Outcome-based Ministerial Preparation—A Case Study
by
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The 1997 General Assembly passed legislation that was purported to transform the way ministers were educated in the Church of the Nazarene. The legislation called for an outcome-based educational process rather than the traditional content-based process. It recognized the cultural realities of different world regions and allowed for cultural adaptation of educational programs. The new legislation required a partnership between the educational provider and the local church to assure that candidates have opportunity to apply their new knowledge in real ministry settings. One final component of the legislation was the requirement for life-long learning of all ordained ministers.

This paper will attempt to explain the basic tenets of outcome-based education, and show how curriculum development projects following the1997 General Assembly action illustrates an outcome-based approach to ministerial preparation.

Three alternatives for developing curriculum[1]

Through much of western history the dominant method for determining what should be taught and learned in schools could be described as a *body of knowledge* method. This would be like inviting all of the theology experts in the world to attend a conference where each would describe how he or she organizes his or her knowledge. Then, this group of theologians would synthesize an inherent structure of the body of knowledge that could be used to communicate theological knowledge to new learners. This inherent structure would emerge from the content, give learners a way to organize new information, and assist teachers in making decisions about how to teach theology.

An alternative method for developing curriculum can be described as *ways of thinking*. In western universities many graduate programs are designed through this method when a graduate student sits with his or her major professor and together they lay out a course of study. The objective of this method is to expose the graduate student to a variety of different professors. The particular topic of the course is secondary to examining how the professor thinks about and communicates the content and processes of the course. The graduate student's objective is to synthesize these varied *ways of thinking* into a disciplined method of thinking and learning that enables the student to make a lifelong contribution to his or her chosen field.

Most laymen learn theology using this method. The layman hears a lifetime of sermons and Sunday school lessons presented by a variety of pastors and teachers. Each pastor has a different way of thinking about, selecting, and illustrating the topic of the sermon. The quality of the layman's understanding is directly related to the pastors' ways of thinking and skills in communicating theological concepts. Because of chance in where the layman attends church and the pastors who serve during that time, the quality of this educational process can vary widely.

A more systematic method for deciding what should be taught and how it should be taught should produce more predictable and consistent results. One such method follows the

outcome-based education model.[2] In outcome-based education, all programs and instruction are designed to produce specific lasting results in learners by the time the learner leaves the program.[3] Focus is shifted from the content to the learner. Determination of what the learner should be like, what he or she should be able to do, and what he or she should know following the learning experience guides development of the curriculum.

An outcome-based curriculum model

A key element of outcome-based education is a clarity of focus around significant, culminating, exit outcomes that are defined by each educational provider.[4] These outcomes are agreed on prior to designing instructional activities and guide decision-making. There must be an explicit relationship between any learning experience and the ultimate outcomes to which that experience is essential. Activities are included because they assist learners in reaching the outcomes. Learning is intentional.

In an ideal outcome-based educational system, available time and resources are expanded so that all learners successfully reach the exit outcomes. Within Christian education the goal should be that every individual learner reach his or her highest potential. Educational designers maintain consistent high expectations that 100% of learners will succeed in the program. These ideals are established as goals of the curriculum development process.

Educators are generally pragmatists. They know that 100% success may be unattainable but they establish a high goal because they know that they will never reach a goal that is higher than the one they set. If the goal were 70% success, then 70% would be the most one could hope for. Therefore, 100% success is the goal of outcome-based education.

Educational goals, curriculum, and instruction

Understanding of the outcome-based curriculum development model may be enhanced by a discussion of the distinction between process and product. A process consists of one or more activities or events. For example, instruction is a process because it involves a series of events intended to lead to some learning outcomes. A product on the other hand, is something that is produced by a process. An instructional plan is a product that results from the instructional planning process. The plan is a description of instructional events, methods and materials.

Educational goals and curriculum can be described in terms of product and process. Educational goals, the cumulative effect of actual intended or unintended learning outcomes, are products of a goal-setting process. Likewise, curriculum is defined as what is to be learned. Curriculum is the product that results from the curriculum develop process.

