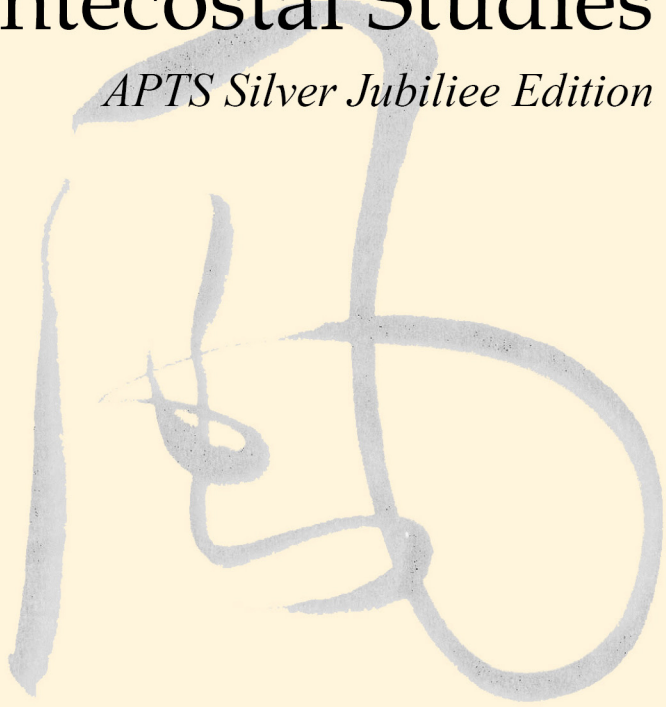


# Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

*APTS Silver Jubilee Edition*



Volume 27, Number 2 (August 2024)

**Creating a Dynamic Balance between Theory, Practice,  
and Calling: A Pedagogical Model for Pentecostal Theological  
Education in Asia Pacific**

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**Introduction**

Practitioners of theological education always struggle with the balance between theory and practice, academic training and practical training. Two conversations illustrate this issue and inform my thinking in this article. First, a missionary pastor recently shared the reason he stopped hiring Bible school graduates for his ministry. He said that the graduates were well trained and had excellent knowledge, but they were not interested in doing the hard work of the ministry. He shifted his strategy to raising up ministers from among the laity, specifically, people who were already busy doing the work of ministry. This conversation disturbed me because I knew the school to which he was referring by reputation. This pastor's experience with Bible school graduates highlights how difficult it is for even one of the stronger institutions in the Assemblies of God fellowship to strike a healthy balance between academic training and ministry formation.

The second conversation took place several years ago at Cambodia Bible Institute. I was a new Bible school teacher at that time. The school was led by two excellent ministry educators from the Philippines. We hosted a joint program with an evangelical Bible college in Phnom Penh. Some of our students told me about a conversation with students from the other school. These students asked our students what they planned to do for ministry after graduation. Our students were shocked by this question because they were already serving in ministry and were required to continue to do so every weekend if they wished to remain school. As they related this conversation to me, they wondered aloud about the perspective of the students from the other school. Why were they waiting for graduation to serve in the ministry? The answer lies in two different philosophies of theological education. Our school offered in-service training with a strong emphasis on character and skills formation; their

school was more academically oriented, offering traditional pre-service professional ministry training.

These two typical approaches to theological education both have strengths and weaknesses, as well as historical roots. However, when the dynamic between theory and practice is not properly balanced Bible schools can be perceived as no longer relevant to the needs of churches. This article discusses the challenge of creating that dynamic balance in Pentecostal theological education in Asia Pacific. I begin with a discussion and critique of some approaches to striking a healthy balance between theory and practice. Then I propose a pedagogical model that takes a third element into account—calling. Finally, I offer some practical applications from the proposed model for teaching Pentecostal theological education in Asia Pacific.

