

Leadership Formation and Theological Education: Assessing the Efficacy of Leadership Formation in Undergraduate Programs at Bible Schools

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Introduction

Many may have heard of Howard Hendrick's quote: "The greatest crisis in the world today is a crisis of leadership, and the greatest crisis of leadership is a crisis of character."¹ Numerous individuals share this sentiment, having witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of poor leadership in secular, church and Christian ministry contexts. John Maxwell echoes sentiments similar to Hendrick's, emphasizing the importance of effective leadership and asserting that "everything rises and falls on leadership."² If we agree with these statements, we must honestly ask ourselves: 1) Is the Church ascending or declining in its impact on the world? 2) Is the church becoming healthier and more robust in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission? 3) If the Church is losing her effectiveness, could this be attributed to poor church leadership, as suggested by Hendricks and Maxwell? 4) If theological institutions are tasked with producing Christian leaders, could the lack of effective leadership be a contributing factor to their output? 5) If so, what steps can they take to address this issue?

This paper aims to explore these questions and offer some insights from a holistic perspective on the effectiveness of leadership formation within undergraduate programs at Bible schools to foster ongoing reflection and the enhancement of educational practices for equipping Christian leaders in ministry. However, due to page limitations, this article cannot cover all aspects deeply.

¹Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 18.

²John Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Within You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), ii.

The Effectiveness of the Church

The purpose of the Church's existence is *Missio Dei*. The mission is to continue Jesus' work on earth and fulfill the task given by God. The question is: Is the Church carrying out this task effectively? The answer is "no" according to Mike Ayers. In the first chapter of his book, *Power to Lead*, Ayers points out that the church in America is declining in attendance and influence.³ He shows the same statistics to prove his point:

- One-fifth of USA today—and a third of adults under thirty—are religiously unaffiliated - Pew Research Center
- The number of unchurched (anyone who hasn't been to church in the last six months, excluding weddings and funerals) has jumped from 30 percent in 1990 to 43 percent today - George Barna and David Kinneman⁴

He also states the statistics on divorce, out-of-wedlock births, abuse of drugs, pornography, etc., have indicated the church has declined her moral influence on the country.⁵

This phenomenon is not limited to America but is also observed in other parts of the world. Perry Shaw asserts, "In reality, the church across the globe struggles to fulfil the mandate. Both internal and external challenges to the church blur its vision and stifle its effectiveness."⁶

George Barna highlights poor leadership as the primary reason for the church's loss of influence and effectiveness.⁷ Dominic Yeo emphasizes the importance of good leadership when he states, "Leadership is essential in every arena of the world we live in . . . whatever scope and realm, the great leadership is a critical contributor to its success."⁸ The church requires effective leaders to lead and guide the church in fulfilling its mandate. Shaw writes, "The church is in desperate need of faithful men and women who can guide the people of God to confront

³Mike Ayers, *Power to Lead: Five Essentials for the Practice of Biblical Leadership* (Spring, TX: RBK Publishing Group, 2018), 1.

⁴Ibid., 2.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2014), 20.

⁷Ayers, *Power to Lead*, 2.

⁸Dominic Yeo, "Ingredients of Leadership" in *The Pastor and Theological Education: Essays in Memory of Rev. Derek Tan*, eds. Siga Arles, Lily Lim, Tan-Chow MayLing, Brian Wintle (India, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 72.

and overcome the challenges they face, and courageously and clearly fulfil their mission mandate.”⁹

Theological Education and Leadership Training

The church is in desperate need of effective leaders and effective leaders are in desperate need of effective equipping. Ayers laments the reason why the church is not as effective as it should be is because the church leaders are “ill equipped to address the problems at hand.”¹⁰ Leadership training is greatly needed for all ministers whether lay leaders or clergy. The responsibility of theological education is to create training strategies for leaders to meet the needs of the church. Shaw recognizes the important role of theological education in training the church leaders and he states, “The mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the mission of the Church.”¹¹ He further comments:

A missional-ecclesial foundation for theological education suggests that our schools exist in order to prepare men and women who are capable of guiding the church to be effective in fulfilling the mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord throughout the earth. Note the preparation of men and women is not the ultimate goal, but a significant means towards the accomplishment of the greater goal of seeing empowered churches which significantly impact their communities, such that the marks of the kingdom of God are evident in the world.¹²

However, some studies show that theological education is not training leaders effectively. In the twenties, a study of over one thousand churches in thirty-two countries by Natural Church Development (NCD) was conducted. The study shows “there is a direct inverse correlation between denominational growth and educational expectation: the more education a denomination expects of its pastors and educators, the more that denomination evidences decline.”¹³ The research team found that “only 42 percent of pastors in high-quality, high-growth churches had seminary training, while in low-quality, low-growth churches 85

⁹Shaw, *Transforming*, 20.

¹⁰Ayers, *Power*, 2.

¹¹Shaw, *Transforming*, 20.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 17.

percent had graduated from seminary.”¹⁴ This study showed that formal theological leadership training did not produce the desired “product” since it had a negative correlation to both quality and growth of churches.

Derek Tan, former president of TCA College, Singapore, also recognizes the inadequate training for the students, and he states, “there are a number of graduates who strongly feel that their training did not adequately prepare them for the ministry. . . . The failure of our graduates to function effectively in ministry in churches has prompted a number of churches to conduct their own training programs for their workers and pastors.”¹⁵ This sentiment aligns with R. H. Welch’s findings from his survey of seminary graduates entering church ministries, who face the reality of church ministry and wish they had received more leadership training in their theological education.¹⁶

To investigate the validity of Welch’s statement, I reviewed the websites of several theological seminaries in Singapore and found a notable lack of comprehensive leadership courses within their curricula. Specifically, there is a scarcity of courses that focus on topics such as Personal Leadership Development, Team Leadership, Pastoral Leadership, Organizational Leadership, Cross-Cultural Leadership, Change and Conflict Management, Ethical Leadership, Leadership Development through Mentoring and Coaching, and Contemporary Issues in Leadership.

These critical areas of leadership are underrepresented in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, suggesting a potential gap in the formation of well-rounded and effective leaders for contemporary ministry contexts.

Some Possible Reasons

Theological institutions fall short in training leaders for several possible reasons. First, the institution may not be sure of the purpose of its existence or may have lost sight of the purpose. According to Hardy: “The primary task of theological education is to shape the lives of those who are followers of Jesus so that they can be used by God as leaders

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Derek Tan, “Theological Education in Asia: Present Issues, Challenges and Future Opportunities,” in *The Pastor and Theological Education: Essays in Memory of Rev. Derek Tan*, eds. Siga Arles, Lily Lim, Tan-Chow MayLing, Brian Wintle (India, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 86.

¹⁶R. H. Welch, *Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), vii.

and influencers for the good of his kingdom.”¹⁷ However, theological education may have become more focused on knowledge and academics like a university. Ferris, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr. state that there is a difference between the mission of theological education and the university:

Research universities exist to preserve and advance cultural and scientific knowledge; Seminaries exist to equip leaders who, in turn, “equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12-13). When seminaries orient to the university and the scholarly guild, they equip graduates for the guild rather than for ministry in the church. The seminary can be successful only by orienting to the church.¹⁸

The institution may have been isolated and separated from the church. Tan questions how relevant theological education is to meeting the needs of the church and he states, “We must not forget that theological institutions are responsible and accountable to the end-users: the church, ministries, and mission agencies with whom their graduates will serve. Our products (graduates) must fulfil their intended reason for being.”¹⁹

Second, the curriculum may be not ministry competent. Tan questions,

Is our curriculum designed by scholars and for scholars? The challenge in our curriculum is not a question of academic or scholastic competency but contextual relevancy. . . . The design of theological education cannot be institution or academic oriented only but to incorporate church or mission oriented elements in the curricula.²⁰

To develop church leaders in the theological institution, the institution needs to understand the nature and function of church leadership. The graduates are ill-equipped for leadership functions such “as inspiring vision in the church, aligning and empowering members in places of service, recruiting and equipping leaders, resolving conflict, building church cultures, bringing changes, and structuring the church for greater effectiveness.”²¹

¹⁷Steven A. Hardy, *Excellence in Theological Education: Effective Training for Church Leaders*, ICETE Series, edited by Riad Kassis (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016), 20.

