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Editorial Statement

CATALYST is the flagship journal of Asia-Pacific International University (AIU). It is an inter-disciplinary, peer-reviewed journal published by AIU’s Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies through its publishing arm, Institute Press. The journal is published online with a limited number of hard copies available.

Scope of CATALYST

As an interdisciplinary journal, CATALYST brings together articles in several areas of the humanities and social sciences such as religion, education, arts and humanities, and business, as well as social science research in other disciplines.

Objectives of CATALYST

1. To facilitate scholarly activity among the faculty of AIU
2. To engender scholarly exchanges with other universities within Thailand and with visiting lecturers, pastors and teachers from other parts of the world
3. To encompass scholarly as well as professional articles, seminar/forum papers, research papers and book reviews

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1. Manuscripts should be in MS Word format and should relate to one of the relevant disciplines listed in “focus and scope”.
2. Manuscripts should adhere to the Catalyst Publishing Guidelines; failure to comply with the guidelines may result in the rejection of a submission.
3. Manuscripts should be submitted through the online submission system found in “submission request”
4. Manuscripts should be submitted by the 30th of March for the June issue, or the 30th of September for the December issue.

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Editorial

Joy C Kurian

The editorial and review board of Catalyst is extremely glad to announce to all its contributors and readers that this journal which, is published by Asia-Pacific International University’s Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies, has been listed in the Thai Citation Index (TCI). We are also thrilled to share with you the good news that Catalyst has been placed under Category 1 which stands for a highly respected journal...Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Contributors to Catalyst can now have a feeling of elation to publish their research findings and articles in a highly acclaimed and prestigious journal, nurtured by Asia-Pacific International University, in the Kingdom of Thailand.

In conformity with the journal criteria, the present issue covers diversified subjects such as Business Management, Current Issues in Theology, Issues in Professional Nursing, Graduate Education Programs, Suicide among School Age Children in South Korea, Jesus and Politics, Higher Education in Cambodia, Technology and its Influence on Education and a couple of Book Reviews in the areas of Teaching and Learning. The skilled and professional contributors, with varied training and university affiliations, represent countries such as Australia, India, Thailand, Kenya, USA, Peru, Cambodia and China. There is definitely something of interest for one and all so just dive in and enjoy!
Christian Business Management Excellence

Pak T. Lee

“Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible.” Ronnie Oldham

Abstract

The 21st century business environment demands superior performance, and high outcomes. Best management practices are seen as the ways to meet such demands and challenges. This means developing and emulating behaviours that are considered to be the best in the world. It is the belief that this type of approach will create an opportunity to bring in high monetary rewards and material gains. While this may be the secular world’s approach to achieving excellence in terms of high performance outcomes, there are organizations striving to attain management excellence from a different perspective by adopting and integrating the best practices from biblical principles and Christian literature. This approach should not be ignored. Christian business practitioners look beyond what secular organizations aim at – profits and material gains. They desire that their intended practices are consistent with God’s character, are being done with good motives and bring the high level of performance desired by the business enterprise.

Introduction

A secular business enterprise exists to serve personal and corporate interests. Its foundation is based on human philosophy and values. It is materialistic in outlook with the intent of wealth accumulation and maximization of profit for the owners. Over the last twenty-five years, different management concepts and ideas have been used by business organizations to create excellence in achievements. Related literature (Leonard & Denney, 2007; Shelton, Darling & Walker, 2002) suggests that organization and management excellence can be achieved by having a self-assessment framework for measuring the strengths and areas for improvement of an organization across all its activities. Quality circles, self-directed managerial teams, total quality management, processes and systems improvements, customer focus, continuous improvements, innovations and creativity, have been frequently used to build a framework for achievement of business excellence (Foster, 2010). None of these have been proven to be a direct path to achieve it. The framework focuses on what an organization does or could do, to provide an excellent service or product to its customers, service to users or stakeholders. With such a framework in place, achievement of high performance results (profits) are thought to be possible in terms of productivity, employee and customer satisfaction through driving policy and strategy, people, partnership and resources, leading ultimately to excellence in key performance results.

This purpose of this paper is to briefly present a Christian’s view of business management excellence, a different perspective by adopting and integrating the best practices from biblical principles and Christian literature. The Christian approach is not centred on human effort alone. It is a partnership with God, who is the centre of our being. This approach consists of seven dimensions. Each dimension will be defined and discussed. The final part of this article is an attempt to integrate all the dimensions together to form a Christian approach to business management excellence.
Meaning of Management Excellence

At this point, a few definitions are essential. First, what is business excellence? Excellence seems to mean different things to different people. It is difficult to define and even more difficult to achieve. Not knowing what it is makes it difficult to know whether it is being attained. The secular concept of excellence in terms of management and organization performance was introduced over thirty years ago by Peters and Waterman (1982). They presented a model comprising seven success criteria for excellence. The seven criteria are (1) structure, (2) strategy, (3) systems, (4) shared values, (5) skill, (6) staff, and (7) style. They did not attempt to define excellence but they revealed that managers achieved better performance results when they gave attention to all seven criteria rather than two or three of them.

There are many definitions of business management excellence in secular literature. The following two definitions are typical examples. One source defines business management excellence as:

“...the systematic use of quality management principles and tools in business management, with the goal of improving performance based on the principles of customer focus, stakeholder value, and process management.” (Business Excellence, What is it? www.enablingresults.com/business-excellence/, para 1)

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) defines business management excellence as:

“Outstanding practices in managing the organisation and achieving results, all based on a set of eight fundamental concepts, these being, results orientation; customer focus; leadership and constancy of purpose; management by processes and facts; people development and involvement; continuous learning, innovation and improvement; partnership development; and public responsibility” (BPIR, 2002, para. 5).

The key driver behind business management excellence is high performance results in terms of profit, market share, and monetary and material gains. Having greater market shares, better customer and employee satisfaction, higher productivity or more product innovations, are seen as the means of achieving better performance results and greater returns on investments. Shareholders’ high expectations of the returns on their investments also play an important role in pushing business leaders to continue their search for higher and higher achievements in performance. All these are important and have value, but not one of them has proven to be a direct path to business management excellence.

The two terms, model and framework, are used interchangeably here. Business management excellence models, are defined as “frameworks that, when applied within an organization, can help to focus thought and action in a more systematic and structured way that should lead to increased performance” (BPIR, 2002, para. 3). These two terms are often used interchangeably in related literature on business management excellence (Leonard & Denney, 2007)

There are plenty of business management excellence frameworks (Dahlgaard-Park and Dahlgaard, 2007; Peter and Austin, 1985, cited in Daglgaard-Park and Dahlgard, n.d.; and BPIR.com Ltd, n.d.). Most, if not all of the secular frameworks or models, are very similar with some small differences in the ways the concepts and criteria are packaged together. All of them seem to focus on changing the organization (its people, processes or products) in the quest for high performance results.

A Christian Approach to Management Excellence

Gary Inrig presented seven concepts of excellence in his book, A Call to Excellence (1985, pp 34-35). The writer of this paper is indebted to Inrig for the seven dimensions conceptual framework.

Scripture presents God as the centre of all excellence. This is usually not part of the secular frameworks, and too often, it seems, those who claim to practice the Christian approach as well. Rush presented a similar point of view by saying that the secular management philosophy is diametrically opposed to biblical principles, for it has been suggested that if Christian enterprises are to accomplish the tasks for which God has raised them up, their management and organizational leadership must employ the Christian principles as they are outlined in scripture (Rush, 1983). Putting God as the foundation and centre of an organization impacts on everything management stands for and does. God, being the foundation for the Christian’s approach of management excellence, must make a difference in the motives behind the actions of Christian organizations and the ways
they operate their businesses. In other words, the actions may appear to be the same for both the secular and the Christian approaches, but the motives are different. Often the secular management philosophy of business and management excellence are applied in the management of Christian organizations. Profits and material gains appear to be the main focus. At times employees are treated as a factor of production of goods and services. Christians are admonished to avoid such an approach (Matthew 20:20-28; 1 Kings 12:7; Philippians 2:5-7).

A Christian approach to management excellence does not deny all that is found in the secular frameworks and models. However, organizational management practices under the Christian approach is more than simply taking current socially accepted business practices and adding some religious jargon to them. It sets the consideration of organizational management in an entirely different context. The foundation for business management excellence in a Christian approach is more than simply human equation. The motive of the Christian approach is not about maximising one’s wealth, being the most productive, maintaining a competitive advantage over rival businesses, positioning the organization’s products against competitors or being number one, but rather it is honouring, glorifying, and promoting God, and pleasing Him in all respects, by serving others and helping every employee to reach their full potential and the realization of their aspirations. This is not saying that Christian organizations should not make profits, be competitive, be the best, or be productive. They should. But these are secondary goals. Christian organizations believe that they have a higher goal to achieve: to walk worthy of the Lord and to please God in every respect.

The organizational management philosophy of the Christian approach is different from the secular models. The Christian approach (Figure 1) has a different foundation, a different benchmark and standard to compare, a different role model to emulate, a different set of goals to accomplish, a different focus for activities, a different set of management values to guide management practice, a different motive behind the operational and business activities, and a different source of empowerment to get the work done in order to accomplish the vision and mission of the organization. The differences are the result of a different foundation, a God foundation, that is absent in the secular models. The secular models are based on human philosophy and are human centred, but the Christian framework is God centred. The secular frameworks are based on human values and the Christian approach is based on God’s values. The Christian framework values excellence of achievement, but only when it is an extension of excellence of character (2 Peter 1:2-11). The secular tends to define management excellence in terms of human achievements and pays little attention to the question of character.

God is the foundation and centre of the Christian approach (Figure 1). Christians believe that God created the world and the human race (Genesis 1:26, John 1:1-3), and He is the centre of human existence. “In God we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28, NIV). From the preceding texts, it can be deduced that it is God that gives meaningfulness to a Christian’s existence. God is the very reason why Christians build and operate organisations like schools, hospitals, and other business oriented enterprises, to promote Christ-given messages to the world and to give honour and glory to Him. Christians believe that God is the owner (Deuteronomy 10:14, Psalm 50:10-12, Psalm 24:1, Haggai 2:8, 1 Chronicle 29:11, Colossians 1:16) and people are His managers and stewards, accountable for their actions (Luke 12:48, Matthew 25:26-27). In other words, God is the heart and mind of all truly biblically-based Christian business enterprises.

From a search of Scripture and Christian literature, an approach of Christian organizational management excellence with seven dimensions is presented. These dimensions of excellence are: God, the Christians’ benchmark and standard for management excellence; Christ, the role model for management and leadership excellence; Christlikeness, the goal of management practices and excellence; serving the needs of others, the focus of management excellence; Christian values, the basis of management philosophy for excellence; God’s glory, the motive of management excellence; and God’s Love and compassion, the source of empowerment for management excellence (Figure 1). These seven dimensions are closely connected to the foundation and to one another. The integration of these dimensions, with God in the centre, influences organizational practices and operations at all levels within the organization. This approach is shown in Figure 2, in the latter part of this paper.

**Dimensions of a Christian Approach to Management Excellence**

The following will focus on the dimensions of the Christian approach to business management excellence.

*Dimension 1: God - the Christians’ benchmark and standard for management excellence.* Benchmarking,
as it is applied to organizational operations, is a practice that compares the performance of the firm to an external standard. The firm measures its products, services, processes or organizational practices against industry leaders in the field (Rothman, 1992).

In benchmarking, managers search for the best practices that are more superior to their own (Walleck and Leader, 1991). Hence operating devices of an organization are measured against an external standard, usually the market leader, whose practices are considered as the best-in-class. Camp (1989, p. 12) gave a generic definition of benchmarking as “a basis for establishing rational performance goals through the search for industry best practices that will lead to superior performance”.

As one struggles with the issue of organizational management excellence, the pages of Scripture provide a critical framework for understanding many human endeavours, including improving business practices (Hodgetts, Luthans, & Lee, 1994). The so-called “world class” organizations that strive to be the best in the world at what they can do or achieve in terms of human effort, are not the appropriate measurement standard for Christian organizations. The goal of business practices and improvements should not be solely on the basis of being admired by other organizations, being more profitable, or being the most competitive. Christians do not measure their works and accomplishments by what others have done, but by what the Lord has done (Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). Human endeavours are not God’s ways. Isaiah 55:9 (NIV) says: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Furthermore, God looks at motives, not actions alone. “The Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV). God’s standard of management excellence is very different from the human standard of excellence.

Standards are essential to excellence because they provide necessary criteria to measure achievement. Christians value excellence of achievement, but only when it is consistent with God’s character. For Christian organizations or business enterprises, the character of God provides the point of comparison, not the management practices of the most admired and successful organizations, a common practice that compares the performance of the firm to a reference standard (another firm). Many of the practices of the secular models are not compatible with the Character of God. Christian business practitioners take into consideration whether the intended practice is consistent with God’s character, being done with the proper motives, and bringing honour and glory to God. Making profits to keep the organization operating to meet the needs of the community is also important and comes with honouring God. It is the Christian’s belief that God will bless and honour those who honour him (John 12:26).
Christians live under a mandate, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2 NKJ); “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16, NKJ). The Lord Jesus Himself commanded, “You must be perfect - just as your Father in heaven is perfect!” (Matthew 5:48, GNB). This principle is awesome. The Christian standard is nothing less than the Character of God. Inrig (1985) reminds Christians that such a standard or benchmark imposes humility on every believer. In God, every thing, in every respect, is immeasurably superior. It infinitely transcends the capacity of mortal beings. The fact that such a standard and benchmark is ultimately unreachable does not mean that it is inoperable or meaningless. On the contrary, it provides a high and holy incentive to move beyond customer satisfaction and loyalty, market share, and profits. As the Scriptural references above indicate, God is the true benchmark and standard for Christian management excellence, and nothing less.

Dimension 2: Christ is the role model for organizational management excellence. A role model is someone worthy of imitation, a person who serves as an example for others. The concepts of role modelling and models are used extensively in the management of organizations. Managements use successful organisations as their models to follow. Leaders of organizations are expected to be good examples (role models) to their employees and others. They are expected to take on the role of motivating, inspiring, influencing and leading others in the organization to work together productively in pursuit of the organization’s goals.

Jesus was a role model for His disciples. The impact of His role modelling was noticed by the Jewish leaders. “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13, NIV) Jesus is the role model for all Christians at all times and in all vocations and professions. “It was to this that God called you, for Christ himself suffered for you and left you an example, so that you would follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21, GNB). “I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.” (John 13:15, GNB). The message is undeniably clear.

Jesus is the role model for all walks of life. He is the role model for managing limited resources. In the parable of the three servants, He richly rewarded those who managed the resources well (Matthew 25:14-27; Luke 19:11-27). He took away the resources from the one who failed to manage them and gave them to the two who did well. Jesus taught his disciples to eliminate waste. At the end of feeding the five thousand, all leftovers were gathered. Nothing was to be wasted. (John 6:1-13; Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17). All leftovers were collected and put to good use. In another situation (Luke 16:1-15), Jesus also praised a manager not because of his dishonesty but rather his strategic use of resources. The manager’s time was short, so he took what he had and transformed it into something that would provide for him long into his future. He was praised for acting shrewdly or astutely.

Jesus set Christians an example of putting God first in every aspect of their living. He placed God first in His life and expects Christians to do the same as He did. “I can do nothing on my own authority; I judge only as God tells me, so my judgement is right, because I am not trying to do what I want, but only what he who sent me wants.” (John 5:30, GNB). Christ did not put on a front. He was completely genuine. He rebuked the Jewish leaders for being bad models (Luke 20:45-47; Matthew 23:27). Jesus had humility in spite of who He was (Matthew 19:16-17).

Christ showed His concern for people (Matthew 4:23, Matthew 8 and 9 are just a few examples in the gospels). Jesus was concerned about workers’ productivity, “…that you bear much fruit, so that you will be my disciples” (John 15:8 NKJ). Employees are expected to be productive. John 15:2 says that “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (NKJ). The example of Jesus compels all Christians, leaders and workers, to do as He did. Christ is the Christian's role model in all walks of life.

Dimension 3: Christlikeness is the goal of business management excellence. What is being Christlike? The word “Christian” means “Christlike”. The true meaning is learning to live and act like Christ. Scripture tells of the importance of Christ-likeness. The Philippian Christians were told to have the same mind in them that was in Christ (Philippians 2:5). Paul said that Christ lived in him so completely that he no longer lived but Christ lived in him (Galatians 2:20). To be Christ-like, Christians should think and reason as Christ thought (Ephesians 4:21-24); love and obey God as Christ loved and obeyed God (Philippians 2:5-8); learn to love and meet the needs of other people as Christ did (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John gospels); seek to be holy as Christ was holy (1 Peter 1:13-16). These scriptural references have important managerial and employee implications.

Excellence is a progressive realization of the God-given purpose of Christ-likeness. Romans 8:29 says that “Those whom God had already chosen He also set apart to be like his son” (NEB). This goal of Christlikeness must shape human conduct in every area of life, whether in public or private. The book of Romans further
provides the basis for business and organizational excellence. For it says, “Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to Him and is perfect” (12:2, NEB). Being Christ-like can be translated to mean being honest (Ephesians 4:25; Romans 12:17), being fair (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31; 1 Timothy 5:18), doing what is right (Philippians 4:8), not taking advantage of others, which include employees and customers, (Deuteronomy 25:13-15; 1 Timothy 5:18), and taking responsibility for one’s actions (Romans 14:12).

God does not like cheating. Deuteronomy 25:13-16 says:

You shall not have in your bag different weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord your God. (NKJ)

This is the principle of giving a full amount in exchange for a fair payment. In other words, give full quality for what is paid for and according to what is advertised. “Do for others just what you want them to do for you” (Luke 6:31, GNB).

Being Christ like calls for total honesty in all things. Ephesians (4:25) calls for the speaking of truth. The Living Bible best sums it up in Romans (12:17) which says, "Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through". Then there is personal responsibility. Christians must take full responsibility for their own actions and decisions. They should not try to excuse their actions based on pressure within the business or organization to do what they know is not right. Christians must accept the responsibility for what they have said or done and not try to pass that responsibility on to someone else or try to blame it on some set of circumstances. Romans 12 verse 2 warns of the danger of allowing the world to shape Christians into its mould.

There is the issue of reasonable profits. To a business, profit is the price of its service or product above its cost. To the employee it is the amount of his or her wages for the service to the organization. Luke 3:14 admonishes employees to be content with their wages, but the Bible also reminds the employers in 1 Timothy 5:18 that the labourers are worthy of their wages. Being Christlike means being fair on the part of employers and employees.

Christlikeness is the goal of Christian business and an important dimension of the Christian framework of business excellence. In every area of life and activity, the Christian serves as a representative of Christ. Christ-likeness should be seen in every deed and word in the management and operation of Christian organizations, from both the managerial and employee perspectives. Anything contrary to this is a misrepresentation of Christ-likeness.

Dimension 4: Serving the needs of others, the focus of organizational management excellence. The www.thefreedictionary.com gives the meaning of focus as “a center of interest or activity”. The definition is significant in terms of organizational management practices. The modern definition of business management is not about serving others, it is focusing on productivity, and ‘getting things done through other people in organizations’ (Hill & McShane, 2008), p. 4). The definition implies that people are to be controlled and used by management to achieve its goals and objectives. In the secular world of business management, success in managing people is seen as productivity output – getting things done with least cost. Unfortunately, whether intentional or unintentional, workers are frequently regarded as a factor of production.

Jesus taught a very different approach to management. He said,

You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you: but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28, NKJ)

Paul, in Philippians 2:3-4 (NEB) says,

Don’t do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another’s interest, not just for your own.”
Meeting the needs of others is about relationships. The Ten Commandments in Scripture (Exodus 20) focuses on two central themes about relationships – people’s relationship with God, and people’s relationships with others. The first four Commandments focus on relationship with God (serving God), and the last six Commandments focus on relationships with one another (meeting the needs of others). From the beginning of Scripture (Genesis) to the end of the Bible (Revelation), Christians are being reminded about these relationships. Everything Christians do rests on meeting and maintaining the right relationships with God and with their fellow human beings.

The measure of true success and excellence, from the Christians’ perspective, is relationship with God and relation with others. ‘Lording it over’ others and ‘exercising authority over’ others for the sake of establishing one’s superiority or authority creates relationship problems in organizations (Rush, 1983), and is an abuse of the relationship principles outlined in scripture. It destroys one’s relationship with God because it denies His rightful place as the superior being and it destroys relationship with others because it denies the dignity that is due to them as equal persons. The wisest man who ever lived said: “There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt” (Ecclesiastes 8:9, NKJ). In His teachings, Jesus places the emphasis on responsibility rather than on authority (Luke 12:42-48).