### **Striking a Healthy Balance between Theory and Practice**

Accreditation standards work from the assumption that theological education has a healthy balance between theory and practice that equips graduates for effective ministry in their constituent churches. Typical indicator 2A.4 of the Asia Pacific Theological Association accreditation standards states, “There are programs which provide opportunities for all students to develop and demonstrate competence in communication and ministry skills.”<sup>1</sup> The question is not whether such opportunities contribute to ministry formation alongside academic studies; the question is how academic studies and practical ministry formation interact and contribute to each other in the practice of theological education.

#### **Bernard Ott: Three Primary Models that Influence Theological Education**

Bernard Ott has provided an overview of three models of ministerial training that have strongly influenced modern theological education: the academic university model, the American seminary model, and the Bible school movement that developed as part of the modern missionary movement. Each of these models struggles with the balance between theory and practice in a different way.

First, the academic-university model developed in Europe in the 1800s provides academic training for church leadership in which theology is approached as a science within the university context. Students study

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<sup>1</sup>Asia Pacific Theological Association, APTA Accreditation Standards, rev. ed. (Manila: Asia Pacific Theological Association, 2016), 5.

in an environment where they are free to explore ideas and think critically apart from denominational doctrine. Supervised vocational training normally follows graduation.<sup>2</sup> Ott offers the critique that the university model “creates, especially in practical theology, an unresolvable conflict between theory and praxis.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, this model privileges theory over practice and separates the two into completely distinct categories.

Second, the American seminary model was developed in response to the (perceived) overly scholastic university model as ministerial training that “aims to combine pastoral training (praxis) and academic study (theory) within the North American academic system.”<sup>4</sup> An oversimplification of this model is that at the core of this approach are the fourfold divisions of the academic model described above (Bible, history, theology, praxis<sup>5</sup>) and training that prepares graduates for careers as professional clergy.<sup>6</sup> Ott concludes that this model has not resolved the theory-praxis conflict. Rather, it has exacerbated it by elevating “pastoral technique” (praxis) over theory.<sup>7</sup> The ultimate result can be market driven theological education that has only a pragmatic connection to its theoretical/theological foundations.<sup>8</sup>

To be honest, this summary of the seminary model is an oversimplification for the sake of discussion. Many seminaries in Asia would challenge the assertion above. For example, the traditional slogan of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS) where I serve is “Zeal with Knowledge,” which clearly puts the emphasis on passion and action. Regardless of intentions to create balance, the tension between theory and practice persists. Does APTS exist to produce Asian Pentecostal scholars who will contribute to the knowledge and thinking of the church (theory)? Or does it exist to equip graduates for effective ministry and leadership in Asia (praxis)? Our research papers and reading requirements tend toward the first question, but our constituents measure us by the second (as the first conversation in the introduction illustrates). Either

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<sup>2</sup>Bernard Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, ICETE series, edited by Riad Kassiss (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016), 122-125.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Asia Pacific Education Office, *Bible School Administration Manual*, rev. ed. (Manila: Asia Pacific Theological Association, 2010), 254-278. The influence of this fourfold curriculum remains. The Asia Pacific Education Office’s manual for Bible school administrators has four curricular divisions: Bible, Theology, Church Ministries, and General Education. Bible and Theology courses are primarily theoretical in focus, while practical training takes place under Church Ministries and General Education (which tends to include only courses that contribute to ministerial training).

<sup>6</sup>Ott, *Understanding*, 127.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 128, 135.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 128-129.

way, it is a difficult challenge to train practitioners in an environment that is so theoretically saturated.

Third, Ott states that most evangelical theological institutions rose up from the Bible school movement that developed as part of the modern missionary movement.<sup>9</sup> For Pentecostals, the institutions founded by D. L. Moody and A. B. Simpson in the 1880s proved to be key paradigms that missionaries followed well into the 20th century as they established Bible schools all over the world.<sup>10</sup> Ott characterizes these schools with the words “spiritual life and missionary passion,”<sup>11</sup> which seem to indicate a strong emphasis on praxis. However, his assessment of evangelical Bible schools concludes that they are “shaped by an understanding of the supremacy of theory over praxis [with a] tendency toward (apologetic) indoctrination.”<sup>12</sup> The same can be said for Pentecostal Bible schools in Asia. Indeed, schools that encourage too much free exploration of ideas (e.g., questioning of denominational doctrine or governance) run the risk of being labeled theologically “liberal” and may face a backlash from their constituents.