¹⁸Robert W. Ferris, John R. Lillis, and Ralph E. Enlow, Jr, *Ministry Education That Transforms*. ICETE Series, edited by Riad Kassis. (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018), 5.

¹⁹Tan, “Theological Education,” 88.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ayers, *Power*, 3.

Third, Tan pointed out that: “It could be the curriculum used is outdated and does not reflect the concerns of the ministry done in today’s context.”²² Hardy has received much feedback that theological education does not effectively equip its graduates and questions, “Is a traditional curriculum capable of imparting the practical pastoral and leadership skills that people need for ministry?”²³ Ayers also adds:

These institutions convey the message that simply knowing about the nature of God and the doctrine of faith is sufficient for a leader in the church. Pastors rely upon teaching, doctrine, and theology to mature the church and impact the people. Many ministers first coming out of seminary see their primary role as that of “teaching.” Teaching is not the chief activity they fulfill in day-to-day work. . . . Those who go into ministry end up discovering that the greatest needs of their congregations and the greatest demands upon their time concern functions of leaders.²⁴

Fourth, Tan commented that the theological educational institution’s philosophy should be re-examined. As the world is getting more complex, re-engineering theological training is needed, the transmission of cognitive knowledge is no more the only mode of training and Tan suggests: “We need to be innovative in searching for a variety of educational processes that seek to bridge the gap between theory and practice.”²⁵

Curricular Questions for the Theological Education

Churches are in desperate need of leadership, not managers or administrators (although managing and administrating are important), and leadership is in desperate need of effective educational formation. To develop a leader, theological educators need to understand what church leadership is and how they can learn to think and act theologically. Robert K. Martin states:

When approaches to church leadership are multiplying exponentially and when congregations and denominations are grasping frantically for the next best thing in leadership

²²Tan, “Theological Education,” 87.

²³Hardy, *Excellence*, 85.

²⁴Ayers, *Power*, 2.

²⁵Tan, “Theological Education,” 87.

development, is it not the responsibility of reflective practitioners and teachers to boldly commit the socially unpardonable and ask a question of theological method and education: how do we understand what church leadership is and does; and perhaps more importantly, how might we best come to know and describe the process by which church leaders (including ourselves) investigate, reflect, and act theologically?²⁶

Curriculum development in Leadership Formation begins with an understanding of what a Christian leader is, the qualifications of a Christian leader, and what leadership skillsets a leader needs to lead and pastor a church.

What is a Christian leader? Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini define a Christian leader as “a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given purpose.”²⁷ Expanding upon this, my definition is: “a Christian Leader in the Christian Organization is God’s servant, shepherd, and steward with Christlike character and capability, called by God to influence His people to accomplish God’s mission by the power of the Holy Spirit.”²⁸

The above definitions indicate that a Christian leader is someone with godly character and competence, called by God to influence his people to accomplish God’s mission. While good character is essential, it is not sufficient on its own to be an effective leader. Psalm 78:72 (NIV 2011) illustrates this balance: “And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.” David exemplified leadership with both godly character and competency. Malphurs and Mancini highlight a significant shortfall in leadership training in the theological institutions, stating, “Competency is based to a great degree on knowing what to do. . . . This is where seminarians come up short far too often. They are trained in crucial areas, such as language, theology, and church history, but receive little training if-any-in [sic] leadership.”²⁹ They stress the importance of leadership development, defining it as “the intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every

²⁶Robert K. Martin, “‘Mind the Gap’: Closing the Distance between Theological Method, Theological Education, and Practical Theology for Religious Leadership,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 2.

²⁷Audrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 20.

²⁸William Toh, *Leading and Following: The Effective Subordinate Leaders in Christian Ministry* (Baguio City, Philippines: Sambayanihan Publishers, 2021), 136.

²⁹Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 148.

level of ministry to assess and develop their Christian character and acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills.”³⁰

In addition to understanding what defines leaders and their role, theological educators also need to identify the specific leadership knowledge and skill sets required for an effective church leader. They should consistently evaluate whether they are indeed producing leaders who are godly, competent, and relevant.

