

CHAPTER 3

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION BY EXTENSION

The criticisms of traditional residential training referred to in the preceding chapter were pivotal in giving rise to Theological Education by Extension. Certain types of extension studies have already been mentioned. However, this chapter will deal with the movement known as Theological Education by Extension: its origin, rise, definition, purpose, philosophy, description, positive features, and limitations.

The Origin and Rise of Theological Education by Extension

Theological Education by Extension, as it is known today, originated in Guatemala in 1963. The Presbyterians were concerned that their residence seminary in the capital was not producing enough pastors for their growing denomination. "Most of the congregations could not achieve the status of a recognized church because they did not have an ordained pastor. . . . Student enrollment in the residence school varied between six and twenty." Needs of the church were not being met. A type of on-the job training by extension was being offered, but it was inadequate.⁵¹

⁵¹Ibid., 28-29.

An extension studies workshop was held in Armenia, Colombia in 1967, which promoted extension throughout Latin America. At least eight new extension programs were begun during 1968.⁵² By the late seventies, there were approximately 133 known programs with 19,384 students in Latin America (including Brazil) and the Caribbean.⁵³

In Latin America, a curriculum of 36 courses of 3 hours credit each for the diploma or post-primary school level studies was developed and authors were assigned to prepare texts or manuals for the teaching of those subjects in extension studies. However, it was discovered that the production of programmed instruction materials was much more complex than originally thought. Prospective writers had to learn a whole new and difficult way of presenting the material. By January of 1973, only one official text had been published.⁵⁴

Theological Education by Extension began in Brazil in 1969, and within two years, 27 of the 85 Brazil's theological institutions were participating in the movement with 2,000 students enrolled. The production of programmed texts has advanced much farther in Brazil than it has in Latin America, due largely to easier coordination within a single country.⁵⁵

⁵²Ibid., 31.

⁵³Kinsler, Ministry by the People, 7.

⁵⁴Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 32.

⁵⁵Ibid., 33-34.

A workshop sponsored by CAMEO (Committee to Assist Missionary Education Overseas) was held in Wheaton in December, 1968. One hundred twenty-one persons representing thirty missions attended. Featured on the program were C. Peter Wagner and Ralph Winter. Topics discussed included the relative merits of residential and extension studies, the inability of traditional theological education to meet the needs, and the explanation of programmed learning and its application to the preparation of programmed materials. Participants were encouraged to consider possibilities of extension studies in the geographical areas which they represented. Such workshops have been very important to the expansion of the movement. Persons trained in the workshops have produced extension materials in many lands and in many languages.⁵⁶

Theological Education by Extension was begun in Kenya in 1969. By the year 1977, there were more than 57 programs in Africa and Madagascar with a total of 6,869 students.⁵⁷

"The oldest and most extensive scheme for the production of extension materials was initiated by Fred Holland [in Zambia] in the early 1970's and is now sponsored by the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar. Teams of African and expatriate writers have been trained through workshops and are working on a commonly agreed series of 40 basic texts for local church leaders with limited formal education." Evangel Publishing House reported [in 1982

⁵⁶Ibid., 35-38.

⁵⁷Kinsler, Ministry by the People, 9.

or 1983] that in addition to regular texts in English and Swahili, 196 translations have been made in 43 languages.⁵⁸ At the time of this writing, 15 different texts have been translated into Portuguese for use in Portuguese-speaking Africa.

The United States and Canada are currently experiencing the fastest growth of Theological Education by Extension, not just among minority groups but also among white 'mainline' churches. In fact, "the oldest (1950) and largest extension program in the world is the Southern Baptist Extension Department." In 1981, there were reported 11,000 students and 400 centers in all 50 states and 18 foreign countries.⁵⁹

Theological Education by Extension has developed more slowly in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific. However, it seems to multiply most in India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Much less seems to be happening with regard to alternative theological training in Europe than in other parts of the world, but considerable reform of theological education and widespread experimentation with alternative patterns are occurring at this time in the United Kingdom.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ibid., 10.

⁵⁹ibid., 10-11.

⁶⁰ibid., 12-14.

