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"We Are Glad You Are Here": Teaching in the Local Church in Cambodia[1]

by Darin R. Clements

Introduction

I had the privilege of preaching for a church's first Easter service in Cambodia's Kompong Speu Province in 2011. The Church in Cambodia was still almost entirely in its first generation at that time, so celebrating Easter was a new idea for many fellowships. This particular church was doing so for the first time, after I had challenged the pastors in my Pentateuch class to develop culturally appropriate holidays that honored Scripture and connected them to the Church worldwide. When my student invited me to preach, I was delighted. When he asked me how to conduct an Easter service, I encouraged him to talk to a Cambodian pastor I knew who had already been celebrating Easter for a few years.

The pastor opened the service by welcoming everyone in the culturally appropriate way, acknowledging guests who had come from other Christian groups in the area. Then he said, "And we want to welcome all those of you from the community who are not Christians. We are glad you are here with us today." I admit I was shocked, for in my culture we do not speak to guests like that in worship services because we prefer to minimize the differences in order to avoid embarrassing people publicly. When communion was taken that morning, he politely instructed his Buddhist guests to abstain. No one was offended because Cambodian culture looks favorably on people who live according to their religious identity.

I recount this experience here because it illustrates how the Assemblies of God of Cambodia (AGC), as a first-generation church in a majority-Buddhist nation, presents the Good News.[2] While churches in other majority-Buddhist nations work to create cultural bridges, many Christians in Cambodia follow the practice of presenting God's promise

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[1]This article presents the research found in Darin R. Clements, "A Multiple Case Study of Approaches to Nonformal Christian Education among Assemblies of God of Cambodia Churches" (PhD diss., Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines, 2019).

[2]The AGC is one among many groups that take the approach I am describing here.

of salvation on its own terms without using Buddhist forms. They often address the concerns of the surrounding Buddhist worldview in very intentional ways, but they do so without direct confrontation or methods that would be considered disrespectful to the national religion.

This approach was evident in my study of nonformal Christian education (CE)[3] in four AGC churches. They did not use Buddhist forms of pedagogy or Buddhist vocabulary,[4] even when their teaching was specifically directed toward children or adults outside the church.[5] Instead of adjusting to the majority religion, the churches in this study developed their approach to teaching with reference to the national educational system. As the research findings show, these churches function as teaching communities with counter-cultural notions about the teaching-learning process.

Context of the Study

Cambodia is a majority-Buddhist nation that has enshrined Buddhism as the state religion in its constitution. Official statistics vary, but they typically place the percentage of adherents well over 90% of the population.[6] These statistics are based on national ID cards, not actual adherents. They do not take conversions into account, nor do they seem to fully represent non-Buddhist groups like Muslims and animists. Making allowance for these factors, the Joshua Project reports that 82.2% of Cambodians are Buddhist.[7] Regardless of the country's religion mix, Buddhism dominates the worldview of ordinary Cambodians, shapes the Khmer language, and even accounts for the abundance of holidays in the calendar year.

The first 400 years of Christian church history in Cambodia saw very little growth; however, such has not been the case over the last few decades. From the arrival of the Dominican Priest, Gaspar de Cruz, in

[3]Nonformal Christian education refers to CE that is intentionally structured but lacks formal assessments and formal accreditation.

[4]Christian terms like 'God', 'prayer', 'sin', 'salvation' and 'eternal life' are appropriated from commonly known Khmer words. However strongly supported by Bible translations, they have been invested with meanings that often do not match their meanings for Buddhists. In my experience, Christians simply use the terms with little effort to explain the differences for the benefit of Buddhist listeners.

[5]Teaching for the community addressed topics like farming techniques, parenting, hygiene, and child safety.

[6]For example, the World Factbook puts the Buddhist majority at 97.9%. See "Cambodia," The World Factbook, last modified February 16, 2021, Cambodia—The World Factbook (cia.gov).

[7]"Cambodia," Joshua Project, http://joshuaproject.net/countries/CB (accessed February 19, 2021).

the 16th century[8] to the beginning of evangelical missions by the Christian & Missionary Alliance in 1923,[9] Christianity struggled to take root in the nation. It continued to grow slowly throughout much of the 20th century but never exceeded a few hundred evangelical believers.

