

CONTEXTUALISATION AND GLOBALISATION IN THE BIBLE TRAINING MINISTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERN CHURCHES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PART 2 OF 4)

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INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 of this series of articles, I looked at the two major forces that impact Bible school ministry – contextualisation and globalisation. The first embraces the assumption that Bible schools must adapt rigorously to their local context; the second, that Bible schools, everywhere, should be similar in form and function, in goals and outcomes. In this series of articles, we examine the balance between these two approaches, in the Bible schools of the Christian Brethren churches of Papua New Guinea (CBC), and seek to draw lessons for theological education in Melanesia.

In this, and the next two articles, I look at three key elements of theological education – curriculum content, theological orientation, and educational method¹ – to demonstrate how global and contextual orientations have impacted CBC Bible schools.

¹ Curriculum content provides essential background for the theological and educational aspects, and, for this reason, it is placed first.

I begin with the curriculum framework of the schools. What should they teach? What should the curriculum contain? What is essential, and what is optional? I define the term “curriculum”, and then observe that an adequate curriculum can be developed, only with reference to the aims and purpose statements of the Bible schools. I take four schools as examples – the earliest, the West Sepik Bible School at Yebil; its sequel, the Baibel Tisa Trening Skul² at Amanab; Yimbrasi Bible School in the Nuku area; and the English-language Bible School at Anguganak – to examine this relationship in each case. I then look at a draft national Bible school curriculum for all CBC schools running on the four-year, six-month cycle. Certain imbalances in the curriculum statements emerge.

Both global and contextual factors provide a framework for a balanced curriculum. Two important globalising factors are the Western Bible school model, and the denominational distinctives of the Brethren. At least five contextual factors are: the language medium of instruction; Melanesian worldviews; issues emerging from the gospel’s interaction with Melanesian cultures; tensions and dislocations arising from social change and modern development; and the history and character of Brethrenism in Papua New Guinea.

Adequate attention to these factors shape and bring balance to the curriculum. I explore ways in which both contextual and global factors can be accommodated in a balanced curriculum for the CBC in Melanesia. Finally, two propositions, developed by Ted Ward, help us in this task.

A. DEFINING “CURRICULUM”

In 1994, Donald Senior and Timothy Weber³ described three ways, in which the term “curriculum” is used:

² In English: Bible Teacher Training School.

³ Donald Senior, and Timothy Weber, “What is the character of curriculum, formation, and cultivation of ministerial leadership in the good theological school?”, in *Theological Education*, 30:2 (1994), pp. 17-33, reporting on a two-day consultation of the North American Association of Theological Schools (ATS).

1. Curriculum refers to “all that is required to earn the [qualification]: core courses, electives, field education, supervised ministry hours, etc.”
2. Curriculum refers “to everything that happens to students, under the aegis of the school”, including “not only academic requirements, but the other events, or processes that the institution provides: worship, fellowship groups, trips . . . special programs, or lectureships, retreats, social events, and the like”.
3. Less frequently, curriculum refers “to whatever happens to an individual student during his or her seminary years: classes, internship, worship, friendships with fellow students and professors, financial pressures, personal growth, and crisis experiences, family life, and other similar experiences”.⁴

These definitions overlap, their difference depending largely on whether the focus is on the achievement of a qualification (definition 1.), the description of the school (definition 2.), or the experience of the student (definition 3.). We shall use definition 2., while acknowledging the importance of the others.

Central issues, in the minds of both stakeholders and potential students, are, “What is taught there? What will the students learn? How will this Bible school course fit him or her for a future ministry?”

Immediately, we strike a central issue for CBC Bible schools. What is their purpose, and for whom are they catering? Questions of curriculum content are closely related to questions of purpose.

B. THE PURPOSES AND AIMS OF CBC BIBLE SCHOOLS AND THEIR RELATION TO CURRICULA

Not all the Bible schools have clearly stated aims and purposes. Some have changed in character, and also in purpose, as time has gone by. Consistent curriculum decisions cannot be made, let alone effective

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

evaluation, without clarity in this area. For this study, we examine the purpose statements, and curriculum content, of four schools.

1. WEST SEPIK BIBLE SCHOOL

In planning for the West Sepik Bible School (WSBS) to commence at Yebil in 1967, the missionaries clarified the aims and purposes, at their 1966 conference.

The prime aim is to build up, and strengthen, the indigenous church, and, to this end, it is planned to graduate the students as Christian leaders, fulfilling a full- or part-time pastoral and/or evangelistic ministry. These men [are] to be able to feed daily on the word of God in Pidgin, and to teach others, systematically, from it. They would need to be able to teach Bible stories consecutively for baptismal instruction, and also to expound passages of scripture for the teaching and building up of Christians. Further, it would be valuable for them to be trained as literacy teachers.⁵

According to this statement, WSBS had a primary focus of establishing a strong indigenous church, for which a literate and Bible-trained leadership was deemed essential. Implicitly, recognition was given to the Eph 4:11 gifts of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, as being the three most important spiritual gifts for leadership in local churches.⁶

The description assumes that both pastors and evangelists need to exercise a teaching ministry. The teaching pastor represents a tension in Brethren leadership patterns. The term “pastor” is used cautiously, because many Brethren churches have taken a strong stand against

⁵ CMML Conference minutes, Anguganak, July, 1966.

⁶ The Brethren regard apostles, in particular, and depending on how the term is used, prophets, as being for the New Testament era only, being replaced, in time, by the completed scriptures of both Old and New Testaments. See, for example, Henry Hitchman, *Some Scriptural Principles of the Christian Assembly*, Kilmarnock UK: John Ritchie, 1929, pp. 102-103; J. M. Davies, *The Lord and the Churches*, London UK: Pickering & Inglis, 1967, pp. 67-68. Davies states, “The apostles and the prophets were gifts God used to lay the foundation. This having been laid, the need for such gifts has ceased, but their ministry is abiding; it is permanently embodied in the New Testament.”

one-man leadership. The issue is compounded by the rather-different spiritual gifts required of a teacher, compared with those of a pastor.

We should remember that the CBC churches were at a very early, and formative, stage, when the above purpose statement was written. Many had no elders, and, in any case, recognition as an elder is not seen by Brethren as a consequence of formal training. An elder is equipped by the Holy Spirit, appointed by God, and recognised by the local church.⁷ It is not a Bible school function to offer pre-service training to potential elders, although Bible schools can, and did, run courses to upgrade and up-skill existing elders. In some places, the need was seen to be for evangelists and church planters, rather than for a more-settled form of ministry.⁸

Jenny Fountain has pointed out that the first CBC Bible school was established on the pragmatic grounds of the situation in PNG, in the face of the missionary desire to rapidly establish a fellowship of strong indigenous, and autonomous, local churches.⁹ A paper presented by Kay Liddle had argued for a settled pastoral ministry, as being valid, from New Testament church practice, and required, in the Melanesian context the missionaries faced.¹⁰

Another aspect of the purpose statement, quoted above, is that, since Bible teaching was deemed to be a core function of strong indigenous churches, there is an implicit expectation that those who graduate would exercise a church-leadership function.

⁷ “*Toksave long sios*” BTTS Bible School notes, nd, states “*God i makim na putim ol wasman long sios*” [God appoints and places elders in the church(es)], and adds the references Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:3; 1 Thess 5:12-13. See also “*Wokim rot bilong strongim ol sios*” [Making a way to strengthen the churches]. Notes prepared by L. A. Marsh, BTTS, nd. Both these were, however, produced later than the period under discussion.

⁸ The relationship of church elders and church workers is a matter of some uncertainty among the Brethren. See Peter J. Lineham, “Pastor-Elders relationships in the Brethren: Revisioning a troubled relationship”, unpublished paper presented at a Brethren Pastor’s Retreat, July 1999.

⁹ Jenny Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, MS, pp. 17, 20-21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

In the light of increasingly urgent pressure for a trained indigenous leadership, the decision was made to establish the first residential Bible school,¹¹ and to cover a basic curriculum over a two-year period of six 12-week terms.¹²

The primary goal of the first long-term Bible school, then, was to train pastor-teachers and evangelist-teachers for the CBC churches.¹³ This was broken into a number of specific curriculum objectives for each major subject field (see Appendix, Table 1.1).

These objectives¹⁴ demonstrated the range of knowledge, and the devotional and communication skills (especially preaching) expected of a Christian leader. They placed high value on knowledge of the Bible, the flow of biblical history, and the interconnectedness of the biblical story, even when significant parts of the Christian scriptures were unavailable. Relating the Bible to the present world, including geography, church history, and rival religious alternatives, were also important, especially those aspects that Melanesian rural adults may not have been aware of.

The Bible was seen to be the source of knowledge of biblical history, of instruction about the Christian faith, and of devotional nurture. The Brethren have placed great emphasis on the inspired scriptures, as the basis of strong, independent churches, led by godly Christian leaders.

