of shame as something highly valued.<sup>27</sup>

This seems to indicate that at least the majority of Papua New Guinean students would be field-sensitive students. The Bowens suggest that the field-sensitive person predominates in many cultures that have been traditionally missionary-receiving cultures.<sup>28</sup> Their own studies showed that almost all students in Kenya and Nigeria were field sensitive.<sup>29</sup> Hesselgrave concurs with these findings, categorising tribal peoples as “concrete relational thinkers”.<sup>30</sup>

If field-sensitive students have a characteristic way of thinking and learning, then teaching methodology ought to reflect this. Western teaching methods have generally been developed for field-independent students. Thus, since Western teaching methods have been copied in Papua New Guinean educational institutions, and in the seminaries, learning is not as efficient as it could have been. Educators need to consciously adapt their teaching styles to the learning styles of the people with whom they are working.

The Bowens studied how teaching strategies, appropriate for field-independent students, differed from those appropriate for field-sensitive students. In the light of their African teaching experiences, they propose

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas L. Oliver, *Oceania: the native cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands*, Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1989, p. 1028.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1067, 1107.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1101.

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth McElhanon, and Darrell L. Whiteman, “Kinship: Who is Related to Whom”, in Darrell L. Whiteman, ed., *An Introduction to Melanesian Cultures, Point 5* (1984), p. 108.

<sup>28</sup> Bowen, “What Does It Mean?”, p. 208.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>30</sup> Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, pp. 303, 325-328.

the following teaching strategies for those parts of the two-thirds world, where students are predominantly field sensitive:

1. The thought processes of field-sensitive persons are holistic. They need to see a whole plan for the subjects they are doing. Therefore, a course outline should be provided. An oral preview should also be given.
2. Clearly-written course objectives will help students to know what they are expected to learn, and why.
3. Each individual lesson should also give a brief preview of the material and goals for the lesson.
4. Field-sensitive persons should be taught how to take notes. It is not one of their strengths.
5. Frequent feedback and reinforcement are needed.
6. Illustrations, taken from life situations, are best.
7. Small units of work are to be preferred over larger ones.
8. Role-playing is an excellent teaching method.
9. Set deadlines, towards which students can work, and keep the dates set.
10. It is better to give assigned readings than to tell students to read a set number of pages about a given subject.
11. Correction and support must be given to field-sensitive students, bearing in mind that they are sensitive to the praise and criticism of both peers and authority figures.
12. Group work is preferred to individual work. Students should be encouraged to work and study in groups or pairs.
13. Field-sensitive students prefer structure and direction in doing a project.
14. If students are more visual than auditory, they will work best if notes are provided, or written up on the blackboard, or overhead projector.

15. Other visual aids of all kinds are essential. Pictures, charts, posters, and models may not only raise the level of learning, but may be necessary, even for basic learning to occur.
16. External, rather than internal, motivators reinforce the field-sensitive person. Praise, criticism, and grades have a great effect on field-sensitive students. It would be helpful to grade them more frequently.
17. Field-sensitive students learn more from examples and models. A teacher's example will teach more than an explanation.
18. Field-sensitive students want to be told how to do something.
19. Criterion-referenced grading is best used with field-sensitive students. Grading should be based on the student's performance, in relation to set standards.
20. Test material should be taken from the objectives that have been provided to the class.<sup>31</sup>

To many, these suggestions appear to recommend obviously good teaching methods. Field-sensitive persons will especially find this so. But field-independent learners will find many of these suggestions do not suit their preferred learning style.

Plueddemann, a professor of cross-cultural education studies, agrees with the Bowen's proposal that cross-cultural differences influence people's learning styles. Cultural differences will give some people a high degree of sensitivity to their immediate concrete context ("high-context" people), while others appear to be more interested in ideas and principles, which are broader than the immediate context ("low-context" people).<sup>32</sup> Though Plueddemann explains that no person is totally "low context", focusing only on ideas, or totally "high-

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<sup>31</sup> Bowen, "What Does It Mean?", pp. 211-213. See also Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, pp. 338-339.