Then, starting in 1970, the Church experienced remarkable growth (up to as many as 10,000 people) as missionaries were given freedom to work by the besieged, pro-West Lon Nol government between 1970 and 1975.[10] However, after Phnom Penh, the capital city, fell in April 1975, the Church was decimated by the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979), then further suppressed under Vietnamese occupation (1979-1989). In 1989, only an estimated 200 Christians remained in the country.[11]

But in 1990, things began to change; according to the Joshua Project, Christian adherents presently make up 3.4% of the population, with the annual Evangelical growth rate being 8.8%.[12] Interestingly, that turn-around parallels the progress in national development, including strong gains in the education sector. Expansion of the education system has been one of the key items in the National Strategic Development Plan, resulting in impressive increases in primary and secondary school enrollments. Universal access to primary school is now within Cambodia's grasp, although teacher quality remains a concern.[13]

Considering these development indicators plus the general growth and organizational development of the Cambodian Church since 1990, it would seem reasonable to expect to find local churches developing effective approaches to CE. However, the lack of such development is indication of a serious gap in the picture of the Church in Cambodia. Thus, this research sought to describe, explore, and compare nonformal CE among a set of AGC churches that has achieved a relatively strong level of CE development.

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[8]"Church's History," Catholic Cambodia, http://catholiccambodia.org/eng/community-history (accessed December 4, 2014).

[9]Brian Maher and Seila Uon, *Cry of the Gecko: History of the Christian Mission in Cambodia* (Centralia, WA: Gorham Printing, 2012), 17.

[10]Steven Hyde, "A Missiological and Critical Study of Cambodia's Historical, Cultural, and Sociopolitical Characteristics to Identify the Factors of Rapid Church Growth and Propose its Future Prognosis" (PhD diss., Bethany International University, Singapore, 2015), 46.

[11]Barnabas Mam, *Church Behind the Wire* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2012), 346.

[12]"Cambodia," Joshua Project, http://joshuaproject.net/countries/CB (accessed January 19, 2021).

[13]"Net primary enrollments increased from 83.8% in 1992 to 96.4% in 2012, and net secondary enrollments from 16.6% in 2000 to 35.1% in 2012." See Prateek Tandon and Tsuyoshi Fukao, *Educating the Next Generation: Improving Teacher Quality in Cambodia*, Directions in Development: Human Development (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), 1, http://dx.doi.10.1596/978-1-4648-0417-5 (accessed June 9, 2015).

The Assemblies of God of Cambodia

Since this research was delimited to the AGC,[14] a brief overview of its history is an important piece of context for the findings that will be discussed. The first resident Assemblies of God missionaries arrived in Cambodia from the United States in June 1990 under protocols with the Cambodian government to establish two children's homes, to open a medical clinic, and to teach English.[15] Over the next few years, additional AG missionaries arrived from France, the Philippines, Australia, and Malaysia. At times in its history, the Assemblies of God Missionary Fellowship has been comprised of as many as 14 nations, including missionaries from North America, Central America, Northern Europe, and across Asia.

The AGC was formally organized in 1997 having 12 recognized pastors and 12 churches;[16] it was led by a five-member national committee with Kheok Srin serving as chairman. By year 2000, the AGC numbered about 20 congregations with an estimated 1,000 constituents.[17] In 2010, it further organized into six districts with locally elected committees. By 2013, it reported having churches in all but four provinces out of a total 24 cities and provinces. And in 2016, the AGC numbered 202 churches,[18] 59 formally recognized pastors, 183 leaders, and 13,360 members' (5,944 adults and 7,416 children).[19]

Statement of the Problem[20]

The phenomenon of recent church growth in Cambodia without concurrent development in discipleship programs or nonformal Christian education raises many questions, especially considering the rapid development of the nation's education system since 1993[21] and an almost national obsession with formal education as a means of social mobility and family security. This research attempts to address these two gaps by describing, exploring, analyzing, and understanding the nonformal CE

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[14]Clements, 17.

[15]Carolyn Dorsey, "Information Regarding the Founding of the Assemblies of God Work in Cambodia" (Springfield, MO, May 2005).

[16]National Executive Committee of the Assemblies of God of Cambodia, "Presentation AGC Info 2012" (Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2012).

[17]Clements, 13.

[18]Includes all levels of development.

[19] National Executive Committee of the Assemblies of God of Cambodia, "Report of Churches of Assemblies of God of Cambodia 2015," (Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2015).

[20]Clements, 4-5.

[21]The current constitution was promulgated in 1993, opening the way for massive foreign assistance in educational development.

approaches of four AGC churches representing two different socioeconomic situations.

