

Out of the Cloister and into the Streets: Two Partnership Models of Integrated Praxiological Andragogy in Cross-Cultural Urban Ministry

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“Doing urban ministry today is a complex task because urbanization has created new multi-faceted and complex urban realities. Those who train urban workers — whether formally in Bible school or seminary, or informally in local church or para-church organizations — must ensure that their training programs are relevant for the task.”¹

There is a perpetual struggle in higher education between producing academics and practitioners in every field, and yet many academic institutions do not recognize the “skills gap” that their graduates and employers see.² Regarding cross-cultural ministry degrees most universities and seminaries seek to produce practitioners who are academically astute and can bring theory into practical work. Yet, education in cross-cultural urban ministry occurs mostly cloistered in seminary ivory towers, separated from the streets and cross-cultural context. There is no substitute for academic

theory, but if the desire is to produce practitioners, cross-cultural Christian urban ministry programs must look to models that foster an integrated praxiological andragogy to mitigate the skills gap of cross-cultural urban ministry graduates.

A change is necessary, and is emerging. This paper highlights two collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions and external ministries that model integrated praxiological andragogy in graduate cross-cultural urban ministry education. Each program is integrative, immersing students in a local urban context, and praxiological, providing applicable skills in context. These models affirm Ken Gnanakan’s hope for theological education, that it is “meant for preparing men and women for practical ministries,” and cut against the grain of how he perceives theological education, which “appears to be gauged by its academic rigors rather than engaging in real life contexts.”³

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Integrated Praxiological Andragogy (IPA)

Examining the cross-cultural ministry curriculum requirements at the ten largest schools affiliated with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS)⁴, most have cross-cultural practicum requirements averaging only six to eight-weeks of mentored experience. Such limited cross-cultural immersion is insufficient to truly learn experientially. Gnanakan writes: “If we believe we are preparing ministers for the real-life context, then their training would be incomplete without experiential learning. One of the primary tenets of integrated learning is the fusion of our training with the real life environment.”⁵ This is especially true for cross-cultural ministers who must be competent in applying ministerial training in unfamiliar contexts. Most institutions recognize the need for field-placement in order to grasp cross-cultural competencies and integrate theoretical knowledge. Practicum requirements provide opportunities to test intercultural theory and other competencies while interacting in another context. Yet, practicum are often distinct and isolated, so that they tend to lack integration. Integrated practicum, therefore must “break down the walls we build in our artificially segregated curriculum,”⁶ and “be related to the particular gift of the learner.”⁷

Paulo Freire and David Kolb emphasize the criticality of praxis learning, especially via problem-solving in context. Freire suggests that “problem-solving education makes [learners] critical thinkers.”⁸ Kolb stresses the importance of problem-solving through learning environments. He writes, “Affectively complicated learning environments are ones in which the emphasis is on experiencing what it is actually like to be a professional in the field of study... Behaviorally complex learning environments are those which the emphasis is upon actively applying knowledge or skills to a practical problem.”⁹ In this way practicum become integrated praxiological laboratories for learning.

Crucial to integrated praxiological andragogy is the development of field mentors as educators. Richard Slimbach notes, “Although the potential

for intercultural learning is great [via cross-cultural immersion], much depends on whether [students] receive the coaching and support necessary to make sense of and function effectively in their new environment.”¹⁰ Ideally, students would have a team of mentors in their problem-solving, integrated environment. At least one mentor on the team, whether assigned or discovered by the student, ought to be native to the context. Yet, for good overall learning, the student is also best served by a mentor from the student’s native context, presently immersed in student’s new context.

The field mentor is not passive to praxiological learning, but engaged with the student in problem-solving. Gnanakan, in the spirit of Freire, writes: “Integrated learning encourages the teacher as well as the student to be part of the learning process. Rather than a one-way, top-down narration, learning is a two-way interaction.”¹¹ Problems that will arise for the student will have new and unfamiliar components to the field-mentor as well. This is an opportunity to guide learning, but also provide the student an opportunity to inform and instruct the field mentor.