<sup>32</sup> Plueddemann, "Culture, Learning, and Missionary Training", pp. 219-220. These concepts are borrowed from T. Hall, *Beyond Culture*, Garden City NY: Anchor Books, 1977, p. 92.

context”, focusing only on the present context, he does suggest that people from rural, agricultural communities tend toward the high-context end of the continuum.<sup>33</sup>

The high-context teaching and learning style, described by Plueddemann, reflects many of the Bowen’s recommendations. I summarise some of his points here:

1. High-context students are concerned with the practical and personal implications the course will have for them.
2. High-context students are respectful of the teacher.
3. High-context students cooperate with each other.
4. Non-verbal communication is significant to high-context students.
5. High-context students are group- and people-oriented.
6. High-context students respond to the praise and criticism of others with the group. A feeling of belonging, and of group cooperation, is important.
7. It is better to begin with the high-context student’s experience and lead into theory and ideas.<sup>34</sup>

Plueddemann offers telling advice when he warns that good teaching will not consist of merely adapting to the student’s preferred learning style.<sup>35</sup> High-context students will prefer to learn “how-to-do-it” techniques, without necessarily reflecting on the theories and principles involved.<sup>36</sup> Yet, today’s village pastor should be able to operate beyond this “how-to-do-it” stage. Teaching methods will have to take into account the high-context learning preferences, yet extend the student beyond these bounds. A good suggestion from Plueddemann is to focus on problem solving.<sup>37</sup> Problems grow out of practical

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<sup>33</sup> Plueddemann, “Culture, Learning, and Missionary Training”, p. 221.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 221-228.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

difficulties, but require theoretical insights for solutions. Actual case studies are useful for both high- and low-context students. High-context students should be challenged to reflect on their experiences, and draw out theological implications. Thus, practice and theory should be integrated.

### **Reflections from Papua New Guinea**

My own recent experiences in teaching at Lutheran Highlands Seminary confirm a number of the Bowen's recommendation, and Plueddemann's summaries. I cite just two examples:

In 1991, I taught "Galatians" to the third-year class. The subject was divided into small units. I gave regular weekly short tests of multi-choice questions. Students were assigned readings and assignment questions for each unit. Larger tests were given at the end of each unit. Although the frequent preparation of tests and assignments, and then the added work of marking them, all added to my workload, I noticed that the students did very well in their tests and assignments. They also were clear about what we were learning during the lesson period. At the end of the course, the class asked that I follow a similar method in other subjects that I taught them. Of the Bowen's recommendations, numbers 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13, and 16 were emphasised in my approach to teaching this subject.

In 1992, I taught a doctrinal subject to the final-year class, which focused on doctrines challenged by other churches and sects. I had the students suggest to the class which doctrines of our church they saw being challenged. We also looked through the question-and-answer section of the *Niugini Luteran* for doctrinal questions, which were frequently asked by readers. Students were divided into small groups, with each group having to prepare an answer to the challenges made to that particular doctrine. The groups then presented their answers to the class, where further discussion and evaluation were held. Several students thanked me for what I had taught them in that subject. This surprised me, because most of the lesson content came from the students' own work, and not from my presentations. Further feedback showed that the students found the topics were relevant, and they saw how they related to their work. The Bowens' recommendations, which were

followed for the teaching methodology of this subject, were the use of life-related examples, and group work (points 6 and 12). Plueddemann's points 1, 3, 5, and 7 relate to the teaching methodology I used.

As a point of comparison, it is interesting to note that another subject that I taught, using a standard lecture method, provided some frustrations for me, especially in the test results. Where I thought that I had gone over some points time and again in class, students' test papers showed me that they had not picked up those very points. It confused me at the time that, something I thought I had presented very clearly, was not learned by the students. On reflection, I can see that I taught the subject without utilising the recommendations for field-sensitive/high-context learners.