Jesus told the disciples not to pattern their lives after the world’s philosophy, not to use authority and power to control people. He emphasized that people in positions of authority and power should use their authority and power to serve those under them (Matthew 20:25-28). The biblical model of organizational management is meeting the needs of people as they work at accomplishing their goals. As Christians give themselves to serving the needs of those under them, they will make a happy discovery. People will voluntarily and continually meet their needs in return (1 King 12:7). Christ was not self-serving but deliberately chose to serve others and meet their needs (Acts 10:38). Someone has said that you never diminish the flame of your own candle by lighting the flame of someone else. Lee Brase states “I have discovered if you train a man, he will become what you are...But if you serve him, the sky is the limit as to what he can become” (cited in Rush, 1983, p.13-14). Meeting the needs of others is the focus of Christian organisational management excellence. Christ has given Christians a perfect example to emulate.

**Dimension 5: Christian values, the basis of management excellence**

Excellence involves a statement of values. In Search for Excellence, Waterman and Peters (1982) return again and again to the theme of values and their importance in achieving excellence. According to Waterman and Peters, the most excellent companies place great emphasis on their few core values. These values run deep in the organisation. Every company they studied was clear on what they stood for and took the process of value-shaping seriously. Waterman and Peters uncovered the fact that these successful companies were driven by coherent value systems, and required and demanded extraordinary performance from the average employee. Waterman and Peters suggested that the companies they studied had seven basic values (cited in Inrig, 1983, p.37): (1) “A belief in being the best”; (2) “A belief in the importance of the details of execution, the nuts and bolts of doing the job well”; (3) “A belief in the importance of people as individuals”; (4) “A belief in superior quality and service”; (5) “A belief that most members of the organization should be innovators, and its corollary, the willingness to support failure”; (6) “A belief in the importance of informality to enhance communication”; and (7) “Explicit belief in and recognition of the importance of economic growth and profits.” The forgoing suggests that a strong value system is an important basis for achieving excellence.

It has been said that organisational values are reflected in the ways managers and leaders do things (Robbins & Judge, 2009). A system of values is a driving force behind management’s behaviours in the allocation of resources and rewards; the development and implementation of management policies; the handling of crisis; the hiring and firing of employees; the organization and distribution of power and positions within the organizational structure; what is regarded as important or not important; and the ethical and social responsibility behaviours of people in the organization.

Christian organizations emphasize God’s values. Christians live in a world of distorted values and priorities. People tend to highly value things that God considers secondary. God values fairness (Deuteronomy 25:13-15); honesty and integrity (1 Corinthians 4:2; Philippians 4:8, Ephesians 4:25, Romans 12:17); servant leadership and service to others (Matthew 20:26-28); accountability (Romans 14:12); character (Luke 22:25-26); quality of products and services (Ecclesiastes 9:10, Colossians 3:23); relationships with Him and others (Exodus 20; 1 Corinthians 1:10); processes and strategies (Luke 9:1-6, Matthew 10:5-15, Mark6:7-10); continuous improvements (Matthew 5:48); people (Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 10:25-37); good actions and motives (Luke 19:1-9); humility (Luke 14:7-14, Matthew 5:5); work and productivity (Luke 13:6-9, Matthew 21:18-20); performance evaluation (Colossians 3:23, Mark 7:37, Matthew 25); Planning (Proverbs 24:3-4 [LB], Jeremiah
Values play a critical role in an organization management excellence framework. Good management involves a statement of values. Christian organizations are no exception. What makes an organization stand out has much to do with the value system it holds. The values expressed by secular organizations are different from those of Christian organizations. They are means to an end, not an end in themselves. They are based on humanistic philosophy. The value system built on human philosophy cannot be enduring because its foundation is built on relativistic values. The Christian values are based on eternal principles – God’s principles. Christians must emulate God’s values in the management and operations of church related organizations.

Dimension 6: God’s glory is the motive of management excellence.

What is a motive? A motive is the reason behind an action. While an action is visible, the motive behind the action is not. There are such things as a good action with a good motive, a good action with a wrong motive, a wrong action with a good motive, and a wrong action with a wrong motive. The emphasis of the Christian framework of excellence is good/right actions with good/right motives.

The motive behind the secular framework of business management excellence is the bottom-line, business results, and wealth maximization of owners. This is not the case in the Christian approach to business management excellence. Consider an event recorded in the New Testament where Jesus observed a poor widow, whose actions were no different from the others in the temple. Many were putting money into the offering bag on this particular day.

Many rich men dropped in a lot of money; then a poor widow came along and dropped in two little copper coins, worth about a penny. He called his disciples together and said to them, ‘I tell you that this poor widow put more in the offering box than all the others. For the others put in what they had to spare of their riches; but she, poor as she is, put in all she had to live on. (Mark 12:41-44, GNB)

Notice that Jesus focused not only on the action of the individual but also on the motive. The motive of the woman was remarkably different. Jesus told the disciples that her motive was one of faith because she sacrificed her own well being in giving her few, precious coins. The implication is very clear. The actions were similar but the motivation was different. Jesus emphasized the fact that thoughts and motives were just as important as one’s actions. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJ), reminds Christians that: “Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God”, “…that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory….“ 1 Peter 4:11, (NKJ).

There are a few cases in Scripture that provide examples of both action and motive of the decision maker (Luke 19:1-9; Acts 5:1-11; Philippians 1:15-17). Take the example of a Jewish man who collected taxes for a living – Zacchaeus. This story of Zacchaeus illustrates the importance of motives and actions. He was a very high ranking official – Chief Tax Collector. He was a member of a class called tax collectors, hated by the people. The hatred was the result of tax collectors’ harshness, greed, and deception in which they did their job of collecting taxes.

Zacchaeus had an encounter with Jesus. Because of this encounter, Zacchaeus changed his behaviour and started doing something good. He displayed a visible sign of an invisible change by saying that if he had falsely cheated anyone, he was willing to repay four times the amount. He said, “Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much.” (Luke 19:8, GNB) Zacchaeus was willing to make it right by redressing his relationship with those he had wronged. What is more, he announced that he would donate part of his wealth to the poor and correct the injustice done to others in the past. From the story, Zacchaeus’ behaviour or action was certainly good. What about his motive? Based on Jesus’ comment, Zacchaeus’ motive was right. Jesus said, “Salvation has come to this house today” (Luke 19:9 GNB). Zacchaeus was motivated by salvation that had come to his home.

Take another example found in Philippians 1:15-17. From the text, several individuals were preaching the gospel of Christ but with different motives. According to Paul, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus certainly represented a good action. However, Paul clearly pointed out the wrong motives behind the preaching. The good action was motivated by wrong motives, to create trouble for Paul.
Excellence in organizational management may be sought for many reasons. The actions and motives must be good. The Christian’s ambition is to please God and walk worthy of Him. This is a very strong incentive, born out of the grace of God experienced by the believer. Bruce (n.d.) strongly emphasizes that improving business practices is something that seems to be universally viewed as desirable, good, and important. He adds that becoming more efficient and effective is a clear indicator of good management or stewardship. This trait is very compatible with Christian belief. The issue is not so much about the need for improving the quality of the business and management but rather the means for that improvement. Those means must be evaluated in terms of actions themselves and the motives driving those actions. Practices that are consistent with Scriptural principles and result in superior organizational performance should be the goal of Christian business professionals who are seeking to integrate their faith with their vocation. The motive of management excellence in organizations is for God’s glory, to recognize Him as the centre of human existence and human activities.

Dimension 7: God’s Love and compassion being the source of empowerment for management excellence in Christian organizations. Empowerment is the catch word of the 21st century. The word is often used in management literature in relation to human resource management. It is the belief that organizations can improve productivity through employee empowerment (Daft & Marcic, 2009). They believe that this can happen in one of two ways. First, empowerment can strengthen motivation by providing employees with the opportunity to attain intrinsic rewards from their work, such as a greater sense of accomplishment and a feeling of importance. In some cases, intrinsic rewards such as job satisfaction and a sense of purposeful work can be more powerful than extrinsic rewards such as higher wages or bonuses. Motivated employees clearly tend to put forth more effort than those who are less motivated. The second means by which employee empowerment can increase productivity is through better decisions. Especially when decisions require task-specific knowledge, those on the front line can often better identify problems. These are compatible with Christian belief.

A number of different human resource management programs are being used for employee empowerment to some extent. These include informal participative decision-making, job enrichment, quality circles, decision-making authority, continuous improvement, and self-managed work teams, just to mention a few (Daft & Marcic, 2009).

A Christian approach to business management excellence does not deny all that is found in the secular model regarding empowerment. However, Christians have a different and higher source of empowerment. Jesus describes the results of a growing relationship with Him as an abundant, overflowing life that comes from within. He explains that the source of this life is the Holy Spirit. Just as the Christian’s relationship with God totally depends on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live a dynamic Christian life also comes totally from God (John 7:37-39, Ephesians 4:15-16). Grace is the greatest incentive for Christian
excellence as well as its enablement (Inrig, 1985). The spirit dwelling within the believer is able to do what he or she otherwise could not. The seventh dimension is the empowering force. Without the empowerment dimension, the workings of the other dimensions may be purely human effort.

Integration – Foundation, Dimensions, and Business/Management Practice

In the Christian approach of business management excellence (Figure 2), God is the foundation (centre) of the seven dimensions. These dimensions are: God as the standard and benchmark for excellence; Christ as the role model for organizational excellence; Christ likeness as the goal of business management excellence; God’s values as the basis for business management excellence; serving others as the focus of management excellence; God’s glory as the motive for organizational excellence; and God’s love and compassion as the source of empowerment. These dimensions are directly connected to the foundation and to one another. The integration of the seven variables with God in the centre forms a powerful force in influencing or impacting the organization’s leaders, employees and the operational variables at all levels of the organization (Figure 2). Take for example, when leaders and organization employees take on the work of developing, revising and executing the vision, mission, objectives and strategies of the organization; God is the benchmark and standard; Christ is the role model to follow; Christlikeness is the goal; serving others is the focus; Christian values are the basis; for God’s glory is the motive; and God’s love is the empowerment to do all these.

The organizational operation variables include but are not limited to the following: (1) organizational planning, design, forming the vision, mission, goals and strategies; (2) organizational systems and processes for conducting business activities; (3) relationships with internal and external customers; (4) communication within and with outside parties; (5) team building, and empowerment within and forming alliances with outside organizations; (6) organizational learning, employee training, and development in the workplace; (7) allocation and the use of resources; (8) quality of products and services provided by the business enterprise; (9) continuous improvement of processes and systems of getting work done including working policies, procedures, and practices; (10) compensation and reward systems for employees; (11) productivity, innovations and creativity (12) ethical and social responsibilities to the communities in which the business organization is located and to the wider business world. The final outcome is Christian management excellence. Figure 2 is an attempt to visualize what is being outlined in a diagrammatic form to create and communicate an understanding of the relationships among the elements in the Christian approach.

The source of empowerment in the Christian approach is God’s love and compassion for the human race. Without God being the foundation of the framework and the integration of input variables with the foundation, the impact of these variables on organizational operation activity and practice variables are just human endeavours motivated and empowered by human desires and values and selfishness.

In the Christian approach, the actions of leaders and employees (management) are motivated by a different motive – to represent God and to give glory to Him. It is the foundation of this approach, God, which makes it different from all the other secular frameworks and models.

Summary and Conclusion

Business organizations, whether they are secular or Christian, desire to achieve excellence in management. This is a noble ambition. However, business management excellence means different things to different people. The motives driving the approach for management excellence may differ. For a secular organization, the motive behind business management excellence may be associated with high financial returns. Product or service quality, competitive advantage, market share, or customer service are the means of achieving high financial rewards. From this perspective, the framework of excellence in business management is associated with organizational or personal wealth accumulation. In other words, excellence of achievement has a priority over excellence of character. This priority has an important bearing on the establishment of priorities in an organization’s dealings with others.

The Christian management excellence approach with God as the foundation or centre of the dimensions of management excellence, integrates the foundation and dimensions with all management operating activities and practices. A strong integration of these elements forms a framework to accomplish the Christian business management excellence. The Christian approach to business management excellence is based on principles found in Scripture and Christian literature. In this approach the standards of measurement in every aspect of an organization’s operations and practices are not human-centred, but always God/Christ centred. Christian
organizations should not measure business and management achievement by what others have done, but by what God has done. Christians are to walk worthy of their heavenly calling (Ephesians 4:1); to live and conduct their activities worthy of the Gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27); and to walk worthy of God (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

References


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Current Issues in Theology and Their Relevance to the Adventist Church: An East Asian Perspective

Wann M. Fanwar

Abstract

This paper comprises three parts: (1) An examination of the missiological challenges that the Church faces in East Asia and the ramifications of such challenges; (2) An exploration of various models proposed by East Asian Christian scholars as to what the Church could do to meet these challenges; and (3) A reflection the significance and impact of these models on the Adventist Church and its mission in East Asia.

Introduction

This paper is an investigation of pertinent theological issues in today’s setting but with a geographical delimitation. To examine trends throughout the Christian world is a rather gargantuan task. To provide greater focus to the study, I have chosen to survey the theological issues that confront the Church in East Asia (here designating the area from Myanmar to Japan and China to Indonesia).

The basic start up question is, ‘Why East Asia?’ There are three principal reasons for this choice. First, I have worked as Bible teacher and pastor for the Adventist Church in East Asia since 1981. This is essentially my home field and one I am most familiar with. Second, this is arguably the most religiously complex part of the world, where all major living religions (we may even include atheistic communism and secularism here) of the world reside and compete for adherents and where the gospel has made minimal headway despite lengthy presence. Third, as will be articulated in this paper, Christian scholars in East Asia have produced volumes of theological reflection. There are many voices wrestling with the demands of doing theology in the region. East Asian theology is remarkably dynamic and is doing its best to aid the growth of God’s kingdom.

My purpose here is to engage the various efforts being made by Christian scholars to communicate the gospel more meaningfully in East Asia. I will also consider the progress of Adventism vis-à-vis such developments and analyse the potential contribution of these ideas to Adventist mission in East Asia.

Missiological Challenges of East Asia

A quick glance at demographic ratios in the countries of East Asia heightens the enormous challenge for Christian mission in this region, as the following statistics indicate.

- China: OMF International estimates the Christian population of China at 5.3% of the population, whiles the CIA’s online *The World Factbook* (WFb) puts it at 5.1%, based on a 2010 estimate. It has also been estimated that the number of Christians will reach 247 million by 2030 (Kumar, 2014) but this must be tempered by China’s burgeoning population growth.
- South Korea: According to a 2010 survey, the Christian population of South Korea is 31.6%, placing South Korea second only to the Philippines in terms of Christians (WFb).
- Singapore: According to Pew Research Center study on religious diversity (2014; first published in 2012), Singapore is the most religiously diverse country in the world and its Christian population stands at 18%.
- Japan: Based on the 2005 census, the Christian population of Japan is about 2% (WFb).
- Taiwan: Christians make up about 4.5% of Taiwan’s population (WFb).
• Thailand: As of 2010, it is reckoned that about 1.2% of the population is Christian (Wfb). Estimates vary substantially from about 1.1% by OMF and 0.5% by CMA.
• Myanmar: Christians make up 4% of the population (Wfb).
• Malaysia: As of 2010, Malaysia’s Christian population stands at 9.2% (Wfb).
• Indonesia: A 2010 estimate puts the Christian population of Indonesia at 9.9% (Wfb).
• Cambodia: Based on a 2008 estimate, Cambodia's Christian population stands at about 0.4% (Wfb).
• Laos: According to the 2005 census, about 1.5% of Laos’ population is Christian (Wfb).
• Mongolia: In 2010, Mongolia’s Christian presence was around 2.2% (Wfb).
• Philippines: By comparison, Christians make up 92.5 % of the population of the Philippines, according to the 2000 census. This is the only Christian country in East Asia.

Arguably, even the most casual observer is compelled to acknowledge that the task of Christian mission in East Asia has no exact parallel anywhere else in the world. A crucial question at this juncture is, ‘What are the missiological challenges of East Asia?’ While many suggestions could be made, I will highlight two challenges which I deem the most germane to this paper.

First, for most East Asians, identity is a complex of religious and cultural elements intertwined into a seamless fabric. This evidences itself in a question of a Thai Buddhist, ‘If I become a Christian, am I still Thai?’ There is an indelible sense of being that renders religious and cultural identity inseparable. To be Thai is to be Buddhist; to be Japanese is to be Shinto; to be Malay is to be Muslim. Mission enterprises which ignore this foundational concept are prone to impotence.

Second, for most East Asians, Christianity is viewed primarily as a ‘foreigner’ religion whose ideas are noteworthy but inapplicable to their context. There is an innate sense in East Asia that the gospel is not for them. This is driven as much by local faiths which are deeply entrenched as by the manner in which the Church presents its message. Being Christian and being western are often viewed as two sides of the same coin. This translates into being Christian as not really being Asian.

The relative smallness of Christian representation in East Asia is indelibly tied to these two issues. Without stretching the point too finely, it may be stressed that there will be no major breakthrough in East Asia until these two issues are confronted and addressed.

**East Asian Models**

In an attempt to address these missiological realities, Christian scholars have made several proposals to enable the Church to sell the gospel to and inculturate it in East Asia. The buzzword of this enterprise is ‘contextualisation’, a word which may be argued represents the entire spectrum of Asian theology. The ideas discussed below are, in one form or another, versions of the contextualised approach to mission. Additionally, East Asian theology is by and large missonal theology by nature because the two, mission and theology, are viewed as indistinguishable in this context.

I have chosen to divide the various models and/or proposals into two groups: (1) those which have a more macro view of mission and theology, and (2) those which are more focused on ethnic or other related issues.

**Missional-Theological Frameworks**

In this first group I wish to draw attention to the work of certain selected scholars. These scholars have proposed ideas that may be applicable on a larger scale without targeting any specific context. They could be referred to as Asian not merely East Asian theologians. The models discussed here represent different national and cultural backgrounds ranging from Japan to Korea to Thailand.

*Kosuke Koyama*

The late Japanese Professor Koyama rose to prominence with his seminal work *Water Buffalo Theology* (first published in 1974 but revised in 1999), a missiological treatise derived from years as a Christian missionary in Thailand. This is a country whose openness belies the fact that it is also one of the most resistant to the gospel.

Koyama’s primary contribution is encapsulated in two principal notions. The first is his aversion to an academic style of communication and his penchant for ‘vivid imageries borrowed from everyday life and
human history’ (Yung, 1997). He attempts to contextualize Christianity via indigenous sources such as monsoon and water buffalo (Peter, 2010). Koyama’s prime interest is ‘letting theology speak in and through that context’ (1999, p. 15).

The second working notion of Koyama is his strong people-centred hermeneutic or community-centred mission. His unique label of ‘neighbourology’ is an attempt to describe his desire ‘to root theology in the various cultural and historical contexts’ (Yung, 1997, p. 162). This leads to his well-known axiom that the ‘study of ist is far more exciting than the study of ism’ (1999, p. 93). In doing this, Koyama paved the way for a mission approach that leaves out the hard sell method of certain evangelistic initiatives. For Koyama, the only way to sell the gospel in Asia is through the three modes of Christian presence: stumbling, discomfited and unfree. He contends that to present the gospel as triumphal, comforted and free is counterproductive (1999).

Undoubtedly, Koyama has contributed much to the theological process in East Asia. However, his penchant for flowery language means that while there are significant theoretical ideas they are sometimes short on practical methodology. Following Koyama’s path implies a degree of uncertainty and makes application harder to come by.

Choan-Seng Song

Song, a Taiwanese, is perhaps one of the most prolific writers in the East Asian theological arena. Works such as Third Eye Theology and Theology from the Womb of Asia have become standard reading for those who study East Asian theology. Central to Song’s theology are three key ideas. First, he subscribes to a radical rejection of biblical salvation history as being normative to theology and views it as more of a pattern of God’s salvific work (1974). Within this rubric, he proposes the idea that all religions are part of the same spiritual universe and despite the differences between faiths, there is the possibility of valuing the dignity of each religion (2006).

Second, Song’s theological methodology is termed transposition which is essentially another word for incarnation (Yung, 1997). Song rejects the Judeo-Christian centrism of the gospel and asserts it is a roadblock to mission. Since God is at work in all cultures and religions, it follows that the gospel must be fully incarnated into Asia so as to become part of the religious landscape.