### The Issue of Terminology

Up to this point, I have considered the historical roots of modern theological education without addressing terminology. Ott’s quest in the historical survey above was to arrive at an integration of theory and practice. To achieve that integration, he engages in a discussion of the Aristotelian categories of *theoria*, *poiesis*, and *praxis*. In classical terms, these categories correspond to reasoning that arrives at truth (*theoria*), productive skills or ability (*poiesis*), and a way of life characterized by “wisdom, intelligence, and ethics” (*praxis*).<sup>13</sup> He suggests that *praxis*, as a way of life, encompasses and gives the other two their proper place in theological education.<sup>14</sup> One of his most important conclusions for this discussion is that spirituality is best understood as *praxis*, not *poiesis*. As such, it is “not to be understood as yet another discipline to be integrated with others but rather as an integrative force.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>10</sup>Paul W. Lewis, “A History and Components of Pentecostal Theological Education,” in *Theological Education in a Cross-Cultural Context: Essays in Honor of John and Bea Carter*, ed. A. Kay Fountain (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2016), 184.

<sup>11</sup>Ott, *Understanding*, 118.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 202-205.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 206-207.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 208.

Ott's point is very agreeable to Pentecostal theological education. However, because of its grassroots nature, the Aristotelian categories are somewhat removed from the everyday experience of ministerial training in Asia. What is the meaning of "praxis" in modern usage (not in the Aristotelian sense)? It can be misunderstood as "practice," specifically, the "practice" side of the theory-practice balance. Thus, the word "praxis" can easily become a term for practice that is shaped by theory. Robert Banks sees this as insufficient and offers a way out of this conundrum. Building on Marxian usage instead of Aristotelian, he describes praxis as "reflection on life oriented towards and involved in action."<sup>16</sup> Thus, one of the key purposes of theological education is to equip "reflective practitioners," which Banks describes as ministers who are "thinking about practice and thinking in practice."<sup>17</sup>

In light of the above, I would like to suggest a shift in terminology from these esoteric historical terms to terms that, in my opinion, provide more useful tools for shaping holistic theological education—Head, Heart, and Hands (corresponding to cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of learning). I realize that these terms lack sophistication and that they are open to interpretation, but they have proven to be helpful and effective across educational contexts. Working from three historical approaches to educational psychology, Rick Yount refers to "Head, Heart and Hands" as the "Christian Teacher's Triad" of Thinking, Feeling, and Doing. He argues that all of these elements of human nature need to be in balance in Christian education to support the growth of students toward the goal of Christlikeness.<sup>18</sup> The model I propose below suggests one way to bring these elements into dynamic balance for holistic teaching in Pentecostal theological education.

### Paul Lewis: Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy, and Orthopathy

This clarification on the meaning of praxis moves the discussion closer to an integration of theory and practice, but it still lacks a model that brings the pieces together. Paul Lewis offers such a model built from the concepts of "*orthodoxy* (right belief); *orthopraxy* (right action); and *orthopathy* (right experience, affection, or passion)."<sup>19</sup> He brings

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<sup>16</sup>Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 160.

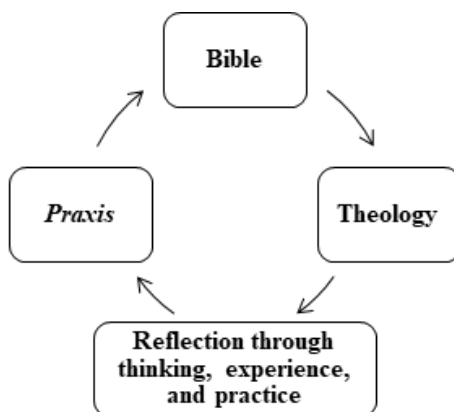
<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>18</sup>Rick Yount, "The Goal of Christian Education: Christlikeness" in *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 2nd ed., ed. William R. Yount (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 185-213.

