

This book has a lot to offer in synthesizing some major models of missionary activity. I particularly appreciated the categorization of massive amounts of church planting material.

Its weakness is that it lacks a sufficient critique of ‘hurry up’ models of church planting based on a short-term approach. I don’t believe it follows that short-term mission and facilitative work go hand-in-hand. In many people groups the size and scope of the effort dictates that, regardless of the model, long-term slogging for years should be expected. There are also some ‘stretches of the imagination’ that Steffen takes here that are a bit much for me. For example, as we look at the current missionary era (what the book calls the ‘4th Era’) I see no way that Rick Warren can be considered its primary persona (the hero of the next generation of mission is most certainly the unknown indigenous worker).

All things considered this is possibly better understood as a high level review of contemporary missions thinking in North America. It does miss out on some themes (for example, contextualization) but it’s a solid review of the literature. Speaking from within an organization with many ‘pioneering’ missionaries I sense that the move toward facilitation is a necessary and helpful step toward partnering with the two-thirds world church.

Reviewed by Ted Esler

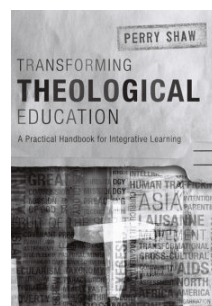
Dr. Ted Esler recently became President and CEO of Missio Nexus after more than fifteen years in executive leadership with Pioneers USA and Canada.

Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning

by Perry Shaw

Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-78368-957-6

In just over 270 pages, Perry Shaw’s *Transforming Theological Education* (Langham Global Library) is a ‘must read’ for anyone committed to training and equipping Christians for the church’s mission in the world today. Those who have known Perry’s ministry as an educationalist, theologian, teacher and ‘missionary-reformer’ of theological education have been looking forward to this volume for some time. In it he brings together a lifetime of experience in institutional theological education and particularly the story of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary’s (ABTS) journey in 2007 from a traditional fragmented model of theological education to an



increasingly missional-ecclesial, multi-dimensional and integrative approach to training Christian ministers and leaders today.

What is so helpful in this book is that almost everything presented has been ‘field tested’ at ABTS. Perhaps deliberately to ground the book in a real context, Perry’s preface enables us to see exactly what such an integrative and multi-dimensional model actually looks like. Having visited ABTS and met some of its recent graduates from North Africa, I can confirm that ‘the proof of the pudding’ *really is* ‘in the eating.’

So, what are the ingredients of Perry’s ‘pudding’? There are two parts to Perry’s book. Part 1 addresses the philosophical and educational principles of integrative learning and how these are worked out in institutions. At the heart of this is a call to work with a whole faculty in re-forming (or redesigning) the school towards a missional mandate of ‘preparing and equipping men and women to guide the church to have a more effective impact on the surrounding society.’ Part 2 takes these same issues and seeks to provide theological educators with a ‘toolbox’ containing the practical skills to help this missional-ecclesial approach actually work in practice.

The first few chapters of Part 1 set the horizon of his missional-ecclesial vision of theological education through a process of ‘backward design’ – that is, starting with the end goal of the theological education process and working back. He asks fundamental questions such as, ‘What are the characteristics of an ideal church for accomplishing God’s missional mandate?’ and ‘What is the ideal profile of a graduate who will serve in and through this church?’ Whilst some of these characteristics will be universal many others are contextually-driven. By envisioning the ‘ideal’ church, graduate and the particular challenges of the context, the design of training is more likely to equip, support, evaluate and encourage students for effective ministry.

In chapter three he argues for a high level of reciprocal student evaluation of self and of faculty. Then in chapter four he outlines the shape of multidimensional learning. He calls us to move away from theological education characterized merely by cognitive mastery, the disconnected ‘four silos’ of biblical theology, systematics, church history and practical theology, towards a more holistic model with the intentional promotion of *affective*, *behavioural* and *cognitive* learning. He is not alone in the prognosis that the most influential, widely exported and ‘successful’ models of theological education are shaped in a western, white and predominantly male world. Not surprisingly he argues that this model is largely unfit for purpose, not just in the majority world but also increasingly in the west. As he puts it, in most traditional evangelical models, ‘While condemning secular rationalism, there is a tacit affirmation of the basic tenets of rationalism through the almost exclusive focus on the cognitive domain.’