Third, and as a direct consequence of his second proposition, there is a need for major reconstruction of Christian mission so as to avoid the Western centrisms and individualistic gospel that is the hallmark of Western Christianity. In short, Song rejects any form of mission which focuses on individual conversion as this merely renders the convert rootless in his or her own culture (Yung, 1997). Instead he suggests that the fundamental task of mission is the re-formation of Asian spirituality and society through ‘the love and compassion of God in Jesus Christ’ (1979).

A further consideration of Song pertains to his contribution to Minjung Theology. He suggests that Asian spirituality equals life; it comprises the totality of being. This stands in sharp contrast to Western theology which he views as flat theology comprised of reason and experience. He proposes that Asian theology requires a third eye, mystery (insight, enlightenment, numinous) (1979).

In another work, Song proposed a four part theological ‘adventure’ for Asia. He advocates four ideas: (1) imagination which is part of the image of God in humans; (2) passion which enables us to encounter God’s compassion; (3) communion as a way of interacting with each other and (4) vision of ‘God’s redeeming presence’ which opens a new course in theology (1988, p. 3). This adventure provides ‘freedom to meet God in Asian humanity’ and ‘to encounter Jesus the savior in the depth of the spirituality that sustains Asians’ (1988, p. 3). He concludes with

Theology is poetry of God in the prose of the people. It is God’s hymn in the songs of men, women, and children. It is God’s story in the parables and folktales of our brothers and sisters. . . . Theology is confession. It is witness. It is testimony. And above all, theology is prayer: “God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (1988, p. 227)

Song has been a stalwart of East Asian theology and his rejection of Western theology in general may be somewhat biased. Divorcing Western theology and Asian theology may not be such a simple exercise. Further, his tendency to pluralistic universalism may not be acceptable for Adventists who have a strong sense of calling as ‘remnant’ church.
Yong-Back Kim

Kim from Korea adopts one of the most strident views of what Asian theology should be doing. His starting point is Christology and he maintains that traditional Christology is essentially a process of enculturation of Jesus who was Asian into Western culture. When Christianity made its way back to Asia, it brought with it this reconstructed Christology whereby Jesus served as a symbol of Western colonialism. The imposition of Western culture was integral to the missionary endeavour (2005). With this in mind a question is raised, ‘Is Jesus a Westerner or and Asian?’ (2005, p. 24).

Kim then proceeds to list a number of ways which demonstrates that Jesus was truly Asian (but lost to Asians). He asserts that Jesus is physically and historically Asian and was born among poor Asians. Jesus is also culturally Asian who in actuality was a cultural alien in Europe. This Jesus should be seen as the liberator of Asian people (2005).

The principal suggestion made by Kim is the need to fully recover and resurrect Jesus for Asian. He states

> We need to excavate Jesus the Asian who has been buried in the history of Asia, while we dismantle the Christianity and Christian heritages that are subjugated under the powers of Christendom and Empire (2005, p. 34)

This is Kim’s call for a totally radical rethink of Christian mission, not as replication of Western methods but as discovery of things that are truly contextual.

There is much of value in Kim’s suggestions about excavating Jesus in Asia. Granted, his call is a genuine one as the Jesus of Christianity looks and sounds a little too Western. Nevertheless, this too is integral to the image of Jesus even though we may concede that that image was invented in Europe. It may be better to err on the side of caution in this respect for Jesus is a universal messiah. He is not exclusive to Europe or Africa or Asia; Jesus is for everyone.

Kwok Pui-Lan

In one of her works (2000), Kwok, from Hong Kong, proposed a post-colonial and post-modern approach that may be termed ‘narrative hermeneutics’. With an eye on women’s issues, Kwok argues that there is a need for oral interpretation and re-telling of biblical stories. She posits that oral transmission is the principal mode of religious communication, is more fluid in nature, is more participatory and affords a dialogical process between storyteller and audience (2000). She suggests that such re-telling should take into consideration the urgent questions of contemporary reality. It is in this re-telling that the Bible may be brought back to contemporary relevance and applicability.

Her approach has been ardently feminist in its outlook as Kwok believes both in the need to rediscover the role of women in the Bible (2000) and the urgent need for more women to participate in the ‘work of religion’ today (2014). She contends that scholars in the field of feminism and religion are frequently marginalised by mainstream media and efforts akin to hers are needed to address the imbalance.

Having taught at the secondary and tertiary levels in East Asia for nearly 30 years, I resonate with Kwok’s narrative hermeneutics. The learning style of most East Asians is inductive and students are less likely to think in linear terms. This is a methodology that is readily applicable for Adventist mission but cannot be used exclusively. The great Gospel commission (Matt 28:19-20) distinctly calls for teaching as part of the task to make disciples. Perhaps a blend of narrative and didactic elements may be more desirable.

Ubolwan Mejudhon

A final model in this brief survey is one proposed by Thai scholar Ubolwan Mejudhon. She propounds a contextual approach to mission that she terms ‘Life Exegesis’ (2006). Life Exegesis comprises primarily of two aspects, contextual theology and local cultural context. These two underpin the conceptual framework for life exegesis. At the practical level, life exegesis employs such tools as story exegesis, inductive Bible studies and inductive preaching/teaching (2006).

Mejudhon envisions this form of exegesis as something which ‘derives from the Asian context’ and is able to elucidate ‘oral tradition, narration, and lives rather than concepts’ (2006:24). She suggests two primary benefits of life exegesis: (1) it is a more appropriate fit to the worldviews of Asians, and (2) it enables Asians to more easily understand Jesus, who is by context also Asian.
I admit that Mejudhon makes good sense. Thais have a life-based approach to their religion which is practical and non-obtrusive. Her suggestions are worth exploring if they are accompanied by a proper re-definition of exegesis.

Contextually-focused Ideas

An emerging pattern is the desire by East Asian theologians to drive the gospel story home at a more down-to-earth level. There is a growing realisation that it is insufficient to suggest broad-strokes theological concepts. In the words of many, such theories should be brought down to earth. The overriding concern pertains to the application of such macro suggestions to a specific local context.

The specificity of contexts in East Asia poses a tremendous challenge to Christian mission. The sheer geographical, linguistic, cultural and religious complexity of the region makes it unthinkable that any single method can apply to every situation. With this as backdrop, there is a surge of scholarly energy from various corners seeking applicable ideas to a more micro, focused context.

Thai Example

A good example of this type of approach is Nantachai Mejudhon’s proposal of using meekness as a missiological methodology or philosophy within Thailand (1997). He posits that meekness is the better tool for Thai people but requires application. Such an approach should maintain a humble attitude towards Buddhism and adopt a new attitude to Thai culture. Furthermore, the approach should present the gospel as something which brings benefits and help rather than challenge and threat. He also contends that this approach requires time and indigenisation (2005). The aggressive methods employed by missionaries and Thai Christians in the past ‘is viewed as having violated the cultural and religious values of reciprocity and harmony’ of life in Thailand (2005, p. 150). He categorically states that ‘Thais, without exception, ranked the hardworking achievement value much lower than the group of social relationship values’ (2005, p. 159). Mejudhon suggests that long-term, genuine relationships with Buddhists, with no strings attached, will yield more permanent results (Johnson, n.d.).

Having lived in Thailand for 14 years, I fully resonate with his views. Much damage has been done to Christian mission as a consequence of aggressive missiological methods. The favoured way of describing the Thai approach to life is the word sabai sabai. The term essentially depicts life as something that should not be rushed and good things should be gradually and carefully embraced. Christian mission often comes across as rushed and therefore foreign. Moreover, the innate arrogance of Christians is difficult for Thai Buddhists to swallow. Mejudhon’s approach is a truly helpful one and should be embraced.

Cambodia Example

A similarly focused approach is Gerard Ravasco’s proposal for Cambodia (2004). His basic premise is that Christian proclamation in Cambodia can only be carried out ‘in a spirit of true dialogue with our Khmer Buddhist friends’ (2004, p. 56). The starting point of such dialogues is to discover the areas which unite Christians and Buddhists. Ravasco enumerates several of these bridges and proposes several theological and practical possibilities. At the practical level he lists ideas such as social awareness programmes, education programmes and a heart for the poor as potential bridges to unite Christians and Buddhists (2004).

Cambodians approach life in much the same way as Thais do since both nations are closely linked by linguistic, religious and cultural elements. Ravasco has hit the nail on the head when he recommends relational approaches above all other possible techniques. This is not dissimilar to what Jesus and the early apostles did.

Malaysian Example

A Malaysian example is presented by S Batumalai (1988) who begins his discourse by speaking of the difference between Western and Asian theology and envisages the theological enterprise as a cross-boundary task involving Christians and non-Christians, professionals and lay persons. He calls upon the Church to open itself to another way of doing theology, to cease looking at ‘Christian theology as a monopoly of Christians’ (1988, p. 15). Instead the Church should consider the new voices of God and he suggests that theology is a collaboration with cartoonists, novelists, trade unionists, intellectuals, nationalists, freedom fighters and
journalists. He surmises that such collaboration is a necessity if the Church is to carry out its mission of incarnation.

Batumalai’s ideas may be problematic for Adventists because of his willingness to utilise tools in doing theology that are somewhat foreign to the Church with its penchant for exclusivity. Nevertheless, it may be possible to adapt his ideas so as to widen the field and make it possible for a more inclusive process.

**Exegetical Samples**

Of note is an emerging trend whereby biblical exegesis is employed to address a specific context or situation; a sort of contextually driven exegesis. Examples of such focused approaches may be gleaned from papers presented at theological conferences in East Asia. At the Meeting of the Society of Asian Biblical Studies (SABS) on 23-25 June 2014 in Chiangmai, Thailand, certain presentations may be viewed as potential representatives of this developing trend.

- James Ha Tun Aung’s (2014) study explains how Acts 6:1-7 may inform the work of the Church in Myanmar. He warns of the danger of repeating the same error in today’s world as the Church in Acts did. He states that the Church should pay close attention to the admonition to care for those in need (the widows).
- Also from Myanmar is Seng Tawng (2014) who provides a contextual re-reading of Prov 31:10-31 by drawing attention to the similarities and differences between the ideal wife in the passage and the traditional Kachin wife in Myanmar. Seng calls for a re-think of the role of the rural Kachin wife so as to allow her to fully develop her God-given gifts.
- Batara Sihombing (2014), from Indonesia, places 1 Pet 2:11-12 within the background of violence against Christians in Indonesia and wonders whether the government concept of Pancasila (Five Principles) may be drawn upon to allow better treatment of Christians in the country and to enable Christians to shed the image of being looked upon as pilgrims or strangers.
- Kyung Sook Lee (2014) of Korea addresses the case of the tragedy of foreign queens in the Hebrew Bible and applies this to the situation in modern Korea where the Bible is used both as a text of liberation for and a tool of oppression against women. She contends that the Church in Korea has often used the Bible to put women down and calls for this situation to be changed so as to fully develop the role of women in the country and Church and provide a more relevant post-colonial reading of the Bible.

The application of biblical exegesis to missional issues is highly commendable and beneficial. While it may not be possible to apply the specifics of these papers, it may be possible to detect useful principles. These could be invaluable tools for the Church. At the very least such tools may move the Church closer to a truly contextual base for doing theology and mission.

**Implications for Adventist Theology**

The striking aspect of these theological movements is the virtual absence of Adventist voices in the mix. It is unclear as to why this state of affairs exists. Possibly this is partly a reflection of the theological isolation that surrounds the Adventist theological enterprise in East Asia. At the SABS meetings in 2014, Adventist representation was visibly absent. Apart from my wife and I, there were no other Adventist scholars from any of the East Asian countries. It is difficult to ascertain the level of expertise we may be developing or the ideas we may have when we are not prominent in the theological discussions of East Asian scholars.

Perhaps, this absence may also reflect the lack of any critical work along similar lines. It appears that Adventist work has a certain ‘one-shoe-fits-all’ approach that renders moot any attempt to re-think our methodology. Or, at the very least the Church discourages any creative or critical thinking which may add impetus to Adventist missiological and theological considerations.

Nevertheless, the situation is not entirely hopeless. The setting up of the Centre for East Asian Religions (CEAR) is a small step in the right direction. CEAR is making attempts to engage the developing trends in missiological and theological reflection in East Asia. On 20-22 May 2014, CEAR conducted its annual conference in Bangkok, Thailand, with a good number of Adventist teachers, thinkers and leaders from the two East Asian divisions, Northern-Asia Pacific and Southern-Asia Pacific, attending and presenting papers.
What was unique about these proceedings was the specificity of the Conference. The 2014 CEAR Conference was titled ‘Ministering to Mourners: Funeral Rituals and Christian Witness in East Asian Contexts.’ The Conference intentionally addressed just one issue that impacts Adventist church work, funerals. This attempt to uncover missiological and theological principles which may enable the Church to use funerals as a mission tool can be seen in several of the papers presented. Below is a sampling of some of the presentations.

Danielle Koning

Tackling the subject at hand from an anthropological viewpoint and with a Southeast Asian context is the presentation of Danielle Koning (2014). She discusses the importance of Christian service in relationship to those who grieve the loss of a loved one. Her primary concern is to encourage the Church to ‘move closer towards an educated ministry to mourners.’ In doing so she outlines some beneficial steps in research which will foster a movement towards this stated goal. The paper was appropriately titled ‘Towards an Educated Ministry to Mourners: Research Tools for Understanding Funeral Practices in Southeast Asian Mission Contexts.’

Koning’s introduction of research tools is laudable but it would take more training and follow-up. It could lead to a more professional approach to mission whereby the cultural and sociological factors encountered are not ignored.

Khamsay Phetchareun

Phetchareun discusses the Lao and Hmong practices which are part of their funeral traditions in ‘How to Honor the Dead and Minister to the Living in Laos’ (2014). The paper tackles such practical considerations as viewing the dead, the burial or cremation dilemma, the use of song and food in the funeral and the role of grief. The Laos backdrop comprises two divergent religious realities, Buddhism and animism and, according to Phetchareun, it is crucial for pastors and missionaries to come to terms with these elements so that appropriate explanations could be provided when Christians are compelled not to follow traditional practices.

He draws attention to the need for caution with what is done at funerals as the bereaved are in a highly sensitive state of mind. His overriding concern pertains to the mental and spiritual health of the survivors (as suggested in the title of the paper). He contends that funeral rites do not matter to the deceased, but they do have a great impact upon the living mourners. He concludes with these words, ‘. . . funeral rites do not determine the fate of the deceased so accept any practice that is not forbidden by God for the sake of the surviving family members, even when you don’t feel comfortable with it.’

Funerals are a definite missional opportunity even though the Church may not have looked at it this way. In countries where relationships are held at a premium, any type of relationship building is invaluable. Maybe it is time to pay closer attention to how the bereaved are treated as this will engender a more caring image for the Church.

Samuel Wang

Wang’s paper, ‘A Missiological Reflection on Chinese Qingming Festival’ (2014), offers a very Chinese view of the proceedings. Wang postulates that ‘one of the biggest stumbling stones in the path of the Chinese embracing the Christian faith is related to the way the dead are treated by Christians.’ The extreme veneration for the dead (of ancestors) among the Chinese is encapsulated in the annual festival called Qingming. The Qingming festival is widespread in East Asia and is a time to reflect, honour and give thanks to one’s forefathers. The essence of Qingming is the underlying concept of filial piety which is a mainstay of Chinese culture. For many Chinese this is something sorely lacking among Christians.

Wang makes four suggestions for Christians to improve understanding and remove the barrier created by this veneration of ancestors. First, the Church should present itself as keeper rather than destroyer of meaningful traditions. Second, Christians should exhibit sincere respect and heartfelt memorial towards ancestors without overstepping their faith boundary. Third, the Church should be prepared to capitalise on life and death opportunities to communicate biblical teachings. Fourth, Qingming can be used as a family time to reflect on God’s creative and redemptive works. Wang makes a poignant appeal, ‘When ministering to the Chinese, be like the Chinese.’
His appeal sounds so much like Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 9:20. ‘To the Jews, I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law . . . that I might win those under the law’ (ESV). Clearly Paul imbues the same sense that Wang is trying to communicate; the need to be contextually relevant.

Soontorn Thanteeraphan

In ‘Funeral Homily: A Fresh Look at Sermons in Thai Christian Funerals’ (2014), Thanteeraphan zeroes in on the use of funeral sermons and warns about the danger of being misunderstood or giving offence with funeral sermons. First, he contrasts typical Thai Buddhist funerals with Adventist ones. The highlight of a Buddhist funeral is the chant by monks which brings words of blessings to the bereaved. In contrast, Adventist funerals, following Church practices, contain a number of preliminary items which leave the bereaved almost numb by the time the sermon is delivered.

Next, Thanteeraphan suggests that Adventist funerals should concentrate more on the sermon to parallel the chant so as to achieve the same effect, the passing of words of blessings. He also proposes that careful attention be paid to the type of sermon being utilised in funerals. He contends that the funeral sermon ought to be relatively short and serve as the crux of the funeral service. Moreover, funeral sermons should not be evangelistic in nature but serve as words of comfort and blessing.

The concern that the effect of the funeral sermon has not been sufficiently attended to is notable and Thanteeraphan’s call to be more therapeutic in funeral sermons is noteworthy. Here is another example of what the Church could do to enlarge its missional scope and effect.

While these presentations are by no means definitive, they do reflect an advancement of sorts. There is now a concerted attempt to reflect on the mission of the church and to do this theologically and biblically. In an exegetical approach to the subject, ‘Death and Burial in the Hebrew Bible’, presented at the same Conference (2014), I examine the twin forces which make up funeral practices, Scriptural material and cultural milieu. I suggest that the Hebrew Bible (HB) indicates a blending between these two forces and that is what we observe in HB. Further, we also see a reflection of the cultural norms of Israel’s neighbours in funeral rites as well as distinctive elements. I see a dual-edged version of contextualisation at work in HB and this affords us some flexibility in making Christian funerals less offensive to the local culture. At the very least, we may be able to view funeral practices as missional opportunities for ministering to the bereaved and for growing the kingdom of God.

Reflections

In an article published in 2008, I put forward certain propositions in an attempt to engage this emerging theological discussion. My first step is to examine the challenge of Asia which Christian mission must confront. At the time the article was written, the Asian Christian population stood at under 3% with even China’s supposedly burgeoning Christian membership making up only 5.7% of the country’s population. There are a few countries in Asia (e.g., Afghanistan) where Christian presence accounts for less than 0.2% of population. As earlier presented, all the major religions of the world are entrenched in Asia. The exception to all this is the Philippines whose population is approximately 93% Christian (2008).

In wrestling with these issues, I propose a ‘Middle Path of Missions’. I contend that we cannot pretend we know everything about God’s salvific work and that perhaps the only thing we can say with certainty is, God has a primary method but he is not limited to that method. We can also say that we have no further knowledge about any other method God may be employing. However, we cannot assume that the absence of further knowledge is equivalent to the absence of other methodologies. This is a call for the willingness to admit that God ultimately controls the issue of salvation; not us (2008).

Therefore, for me, doing theology in Asia means that we must take contextual methodologies seriously and the gospel must become indigenised to Asia. I also suggest that Jesus’ methodology is probably preferable (White, 1942, p. 143). This is mission that involves a live-in experience and has the capability to make the gospel a truly indigenous experience. I see this as the most viable option for Christian mission (2008).

It may help to compare this approach to one of East Asia’s enduring martial arts form, Tai Chi (see Deavin, 2010, for a useful survey of Tai Chi history). Today, Tai Chi has become primarily an exercise form which blends opposing concepts. ‘The philosophy of Tai Chi is simple yet profound. In short, the idea that everything consists of two opposing forces that harmonize with each other to create a whole’ (Shifu, 2011). Similarly,
Christian theology is an attempt to make sense out of two very different realities, biblical truth and cultural/religious traditions. The soft and strong approach of Tai Chi affords a lens through which the mission God has placed on the Church may be viewed. Undoubtedly, the theological enterprise is very much tied in to missional concerns.

East Asian theology is intentionally contextual and missiological. I affirm this approach and suggest that Adventist theology should also become more missional in its endeavour. It is time to shed the propositional approach to theology so long identified with Western Christianity and adopt a more mission-driven theological approach in Asia. I resonate with Hwa Yung’s assertion that in order for the Church in Asia to fulfil its divinely appointed destiny, we should always be cognizant of two unavoidable premises: (1) ‘we must learn to depend fully on God, and not ourselves’ and (2) we must recognise ‘the need for genuine commitment and sacrifice’ (2009).

My hope with this paper is that it may ignite interest in pursuing these matters further and that those entrusted with gospel ministry become better informed about the issues involved.

