

MISSIONAL APPROACH IN SEMINARY CURRICULUM

K. Y. Cheung Teng

1. Missionary Legacies:

Sent from North American Christian and Missionary Alliance (宣道會), Rev R. A. Jaffray, (翟輔民1873-1945) had been the Principal of the Alliance Bible School (previously Alliance Bible Seminary, ABS建道神學院) in Wuzhou, Guangxi(廣西梧州) in China twice. Then, not only did Rev. Jaffray brought students to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia etc. to have their short term missionary trips, he also influenced them by conveying the spirit of "trailblazing, zealous devotion and long-suffering", especially those who graduated in 1917 like Rev. Choe Sing Huen(朱醒魂), and Rev. Wang Yuan Su(黃原素). In 1921, Rev Choe was sent to Vietnam and became the first overseas missionary. Later in 1928, Rev Wang was sent to Saigon (Ho Chi-Min City), Phnom Penh, Thailand, Penang and Singapore and other areas, to spread the Gospel and build Christians' spiritual lives.

In 1927, Rev Jaffray went to conduct field trips in South-East Asia, he found that there was spiritual darkness and an urgent need for the Gospel. In 1928, Rev. Jaffray with a number of his students like Rev. Choe Sing Huen, Rev. Wang Yuan Su, Pastor Lin Zhengye(林證耶), Pastor Wang Zai(王載), and Pastor Lien Guang Lin(練光臨) had missionary trips in Southern Seas. Later Rev. Choe left the South Seas and went to have missionary service in Indonesia. After several years' effort, this team decided to establish the "Nan-yang Missionary Union" (南洋佈道團) as the first Chinese overseas missionary institution. Half a year later, the members of the team believed that the Gospel should reach all people over the world, so they changed the institution's name to "Chinese Foreign Missionary Union" (中華國外佈道團).

Under the leadership and motivation of Rev. Jaffray, some graduates of the Alliance Bible Seminary dedicated their lives to evangelism and missions organized by "Chinese Foreign Missionary Union". They took the spirit of "Trailblazing, Zealous Devotion and Long-suffering" (開荒、火熱、吃苦) which becomes the slogan of ABS spirit nowadays.

2. The Development of Intercultural Studies

2.1 The Development of Formal Education

In 1976, Dr Jack Shepherd started mission courses in the Bachelor of Theology (B. Th.) program. In the same year, the Seminary set up the Department of Missions which has trained up a lot of students dedicated to serving God in different mission fields as trailblazers.

Coping with the changing world, the Seminary offered the Master of Arts in Mission and Evangelism (MME) in 1986, and renamed as Master of Christian Studies major in Mission (MCS in Mission) in 1997. Also, in 1990, the Seminary started to offer the Master of Divinity (M. Div.) majoring in Missions.

ICS has gone through thirty-four years of development since 1976. In 2002, the Seminary offered certificate, diploma, and Master of Christian Studies major in courses of Inter-cultural Studies (Cert.-ICS, Dip.-ICS & MCS-ICS) for off-campus lay leaders. And since 2007, Urban Missions program has also been launched. All these programs serve to equip Christians and church leaders to conduct tent-making missions, develop mission and evangelism ministries in churches, and provide training to equip workers of mission agencies and local evangelistic organizations.

Today, most countries do not welcome missionaries. Missionary training should be innovative to cope with the challenges and opportunities of the times. Therefore, ABS-ICS has been renamed as Department of Intercultural Studies in 2006 in response to the needs of the people in Creative Access Nations.

2.2 The Development of Non-formal Education

Because missionary training encompasses both the theological teaching and practical expertise in a cross-cultural setting, from 1988, the students' missionary training has been extended to overseas field work practice in an intercultural context. Introducing the 8-week (for full-time ICS students) and 4-week (for part-time ICS students since 2004) fieldwork internship in a cross-cultural setting greatly facilitates the students to understand and adapt to different mission fields in different cultures: to learn how to deal with culture shocks, to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, to enhance individual and spiritual growth, to learn team building, and to confirm God's will in their future participation in mission works.

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Areas to be covered by the Interns are: Basic Language and Culture learning for cross-cultural communication; understand and deal constructively with the stress and tensions of culture shock experienced in cross-cultural living and working; learn to observe local culture, such as the local customs and manners, worldview and value systems, relationship between genders, marriage and family system, including cultural artifacts, cultural knowledge and cultural behavior; gain cross-cultural experience in connection with and building relationships with the local people; (where applicable) team building: flexibility, adjustment, adaptability, co-operation, in-depth sharing, unity and diversity, building

relationships through interaction, communication, leadership and discipleship, spiritual life, interpersonal skills, and work relationships. The intern can be involved in local outreach and evangelism, preaching, teaching, follow-up such as visitation, discipleship, counseling, administration, etc. in order to broaden their perspectives and cross-cultural field experience.

Places of cross-cultural internship in the Free Countries are: England, Germany, Spain, Brazil, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, l'île de la Réunion, Fuji, Panama, South Africa, Post-communist Russia etc. And places of cross-cultural internship in Creative Access Nations are: West Africa, East Europe, Middle East, Euro-Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia, South-East Asia, etc.

2.3 The Development of Informal Education

Besides regular lessons, the Seminary encourages students to equip themselves holistically. Since 1993, an Annual Mission Week was launched to strengthen the students' awareness and participation in missions. Since 2001, the Annual Mission Growth Camp was established for full-time students, and since 2004, for part-time students. These Camps are not only for ICS students before entering mission fields, but also open to all students enthusiastic in missions, aimed at training themselves for self-awareness, especially in their own cultural background growth process, and dealings with cross-cultural adaptation. Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory, CCAI, has been used as a tool in the camp.