Significance of the Study[22]

This research and its findings are significant in two ways—transferability and the literature gap. The first is that significance lies not in their *generalizability* but in their *transferability*. Generalizability requires a representative sample, whereas transferability "refers to the fit or match between the research context and other contexts as judged by the reader."[23] The goal was to particularize the research and bring out the 'Khmerness' of the cases in order to make a contribution to thinking about Christian education from a Cambodian context.

The findings should prove transferable to three contexts. The first and second contexts are the AGC (the primary stakeholders of the research) and the wider Christian community in Cambodia because the teaching ministries of local churches have not developed to that extent that their numerical growth has. The third context is the development of nonformal CE in similar socioeconomic situations and educational environments. Churches in socioeconomic and educational contexts like Cambodia encounter obstacles at a fundamental level when they begin to develop an approach to nonformal CE. They face dynamics that differ from the West, where overall education levels are good and Sunday School was once a powerful force for spiritual formation and community education.

With regard to the literature gap, the literature generally lacks a lens for thinking culturally about and conducting CE in contexts like Cambodia. An abundance of good CE literature has been produced by the West and is utilized in much of the rest of the world. This literature strives to work with current educational philosophy and aims at universal principles. The problem for contexts like Cambodia, however, is that these theories and approaches were primarily developed in and for western socioeconomic situations where people have high levels of literacy, strong national education systems, relatively healthy economies and sufficient resources for curriculum and teacher training.[24]

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[22]Clements, 21-23.

[23]Linda Dale Bloomberg and Marie Volpe, *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map from Beginning to End*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 113.

[24]For a full discussion of the literature, see Clements, 29-99.

Research Design[25]

The design of this research followed the multiple case study approach of Robert Yin. According to Yin, "Case studies are the preferred method when (a) 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context."[26]

The research design began with this central question directed toward a set of cases: "What approaches to nonformal CE have been developed by AGC churches?" The cases were then described, explored in depth, and analyzed through six procedural sub-questions over a series of phases.[27] The four cases included two cases each from two socioeconomic situations—the capital city and provincial location. The primary criterion was that each church had succeeded in developing a sustained approach to nonformal CE. Data were collected using ethnographic methods in order to have both emic and etic perspectives of the AGC approaches to nonformal CE.[28] Table 1 provides an overview of the research design following the procedural sub-questions.[29]

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[25]Clements, 24-27.

[26]Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th ed., "Applied Social Science Research Methods," ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog, vol. 5 (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009), 2.

[27]John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, 4th ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2014), 134-135.

[28]Ibid., 470-471.

[29]The value of social science research depends on the reader's ability to audit the credibility and dependability of the research from which findings have been drawn. For a full explanation of the research methodology, see Chapter 3 of "Research Methodology" in Clements, 100-136.

Table 1. Research Design Overview[30]

	Central question: *What approaches to nonformal CE have been developed by AGC churches?*
Case selection, informed consent	
Data collection	Sub-question 1: *How are approaches to nonformal CE organized in each case? What is the rationale for each organizational approach?*
	Sub-question 2: *How did the current approaches to nonformal CE among the cases originate and then develop over time?*
	Sub-question 3: *How are teachers recruited, developed, and resourced in each case? What ideas about teaching and learning influence this process?*
	Sub-question 4: *What are the perceived contributions of the approaches to nonformal CE to the health and mission of each case?*
Focus groups (member checking, additional perspectives)	Sub-question 5: *How do approaches to nonformal CE among the cases reflect the educational context?*
Cross-case analysis	*Sub-question 6*: *How do approaches to nonformal CE among the cases compare across socioeconomic situations?*

Presentation of Findings[31]

This multiple case study of nonformal Christian education among AGC churches yielded 12 findings in four categories, which I used to construct a descriptive model. Figure 1 presents the simple four-level model for thinking about nonformal CE in Cambodia constructed from those findings. The transferability of the model lies in its potential use as a lens for thinking about nonformal CE in other contexts. Figure 2 at the end of this section is the full descriptive model of approaches to nonformal CE among AGC churches developed from the findings.

[30]Clements, 24.
[31]Ibid., 266-278.