References


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Cultural Competency in Professional Nursing: Some Considerations for Thai Nurses

Praneed Songwathana & Jarurat Sriratanaprapat

Abstract

The growing research focusing on cultural competency in the nursing profession necessitates a contextual evaluation of the Thai nursing profession. This paper gives an overview of the definitions, related concepts, and existing measures of cultural competency for nurses. Data was retrieved from electronic databases such as CINAHL, Science Direct, and ThaiLis. The inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed and primary source articles regarding cultural competency of nurses within the past 15 years since it is a time-sensitive subject. The findings revealed the levels of nurses’ awareness of the diverse ethnicity of the population and its impact on value conflict in health care. From the meta-analysis of the literature, it was found that cultural knowledge and strategies to gain cultural competency and to foster learning in the workplace remain minimally explored among Thai nurses. To conclude, this study proposes strategies in which cultural competence can be acquired and developed.

Keywords: cultural competency, nursing education, psychometric assessment

Introduction

Health care workers of the 21st century experience rapid changes in ethnically-diverse customer populations. In the nursing profession, whether the area of practice is education, clinical, or research, nurses encounter this dilemma as a result of globalization. According to the statistics of Foreign Business Certificate classified by the Business Sector and Foreign Laborers Registered as Workers in Thailand during July 1-30, 2009 (Nitisiri, 2009), migration has dramatically increased and included non-registered laborers and foreign residents.

In the health care area, the growing number of foreigners in Thailand may affect the way nurses deliver care and the quality of care patients receives. An example is health care access. Patients who are the majority are generally accustomed to feeling at ease in their environment. It is also common that the privilege of being in the majority brings a sense of belonging and control. Conversely, the minority may feel less willing and comfortable to seek contact or be among health care providers. Furthermore, for under-privileged foreigners, their socio-economic status and disparities in insurance coverage have an impact on their access to care; therefore, they use fewer health care resources. These inequities may be partly attributable to racial, cultural, and communication barriers between clients and health care providers (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Cooper-Patrick, Gallo, & Gonzales, 1999; Satcher, 1999).

In addition, the number of international students in Thailand has increased rapidly. Thailand may become the center for international study programs in the future as evidenced in the increasing number of foreign students from Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and other countries because of the standard of international study programs in Thailand (Kitthisathaporn, 2007). However, it is unclear how nurses perceive and adjust to the situation nowadays in order to gain competency in attitude, knowledge and skill for cultural care. Furthermore, questions are raised whether health care institutions provide culturally competent care to clients. These questions remain because of the following reasons.

First, almost all nurses in Thailand are Thais originating from the four regions of Thailand. There are no foreign nurses to serve foreign clients even though their numbers are growing rapidly. Clearly, there is a discrepancy between cultural backgrounds of health care providers and clients among this multiethnic group. Secondly, there is neither mandatory regulation to include cultural diversity content in nursing curricula nor
expectation of accreditation and approval boards for nursing program education in preparation for nursing students caring for this special group of clients. Inadequate knowledge regarding clients’ health beliefs and life experiences, as well as unintentional and intentional racism, influences the care of clients negatively. Thirdly, faculties in nursing schools are also challenged to develop culturally appropriate skills among all students, both Thais representing their society and international students from various ethnic backgrounds, since they have a different worldview in definition of health and illness and how illness should be managed.

For more than a decade, Leininger (1995) has urged schools of nursing to examine structure, worldviews, and environment as influences on clients’ health. Many studies were conducted in this area for a number of years in Western countries; however, minimal progress has been observed and little empirical evidences available to describe the knowledge, attitudes, or skills in caring for diverse cultural population of nurses in the Non-Western world.

This paper aims to review the meaning and concept of cultural competency (CC) among nurses and nurse educators. Furthermore, it aims to explore how CC is gained and perceived. Finally, this paper also aims to review existing tools to measure CC. The identification of literature related to CC was primarily done through electronic databases such as CINAHL, Science Direct, and ThaiLis. Inclusion criteria used were publication on CC of nurses between 1999-2009, peer-reviewed, primary source, and written in English or Thai. Since this study is a time-sensitive subject; therefore, studies published before 1999 would be used only if it contains important relevant information especially studies from Asian countries.

**Definition of Cultural Competence**

In general, competency is displayed as the ability to do something well or effectively (Cobuild, 2006). Many scholars have defined CC as a process, not an endpoint, in which the nurse continuously strives to achieve the ability to work within the cultural context of an individual, family, or community from a diverse cultural/ethnic background (Campinha-Bacote, 1994), or a dynamic process of framing assumptions, knowledge, and meanings from a culture different than our own and a way of becoming self-aware and of understanding how meaning is assigned (Bartol & Richardson, 1998), or the ability to recognize an essential to value people differences and preferences, and the self-awareness to respect and try to understand patients from whom we differ (Flores, 2000).

Therefore, the definition of CC is a process of gaining ability in terms of attitude, knowledge, and skills to effectively interact with and care for people who differ in ideals, values, assumptions about life, language dialect and goal-directed activities which change from time to time and transfer from one group to the other continuously. The application of this capability is not limited to people from a different ethnicity only, but also includes people from different demographic backgrounds (the Other) such as age, gender, education, faith, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, political preference, ability, and geographic orientation.

**Concept of Cultural Competence**

The concept of CC still remains vague due to its complexity and early stage of exploration in humanity. Its influences on human behavior exclude any definitive formulations of concept and generalized cultural care interventions. The knowledge, theory and research guiding the processes of culturally competent care are yet to be fully developed (Bartol & Richardson, 1998; Lester, 1998; Meleis, 1996; Smith, 1998) even though the issue has been studied in Western countries for decades. This study, the concept of CC is composed of: (1) the process of acquiring CC, (2) factors contributing to CC, (3) barriers, and (4) outcomes.

**The processes of acquiring CC**

Since the definition of cultural competency is a process of gaining ability in cultural attitude, cultural knowledge, and cultural skill to efficiently interact and care for people who are different in cultural backgrounds, the concept of CC involves the process of developing attitude, knowledge, and skill in CC.

**Cultural attitude**

Cultural attitude is the primary stage of acquiring cultural competence. It is the way nurses think and feel about culture and people from different cultures, especially when an attitude shows the way nurses behave. Nurses have to be aware of and sensitive to the issue of cultural attitude. According to Campinha-Bacote,
Cultural awareness requires a person to be sensitive to values, beliefs, practices and life ways of the client’s culture (1999). Sensitivity and tolerance to surroundings are vital. Therefore, it is important for nurses to observe and realize that they interact with clients who have different cultural backgrounds. Nurses should be able to perceive the differences through their senses such as hearing, seeing, smelling, and feeling. Then, the received information is processed. Since the way people think and behave is based on their own worldview and background, the attitude of people toward the same and different culture varies. Hence, this process should involve assessment of personal biases toward other cultures and analysis of one’s own values, beliefs, and practice in order to be aware of one’s own cultural attitude (Sargent, Sedlak, & Martsof, 2005). The self awareness of one’s own attitude is very essential. This is reflected by a study in southern Thailand which found that the more you experience another culture and learn, the greater you realize what you do not know about people from other cultures (Songwathana, Hiruanchunha, Sangchan, Petpichetchian, & Kampalikit, 2008). Moreover, people who have positive cultural attitudes are more accepting of people from different cultures and more willing to learn about other cultures than those who have negative cultural attitudes (Sargent, et al., 2005).

Cultural knowledge

Cultural knowledge assists people to be more understanding about cultural differences. It supplies information that assists people with negative cultural attitudes to adjust easier and could also change one’s attitude in a negative direction.

The elements of knowledge are varied. A good example is from the Ethnic Student Training Group Program that was conducted by Parker, Bingham, and Fukuyama in 1985 to emphasize the development of cultural knowledge. The content included value changes, acculturation, generational differences, parental pressures, and religious issue (Parker, Bingham, & Fukuyama, 1985). Furthermore, cultural knowledge includes particular biological variations, beliefs about illness causality, culture-bond illnesses, and forms of interaction among ethnic groups which are beneficial to the nursing profession (Campinha-Bacote, 1999). Nevertheless, it is obligatory that nurses also acquire the knowledge of transcultural nursing in many aspects such as communication, space, social organization, time, environmental control, biological variations, and health practice. The knowledge can be utilized when nurses encounter various types of client. A study in Thailand showed that the cultural care management of persons with DM in the community based on knowledge rooted in socio-cultural aspects and biomedical knowledge was well applied (Nakagasien, Nuntaboot, & Sangchart, 2008). Therefore, the more cultural knowledge people have, the stronger the foundation of cultural skill they will gain because cultural knowledge together with cultural attitude are essential for incorporating cultural nursing care for clients.

Cultural skill

Cultural skill involves a complex development in gaining cultural competency among these three sub-concepts. Many people can have both good cultural attitude and knowledge; however, they may still not be proficient in cultural skill. Sometimes, practitioners may not know how to use such knowledge, or they may not think or choose to use it in practice for a number of reasons (Kumas-Tan, Beagan, Loppie, MacLeod, & Frank, 2007). Nurses who are culturally skilled are the ones who carry on activities with people not only from different ethnic cultures but also those of a different age, gender, education, faith, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, and geographic orientation. The skill requires special cultural knowledge and training. Therefore, when nurses start an interaction with clients from different cultural backgrounds, it is necessary to use the cultural attitude and knowledge to assess their cultural needs. This step is also suitable because cultural skill is about learning how to determine a client’s values, beliefs, and practices by conducting a cultural assessment (Campinha-Bacote, 1999). Following this, the planning and implementation can be undertaken to provide appropriate service and meet the client’s cultural need. However, it is predictable that the more nurses expose themselves to this group of client, the more they will become competent because they accumulate skills, abilities, and experience that is necessary to perform CC care well.

Even though these three components are the process of becoming culturally competent, there are contributing factors and barriers that influence the level of competency of an individual.
Facilitating factors contributing to CC

Exposure to people from various cultural backgrounds

A study about CC in the nursing and health education revealed that nursing faculties who were more exposed to immigrant populations scored higher in CC tests than those who had less exposure (Kardong-Edgren, 2004). This is supported by another study saying that the comfort in caring for clients from diverse cultures was increased through repeated exposure to persons from other cultures (Kardong-Edgren, et al., 2005). Furthermore, some measures and studies imply that CC is achieved when practitioners have acquired sufficient awareness and knowledge of the other, often through repeated exposure and contact with the other (Bond, Kardong-Edgren, & Jones, 2001; Kumas-Tan, et al., 2007). Not surprisingly, cultural immersion and working with people from other cultures are the most effective strategies for gaining comfort with diverse cultures (Kardong-Edgren, 2004).

Correct attitude

A previous study showed that nurses who had low ego-defensiveness and open-mindedness had a more positive attitude toward Hispanic clients who are a minority in the USA (Bond, et al., 2001). Positive attitude toward cultural differences leads to a desire to acquire cultural knowledge and skill, which are the essence of CC.

Educational preparation

Experience in taking courses and workshops related to cultural competent care is a significant factor that influences cultural competency levels (Kawashima, 2008). The finding is correlated with a study on cultivating cultural competence through education in China in 2007 which discovered that nurses who received a cultural competence educational program obtained significantly higher scores on cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and cultural skills than the others (Perng, Lin, & Chuang, 2007). Furthermore, the educational level of the provider was associated with differences in knowledge of cultural patterns and attitudes toward clients of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Jones & Bond, 1998).

Being a woman

Women have a greater aptitude at developing cultural sensitivity than men. According to a study by Lee and Coulehan in 2006 that aimed to assess the cultural attitudes of medical students toward racial diversity and gender equality and to identify groups within this population that differed in cultural sensitivity, women scored higher than men. Similarly, a study found that female doctors exhibit more empathy and engage in more co-operative, partnership-building relationships with clients than male doctorsw.ebscohost.com,july22,09.

Being a minority

In a study on students learning cultural differences, it was found that the combined score of minorities was substantially higher than that of the majority. Over a 2-year period, the same test was given and it was found that minority group students (Asian, Hispanic, and black) showed a significant increase in mean score \( P = 0.001 \) compared with the white group, which did not change \( P = 0.34 \) (M. Lee & Coulehan, 2006). It was suggested that minority students may recognize the significance of cultural studying and upholding cultural attitude more than majority students.

Barriers to cultural competence

Lacking cultural knowledge and its application in practice

Since current health care practices are structured in a more or less neutral approach to acknowledging the cultural differences, a low level of self-confidence in cultural knowledge is an evident barrier to acquiring cultural competence. The confidence in cultural knowledge is influenced by the lack of exposure to minority
people, prejudice and stereotype, or it may reflect less information in today’s literature about that minority culture (Kardong-Edgren, et al., 2005). Therefore, any minority group with a lack of literature explaining their own culture to other people is at an obvious disadvantage. The chances of being understood and of suitably interacted with by others are diminished for both parties. Hence nurses avoid contact with the Other and have negative attitudes toward them sometimes. Similarly, another study about exploring the barrier in the implementation of diversity in health care practices among health care professionals including nurses showed that there was a lack of awareness and knowledge regarding dimensions of diversity in health care partly due to the unfamiliarity with the impact of dimensions of diversity on patients’ health (Celik, Abma, Widdershoven, Wijmen Van, & Kingle, 2008). Therefore, nurses who have less experience in interacting with diverse populations will not feel comfortable being among them due to the cultural dissimilarities.

Although nurses have cultural knowledge, they may not know how to utilize the knowledge in practice. Several reasons were identified such as ingrained habits, the expectation to conform to standard health care procedure, time pressure, lack of confidence, or directives from superiors (Kumas-Tan, et al., 2007). In addition, a lack of opportunity for students or health care providers to operate their cultural knowledge in the context of actual client care with the other population will decrease the opportunities for improving cultural skills (Kardong-Edgren, et al., 2005).

Discriminatory attitudes

Discriminatory attitude certainly affects cultural attitude; consequently, such an attitude decreases the effectiveness of care for clients. According to Kumas-Tan and his colleagues, ethnocentrism and racism are the result of individual ignorance and individual prejudice as their study shows that the scores of ethnocentric prejudice and discriminatory attitude were high (2007). Even though some people are aware of their own prejudice and remind themselves not to feel that way, they just cannot help it sometimes. Similar findings were supported in another study that described nursing faculty attitudes, perceived cultural knowledge, and cultural skills in caring for clients from Hispanic, African American, Southeast Asian, and Anglo communities (Jones & Bond, 1998). Moreover, attitudes or uneasiness that denies the larger structural and systemic realities of racism, ethnocentrism, and other forms of social inequality create cultural incompetence (Kumas-Tan, et al., 2007). Not only denial, but also a closed minded attitude may lead people to gain more negative attitudes toward culturally different people (Ruiz, 1981). However, we all are aware that these issues exist but for a person who is not interested in the existence of the Other, the cultural attitude, the willingness to learn, and the application of knowledge are not likely to occur. Although some practitioners have good knowledge of the Other, they may not utilize it because of their closed-mindedness and ignorance (Kumas-Tan, et al., 2007).

Language barrier and poor communication

Cultural competence depends on increased familiarity through increased contact or communication with diverse individuals (Kumas-Tan, et al., 2007). One study revealed that students felt more confident in their ability when using interpreters and their CC increased significantly with bilingual and culturally appropriate personnel providing the treatment services (Kulwicki & Boloink, 1996). This reflects the issues that even though an individual has cultural attitude and knowledge, cultural skill cannot be learnt or given effectively due to the inefficient language skill of providers. Therefore, problems occur between providers and clients because of obstacles in communication. This is similar to another study which reported that poor information and communication can be an important barrier of mutual understanding between client and health care professionals (Celik, et al., 2008).

Outcomes

Outcomes of the interaction among those who are acquiring processes of cultural competency can be classified into: (1) cultural competence, and (2) cultural incompetence. An individual who achieves this status is the one who acquires a strong foundation in cultural attitude, cultural knowledge, and cultural skill. They are commonly equipped with any of the contributing factors to CC. Hence, they are capable of assessing cultural needs, planning proper care, and providing cultural care proficiently to the other in any situation. However, some scholars disagree and point out that whether practitioners applied what was taught, or whether what was taught had any impact on service processes and outcomes, remains unclear (Kumas-Tan,
et al., 2007). In contrast, a cultural incompetent individual is the one who is not equipped with cultural attitude, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, or any of these components. Not surprisingly, this person bears some type of CC barriers. Therefore, it is impossible for this individual to understand, interact and care for the Other appropriately.

It is mandatory that people have all of these three components in acquiring CC skill. Unfortunately, the transformation of knowledge received into cultural skill may not occur due to some CC barriers. The more strength in each component people have, the more proficient in cultural competency they will be. Therefore, people are encouraged to advance their ability of all components continuously. In acquiring CC, both contributing factors and barriers must be taken into account as well. The relationship among these five elements of CC can be demonstrated in Figure 1.

Note: Numbers representing each contributing factors and barriers in the content

Figure 1 Concept of Acquiring Cultural Competence, Contributing Factors and Barriers, and Outcomes

Measurement and Instrumentation of CC

The knowledge of psychometric evaluation in measurement is the foundation in examining an appropriate tool for cultural competence studies. Since cultural competence study in Asia is in its early stage of development, it will be beneficial to study tools that are developed earlier from various resources. Moreover, if professional nursing is to evaluate cultural competency, we need to identify existing tools and be able to determine their quality from their psychometric properties (see Table 1).

According to Kumas-Tan and colleagues, several tools are utilized as cultural competence measures (Kumas-Tan, et al., 2007). The most commonly used measures of multicultural competency are Cultural Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES), Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI), Cross-cultural Counseling Inventory (CCCI), Multicultural Counseling Awareness Scale (MCAS), and Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Scale (MAKSS) (Dunn, Smith, & Montoya, 2006). Among those scales, CSES and MAKSS have the highest psychometric properties. However, a minimum of two types of reliability and two types of validity tested was suggested (Waltz, Strickland, Lenz, & Soeken, 2005). Therefore, further studies on CC measures are highly obligatory and encouraging.
In addition to studying psychometric properties of the tools, identifying important components is crucial for constructing other measures in the future. This study will use the method of defining components for CC measure from Walker and Avant (2005). All of the components from these seven tools were analyzed to identify the most commonly used components of the CC tool (Table 2). Among the three most important components for CC measure, cultural awareness ranks the highest under the category of cultural attitude in accordance to the meaning as defined by the concept of CC. Moreover, measuring the cultural knowledge is not a problem in and of itself; rather, it becomes problematic when measures of knowledge are used as stand-ins for cultural competence, of which knowledge is only a part (Kumas-Tan, et al., 2007). Therefore, investigators must bear this in mind when constructing a tool or choosing an appropriate tool to assess CC.

Another important aspect that any investigator needs to be aware of is the effect of social desirability toward the response. Multicultural competency tools, such as MCI, MAKSS, and CCCI-R, were linked with social desirability accounted of average correlation coefficients ranging from .21 to .24. Therefore, it is suggested by many scholars to concurrently administer measures with social desirability questionnaires (Dunn, et al., 2006).

According to Meleis’ criteria to analyze the rigor and creditability of research process of CC (Meleis, 1996), some studies utilize it for assessing measurement scale (Im, Meleis, & Lee, 1999; Im, Page, Lin, Tsai, & Chen, 2004). Even though these studies apply only some criteria in evaluating their tools, they are valuable criteria for CC study. Furthermore, CC has changed over time due to changes in health care delivery systems, culture, people, beliefs, and etc. Therefore, it remains unclear whether measures of CC tools which were developed in western countries can be utilized in non-western countries including Thailand since CC is influenced by the culture to which people adhere.