Exemplary Models

While cross-cultural urban ministry education must change from its cloister to the streets, there are programs that serve as good models for change. Azusa Pacific University (APU) has partnered with Urban Leadership Foundation¹² to create the Master of Arts of Transformational Urban Leadership (MATUL)¹³ specifically for cross-cultural ministers among the urban poor. William Carey International University (WCIU)¹⁴ has partnered with Latin America Mission’s (LAM) missions apprenticeship program, *Avance*,¹⁵ in Mexico City to educate urban ministers among a broader urban context by offering a Master of Arts of International Development. While the two models differ in focus and delivery from each other, they maintain an integrated praxiological andragogy for their graduate students through being primarily field-based, immersed in a local context, and supported mostly by field mentors in mutual problem solving

laboratories. The two partnerships focus on hard and soft skills, integrated with good theory in order to minimize the skills gap of the graduate upon completion of their program.

Azusa Pacific University & Urban Leadership Foundation's MATUL

Perhaps there is little more frustrating to those involved in ministry education than to be told they were teaching differently than Christ does. Viv Grigg, director of the MATUL program does so in his short white-paper, "The Radical Discontinuity of Jesus' Seminary in the Slums."¹⁶ His paper holds that academic approaches are out of touch for those who want to learn contextual theology among the urban poor. Richard Slimbach, a key voice in global field education models, took note of Grigg's integrated approach to urban transformation and leadership, and the two formed a partnership through APU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Program Structure and Intent

Slimbach writes, "The Master of Arts in Transformational Urban Leadership (MATUL) program aims to provide experiential and conceptual foundations for a generation of budding Christian internationalists intent on launching vocations dedicated to advancing God's shalom throughout the world."¹⁷ Grigg and Slimbach sought the need to educate in and around urban slum areas due to the increasing nature of urbanization¹⁸ corralling mostly rural poor into high-density, low-infrastructure areas; a situation that one third of the global urban population finds itself.¹⁹

The four key components to MATUL's integrative praxiological andragogy are that it is field-based, praxiological, combining blended delivery and field support. Foundational to an integrative praxiological andragogy is immersion. "While MATUL seeks to lay strong theoretical foundations from a variety of relevant disciplines, and values the role of serious contemplation on complex urban problems, it is not content with learning that

is restricted to the 'ivory tower,' safely sequestered from the painful realities of slum life."²⁰ Students, in growing in their understanding of urban leadership, befriend and listen to the stories of local residents. They imbed to be transformed alongside local residents applying their local resources and knowledge for transformation, yet integrate strong theoretical learning from the MATUL program. In this case theory is not divorced from the learning laboratory, but hypothesis are tested immediately, ultimately refining theory, seeking transformation.

A decade ago, a Master's degree almost completely field-based in an urban slum would have been rather difficult. Yet, with the rise and ease of access to technology, even in and around slum communities, the MATUL can be delivered in a blended format, linking student colleagues based in cities across the globe reflecting on and testing theory together in dialogue with their distinct contexts. Full-time professors have access to their students virtually, allowing for smaller teams to be dispersed over three continents and a number of cities. Yet, for the student, it all comes back to the day-to-day local context. Key to this is the support of locally assigned mentors who know the context and provide day-to-day support providing both local knowledge and pastoral care,²¹ as "living and learning in distressed environments is unlike any other educational activity in the intensity of emotional stress."²²

Jesus-style Seminary to the Slums

Freire writes, "If students are not able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge and to use the already acquired knowledge to unveil new knowledge, they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing."²³ Dialogue, or conversation, is the key piece to Grigg and Slimbach's andragogical method, based on what Grigg calls "transformational conversations," which is "a process of discerning truth through holistic storytelling."²⁴

A Jesus style seminary, according to Grigg, "involved action-reflection [praxis] more than phi-

losophy, and built from the stories of the people, proverbs, and parables as these interfaced with God's story and the conundrums of the trinity."²⁵ He criticizes the educational approaches of the historical seminary gleaned from Catholicism and the Reformation as being "descended from the Western Platonic academe" and "from a different philosophy and practice" from Jesus.²⁶ Jesus indeed knew of Greek philosophical methods of education, but chose a different way.²⁷ In this very issue of the *William Carey International Development Journal*, Thomas Schirmacher writes, "The best biblical model available for the preparation of future leaders is to be found in the way Jesus trained the twelve disciples..."²⁸