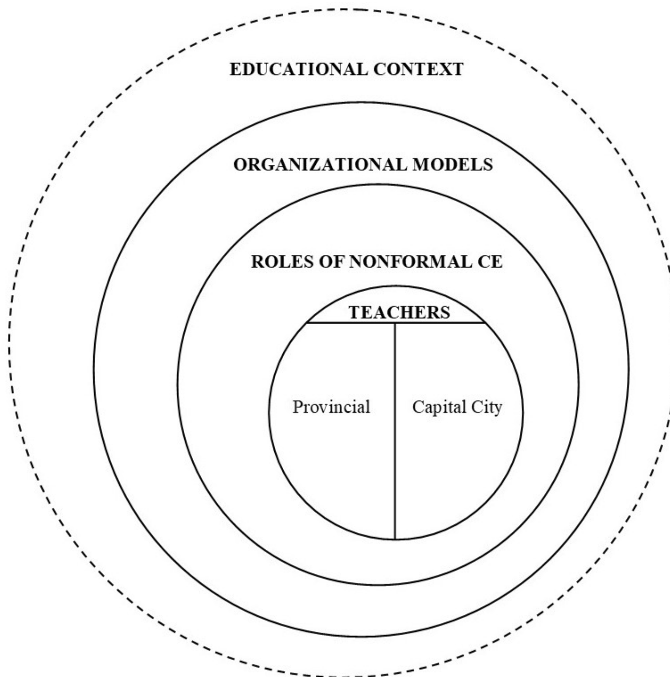

Figure 1. A four-level model for thinking about nonformal CE in Cambodia[32]

Organizational Models and Nonformal CE

> ***Finding #1:*** The congregations in this study functioned like small churches in which nonformal CE pervaded organizational models and dominated church activities.[33]

Even though they were among the largest and most well-developed congregations in the AGC, the cases did not have CE departments. Rather, they operated like small churches with a high level of integration between programs and a deeply vested leadership that was involved in all areas of church life.[34] Nonformal CE was one of the pervasive

[32]Ibid., 268.

[33]Ibid., 271.

[34]Mark Edward Simpson, "Christian Education in the Small Church," in *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 159-166.

elements of church life and accounted for a large portion of weekly and annual activities.

I am addressing organizational structure first because the leadership of each church determined the values and policies to be carried out in every other category. The organizational structures expressed the leadership's values through the qualifications, appointment, and equipping of the teachers. The qualifications of teachers expressed ideals about Christian life and ministry that the church wanted to perpetuate. The process of teacher appointment reaffirmed those values and empowered teachers to carry out their ministry under the leadership's authority. I am listing Findings #5, #6, and #7 here because they demonstrate the connection between the organizational models and the teachers (also see Figure 2 at the end of this section):

> ***Finding #5:*** The top leadership of the cases in this study were directly responsible to appoint nonformal CE teachers.
> ***Finding #6:*** Regarding teacher selection, the cases in this study valued genuine personal faith, faithfulness to the church, submission to leadership, and evidence of a gift and love for teaching. Secondary considerations included teaching experience, education levels, and Bible knowledge.
> ***Finding #7:*** The cases in this study trained children's teachers informally by having the new teachers work with experienced teachers and semi-formally by sending all teachers to seminars.[35]

Roles of Nonformal CE

The continuum of roles examined by this study ranged from internal (i.e., focused entirely on people within the church) to mixed (i.e., focused on people outside the church for their benefit and with a view to bringing them into the church) to external (i.e., focused on people outside the church for their benefit without regard to affiliation with the church). The focus of the nonformal CE in the cases was found to be primarily internal. Typical for Pentecostal congregations, the Bible was the authority and primary source of lessons, with discipleship flowing from that Bible-focus through application to daily living. This emphasis on practical faith was critically important to both the leadership and the teachers.

[35]Clements, 273.

> ***Finding #2:*** The nonformal CE of the cases in this study had a strong internal focus that emphasized Bible knowledge, discipleship and personal faith through nurture.[36]

Personal faith through nurture (as opposed to crisis-conversion experiences) as a primary role of nonformal CE was one of the most critical findings of this study. The emphasis on personal faith meant that individuals could not simply become members by application or by physical birth into a Christian family. Somehow, without altar calls in Sunday services and teachers inviting students to *tvay kluon* ("give themselves") to Jesus in class, people were coming to personal faith. That experience of personal faith was validated through public testimony, faithful participation in church life, and water baptism.