For Thais, collectivism is demonstrated in their way of living and working. Thais, generally, live in an extended family systems composed of immediate family members and close family members residing together in one house. Helping, caring, and sharing among members are common practices which is called “Nam Jai”. Hence, Thais tend to have more sensitivity toward and tolerance of the Other. Hence, CC measures that take into consideration cultural practices and values of nurses within the appropriate context of the population in their own country are necessary. A suggested example of the items measuring the cultural attitude component for Thai nurses should include the statement “I feel comfortable being around Caucasian, Burmese, Islamic, Karen, African, Chinese, Indian, and the Other”. Suggested examples of the items in the cultural knowledge component should include “I know that I should not make eye contact with older Chinese or Korean when talking to them because it is impolite in their culture” or “I should leave more space when approaching Caucasians because they are highly individualistic”. Some items in the cultural skill component can be “I am flexible with time when rendering my care to Muslim clients because they have to pray 5 times a day".
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Competence Measures</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Validity</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI), 1994 (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007; Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994)

- For use in counseling psychology
- One general multicultural competency factor
- Four specific factors
  1. Multicultural counseling skills
  2. Multicultural awareness
  3. Multicultural counseling relationship
  4. Multicultural counseling knowledge

- Unknown result of test-retest stability
- Good face validity
- Moderate convergent validity with MCI
- Questionable reliability

Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills Survey (MAKSS and MAKSS-CE-R), 1991 and revised in 2003 (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007; Ponterotto et al., 1994)

- For use in counseling psychology
- Revised: Awareness, Knowledge, Skills
- Adequate reliability
- Acceptable construct validity
- Acceptable criterion-related validity
- MAKSS-CE-R accounts for 1/3 of the variance that the original MAKSS had accounted for (29.8%)

Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory (CCCI and CCCI-R), 1983 and revised in 1991 (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007; Ponterotto et al., 1994)

- For use in counseling psychology
- Revised: Cross-cultural counseling skills
- Questionable test-retest reliability
- Questionable inter-rater reliability
- Questionable content validity
- Factor structure remains in question

Multicultural Counseling Knowledge and Awareness Scale (MCKAS), 1991 and revised in 2002 (Kumas-Tan et al., 2007; Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994)

- For use in counseling psychology
- Revised: Knowledge, Awareness
- Not known
- Moderate convergent validity with MCI
- Questionable criterion validity

Results of psychometric evaluation are preliminary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Number of times used as CC components among 7 tools</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of cultural patterns (#1),</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of cultural concepts (#1),</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Knowledge (#2), Multicultural counseling knowledge (#4),</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge-revised (#5), Knowledge (#7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in performing transcultural nursing functions (#1),</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural skill (#2), Multicultural counseling skills (#4), Skills-revised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural counseling skill (#6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural awareness (#2), Cultural health attitudes and beliefs (#3),</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural awareness (#4), Awareness-revised (#5), Sociopolitical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness (#6), Cultural sensitivity (#6), Awareness (#7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural encounters (#2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural desire (#2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing care-patient interaction (#3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural health behavior (#3)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural counseling relationship (#4)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2 Components of Cultural Competence Measures**

*Note: (#) Representing tool number in Table*

Inevitably, a standard CC measure, both psychometric properties and the content that fit circumstances to the population of the practice sites are important. It is suggested that more CC tools development and more utilization of CC measures in CC research are required.

**Clinical Practice Issues**

Thai nurses’ way of rendering care to the Other originates not only from their cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skill, but also from their own culture belief, background and experiences. This section will describe clinical practice issues regarding cultural care.

When nurses first meet clients, their initial response is to observe the language, appearance, odor, costume, and manner of that client in order to assess similarities and differences between themselves and their clients. According to a study on Cultural Awareness Competency of Thai Nursing Students and Faculties in giving care to multicultural client (Hiranchunha, Sangchan, Songwattana & Phetphichetchean, 2009), students who have less experience in contacting the Other sometimes avoid contact with the clients who are different from them. Students are afraid of and do not participate in any activities with other students who wear Muslim outfits because of the possible connections with the terrorist acts in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand. At the same time, Muslim students do not participate in Wai Kru ceremony because it is against their religious teaching and some do not understand this. The similar scenario also happen in a hospital when nurses are afraid of Muslim clients and do not attend to them as much as they should because of poor understanding in cultural care. Furthermore, less language skills to communicate with clients who speak a different language may obstruct nursing care. A previous study found that nursing students from other parts of Thailand had difficulty and were uncomfortable in doing clinical practice especially when taking clients’ history and writing care plans because of their inability to speak the southern Thai dialect or Malayan language (Hiranchunha, et al., 2009). Fortunately, Thais have Nam Jai and a tradition of respecting powerful and privileged persons in the society. Hence, nurses try to communicate, assist, and especially, tend to give special attention to the client who appears to be superior. Therefore, strategies to enhance progression in cultural competency skills are essential to generate equal treatment among clients.
Strategies in Enhancing Cultural Competency of Professional Nurses in Thailand

According to the concept, the strategies to increase CC in nurses are categorized into two main levels: (1) nursing student level, and (2) professional nurse level.

**Nursing student level**

This level of preparation is considered the most important foundation of CC care. Cultural diversity education is essential and recommended to be included into all nursing programs. However, the implementation of the plan has to be executed appropriately. Thais observe a large power distance cultural practice. They are more accepting of unequal distribution of power and privileges within hierarchical organizational systems (Ralston, 2005). The large power distance culture creates centralization of decision-making power mainly at the top level; therefore, this change in educational system will need to be accomplished by the Ministry of Education and Thai Nursing Council. The question may be raised on what degree CC concept should be included in nursing curricula. The answer depends on how serious the gaps in the provider and client relationship are. A minimum of 1-hour lecture and 2-hour lab/practice may be integrated into the content throughout the program. The issue may be raised in post case conference discussions or seminars when encountering the Other in clinical practice (Songwathana, 2010).

In CC education, students may acquire knowledge and skill in small increments thus enhancing competency as time goes by through repeated exposure to the real practice situation in clinical sites. A clinical evaluation may be designed to ensure an increasing complexity of the three areas of CC – attitude, knowledge, and skill – year by year. For example, the evaluation criteria purposed by Kent State University College of Nursing are worth considering. The first year students are expected to “discuss cultural influences on the discipline of nursing and health care practice”. The second year level, students are expected to “discuss characteristics and components of culture and identify behaviors reflective of a culture/ethnic group as related to health care”. At the third year level, students are expected to “explore the influence of culture on nursing care”. At the fourth year level, students are expected to “critically examine cultural factors related to current challenges in the profession of nursing emphasizing international/global perspectives” (Sargent, et al., 2005). In this study, they found that fourth year students were more culturally competent than first year students. The finding is supported by Reeves (2001) who described a curriculum revision that enhanced knowledge about transcultural nursing.

For a clinical evaluation, it is recommended that students are allowed to do self-assessment in conjunction with faculty evaluation in order to promote students’ cultural self awareness. In addition, Songwathana’s model (2010) for integration of CC training in nursing education for preparing Thai nursing students also supported the idea that third and fourth year of students should learn and use cultural understanding to identify clients’ problems, nursing intervention and improve patient education. Experiential learning can assist students to practice what they have learnt in class.

Furthermore, persons with greater exposure to cultural experiences through international travels are more culturally competent than those who have never been exposed. Similarly, a study where nursing students and faculty members of state university in a Midwestern American small city were asked to complete an inventory for assessing the process of CC (IAPCC). The result showed a positive correlation between the numbers of foreign countries they visited and the cultural competence score (Sargent, et al., 2005). Hence, faculty members are encouraged to obtain an international experience and be a key person to bring back an expertise to help their students. Furthermore, Sargent and colleagues also encouraged the use of immersion experience as a tool to increase students’ knowledge of health care needs among various cultures. The cultural immersion, besides assisting faculty members in gaining CC, will also improve personal adjustment, language acquisition, and culture learning for students regardless of the length of stay (2-10 weeks) (Jones & Bond, 2000). Therefore, educational institutions are strongly encouraged to establish student exchange programs with institutions abroad in order to broaden, not only their perspective on nursing care and education in other countries, but their cognitive maturation as well (Lee, Pang, & Wong, 2007).

**Professional nursing level**

With increasing multicultural and multiethnic background clients, CC is becoming one of the important elements of nursing care. One may be more culturally competent with a certain diverse population (such
as Laotian) but not with another (such as gay and lesbian). Nurses are expected to provide appropriate care for more and more diverse population groups, and to ensure that the human rights of clients from different cultures are respected (Gerrish, 1997). Therefore, as the large power distance cultural practice creates centralization for the process of decision-making, it is suggested that the Ministry of Public Health can establish the CC requirement for hospitals’ national policy and Hospital Accreditation (HA) criteria.

At the implementation level, theoretical consideration is recommended to be added. Raynolds and Leininger developed the Sun Rise Model in 1993 which described the theory of Cultural Care Diversity and Universality (Reynolds & Leininger, 1993). The model concerns the context of environment, language, and cultural background. As hospitals accept the national policy to increase CC, creating an environment to support this change is essential. The environmental changes will assist all nurses and other health care personnel to be aware of and sensitive to the issues and promote learning experience in CC. For instance, pictures or reading materials that illustrate people from different cultures and ethnic groups around this region such as Chinese, Indians, Muslims, etc. could be made available in the waiting room and client rooms. Handouts and brochures should be in the main languages of clients that the hospital serves. Health care providers and office support staffs should as far as possible be from the same major ethnic background as clients. Television and radio programs in some channels are in the languages of the major ethnic backgrounds of clients. When this new environment is created, it stimulates cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness which contribute to establishing an important foundation for cultural attitude. Since language is one of the CC barriers, some hospitals may wish to send nurses to learn other languages. Lastly, to avoid miscommunication, utilizing interpreters should be available as an option.

CC training courses is required for nurses to understand clients’ cultural background. The training activity can be implemented through cooperation between hospitals and the national policy from the Ministry of Public Health. Administrators may send nurses to learn other cultures and immerse themselves at international experiences. Nurses will gain greater attitude, knowledge and skill in effective CC care as well as technology in nursing from other hospitals. When implemented, such a program which was done at the School of Nursing Polytechnic University in Hong Kong reported significant changes in personal development in relation to gaining a cultural understanding of the host region (Lee, et al., 2007). Moreover, to increase the level of confidence in transcultural care skill, cultural content taught in current nursing program, continuing education courses, and the predominant ethnicity of clients is recommended. These three predictive variables accounted for 33% of the variability in the level of confidence in transcultural care skill (Kardong-Edgren, et al., 2005).

A recent survey on CC of nursing students, nurses, faculty members conducted in southern Thailand where a predominant Muslim population was shown a significant finding. Findings revealed most subjects’ CC is interpreted as having cultural awareness. Although the cultural content knowledge was low, the overall cultural attitudes and skills were at a moderate level. Lack of knowledge and language barrier were perceived as the main barriers. The results suggest that teaching and learning through direct experiences and delivering culturally competency care are necessary. Further studies may be required to develop an effective model through the use of the clinicalsetting within the context of real-world clients in order to facilitate their cultural needs (Songwathana, et al., 2008).

The strategies to increase CC at both student and professional levels are equally important. Hence, the continuation of above strategies will create a consistent CC care outcome.

Conclusions

Health care providers and clients are affected by globalization in the last decade in many aspects. Clients feel uncomfortable in accessing medical care due to being perceived as minorities or different (the Other). Meanwhile, nurses concerns whether cultural care for this special group of clients is efficient. Three processes of gaining CC are cultural attitude, cultural knowledge, and cultural skill. While contributing factors and barriers in CC derive from each individual’s background, those are unchangeable; attitude, experience, and knowledge in CC are changeable. Successful outcomes depend mostly on the changeable variables. To fill the gap of knowledge in this area may require further studies in the Thai context in order to capture the concept more completely. Although several tools exist, none of the tools in this study was developed in Asia; therefore, there is a great need for a study to develop a standard CC measure in Asian context that may be utilized suitably for Thai and Asian nurses.

Even though many resources are available for improving CC, it is important to recognize that there is no cookbook approach for teaching cultural sensitivity and competence (Suzan Kardong-Edgren, et al., 2005). Therefore, success in improving our CC in Thailand also depends on the vision and support from involved
government offices. Implementation at all levels is equally important which requires the attention of administrators and staffs as well as financial support from organizations. Our hope in the future is seeing health care personnel from diverse ethnicities effectively serving clients from anywhere in the world, while learning and sharing experiences in life among each other. It is our belief that the process of civilization rooted in our humanity will be enriched by diverse perspectives in the near future.

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Development of Graduate Education Programs in the Age of Broken Borders

Risper A. Awuor & David Parks

Abstract

We live in Friedman’s (2006) flat world with goods, services, ideas, people, and culture flooding across borders. There is increased social consciousness and a new awareness of the vulnerabilities and responsibilities of the nations that once felt secure behind closed borders. Borders are symbolic or real demarcations that restrict, define, enclose, isolate, separate, protect, constrain, blind, and limit. As physical borders fade, the impact of its degeneration on graduate education programs is clear. In this paper we present four of the major concepts that have changed the context of graduate education programs in the era of broken borders. Among the concepts that describe an evolving context of schooling that policy makers and practitioners at all levels of the educational enterprise in all parts of the world are dealing with are digitization, globalization, complexification, and cosmopolitanization. We describe and draw implications of each for schooling and the preparation of educational leaders, particularly at the graduate level. The implications are clear for those in educational faculties that it is time to embrace the digital revolution; and develop programs of study that integrate distance education components, mentorships, face-to-face instruction, student-to-student interaction, and cultural emersion. The influence of these concepts cannot be ignored by our educational systems. It is a reality that we must confront in the schools and classrooms at all levels. Preparation programs for school leaders should incorporate studies of this force that is restructuring and reforming the thinking of peoples throughout the world in order for children to live locally, but be able to think globally.

Key Words: Broken borders, cosmopolitanization, globalization, graduate education

Introduction

Friedman’s (2006) flat world suggests that free flow of communications across the globe has increased social consciousness and there is a new awareness of the vulnerabilities and responsibilities of the nations that once felt secure behind closed borders. This environment of change and awareness presents faculties of education with opportunities to recreate their graduate programs for a future that is very different from the past. In this paper we present a set of principles on which this reconsideration might be based. We believe that our analysis of the environment and the principles that we derived from it will be useful in helping others think through their own perspectives and the direction that graduate work in faculties of education may take.

The University Continuing Education Association (UCEA), in the United States was originally designed to serve the needs of working adults who seem to come in distinct categories (cohorts). Some continuing education students take courses to stay abreast with new developments in their field as they seek to enhance their upward mobility. Still others are there simply because they like learning. Continuing education while keeping your job is an educational choice that the Graduate Education program at Asia Pacific International University embraces. The program’s chosen mode of delivery is the blended approach, where coursework begins before (usually one to two weeks) followed by a short period of intensive face-to-face classroom setting interaction and continues after for about another two months or so, to cover a full semester of work. Face-to-face lecturer/student time amounts to 15 hours for one credit, while independent work time amounts to 45-60 hours for one credit. With this mode of graduate program offering, participants are expected to complete the pre and post-assignments which are geared towards developing their mastery and competencies in the various courses.
The Changing Social, Economic, and Political Context of Graduate Education

The context of education generally and graduate education specifically is changing rapidly. Among the concepts that describe an evolving context of schooling that policy makers and practitioners at all levels of the educational enterprise in all parts of the world are digitization, globalization, complexification, and cosmopolitanization. We describe and draw implications of each for schooling and the preparation of educational leaders, particularly at the graduate level.

Digitization

At anytime, anywhere, digital age is flooding across an inter-connected, flattened Friedman (2005) world. The Medieval concept of graduate education has given way to the 21st century concept of infinite knowledge stored digitally with unlimited access, transmitted instantly by a network of interconnected computers, and mediated by thousands—if not millions—of contributors, critics, revisionists, experts, and potential knowledge saboteurs (Downes, Siemens & Cormier, 2008; Fabunmi, Paris, & Fabunmi, 2009; Picciano, 2012; Dodd, 2014). Many universities currently network with other universities across the globe. By 2014, Udacity, founded by Thrun had 16 partnerships, while Coursera which was founded by Daphne Koller and Andrew had 107 partners from around the world.

Several universities currently convert hard copies of theses and dissertations to electronic copies that are accessible to many interested users regardless of where one is geographically located in the world. Other universities such as Gothenburg University stopped requiring dissertations in the traditional format of chapter many years ago. Instead they require manuscripts that are published and shared digitally with other interested readers the world over. Digitization is an essential task not only in modern day libraries but also in every graduate school/college, because of the current need to provide online services.

The vision of a worldwide digital source of all knowledge, from the wisdom of the ancients to the latest studies in any field, is becoming a reality as libraries and publishers partner with Google Book Search (Google, 2005, 2006) to digitize their holdings. E-books “are available to be read electronically on a variety of devices, including traditional computers, iPads, Amazon’s Kindle, Barnes & Noble’s Nook, Sony e-readers, iPhones; and are also available as e-audio books” Columbia University Libraries, n.d., para. 1).

Digitized information, available anywhere at any time, fits the life styles and preferences of the digital generation with their wireless multifunction telephones and handheld digital devices. E-learning is progressing and may be expected to continue to evolve as characteristics of the users change (Perna, Ruby, Boruch, Wang,, Scull, Ahmad and Evans, 2014). Any graduate program that does not consider digitization of learning materials is remaining behind and may soon find itself out of the global competition for students. While the quality of online degrees left much to be desired during their early days, their attributes have steadily improved over the past few years, as have their pedigrees. As the demand continues to grow for online graduate programs, it is possible to imagine a future with doctoral students obtaining terminal degrees online from almost any university in the world regardless of where they live (Blackman, 2012).

In 2006 there were over three million people pursing degrees online in such fields as business, education, engineering, library science, nursing, and public health (“Education online”, 2006). As digitized information expands and delivery systems become more user-friendly and interactive, the necessity for only face-to-face—teacher-to-student—instruction is rapidly declining. The implications are clear for those in educational faculties that it is time to join the digital revolution; and develop programs of study that integrate distance education components, mentorships, face-to-face instruction, student-to-student interaction, and cultural emersion.

Globalization

The view that the world is everyone’s homeland, although expressed by those who believe in international social justice, is not popular in most countries. The nation with its political-geographical borders is the preferred state of affairs, (Vaira, 2004). Given their preferences, ethnic groups would carve out their small plots of territory for self-government. Examples are easy to identify: the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia into small nation-states; the establishment of Israel as a nation; territorial tribal wars in Africa; the division of South Africa into homelands; the continuing attempts of the French Canadians to establish their own territory in Quebec; the tensions among the ethnic and religious groups in Iraq; the division of Crete
between Greeks and Turks; the separation of Pakistan from India; the division of Eretria from Ethiopia and a recent separation of South Sudan from northern territory. In spite of these preferences; disparities in social, economic, political, and religious conditions, coupled with worldwide information technologies, are opening the minds and fueling the aspirations of those who are becoming aware of their conditions and the disparities between their lives and the lives of others in more advantaged places. This new awareness and these new aspirations are putting pressure on all types of borders that have been put in place to restrict the flow of people; goods; ideas; technologies; crime; poverty; terrorism; and religious, social, and political ideologies.

Borders are symbolic or real demarcations that restrict, define, enclose, isolate, separate, protect, constrain, blind, and limit. Border controls worked until the middle to late 20th century, when new technologies became available and cheap enough to transport people, goods, and ideas throughout the world. Eyes were opened; minds were awakened; aspirations were heightened; and political, geographical, economic, social, as well as ideational borders were crossed. As physical borders fade, the notions of one-world, one economy, one government, and one people grows in the psyches of all inhabitants of the planet Earth.

In line with the divergent theory of globalization, Goldberg and Pavcnik (2007) argue that different countries experience globalization in different ways and at different times. They reckon that from a policy point of view, attempts to alleviate the potentially adverse distributional effects of globalization should be grounded in a careful study of the nature of globalization and the individual circumstances in each country. However, in recent times, due to the same globalization phenomena, what happens in the individual country is hardly contained within the borders of that country.

Globalization is a powerful, grassroots movement that will not go away. Once people get a taste of freedom from lives of daily drudgery, repression, and poverty, there is no turning back. This has been demonstrated by the uprising in the Arab world: Egypt, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, and many others as the citizens in the countries demand democracy. The sheer numbers of people putting pressure on borders of all types will cause them to gradually fade and dissipate, perhaps leading to greater equity across peoples and individuals. The awareness of a global society and how educational institutions do not only serve students from their locales is paramount in the development of graduate programs. The knowledge gained from graduate programs is no longer only applicable in the community in which the institution which confers the degree resides. Institutions of higher learning serve a wider community, not restricted by geographical borders.

### Complexification

Complexification is a term that combines the stresses of modern life that surround us every day and are found in the family, the job, the world political climate, the weather, technologies, the economy, conflicting social ideologies and movements, and the increasing diversity of persons inhabiting our neighborhoods. Tertiary institutions and specifically graduate programs must produce graduates who understand the complexification of life and the role that education can play in helping children and adults cope with the stresses and consequences of progressive complexification. While graduate students cannot remove some of the stressful events from their lives, graduate programs should incorporate lessons that help manage stress or that help the graduate students make wise decisions on how to deal with stressful situations (Girdano, Dusek & Everly, 2005). While we cannot remove the stressful events from our lives, we can adjust the way we react to these events. We will be able to perform at a more productive level and feel better about ourselves if we can bring high levels of stress to a more manageable level. While we cannot remove the stressful events from our lives, we can adjust the way we react to these events. We will be able to perform at a more productive level and feel better about ourselves if we can bring high levels of stress to a more manageable level. The programs must include broad preparation in the disciplines if the future thinkers, researchers, and leaders in education are to reform the educational system to accommodate the effects of social, economic, and political complexities. To be true to ourselves, all these may not be possible without the development of character and a strong values systems as well as a desire to be “my brother’s keeper!” As such, the success of graduate programs depends, to a large extent, on the foundation laid in the elementary, high schools and undergraduate programs in different parts of the world; adding to the complexification of the role of tertiary institutions, and in particular the graduate education programs.