Chapters five to seven further expand this basic thesis by exposing the ‘hidden’

and the 'null' curricula. The 'hidden' curriculum is everything that is not stated in the explicit syllabi that is handed out to students at the beginning of term... all that is 'caught rather than taught' in the teaching and learning process. He identifies seven possible negative aspects of a school's 'hidden' curriculum that students 'catch' and which might limit the school's ability to fulfil its missional-ecclesial calling. They are: 1) the idea that schooling *is* education, 2) an academic approach to ministry, 3) a knowledge-centred hierarchy, 4) the idea that leaders have *all* the control, 5) that there is a 'one-size' that 'fits all' in theological education, 6) that ministry is about competition not cooperation and 7) the prevalence of the 'null' curriculum.

This final concept is the significance of what is *not* taught in many traditional models of theological education. Given the fact that no school can teach everything, Perry argues that much can be discerned from what is left out in many schools. Citing extensive studies in the west and through a recent 'Global Survey on Theological Education'⁹, Shaw suggests that what is missing is spiritual formation, interpersonal and counselling skills as well as cross-cultural communication and practical skills related to ministry and mission.

This is further supported in chapter six by a deeper evaluation of the dangers of fragmentation in the curriculum and then in chapter seven an exploration of what he considers the non-negotiable aspects of training outside the classroom. Citing Linda Cannell's comprehensive history of western theological education and its journey to the current globalized model in *Theological Education Matters* (2006), Perry identifies the roots of fragmentation in the western embrace of the Greek philosophical approach. He points to the influence of Thomas Aquinas's application of Aristotelian philosophy to theological reflection and the subsequent systematizing of categories in theology. He then describes how through the Enlightenment and the success of the 'scientific method' an epistemology which limits 'knowing' to merely 'rational reflection' has fragmented so many of our current models of theological education.

What Perry does, whilst in no way being anti-rational or anti-academic, is bring to bear extensive research about the importance of emotional and social intelligence to the teaching and learning process in theological education. It is not just the re-dressing of the balance from a focus on a student's intellectual capacity to more influential factors like emotional stability, social skills, positive attitudes and self-motivation. Rather, he suggests that our evaluation of quality theological education must shift away from criteria formulated within the parameters of the academic community towards those defined by the 'end goal' of the process, namely, equipping and liberating students for effective involvement in God's mission and the transformation of their contexts. He offers numerous practical tools to help the

⁹ See <http://www.globethics.net/web/gtl/research/global-survey>.

reader engage in such an evaluation.

One of the more obvious tools he outlines in chapter seven is the adoption of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), over and above the American Carnegie credit-counting system. Whilst the latter is more widely used around the world, Perry argues that it has multiple shortcomings especially at the level of the 'hidden curriculum.' It grants credits almost exclusively to the classroom-centred component of the curriculum, which communicates that what is most important is what happens in class... that is the *teaching* and *not* the formative *learning* that goes on outside the class. The ECTS on the other hand focuses on hours of learning rather than hours in the classroom and affirms the substantive formative value of non-classroom based elements. Once again Perry puts plenty of flesh on the bones of this concept. He discusses the use and essential value of mentoring, small groups, community worship, theological reflection (on *all* aspects of life!) and independent learning contracts.

The final chapter of Part 1 examines the concept of 'deep learning.' Expanding on his central thesis that education is about learning – not teaching, Perry goes on to explore learning that lasts and that impacts life. He writes, 'the real learning is not what is remembered at the end of a course, but what is remembered five or ten years after taking the course, and even more what shapes in the long term the character and actions of the learner' (129).

In case the first part of the book raises the question, 'I'm convinced of the need for change, but how am I *actually* going to achieve what Perry is suggesting?' Part 2 provides very practical tools to have a go! I came away genuinely encouraged to do exactly that. As Perry writes, even if just a few of these steps are taken, the implications for furthering the global mission of God are massive.