Naturally, the Brethren denominational distinctives, and distinctions, were implied. Brethren ecclesiology (termed, “assembly principles”),

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

¹² CMML Conference minutes, Anguganak, July, 1966.

¹³ Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 25.

¹⁴ Jenny Fountain indicates that the subjects actually taught in the first two years differed somewhat from this plan. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

opposition to Roman Catholicism,¹⁵ and links with other evangelical groups,¹⁶ appeared as specific issues in the curriculum.

Spiritual formation was also very important. Besides the emphasis on a personal devotional life, group-centred, and group-led, worship and instruction, in the form of daily chapels, were seen as important aspects of spiritual formation. Here, traditional, Western, institutional Bible training overlapped with Melanesian cultural forms. The Brethren emphasis on scripture memorisation also overlapped significantly with the importance of memory in the oral cultures of Melanesia.

But, as one might expect from a programme developed by expatriate missionaries of that era, a measure of paternalism was revealed in places. In music, the objective was “To teach an appreciation of hymnology, and of keeping to time”. The fact that Papua New Guineans struggled with Tok Pisin songs, set to Western tunes, demonstrates how difficult these were among the varied Sepik cultures, and how little emphasis was laid on attempts to develop an indigenous hymnology.¹⁷ Given that much traditional wisdom was communicated in song and chant, it is all the more surprising.

2. BAIBEL TISA TRENING SKUL

When Les and Hazel Marsh moved to Amanab in 1974, the focus of the school became more narrowly defined.¹⁸ He renamed the school

¹⁵ Addressed even more specifically here than in Western Brethren literature, because the Catholic faith was the principal Christian alternative, and dominant religious affiliation, in the Western Sepik at this time.

¹⁶ The Brethren used the interdenominational Missionary Aviation Fellowship flying service, and had comity agreements with the South Seas Evangelical Mission to the east, and the Baptists to the south, and had taken over the work of the Sola Fidei Mission in the Lumi area.

¹⁷ The writer recalls, with what sense of pride, the Wulukum villagers in 1964 were prepared to sing a single song they knew that had been translated into their vernacular.

¹⁸ Jenny Fountain describes how Marsh had the vision of moving around the villages, encouraging the Christians, and teaching the Word of God, while Les and Kay Loader worked in the Bible school. However, he came to see that, through the Bible school, he could multiply Bible teachers by training the students, who, in turn, would give

Baibel Tisa Trening Skul (BTTS), and focused on equipping men and their wives as Bible teachers. Jenny Fountain notes that a further motivation for the new focus was to safeguard against the “views filtering through from other missions, and influencing the thinking of CBC people, especially the idea that when a person goes to Bible school, he or she will return home as a pastor, and be paid”.¹⁹ This reflected the different views of some CMML leaders in the 1970s, from the more flexible and experimental ones of Kay Liddle and others, in the 1960s, who were happy to use more overtly “pastor” training institutions, and to defend this approach from scripture.

Despite the specific focus of Les Marsh, the 1988 constitution of BTTS preserved the broad definition “to develop disciples and to prepare people for service”.²⁰ Although literacy²¹ and other training programmes became important on a shorter-term basis, through Les Marsh’s continuing involvement, the primary focus on training “servant”-style Bible teachers remained the dominant objective of BTTS.

BTTS staff felt limited by the shortage of written materials, when constructing the curriculum,²² so, in 1982, the staff produced a comprehensive two-year programme (see Appendix, Table 1.2).²³

consecutive Bible teaching, and expository preaching, in their weekend ministries, and quarterly treks to outlying villages.

¹⁹ Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 43.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44. The December, 1988, Amanab Bible Teachers’ Training School (BTTS) constitution stated, “*Dispela skul i (sic) kirap bilong redim ol Kristen long wokabaut wantaim Bikpela, na mekim wok bilong Bikpela*”. Literally translated, this is “This school has been built to prepare Christians to walk with the Lord and to do the Lord’s work”.

²¹ L. A. Marsh, and H. D. Erlam, *In His Name*, 2nd edn, Palmerston North NZ: GPH Society, 1987, pp. 261, 269.

²² The October, 1982, document, “Tripela hap tok bilong ‘kirikyulam’ bilong BTTS”. Three parts of the curriculum of BTTS stated, “*i mas i gat not o buk bilong autim tok na dispela i karamapim dispela silibas o aulain na yusim taim yumi makim long en long progrem bilong skul*”. (There must be notes or a book for teaching that covers [each part of] this syllabus or outline to use in the time allocated in the programme of the school.)

²³ Source: “Tripela hap tok bilong ‘kirikyulam’ bilong BTTS”, mimeographed paper, October, 1982 (translation mine).

Compared with WSBS, the BTTS curriculum is more comprehensive. Written 16 years later, it reflects a higher level of literacy and understanding on the part of the students. It is, therefore, considerably more ambitious than what was attempted at WSBS in 1967.

The curriculum reflected the knowledge and skills considered basic equipment of a Bible teacher. These appear to be:

1. A broad knowledge of the contents of all the books of the Bible, studied as books, rather than as a continuous story. A variety of scripture genre, from both Old and New Testaments, were studied concurrently.
2. A different approach was used to teach the Old Testament, but this was more a factor of the books of the Old Testament that were available than a variation in exegetical approach. Where a book of the Bible was not directly available, recourse was made to secondary sources.
3. The strong focus on mastering the contents of the Bible was supplemented by courses on basic Bible doctrines, Brethren church history, ecclesiology and practices, Christian character and discipleship.
4. The skills related to evangelism, Bible teaching, and specialist ministries (youth, Sunday school teaching, religious instruction, and literacy teaching).

The curriculum differs mainly in emphasis from what might be taught in a more general course for leadership among the CBC. Despite the strong Brethren commitment to leadership of local churches by a part-time, plural eldership, the fact remains that the graduating Bible teacher from BTTS in the early 1980's was likely to have been the best-trained member of most congregations, when viewed from a Western perspective. In Brethren church practice, the system of extractive Bible training relies heavily for its implementation on the development of Christian character. In reality, the "servant" attitude, emphasised by Christ (e.g., John 13:12-17) may easily be sublimated into an authoritarian style, especially if a dogmatic theology reinforces

the conviction that the Bible school graduate now has a knowledge of the truth, above others.

The effectiveness of Bible teacher-training also relied on balancing the students' classroom intake of the teaching content, with the out-of-class ministries, as they participated in weekend village preaching and ministries, in their holiday periods.

Over time, three important developments impinged on the training of BTTS, and impacted the curriculum. The first, highlighted by Jenny Fountain,²⁴ was the writing and publication of the *Baibel Tisa* New Testament commentary series, over the 12 years: 1979-1991, although the books were available, in draft form, to BTTS students before their final publication. There is an inevitable shift involved in tying a Bible school teaching programme to a commentary publication process. That shift moves even further away from the dynamic of personal interaction and discovery, essential to the hermeneutical process involved in developing a living and relevant theology, towards an exposition of Bible truth, as a given body of knowledge. A commentary, purporting to teach what the text means and how it should be applied, is inserted between reading and interpreting the biblical text, on the one hand, and the resulting lived and communicated message on the other. A continuing temptation for the Bible student, then, is to rely more on the expository explanation of the commentary than to grapple directly with interpreting the biblical text.

A second development was the transition from the nine-month, two-year cycle towards six-month courses in 1986, and further shortening to four-month courses in a three-year cycle in 1990.²⁵ The change was accompanied by a reduction in the catchment area, from which students were drawn, necessitated by the increasing poverty of the school's land for food production, the loss of profits from the school's store to finance imported or locally-purchased foods, and the higher cost of air fares. The overall impact was two-fold. Amanab, as a Bible training centre, lost its national focus, and became a regional training

²⁴ Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, pp. 51-52.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

institution. It has since become only a local one. But, through the vision and input of Les Marsh, other local training programmes, essentially based on the Amanab model, have been spawned at Guriaso and Green River.

The third change that impacted curriculum development, is the publication of the Tok Pisin Old Testament in a completed Bible in 1989. In 1978, a revised New Testament with Psalms had been published, and the completed Bible gave further impetus to expansion of the study of the whole corpus of scripture. The combination of a reduction in the total length of training, and the increased scope of the courses, must make for a more cursory overview of the biblical material, with consequent losses. This would seem to be especially so with a content-focused curriculum, compared with a more skills-focused one.

3. YIMBRASI BIBLE SCHOOL

A different purpose lay behind the Yimbrasi Bible School (officially known as the Yimbrasi Adult Christian Education Centre).²⁶ It was to meet “general adult Christian education” needs, rather than for pre-service training of Christian leaders. Max and Heather Tuck, who spearheaded the establishment phase, felt the need to cater for those who would not otherwise go to study at either the Christian Leaders’ Training College (CLTC) or Amanab. They wanted to avoid the danger of dislocation, involved in sending people away for long periods from their village environment. The powerful model of secular institutions, and the expectations of paid employment, were also problems they wished to avoid.²⁷ The advice of Professor Alan Tippett, who visited Yimbrasi at an early stage, and saw the potential for a new pattern of theological education, became powerfully important for Tuck, in his vision for Yimbrasi.