Definition, Purpose, and Philosophy of
Theological Education by Extension

Definition of Theological Education by Extension

Ralph Winter defines Theological Education by Extension as "simply that form of education which yields to the life cycle of the student, does not destroy or prevent his productive relation to society, and does not make the student fit into the needs of a 'residential' school."⁶¹

Stewart G. Snook has defined it as "theological training which comes to the student in his home area in a decentralized fashion." He expands his definition further. "TEE is theological in the sense that the content, motives, and skills are derived from the Bible and theology is central. The focus is particularly on pastoral theology; students do the work of the ministry. TEE is education in that it aims to change students in attitude and knowledge and develop their skills. TEE is extension in that it brings training programs within the reach of people where they live."⁶²

Fred Holland, TEE pioneer in Africa, gives a similar, perhaps simpler definition. 1) TEE is theological--teaches about God, what God is like and what he does. It teaches how to work for God. It gives training in all the basic foundations of our faith. 2) TEE is education--built on sound training principles and produces good results--a good education. 3) TEE is extension--causes the

⁶¹Ralph Winter, "Preface" to The Extension Movement in Theological Education by Kinsler.

⁶²Stewart G. Snook, Developing Leaders Through Theological Education by Extension (Wheaton, Ill.: The Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, 1992), 6.

good work of a school or seminary to reach out. It takes the training out to the student, when the student cannot come in to the classroom.⁶³

The Purpose of Theological Education by Extension

Kinsler provides us with an amplified but excellent explanation of the purpose of TEE as follows:

The word extension itself indicates that our concern in this movement is to extend (stretch, expand, spread, adapt) the resources of theological education in order to reach the people who are the natural leaders of our churches. Most of these people are mature men and women, married and with families, settled in their communities and professions. So we must extend our seminaries and institutes to where they live, i.e. to the whole area of our churches. We have to adjust our schedules to fit theirs, our thinking to communicate within the varied sub-cultures which they represent, our teaching to match their different academic levels, our materials to carry a greater portion of the cognitive input. We need to extend our concept of theological education to include, besides candidates for ministry, lay workers, elders, youth leaders, ordained pastors, i.e. those who carry the primary responsibilities in our churches and congregations, especially in those areas where there is scarce hope in this generation or the next for an established, full-time salaried ministry.⁶⁴

Holland indicates that the purpose of TEE is that students learn to do the work of the church. They learn not only through books, classes, and experience but also by following the example of the teacher.⁶⁵

⁶³Fred Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Press, 1975), 9.

⁶⁴Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 25-26.

⁶⁵Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension, 24-29.

Kinsler has also referred to the fact that we need to take our training programs to the local church leaders because they cannot come to our seminaries and institutes, and because we can reach many more students and are more likely to get leaders if we go to the congregations.⁶⁶

The students may represent different social classes and economic levels as well as several different sub-cultures. Ideally, extension programs should offer theological courses at all the academic levels represented in the churches served, but problems of texts, personnel, and prejudice between students at various levels may surface.⁶⁷

The Philosophy of Theological Education by Extension

Theological Education by Extension is based on the philosophy that "real learning must integrate theory and practice creatively, that teachers and students must relate to each other as persons and as complementary equals, that learning takes place in all of life and is often more effective outside of our academic institutions."⁶⁸

When students are trained among the people and serve in real life situations, the application can be made immediately and real learning is more likely to take place. Students will be active in ministry. Therefore, churches will not have the problem of placing graduates. Graduates will not drop out of

⁶⁶Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 31.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 31.

service, but will remain in the church where they are already accepted as natural or potential leaders (even if they do not finish their training). Students are more likely to have interest in their studies because of the likelihood of immediate application to their ministries. They will feel their studies are useful to their purposes.⁶⁹

The discussion class is designed to help participants grapple through dialog with real problems in a very imperfect world. God's people learn to think and express themselves. They learn how to solve problems and overcome barriers. Leaders doing ministry can study while they remain in their gainful employment, living normal productive lives and being enabled to develop their spiritual gifts in ministry.⁷⁰

The Theological Education by Extension Model

There are three essential educational components as well as other internal, external and intangible factors in the extension model.⁷¹ These are mentioned in the following material along with what others have expressed about some of the factors. The latter factors will be discussed more fully in the chapter on planning for theological education. The quality of each of these factors will have an effect on the success or failure of the program.

⁶⁹Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 43-45.

⁷⁰*ibid.*, 44-45.

⁷¹*ibid.*, 7-10.