<sup>19</sup>Lewis, "A History," 188.

these elements into a hermeneutical circle (see Figure 1 below) that begins with the Bible, which leads to theology (*orthodoxy*), which is experienced and reflected upon, which leads to *praxis* (action), and then back to the Bible itself.<sup>20</sup> In this model, *orthodoxy* is primary because it “sets the boundaries for experience and work.”<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 1. Lewis’ hermeneutical circle<sup>22</sup>**



This model contains two issues that make it difficult to implement in Pentecostal theological education. First, the model is driven and bounded by *orthodoxy*. This statement is perfectly logical and resonates well with the “people of the book” ethos of Pentecostals. However, reality is not so linear. In my experience, very few students enter Bible school or seminary driven by a desire for *orthodoxy*. Instead, they enrolled out of a sense of calling (*orthopathy*) or a desire to grow in the ministry they were already doing (*orthopraxy*). They bring experiences in life and ministry that shape their understanding of the Bible and their understanding of *orthodoxy*. Even the apostles first experienced the teaching and actions of Jesus for some time before they fully understood his teaching (*orthodoxy*).<sup>23</sup> Notice that Lewis’ model, begins with *orthodoxy*, but the hermeneutical circle ultimately makes *praxis* the lens through which *orthodoxy* is understood.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 188.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>23</sup>Luke 9:45 and John 12:16 are two examples of the apostles’ inability to fully understand what Jesus was teaching them even after nearly three years as his disciples. They did understand more fully with experience, specifically, the resurrection.

<sup>24</sup>This argument is a cognitive constructivist view of learning, which considers

The second issue with this model is the terminology itself. While Lewis' terms move from esoteric Aristotelian categories to the more concrete notion of "right"-ness, they are still difficult to clarify so as to shape the practice of theological education. Is *orthodoxy* determined by denominational doctrinal statements or discovered through free exploration of ideas? How is "right experience" or "right passion" (*orthopathy*) determined, aside from being bounded by *orthodoxy* (however that is defined)? Even the term *orthopraxy* easily shifts to "right action" in this model, thus losing the holistic nature of the concept of *praxis* (which is also hard to clearly define). The model I present below can alleviate this issue by shifting less constricting terminology and by bringing it into a dynamic rather than hierarchical integration.

### Carl Gibbs: The Training Pyramid

The Training Pyramid as described by Carl Gibbs makes helpful progress in the effort to bring theory and practice into a healthy balance in theological education. The genius of this five-level view of the training work of the church is its emphasis on *intentionality* at all levels and *simultaneous* coordination between the levels.<sup>25</sup> The five levels can be seen in Figure 2 below, which includes ratios suggested by Gibbs for the sake of illustration.

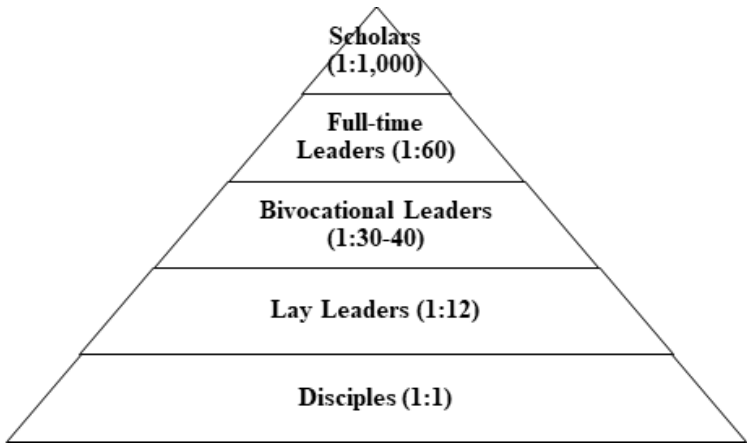
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how students construct knowledge from experience and from interaction with the world around them. Jack Snowman, Rick McCown, and Robert Biehler, *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, 12th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009), 326-327.