Tippett advised Tuck to avoid five dangers – removing students for long periods from their cultural environment; transplanting Western training programmes and theological college curricula; educating

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

trainees too far ahead of their target congregations; graduating trainees as an elite minority; and establishing a centralised, hierarchical church structure. He recommended four aspects of an effective programme – in-service training, using short courses about topics faced by the growing church; communicating culturally-relevant and biblically-centred truth; teaching a broad selection of active Christians, including male *and* female, the elderly (with *mana*), the mature, and youth; and cultivating an attitude of ongoing learning.²⁸

Clearly, a profoundly different set of guiding objectives would result in a very different function and curriculum for Yimbrasi, when compared with BTTS.

The impact on the curriculum was to allow very great flexibility in the type of courses offered. This was a weakness, as well as a strength. The strength was that, with a deep sensitivity to local church needs, courses could be dovetailed to suit those needs. The weakness was that the programme was open to dislocation, external pressures from partisan groups, and individual whim.

Such weaknesses can be avoided by long-term planning, a stable staffing of the school, by teachers closely integrated into the life of the surrounding churches, and a strong and theologically-aware board of control. Despite its very committed staff, unfortunately, the history of Yimbrasi does not lead this writer to believe the best use has always been made of this facility.

Over the years, Yimbrasi moved away, somewhat, from its original vision. This was partly due to changing personnel. Other factors, such as the continuing difficulty of moving students to the longer-term training institutions at Amanab and CLTC, resulting in a lack of skilled Bible teachers in the area, and the pressures from other denominations encroaching into the Palai-Maimai,²⁹ perhaps more than elsewhere, brought pressure for change.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

²⁹ During the 1980s, several emotionally-charged confrontations took place in this area, when national Pentecostal preachers worked to divide Protestant congregations.

If we regard the period from 1971-1977 as the first phase of Yimbrasi Bible School, Jenny Fountain has helpfully outlined five stages of the change and development.³⁰ Short courses, serving mainly local church leadership needs continued, but a four-year cycle of six-month courses in Tok Pisin, catering for male and female students was developed.

Purpose statements altered also. In Phase 2 (1978-1982), Bob Davis saw the aims to be:

To provide a solid grounding in the Christian faith, with training for those who have spiritual motivation and gift, plus encouragement to develop into mature workmen for Christ. Also, to train gifted national brothers to positions of leadership within the school.³¹

Three major changes should be noted in this statement. Firstly, we note a move away from training mature adults towards a younger age group. The qualifications for entry are, apparently, based more on personal motivation, and perceived gift, than actual leadership, and participation in church life. Secondly, rather than targeted training, geared towards equipping in specific areas, the statement reflects a greater desire to offer training for personal growth towards maturity. Thirdly, missionary involvement began to focus on development of national leadership for ministry within the school.

In the next phase, Neal Windsor described the purpose of studying portions of “the Old and New Testaments” within the Bible school as “helping the personal growth of individual students, and equipping them to take their part in the church more effectively”.³² The comment reflects an increasing emphasis, both on younger people, and on the

³⁰ These are: (1) 1971-1977: Max and Heather Tuck get started; (2) 1978-1982: Davis, as principal; national staff; six-month courses begin; (3) 1982-1989: national leadership (Hayuruwen, Suren) with missionary (Windsor, Anderson) assistance; (4) 1989-1996: management and leadership training; full national control (Ivan and Tracy Tuck); (5) 1996 to the present: full national staffing of teaching and management, with occasional visits from expatriates.

³¹ Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 76, quoting R. Davis, *Treasury*, 1980.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 76, quoting N. Windsor and S. Martin, “Letter to Yimbrasi prayer partners”, April 20, 1985.

knowledge and skills of personal Christian discipleship.³³ During Windsor's time, a four-year cycle of six-month courses was established, with courses covering six major curriculum areas. (See Appendix, Table 1.3.) These were: (1) significant portions of the *Old Testament* (the Pentateuch, and the historical books, with four prophets being proposed for the fourth year);³⁴ (2) *New Testament*, with the exceptions of Matthew and Philemon, and possibly James and Revelation;³⁵ (3) *Devotions/Quiet Time*, using Psalms or Proverbs in most years; (4) *The Church* (Acts and CBC Beliefs); (5) *Book Study and Other Studies*, using a variety of helpful, published literature; and (6) *Practical* (skills training in specific ministries, including Sunday school, evangelism, outreach, open air, RI, youth work, and rally).³⁶

Clear purpose-statements are lacking for the fourth stage, but, during this time, the missionary vision of Ivan Tuck had been to set the school up so that it could run with indigenous staff, and minimal external help. Bible-school teacher in-service courses were commenced during this phase, not only for Yimbrasi staff, but also for all Bible schools.

By 1997, the four-year cycle of six-monthly courses was seen by the fully national Board of Management as being for "young people to come and learn the Word of God, and then go out and help the church of God".³⁷ The change to a primary focus on younger men and women was now virtually complete, but the training vision of the school had broadened into a general programme of pre-service training for involvement in the church at large.

³³ It is not without significance that, whereas Bob Davis came to the Bible teaching task from a background of practical experience, Neal Windsor was a primary teacher by profession, but also without formal Bible training.

³⁴ Brackets and a question mark in the course plan about Daniel, Hosea, Joel, and Jonah raises the question as to whether these prophets were actually taught.

³⁵ James and Revelation are bracketed in the fourth year, again, raising the question as to whether they were covered.

³⁶ Every Boys' Rally and Every Girls' Rally are Brethren youth movements, commenced in New Zealand, and have become internationally recognised, principally in Western countries.

³⁷ Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 76, reporting a meeting between the Fountains and the Yimbrasi Board of Management, April 26, 1997.

4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE BIBLE SCHOOL

The English Language Bible School (ELBS) represents a fourth model of Bible school curriculum development. A draft constitution was prepared by Graeme Erb, reflecting his personal ethos of the school, rather than a formal or approved statement of aims.³⁸

The draft constitution lists the ethos of the school as comprising a commitment to:

- encourage and help students to be the person [sic] God wants them to be;
- a Bible-centred curriculum;
- integrating formal learning with practical experience;
- helping the students develop, and humbly exercise, their spiritual gifts, in the context of the local church, as it seeks to fulfil the great commission.³⁹

The constitution also includes the following statement of intended outcomes:

A graduate of the English Language Bible School should, then, be a person who demonstrates the desire to live a godly life, one who is able to handle the word of God well, and one who desires to serve the Lord, humbly and wholeheartedly.⁴⁰

³⁸ Erb is one of the most-qualified theological educators working with CBC in PNG. He is a trained secondary-school teacher, who has done post-graduate theological training at Dallas Theological Seminary, and practical missionary training, and training of others with Gospel Literature Outreach in Smithton, Tasmania. See "Commendation notice", in *Tidings*, January/February, 1988, p. 18. Graeme was training supervisor at the GLO Training Centre for four years prior to his commendation.

³⁹ G. Erb, "English Language Bible School Constitution", draft unpublished paper, nd, Introduction. See also Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 101.

⁴⁰ Erb, "English Language Bible School Constitution", Introduction. See also Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, section 1.8.

How were these aims and objectives translated into curriculum items? In 1997, Erb supplied the following list of subjects as those being covered during 1994-1997 (the four-year cycle):

Old Testament: Overview of the Old Testament, Genesis, Pentateuch, Exodus, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, Esther, Nehemiah, Proverbs, Daniel.

New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Inductive Study of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 Peter, Hebrews, Inductive Study of James, Inductive Study of Jude, 1 and 3 John, Revelation.

Topics: Foundations of the Faith (Doctrine), Prayer, Church Leadership, Bible Study Methods, Christian Education, Christian Marriage and Family, Doctrine of the Church, Holy Spirit, Lord Jesus Christ, Worship.

The list reveals some interesting aspects of the ELBS curriculum. The strong focus on the study of the Christian scriptures, like the other Bible schools, remains central. Within this, the emphasis is on the New Testament, rather than the Old, although students have access to the whole Bible in English. Selection, therefore, rather than comprehensive coverage, is a deliberate choice. Most, but not all, New Testament books are listed. Surprising omissions from the New Testament are 1 Timothy (possibly covered in part in the course on Church Leadership), and 2 Thessalonians, and, in the Old Testament, all but Daniel of the major and minor prophets.

In treating biblical material, ELBS has made a breakthrough in the combination of at least three courses, using an inductive approach, and a course on Bible-study methods. This is a strong attempt to use the programme to “kick-start” the disciplined personal study of the scriptures, in a way that develops an essential set of skills in an on-going pattern that is considered important for the evangelical church leader.