There is a relationship among educational goals, curriculum and instruction. The curriculum indicates what is to be learned. Educational goals indicate why it is to be learned. And, the instructional plan indicates how to facilitate learning.[5]

This relationship can be represented by a Curriculum/Instruction model adapted from Posner and Runitsky, *Course Design—A Guide to Curriculum Development for Teachers.*[6]

Curriculum/Instruction Model
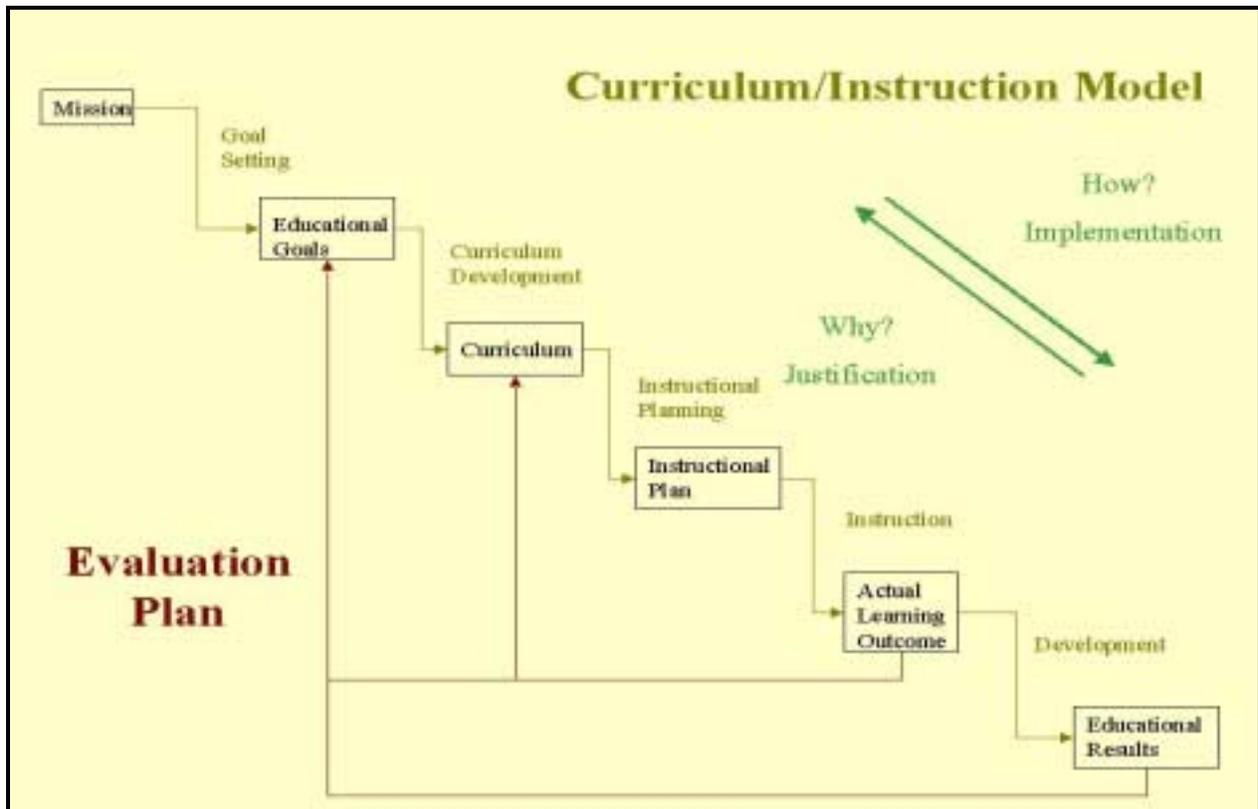
Within this model boxes represent products and arrows show processes that result in those products. All processes and resulting products described by the model flow from the mission statement for the educational program. To understand how each step in the program is to be implemented, one would follow the model from upper-right to lower-left. Justification for why a certain component exists or why a certain process is being followed can be found by going from lower-right to upper left. For example, a given instructional plan is put in place because of the curriculum that has been defined and that specific curriculum is used because of the educational goals that have been established.

An evaluation plan is included in the model. Summative evaluation is conducted by examining long-term educational results and comparing those results with the educational goals that were defined. Formative evaluation measures actual learning outcomes and compares them to the curriculum. If the comparisons do not show results that are consistent with the intended results, then adjustments can be made in the instructional plan to produce actual outcomes that match intended outcomes.

A Case Study: The Breckenridge Process

During the 1980's many different voices expressed dissatisfaction with ministerial preparation in the Church of the Nazarene. Some ministers were well prepared for ministry and made good pastors. Others were good people but were not performing well in assigned positions. There was a gap between what was expected from graduates of the educational program and the

actual outcome or performance of the graduates. Educators, church leaders, district superintendents, laymen, and many of the learners themselves asked why the performance gap existed.