The establishment of Mission Fellowship for full-time ICS students in 1979, and for part-time ICS students in 2008, effectively gathered students, reinforced their vision towards missions and enhanced them in various ways of learning. The Mission Fellowship is now led by students and is associated with the ABS Student Union and with ICS faculty members serving as advisors. Apart from its bi-weekly fellowship meetings for full-time ICS students or bi-quarterly for part-time ICS students, it coordinates with ICS in activities such as the Annual Mission Week, Missionary Growth Camps and Mission Day Retreat, plus other events from time to time. Its aims are to promote mission awareness, to concern and prayer for missions among students, to provide news and information on the gospel needs among different people groups worldwide, to enable students to clarify their mission vision as well as directing them in their future mission service, to promote care, concern and prayer for missionaries with focus on alumni missionaries, and to make contacts with different mission organizations in Hong Kong.

Similarly, the established ABS Society for Missions (ABSSFM) for ICS graduates in 2001, is to link up both ICS students and alumni who have a heart for missions plus those who are currently involved in missions, to provide support to alumni who are preparing for missionary service and to those serving in the mission fields, to motivate alumni and students to raise mission awareness and promote mission education in the local churches, to provide caring support to alumni who are serving as missionaries and to those who are preparing to go to the mission fields, to use internet access to provide members with news, any upcoming events,

and to encourage their mutual communication, and to coordinate with ICS Student's Mission Fellowship in conducting the above ICS events.

3. ABS Missionary Alumni

God used ABS to train and raise dedicated Christians to serve Him for 111 years since the establishment of the Bible School in Wuzhou, in 1899. God also let it keep the vision and mission of His Great Commission. Since then, there were many dedicated students who are making disciples in different corners of the world serving the Lord with their good testimonies.

According to the statistics from 1951 to 2009 while ABS has been moved to Hong Kong, there are over 141 (about 9% of the total graduates) missionary alumni among 1,568 ABS graduates committed to missionary services, comprising from Creative Access areas, missionary agencies and broadcasting institutions.

---Male 64 (45.4%), Female 77 (54.6%), total 141 missionary alumni.

---There are 83 (58.9%) missionary alumni serving in Free Access Areas including 49 working among Diaspora Chinese, 27 in near cultural mission area, i.e. Asia countries, and 7 in cross-cultural missions.

---There are 58 (41.1%) missionary alumni serving the Lord in the form of tent-making missions in the Creative Access Nations. They emphasize mainly on evangelism, training Christians and social services.

In face of the gospel needs over the world, we certainly see that there is an imminent need for fostering leadership and qualified persons to undertake study on mission works within the Chinese churches and mission groups.

4. Response to Needs of our Times

4.1 Conduct Lectures in Putonghua

Starting from the academic year of 2007-2008, Putonghua became the main medium of instruction in lessons of full-time ICS programs. Giving more opportunities for the Hong Kong Cantonese students to practice the use of Putonghua will help facilitate them in their missionary works in the future. This would also provide a channel to the Putonghua speaking Christians from China and Diaspora Chinese, plus Putonghua speaking non-Chinese to receive inter-cultural studies across the globe.

4.2 Launching the Urban Mission Program

To cater to the gospel needs in facing the rapid change in cities like Hong Kong, ICS has designed a series of urban mission courses to provide continuing education for pastors and Christian lay leaders. This series of course focuses on the needs for practical skills in evangelism and cross-cultural missions locally in cities. It consists of Urban Mission Certificate, Urban Mission Diploma and

Urban Mission Advanced Diploma.

4.3 A Series of Publication on ABS Missionary Alumni

In the period of 111 years since ABS was set up, numerous graduates had been trained and sent overseas to serve the Lord. In light of the tasks and contributions they have made, in 2009, ICS has published the first volume of Mission Passion across the Centuries Series "Chinese Mission Pioneers: ABS Early Graduates as Mission Trailblazers in Southeast Asia, 1920s-1940s," in which about 30 alumni missionary works have been recorded and reported. And the second volume will be coming soon. Hoping this documentary series will serve as an encouragement to the next generation of Christians in the Chinese Church.

4.4 Modular Courses for Missionary Development

In response to the needs of missionary advancement, ICS liaised with some Chinese mission agencies to provide intensive courses starting from 2008. Courses such as Spiritual Encounter, Healthy Growth in Missionary Life and Work, Strategies in Business as Mission and the like are popular subjects.

4.5 Researches on Chinese Missions

In face of the gospel needs over the world, we certainly see that there is an imminent need for fostering leadership and qualified persons to undertake study on mission works within the Chinese churches and mission groups. Training and advanced research study relating to mission works have therefore acquired a certain importance and is mandatory. ICS has commenced

a series of research topics on Chinese missions since 2010. The launch of the mission research was carried out in the hope of training mission leaders as well as to enhance the professional quality of missionaries and fostering Chinese mission scholars who can partner with international missiologists in undertaking research studies.

There are insufficient number of lecturers in Chinese seminaries who have received advanced missiological training. It is also not uncommon that people furthering their education abroad often do not return in view of their long absence from home. In view of these circumstances, ICS is planning in its next step to start a Doctor of Missiology (D. Miss.) or Doctor of Philosophy in Intercultural Studies (Ph. D. in ICS) program that can meet the needs of Chinese mission works in Asian context.

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