Jesus's method, as seen by Grigg, is that "he recruited learners around him and mentored them in action."²⁹ Grigg sets MATUL against traditional seminary education, stating, "Mentoring as a primary educational mode as against mentoring as an additional element in the course of didactic learning is rarely seen across educational institutions..."³⁰ This mentor becomes a facilitator in the local community, assisting in the development of transformational conversations. "Action-reflection education will need to be led not by an expert instructor but by an expert facilitator of reflection who can easily move back and forth from his/her base of expert knowledge to a mode of facilitative reflection on experiences."³¹ It then becomes a "local to global reflection process. Local experience, local reflection, followed by the facilitation of a conversation between that reflection and the global literature."³²

Being field-based and immersive, students gain experience during their education, rather than have to seek it out after graduation, mitigating the skills gap and making them employable upon graduation. MATUL, Grigg admits, has trouble proving its andragogical method as a theological degree to those trained in Platonic ivory tower andragogy, so has opted to focus the degree as leadership under the umbrella of the Global Studies, Sociology, and TESOL department.³³ Nonethe-

less, Grigg challenges seminaries, stating, "[I]f your school believes it should follow Jesus among the poor, remember how he was treated by the theologians of the day and muse carefully before you leap. You may enter the forefront of education and theology unwittingly, with all the conflict inherent in pioneering obedience."³⁴ His challenge is ultimately to take education out of the cloister and into the streets.

William Carey International University and *Avance*

The Christian Higher Education Futures Panel remarks, "Some of the new models we are brainstorming about today may need entrepreneurs not affiliated with an existing campus...Maybe new kinds of partnerships will emerge between an existing campus and a new venture."³⁵ WCIU's partnership with the non-profit mission immersion program, *Avance*, is one such partnership.

History of WCIU and Avance

WCIU was begun by Ralph Winter, and in its current form offers both a Master's degree and a PhD in International Development for those working cross-culturally with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and scholars from the Global South. WCIU partners with NGOs and requires all of its prospective students to be referred by a NGO recognized by WCIU. The school, as a university whose vision is to see "Jesus transform lives and societies," it recognizes faith-based NGOs and local churches.³⁶

Avance is a cross-cultural ministry training program based in Mexico City. *Avance* began as Spearhead, originally named by Ralph Winter, in the summer of 1972, and founded by Harry and Bernice Burke. Burke wanted a program where young adults would pursue evangelical ministry internationally, and wanted to model this evangelical ministry after the Peace Corps by immersing the students to serve the local community.³⁷ *Avance* hosts two programs, a two-month internship as well as a YearOut apprenticeship. Both programs

focus on immersion through homestays, working under local ministerial leadership, and ministering in the local language. For the purposes of this paper, *Avance* will refer to the YearOut apprenticeship.

Andragogical Approaches and Partnership

WCIU's andragogical approach is field-based, permitting NGO cross-cultural Christian workers to continue in their current employment or service, completing their degrees completely at a distance. According to WCIU's website, "The learning experience is designed to promote the application of foundational learning,"³⁸ allowing for theoretical interaction across the globe, while maintaining a local contextual perspective to integrate learning.

Incarnational relationship is the core andragogical method of *Avance*. Much like the MATUL program, relationship is crucial in learning intercultural competencies, which can only be truly done over time and through solidarity. Freire states: "Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those whom one is in solidarity."³⁹ Slimbach applies this to ministry, noting that, "Of all the great Christian doctrines, it is perhaps the Incarnation that has been most neglected in its pedagogical significance. Jesus didn't remain in a sequestered religious or cultural 'bubble'..."⁴⁰ *Avance* is intensely focused on practical learning through incarnational relationship; however, it has also incorporated reflection as well, including face-to-face coaching, literature reading and discussion, and other didactic activities seeking reflection for application. This praxis cycle happens organically, fusing global theory within a specific local context. *Avance* participants, placed in a variety of ministries, discuss not only theory in cultural contexts, but the differing ministerial contexts as well.