About the same time new research into how people learn had caused major changes in education. New paradigms or models were being developed to prepare professionals in different fields to adapt to rapidly changing professional environments. Nazarene Office of the Ministry, predecessor of Clergy Services, jointly sponsored a series of meetings at Breckenridge, Colorado USA to talk about ministerial education.

The purpose of the meetings, conducted between 1989 and 1997, was to develop a coherent, comprehensive program for preparing ministers to serve the Church of the Nazarene in North America.[7] The Breckenridge meetings brought together all interested stakeholders including church leaders, educators, laymen, ministers, and other professionals.

After careful consideration participants chose an outcome-based curriculum that allowed for cultural adaptation with a defined approval process. The adopted plan recognized that more than classroom learning was required to prepare ministers. A provision of the plan required partnering of the educational provider and local congregations to prepare learners for ministry. The learner needed a supervised experience with a local church where application of classroom learning could occur.

Ministerial preparation gets the learner ready to begin ministry. As the learner gains additional experience and maturity he or she must continue learning over his or her lifetime. The plan required continuing educational experiences for all ministers.

Mission

In an outcome-based curriculum model a mission statement directs all decisions. The mission statement for ministerial preparation adopted by the General Assembly was to equip ministers for a lifetime of effective ministry so that they may
- "respond to the Great Commission of Christ to 'go and make disciples of all nations'" and
- "advance God's kingdom by the preservation and propagation of Christian holiness as set forth in the Scriptures."[8]

Educational Goals

Once the mission statement was adopted educational goals needed to be written. Educational goals describe the long-range results of the educational process—they describe a minister in the Church of the Nazarene. The educational goals for ministerial preparation are summarized by three words—be, know, and do.[9] These words represent goals in the kind of person the minister should be, what the minister should know, and what the minister should be able to do.

An arrangement of the educational goals into a triangle with *be, know,* and *do* at the points has been suggested.[10] *Be, know,* and *do* help define characteristics of the minister. These characteristics are supported by a call to ministry, a passionate burden for the lost, and obedience to the Holy Spirit. While the triangle is shown as an equilateral triangle, growth of the minister may result in different sides growing at different rates or one characteristic being emphasized at different points in the minister's career. God is the focus of the minister's life and He directs growth that occurs over the minister's lifetime of service.
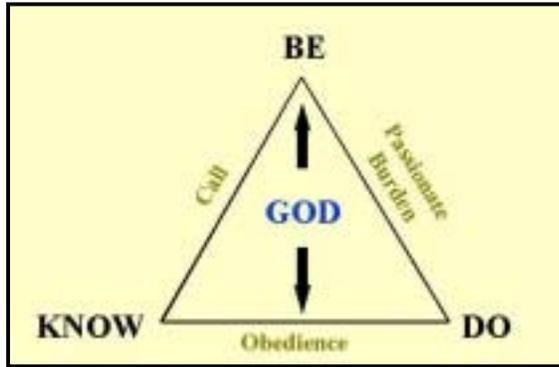
Curriculum

Based on the mission and educational goals, the curriculum was defined through a series of *ability statements* that were divided into four categories—content, character, competency, and context.[11] The *Manual* describes these four curricular areas in paragraph 424.3. *The USA Sourcebook for Ministerial Development* further delineates these descriptors by stating 132 explicit abilities that a candidate for ordination should be able to demonstrate.
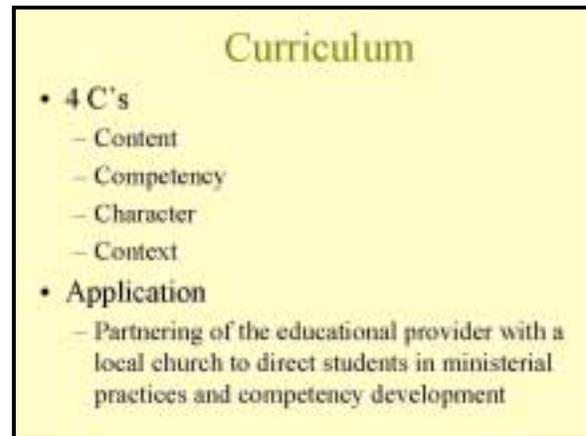
The educational goals and curriculum categories are directly related. The *be* educational goal is described by character ability statements, *know* by content, and *do* by competency. Context ability statements represent that the minister must work in a specific culture or context.