Educational Components

Self-study Lesson Materials--These are the facts, or truths, or information which the student is given in written form. The material is to be studied at home. Good programmed texts will be best. Each student must have his own materials to study at home and write in answers and do other things which the lessons tell him to do.⁷²

It is imperative that the students get the basic content on their own, because the limited time available in once-a-week seminars cannot be used passing out information. The texts will guide them through the important points toward their goals.⁷³

Discussion Seminar Meetings--These are regular meetings of the students with leader, preferably every week but at least every two weeks. If they are too far apart, students lose interest and fail to apply the lessons to life. The seminars are different from classes in that the leader does little talking, but rather answers students' questions about the materials and helps them see what these lessons mean in their lives. The group leader can make the program succeed or fail.⁷⁴ Ideally the group should have from three to fifteen participants who discuss and interact with one another over their lessons.⁷⁵

⁷²Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension, 11.

⁷³Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 34.

⁷⁴Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension, 12.

⁷⁵Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 8.

"Students cannot depend on a lecture for essential information. They must prepare beforehand in order to contribute significantly to the seminar discussion of the lesson. A student is expected to learn the essential material before coming to the seminar and to use the time with other students to enrich his understanding of the subject."⁷⁶

"One important function of the central meetings is to provide fellowship and inspiration for . . . students and professors. Another is to provide motivation and clarification and confirmation of their studies. Another is to integrate through discussion the course content and the practical problems and work in the congregations."⁷⁷

Field Experience--This is the life and work of the student while he studies. He must apply what he learns to his own life and work. Work assignments such as preparing a sermon, telling someone what he has learned, witnessing to someone in the market place, writing a paper on some subject are part of the lessons for each week.⁷⁸ The students are expected to be involved in a local church-based ministry such as evangelism, discipleship, and pastoral work. "Daily experiences are the grist of the learning mill."⁷⁹

⁷⁶Viertel, A Guide to Decentralized Theological Education, 21.

⁷⁷Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 35.

⁷⁸Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension, 12-13.

⁷⁹Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 8.

"In many places extension has been successful primarily because the students are so involved in practical work in their own congregations. This was not planned so much as assumed because the students are the leaders, often the functioning pastors of their churches."⁸⁰

Other Internal Factors

Students. It has already been established that the participants are drawn from the natural leaders in the church, that they are mature and accepted by their peers. Viertel asserts that "scriptural requirements do not reveal a certain level of formal education (1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9). . . Leaders of training programs would do well to seek out persons who are dedicated to the Lord, dependable workers, not controlled by pride or selfish ambitions, and sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. . . . One of the greatest problems for leaders . . . is to determine which students are not self-seeking."⁸¹

Raymond Rigdon of the Seminary Extension Department of the Southern Baptist Convention gives the following general characteristics of adult learners which could apply in various cultures:

1. They usually have reasonably strong motivation at the beginning of a course.
2. They expect quick results and may become easily discouraged if they do not feel that progress is being made.
3. They may doubt their ability to engage in serious study. . . . [However} adults have certain advantages in learning which children do not have such as more highly developed reasoning

⁸⁰Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 34-35.

⁸¹Viertel, A Guide to Decentralized Theological Education, 32-33.

processes and a wider background of experiences. But remember that they are not disciplined to study . . . hearing and vision may be slightly impaired.

4. They may have heavy family and vocational responsibilities.⁸²

Rigdon gives the following characteristics of undereducated adults.

1. They may attempt, and even succeed for a while, to conceal their educational limitations.
2. They may have a sense of failure and inadequacy.
3. They may have a fear of school and of you as their teacher.
4. They may be unusually sensitive to non-verbal forms of communication such as a shrug of the shoulder, a facial expression, or your failure to "hear them out." These may be interpreted by a student as a condemning attitude on your part.
5. They may have developed sound reasoning ability and skill in thinking clearly, and good common sense.⁸³

Fred Holland gives the following characteristics many times [but not always] found in the African TEE student.

1. He has had about four years of education.
2. He is mature and active in his home community.
3. He has little or no formal training in Bible study.
4. He is African, coming from one of many tribes.
5. He is aware of the spirit world which can affect his daily life.
6. He is active in the work of the church as local pastor or other leader.⁸⁴

Viertel mentions several economic limitations which students in theological education may have.

1. The student may be unable to purchase basic books for library, for textbooks, to pay tuition fees, and to travel to study centers.

⁸²Raymond M. Rigdon, Resource Guide: Developing Church Leaders through Extension Education (Nashville, Tenn.: Seminary Extension Department, SBC Building: 1978), 54.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 55.