Avance participants come with specific areas of focus. Past participants have been involved in preaching and bible study ministries, rehabilitation of sex-trafficked girls, ministering to street children, university campus ministry, and community development among others. While placement can't

always match the specific interests of participants, field staff seeks to find ministerial placement that will be a close match. This follows Schirmacher's comment, "If we want to prepare people to use their gifts for the rest of their lives, then those gifts [and interests] must play a central role in a student's training."⁴¹ Participants gain ministerial experience in the reality of the cross-cultural context and the real lives of those they minister with. "Education must be adapted to life, not life to education," writes Schirmacher.⁴² This is especially true for education in context. While the participant's ministry and time immersed in context is limited to a year, education must be adapted to the life that they live. In urban ministry, especially among a myriad of ministerial options, socioeconomic contexts, and student learning styles, andragogy is tailored for integration of the student to their local ministerial environment. It is not easy to control, but, "Since the [participant's] situation has a strong influence on his [or her] ability to learn, theological training can never become too flexible."⁴³

Avance's core andragogical component is the mentor team, which consists of two assigned mentors and often results in a number of independent or interdependent mentors chosen by the participant throughout the course of the apprenticeship. *Avance* puts key emphasis on the one-on-one mentoring of the missions coach. Each student is assigned a missions coach who will serve as a combination of cultural mentor, spiritual director, and integrated educator. This person is familiar with the context that the student comes from, and is familiar enough with the local context to facilitate a problem-solving laboratory, learning alongside the participant, coaching through a variety of issues. "Besides a multitude of specialist instructors," advises Schirmacher, "every student should have his [or her] own personal tutor. Continuous 'soul care' and regular counseling should be common practice in theological education."⁴⁴ Another key mentor is the ministry leader, who comes from an indigenous leadership base. This person, all the more so, is aware of the culture and context, coaching the participant in contextually appropriate ways of minis-

try. *Avance* avoids Schirmacher's criticism of most theological education, which "may fail to provide either counseling or cooperative practical training by instructors in everyday [ministry] life."⁴⁵

The partnership between WCIU and *Avance* is a natural fit. As WCIU drew its students from faith-based NGOs and *Avance's* curriculum included many pieces of WCIU's Master of Arts of International Development, the two decided to partner together to synthesize a curriculum for *Avance* participants. *Avance* remains separate and distinct from WCIU as the degree is optional for participants, but those opting for the degree incorporate WCIU curriculum into the existing *Avance* curriculum, and take a course online from WCIU faculty. Participants gain from WCIU's distance delivery, and it's willingness to approve contextually appropriate changes in its curriculum for *Avance* to take the helm of participant learning. This increases the level of action-reflection in an integrated learning process for the participant. As *Avance* models a curricular partnership with WCIU, this paves the way for other faith-based NGO's to do the same, resulting in a more stable pool of applicants for WCIU and affordable education for NGO workers while continuing on the field.

Conclusion

Field-based and study abroad education is the future of higher education, at least in part. Ronald Morgan, director of ACU in Oxford, concludes that, "thoughtful and creative educators are recognizing that the study abroad setting offers almost unlimited potential for the kind of integrative, holistic learning they are seeking to facilitate on their U.S. campuses."⁴⁶ While this is a growth step for higher education in general, it is essential for cross-cultural urban ministry education. Integrative praxiological andragogy requires a shift from the ivory-tower cloister and from professor as hyper-specialist to mentor-based, collaborative, contextualized laboratories. The APU-MATUL and WCIU-*Avance* partnerships are replicable models of integrated praxiological andragogy that

mitigate the skills gap common in urban ministry by moving from cloistered ivory towers to provide "street smarts" in student learning.

Endnotes

1. Larry W. Caldwell and Enoch Wan, "Riots in the City: Replacing Nineteenth-century Urban Training Models with Relevant 'Urbanized' Training Models for the Twenty-first Century," *Reaching the City: Reflections on Urban Mission for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Gary Fujino, Timothy R. Sisk, and Tereso C. Casiño. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012), 97.
2. Max Nisen, "The Growing Skills Gap, Explained in Three Charts," *Business Insider*, December 8, 2012, <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-growing-skills-gap-explained-2012-12>, (accessed December 8, 2012).
3. Ken Gnanakan, *Learning in an Integrated Environment*, International Council for Higher Education (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2007), 46.
4. Association of Theological Schools The Commission on Accrediting, Factbook on Theological Education 2006-2007, pg. 5, <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/PublicationsPresentations/Documents/FactBook/2006-07.pdf>, (accessed November 19, 2012). Size measured by enrollment.
5. Gnanakan, *Learning in an Integrated Environment*, 48.
6. Ken Gnanakan, "The Integrated Learning Experience," *William Carey International Development Journal*, Vol. 2, Is. 1: Integrated Education, February 7, 2013, <http://www.wciujournal.org/journal/article/the-integrated-learning-experience> (accessed February 20, 2013).
7. Ibid.
8. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary Ed. (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2004), 83.
9. David Kolb, *Experiential Learning Theory: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1984), 198.
10. Richard Slimbach, *Becoming World Wise: A Guide to Global Learning* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2010), 100.
11. Gnanakan, *Learning in an Integrated Environment*, 118f.
12. <http://www.urbanleaders.org> (accessed February

21, 2013).