<sup>25</sup>Carl B. Gibbs, "The Training Pyramid," in *Theological Education in a Cross-Cultural Context: Essays in Honor of John and Bea Carter*, ed. A. Kay Fountain (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2016), 103.



Figure 2. The Training Pyramid<sup>26</sup>



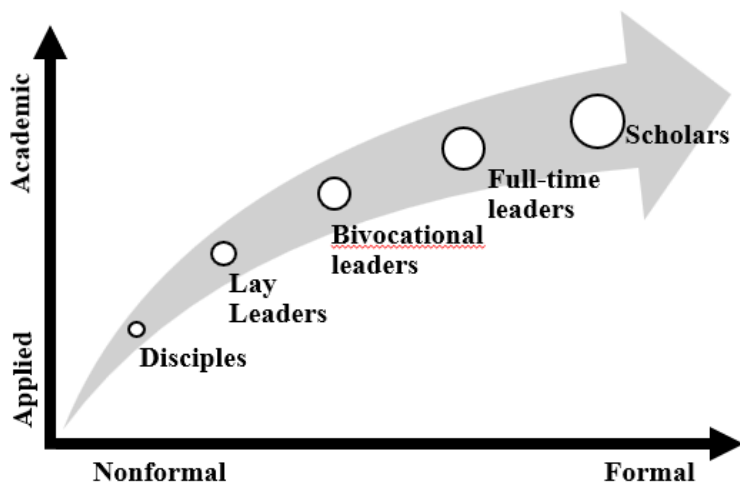
According to Gibbs, the lower three levels of the Training Pyramid drive the growth of a movement, while the top two levels provide organizational and doctrinal stability.<sup>27</sup> The training at the bottom two levels drives local church growth, while training for the middle level (bivocational leaders) drives the growth of the movement, especially through church planting.<sup>28</sup> Each level requires a different balance between theory and practice, as well as a different kind of organizational support structure. Training for the bottom two levels is the responsibility of the local church and includes a strong emphasis on practice supported by the necessary theory. The top two levels require resources beyond that of individual local churches. In order to fulfill their role in the movement, these levels need a strong emphasis on theory that includes a larger perspective of Christianity and theology. Figure 3 illustrates the increasing emphasis on theory and academic learning with each level of the Training Pyramid.

<sup>26</sup>Adapted from Gibbs, 104.

<sup>27</sup>Gibbs, *The Training*, 103-104.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 105-107.

**Figure 3. Nonformal to formal training<sup>29</sup>**



Gibb's presentation of the Training Pyramid helps us avoid two problems. First, the Training Pyramid highlights the types of training that need to be *intentionally* carried out at each level, specifically in terms of the theory-practice balance. One common issue in theological education is that the training offered does not fit the practical training needs of students in their current level of ministry development. When the emphasis on theory is too strong at the Bible school level, graduates are better prepared for ongoing academic studies than for effective service in their local churches.

Second, the Training Pyramid brings the levels into a continuum with each other, which highlights the *simultaneous* contribution of each level (see Figure 3). This insight guards against unbiblical attitudes in which the Bible school says to the seminary, "I have no need of you" (see 1 Cor 12:21), or the scholar looks down on the Bible school teacher as less significant in the kingdom of God. A proper balance between theory and practice at all levels helps theological educators avoid such short-sighted and prideful views of their work. Such views, whether healthy or short-sighted, will be passed on to students through their teaching.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 105.