Besides biblical courses, the programme develops a range of basic doctrines, personal devotion, and spiritual formation courses, and some relational and practical skills. Much of the latter two are, however, part of the informal learning involved in Erb's approach to the task, his close personal relationships with students and other staff, and his modelling of Christian discipleship and leadership role.

The informal aspect of the curriculum was evident in the interviews conducted in data collection for this research. My wife and I were present over part of a week-long graduates' refresher, and several days with the current students. We were able to interview almost all the present and past students. They were asked what they found most helpful about their ELBS course. As Jenny Fountain notes, *Book-keeping, Administration, and Typing*, which were not on the official list of courses, were frequently noted as being the most helpful courses students had taken.⁴¹ We note, in passing, that an expectation of the integration of biblical, practical, and relational aspects seems to be absent from formal curriculum statements in all the Bible schools, examined above. The fact that it goes on informally is an important feature of ELBS, and is highly desirable in all Melanesian Bible schools.

The four examples chosen typify alternative models in the CBC Bible school system. If we set aside the early Yimbrasi model, all the others bear some basic similarities. All four are essentially Bible-based. Most attempt to cover the whole (available) Bible in survey form. All add classes on doctrine, sometimes focused on Brethren doctrinal positions. Most have moved, in recent years, towards a programme of using four- or six-month courses, spread over four years.⁴²

The schools also differ in several ways. Some are more clearly pre-service training; others focus more on in-service. While all identify their purposes somewhat differently, a common factor is that all are training students for leadership. All of the Bible schools value

⁴¹ Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 109. The interviewees were unaware of the publications and experience of Jenny Fountain in these areas, so the danger of a "halo effect" can be discounted.

⁴² Amanab, Green River, and Guriaso now run a cycle of three four-month courses.

discipleship, and seek to foster it, through institutional patterns.⁴³ Discipleship may be emphasised, in the recruitment and application process, in the orientation to Bible school routines, in the explicit provision of the daily timetable, or, informally, in pastoral encouragement by the staff.

5. A NATIONAL CBC BIBLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

In June 1996, an in-service course for CBC Bible school teachers was held at Yimbrasi. Following discussion about the need for a national curriculum, Reggie Howard drafted a “National CBC *Baibel Skul Kirikulom*” for consideration. He stated that the purpose of writing the curriculum was “not to restrict or limit teachers in what they teach, but, rather, to do a lot of the advanced thinking on their behalf, so that the teachers can concentrate more on the needs of students than on preparing daily lessons”.⁴⁴

The “Kirikulom”⁴⁵ covers seven sections – introduction, philosophy, four-year plan, weekly schedule, six-month schedule, outlines of some subjects, and a conclusion. In the introduction, Howard expresses the strong desire to move from “a knowledge- and information-based curriculum to a skills-based curriculum”, and he proceeds to outline five essential skills – to be able to use good Bible-study skills, preach the gospel, teach God’s Word, develop good Christian habits of discipleship, and practice evaluation and discernment.⁴⁶

He further emphasises that it is not merely a matter of revising the subjects, but also improving the teaching methods. If teachers can change from just lecturing to giving assignments and projects, students can learn the skills listed above.

⁴³ Patterns of devotional life, established in Bible schools, do not easily transfer into everyday experience of the graduates.

⁴⁴ Reggie J. Howard, “National CBC Baibel Skul Kirikulom”, unpublished paper, 1996, p. 1.

⁴⁵ The “Kirikulom” was written in a mixture of English and Tok Pisin. Some wordings have been translated here.

⁴⁶ Howard, “Kirikulom”, p. 2.

Howard's proposals revolve around the current pattern of the larger CBC Bible schools, which run the four half-year cycles. He suggests that each six months' course comprise a 23-week programme, with 20 weeks of normal classes, and three special weeks. The first week of a six-month course would be the first special week, involving an immersion style "Bible Study Week". Basic Bible study methods would be taught, and the inductive approach to Bible study commenced. The second special week would be devoted to "outreach". The third, occurring in about the fourth or fifth month, would be devoted to developing Christian spirituality, with a guest speaker, and introducing musicians, to teach some new songs.⁴⁷

As far as the detail of the core curriculum is concerned, Howard proposes a traditional fourfold division of the curriculum into Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology. He adds a fifth category of "Other Classes"⁴⁸ (see Appendix, Table 1.4), in which he includes two types of courses: a study project on a biblical book (Jonah, Galatians, Job, Ephesians), and practical training (book-keeping, written communication, i.e., various kinds of letters, typing, planning, and administration). The "Kirikulom" goes on to outline, among other things, a year-two programme of 20 weeks of Old Testament lectures (Judges-Esther),⁴⁹ and a systematic theology outline of topic headings (with some references added).⁵⁰

Howard has done a considerable service to the CBC Bible schools in preparing this 18-page document. It is a genuine effort to help the teachers, many of whom have very limited experience in such institutions. However, there are several matters, pertinent to this study, that are worthy of further consideration.

First, the "Kirikulom" offers a strong call to move from a merely content-centred approach to a skills-focused programme. This important change helps teachers to concentrate on the teaching task of

⁴⁷ Howard calls it a "Rejoice in the Lord week" ("*Amamas long Bikpela wik*").

⁴⁸ "*Ol arapela klas*".

⁴⁹ Howard, "Kirikulom", pp. 9-13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

preparing students for ministry, rather than merely *delivering* “factual content”. The “*Kirikulom*” continues to reflect the Brethren stress on biblical knowledge. For many Brethren, this highly-valued cognitive element perhaps reflects an assumption that, the better one knows one’s Bible, the holier one will be in life, and the more skilled one will be in preaching and teaching ministries. The “*Kirikulom*” goes some way to counter that.

Of Howard’s six key skills,⁵¹ to be developed through Bible school ministry, three aim at personal equipping, which every Christian needs; two are communication skills, intended for those with gifts of teaching and evangelism. Whether these are, in fact, the key skills, around which all CBC Bible schools should focus their curriculum, needs to be examined from several perspectives. We have already pointed out that the rather broad, even vague, purpose statements sometimes do not match the narrower intentions of the (missionary) teachers. If the Bible schools are to serve the churches adequately, then the purpose statements need clarification, as a prior task. The CBC church leaders, along with other stakeholders, need to express their intentions, in supporting and sending students to the schools.

We also need to ask what place there is for the development of a wider range of spiritual gifts and natural abilities. Evangelicals recognise that the body of Christ is composed of “members”, each of whom is Holy Spirit-gifted to fulfil their role in that body. But, it seems a false assumption that such gifts can be exercised effectively without training and/or experience. Furthermore, to focus the role of the CBC Bible schools on only two leadership/communication ministries, appears to unduly limit their role.

Another emphasis, reflected in Howard’s “*Kirikulom*”, is the concern for spiritual formation, and character-building. It is important that the Bible school curriculum moves, not only from content to skills in its focus, but beyond skills to the task of training *whole people*, and even further, to a vision for training *whole people in communities*.

⁵¹ “Evaluation” and “discernment” would appear to greatly overlap.

The term “whole people” recognises the necessary integration of personal experience, present giftedness, integrated development of character, knowledge, skills, and ministry, that comprises the growth process for students who enter and pass through the Bible schools. “In communities” deliberately points to the fact that learning takes place in community interactions. In using the term “community”, I refer to three different aspects – the school, as a learning community, the local church, as a functioning expression of the body of Christ, and the local Melanesian communities, village, or clan, in which churches and individual Christians express the love of Christ, in action and verbal expression.

Finally, we note that the “*Kirikulom*” makes an implicit assumption that the writing of a curriculum is a global function. Howard claims that “Many big Bible schools appear to have four main subject fields to be covered in their curriculum. These four fields are (1) Old Testament, (2) New Testament, (3) Systematic theology, (4) Practical theology.”⁵² We ask whether such globalisation of this traditional Western approach to theological training is adequate for the training needs of CBC in PNG, if not balanced by a healthy contextualisation. The inclusion of “Other Classes”, as discussed, above, does go some way to develop aspects of the curriculum that emerge from locally-felt needs, rather than from global perspectives. Does the “*Kirikulom*” take this matter far enough?

C. IMBALANCES IN CBC CURRICULA

Reviewing the examples of CBC curricula we have cited, including the proposed national one, there appear to be some significant imbalances. If we accept the definition of curriculum, stated earlier in this chapter, of “everything that happens to students under the aegis of the school”, then the curriculum outlines emphasise two principal aspects of the learning process of the Bible schools – the cognitive knowledge base, and the ministry skills. The knowledge base is supplemented further

⁵² I have translated the Tok Pisin, which states, “*Planti ol bikpela Baibel Skul i luksave olsem i gat 4-pela bikpela sabjek ol i mas karamapim insait long kirikulom (sic) bilong ol. Dispela 4-pela bikpela sabjek i olsem. 1. Olpela Testamen. 2. Nupela Testamen. 3. Ol bilip bilong yumi (o as tok). 4. Mekim wok bilong God.*” Howard, “*Kirikulom*”, p. 3.

by courses in basic Christian doctrine, Brethren beliefs and practices, and their justification, from the Bible, some aspects of church history, cultures of biblical times, and knowledge about other Christian groups.