⁸⁴Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension, 19.

2. Work responsibilities in providing for dependents may leave him little time to study.
3. The pressure of supporting a family may sap his emotional energy.
4. Inadequate financial resources may also result in:
 - (1) Crowded housing conditions with no place of privacy for study.
 - (2) Insufficient nourishing food to give mental alertness.
 - (3) Inadequate lighting for study at night.
 - (4) Neglect of medical attention for physical or visual problems.⁸⁵

Seminar Discussion Leader. First of all, the seminar leader should be a Christian whose commitment to God shows in his life. He should be gifted by the Holy Spirit to love and help others. He ought to be one who likes and cares about his work, always concerned with doing it well. He should give of his time and money to God, be a good example to other believers, and be mature and steady in his spiritual life and in his work for the church.⁸⁶

Weld describes the role of the teacher in the weekly meeting as mainly that of a catalyst. When necessary he should be able to summarize, serve as a resource person, stimulate the students and ensure that they comprehend the lesson material. A teacher should "have a general knowledge, mental agility, and honesty."⁸⁷

Holland declares, "Seminar leaders are people with special abilities." This may mean special training. Holland adds that the leader must have a wide

⁸⁵Ibid., 35.

⁸⁶Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension, 22.

⁸⁷Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 37.

knowledge of the Scriptures and be able to use verses from anywhere in the Bible to answer questions. He should know how to lead discussion groups, understand how TEE functions, and understand the teaching power of home study materials together with seminar sessions and field experience.⁸⁸

The seminar leader needs to have had experience in the church so that he may help those he is leading. One cannot encourage and advise others if he has never encountered their problems in life. Because of this it would be good for the seminar leader to be an older minister rather than a recent seminary graduate. He should be a student himself, always ready to learn. He ought to serve his students as Christ served his disciples. He needs to be willing to adjust seminar meeting-time according to students' schedules. He may need to take extra time to talk after the meeting with a student who has a need. He should be one who loves and works well with others. He should work together with the students rather than trying to rule over them. He should be a happy person, full of faith and encouraging others to keep going. He should be an humble person, willing to admit his mistakes.⁸⁹

Although the seminar leader will administer any exams given, extension programs "do not depend as much on exams for evaluating students as do residential programs. . . ." The seminar leaders "evaluate the students on the

⁸⁸Holland, Teaching through Theological Education by Extension, 21-22.

⁸⁹Ibid., 22.

basis of their contribution to the discussion, how well they have done their homework, and how much progress they seem to make during the term."⁹⁰

Spiritual Foundation. The Holy Spirit should be active in motivating and challenging the whole church. The spiritual base should be expressed in the program's purpose statement with spiritual formation as the goal.⁹¹

Administrative Supervision. Faithful attention and supervision of the details of the program necessitates an alert administrator, creative in obtaining texts and other materials, organizing seminars, keeping records, and training tutors or monitors.⁹²

External and Intangible Factors

The following factors inter-relate with the internal factors of theological education by extension.

External Factors. These are relationships to groups outside the program, such as a local church, the community, administrators who are top level leaders in the church or denomination which serves as sponsor and stakeholder, and academic institutions such as a resident school or larger academic community.⁹³

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 9.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., 9-10.

Intangible Factors. These are the enthusiasm of the leaders, the motivation of the students, the meeting of felt needs, and the results and blessings as related to the overall program.⁹⁴

The Case for Theological Education by Extension

Why is there a need to consider alternatives to residential training of leaders? Is there a need for Theological Education by Extension? Is it serving a purpose in leadership training?

Lois McKinney declares, "The growth of the church [around the world] is a reason for rejoicing; it is also a cause for deep concern, . . . As churches grow, the need for church leaders multiplies. [As already referred to in criticisms of residential training,] in many areas of the world, existing educational programs are not even beginning to meet the demand for trained leaders. . . . Much of the work of overseas churches revolves around ordained clergy who are seminary trained and are paid for their ministry. . . . Church leaders are being added one at a time from the ranks of seminary graduates instead of being multiplied as church members exercise the gifts God has given them within the Body of Christ, and the whole Body suffers."⁹⁵

Snook says,

The exploding church growth in Africa makes it vital that church leaders be trained. Some estimate that by the year 2000,

⁹⁴Ibid., 10.

⁹⁵McKinney, "Key to the Growth of the Church" in Discipling through Theological Education by Extension, ed. Gerber, 179-181.