So what are some of these practical tools? Chapters nine and ten outline helpful steps for designing courses and lesson plans for multidimensional learning. That is the nuts and bolts of a 'learning-centred' and 'learning-focused' approach; approaching the lessons with purpose, clear learning objectives and with an appreciation for the psychology of teaching and learning.

For the theologian, cross-cultural minister (missionary), pastor or church planter with little educational training, chapter eleven walks us through the difference between a traditional and a non-traditional instructional method. In contrast to the professorial lecture approach he explores the steps to designing dialogue, whole class and small group discussion, brainstorming, debates, forums or panel discussions, interviews and much more. In almost twenty years of education, I have come across no one better able to communicate the importance of instructional strategy over and above merely teaching technique.

Then in chapters twelve and thirteen he walks us through the art and science

of designing questions and case studies that engage the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains of learning and growth. You may never have considered that this would be worthy of two whole chapters, but I defy you to come away from this without being changed by it. He then goes on to look at learning styles and cultural context in chapter fourteen. As someone committed to supporting in-context theological education and advocating a much greater awareness of the cross-cultural issues involved in the teaching and designing of theological education, this chapter was full of applicable wisdom.

He continues in chapter fifteen with yet more practical steps to improving the design of grading and assessment, convincingly exposing problems in issuing grades in theological education and presents a series of alternative, more dialogical and reflective forms of assessment. Finally, in chapter sixteen he ends with a call to raise the bar and strive for excellence in teaching, defined using B.T. Washington's words as 'doing a common thing in an uncommon way.' This excellence involves developing a hospitable relationship with students, demonstrating competence, a clarity of communication, creativity, enthusiasm, a well-ordered learning environment, the appropriate use of praise and criticism as well as developing high expectations, and, crucially, a capacity for self-evaluation and continuous growth in the student and teacher.

Although it will be crystal clear that I think this is a rather impressive book (British understatement!) I have two warnings. Firstly, because of the influence of his educational background and impressive survey of contemporary educational theory, you get the impression that Perry is suggesting that our motivation for bringing transformation to the traditional model of theological education should be based on catching up with the last fifty years of educational research. He does of course make the case for transformation as a theological imperative from the Bible, but I was left wanting more discussion of this rather than endless citations from contemporary educational research. If Paul Sanders is right that 'the problem with much theological education is that it is neither theological nor educational'¹⁰ then some readers may be frustrated with the lack of theological exploration of this missional-ecclesial vision of theological education.

Secondly, Perry at a number of points admits to being intentionally provocative (and negative) about the status quo in traditional schooling models of theological education. Although he admits that traditional schools have introduced some of the holistic and multi-dimensional reforms that he is advocating, by his hypercritical approach, he may lose a significant number of readers among the exact constituency (traditional theological educators) that he is seeking to transform.

¹⁰ See <http://theologicaleducation.org/2010/09/29/trends-in-global-theological-education-dr-paul-sanders/>

In a field reputed to be the one of the slowest to accept institutional change, many have laboured but given up disillusioned. Both the influential Edward Farley (1983) and more recently Robert Banks (1999) ended their quest to see a re-envisioning of this field depressed at the lack of change. As a teacher and PhD student wholeheartedly committed to seeing the BMB church equipped and trained in-context and for the context of the Muslim world, I am grateful to God for lifting Perry from his own disillusionment and subsequent breakdown in 2006 and enabling him to complete this journey of curricular and institutional change with ABTS.

Works Cited

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Reviewed by Pat Brittenden

Pat Brittenden grew up as a 'third culture kid' in Algeria. With a background in education in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors, he then worked in cross-cultural church planting and development work in North Africa. After further theological study, he now researches, writes, trains and advises on the design of Christian discipling and theological education in Muslim-majority contexts.

Peace Catalysts: Resolving Conflict in Our Families, Organizations and Communities

by Rick Love

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014, 207 pages.

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Synopsis from the Back Cover of the book

Rick Love, founder and president of Peace Catalyst International, shares the principles that have guided his peacemaking efforts around the world. He provides a biblical framework for how the God of peace seeks the common good of any who have been at odds with others. As ambassadors of reconciliation, we can practice peacemaking at every level - in our homes and workplaces, from domestic disagreements to international disputes.