The skills that are emphasised, fall into three categories. There are basic skills, like becoming literate in Tok Pisin scriptures, and the disciplines of evangelical faith, such as how to pray, how to have a quiet time, memorising scripture verses, and learning Christian songs. ELBS, and some recent trends in Tok Pisin Bible schools, have emphasised the “inductive method” of Bible study. These are disciplines of Christian discipleship, and, perhaps, should be encouraged in every literate Christian.

Ministry skills are focused on a fairly narrow range of Christian involvement, related to certain types of leadership – how to prepare a sermon, how to preach, how to evangelise, teach Sunday school, and religious instruction. At one stage, BTTS was developing translation skills.⁵³

A third range of skills, that are popular, but not seen as crucial, in the programme are practical administrative skills – typing, administration, book-keeping, and letter-writing.

If this is the total overt curriculum, then it appears somewhat unbalanced, making huge assumptions about the transfer of Bible school-based learning into post-graduate experience. Undoubtedly, there are desirable, but unstated, outcomes for the schools. For one thing, Brethren acknowledge that developing spirituality, and character-formation, are vital. But explicit goals in these areas are absent, and teachers may assume that cognitive knowledge and skills development will induce progress in these other areas.

In the affective domain, and interpersonal relationships, how do community life and learning, together, foster progress to maturity and harmony? Both of these are biblical goals, and, one would assume,

⁵³ Translation processes are an important set of competencies in Melanesia, where a large proportion of Bible school students are trained theologically in one language, and will exercise much of their ministry, after training, in another.

should, therefore, be part of a Bible school's goals, too. Courses, like those on marriage, are included in the programme, and do go some way to fulfil this important function. But is this adequate?

We have noted, further, that largely informal use seems to be made of experience outside the classroom. Regular field education assignments are organised for weekends and outreach weeks, but little use seems to be made to monitor experience in the six months students spend at home. A system of internship monitoring seems to be highly desirable. Graduates from the past, for example, could be used, after appropriate training, for internship supervision.

Finally, apart from the language used, it is not obvious from the curricula that these schools are catering particularly for Melanesian students, and equipping them to operate in Melanesian cultural contexts. In 1997 fieldwork, I did observe very useful dialogue emerging from student questions at the end of lectures, but the lectures did not appear to be structured around Melanesian and contextual issues. Rather, they emerged from a more-globalised and general list of topics students anywhere, and particularly in the West, need to know.

D. MAJOR INFLUENCES ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

In the foregoing discussion, it was assumed that purpose and objectives statements would have a direct impact on curricula of the Bible schools. That assumption appears broadly correct, even though it is difficult to demonstrate that link precisely.

However, there are a number of factors, other than aims and objectives, that influence curriculum formation, and it is in order to spell some of these out, especially as they relate to competing global and contextual tensions.

1. GLOBAL FACTORS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Two global issues, we develop further, are the Western Bible school model, and Brethren distinctives.

a. *The Western Bible School Model*

A global impact on the CBC Bible schools is the imported Western model. The missionary founders of Bible schools were influenced, largely unconsciously, I believe, by their experience of theological education in their countries of origin. Writers about Bible schools have described how these emerged, and developed roughly similar curricula in Western countries.⁵⁴ Many Brethren missionaries trained in interdenominational Bible colleges, while others came to the field without any formal theological training.⁵⁵

The model of distinctively Brethren Bible schools was established in all three Brethren-sending countries. The earliest was probably Emmaus Bible School in the United States. R. Edward Harlow, while still a missionary in Belgian Congo, expressed the desire, in 1938, for a Bible College, “which taught the principles of New Testament Christianity, without compromise, and where the whole counsel of God could be declared”.⁵⁶ Ross McLaren identified Harlow, along with John Smart and C. Ernest Tatham as taking the initiative for commencing the Emmaus Bible School, as a part-time evening school

⁵⁴ Virginia L. Brereton, *Training God's army: The American Bible School 1880-1940*, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1990, especially chapters 7 and 8; Gene A. Getz, *MBI: The story of Moody Bible Institute*, revd edn, by James M. Vincent, Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1986, chapters 6-10 deal with the developing curriculum, as the range of ministries grew. Interestingly, Peter Lineham, the historian of the New Zealand Brethren, makes only brief mention of the New Zealand Assembly Bible School (Peter J. Lineham, *There We Found Brethren: A History of Assemblies of Brethren in New Zealand*, Palmerston North NZ: GPH Society, 1977, p. 159), while Ken Newton, historian for the Brethren in Australia, devotes a whole chapter to training for leadership, but devotes only one paragraph to the curriculum of the principal Bible school, Emmaus (Kenneth J. Newton, *A History of the Brethren in Australia*, Gailies Australia: Aberdeen Desktop, 1999, p. 84).

⁵⁵ Several of the missionaries involved in the commencement of CBC Bible schools were trained teachers, including Bruce Crowther, Dennis Thorp, Les Loader, Ben Poulson, Neal Windsor, Ossie and Jenny Fountain, and Graham Erb. Many of these came with the mental model, and understood the value, of institutionally-based education.

⁵⁶ Emmaus Bible College, *Student handbook 1999-2000*, Epping NSW: Emmaus Bible College, p. 6. “Without compromise” may express a concern that the whole counsel of God, as the Brethren view it, could not be freely taught in interdenominational theological colleges.

in 1941, and full-time classes in 1945, first in Toronto Canada, and then in Chicago USA.⁵⁷ The two schools merged into one in Chicago in 1947.⁵⁸

In Australia, Emmaus Bible School is the most well-known Brethren theological training institution. It began in 1952 as “an arm” of its American counterpart, by printing and distributing Emmaus correspondence courses from an office in Brisbane.⁵⁹ Although many others were involved, Ken Newton attributes the founding of Emmaus Bible School to New Zealander Gordon Blair in 1954, with evening classes. Unfortunately, a full-time programme did not eventuate until 1959, less than a year after Blair died.⁶⁰

In New Zealand also, the New Zealand Assembly Bible School began in 1958,⁶¹ under the instigation and encouragement of a number of Auckland Brethren, notably Robert A. Laidlaw.⁶²

A further mental model was provided, in Australia and New Zealand at least, with the missionary-training ministries of Gospel Literature Outreach, which began in 1968.⁶³ GLO commenced training colleges in Smithton, Tasmania, and Te Awamutu, NZ, in 1975, running some training courses from its head office in Riverstone, Sydney.⁶⁴ Several missionaries, who worked in the CBC Bible schools, attended a

⁵⁷ Ross H. McLaren, “The triple tradition: The origin and development of the Open Brethren in North America”, MA thesis, Nashville TN: Vanderbilt University, 1982, pp. 139-150.

⁵⁸ It is currently located in Dubuque, Iowa. See *Student handbook 1999-2000*, p. 6.

⁵⁹ *Student handbook 1999-2000*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Newton, *History of the Brethren in Australia*, 1999, pp. 83-84.

⁶¹ At 9 Lovelock Avenue, Mount Eden, moving to 20 Palmer Avenue, Kelston, in 1964. (Noel McKernon, personal communication, March 27, 2000).

⁶² Peter J. Lineham, *There We Found Brethren*, 1977, p. 159. By February, 2000, NZ Assembly Bible School and GLO College of Bible and Mission had merged, and commenced classes as Pathways College on the NZABS campus.

⁶³ Noel McKernon, personal communication.

⁶⁴ Kevin White, personal communications, March 26 and 31, 2000.

Brethren-related Bible training institution, either in preparation, or as in-service missionary training.⁶⁵

The *Student Handbook* of Emmaus Bible College, Sydney, while foreshadowing possible changes to the order in which courses are taught, offers a basic core in the first year of its three-year Certificate and Diploma programmes, comprising *Old Testament survey; New Testament survey; Survey of Bible doctrine; Genesis; Foundations for ministry; Evangelism; Hermeneutics: interpreting and applying the text; History and perspectives of Christian missions; Contemporary communication; a choice from various electives*.⁶⁶ Comparison with the curricula of the CBC Bible schools in Papua New Guinea, reinforces the claim of a globalising tendency among the latter, from overseas models.

Mr Max Lane made insightful audit reports of the two New Zealand colleges in 1989 and 1994 respectively.⁶⁷ Although these do not provide a complete listing of courses, sufficient is given to indicate that a similar approach is adopted, with strong emphasis on coverage of the Bible, theology/doctrines, church practices, and communication skills, with possibly a somewhat stronger emphasis on mission in the GLO college.