Another provision of the curriculum is that a partnership must exist between the educational provider and a local church to direct students in ministerial practices and competency development.[12] Breckenridge participants understood that most professional development programs now contain a strong practical component where learners are encouraged to practice their new knowledge and skills in real-life situations. These internships and field-experiences must be well supervised by practicing professionals. In a ministerial development program the practicing professionals would be ministers and pastors of local churches. The local church has an intense interest in the men and women who graduate from these programs and should have a direct impact on how the programs are designed and conducted.

Instructional Plan

It is important to distinguish between the curriculum to be presented and the methodologies used to deliver the curriculum. Many different methodologies or delivery systems can be used to meet the instructional needs of learners. Some examples of deliver systems

include campus-based classroom instruction; extension classrooms; supervised directed study; audio, video, or computer-based instruction; individualized learning; and online learning. Each delivery system has advantages and disadvantages and must be matched to the needs of the local culture and individual learner.

An instructional plan must be designed to implement the curriculum. In the United States there are several institutions of higher learning, district alliances, and other groups that prepare candidates for ordination. Each of these entities has a slightly different instructional plan to meet the requirements of the educational goals and curriculum defined by the *Manual* and *USA Sourcebook*. Validation of each of these programs is maintained through review by the USA Course of Study Advisory Committee and International Course of Study Advisory Committee.[13]

Clergy Services also provides a ministerial preparation program for candidates who do not wish to pursue a university degree. This program is offered under the direct supervision of the District Ministerial Studies Board. A new program that meets all requirements of the *Manual* is being designed at this time. It is called the Modular Course of Study. A modular approach fulfills the requirements of an outcome-based approach by grouping defined abilities into manageable units and concentrating on developing those specific abilities. Modules can be appropriately sized to develop the outcomes and are not restricted to a predetermined, fixed length.

The modules are represented by a faculty guide with detailed lesson plans, source materials, and instructional resources for conducting the lessons. A student guide is also available that includes the syllabus, lesson summary pages, and duplicates of all instructional resources. Modules are flexible and can be used in campus-based, extension, intensive, and other non-formal settings.

The current design utilizes a classroom delivery system. It is the belief of the steering committee that learning takes place best in community and that this delivery system will accommodate the needs of the majority of candidates. When the classroom versions are completed additional delivery systems will be explored including supervised directed study.

Modules are being developed and released for field-testing through Clergy Services. When all modules are completed and tested the entire program will be submitted to the USA Course of Study Advisory Committee for validation.[14]

Evaluation

Formative evaluation for the Modular Course of Study is conducted through field-testing and examination of the actual learning outcomes that learners exhibit. The instructional plan for each module can be easily modified as needed to assure that intended outcomes are reached because the modules are published electronically. An instructor can obtain the most recent revision through a Clergy Services website or by requesting the latest CDROM from Clergy Services.

The district ministry boards conduct summative evaluation of the Modular Course of Study when candidates are examined for ordination. The district boards must determine if candidates can adequately demonstrate each of the abilities and are prepared to begin ministry. Communication between all parties—district boards, candidates and educational providers—will help improve the Modular Course of Study.

Summary

Outcome-based education is the chosen method for preparing ordained ministers in the Church of the Nazarene. The curriculum development process was a broad-based, cooperative effort carried out through representative consultations and General Assembly action. Many different educational providers are involved in implementing the defined curriculum.

Church growth will require many thousands of additional and replacement pastors over the next ten years and the church will require the best efforts of all educational providers to meet this need. With all of these different educational providers preparing candidates, how many courses of study are there? The answer is only one. The Course of Study in the Church of the Nazarene is defined in the *Manual* by the educational goals—*be, know,* and *do*—and the curriculum—the *4-C's.* But, it has a variety of contextualized expressions and various delivery methods.