Erickson and Riecke also made suggestions, which show that they concur with the general recommendations of the Bowens and Plueddemann. Erickson mentions that subjects should build on the experiences, knowledge, and ability of the students; that outside resource people should be used in teaching; that evaluation of the students should be constructive, focusing not only on the students' academic achievements, but also on personal growth.<sup>38</sup> These suggestions correspond with the Bowens' recommendations at points 6, 11, 16, 17, and 19, and Plueddemann's point that teachers should proceed from students' experiences to theory and ideas. Riecke emphasises the need for subjects to be related to daily-life situations (Bowens' point 6; Plueddemann's point 1); that fieldwork should be an integral part of seminary training, with subjects building on the experiences from fieldwork (Plueddemann's point 7); the example of teachers (Bowens' point 17; Plueddemann's point 2); utilising different teaching methods, such as group work, drama, role-playing, case studies, visual aids (Bowens' points 8, 12, and 15; Plueddemann's points 3, 4, and 5); the development of the whole person.<sup>39</sup>

Most of the Bowens' and Plueddemann's discussion focused on adapting teaching methods to a culturally-preferred style of learning, presupposing that formal classroom education was the norm. Yet, the

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<sup>38</sup> Erickson, "Search for Alternatives", p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> Riecke, "Why are Changes so Difficult to Make?", pp. 28-30, 32-33.

challenge to consider the strengths of informal and non-formal education, indicated early on by the Lutheran church's first experience with education at Finschhafen, and the later comments made by Erickson and Riecke, need to be taken seriously. The Bowens' and Plueddemann's own remarks about students learning by example, and the value of students' experiences for learning, also suggests that this topic needs to be considered further.

Formal education methods generally are not questioned. It seems expected that high academic qualifications will be obtained through using formal teaching methods. The corollary is that non-formal and informal education is related to inferior education, at least in regard to academic achievement.<sup>40</sup>

Non-formal and informal education has always had a recognised place at the Lutheran seminaries in Papua New Guinea. It seems, however, that their roles were more respected in the earlier years. Horndasch writes of how the community of staff and students, with their families, at Logaweng, live as a Christian community/congregation, "having a normal spiritual life in worship and work, exercising discipline among themselves, and caring for the sick, and for the children".<sup>41</sup> I have also described the community life aspect of the seminary at Ogelbeng. Horndasch also records how the initial training at Ogelbeng was done in close connection with practical evangelistic work in nearby villages.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the importance of non-formal and informal education methods at the Pidgin seminaries has not gone unnoticed.

The matter of academic levels is of concern for the preparation of the church's future pastors, and also for coordinating with other theological schools. Yet, it must be questioned whether upgrading academic standards necessarily requires the diminishing importance of informal and non-formal education. Also, the goal of training effective

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<sup>40</sup> William David Taylor, "Introduction: Setting the Stage", in *Internationalising Missionary Training*, William David Taylor, ed., Exeter UK: Paternoster Press, 1991, pp. 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> Horndasch, "The Church and its Ministry", p. 399.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

pastors for congregational work in village and town situations should never be lost sight of.

Much of the structure, which emphasised non-formal and informal education at the Lutheran Highlands Seminary, is still in place. Students and staff continue to live together on campus. Student families retain subsistence agricultural practices, while studying at the seminary. Teachers and students are divided into care groups, which meet together regularly. Fieldwork is carried out by the care groups. Year levels also participate in different fieldwork experiences, such as religious instruction in schools, and hospital and prison counselling. There is a campus congregation. The Bowens' and Plueddemann's research suggests that learning would be more effective if these non-formal and informal educational aspects worked in coordination with formal educational aspects. Riecke has also come to this conclusion:

Theological education has to bring together studying, action, worship, and challenges for personal growth, in an integrated manner, to develop well-trained and dedicated Christian persons, being able to serve their community in an effective and inspiring way.<sup>43</sup>

Some suggestions, which appear relevant to the circumstances of the Lutheran Highlands Seminary, are given here.