50% of sub-Saharan Africa will be Christian. Without appropriately trained leaders, these churches will not be able to nurture new converts or train sufficient leaders. Theological leaders cannot afford to have leadership training programs stagnate or collapse in the face of great church growth.

Many Christian scholars see syncretism in the Christianity of Africa which is often mixed with traditional religion. The result of syncretism is something less than Christian. The tendency to drift toward syncretism can only be halted by effective teaching of the Word of God. We need to have solidly biblical and contextualized training. The development of biblically oriented leaders affects the degree to which syncretism will be challenged.⁹⁶

TEE Can Train More People

Weld affirms that TEE allows a more ample selection in the training of leaders for our churches. It can "reach out to any man in any local congregation, at any age, any stage in life, in any occupation, and screen him, prepare him, and elevate him to whatever level any church desires for whatever leadership position his God-given gifts will take him."⁹⁷ Kirk maintains that in TEE, theological training is accessible to every Christian who desires it.⁹⁸

Snook indicates that TEE programs "meet a great felt need for local church leadership on all ministry levels."⁹⁹ Kinsler asserts that the men and women [in TEE] are from the grassroots of the church and all parts of society.

⁹⁶Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 3.

⁹⁷Winter, "Preface" to The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension by Weld, ix.

⁹⁸Kirk, Theology and the Third World Church, 51.

⁹⁹Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 166.

Because they study as they lead their churches, their theological development is interpreted and utilized in the local context.¹⁰⁰

Flexibility

"Decentralized means that not everyone must be brought together for instruction. . . . The local centers may operate at any one or more of the various recognized levels. Not only does the extension student study at his own level, but he is able to go his own pace at that level, because he studies in his own home the materials or text assigned. TEE spans the whole range of educational levels and also allows it to cross cultural barriers. . . . TEE is able to adapt its structure to the local situation. Centers are organized for the day, time, and place which are most convenient for the majority of the students."¹⁰¹

TEE Develops Good Study Habits

Kinsler believes that TEE helps students to develop good study habits. He says:

Probably the greatest need felt by the leaders in our churches is the ability to study and use the Bible independently. . . . The Bible is without question the basic source book. Most of our students have no libraries; they are called upon to expound the Bible constantly, and they must base their entire ministry upon its teachings. [In TEE,] the students work intensively through . . . selected books of the Bible in order to develop their ability to do . . . Bible study on their own. . . . They will be able to discover for themselves the nature of the book, its historical background, and its structure; they will be able to take any passage and observe what it

¹⁰⁰Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 53.

¹⁰¹Weld, The World Directory to Theological Education by Extension, 20-21.

says, interpret what it means and apply its message to their own situation; and they will be able to develop sermons and group studies and investigations in Biblical theology.¹⁰²

Costs Are Less per Student

Viertel maintains that "the cost of residential programs . . . and the high prerequisites will limit the number of pastors who can be trained in the institutional setting; therefore, additional leaders must be trained beyond the campus program. . . . National churches even in low economic areas must be able to support their own training programs; thus they will need an economical but effective program. In most countries the level of the masses of people is too low for them to support and enjoy the luxury of a university graduate as pastor. Pastoral leaders who serve these churches must adopt a tent-making pattern of ministry. Such leaders are best trained in extension or decentralized programs."¹⁰³

Zorn declares that "the costs of maintaining students in residence are eliminated; many students in this programme [sic] retain their positions as working members of society. When they complete the course, they may very well continue to support themselves as they take up responsibilities in congregations. If they do become full-time, fully-supported ministers of congregations, they can live at the same level as the members of the congregation."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²Ibid., 55.

¹⁰³Viertel, A Guide to Decentralized Theological Education, 28-29.

¹⁰⁴Zorn, Viability in Context, 23.

Avery Willis indicates that not only are the expenses for the school and the student less when he studies in his own cultural context, but that he also "learns to depend on God and his local church for financial support rather than on foreign funds."¹⁰⁵

Candidate Selection

"Since extension students are generally not young men preparing for an occupation, there is far less danger that their training will serve as a ladder for personal advancement. At the same time extension programs are capable of reaching people at the highest educational levels without creating a clergy class dependent on the churches for their relatively high standard of living."¹⁰⁶

Older men who are already established in a profession and are often the proven leaders in their community, have an opportunity to study theology. Therefore a transition to tent-making or bi-vocational ministry is common and even anticipated.¹⁰⁷

High Motivation

Kinsler maintains that students in TEE elect to study and they study because the program is helpful to them in their ministry, not just because they desire to pass their exams and receive a diploma. Teacher and students meet

¹⁰⁵Avery Willis, "Contextualization of Theological Education in Indonesia" in Discipling through Theological Education by Extension, ed. Gerber, 157.