The following diagram represents the relationship between the different entities working with the Course of Study.
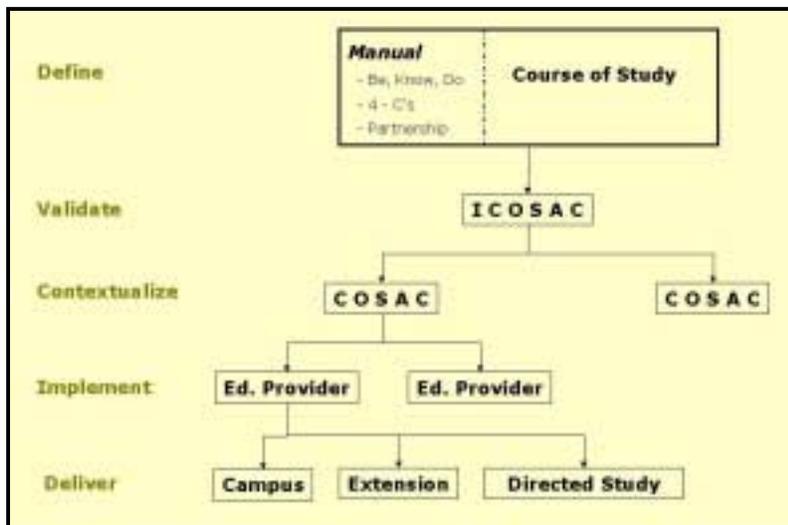
The *Manual* defines the Course of Study. The International Course of Study Advisory Committee validates educational programs from the regions. Regional Course of Study Advisory Committees oversee the contextualization and compliance of programs within their region. Educational providers implement the contextualized programs and deliver it to learners through a variety of delivery systems.

In an outcome-based model success of the program is determined by looking at the results more than the detailed means. The results are embodied in the learners—what they know, the kind of people they are, and the things they can do.

Endnotes

[1] Many formal curriculum development methods have been developed. In this paper only three methods from many will be discussed—body of knowledge, ways of thinking, and outcome-based education. The titles used for these methods are intended to be descriptive and may not represent formalized titles from the curriculum development literature.

[2] Some people have associated outcome-based education (OBE) with the teaching of specific topics and choose to reject the methods because they do not agree with the content. For instance, many associate outcome-based education with the teaching of evolution. Because they reject evolution as a scientific theory they reject outcome-based technologies as a valid teaching-learning method.

Outcome-based education (OBE) is a teaching-learning tool. It has no inherent morality. It is like a hammer. The hammer can be used to build cathedrals or as a weapon to kill a person. The hammer is only a tool and the person holding it intentionally determines how it will be used.

[3] http://www.funderstanding.com/outcome_based_edu.cfm You can access a commercial internet site that provides good foundational information about learning, learning theories and curriculum design. This website contains the definition and characteristics of outcome-based education noted here.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Posner, G. J. and A. H. Runitsky. *Course Design—A Guide to Curriculum Development for Teachers,* 6th edition, New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. 2001, p. 8.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[7] The Breckenridge discussion included representatives from North America. When the General Assembly adopted legislation implementing the plan, procedures were included that allowed for regionally designed programs that met the needs of different cultures, established a validation procedure to be followed by all educational providers, and required partnering between educational providers and local congregations in preparing ministers. Subsequent work through regional bodies under the guidance of the International Course of Study Advisory Committee has adapted the course of study in culturally appropriate ways to meet the needs of the global church.

[8] The *Manual*/1997-2001, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 424.3

[9] *International Sourcebook on Developmental Standards for Ordination,* Church of the Nazarene, Clergy Services, 437.2

[10] Natalie Ward, discussing educational goals with the author at the Bangkok 2000 educational consultation, October 2000.

[11] *Manual*/1997-2001, 424.3

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] The regional course of study advisory committee (COSAC) works with the International Course of Study Advisory Committee (ICOSAC) to create a regional sourcebook that meets all general church requirements. The regional COSAC then reviews the educational programs of all educational providers within their region and reports compliance to ICOSAC. ICOSAC then recommends programs to the General Board and Board of General Superintendents for validation.

[14] At the time of this writing five modules have been released for field-testing and 17 others are being developed by content specialists, reviewed by practitioners and formatted by educational specialists. The goal of the developers is

to have all modules completed during 2003. These modules will be published electronically on a website and are also available on CDROM from Clergy Services, 6401 The Paseo, Kansas City, MO 64131 USA. Email requests can be made through dmiller@nazarene.org

Other parallel development projects are underway. The South American Region is developing a complete course of study based on the *Spanish Sourcebook for Ministerial Development.* Efforts are being made to provide parallel Modular Course of Study modules in languages other than English. A pilot project is also underway to provide the modules online through one of the North American universities. Other universities are helping prepare pastors-as-teachers on their educational regions.