It is not suggested that the colleges in these Western countries had a direct influence on the formation of CBC Bible schools in Papua New Guinea, and even less on their curriculum. But the precedent was, even so, created, and this provided a measure of legitimacy to the institutional model of training. Visiting speakers, closely associated with the Bible schools of all three sending countries came as CMLL

⁶⁵ Two examples are Graeme Erb (GLO Training College in Tasmania) and Ivan Tuck (New Zealand Assembly Bible School). Others became teachers in overseas Bible Colleges after leaving Papua New Guinea, notably Bruce and Margaret Crowther, Dennis and Barbara Thorp, and Kevin and Yvonne White.

⁶⁶ Emmaus Bible College, *Student handbook 1999-2000*, p. 32.

⁶⁷ Max S. Lane, "New Zealand Assembly Bible School: Report of the visiting evaluation team, April-June, 1989", unpublished report, July, 1989; Max S. Lane, "New Zealand GLO Bible and Missionary College: Report of the visiting evaluator, September, 1994", unpublished report, September, 1994. Access to these confidential reports, with permission of the author.

missionary conference speakers, and visited at least some of the CBC Bible schools as part of their itinerary.⁶⁸

b. Denominational Distinctives

Another globalising influence for the CBC Bible schools is the common commitment of CMML missionaries to a set of denominational distinctive doctrines and practices (see Chapter 1). Membership in, and commendation by, overseas Brethren assemblies was a pre-requisite, in most cases, for inclusion in the CMML missionary team, and especially in the church-related ministries of CMML and CBC.⁶⁹

Curriculum content was influenced by Brethren background at several levels. Firstly, several schools felt the need to include a course in the programme on “assembly principles”. Sometimes, such direct teaching is supplemented by lessons or courses on other streams of Christianity and/or “false cults”, especially where these are present in the local area, or in PNG, and students are likely to know about them, or to come in contact with them in the future. This can be viewed as teaching denominational distinctives, by a process of comparison, using the contrasts as polemical teaching points.

Perhaps, inevitably, however, the infusion of denominational distinctives into other aspects of the curriculum is the most-pervasive globalising influence. Passages of scripture, important to Brethren theology or practice, will be valued and taught in a way that emphasises the denominational viewpoint. In this regard, Acts and 1 Corinthians have been more significant for deriving “church truth”

⁶⁸ CMML conference speakers have included Doug Hewlett (Principal, NZABS), John Smart (Emmaus Bible School, Canada/USA), and Ian McDowell (Principal, Emmaus Bible School, Sydney, Australia), among others.

⁶⁹ CMML was open to accepting non-Brethren missionaries and coworkers. The most outstanding example is the involvement of German Liebenzell missionaries to run the Anguganak Girls’ Bible School. Liebenzell missionaries, coming from an evangelical missionary-sending agency, with personnel from the Lutheran and Reformed churches, have agreed not to contradict distinctive Brethren teachings in their cooperation with CBC.

than Romans.⁷⁰ But Brethren distinctives not only influence the selection of biblical books for course teaching; they influence the interpretation of particular passages as well.

A notable example of the influence of denominational distinctives is how the topic of “church history” is taught. Emerging out of student questions, and the CBC church leaders wanting to know their denominational heritage, church history almost inevitably emphasises Brethren church history.

Brethren distinctives also influence other aspects of the curriculum. The way students are selected for acceptance, how the field experience is structured, and the process of transition upon graduation are often affected by the denominational distinctives of church structure and relationships. This may cause tension for the student or graduate, when, what he or she experiences of local church life, does not match the ideals that have been taught in the school.

These two global influences, overseas models, and Brethren distinctives, have impacted the CBC Bible school curricula, perhaps more profoundly than any others. This may have been inevitable, with the schools emerging from a missionary initiative, rather than from local felt need.⁷¹

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The effectiveness of a particular curriculum, I believe, may depend on the extent to which global influences are interpenetrated by contextual ones. To discuss this, we need to ask, “In what ways has the curriculum, and the content of courses, been adjusted to suit the

⁷⁰ Rom 16, for example, provides evidence for house churches existing alongside each other in the city of Rome, despite the implication that the letter is written to one local church. We should note, however, that Paul omits the word “church” from his salutation in 1:7.

⁷¹ It was the missionaries who took the initiative to bring PNG church elders together to discuss the concept of a Bible school, and work out ways and means. They also felt the need for rapid localisation of their work, in case independence curtailed their ministry. This was a factor in the commencement of the CBC Bible schools. See J. Hitchen, K. Liddle, and C. Cliffe, “Towards an overall strategy for missionary planning”, unpublished CMML discussion paper, 1967, pp. 4-5, 7-8.

perceived needs of students training for ministry in a Melanesian context?" We consider five aspects.

a. The Language Medium of Instruction

The fact that five of the CBC Bible schools surveyed use Tok Pisin is a significant adjustment to the local context. Tok Pisin is widely understood as a medium of largely oral communication, and is employed by PNG radio stations, especially in areas like Sandaun Province, where many vernacular languages have few speakers. Tok Pisin allows the Bible schools to focus on training a clientele, consistent with the Brethren commitment to the priesthood of all believers, rather than an elitist leadership, that might emerge if English was the only medium of instruction. It also allows older Christians to aspire to, and be trained for, leadership, rather than abdicate to younger English-speaking products of the formal education system.

But the strengths of Tok Pisin need to be balanced by the liabilities. There is a very much smaller availability of Tok Pisin-written material than in English. This impacts the curriculum directly in the choice of biblical courses, and the way in which non-biblical subjects are taught. It also influences the breadth of resources, by which students can compare and question what is being taught in the classroom. Inevitably, this places greater authority on the word of the teacher (or the one Tok Pisin Bible commentary). We shall return to this issue in a later article about educational methods.

ELBS uses English as its language medium, and focuses on students, who have acquired English, through their formal education. As a language medium, English makes a somewhat different accommodation to contextual factors. Because English is a second language, and the entrance standard is completion of Grade 8, certainly not all the tools of an English-based theological education are available to the students, although the potential is there. English opens the possibility of further language improvement, and, also, of further theological study at the Christian Leaders' Training College, or even overseas.⁷² Even so, curriculum choices, where they are based on

⁷² Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 100.

availability of written literature, are inevitably greater. The fact is, however, that the ELBS curriculum is possibly narrower than the Tok Pisin alternatives, and this is by deliberate choice. The key methodology of an inductive approach to Bible study intentionally seeks deeper interaction with the biblical text, rather than broader research into commentaries, and other exegetical resources.

An English-based curriculum, and teaching process, limits student recruitment to a younger generation, and to those with competence in the English language. It is, therefore, making a longer-term investment into the life of the Brethren churches than Tok Pisin, as a medium. It also opens up some ministries, not so readily available to Tok Pisin speakers, such as, religious education in schools, and in other English-speaking environments.

English opens the curriculum content to wider global influences, making a greater personal impact. Thus, it forces a greater demand, than Tok Pisin, to bridge the gap between student learning and effective communication to non-English, vernacular speakers.

b. Melanesian Worldviews

A second important area of accommodation to the local context involves asking how Melanesian worldviews and “plausibility structures”, to use Peter Berger’s terminology, impact curriculum formation and delivery.

Another way of putting the issue, is to ask whether the curriculum has been constructed around Melanesian questions, and local perspectives, or whether global influences have introduced more universal formulations, in the interests of completeness or missionary-determined curriculum ideals. Undoubtedly, local viewpoints about what was to be taught in the Bible schools emerged, out of interaction between the missionaries and local Christians. On the face of it, however, all the curricula look much more globalised than contextualised. The fact that the issue of a single curriculum for the Bible schools could be raised, demonstrates this assumption. If a Melanesian worldview is so different from a Western one, one would

expect that more attention might be paid to linking the Bible-school programme to Melanesian perspectives.

It is acknowledged that an alert and interactive teacher can still deal with local contextual issues, using a globalised curriculum. Issues that relate to the local context will inevitably arise in classroom discussion. But, with a globally-oriented teaching method, they will tend to emerge incidentally, rather than as an automatic, and integral, aspect of the curriculum. If this argument is even somewhat on the right lines, then considerable work remains to be done in revamping existing curricula around local felt needs, and life questions. A process of dialogue with significant Papua New Guineans should be put in place to evaluate the outlooks of local people, the felt needs of the churches, and the directions of the local and national social, economic, and political issues. At another level, renewed study of Melanesian and Western worldviews seems necessary to identify commonalities and diversities. This needs to be done, both on a macro or national level, as well as on the micro or local cultural level. The considerable differences between Highlands, Sepik, and urban cultures makes this task important. Furthermore, in the light of rapid culture change, the process of curriculum review needs to be on going.

c. Issues Emerging from the Gospel's Interaction with Melanesian Cultures

My thesis⁷³ identified a number of issues, relating to the broad characteristics of the Melanesian cultural context – linguistic diversity, fragmentary political units, kin-based societies, communal land-holding, “big man” leadership, and primal religion. It went on to identify distinctive features of two particular culture areas – the Wape-Au and the Koroba Huli. We now ask, to what extent the curriculum interacts with these contextual realities. How well are students being helped to see how the Bible applies to Melanesian life?