13. <http://www.apu.edu/clas/globalstudies/urbanleadership/> (accessed February 21, 2013). APU is not the only partnering school with Urban Leadership Foundation. Asian Theological Seminary also offers Master of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees in Transformational Urban Leadership. See <https://sites.google.com/site/atcourseofferings/center-for-transformational-urban-leadership-ctul> (accessed February 21, 2013).

14. <http://www.wciu.edu/> (accessed February 21, 2013).

15. <http://www.lam.org/serve/avance> (accessed February 21, 2013).

16. Viv Grigg, "The Radical Discontinuity of Jesus' Seminary in the Slums." http://www.apu.edu/live_data/files/250/urbanleadership_seminaryslums.pdf (accessed November 25, 2012).

17. Richard Slimbach, "A Modest Proposal for the Promotion of a Global Christian Peace Corps," http://www.apu.edu/live_data/files/250/urbanleadership_modestproposal.pdf (accessed November 25, 2012).

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19. <http://www.citiesalliance.org/node/2195> (accessed February 21, 2013).

20. Slimbach, "Christian Peace Corps."

21. Viv Grigg, conversation with author, March 22, 2012.

22. Slimbach, "Christian Peace Corps."

23. Freire, 19.

24. Viv Grigg, "Jesus'-style Seminary in the Slums." http://www.apu.edu/live_data/files/250/urbanleadership_jesusstyle.pdf (Accessed November 25, 2012). For further reading on this see Viv Grigg, *The Spirit of Christ and the Postmodern City*, Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2009.

25. Ibid.

26. Grigg, "Radical Discontinuity."

27. Grigg, "Jesus'-style Seminary."

28. Thomas Schirrmacher, "An Appeal for Integrated Education Models: 19 Proposals," *William Carey International Development Journal*, Vol. 2, Is. 1: Integrated Education, February 7, 2013, <http://www.wciujournal.org/journal/article/an-appeal-for-integrated-education->

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30. Grigg, "Radical Discontinuity," emphasis mine.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Christian Higher Education Futures Panel, "Eighteen Alternative Models for Private Colleges," November 1, 2012, unpublished manuscript emailed to author November 12, 2012.

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37. Harry Burke, "A Brief History of Spearhead," unpublished manuscript emailed to author June 8, 2012.

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39. Freire, 49.

40. Richard Slimbach, "Learning from the Slums: Study and Service in Solidarity with the World's Urban Poor," in *Transformations at the Edge of the World: Forming Global Christians through the Study Abroad Experience*, ed. Ronald J. Morgan and Cynthia Toms Smedley (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2010), 194.

41. Schirrmacher, "19 models."

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., emphasis mine

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ronald J. Morgan, "Toward Successful Transformations," in *Transformations at the Edge of the World: Forming Global Christians through the Study Abroad Experience*, ed. Ronald J. Morgan and Cynthia Toms Smedley (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2010), 233.

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Task 1 You are a member of the jury of the Social Issues Photo Contest, ask your partner 2 questions to get additional information not mentioned in the presentation or to clarify the presenter's point made during the presentation. (Dialogue; Time: 2 minutes). Task 2 You participate in the Social Issues Photo Contest. Social Issues Photography is a way to bring awareness to the various factors which affect our human life, our interactions with each other and with our environment in order to create social change. Look at the set of the photos you took for the contest (set 4) and be ready to tell Start studying Cross Cultural Psychology Chapter 2. Learn vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools. Studies that unpackage the contents of the global unspecific concept of culture into specific measurable psychological constructs and examine their contribution to cultural differences (peeling an onion). define: context variables. variables that operationalize aspects of culture that researchers believe produce differences in psychological variables. measured in unpackaging studies. what are the two procedures used to establish linguistic equivalence? (define each). 1. back translation- taking the research protocol in one language, translating it to another, then translating it back to the original.