### Cosmopolitanization

Cosmopolitanization is the seeping of globalism into the minds and behaviors of individuals without
Cosmopolitanization cannot be ignored by our educational systems. It is a reality that we must confront in the schools and classrooms at all levels. Preparation programs for school leaders should incorporate studies of this force that is restructuring and reforming the thinking of peoples throughout the world. Learners may live locally, but they must be able to think globally. Cosmopolitans identify with, empathize with, and act in accord with their membership in the cosmos. They must be members of nation-states with their patriotic fervor and nationalism, but they are part of humanity as well. Education has the obligation of developing the personal reflexivity needed to develop a clear understanding of an individual’s multiple identities (Rantanen, 2005). It is recorded in the Bible that we are in the world but not of the world (John 17:14). The best universities are focusing the attention of their professors and programs in education on two purposes: (1) producing graduates who have a global perspective and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work for the benefit of all children and society within educational institutions and their diverse environments and (2) directly creating, interpreting, using, and assessing knowledge that contributes to improving the lives of all children, families, and others in general, wherever they may be on the globe.

A national perspective alone is no longer adequate. The economic, political, and social lives of nations depend on the development of people worldwide. The Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) which includes Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam is possibly an influence of both cosmopolitanism and globalization. The organization of the European Union is another example of such influence. The attempts of the African presidents to form the United African States is also a demonstration of such influence.

Educators have to prepare graduates who know and understand the dynamics of globalism and their implications for the curriculum in the schools. Globalism requires knowledge, skills, and dispositions far different from those of the industrial-modern era on which the curriculum of American schooling, which is imitated by many developing countries, is based. Classrooms in the globalized world have become a melting pot of various cultures which include different world views, religious beliefs, values, abilities, and languages (Saban, 2013). Graduate classrooms should be venues where individuals have the freedom to think otherwise and not be mere reflectors of their professors’ thoughts. Graduates from doctoral and masters of education programs in tertiary institutions must be prepared to create a new vision of schooling and articulate, implement, steward, and continuously evaluate and modify it as conditions change. It is inevitable that critical thinking should be an integral part of the curricula of graduate education in the “flat world”. To remove critical thinking from the list of desired outcomes of tertiary education, especially graduate program is a blatant demonstration of lack of vision for the kind of graduates the world needs.

In conclusion, regardless of the attitudes of the graduate program directors and leaders of higher education institutions, the broken borders as well as the evolved context of schooling dictate that the concepts of digitization, globalization, complexification and cosmopolitanization should not be ignored when developing graduate education program.

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Rising Rates of Suicide Among School Age Children in South Korea: Trends

Josiah Hunt

Abstract

South Korea, a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, has experienced unprecedented growth within the last 60 years. Commentators frequently attribute the nation’s success to its system of education. Though education has indeed contributed much to the advancement of the nation, it has been identified that the hypercompetitive nature of education has led to an exponential increase in suicide among school age individuals ages 15-24. In this paper, I examine the rise in rate of suicide from 1985 to the present time, factors that have contributed to this occurrence, and possible solutions to this societal problem.

Keywords: South Korea, students, suicide, competition, exams, hagwons, trend, society, pressure.

Background

South Korea, officially the Republic of Korea, is an East Asian member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that has experienced unprecedented economic and technological growth. Within the last half-century, Korea has transformed from being an agrarian nation on the brink of collapse to an economic powerhouse that is a world-leader in business, shipping, technology, healthcare, and manufacturing. Though ranking 102nd among the world’s 189 nations in terms of landmass, Korea—a country smaller than Cuba—has the 14th largest economy in the world, as well as the highest individual income in all of Asia (World Bank, 2014). Such achievements find attribution in the Korean government’s putting into place a system of education geared towards targeting national needs in the wake of the Korean War.

Korea, for the past two decades, has been lauded as an “educational miracle” (Sistek, 2013). Within a single lifetime, the nation has progressed from one where less than five percent of its population received a high school education to its current state of where ninety-seven percent of all school age children graduate from high school. Of these graduates, approximately eighty percent continue on to university, resulting in a populace in which sixty-four percent of those ages 25-34 hold university degrees (ICEF Monitor, 2014). Korea consistently produces students who top international charts in literacy, science, and math (Economist, 2014; Kristine, 2011; Beyond Hallyu, 2013). As a result, income has soared (Per capita GDP, which in 1962 averaged under $90, is currently well over $20,000). On the surface it would appear as if Korea is a model of the transformative nature of education; yet, such achievements have not been without cost.

The advances as a result of education have transformed Korea into a hypercompetitive society. The drive to be the best, smartest, richest, prettiest, and most skilled has produced a situation that—for lack of better words—is akin to a socioeconomic pressure pot. As a result, Korea (a once peaceful nation) has assumed the status of being one of the world’s most violent; yet, what is paradoxical is the acts committed are not directed at others, but rather against one’s self.

Among the 70 developed OECD nations, Korea has the highest rate of suicide. This is quite contrary to reason, for contemporary Koreans, though highly educated and prosperous, are five times as likely to take their own lives than their forefathers who weathered war and extreme poverty. The nation’s current rate of death from suicide is 31 people per 100,000—in the early 1980s it was 6 (Cho, 2010; Victoria, 2013). To put this into perspective, 14,160 people committed suicide in 2012—more than double the 6,444 suicides in 2000 (Kim, 2014; Williamson, 2011). As shown in Table 1, viewing suicide rates over a period of time reveals that it is a trend that is rising exponentially among the people of Korea.
Suicide and the Lives it Claims

Suicide, the intentional killing of oneself, is nothing new; however, the rate at which it is being committed among young people is. Though once 8th in rank in terms of causes of death, suicide has advanced to become the leading cause of death of individuals ages 15 to 24 (Statistics Korea and the Ministry of Gender Equality as cited in ICEF Monitor, 2014; Kristine, 2011; Economist, 2014). In 2009 alone, 446 people (ages 10-19) and 1,807 people (ages 20-29) committed suicide. These ever-increasing figures suggest the intentional killing of oneself is not only an individual problem, but also evidence of a societal problem that directly impacts the lives of young people.

The Price of Education

Korea’s education system has long been hailed for its integral role in furthering advancement and modernization. It has been said, “Without its education obsession, South Korea would not have transformed into the economic powerhouse it is today” (Ripley, 2011, para. 9, emphasis added). Lest one perceive the aforementioned statement as being entirely complementary, consideration of the italicized word may lead one to think otherwise.

By definition, an obsession refers to any preoccupation with an idea, image, or desire that dominates one’s thoughts, feelings, or actions (Dictionary.com, 2014). Reflecting on the words “education obsession” led to the following questions: Could it be possible that the desire for education among Koreans has reached the point of being a morbid obsession? Could education be the thing leading Korea’s children to take their own lives?

Educational Investments

In many western schools, a significant portion of the year is spent preparing students for the test; in Korean schools, a significant portion of students’ lives are spent preparing for one test: The national College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT). Although it is said (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2012) that decisions impacting the direction of students’ lives and “educational opportunities should not be made on the basis of test scores” (p. 206), CSAT continues to be the primary determinant of the universities students gain access to and, by extension, what their future status and salary will likely be (Williamson, 2011). This test, lasting eight hours, can make or break futures by associating students with a score that is supposed to be symbolic of all their years of hard work, erudition, and cramming at afterschool hagwons (private learning institutes).

Preparation for the CSAT begins years before students first day in primary school. As early as kindergarten, children ages 3-4 begin learning math, reading, writing, and English to gain an edge on the competition—i.e. other 3 year olds. Though 75 percent of school age children attend hagwons for a variety of subjects, the duration of time spent in such institutions increases dramatically during the middle and high school years.

On a given day, middle and high schoolers spend as many as 14 hours in schools, hagwons, and learning related facilities—e.g. libraries, private study cubicles. The desire to excel above one’s peers is so strong that it is not uncommon for high school students, in preparation for the CSAT, to study 16 hours a day (Beyond Hallyu, 2013; Janda, 2013; Williamson, 2011). Surprisingly, this practice is not discouraged, but encouraged by parents, teachers, and Korean society in general.

This type of practice suggests that one’s youth is not a time for sports, socialization, talent development, or enjoyment, but rigorous study in preparation for the test that ultimately determines one’s destiny. This test is so important to students’ lives that on the day it is offered traffic is diverted away from exam centers, airline flights are delayed, employees receive the day off, and police cars and ambulances are deployed to help students who are at risk of being late for the exam. In many respects, this test serves as an appraiser that determines the price tag of each student’s cognitive worth to prospective academic and occupational circles.
The Dream

The amalgamation of the years of study, hard work, and sacrifice stems from the dream of being accepted into one of the nation’s three prestigious schools: Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University (aptly termed SKY). Day after day, month after month, and year after year, students spend countless hours at learning institutes not because their schooling is insufficient, but as a response to the intense pressure to be the best. Each year over 700,000 students compete for spots at one of the three prestigious universities (Lee, 2011), which in total accepts less than 20,000 incoming freshman. For the select few, entrance into any of the SKY universities almost guarantees a secure future at high-paying conglomerates—e.g. Samsung, Hyundai, or LG. Sadly, for the remaining 680,000 test takers, the dream held since kindergarten must come to an abrupt end.

The Sad Truth

In 2012, the National Youth Policy Institute in Korea conducted a study that found one in four students consider committing suicide (Sistek, 2013). In 2014, the number of teenage students having suicidal thoughts rose to one in two (Kang, 2014). Though suicide rates in OECD nations are generally declining, it seems as if there is a definite force advancing the frequency at which suicide occurs among school-aged individuals in Korea. That force, according to the data listed in Table 2, is identified as school/grades among individuals ages 15-19, and economic difficulties among individuals ages 20-29. In the Korean context the two motivators are closely related—for the degree of schooling acquired and where one is educated has a direct bearing on status and financial security.

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Table 2. Causes of Suicide (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2011)

In 2010, 3 elementary, 53 junior high, and 90 high school students committed suicide. It is likely that high schoolers comprise the largest number of deaths for they face the most intense pressure. Though it is widely known that Korea has the highest rate of suicide among OECD nations, what is less known is that this rate surges among students when the CSAT results are released (Janda, 2013). In many respects, Korea has created a system of education geared towards preparing students for the exam. This is the only life many students ever know—hence, failing the test by receiving a less that satisfactory grade may in some senses be synonymous with failing life. The World Health Organization (2008) soberly notes that for some students, resorting to suicide is the only means by which they can take control of their lives. Yet the sad truth is this: For every student who out of despair takes control by committing suicide, thousands more go on living in misery.

The Future of Korea

Unless the Korean government radically reforms their society (of which the education system is only one part), it is highly probable the rate at which suicides occur will continue to rise. Korea is a face valuing society that places considerable emphasis on status, title, hierarchal relationships, appearance, achievements, and family advancement—most of which are competitively attained. For those who fail to save face by having the right education, job, or levels of success, suicide is often perceived to be a viable option. Change would ultimately call for a reversal of the very thing that led to the nation’s advancement—i.e. the desire to be the best.

To prevent students from overexerting themselves in study, the government has come up with three solutions. The first took the form of legislation in the 1980s and ‘90s mandating that all hagwons be shut down; however, parents’ desire for additional schooling geared towards the children’s advancement prevented this law from ever taking root. Presently, the government has declared a nation-wide curfew for students at “10:00 p.m.” as being the time when students in hagwons must go home. However, a number of
these schools have intentionally violated the curfew by moving students to windowless classrooms so as not to be suspected by patrolling officers. As a result, task force teams have been put into place that carry out daily raids on offending hagwons. The final approach the government has suggested is deemphasizing the CSAT exam, while also seeking to promote egalitarian admission policies.

The Author’s Position

Realistically, in order for change to occur in the future, the government must in the present stop focusing on symptoms and address the problem. The problem is not hagwons closing at 2:00 a.m., nor is it the admission policies of 3 universities among South Korea’s more than 300 colleges and universities. Rather the problem that needs to be addressed among the Korean people is that of perception. As an American whose cultural worldview differs substantially from Koreans, I am not in a position to say their country should change this or that. Nonetheless, the rising rate of suicide among their young people, which is a direct result of schooling, suggests that Korea’s educational views are out of balance and are in need of adjustment. Though society is slow to change, young minds are easily molded. The refocusing of the youth’s understanding of education and its purpose in life can have positive long-term effects on Korean society when students reach adulthood. One way this can be done is by posting banners in schools saying:

- “You only fail when you give up. Suicide should never be an option.”
- “You are not a commodity that loses its worth once life doesn’t go as you plan. You have immeasurable worth.”
- “Your worth is not measured by your grades, your wealth, your possession, or even your looks. Your worth is measured by what Jesus gave for you: Everything.”
- “The CSAT is a one-time thing. It is not the determiner of your worth. Rather how you choose to live your life each day, in spite of difficulties and challenges, is the real measure of your worth.”

Although it is highly probable that students’ parents may continue to push their children to study excessively, children raised in less competitive environments where words of encouragement are continually said may not only experience a decrease in the rate at which suicide occurs, but may also actively strive to raise the next generation differently.

Conclusion

The financial, technological, and social advances wrought in Korea during the process of modernization have not alleviated competitiveness, but strengthened the intensity at which it is experienced. For young Koreans, failure to develop the ability to cope with the stresses of life often proves to be fatal. Among individuals ages 15-24, suicide is a trend that has grown to become the most common cause of death. In analyzing the factors contributing to its occurrence, this report identified the Korean education system’s emphasis on excessive studying for the CSAT exam. In a competitive society where the education system ranks its students from top to bottom, it is unlikely that parents will stop sending their children to hagwons and cram schools out of fear of their child falling out of the race. The placement of ranking numbers on students in a sense commodifies them; and once and a commodity loses its usefulness by appearing at the lower rungs of the educational rankings, the commodity often is seen as having no value to business and society in general. When applied to people, the result of such a rank often equates to a menial life. In this respect, Education is a decided tool—both for good and evil—in determining what one’s life will be.

References


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About the Author

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Jesus and Politics

Miguel Luna

Abstract

Jesus and politics explores the circumstances by which His life and teachings were challenged by Jewish leaders and His disciples who misunderstood His messianic mission as a political leader. This article responds on these claims as they are found in the Gospels beginning at the time of His birth until the events of the passion narratives. So throughout the events of the temptation in the wilderness, in the dialogue with James and John, the feeding of the five thousands, His kingship entrance to Jerusalem during the last week of His ministry, in the dialogue with Jewish authorities and in the passion narratives, Jesus clearly demonstrated His mission as the suffering Messiah without any political agenda. The way Jesus presented Himself shows that indeed He was not a political leader but Savior of humanity.

Introduction

The Gospels teach us that Jesus came to this world as the Messiah for redemption of humanity. Although Jesus Himself used occasionally the title Messiah, the title Son of Man showed that indeed he was the expected Messiah, the promised One, and as I was prophesied by the Law and the Prophets. Although these titles gives us an understanding of His Kingship, throughout His life and ministry He mainly focused on His mission as the servant suffering predicted by the prophet Isaiah. This paper has the purpose to explore circumstances when Jesus encountered situations and misunderstandings by which His messianic ministry might be misinterpreted as the having a political agenda on His mission sent by the Father.

It is difficult to define politics from New Testament perspective since from that era politics have had different connotations in the context of kingdoms, empires, and other systems of governance that were established by a different historical context which differs from the contemporary understanding of politics. So, in contemporary times, politics is related to governance of a country that exercises the use of power in running a country in a variety of political systems. The term politics in this paper is related to the political situation that Jesus encountered during His life and teaching ministry. So, it is important to ask the question, what was the political situation at the time of Jesus?

Palestine was under the dominion of Rome. The dominant culture of the country was Jewish although the Greek language was used in the intellectual society. Palestine was a place in which exchange of cultures such as Hebrew, Greek and Roman occurred. Jesus developed His ministry between two Roman emperors: Caesar Augustus and Tiberius Caesar (Luke 2:1; 3:1). Herod the Great was King when Jesus was born and after his death his son Herod Antipas inherited Galilee and Archelaus Judah. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (Luke 3:1) during the passion narratives. And finally, In the time of Jesus there were also a group Jewish rebels who were fighting for the liberation from the Roman’s dominion, the zealots. The following sections will explore circumstances by which politics is connected with the life and teaching of Jesus.

At the Birth of Jesus Christ and Politics

The first discussion begins during the birth of Jesus. The arrival of the visitors from the Easter Lands brought enmity against the just born Messiah. Matthew pointed out that it was the angel of the Lord who instructed Joseph to escape to Egypt (Matt 2:13). The reason for such an escape was due to the angel declaration. “For Herod is going to search for the child to kill him” (Matt 2:13b). In this first instance and guided by God
providence Jesus, the born Messiah, escaped death although Herod in his political ambition wanted to kill Jesus to continue in the throne. In this first demonstration, at the arrival of the Messiah, it was clear that He came with other purpose rather than a political one. As the angel of the Lord mentioned to Joseph: “you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). That was Jesus’ mission from the beginning of His appearance in Palestine. Unfortunately Herod looked the new born Messiah as his political opponent, he killed the boys under two years of age in an obsessive attempt to kill Jesus (Matt 2:16, 17).

This calamity the Jews had brought upon themselves. If they had been walking in faithfulness and humility before God, He would in a signal manner have made the wrath of the king harmless to them. But they had separated themselves from God by their sins, and had rejected the Holy Spirit, which was their only shield. They had not studied the Scriptures with a desire to conform to the will of God. They had searched for prophecies which could be interpreted to exalt themselves, and to show how God despised all other nations. It was their proud boast that the Messiah was to come as a king, conquering His enemies, and treading down the heathen in His wrath. Thus they had excited the hatred of their rulers. Through their misrepresentation of Christ’s mission, Satan had purposed to compass the destruction of the Savior; but instead of this, it returned upon their own heads.1

The Temptations of Jesus and Politics

Second, Jesus temptations in the wilderness showed the devil’s insinuation when Jesus was asked to choose a political kingdom instead of a spiritual one. This time the devil itself came and offered Jesus the Kingdoms of the world. “Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow and worship me” (Matt 4:8, 9). The nature of such a temptation shows that Jesus could have changed His mission as the servant suffering for a political one. He was conscious that from an early revelation He was the One who “will save his people from their sins” (Matt 1:21). As the gospel of Luke reveals, He was destined for salvation and redemption of Israel (Luke 2:25-38). What was the devil’s intention in this temptation? Jesus’ temptation was to take the world as a political ruler right then and in that sense hamper His mission. The devil’s intention implies that Jesus would go without carrying out His plan to save the world from sin. Satan, in this case, was trying to distort Jesus’ mission and sacrificial perspective by making Him a political ruler with power but not in accordance to God’s plan. As Ellen G. White mentioned, Christ’s mission could be fulfilled only through suffering. Before Him was a life of sorrow, hardship, and conflict, and an ignominious death. He must bear the sins of the whole world. He must endure separation from His Father’s love. Now the tempter offered to yield up the power had usurped. Christ might deliver Himself from the dreadful future by acknowledging the supremacy of Satan. But to do this was to yield the victory in the great controversy. It was in seeking to exalt himself above the Son of God that Satan had sinned in heaven. Should he prevail now, it would be the triumph of rebellion.2

When the tempter offered to Christ the kingdom and glory of the world, he was proposing that Christ should yield up the real kingship of the world, and hold dominion subject to Satan. This was the same dominion upon which the hopes of the Jews were set. They desired the kingdom of this world. If Christ had consented to offer them such a kingdom, they would gladly have received Him. But the curse of sin, with all its woe, rested upon it. Christ declared to the tempter, “Get thee behind Me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”3

Thus, to express His complete opposition to Satan intention to worship him, “Jesus said to him “away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only” (Matt 4:10). From the perspective of the great controversy acknowledged in the book of Revelation (Rev 12), it looks like Jesus was tempted to put aside His redemptive mission for a political one and being a ruler of a political government. However, Jesus taught that indeed He was the suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53) as the “righteous servant [who] will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

Unfortunately His suffering mission was misunderstood even by His own disciples (Mark 10:35-45). It is important to know that Jesus understood His mission and taught in different circumstance about His sacrifice.
Jesus the Suffering Messiah and Politics

In a more explicit teaching Jesus showed His redemptive mission was addressed at Caesarea Philippi. As Matthew recorded “from that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (Matt 16:21). Even though Jesus taught His salvific mission to His disciples; they were slow to understand the whole scope of his mission as the suffering servant (Isaiah 53:10-12). Two of His disciples asked Jesus to allow them to sit at His right and the other to His left in His glory (Mark 10:37). Jesus saw that they still did not understand His redemptive mission when he declared “You don’t know what are you asking” (Mark 10:38) because they were still thinking from a political perspective of His kingdom. They were asking for high government positions, but Jesus told them that the true greatness comes in serving others and being of a humble spirit (Mark 10:42-44). The climax of Jesus teachings comes when He mentioned the nature of His kingdom and His mission as the One who will redeem humanity. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). The disciples might have thought initially that Jesus’ life and power will save them from Roman domination but Jesus mentioned that His death will deliver them from sin. In Jesus agenda there was no room for establishment of a political kingdom. His kingdom was and is from another dimension that transcends the political understanding of the world. Pointing out to the early church, the apostle Peter later in his ministry reminded the church of such spiritual dimension, “to this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

The Lord’s Supper and Politics

From the gospels narratives, it could be inferred that the idea of a political kingdom was a real one among His disciples. It was just on the last encounter with them and during the Passover feast that Jesus taught them the nature of His kingdom and the way how they supposed to interpret it. So, during the Last Supper Jesus taught His disciples what was the model they supposed to follow? A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:24-30). Thus, in the leadership example of Jesus the greatest is the one who serves which was in contrast of the rulers attitude of the Jewish leaders. By application, Jesus’ disciples who exercise the function of leaders should follow the same principle that is the character and attitude of a servant leader.