The nonformal CE of the cases had external foci as well. Education was one of their primary means of engaging the surrounding community. They accomplished this role two ways—(a) through formal education in the form of pre-schools, Christian grade schools, and youth outreaches offering supplemental education, and (b) through lessons on health, hygiene, civic morals, family dynamics, and agricultural development. Some of these efforts were for the benefit of the community and for evangelism, while others were purely for the benefit of the community in the name of Jesus. Although all four churches in this study engaged in external CE efforts, the provincial churches had a stronger level of social engagement, especially through their village cell groups, than did the capital city churches.

> ***Finding #3:*** The cases in this study used education as one of their primary means of social engagement.
> ***Finding #4:*** The provincial cases in this study had a stronger level of social engagement through nonformal CE than the capital city cases.[37]

Nonformal CE Teachers

Findings #5, #6, and #7 have already been included above as a point of interaction between teachers and organizational models. Passing over Findings #8 and #8a for the moment, I now turn to the circle in Figure 2 (at the end of this section) labeled 'Teachers'. That circle includes four general differences between teachers in provincial and capital city cases. The dynamics undergirding these differences are expressed in Findings #9 and #10.

[36]Ibid., 274.
[37]Ibid., 275.

> ***Finding #9:*** Educational and economic opportunities affected the availability and longevity of nonformal CE teachers.
> ***Finding #10:*** Children's ministry was a function of the youth ministries in the provincial cases.[38]

The arrow pointing away from the provincial teachers in Figure 2 is dashed to indicate general conditions that can affect the availability and longevity of teachers. 'Limited opportunities' meant that youth must leave the community for higher education and employment. Even so, young people bring an energy and an enjoyment of teaching children that seems to be absent in the older generations. Following this dynamic, both of the provincial churches made teaching children's classes one of the main functions of their youth ministries. As a result, children's classes comprised a significant portion of their nonformal CE activity. On the other hands, adult classes received much less attention, being designed more to provide regular fellowship or to respond to felt needs. By contrast, the capital city churches had teachers from across the generations and regular classes for all ages and groups. They also had fewer opportunities for youth to begin serving through teaching.

Reflecting on the Educational Context

Figure 1 above depicts the educational context as encircling the other three nested levels of the model. Figure 2 at the end of this section shows how the organizational models and the teachers interact with the educational context in two different ways. At the bottom of the model, the arrow coming up from the box labeled 'Educational Context' toward 'Teachers' shows that the educational context provides teachers with their formal education. Using secondary education completion for comparison, Finding #11 notes that the overall education level of the teachers in the cases was relatively high:

> ***Finding #11:*** The education level of all teachers across the cases was high compared to national statistics. At least 70% of teachers had completed or were in the process of completing secondary education.[39]

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[38]Ibid., 275-276.

[39]Ibid., 277. In 2016, the Cambodian government reported an upper secondary education completion rate of 6%. See National Institute of Statistics, *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2016* (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Ministry of Planning, October 2017), 48, https://www.nis.gov.kh/index.php/en/ (accessed November 26, 2018).

Findings #12 and #12a are expressed in two locations in Figure 2. The opposing arrows between the 'Educational Context' boxes and the 'Organizational Models' at the top and the 'Teachers' at the bottom show that both the leadership and the teachers had negative perspectives of what they considered to be common teacher models and attitudes in the government education system at the primary and secondary levels. Their rejection of those norms was intentional and thoughtful.

> ***Finding #12:*** The focus groups rejected the norms for teacher attitudes and teacher-student relationships that they perceived in the national school system as unacceptable for teaching in the church.
> ***Finding #12a:*** They also rejected aspects of the national school system that they perceived as harsh, authoritarian, and de-humanizing in favor of a holistic approach to nonformal CE that is characterized by warm, encouraging relationships between teachers and students.[40]

Lastly, Findings #8 and #8a were formulated from the perspectives of both the teachers and the focus groups regarding ideal teacher models. They express values that run contrary to the common formal educational experiences of the people in these churches (Finding #12a). I have placed them at the end of this explanation of the model because they draw the entire model together around the teachers.