⁷³ Oswald Carey Fountain, “Some aspects of globalisation and contextualisation in the Christian Brethren Bible schools in Papua New Guinea”, MTh thesis, Auckland NZ: Bible College of New Zealand, 2000, pp. 56-84.

The answer to this lies partly in the oral interaction of the classroom, and, therefore, may not appear in teacher's notes handed out to students. It also depends on access to a full-range of notes, given out in courses. In 1997, the writer was able to attend only a few classes in action, and comprehensive sets of notes were not available, so it is not possible to provide a comprehensive assessment of these questions. To judge from the curriculum outlines, however, apart from an occasional course (land, marriage seminars), few courses seem to be oriented to the Melanesian context, choosing rather a biblical overview, and/or biblical book studies, as the basic framework for curriculum development. It is, therefore, a globally-oriented curriculum.

While a thorough exploration of contextual issues, relating to Melanesian cultures, still waits to be done, there are a wide range of topics that an adequate curriculum would expect to cover, bringing together both exploration of the present context and exegesis of the Christian scriptures. In relation to land, for example, questions of ownership and inheritance, land disputes, conservation, and responsible use, all have biblical, traditional, and developmental implications that are important for Christians to be aware of, speak out about, and act on. Each aspect of the cultural context could be similarly elaborated. Such an approach is essential, because of the integrated nature of the Melanesian worldview.

The argument that, if one teaches through an orderly progression of Bible books, contextual issues will emerge, is not well founded. The class time for each book is limited, creating pressure to cover the books in overview form, rather than to employ an in-depth, context-oriented methodology. Furthermore, the expatriate missionary, and even the traditionally-trained PNG teacher, may not be sufficiently aware of the local issues involved, to be able to draw out interaction in a way that such issues can be explored.

A global approach to curriculum, tends to use the biblical material as directly applicable to all contexts uniformly. But, the mediation of the text, by the missionary teacher (or the biblical commentary), tends to load the exegesis in favour of a Western understanding, rather than a local view of issues.

Undoubtedly, some issues, emerging from the interaction of the Christian message and Melanesian cultures, are being included in curriculum planning, for example, leadership styles. The servant leadership of the New Testament, superficially, would seem to be in direct conflict with the Melanesian “big man” complex. However, the issue is a complex one. Huli big men, for example, do practice some aspects of “servant leadership”. They are seen to be good for the community, because they serve their clan associates. The conflict between traditional leadership and Christian ideals may be at a deep level of motivation, but this may parallel Western corporate managers, in a number of respects. It may well be as possible to be a keen Christian, and a “big man”, as a Christian, and a corporate manager.

Another contextual issue, given a place in several curricula of the CBC Bible schools, is marriage. Again, the interaction of the Christian faith with the variety of marriage styles, and issues of concern to singles, parents, widows, and so forth, are not simple, black-and-white issues. On-going dialogue between the scriptures, and participants in the local cultures, must continue. It is too easy to identify Christian marriage with Western Christian practices; or Christian family life with the nuclear family in Western societies.

An essential ingredient in curriculum development, is the process of critique, and review, of the courses, and the programme, as a whole. With the current orientation of existing courses, this must include consideration of appropriateness in the Melanesian context.

d. Tensions and Dislocations Arising from Social Change and Modern Development

Previously, in looking at the urbanised environment, we highlighted issues of cultural change and dislocation. A Bible-school curriculum must consider the dimension of change, and inevitable tensions and problems that emerge.

Some of the curricula include studies of the wider world, but the outlines in the Appendix suggest that few of the major ethical, political, and socio-economic problems of PNG, and internationally,

are being addressed.⁷⁴ A Bible school provides an excellent opportunity for discussion, and potential for constructing workable and biblical responses to such issues, in a way that equips students to address these in their communities. The rural location of most CBC schools inhibits direct involvement in practical ministry in urban areas, but change in rural areas is also obvious. Dialogue and interaction on such pressing issues as money and gambling, unemployment, nuclear and extended family responsibilities and tensions, health, family planning, and so forth, are important.

An action-reflection model will facilitate contextual learning, in the face of social change. As change accelerates, curriculum review and revision are essential ingredients for ministry. We deal with these issues, further, in a later article.

e. The History and Character of Brethrenism in Papua New Guinea

The particular form that the Brethren Movement has taken in Papua New Guinea emerges from the combined influences of many strands. It includes backgrounds of the missionaries of CMMML, and, in urban areas, the expatriate Christian community, who came from Brethren origins overseas, with their giftings, planning, and cooperative relationships. It also includes the Melanesian Christian church communities, as CBC emerged in PNG, along with the insights, convictions, and strategies of their leaders. It is important that students learn about, interact with, and participate in this on-going history.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ It remains an open question to what extent traditional Brethren pietism and teaching on “separation”, as non-involvement in community or nation-wide socio-economic issues, have influenced CBC Bible-school curricula. Some conservative Brethren, in the past, have refused to vote, or participate in the political process. This is changing, but Papua New Guineans seem much more ready to discuss and debate public issues than their missionary counterparts.

⁷⁵ Robert J. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1985, pp. 95-104, while not restricting the concept of tradition to merely denominational history, provides a valuable discussion of the problems encountered between churches developing a local theology, when they encounter the preserved Christian tradition.

E. GLOBAL AND CONTEXTUAL ISSUES IN FUTURE BIBLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Given a necessary balance between global and contextual factors in curriculum development, this article is not the place to attempt to detail such a curriculum. That must be worked out in local situations, as a product of the interaction we are envisaging.⁷⁶ However, we highlight two critical factors, by way of summary. These are global propositions, and, therefore, universally applicable. Professor Ted Ward, in contributing an overview chapter to a series of essays in his honour, identifies two “propositions about curriculum” that guided his professional development as a theological educator. As background, Ward states that “curriculum is the meeting point between purpose and content”, and that “[p]urpose must always have priority. The quality, relevance, and contextual worth of purpose is the key to good educational planning.”⁷⁷

Proposition One: *Every curriculum reflects an image of the future.* Ward points out that underlying any curriculum are assumptions “about the value of the learning process”, and the idea of “value has its roots in the future of the learner, or the context, in which the learning will be of use, and will make a positive difference.”⁷⁸ I would make one slight amendment to Ward’s remarks. The future must include a vision for both the learner *and* the context. Curriculum planning must focus on both these aspects.⁷⁹

The future of the learner must include some appraisal of his or her giftings, and potential contribution. Since learning is an on-going and life-long process, the Bible school must grapple with the issues of

⁷⁶ For a similar argument, see Edward Farley, *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University*, Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1988, p. xi.

⁷⁷ Ted W. Ward, “With an eye on the future”, in *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st century*, Duane Elmer, and Lois McKinney, eds, Monrovia CA: MARC, 1996, p. 13.

⁷⁸ Ward, *With an Eye on the Future*, p. 14.

⁷⁹ In order to move toward this future, we assume, here, that the present is shaped by the past. That past must be understood as shaping both students and context. Western thinking frequently ignores this past.

facilitating a learning process that must continue beyond completion of the course. If there is too great a disjunction between the school and the church, in its community,⁸⁰ it is likely that many of the habits and disciplines, developed in the school, will not be carried over into the community living and ministry that follows. That is the first contextual challenge in curriculum for Bible schools.

The second root must involve a vision for the future contexts of ministry for the learner. CBC Bible schools must grapple with facilitating learners for a changing context. One only has to understand the pace of change in Melanesia in the last 20 years to become acutely aware that effective ministry will need to grapple with vastly-increased transformation (and social dislocation) in the future. It is not adequate to prepare Bible teachers and evangelists for the present, or immediate, contexts. Future ministry in Melanesia will need to be in the nature of mission in new and alien contexts. Thus, the second major challenge for Bible school curricula is to address change, in the present, and prepare students to grapple with continual re-contextualisation of the Christian message.

Proposition Two: *The planning of curriculum is a concern for decisions about what should be taught, why, to whom, and under what conditions.*⁸¹ Ward elaborates this statement into four elements. These are, firstly, a *concern for decisions*. Implicit in this, is the question of who takes responsibility for decision-making, and how is decision-making best shared. For CBC Bible schools, the responsibility of the teacher in the school is to actively engage both learners and significant stakeholders in that responsibility. We return to this issue in Part 4 of this series of articles.

The second element is the *what-why connection*. Ward emphasises the connectedness of curriculum content to the issues of “worth, need, and appropriateness”.