### **A Pedagogical Model for a Dynamic Balance between Theory, Practice, and Calling**

This section proposes an approach to Bible school teaching that creates a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling. Before discussing the elements of the approach, we need to consider two differences between theological education and other forms of higher education. First, Pentecostal theological education is in-service training by its nature. Typical higher education institutions provide pre-service training for work that requires externally defined professional skills. Students are not qualified to practice in their field until they have completed the required education and received appropriate certification. In contrast, as the Training Pyramid illustrates, Pentecostal theological education is part of the larger picture of equipping people who already “have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us” (Rom 12:6). Since Bible school students are already gifted by God for service, the pedagogy employed in Pentecostal theological education needs to fit with the biblically described process of growth into Christlikeness and effective service that began before students entered the classroom.<sup>30</sup>

Second, Pentecostal Bible schools should seek to equip as many people as possible for the ministry, unlike higher education institutions that typically have “weed out” classes to ensure that low performing students fail out of their programs.<sup>31</sup> Admissions processes may include entrance interviews, written testimonies, and character references, but once they have been accepted, Bible schools assume the responsibility of helping students grow in knowledge, in ministry skills, in their faith, and in their callings. The “weeding out” process has to do with sanctification (spiritual and character formation), not professional qualifications.

These two differences between Pentecostal theological education and other forms of higher education call for a pedagogical approach that brings students to the historical and biblical content (theory) in a way that is contextually relevant (practice) and that works with their sense of place in the body of Christ (calling). The three elements of this model are developed from the general categories of Head (theory, the cognitive domain), Heart (the affective domain), and Hands (the behavioral domain). In this model, the element of Hands is defined as ministry practice. The element of Heart is narrowed to calling for ministry service, which includes spiritual and character formation.

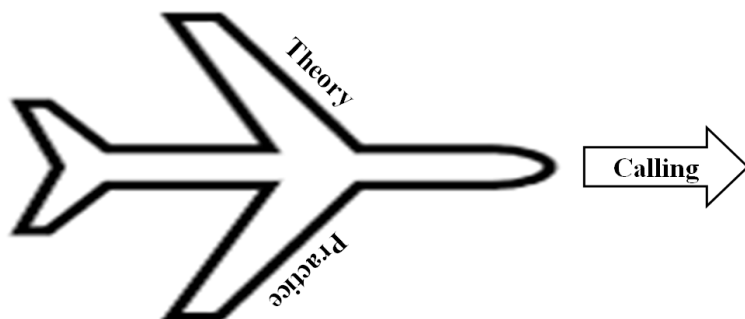
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<sup>30</sup>See also Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:1-31; and Eph 4:11-16.

<sup>31</sup>“Weed out” classes are important in many professions. For example, students who fail anatomy class are not qualified to go on to medical school.

The pedagogical model can be conceived of as an airplane in flight. Theory and practice are the wings, while thrust is the force that pulls the airplane forward<sup>32</sup> (see Figure 4 below). Adjustments to the wings determine altitude and flight path. In the same way, adjustments to the balance between theory and practice determine the direction of a Bible school course. Following Ott's argument for theory-practice integration,<sup>33</sup> all Bible school courses should have interaction between theory and practice. This view is an adjustment to curriculum-level thinking that contends some courses exist for gaining knowledge (such as Bible and theology), while other courses build on that knowledge to guide students in forming practical ministry skills.

**Figure 4. Model for a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling**



To state this view of integration in a different way, practical courses need to be supported by theory to help students continue to grow in ministry skills in the future, and theoretical courses need explicit implications for practice to ensure relevance and encourage depth of learning. Some might object to the second part of this statement on the grounds that it would sacrifice course content (especially theory). On the contrary, showing the relevance of theory through practical applications leads to deeper understanding because new information, concepts, or skills connect with what students already know. This argument is supported by John Milton Gregory's fourth law of teaching: "The LESSON to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already known by the learner—the UNKNOWN must be explained by means of

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<sup>32</sup>I confess that I have a minimal understanding of the principles of flight. I trust that readers will overlook inadequacies in this analogy.

<sup>33</sup>Ott, *Understanding*, 205-206.

the KNOWN.”<sup>34</sup> This view holds that, less content could result in a lot more understanding.

The third element in the model is calling, illustrated in Figure 4 as the thrust that pulls the aircraft forward. Calling is the “heart” element of the Head-Heart-Hands triad. It includes student motivation for learning, as well as divine gifting and purpose for their lives. Bible school teachers intuitively understand that their work is part of the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of students as they respond to God’s call, develop their Spirit-given gifts, and follow God’s direction for their lives and ministries. Calling precedes theological education, animates the learning/growing process, and carries graduates forward in ministry.