> ***Finding #8:*** The teachers and leadership in the cases valued teacher models that emphasized teacher competency and responsibility, student growth and success, and caring relationships between teachers and students.
> ***Finding #8a:*** They rejected teacher models that emphasized knowledge transmission without attention to student development and that depicted unrealistic teacher involvement in the lives of students.[41]

Teachers are the main force of nonformal CE. They carry out the mission of the church in tangible ways and embody the values of Christian life and thought that the church wants to cultivate and pass on. The cases in this study valued teachers who felt that teaching was a responsibility that requires competency and knowledge. In other words, teachers must have something to share with their students. All the cases rejected the mechanical transmission of knowledge and skills as being

[40]Clements, 277.
[41]Ibid.

inadequate for teaching in the church because it engaged just head and hands while leaving out heart (i.e., spiritual and moral character). Though often imperfectly realized, their ideal CE teachers love to teach, love their students, and feel the weight of responsibility to share God's Word in such a way that the students' lives are transformed, they grow to maturity in their faith, and they're ready to serve according to God's plan for their lives.

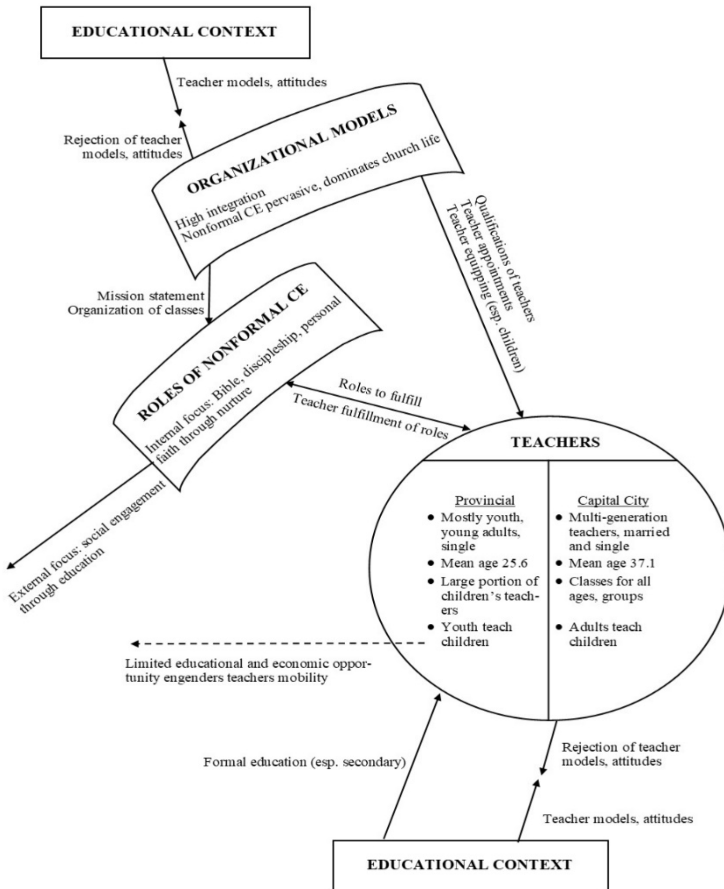

Figure 2. A model of approaches to nonformal CE among AGC churches[42]

[42]Clements, 272.

Implications for Nonformal CE in Similar Contexts[43]

The findings of this multiple case study point to at least eight implications regarding nonformal Christian education among ACG churches. Some of these implications reflect positive findings from the data, while others reflect areas that could be strengthened. All are possible areas of transferability for churches with similar dynamics or in similar contexts. The eight implications that the findings revealed are as follows:

1. CE does not have to be a department in the church.

The literature I reviewed tended to address issues related to the departmentalization of CE in the local church because such was a natural progression for churches in the West.[44] As the churches became more sophisticated, they offered increasingly specialized program choices, which had to be maintained by people having specialized skills. In contrast, none of the cases in this study had a CE department or even a CE committee. Rather, nonformal CE pervaded their organizational models and activities in highly integrated ways.[45] I would offer the observation that all these cases were 'teaching communities' [46] at heart; thus, I'd be surprised to see them develop CE departments as churches in the West have done.

2. Teaching is a good way to engage the community.

Teaching is natural to AGC churches. My field notes are full of reflections on how the research case churches taught through songs, testimonies, exhortations, sermons, ceremonies, and classes. When churches are genuine teaching communities, they can use their gift of teaching to help their communities—from literacy to educational support to social needs.

3. Prioritize the personal faith of teachers in the teacher-selection process.

I was surprised that the cases in this research prioritized genuine personal faith over biblical literacy in the selection of teachers. This choice was more than a pragmatic one made by a first-generation church. Indeed, it was the opposite of looking for 'warm bodies' to teach. The

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[43]Ibid., 287-290.

[44]See Mark W. Cannister, "Organizational Models of Christian Education," in *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Michael J. Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 150-157.