¹⁰⁶Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 17-18.

¹⁰⁷Viertel, A Guide to Decentralized Theological Education, 13.

as colleagues in ministry in the church, sharing course content and experience and learning together. The students show greater interest in learning because their studies relate to existing problems, vital questions, current needs.¹⁰⁸

Adult learners are "concerned with personal development. [They] want to accomplish something. Adults begin to have new goals, especially at middle age. At these 'teachable moments' adults are wide open to new ideas and possibilities."¹⁰⁹

Cultural Relevance

In theological education by extension, cultural dislocation is minimal. The extension centers are within or near the community in which the students live and work. The seminar discussions are related to activities within the local church. Practical work is not "artificial" but rather motivates the course work. Usually the teachers will be from the same culture. Leaders will arise within the congregation. Therefore education by extension can make a meaningful contribution toward developing a genuinely indigenous church.¹¹⁰

Emphasis on Continuing Education

Kirk affirms that in TEE, theological training is seen as an ongoing process. With its training methods, a minimal emphasis on academic

¹⁰⁸Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 19, 50.

¹⁰⁹Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 14.

¹¹⁰Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 26.

accreditation and a greater emphasis on the development of skills, the "stop-go" method of training is much less likely.¹¹¹

Kinsler avers that although the curriculum is similar to the traditional courses, the students take only as many as they desire to take and select the ones they want. No pressure is on them to take them all, to finish within a certain duration of time, or even to graduate.¹¹²

Immediate Application

The emphasis on experience and application represented in TEE by Christian service is a vital element in the learning process. Each seminar gives opportunity for "feedback" and dialog on the experiences in Christian service that week. Each fresh insight can be applied immediately. What the student did and the results become important matters for discussion. When adults are able to put something to use immediately, that learning experience remains with them.¹¹³

The TEE seminar serves as a forum for problem solving. The lesson is discussed, then applied. Problems surfacing out of this process aid the students to think of new ways to solve problems in their lives and in the church.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹Kirk, Theology and the Third World Church, 52.

¹¹²Kinsler, The Extension Movement in Theological Education, 50.

¹¹³Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 16-

¹¹⁴Ibid.

When the students study in the community where they live, they are under constant pressure to relate what they learn to their daily lives. They appropriate what they study for themselves rather than just memorize a series of truths.¹¹⁵

Inspires Evangelism

"In a questionnaire used in urban and rural Kenya, 90% of the students reported that TEE has helped them lead someone to the Lord. TEE students are motivated to do evangelism, and they testify spontaneously to the opportunities they have to witness and win others to the Lord. . . . Many testify that they have been able to lead their relatives to the Lord because of new insights from the discussion classes in TEE or an illustration from the self-study text."¹¹⁶

"TEE programs are often associated with church planting and church growth. In 38 out of 78 programs [in Africa], administrators report the TEE students work in new church planting situations. . . ."¹¹⁷

"Through TEE many more people in the [African] villages are being reached. Students give reports of how they go about witnessing to the people. When TEE participants relate well to their own people and share the gospel effectively with them, contextualization is at work."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵Kirk, Theology and the Third World Church, 52.

¹¹⁶Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 49-50.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 166-167.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 52-53.

Quality of Instruction

Some may be concerned about this. However, it is most important that educational achievements are measurable in the lives and ministries of the students. "A well-taught lesson or a well-conceived sermon represents a more meaningful measure of learning than does the grade on a written exam. And it is undeniably easier to replace a poor extension teacher than a teacher in a residence school.

"The elimination of the lecture method in favor of group discussion, the independent study and critical thinking developed through extension, and the combination of cognitive input with field experience integrated in weekly seminars are all important contributions of extension studies toward the improvement of quality education."¹¹⁹

Spiritual Growth

Students grow "in faith, character, and the ability to transfer truth to others. Administrators [of TEE programs in Africa] mention enthusiasm, changed lives, greater faithfulness and active participation in the church as qualities of their students. . . . Many trained lay leaders get the burden to enter the pastorate and become full time pastors."¹²⁰

¹¹⁹Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 27.