The Feeding of Five Thousands and Politics

From a different perspective, the Gospel of John shows the difference between the political ambition of the Jewish leaders and the redemptive purpose of the Messiah found in the narrative of feeding the five thousand. It was after such a miraculous demonstration of power that the crowd thought that perhaps Jesus could be proclaimed as king. John mentioned “after the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come to the world” (John 6:14). They were asserting that Jesus was indeed the Prophet announced by Moses (Deut 18:15).The prophetic interpretation that the people understood was of a political ruler who might restore the nation of Israel instead of a Messiah who will function as a suffering servant. They focused in the human benefits of a new political order that was different from Roman domination. Jesus clearly understood their intention and misinterpretation of Moses prophetic anticipation. So, “Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself” (John 6:15). Obviously, He would have had support if He had wanted to overthrow the existing powers. But it was clear that Jesus did not wish to become and be involved as a political ruler of the society around Him.
Dodd was able to show that John 6:14-15, the attempt to make Jesus king, fits into the turbulent conditions of pre-70 Palestine better than into any subsequent period. Along with John 11:48, which depicts the fear of the Sanhedrin that Jesus’ large following would bring down the wrath of the Roman son Jerusalem, it suggests that John is more open than the Synoptic to depicting the political situation in Palestine before 70 CE and how Jesus would have appeared in that situation. Of course, this is not simply a historical interest but is always a part of John’s christologically determined portrayal of Jesus and the world that rejected him.

The Triumphal Entry of Jesus and Politics

An important demonstration of His mission as the Messiah arrived at the last week of Jesus’ ministry when He entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey under the canopy of palm branches with crowds hailing Him as their king (John 12:12-15). According to Tenney, “the entry into Jerusalem was Jesus’ announcement that his hour had come and that he was ready for action though not according to the expectation of the Jewish people. He did not come as a conqueror but as a messenger of peace. He rode on a donkey, not the steed of royalty, but that of a commoner on a business trip.” To announce that He was indeed the Messiah He chose the Feast time when all Israel will be gather in Jerusalem and a way of proclaiming His mission was unmistakable. However, the people who were praising God for giving them a king had the wrong idea about Jesus. They understood that Jesus would be a ruler who will return to Israel to its former glory. As John mentioned, even “His disciples did not understand all this” (John 12:16). It was only after Jesus’ resurrection that the disciples understood the many prophecies that were misunderstood along the way of Jesus’ teaching. So after Jesus’ resurrection His words and actions took a new meaning for them and recognized that indeed the suffering Messiah died for redemption of humanity (Luke 24:25-27) and as predicted by the prophet Zechariah “See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey” (Zech 9:9).

Paying Taxes to Caesar and Politics

In another occasion, Jesus made a distinction about the nature of His kingdom on the question of paying taxes (Matt 22:15-22). Both the Pharisees and the Herodians came to Jesus with a question “it is right to pay taxes to Cesar or not” (Matt 22:17)? The Pharisees, a religious a religious group, oppose the Roman occupation of Rome. The Herodians, a political party supported Herod Antipas and the policies instituted by Rome. So if Jesus agreed that it was right to pay taxes to Caesar, the Pharisees will accuse Him that He was opposing God. If Jesus said that taxes should not be paid, the Herodians would hand Him over Herod on the charges of rebellion. However, Jesus answer exposed their evil motives, “give to Caesar what is Caesar, and to God what is God’s” (Matt 22:21). Jesus avoided this trap by showing that we have dual citizenship. Citizens in nations require that we pay taxes for the benefits and services we receive. Citizenship in the kingdom of heaven requires that we pledge to God our primary commitment and obedience. Clearly enough Jesus did not allow the Herodians to charge Him with a political rebellion against Caesar. Even though Jesus did not involve Himself in the politics of His day, He did teach His disciples to respect governmental authorities. Regardless of the nation in which one resides, respect for that nation’s leaders is part of the responsibility of a true Christian. Jesus abided by the established government continued even at the last days of His mission as the suffering servant.

The Passion Narratives and Politics

Finally, the clearest demonstration of Jesus nature of His mission without any political agenda came at the passion narratives. He was confronted with trials by the High priests and the Sanhedrin that accused Him of blasphemy. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” “You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” “He is worthy of death,” they answered” (Matt 26:63-65). In saying that He was the Son of Man, Jesus was claiming that He was the Messiah, as Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin understood. It was clear that Jesus understood His mission and nature of His sacrifice under interrogation of the religious leaders.
However, the Sanhedrin couldn’t execute His death. It was necessary to have the Roman sentence and for this reason the religious leaders moved to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. So during the first early trials Jesus was accused on blasphemy and for this reason the religious leaders moved to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. So during the first early trials Jesus was accused on blasphemy and claims to be Messiah, a king” (Luke 23:1-2). The Jewish leaders had to fabricate new accusations against Jesus when they brought Him to Pilate. The charges of blasphemy would mean nothing to the Roman governor so they accused Jesus of tax evasion, treason, and rebellion.

As Pilate interrogates Jesus, it was evident that He was innocent of the accusations of the religious leaders (Luke 23:13-17). Pilate asked a very specific question “are you the king of the Jews”? (John 18:33). And Jesus answer showed that indeed His kingdom and mission was not an earthly political one. He mentioned to Pilate “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36) and Pilate replied “You are a king, then” (John 18:37). But what was the nature of His kingdom? He was testifying under Pilate that indeed He was King and His kingdom is not of this world. “Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth.

Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37). Even though Jesus was born to be a king, He told Pilate that He wasn’t involved in the politics of that age. He was the Messiah, the Son of Man that came with the purpose of salvation of humanity. This is why His kingdom is not from any political agenda but from a spiritual demonstration of power for the redemption of humanity from sin and death. Unfortunately the priests chose Caesar as their king. In a last effort to release Jesus Pilatus declared “Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!” “Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked. “We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified (John 18:14-16).

Thus by choosing a heathen ruler, the Jewish nation had withdrawn from the theocracy. They had rejected God as their king. Henceforth they had no deliverer. They had no king but Caesar. To this the priests and teachers had led the people. For this, with the fearful results that followed, they were responsible. A nation’s sin and a nation’s ruin were due to the religious leaders.

After Jesus’ resurrection in the way to Emmaus He “opened their minds” so they could understand the purpose of His mission found in the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45, 46). That was the mission of Jesus and the mission entrusted to the Christian church independent from any political agenda.

Therefore, the attitude of Jesus centered in accomplishing His mission according to the will of the Father, and an attitude that did not agree with the political expectation during His life and ministry, neither was His intention to release Judah from the dominion of Roman Empire. Although Jesus was accused by the priests and Pilate of rebellion, there is not any argument in the Gospel that suggests that He had a political agenda for the liberation from the Roman Empire. His agenda was another one, the redemption of humanity. A demonstration of such attitude it is found in Calvary when Jesus mentioned “”Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). The same principles that He taught at the Sermon of the Mount now He practiced at the last moment of His sacrifice.

The Disciples of Jesus and Politics

So what a Christian should do? The mission of a Christian is to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ—an advance emissary of His Kingdom, His coming government. Ambassadors of governments today are expected to not involve themselves in the politics or governmental systems of other nations. Instead, they submit to the government and laws of the nation in which they live. Christians do the same as long as the local laws do not conflict with the laws of God (Acts 5:29; 2 Cor 5:17-20). If Christians are going to follow Jesus’ example, they won’t get involved in the politics of this world but on the expectation and manifestation of His Kingdom coming in Glory (Matt 24:30-31). Even though Christians are not involved in politics they are involved in helping to serve the needs of the community in which they live. An expression of those who inherited the
kingdom of God, Jesus mentioned to His disciples to care for the needed by providing hope, care and basic existential needs for those who suffer (Matt 25:31-46).

Some has argued that Jesus in His first appearing at the Synagogue of Nazareth had a political agenda for liberation of the oppressed (Luke 4:16-30). A careful study shows that Jesus is quoting the messianic promise of Isaiah 61:1-2. Isaiah pictured the deliverance of Israel from the exile in Babylon as a year of Jubilee when all debts are cancelled, all slaves are freed, and all property returned to their owners (Leviticus 25). But the release from Babylonian exile has not brought the fulfillment of what the people had expected; they were still conquered and oppressed people. In that context, Isaiah was referring to a future messianic age that agreed with Jesus declaration “today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:20). So Jesus was proclaiming that He was the fulfillment of this prophecy as the Messiah who has come to deliver them from the bondage of sin.

But when Jesus announced, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,” they were suddenly recalled to think of themselves, and of the claims of Him who had been addressing them. They, Israelites, children of Abraham, had been represented as in bondage. They had been addressed as prisoners to be delivered from the power of evil; as in darkness, and needing the light of truth. Their pride was offended, and their fears were roused. The words of Jesus indicated that His work for them was to be altogether different from what they desired. Their deeds might be investigated too closely. Notwithstanding their exactness in outward ceremonies, they shrank from inspection by those clear, searching eyes.12

What a contrast of Jesus teaching and the teaching of the scribes. “Jesus had said nothing of delivering them from the Romans. They had heard of His miracles, and had hoped that His power would be exercised for their advantage, but they had seen no indication of such purpose.”13

**Conclusion**

Therefore, after brief exploring the gospels by which Jesus was mistakenly perceived as a political leader, the gospel clearly teaches that Jesus came as the suffering Messiah, the One who will redeem Israel and humanity from sin. Jesus kingdom was a different one of the expectation of the Jewish leaders. Certainly this was the kingdom that Jesus came to inaugurate when He proclaimed “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). And after His resurrection, He declared a great commission that states 18 “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20).

As a way of conclusion, a short survey of the early church also suggests that the primary task of the apostles and disciples was the proclamation of the Gospel, including the teaching of Jesus and His kingdom. They continued the development of the church mission in the context of the existing political system of the Roman Empire. During the experience of Pentecost the mission of the apostles was confirmed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming about Jesus as Lord and Savior. Luke also suggest that the early church was devoted to the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, rituals and prayers (Acts 2:42-47). It was Peter and John who testified at the Sanhedrin, “judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God” (Acts 4:19). Therefore, as disciples of Jesus, we are responsible to be good citizens and abide to the laws of the country and making sure that they are not against the principles of the Scripture and the teaching of Jesus. Any opportunity for being engaged in politics in a contemporary perspective, modern disciples should have discretion and follow the principles and guidelines of the Scriptures and church policy.

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Information, Communication and Technology and Higher Education in Cambodia

Sovanroth Nguon

Abstract

This research is a review of literature concerning the development information, communication and technology (ICT) and its relationship with higher education in Cambodia. There is a concern that there is a lack of research materials linking ICT and the Cambodian higher education system. This study will explore challenges faced by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, higher education in Cambodia, critique ICT in Cambodia, and discuss the level of ICT usage.

Introduction

The Kingdom of Cambodia, in 2014, has a population of approximately 15 million. However, for many years Cambodia has faced difficulty in maintaining growth and climbing the income ladder. An effect of such would be the development of educational systems and services. Cambodia’s development discourse largely centers on catching up with the developed world, economically and technologically (Supreme National Economic Council of Cambodia (SNEC) 2010). The Internet is a case in point in this development discourse and policy orientation, with governmental, non-governmental and private institutions promoting the uptake of the Internet. However, critical inputs to balance this current optimism regarding the diffusion of (ICT) and the Internet in Cambodian development discourse have been missing.

Albirini (2008) pointed out that the hasty diffusion and inattentive absorption of the Internet in developing countries often amounts to a form of economic, cultural and political domination, made possible through technological consumerism as well as disproportionate access and content development compared to the developed world. In the Cambodian higher educational sector which, according to the World Bank is largely understaffed and poorly resourced, the promotion of the diffusion of ICTs and the Internet has also been met with great optimism. At the policy level, the Policy and Strategies on Information and Communication Technology in Education in Cambodia, formulated in 2004 by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS 2004), is explicit in promoting ICTs and the Internet in higher education. Most noticeable from this policy articulation is the prioritization of digital literacy and the vision of a new educational paradigm characterized by life-long learning and distance learning.

At the institutional level, such policy-level targets are moderated by sensible challenges, including financial and human resources. Cambodian universities, both public and private, may not necessarily share such policy-level vision due to pragmatism and challenges, yet their students’ access to the Internet is strongly prioritized. Universities feel compelled to provide Internet access at varying levels. Realizing these issues, this paper aims to present an overview regarding the area of ICT in relation to higher education in Cambodia.

Current Level of ICT Access and Use in Cambodia

According to an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Readiness Assessment conducted in 2001, Cambodia ranked eighth out of the 10 ASEAN countries in terms of e-infrastructure, e-society, e-commerce and e-government (See Figure1). As such, it was classified as an “emerging” readiness country, characterised by the need to build basic ICT infrastructure and ICT literate workforce. Public access to computers and the Internet are limited. An increasing number of Internet cafes have appeared in recent years in urban centers and tourist destinations. There are currently over 100 in Phnom Penh and several in the Siem Reap and
Sihanoukville. Computer courses are popular in the major towns. However, with more than 80 per cent of the population living in rural areas, the majority has little or no access to the computers or the Internet. The rural people rely heavily on radio and television for information.

**Internet Technology**

Cambodia has one of the lowest Internet penetration rates in the region and the world, although the number of Internet users has grown in the last few years. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimated the number of Cambodian Internet users at 78,000. In 2009 (with a penetration rate of 0.53 per inhabitant; however, the Cambodian Ministry of Post and Telecommunications estimated the number to be about 291,000 by 2010), and that of broadband subscribers at 30,000, with a penetration rate of 0.12 (Department of Media and Communication (DMC) 2010).

According to data from the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC), by 2010, 34 Internet Service Providers (ISPs) provided Internet service to some 50,000 subscribers, only a relatively small number of which were private households, while mobile access has been increasing (DMC 2010). According to data from the National Census 2008, only 0.11 percent of all Cambodian households (and 0.43% of all urban households) had access to the Internet at home, and only 0.85 per cent of all Cambodian households (and 3.64% of all urban households) had access to the Internet outside home (NIS 2009). Therefore, though official figures are unavailable, public Internet access venues play a significant role in providing Internet to Cambodian users. Among these public access venues are some 300 Internet cafés (over 100 in Phnom Penh, according to MPTC’s records (DMC 2010)), locally known as ‘Internet shops’, which charge low rates for Internet access. A survey at 23 Internet cafés in Phnom Penh in 2010 by Peou and Chea (2010) showed that the patrons at these cafés were mostly male (close to 80%), mostly young (76% below 26 years old), and dominated by university students (47%, the largest group compared to others). Internet cafés remain the most crucial access point for users. For the Cambodian university students, Internet cafés were the most used (50% at least once a week) and most strongly associated with all Internet uses: information seeking, entertainment, socialization and, most crucially, academic utilization. This is in parallel with findings on Cambodian Facebook users, who have increasingly integrated Facebook into divergent aspects of their lives, including fun seeking, socializing and friendship maintenance (Saray, Chea & Peou 2010). In terms of the students’ attitudes, the Internet appeared to be readily embraced by the students. However, even if these new opportunities in Cambodia as of yet are extremely limited and unevenly divided, information technology has the potential of breaking part of the isolation that has had such fundamental impact on the Cambodian society. There are also a few examples of IT projects in Cambodian schools. In a Japanese supported project called Village Leap in Preah Vihear province in northern Cambodia, the students learn to work with computers and internet, and the organization Future Light Orphanage gives children and youth they work with the ability to go online.

It must be noted, though, that Internet regulations remain dubious at present. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC) is technically the sole regulator of the Internet in Cambodia. However, issues arising around the Internet usually involve other authorities. Despite occasional concerns, formalized censorship is non-existent, although the Ministry of Information and MPTC are rumored to be working on an Internet law. The Internet has become an important aspect of Cambodia’s development policy, with the National Information Communication Technology Development Authority (NiDA, established in 2000) entrusted to develop IT and Internet infrastructure and policies. The Authority’s current tasks are focused on infrastructure expansion and e-government, including connecting governmental institutions for data exchange and e-governance such as online registration of vehicles, residency and real estate.

**Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)**

The long-term vision of Education for All in Cambodia is to ensure equal access to quality basic education for all citizens and to prepare its citizens to play an active role in reconstructing the country as well as integrating Cambodia to the knowledge-based global community. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) is introducing various initiatives to facilitate greater integration of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the effectiveness of education at all levels and to produce the technologically literate, productive and critically thinking workforce for the country. The Ministry has outlined three goals, which are:
• Increased access to basic education for all, both formal and non-formal, using ICT as one of the major tools for learning, teaching, searching and sharing information.
• Improved quality of basic education and promote independent and lifelong learning, especially for post-primary education,
• Availability of workforce with the ICT skills needed for employment and use in a knowledge-based society; to ensure that Cambodia can compete and cooperate in an increasingly interconnected world

Benefits of ICT Use in Cambodian Universities

Since Cambodia is experiencing a shortage of well-trained university lecturers and professors, it is essential that the universities think of creative ways of connecting learners to virtual learning resources worldwide. The Ministry had proposed the promotion of use of ICT in teaching and learning process, research and administration by creating a cyber campus consortium and linking this to other virtual universities in other countries. This move will also promote the digitizing of the Khmer language books and translating of foreign core books into Khmer (Policy and Strategies on Information and Communication Technology in Education in Cambodia). Moreover, the potential of the Internet as offering a new learning tool and environment has been well argued by many, for instance, its liberating capacity for independent and goal-orienting learning experience (Knight, Knight & Teghe 2006) and its flexibility for the methods, goals and physical environment for learning (Oliver, 2002). Therefore, constructive adoption of the Internet as well as other applications in higher education will need to focus on the pedagogical potential of the technologies and rational and pragmatic adjustment on the part of educators and learners. If the potentials of ICT are fully realized, higher education in Cambodia will reap the following benefits:

Convenience for students

Technology aids Cambodian students’ expression. Because of technology, especially the Internet, Cambodian students can use much more than just pen and paper to express themselves or present what they have learned. They can use software to make presentations and projects. This makes them more interested in the subject and leads to better retention of information. With technological aids, they can make easy-to-remember notes and a creative presentation of the information they have acquired. In addition, according to the Association for Progressive Communication (2010), Cambodian students and youth, especially universities students are learning how to use Facebook and Twitter over the internet to address the issue of violence against women. Through information-sharing activities, they will teach each other and engage in discussions about gender-based violence; some of which will elaborate strategic plans and suggestions for the national action plan on violence against women.