The fieldwork programme should be treated as more than an adjunct to the formal education programme. At present, it has a lower status, since there is no serious evaluation of the students' fieldwork activities. This attitude is sharpened by the fact that fieldwork opportunities are normally scheduled in times that students see as their free time. A number of improvements should be made to the programme. The fieldwork experiences, and classroom learning, needs to be integrated. What is learnt in the classroom, can be practised in fieldwork activities, and then reflected on in the classroom. Homiletics is a subject that provides a clear example. Classroom theory can be combined with actual experience in writing for, and preaching in, different situations: village, plantation, town, compound, and radio. The

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<sup>43</sup> Riecke, "Why are Changes so Difficult to Make?", p. 33.

practice of writing for, and preaching in, real situations seems to be important, since it is often noted that seminarians strive to preach more theoretical, academic-type sermons in the seminary chapel. This style, learned at the seminary, will not be effective at the village level. Homiletics classes can then review, and reflect on, the actual experiences of students, and the theory learnt will be better grasped by the students. Homiletics is a subject with an obvious practical aspect to it. Yet many other subjects could also be integrated with practical experiences in Bible studies, counselling, witnessing, leading worship, and religious instruction.

The experience of living together on one campus as a Christian community should be recognised for the important part it plays in the students' training. The teachers' influence on students is not limited to classroom contact. Students see teachers out of classroom hours in the context of everyday-life activities: family life, sport, gardening, shopping, and praying. Teachers should be aware of their influence as role models. Many students have grown up in villages without resident pastors. They have seen a pastor only when he visits for Holy Communion services. The seminary teachers may be the first full-time close contact students have with pastors. The attitudes and lifestyle of teachers, communicated non-verbally, will, therefore, be a major influence on students. The way worship is organised on campus, the way problems are solved on campus, and other aspects of life on campus, seemingly unrelated to the educational programme, nevertheless, will be influential learning experiences for the students. Staff should especially be attuned to this.

Worship and spiritual life, as with fieldwork, should not be an adjunct to the seminary programme. Spiritual formation of students, through organised worship experiences, small groups, meditation and prayer, and daily devotions, must be considered as important as the academic programme. Community life at the seminary should be organised around community, group, and individual worship and prayer. Teachers should recognise their role as spiritual advisers. Care groups will have an important part to play here.

Student evaluation should be based on more than the student's academic achievements. The current practice to involve the care group teacher more in student evaluations is to be encouraged. However, student evaluations of this kind should not be limited to the final-year students. More regular meetings of students with teachers to discuss academic work, fieldwork, personal development, and spiritual growth should be held. Field-sensitive students appear to benefit from more frequent evaluations, and they respond to encouragement given through peers and authority figures. The care-group system, currently emphasising worship and social activities, could emphasise this aspect more.

These examples are positive indications that what is already happening at the seminary can benefit from consciously aligning with the principle of integrating non-formal and informal education with the formal academic programme. Indeed, instead of fearing that academic standards might be lowered, cultural learning preferences of Papua New Guineans suggest that learning would, in fact, be more effective and efficient. In any case, the suggestions do seem to correspond to the seminary's aim of equipping students for pastoral ministry in Papua New Guinea. It should only be emphasised that staff numbers should be kept at their optimum levels, since more than class work is expected of staff under such a programme.

## **Conclusion**

Cross-cultural educators can be aided by knowledge and skills learned from cultural anthropology. Yet, in Papua New Guinea, the thrust of education in general, and of theological education, in particular, has been with Western teaching methods and forms. For at least 20 years, Lutheran seminary lecturers have noted problems arising from theological training that simply copies Western educational methods and forms. Research in Africa, by the Bowens and Plueddemann, shows that culture is an important influence on how people learn. Their teaching strategies for field-sensitive/high-context people are recommended for the situation in Papua New Guinea, as a more serious coordination of non-formal and informal education methods with the academic formal methods now emphasised.

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