¹²⁰Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 49.

Weaknesses and Problems with Theological
Education by Extension

Although TEE has many advantages and benefits, it also has certain limitations or weaknesses and problems. One needs to be aware of these before setting up a program.

Kornfield mentions the following weaknesses of TEE:

1. Failure of students to complete assignments because of involvement in more pressing matters;
2. Lack of identification of the educator with the student;
3. Lack of time for the educator to be with family since one is constantly traveling from center to center;
4. Lack of being able to graduate in a relatively short period of time since to cover the same number of courses [studied] at a residential seminary would require between two and three times as many years;
5. Too much hinges on one individual teacher and there is lack of exposure to many teachers with varying fields, abilities, and visions;
6. It is too easy to quit since there is little initial sacrifice involved in becoming part of the program;
7. The traveling itinerary could be quite expensive;
8. It would be difficult to be involved in evaluation of non-written assignments and of practical application of the learner's studies;
9. The role of the educator would be that of providing cognitive input in a limited amount of time, so that affective and behavioral changes would have to occur at the student's initiative;
10. The lack of resources in many cases, both written and human, to turn to for help during the interim period between the extension educator's visit.¹²¹

Kirk indicates a criticism that "up to the present TEE has expended the bulk of its energies on training Christians for church-related ministries rather than

¹²¹Kornfield, "Seminary Education toward Adult Education Alternatives" in Missions and Theological Education in World Perspective, eds. Harvie M. Conn and Samuel F. Rowen, 201.

on preparing Christians for a faithful, biblical witness in the maelstrom of life outside the church." But he goes on to declare that "there is nothing in the method which would impede training for pioneer tasks within society."¹²²

Kirk also mentions the objection that TEE "does not allow sufficient time for concentrated periods of study, leading, perhaps, to the completion of research projects." He adds that "for this to take place, residential and library facilities must be available" and suggests that "short residential courses may be a valuable back-up to the regular extension seminar sessions."¹²³

Snook refers to several problems which can and have arisen in TEE. However, they are not insurmountable and can be dealt with. If not, the program may break down.

1. Lack of finances--the cost of books, salary for administrators, and incentives for seminar leaders. Another financial problem is transportation for TEE leaders who travel.
2. Lack of program structure--The program may not provide for processing of student results in a central location. Books may be difficult to obtain or the ones which are translated too few to complete a module. Lack of "quick communication" hinders the schedule of ongoing classes. Zealous students are thwarted when communications break down, books are not delivered, and other administrative tasks are not performed when needed.
3. Lack of trained leaders--A program as complex as TEE cannot carry on without a full-time leader. When there is no leader, for whatever reason, and there is no good solution, bad solutions follow. One such "bad" solution is the overwork of those involved. . . . A toll is taken on the servant of God in such situations.

Another bad solution is to appoint leaders who lack training and dedication and who do a poor job. . . . If the leader is weak,

¹²²Kirk, Theology and the Third World Church, 54.

¹²³Ibid., 56.

uninformed and unfaithful (and in some cases does not even show up), the class will decline. . . . The only thing worse than having no leader, or a constant change of leaders, is to have a leader who is not in sympathy with the program. . . .

4. Preconceived ideas about TEE--That TEE is an inferior form of Bible education is one such ill-formed judgment. TEE books are programmed for small-step learning which can take the learner far into knowledge of Scripture. Also basic vocabulary is used in first level TEE studies to facilitate translation and accommodate students unaccustomed to difficult reading. . . . The discussion leader can introduce additional higher level material as suitable to the class. However, many pastors have the idea that three or four years at a residential or fixed Bible School is the only way a pastor can be trained.
5. Lack of church acceptance and approval--The greatest obstacle to TEE is lack of formal acceptance and approval by denominations and missions. When leadership officially adopts TEE as a program and actively promotes it in all its churches, the program develops better. When a denomination or mission does not fully accept a program, time and circumstance may lead to its dissolution (e.g., a missionary on furlough). . . .¹²⁴

Weld notes the following limitation of TEE. He states: "Only limited specialization is possible in extension programs. In this sense extension seminaries can never replace residence studies. They don't have the facilities for research and specialization which a theologian must seek." He adds, "On the other hand, let's not criticize extension programs for producing pastors, not scholars."¹²⁵

¹²⁴Snook, Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension, 171-172.

¹²⁵Weld, The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension, 68.