Accessibility of information

By increasing the numbers of Internet shops both in the city and country sides, many Cambodian students can access the internet and allow them to search information they want much more easily. University students find internet very useful for helping them to do their assignments, projects and other tasks. The Internet is a huge information base. It can be used as an effective tool for acquiring knowledge. All a web user needs to do is to key in queries to search engines. Users are presented with thousands of search results. There are several websites and web directories that offer information on literally everything in the world. And all this is just a few clicks away. Both Cambodian teachers and students can benefit from this.

The Elimination of space and time constraints

With Internet, Cambodian universities are able to offer online education and distance learning has given a new dimension to education and higher learning. Even if students are geographically far away from the university that they want to study, they can be a part of one classroom. Many Cambodian educational institutes which are linked to universities abroad offer online courses, which eliminate time and space constraints in acquiring education. Cambodian Universities offer online educational programs wherein students can interact with their teachers over the Internet, access reference material from the University website and earn degrees online. With the help of technology and the internet, the education in Cambodia
has been growing significantly in the last decade. As the growth of the country depends on the students and youth and so they should be supported and nurtured in the best educational environment. Education is one of the prioritized sectors of the Cambodia. There are many scholarships and grants available for Cambodian students to pursue higher education. There are many aids and scholarships accessible for students who wish to study undergraduate, graduate, master and research programs. This blog is created to give an overview of the different scholarships available for the natives of Cambodia.

Shared Teaching

The teaching and learning, especially in higher education level now can be shared. Because of the application of technology, Cambodian education has become more collaborative in nature. Furthermore, with a plethora of information so easily available to students, they can be a part of the sharing process; they do not need to remain at the receiving end. Owing to the use of technology, subject experts can come together to formulate courses, design assessments and better the process of teaching. This will cater to different learning needs and varying abilities and interests of students.

Communication

As mentioned above, communication is one of the biggest advantages of the Internet in Cambodian higher education. Many Cambodian students now can contact other students or their teachers via E-mail if they have queries about any information. Sharing of information, discussions on a particular subject, etc. can be easily carried out using the Internet. At the same time, teachers can also contact the parents and guardians easily using Internet. In addition to that, many Cambodian universities find internet very useful in term of promoting the school via website world widely. University can communicate with administrators, professors, teachers, and student the information just by posting them on the university’s website or the intranet.

Projects

The Internet can be most useful for completing projects in Cambodian schools and colleges. As the Internet is an ocean of information, covering nearly all subjects known to man, one can literally find information, research work, etc. required for one’s projects. Going through the information on the Internet is definitely faster than reading an entire book on the subject. Homework is also made easier with the help of the Internet which is also one of the important uses of computers in education. Many of Cambodian students and teachers realize that much more easily in their learning and teaching when dealing with assignments, researches, and projects with the help from the internet. According to You V (2007), optimism in regards to the Internet and other ICTs as being able to offer ‘quality’ higher education is pervasive in the country.

Conclusion

Today, computer education has become an integral part of school and college curricula. Considering the wide range of applications of computer technology, it is necessary for Cambodia to be computer-friendly. It is important for each student to gain basic knowledge of Internet access and web research. We live in a technology-age and hence, it is important for us to be abreast with the latest inventions in the field. With education, we acquire knowledge of the functioning and use of different pieces of technology. And with the application of technology, Cambodians now can educate themselves better. This is the impact technology and education has on each other. Cambodia higher education boosts use of technology and technology aids education in Cambodia.

The importance of technology, mainly with the internet in Cambodian higher education cannot be stressed enough. The introduction of technology in the educational field has made the process of learning and knowledge sharing, a more interactive and pleasurable experience. Perhaps, the greatest impact of technology on education is the change in perspective. The paradigm shift in thinking of Cambodian students from local to global can be attributed to technology. Indeed technology is one of God’s greatest gifts to mankind. The growth of the internet in Cambodia has changed significantly the way universities teach and students learn. With these points, we find that the importance of Internet in Cambodia education cannot be denied and therefore, every Cambodian student should be given access to the Internet for deeper understanding and knowledge of a subject for their study and the improvement of the Cambodia higher education. However,
lots and lots of information can be termed as both, advantages and disadvantages of the Internet as students can also have an access to unwanted or unethical information and sites. Therefore, universities, teachers, students, especially the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport should be more active in motivating and educating the students of how internet should be used for. Additional to this, Cambodia higher education should be more responsible to provide all the technological needs including the accessibility of the internet for the universities and students. The Internet is the worldwide network of computers. Internet host computers, or servers, are usually owned by universities, governments or large companies.

The future of Cambodian higher education looks bright. The ICT programs have a lot to contribute to the development of Cambodia education system, but they have to be more provided. There has to be policies, human resources and fruitful workshops in order for teachers to want to adopt for their teaching and students in their learning. In order to take fully advantage of ICT, Cambodia needs to improve practical and essential matters. One of them is the infrastructure. It needs to be improved both in the cities and out in the country although priorities must be taken since many villages do not have electricity. For internet applications to be used, people need access to it. The once that will use it must also receives a proper knowledge and training about it.

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Technology and its Influence on Education in the 21st Century

Hin Yu Wong

Abstract

Improvements in technology are paving the way to provide better opportunities to increase better learning and teaching in the higher education system. Nonetheless, views on the efficiency on technology are divided over such an approach and the degree to how much technology should be allowed in teaching and learning. This article explores the advantages and disadvantages of using such technology to direct teaching and learning.

Introduction

In this digital age, technology has grown more significantly into everyone’s lives. Third graders texting on their cell phones, kindergarteners can navigate an iPod Touch, and Middle-schoolers have Internet following on their blog or YouTube channel (Blair, 2012). There has also been a growing number of adults going back to school to learn new IT skills or to increase the skills they already have (Kasper, 2001). As Kolderie and Mcdonald (2009) say, information technology has transformed the work industry into opening up new types of work processes and business organizations and has increased productivity and consumer innovations. With these constant changes in technology it is not enough for students to simply be watching videos or playing Internet games. Students nowadays want quick access to new knowledge and they are able to learn at a whole new level (Blair, 2012).

From this we can see that there is a need for teachers to adjust to the role of technology in the classroom to satisfy the demands of the students. In other words there is a need to change the focus from the technology itself to ways where technology can be used to bring out the very best in how teachers can teach and how students can learn (Robin, n.d.). According to Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2009) schools are currently investing heavily into technology, buying new computers or softwares, installing Wi-Fi, and programs or devices to assist teachers and students. However, not everything is as easy as it seems, for there are a lot of difficulties and problems that comes with implementing technology into schools. This article will define what technology in the 21st century is as well as the uses and tackle on the advantages, disadvantages, and the challenges ahead.

Definition

To begin, we should ask what the 21st century is. What is 21st Century Education? (2008) explains that we are at a time where there are a lot of technological changes. As mentioned earlier, these new emerging technologies offers unlimited possibilities students should and could learn skills to be able to help change the world, they can learn to do this by participating in real life learning projects to tackle real-world problems. This is defined as 21st century skills and education. These are the skill sets and education students need to adapt to the changes in the world.

There is a change from traditional way of teaching from textbook-driven, teacher-centered, to a new way of teaching where technology allows the students interests, needs, strengths and weaknesses to direct the learning process (Kolderie & Mcdonald, 2009). Teachers are transformed from being the information provider to being the guide in helping students turn information into knowledge and wisdom. Students are encouraged to be interested in their learning and to think critically. Other traits of the students in the 21st century include
having a sense of curiosity; be flexible in the ways teachers instruct and to excite learners so that they will continue to be interested in learning no matter when or where.

**Technology and Education: Advantages**

According to Blair (2012) students are now able to discover and explore instead of just listening to lectures. For example, students can now discover and explore through the Internet research and multimedia resources which can lead them to be able to understand, analyze, and evaluate their experiences in answering questions. Students can also work together in projects (Maximizing the Impact..., n.d.). In other words, students can now investigate, inquire, create, and transform knowledge with meaningful purposes in authentic situations. Secondly technology offers students to become creative and be able to design their own works, and by letting students demonstrate their skill and knowledge in customizing, students become more confident in their own abilities. Students can also personalize in dynamic and unpredictable ways (Kolderie & Mcdonald, 2009; Maximizing the Impact..., n.d.). This advantage can lead to students being motivated to do their own work with better end products and allowing students to search for and construct their own knowledge. Thirdly with this new way of teaching instruction, and by having differentiating methods, individual needs can now be met one way or another because of the difference in strengths and weaknesses of each of the students and technology offers a way for students to find their own strengths and weaknesses. Lastly and one of the best reasons why we should use technology is that when students use technology in their work it can reach out to everyone, to a real and bigger audience. It tells students that their work is worth sharing with others instead of just showing it to the one teacher.

The advantages of authentic use of technology is that they are more flexible, and can be used as a form of communications medium, and be able to be used in any class and the teacher’s teaching practice. Some ways where we can present authentic use of technology is by requiring students to complete written tasks on word processing software. Aside from benefiting just the students, Kolderie and Mcdonald (2009) also state that this approach in teaching improves the teachers work from presenting material to planning, advising, and evaluating. So instead of the teacher doing everything, students are now given more responsibility to search for information with the teachers guiding them. Another advantage of technology is that the process of assessing work can be improved (Kasper, 2001). Feedback for students can now be given immediately even while they are in the process of working. Assessment now not only checks how much the students know but also how they understand and use it. By letting students work with different types of tools, it offers them the experience that gets them ready for the world outside of school.

**Technology in Education: Disadvantages**

According to Kasper (2001), how technology in the classroom is handled may be a threat, instead of the technology itself. Wiske (2004) said that teachers are worried that technology will replace them or that the Internet will poison or distract students. While these are valid points, they should not be focusing on worrying but instead focus on the reasons why technologies are not being used properly (Robin, n.d.) and how they can use the best of what they have available to them.

All these requires teachers to be familiar and confident in choosing the right technology to use in class, this depends on the teacher’s training and time in testing out the technology to be used by the students. And because of this, many teachers do not get enough training to pick out the right technologies and to also have enough support to implement it (Overview of Technology and Education Reform, nd). Parents as well can also be unfamiliar with these technologies, so there will be some difficulty for parents to understand what is going on and for teachers to use it efficiently in the classroom. So to be effective, teachers must work together with technology for it to offer demanding learning opportunities to students. To be able to design activities and be lifelong learners to be able to keep up with the ever changing technology and the benefits it brings. And those teachers must be well trained to be able to use it effectively (Kasper, 2001). Hall and Bannatyne (nd) also says that as technology becomes more and more complex we need to address the skills needed to use it. Content standards and curriculum resources should also be looked into because it is not easy to just employ technology into lessons, the technology should be unbiased, current, and appropriate to the curriculum and be able to promote student interest (AL-Bataineh & Brookes, 2003).
Challenges of Technology in Education

Here is a look at three of the challenges technology may pose when integrated into education: teachers having difficulty in adapting to the uses of technology, the distractions of technologies on both teachers and students, and the worry that technology will replace instruction.

Adaptation

According to Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2009) it is promising that most teachers are now using technology to support student learning. Teachers have now increased the use of computers to manage and to communicate with students and parents as well. However there is also a problem of integrating technology to support the kinds of instruction.

For teachers who are rather conservative, they are not open to change and tend to rely on traditional teaching methods. While they use technology to help them with their professional and personal tasks more efficiently, they are more hesitant to use the same technology in the classroom because of the lack of knowledge. Nelson, Palonsky, and McCarthy (2007) say that technological knowledge involves a working understanding of technical and operational language, an understanding of common technological equipment and related software. It also includes the use of technology to learn to discover, analyze, test, and understand ideas. They go on to say that some teachers are not prepared to educate students with technology. They can set classroom rules that prevent students from bringing in technological equipments. This prevents teachers from exploring the benefits and uses of these useful technology tools. The problem stems from the lack of support, resources, or the motivation to use these new technologies. With equipments being expensive and bans imposed on equipment in class because of misuses by students, it is hard for schools to be motivated to support the use technology in the classrooms. Furthermore, technology changes rapidly. Teachers are not able to keep up with the pace or even if they are keeping up they are not able to make proper use of what is available to them (Bajpai, 2012).

We can see the difficulty here for teachers to keep up and be able to adapt continuously (Pablo, 2012). With technology we can make it quicker or easier to teach the same things in routine ways as well as making it possible to adopt new and better approaches to instruction and or change to the content or context of learning, instruction, and assessment (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2009). Most of today’s teachers find this to be the most challenging, because they require the most amount of change. So there is a need to help teachers understand how to use technology to facilitate meaningful learning. Teacher change is a complicated process, affected by the teacher’s knowledge, beliefs, as well as the culture from which the teachers work. To encourage and aid teachers to adapt means efforts from all fronts including teacher education programs, teacher professional development, leadership and administration, as well as the individual teachers themselves. This shift from a teacher-centered environment requires educators to revisit their methods. But even so most teachers use technologies that are useful to them and ignore those that aren’t (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2007).

Burbules and Callister (as cited from Lavin, Korte, and Davies, n.d.) suggests that technology can be used well or poorly, meaning that the effectiveness of the technology depends on how it used, by whom and for what purpose. It is a complex problem, but one where if teachers and administrators work together to see what can be done, what training teachers need and what best technology to use that can let students learn then we can see a more better and efficient education. Teachers should be willing to take chances and be able to figure out not just how technology works but also how it works for each student and where its use is most appropriate.

Distraction

Distraction is one of the biggest problems faced by students and teachers alike. While technology has brought access to all sorts of information to students (Porter, 2013), here is also where the problem lies. Students are able to search for anything online even those that are not related to studies. They could be playing games, social networking, reading other articles, and all sorts of other entertainment when they are supposed to be doing their work. Students are even constantly being
distracted while learning in the classroom, outside in the hallways or even at home. Porter (2013) goes on to say that 76 percent of teachers believed students are being accustomed to find quick answers through the Internet which they believe hurts the critical thinking and the student’s ability to do their homework. About 60 percent of teachers said that this hinders the students’ ability to write and communicate face to face. McCarthy (2012) shares the same opinion by saying that with the latest technology and social media platforms, students are less likely to have conversations face to face. This leads to concerns on whether students’ written, verbal and social skills will suffer. With these distractions comes a lack of discipline (Bane, 2013) leading to a dip in grades.

**Technology Replacing Instruction**

Gulley (2003) says that many people believe that computers are doing all the work for the students, and not allowing students the chance to grasp what they have learned in class. A good example of this is the calculator; why try to understand the logic behind mathematics when you can solve the problem with the press of a few buttons? Boyle (as cited from Gulley, 2003) argues that technology “may actually be making us stupid.” He argues that computers take more of the thinking process out of students. Meaning students are going to become less critical thinkers and more dependent on technologies. Another worry is that the use of computer might take the emotion and heart out of the classroom. Teachers need to know the importance of student’s emotions, and that they need human support from the teacher-based instruction. The problem in computer technology is of the belief that computers can solve the problems that teachers cannot. And schools are now focusing more on technology than learning. And with this technology replacing instruction, teachers suffer too, respect for them decreases, their teaching skills and value of academic/professional judgment as well (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2007).

**Conclusion**

Technology is a very helpful tool for teachers to use as well as for students to become interested in and motivated to learn, with all this in mind to help prepare students for their future work. Technology is ever continuously changing and thus teachers and students alike need to be able to adapt or else be left behind. We do not even know what technology will be like in the future workplace, so students should be learning skills that allow them to be able to adapt to use future technologies and teachers must understand the latest trends in technology and find out what interests students. From the case studies, we can also see that there will always be problems without always having solutions presented to us. There will not be a single solution for all but different solutions depending on different situations.

Teachers are still the ones that guide the student’s learning and technologies are used as a way to improve teaching and learning. A good example of this is the use of calculators where when left alone wouldn’t teach students much but can make work much easier for everyone, so in this case the calculator is just a tool and that students must learn to use it. From the advantages and disadvantages, for technology to be used efficiently and to have significant changes in learning, we need to be able to change the school’s practice, the goals and materials, assessment policies, and teacher development. Not doing so would be like continuing to support the traditional practices. And while there are doubts about the costs or on the misuse of technology, there are much more benefits from using it for learning in the classroom and we must keep in mind that technology is the way forward just like authentic instruction. Another point is that it is not like we are always going to be using technologies in the classroom so teaching instructions can and should be balanced through having a balance of traditional and authentic instructions. Most importantly it is how teachers understand and use these technologies in the classroom, because how well teachers answer these questions will result in how well the technology can be beneficial to the students. We do know that technology is a very helpful tool in the classroom; we just need to understand it and be able to use it wisely.

**References**


About the Author

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Book Review


*Five Big Ideas for Effective Teaching* is ideal for people from the teaching field. Written by Wilson and Conyers, this book share with educators the “five big ideas” for effective teaching. They are connecting mind, brain, and education research to classroom practice. This includes the brain’s neurocognitive plasticity, learning potential, the dynamism of intelligence, the vital role of the brain and body, and metacognition intelligence or “thinking about what we think about”. Besides presenting the “five big ideas”, the authors also share educational research on the brain and its’ plasticity, challenges and opportunities teachers face in schooling, and various situations teachers will encounter while working in the profession.

One “big idea” discussed in the book is neurocognitive plasticity. Research has discovered that learning alters students’ thinking. This, in turn, changes the brain’s physical structure. Another “idea” is concerned with the potential of each student in the classroom, and recognizing that potential. Educators who recognize the learning potential of each student will be able to improve their teaching styles to more mentally stimulating activities and higher academic expectations. Furthermore, recent research suggests that intelligence is modifiable, and not rigidly fixed. Intelligence and the capability to critically think can always be improved regardless of age or gender. The body and brain work hand in hand in learning. As a healthy body sharpens the mind, it is essential for teachers to inform students to care for their bodies. Students’ metacognition should also be emphasized, where students are taught to monitor and regulate learning.

Rather than focusing on a student’s past or background, the authors recommend educators to emphasize students’ potential in grasping knowledge. A teachers’ attitude plays a big role not only in shaping a students’ academic performance but also their self-esteem; thus, a teacher should never label his or her students as the term dwells in a student’s mind, often prophesizing the student’s performance and dreams. This is harmful as intelligence not entirely prophesized but is malleable. Educators who read this book will see each student’s potential – high academic achiever or not. Every student, whether a high academic achiever or not, is smart and has the potential to become smarter through effective teaching and learning methods.

Though information found in this book is based on research, it is very “accessible”. Written in an optimistic note, Wilson and Conyers compel their readers to believe that they do hold the power to create a positive impact in their students’ lives. Each “big idea” is presented systematically linking brain research, plasticity, potential, and intelligence to efficient teaching in the classroom.

About the reviewer

Katleeya Jongsuksathaporn is an undergraduate student at AIU studying English with an emphasis in TESOL.
**Book Review**

Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners* (2nd ed.). Alexandra, VA: Summer Academics. 197 pp. $30

*The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of all Learners* gives an inside look of teachers’ success in classroom. The book answers the question of how teachers can become professional in the classroom by looking at many varieties. This book provides guidelines for teachers to work in classroom professionally by understanding and practicing differentiation in the classroom.

The practice of differentiation includes proper time management and resources, ample understanding of students’ background and skills, and a drive to make learning interesting.

Some of the important topics covered by the author include real problems experienced in the classroom and various approaches to implement differentiation. The author urged that teachers should help each student to move toward teaching that meets individuals at their points of readiness, interest, and learning profile. Being a teacher is not easy because one must understand many varieties to be successful in the classroom such as understand students’ needs as a way to help students have an interest in learning. Though this book provides support by presenting facts, opinions, and research that address the main point, there are some weaknesses, some of which include very subjective and incomplete arguments because of the lack of empirical evidence, as well as information from opposing ideas.

This book can be very significant for teachers who want to be successful in classroom. The author’s advice is very beneficial in that it will lead teachers to achieve success in their teaching practices. This book is highly recommended to students who want to be teachers in the future, especially in-service teachers so that they may be compelled to explore other pedagogical approaches to vary their teaching, as well as a means to self reflect.

**About the reviewer**

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Catalyst Publishing Guidelines

Institute Press (IP)
(Revised 2015)

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1.2. Manuscripts should be written in correct and standard academic English.
1.3. Manuscripts should be single-spaced.
1.4. Manuscripts should use Calibri font size 11.
1.5. Manuscripts should contain minimal formatting (bold and italics commands are acceptable).
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1.7. Manuscripts which involve tables/diagrams should submit the tables/diagrams in JPEG files and send the files as separate attachment (use a separate JPEG file for each table/diagram).
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4.2. Authors will be informed of reviewers’ comments as soon as they are available.
4.3. Authors will be given about 1 month to revise their papers (should that be necessary) and should return the revised papers to IP by the 1st of July/December.