Calling is illustrated as thrust that pulls the aircraft forward because, like Ott’s conceptualization of *praxis*,<sup>35</sup> it provides the in-service dynamic of theological education by helping students construct a contextual understanding of theory and practice. A pilot can make perfect adjustments to the wings to fly to a certain destination, but the adjustments are meaningless without thrust. In the same way, the best designed course or the most relevant curriculum will not produce effective ministers unless the element of calling is recognized and involved in the process. Paul Lewis raised this point in relation to his model of *orthodoxy*, *orthopathy*, and *orthopraxy*: “It is apparent that, while attitudes are the hardest to train or evaluate, frequently a school’s reputation is dependent on the attitudes of its graduates.”<sup>36</sup>

In summary, this pedagogical model for Pentecostal theological education in Asia Pacific utilizes a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling. There is no need to prioritize one element over the others. Rather, good theological educators are aware of how these elements interact and make use of them to encourage deep learning in their students. Though this article focuses on pedagogy, this model can contribute to holistic theological education as a whole—throughout the curriculum, in every course, in every class period, and in the total experience of students in an institution.

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<sup>34</sup>John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Boston: Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1886, printed by ReadaClassic.com, San Bernardino, CA, December 12, 2015), 11, emphasis original.

<sup>35</sup>Ott, *Understanding*, 208

<sup>36</sup>Lewis, “A History,” 188.

### **Three Applications of the Model for Pentecostal Theological Education in Asia Pacific**

The model described above presents three elements for teaching in Pentecostal theological education that can guide course construction, classroom interaction, and the design of assignments. The interaction between the three is a dynamic balance whether course content is oriented toward theory or designed to support the development of ministry skills. This section suggests three possible applications of this dynamic to teaching and course design.

#### **Begin and End with the Call**

In flight, thrust is everything. No thrust, no flight, regardless of the skill of the pilot. In the same way, theological educators are not just transmitting knowledge and skills to a new generation like a tea pot pouring tea into empty cups. They are not experts whose job it is to download as much information as possible into a class period so that students will get maximum value for their time and money. Rather, theological education is part of God's process of formation for women and men so they can serve fruitfully and faithfully in his kingdom. Bible school students walk through the classroom door with this motivation in their hearts. Good teachers recognize this heart element and build up on it.

Bible school teachers are wise to affirm calling over classroom performance. "A" students do not always make "A" pastors. Sometimes, students who struggle the most with academics (and overcome!) serve the most effectively in their communities and even rise to district or national leadership. Most Bible schools give awards for academic excellence and leadership, but we should also value Christian character, servanthood, and growth. At our school, Cambodia Bible Institute, we offered an award for the most academic improvement (which was never available to "A" students).

Beginning and ending with the call applies to assessments like research papers, class presentations, and exams. These are educational tools to be used in the teaching-learning process. Most of them are not meant to develop ministry skills. I am not suggesting that teachers should only give assignments that develop ministry skills. Rather, educators need to remember that course requirements are part of the educational process that should ultimately support the development of ministry skills. This requires keeping the ministry context of the students in mind because that is where their callings will be worked out publicly.

### Keep the Ministry Context in View

Returning to Gregory's fourth law of teaching, good teaching builds on what students already know. Students learn more deeply when they can make connections between course content and their ministry context. This is the "so what" question of theological education at the undergraduate level. Moreover, when students make those connections explicit through choice assignments (like research papers and class presentations), they are testing out course content in a controlled environment. When those connections are clear in class presentations, classmates have the opportunity to learn about other ministry contexts and to see how course material could be applied in different ways.