When designing the curriculum for theological education, it’s crucial to include elements that can shape students into effective leaders. Shaw proposes three curricular questions that are valuable for every theological educator to consider. The first question is “What an ideal church might look like, a church that serves the *Missio Dei* faithfully and effectively in the local context, particularly in the sort of context where our students are likely to serve.”³¹ The second question is about identifying contextual challenges and Shaw states, “It is only as we have a clear articulation of the internal and external challenges to the church that we are in a position to build a curriculum that prepares our students to help the church address these challenges.”³² The third question pertains to the characteristics of an ideal Christian leader, which may be asked as follows:

- What knowledge and thinking skills are necessary for the faithful Christian to connect text with context and context with text, and to continue growing and learning throughout the years ahead?
- What character and attitude traits are needed in the leader so that others will follow?
- What skills are necessary so that the eternal message can be incarnated in word and deed in the leader and those who led?³³

The Leadership Formation in Theological Education

Leadership formation in the theological institution should be holistic, going beyond mere knowledge. For undergraduates, leadership formation should encompass the holistic development of students’ S.E.C.K.S. – spirituality, emotion, character, knowledge, and skills. While theological education may not cover all aspects comprehensively in a short period, it remains an excellent platform for shaping the S.E.C.K.S. of future leaders.

³⁰Ibid. 23.

³¹Shaw, *Transforming*, 21.

³²Ibid., 22.

³³Ibid., 23.

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation in theological education is pivotal as it will affect the students' effectiveness in ministry. Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr. comment, "Ministry effectiveness flows out of familiarity with God's Word and personal intimacy with God. If the graduates of our seminaries are to bring transformational change to the churches and communities in which they minister, they must be men and women who know God intimately."³⁴ They further add, "If the ministries of our graduates are to bring the transforming power of the gospel into the lives of those in their communities, we must provide an environment that cultivates spiritual discipline."³⁵

Spiritual disciplines are "the means by which we become more like Jesus."³⁶ Yan and Gregg add, "They help us see how we can become, by the power of the Holy Spirit, an effective, love-filled community of believers growing into the heart of God."³⁷ Theological education should include teaching undergraduates about spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reading and listening to the word of God, fasting, and service, and fostering spiritual habits among the undergraduates. This approach enables the Holy Spirit to work in transforming their hearts.

Emotional Maturity Development

Emotional maturity cannot be separated from spiritual maturity.³⁸ Emotions can affect people in ministry. Malphurs and Mancini see the importance of having emotional health and state, "to develop emotional well-being and establish a spiritually healthy climate for ministry, leaders must cultivate their own emotions and those of the people with whom they minister."³⁹ According to Godwin, emotionally mature and differentiated leaders possess the following "reason muscles" which can be better described as interpersonal muscles:

1. Awareness (the "ability to [notice] actual personal [shortcomings]")

³⁴Robert W Ferries, John R. Lillis, and Ralph E. Enlow, Jr., *Ministry Education*, 71.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 71.

³⁶Tan Siang Yan and Douglas H. Gregg, *Disciplines of the Holy Spirit: How to Connect to the Spirit's Power and Presence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 31.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 31.

³⁸Peter Scazzero, *The Emotional Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 16.

³⁹Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 150.

2. Empathy (“the ability to be bothered if your personal [shortcomings] hurt others”)
3. Humility (the “ability to acknowledge potential personal [shortcomings]”)
4. Responsibility (the ability to admit personal [shortcomings]“)
5. Reliability (the “ability to correct personal [shortcomings]”)⁴⁰

In my book, I state, “Thriving subordinate leaders learn to lead and manage themselves before they lead and manage others.”⁴¹ One of the areas they need to manage is emotions. They must know about their emotions and take charge of them instead of letting their emotions control them”⁴² There are four steps to understanding and managing a leader’s emotions:

1. Learn to recognize what emotions they are feeling.
2. Identify the emotions, for example, anger, anxiety, sadness, fear, shame, discouragement, surprise, joy, love.
3. Begin to manage the emotion.
4. Explore why they are experiencing certain emotions.⁴³