[45]See Clements, 190-192 for a discussion of the data.

[46]Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 124.

case churches knew that vibrant, personal faith and a love for teaching would naturally be accompanied by a desire to know the Bible more; they also knew that the teachers would share that faith and their interest in the Scriptures with their students. Teachers cannot pass on what they do not possess; thus, personal faith is of vital importance.

4. Make teacher development an ongoing priority.

Teachers in formal school systems are usually required to participate in in-service training on a regular basis, in addition to the formal training they received to become teachers. In contrast, because most teachers in local churches are untrained volunteers, the leadership is responsible to provide basic training for new teachers and, hopefully, occasional training as their teaching ministry grows.

Most of the teachers in the cases in this research had been teaching for less than three years, which indicates that the churches were faced with continuous turnover. The stage of life of the volunteers teaching children was the main reason for this dynamic. There are many good reasons for youth and young adults to be involved in teaching children. Churches that want to cultivate this kind of volunteer-teaching ministry need to be proactive about training to ensure both the quality of teaching and a satisfying, fruitful experience for the volunteers.

Although church leadership may be able to do the training of teachers, there are many other good options, such as seminars and workshops. One excellent approach used by the cases in this study was to send teachers for specific-curriculum training. Some of the best teachers I observed gained their skills from curriculum workshops. Also, leadership assigned new teachers to work with experienced teachers, which is good if the experienced teachers are skillful. However, choice of mentors is important because mentors can only pass on what they themselves possess, both the good and the not so good.

5. Provide training for all teachers in the church, not just children's teachers.

When we talk about teacher training, the discussion can easily move towards children's teachers to the neglect of youth and adult teachers. Those who teach these groups are typically untrained volunteers as well. Training should provided for all teachers and include philosophy of the ministry of teaching, basic teaching skills that are appropriate to the group they teach, the teacher's spiritual disciplines, and biblical literacy.

6. Contextually appropriate curriculum is important.

Many teachers in this study said they had difficulty understanding, preparing, and explaining lessons. However, those who had a curriculum

with which they felt comfortable reported being more confident in their teaching and connected their students to the Bible more effectively. In contrast, those who created their own lessons, taught from material not designed for CE classes, and/or taught the stories from a children's Bible tended to be unclear as to the main point(s) of their lessons and were less effective in connecting the biblical text to daily life.

Notice, in defining curriculum, that I chose the words 'contextually appropriate' instead of the word 'contextualized', which implies a curriculum that uses cultural forms like as artwork and story-telling techniques. I am recommending something more mundane. Context-appropriate curriculum is easier for teachers to understand as they prepare and is more natural to use as they engage their students.

7. Youth *can* teach children.

With good supervision and mentoring, youth can be very effective as children's teachers. Many of the youth in this study said they loved teaching children. They also said that they experienced much growth in their faith as they prepared the lessons, prayed for their students, and tried to "live so that my life teaches."

The provincial churches had made teaching children one of the main functions of their youth ministries. In contrast, social stability of the city churches seemed to make it more difficult to connect the youth ministry and the children's classes; however, the youth who were involved made good contributions to children's classes and grew in their faith as they did so.

8. Learn from the educational context.

The churches in this study benefited from their nonformal CE context by evaluating what they perceived to be negative models. In other situations, a more formal educational context can provide good pedagogical principles and models for teacher-student relationships that match biblical ideals, make sense culturally and fit a church's style. It would be wise for churches to learn from good models in all levels of formal education, in adult education programs and in the educational approaches of other Christian traditions.

Conclusion

Teaching is one of the most basic functions of the church. As a Pentecostal denomination, the Assemblies of God-Cambodia has a high view of Scripture and a high expectation that God still speaks through his Word today. They read the Bible, listen to the Bible, sing passages from the Bible, study the Bible, and call the Bible their daily spiritual

food. Thus, it is not surprising that this first-generation church in a Buddhist-majority context simply presents the Bible on its own terms when proclaiming the Good News in their communities.

I still have questions about why the church growth I witnessed during 22 years in Cambodia (1997-2019) has not been accompanied by stronger growth in the ministry of teaching. The reason why the four churches represented in this research stand out from the norm is because they have cultivated a culture of teaching that strengthens the faith of their people as well as helps their communities. These four taught me much about teaching in the local church that has implications beyond the context of Cambodia. It is my prayer that what I learned from them can be useful to help other churches develop a culture of teaching as well.

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