Keeping the ministry context of the students in view does not mean that course content should be rigidly restricted to only what is currently relevant. This "just in time" view of theological education is short-sighted and does not give students a strong foundation for future ministry development. Bernard Ott argues that theological education institutions provide "appropriate distance from church praxis and make possible a dialogue that goes beyond the boundaries of the church (for example in the context of higher education). Nonetheless, the church remains the primary place of responsibility and relationship."<sup>37</sup>

To return to the analogy of an airplane in flight, keeping the ministry context in view in a local Bible school could mean giving students a bird's eye view of the context. The classroom provides a place where students can expand their understanding of the Bible and ministry and think about issues that would be difficult to discuss in a local church setting, but they are still relatively close to the ground (context). Such thinking can prepare them for thoughtful decision-making in the future when they bear the burden of leadership. Graduate level studies, on the other hand, take students up to a view at 30,000 feet. As they read scholars from all over the world, including views which need to be refuted, their view of the context grows. They engage theoretical material that is not needed at the Bible school level (where there is a stronger emphasis on practical ministry development). However, the plane is still flying to a given destination. Keeping that destination context in view helps seminary students remain grounded in their original callings and prepares them for humble service when they disembark for their ministry assignment.

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<sup>37</sup>Ott, *Understanding*, 197.

## The 75-25 Rule

I began to develop the concepts presented in this article when I was the academic dean of Cambodia Bible Institute, especially after reading Carl Gibbs' presentation of the Training Pyramid described above. I was responding to two factors. First, we were using the undergraduate program of Global University as a benchmark for curriculum development.<sup>38</sup> Since most of our faculty were not qualified to write their own courses, we used some of the Global University textbooks for course content. Second, many of our teachers taught primarily through lectures. They loved their students, were passionate about the subjects they taught, and wanted to see the church in Cambodia grow strong. However, their teaching approach naturally leaned toward transmission of information.

I developed the 75-25 rule to help our teachers create better theory-practice integration. The rule had two principles. First, as a general rule, covering 75 percent of the material in the textbook was considered sufficient for both practical and theoretical courses. We did not want teachers to feel that they were slaves to textbooks that were not written with Cambodia in mind. Beyond clearly foundational material, teachers were expected to make judgements about what material to prioritize based on the contextual needs of the students. They were also free to add relevant content that was not addressed in the textbook.

Second, I asked that courses which focused on knowledge/theory contain up to 25 percent of class time for the practical application of the material. As I argued above, this approach gives students opportunities to process course content more deeply. For example, the situation did not support traditional research papers. So, knowledge-focused courses often required students to process course content by writing sermons and lessons for use in the ministries where they served every weekend or making class presentations on issues relevant to their ministry contexts.

## Conclusion

Steven Hardy rightly asserts that "The primary educational goal of a theological curriculum should be to equip real people for real ministry."<sup>39</sup> Like it or not, theological education institutions are judged by the "real ministry" of their graduates. Church leaders and members will see the

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<sup>38</sup> "Undergraduate School of Bible and Theology," Global University, <https://globaluniversity.edu/academics/undergraduate/> (accessed December 14, 2023).

<sup>39</sup> Steven A. Hardy, *Excellence in Theological Education: Effective Training for Church Leaders*, ICETE Series, ed. Riad Kassis (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016), 93.



attitudes and faith of graduates first, then their ministry skills, and after that their knowledge. However, in service to the church, theological education institutions should train graduates in what they truly need, not just what is popular. Many schools were founded with a passion for ministry training, only to be pulled over time into an academic paradigm very different from that original vision, resulting in producing graduates with great knowledge (theory) and little ability to serve (practice).

This article has reflected on the historical tension between theory and practice that has shaped approaches to theological education and fragmented Bible school curriculum. The ideas of Bernard Ott, Paul Lewis, Robert Banks, and Carl Gibbs represent significant efforts to create healthy theory-practice integration in theological education at the institutional and curricular levels. This article has proposed a pedagogical model for teachers at Pentecostal Bible schools in Asia Pacific that can help them strike a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling in their classes. Students and teachers in Pentecostal schools bring a powerful sense of calling into the classroom. When properly harnessed, that calling has the potential to create a healthy and dynamic integration of theory and practice that will powerfully equip all God's people for works of service (Eph 4:12).

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