A leader’s mood can significantly impact an organization and its followers. Leaders must pay close attention to the emotional signals that they send. It is crucial for them to develop and manage a high degree of positive emotional intelligence for their well-being enabling them to thrive in their ministry. In Daniel Goleman’s study of leadership effectiveness, he concludes, “only one-third of a leader’s effectiveness lies in the areas of raw intelligence and technical expertise.”⁴⁴ The other two-thirds comprise the dimensions of emotional intelligence, which includes “qualities such as self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, zeal, self-motivation and empathy.”⁴⁵

Emotional intelligence goes beyond self-awareness and managing a leader’s own emotions; it also involves recognizing and working with others’ emotions. This means that a theological institution could be an excellent place to develop the undergraduates’ emotional intelligence as

⁴⁰Alan Godwin, *How to Solve your People Problems: Dealing with Your Difficult Relationships* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2008), 83.

⁴¹Toh, *Leading and Following*, 185. A subordinate leader is both a leader and a follower at the same time.

⁴²Ibid., 186.

⁴³Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 150.

⁴⁴Taken from Reggie McNeal, *Practice Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 55. See D. Goleman, R. Boyatzis, and McKee, *A Primal Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

⁴⁵Ibid.

the undergraduates will experience different emotions as they study, and as they relate to their faculty members and classmates. It would be a place to help the undergraduates grow in emotional maturity to become differentiated leaders with the following characteristics:

The capacity to separate oneself from surrounding emotional processes; the capacity to obtain clarity about one's own principles and vision; the willingness to be exposed and to be vulnerable; persistence in the face of inertial resistance; and self-regulation in the face of reactive sabotage.⁴⁶

Character Formation

All Christian leaders should lead and shepherd the people with godly character. What is godly character? Malphurs defines character as “the sum total of a person’s distinct qualities, both good and bad, that reflects who he or she is. Godly character encompasses those qualities that Scripture identifies with the Godhead or that God prescribes.”⁴⁷ He comments, “Godly character is the foundation of Christian leadership. . . . Character is the most crucial factor in all relationships”⁴⁸ (see Gal 5:19, 22-23 and 1 Pet 1:13-16). Mannoia and Walkermeyer comment:

Godly character is more valuable than good ministry skills. Both are important, but lack of godly character has far greater consequences. Godly character without good ministry skills is a slow train headed in a good direction. Good ministry skills without godly character are a fast train headed for a washed-out bridge—people are going to get hurt.⁴⁹

Malphurs and Mancini agree and state, “Leaders must be people of good character,” and they lament, “In the circles of theological education, character development in students is often assumed. Educators stress the importance of character development but assume that students are working in this area—a poor assumption that has proved disastrous for some of our top Christian leaders.”⁵⁰ The theological institution can be an excellent place for character formation.

⁴⁶Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. Rev. ed. (New York: Church, 2017), 96-97.

⁴⁷Malphurs, *Being Leaders*, 18.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Kelvin W. Mannoia and Larry Walkermeyer, *15 Characteristics of Effective Pastors* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 155.

⁵⁰Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 147-148.

The Scriptures 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Pet 5:2 provide us with the characteristics and qualifications of church leaders. George Barna expands further in Table 1:⁵¹

Table 1.

The Christlike Character of a Leader		
A servant's heart	Even-tempered	Loving
Honesty	Joyful	Wise
Loyalty	Gentle	Discerning
Perseverance	Consistent	Encouraging
Trustworthiness	Spiritual depth	Passionate
Courage	Forgiving	Fair
Humility	Compassionate	Patient
Sensitivity	Energetic	Kind
Teachability	Faithful	Merciful
Values-driven	Self-control	Reliable
Optimistic	Teachable	

Theological education should encompass character development for students, fostering continuous growth in their knowledge of God and their openness to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit within them. Jack Hayford says it well, “My character is not shaped by the sum of my information but by the process of a transformation that is as unceasingly needed in me.”⁵² Character development cannot be simply taught in the classroom. It also requires transformational teaching and modeling. Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow Jr., comment:

The goal of ministry training should be obedience to truth, not simply recall of truth. Obedience to truth opens the life of a believer—and most critically, a seminary student—to the transformation of the Holy Spirit. When faculty members teach for obedience to truth, they create environments in which ministry education can be transformative.⁵³

⁵¹George Barna, “Nothing is More Important Than Leadership,” in *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on The Art of Leading God's People*, ed. George Barna (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 23.

⁵²Jack Hayford, “The Character of a Leader,” in *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People*, edited by George Barna (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 71.

⁵³Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr, *Ministry Education*, 6.

Knowledge Development

Malphurs and Mancini state, “Knowledge impacts the leader’s intellect, emphasizing his or her ability to acquire and process content or information. Whether old or new, knowledge of the ministry area is essential for leaders,”⁵⁴ and they further add, “Competency is based to a great degree on knowing what to do.”⁵⁵

The key question to theological education is: What foundational knowledge is required for undergraduates to lead and minister effectively? Malphurs and Mancini have given a list of what a leader needs to know which I find applicable to undergraduates:

1. Leaders must know God (Romans 6-8).
2. They must know themselves (their divine design, strengths, and weaknesses).
3. They must know people (this involves the use of tools, such as the Personal Profile and the Kiersey Temperament Sorter for training purposes).
4. They must know how to study the Bible and have a general knowledge of the Bible and theology.
5. They must know how to pray.
6. They must know and agree with the organization’s statement (core values, mission, vision, strategy, and beliefs or doctrine).
7. They need to know how to think and plan strategically.
8. Those at higher levels must know how to preach, raise money, develop staff, and perform weddings, funerals, and baptisms.⁵⁶

One area I would like to add to this list is that undergraduates must know how to follow their leaders. Most undergraduates are subordinate leaders who are both leaders to their followers and followers of their leaders. They must practice effective followership. Effective followership is about the follower’s willingness and competency to follow their leader.⁵⁷ Through my research, I’ve discovered that for a church or Christian organization to grow and thrive, it requires subordinate leaders who exhibit competent leadership and followership at every level. So, while I appreciate John Maxwell’s famous quote, “Everything rises

⁵⁴Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 148.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 149.

⁵⁷Toh, *Leading and Following*, 48.

and falls on leadership,” I believe it’s incomplete. I would add that “Everything rises and falls on leadership and followership.”⁵⁸

Skills Development

Malphurs and Mancini state, “The leader’s skills affect the leader’s actions or behavior. . . . Leaders must be able to put into practice what they learn.”⁵⁹ This highlights the importance of practical application in leadership development. While knowledge is valuable, effective leadership requires more than just knowing; it involves action and implementation.

Malphurs and Mancini categorize two leadership skills. The first is hard or task skills such as preaching, teaching, values discovery, vision and mission casting, strategizing, reflecting, organizing, etc.⁶⁰ The second is soft and relational skills including listening, networking, conflict resolution, decision-making, problem-solving, team building, mentoring, and inspiring/motivating.⁶¹ These are just a few examples of the skills and qualities essential for effective ministry leadership. Continual learning, self-reflection, and mentorship can also contribute significantly to leadership development in a ministry context.

Vehicles for Leadership Formation in Theological Education

Malphurs and Mancini state that there are four training types for leaders – learner-driven training, content-driven training, mentor-driven training, and experience-driven training.⁶² I would like to modify their four training types into three empowering vehicles for Leadership Formation in Theological Education and I call it C.M.E Empowerment – Content Empowerment, Mentor Empowerment, Experience Empowerment.

Content Empowerment

Theological education provides formal, in-depth training for students in Bible study skills, languages, theology, preaching, teaching, leadership skills, and more. It emphasizes knowledge transfer, and the curriculum guides the training process which typically occurs in

⁵⁸Ibid., xxii-xxiii.

⁵⁹Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 149.

⁶⁰Taken from Malphurs and Mancini who listed Task Skill Inventory in their book Appendix D, 262.

⁶¹Malphurs and Mancini have listed Soft Skill Inventory in their book Appendix E, 263.

⁶²Ibid., 155.

a classroom setting, where students engage in learning activities and assignments. Theological education heavily relies on this content-based equipping approach. Malphurs and Mancini comment, “Practically speaking, most leadership training falls into this category, since gaining a basic knowledge of the ministry task at hand is an important starting point for any ministry.”⁶³

However, theological educators should learn and be trained to teach for transformation, moving from theory to practice. While there are various teaching and learning models and principles, educators must go beyond the transfer of information and collaborate with God “in forming our students for transforming ministries in the places to which he calls them.”⁶⁴

Mentoring Empowerment

Leadership is often caught more than taught, meaning that it is not solely acquired through classroom instruction. Mentoring plays a vital role in leadership development, especially for emerging leaders like undergraduates. Hardy states, “The best way to help potential leaders to grow in character and ministry skills is through finding experienced leaders with skills and willingness to serve as mentors.”⁶⁵ Mentors provide them with guidance, coaching, and real-world insights that go beyond what can be taught in the classroom. This personalized approach helps students develop essential leadership skills and qualities in a practical context, contributing significantly to their growth and development as leaders.

Mentoring can take place in various settings, including the classroom, one-to-one sessions, coaching sessions, small group discussions, project groups, field education, and internship settings.

In theological education, faculty members can serve as mentors alongside their teaching roles. They go beyond mere information transfer, transforming students by modeling the knowledge they impart. This approach bridges theological and theoretical understanding with practical application in students’ lives and ministries.

Jesus, the greatest teacher, not only taught the truth but also modeled to his disciples how to live the truth. Faculty members, following Jesus’ example, model spiritual disciplines and spiritual life formation. Jesus modeled a life of faith, prayer, humility and servanthood, compassion and

⁶³Ibid., 153.

⁶⁴Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr., *Ministry Education*, 59.

⁶⁵Hardy, *Excellence*, 22.

selfless love, holiness and kingdom priority, and intentional obedience.⁶⁶ Ferris states, “Although seminary education too often reflected a Hellenistic pursuit of information and a Pharisaic obsession with detail, we can and must redirect ministry education towards obedience to truth taught and modeled.”⁶⁷

Experience Empowerment

This empowerment vehicle provides the students with on-the-job training enabling them to gain hands-on experience in ministry. This aspect of education emphasizes practical application and the doing of ministry work. The content-focused empowerment in theological education can sometimes be overly academic lacking sufficient hands-on-ministry experience for undergraduates. According to Kouzes and Posner’s research, formation education and training rated a “distant third” in comparison to hands-on “trial and error” experience.⁶⁸ They concluded that “There is just no suitable surrogate for learning by doing. . . . The first prescription, then, for becoming a better leader is to broaden your base of experience.”⁶⁹ Therefore, theological educators should offer more platforms for students within the school to serve, as well as opportunities to serve in churches and other ministries, to enhance their practical experience and leadership development.

Malphurs and Mancini agree with them, but they stress the environment also plays an important part of formation and when they state, “The uniqueness of the environment is that it is always influencing people, most don’t realize it.”⁷⁰ Theological education should provide a nurturing environment for leadership formation by creating a good culture that promotes kingdom values, right thoughts and attitudes, and right actions.

Conclusion

Theological education plays a crucial role in shaping godly and effective leaders, especially given the significant leadership crisis highlighted by Howard Hendricks, John Maxwell, and many others. This crisis reveals that theological education is not producing leaders as effectively as it should. As the Church faces spiritual warfare against the

⁶⁶Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr., *Ministry Education*, 19-21.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁸Taken from Malphurs and Mancini, 154.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 156.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

kingdom of darkness, developing leaders capable of expanding God's kingdom becomes even more critical.

In this paper, I have proposed that leadership formation in undergraduate theological training must address the holistic development of students' S.E.C.K.S.—spirituality, emotion, character, knowledge, and skills. I have also identified three empowering vehicles for leadership formation: C.M.E—Content, Mentor, and Experience. Effective leadership development requires more than mere knowledge transfer; it must be rooted in real-world ministry contexts. Therefore, integrating mentorship and experiential learning is essential.

Theological educators must urgently review and adapt their curriculum and teaching methods to ensure they produce leaders who can effectively lead the Church. By embracing these changes, theological institutions can better equip leaders to make a meaningful impact in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

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