⁸⁰ See Yau-Man Siew, “Theological Education in Asia”, in Duane Elmer, and Lois McKinney, eds, *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st century*, Monrovia CA: MARC, 1996, p. 61. Siew faults Western education for, among other things, the dangerous church-school dichotomy.

⁸¹ Ward, *With an Eye on the Future*, pp. 14-15.

Ward highlights a third element, linking the *what-why* with the *to whom*. In doing so, he emphasises the selectivity involved in both the process of acceptance of students, and in determining what is to be taught to the particular clientele of the schools. What is the “fit between the intended outcomes [of] the planned learning experiences . . . and the readiness, fitness, and awareness of need in the learners”?⁸²

The fourth element asks the question, *under what conditions*. This focuses on the “learning situation itself”, and asks questions about such things as length of time, sorts of social relationships, physical-learning situation, resource materials, specific learning exercises, and “exactly where”.

It grieves me to discover, over and over again, that, for many who engage in educational leadership, imagination about learning contexts is limited to classrooms, clocks, hierarchical formal relationships between teacher and learner, and physical space, in which the knowing person looks in one direction, and the ignorant look in the opposite direction.⁸³

Here, however, Ward takes us into the issues of our next article.

CONCLUSION

An important question, raised by Jenny Fountain, in relation to the CBC Bible schools, is, “What are the advantages of a unified curriculum?”⁸⁴ Despite arguments for efficiency in coordination, she proposes an alternative to a unified curriculum, involving a common core, with local variations. In the light of our analysis of global and contextual factors, this would seem to be a way forward that should be seriously considered. Training can still be coordinated, and transfers of students, and indeed, staff also, become much easier if there is a basic commonality. Local needs, and cultural variations, can also still be met by such an approach, without losing the advantages of mutual coordination.

⁸² Ibid., p. 15.

⁸³ Ward, *With an Eye on the Future*, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, pp. 196-197.

There may be other variations that would also satisfy the globalisation-contextualisation balance, and still be effective. If the range of subjects on offer were developed into learning units, they would be more interchangeable, and could still be grouped into fields of study. These could then be selected by a particular school, and packaged into appropriate modules for a particular programme. This would give a school even more flexibility, and, therefore, greater responsibility to select a balanced curriculum that meets both the needs of the churches and the particular students that are being trained at the time. Under this arrangement, a greater range of courses and flexibility for more specialisation could be achieved.

A further challenge is to consider how other alternatives, such as, Theological Education by Extension courses may fit within Bible school curricula. Students, who miss out on segments of a programme, should not need to repeat, or duplicate, courses if they are able to substitute attendance in a course they have done elsewhere with a suitable TEE alternative. TEE, and other forms of training and experience, should be recognised as acceptable substitutes for taught subjects. More-able students, or those with special experience, for example, in church planting, or eldership, would thus be able to take core courses, and substitute, as warranted. For this to work, much further thought, review of courses, and reshaping into a modular format, would be required. But the proposal is worth consideration.

Any of these alternatives could meet the balance that seems highly desirable between a standardised, globally-based curriculum and a smorgasbord of courses, in an attempt to meet all kinds of contextual demands.

Finally, there are several key areas for curriculum improvement. Greater attention needs to be given to improving field education, with a more adequately-supervised internship. More emphasis should also be given to spiritual formation, and personal growth, as important aspects of Christian theological training programmes. Serious thinking needs to be done as to how to structure and monitor these key aspects of leadership training for Melanesian CBC churches.

Curricula should not merely follow the whim of the missionary, the national teacher, or controlling authority. Global and contextual aspects of curricula must be held in balance, with appropriate flexibility. This requires a higher level of coordination than at present exists among the Bible schools.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Coordination implies a higher level of accountability, an issue this thesis is unable to deal with.

APPENDICES

Table 1.1: Curricular objectives proposed for the West Sepik Bible School⁸⁶

<p>a. Old Testament⁸⁷ To cover approximately 60 significant stories at the rate of 1 per week to give a clear chronological outline of Bible history. To draw out and apply spiritual truths to daily life and work. To present each story as an example of “The Bible story-telling method of preaching”.</p> <p>b. Christology and life of Christ⁸⁸ To teach about the person and work of Christ. To present a chronological sequence of events. To teach the usage of the harmony of the gospels. To draw out and apply spiritual truth to daily life and walk. To give worked-out sermon material.</p> <p>c. Epistles⁸⁹ To teach such subjects as church organisation, officers, and ordinances. To teach Christian ethics. To encourage personal use of the epistles.</p> <p>d. Bible doctrines To establish faith in evangelical dogma.</p> <p>e. Church history To establish faith in evangelical Christianity and assembly principles. To teach the origin and development of the church, Rome, the churches. The rise of false cults. To explain the work of missions and the relationship of CMML to other evangelical missions.</p> <p>f. Theological terminology⁹⁰ To explain terms, and maybe illustrate, with Bible stories.</p> <p>g. Memory verses To memorise, say, two per week, with revision.</p> <p>h. Music To teach appreciation of hymnology and keeping to time. To increase repertoire of hymns. To teach choice of appropriate hymns for different occasions. Application of scripture [sic] to culture.</p> <p>i. Homiletics and practical preaching assignments</p> <p>j. Social studies Our country and the world around us. Political science, economic development, social change.</p> <p>k. Daily chapel We regard the development of the devotional life of the students as being of primary importance.⁹¹</p>
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⁸⁶ Source: CMML Conference minutes, July, 1966.

Table 1.2: The 1982 curriculum outline for the *Baibel Tisa Trening Skul*⁸⁷

Subject Field	First Year	Second Year
Old Testament studies	Panorama Bible study (book) Genesis* Ruth, Jonah, Esther* Stories of the prophets, e.g., Daniel* New Testament prophecies, like the return of Jesus, Revelation* Psalms (devotions)	Panorama Bible study (book) Exodus* Joshua, Judges* Stories of the Kings* Proverbs (devotions) (book)
New Testament: Gospels and Acts	Mark (Book 2) Matthew (Book 1)	John (Book 4) Luke (Book 3) Acts (Book 5)
New Testament: Letters and prophetic	1, 2 Corinthians (Book 7) Revelation (Book 15) Galatians and Ephesians (Book 8) 1, 2 Timothy (Book 11) 1, 2, 3 John, Jude (Book 14)	Romans (Book 6) Hebrews (Book 12) Philippians and Colossians (Book 9) 1, 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon (Book 10) James, 1, 2 Peter (Book 13)
Bible doctrine	The Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (book) Satan and the angels Bible (inspiration and revelation)	Man Sin Salvation Resurrection of Jesus
Christian ethics	Christian behaviour and the Ten Commandments	Walking in the way of the Spirit (Galatians 5)

⁸⁷ The Pidgin Old Testament was not available at this stage. The basic textbook was a collection of Bible stories titled *Ol stori bilong Baibel*, published by Kristen Pres, Madang PNG.

⁸⁸ Based on the Pidgin gospels, *Ol stori bilong Baibel*, and a harmony of the gospels.

⁸⁹ The textbook was a Pidgin book, *Sampela Pas Bilong Nu Testamen*, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

⁹⁰ The textbook was a Pidgin book, *As bilong sampela tok* ("The meanings of some terms").

⁹¹ CMML Conference minutes, Anguganak, July, 1966.

⁹² Source: BTTS files, Amanab, 1997.

Helping our own work and life	Time with God (Orientation course)** Bible study and prayer Memory verses Marriage seminar APO work (or “Let’s overcome sickness”) (book)	Time with God (Orientation course)** The way of discipleship (3 books) Memory verses The two shall be one (book)
Church history	Who are the Christian Brethren churches? (notes) The history of the CBC	
Church practice	Baptism (notes) Dealing with problems in the church	Communion (notes) Giving and using the offering Sending and caring for workers (notes)
The work of the Church	What is the church (book) Evangelism – congregational and personal. How to use the booklets, <i>Gutnius</i> and <i>Wanpela Bris</i> What kind of a shepherd are you? (book) Praying together and Bible study Doing Bible teaching (notes)	Pastoral work and how to counsel. A Leader like Christ (book) Youth Work Doing Bible teaching (notes)
Christian education	Literacy work (learning to read) How to use a blackboard and pictures Bible reading practice Practice in interpreting (for a speaker)	R.I. and Sunday School Dramatising Bible stories Bible reading practice Practice in interpreting (for a speaker)
Historical and cultural studies	A timeline – Adam to the present Using <i>Dikseneri bilong NT</i> (the Pidgin New Testament dictionary)	Jewish customs (book) Bible characters (book)

* Use *Baibel Stori Buk*, and *Piksa Baibel* and Sunday School notes for these.

** Pidgin: *Prep Kos*.

Table 1.3: Curriculum for the four-year cycle at Yimbrasi, 1983-1986⁹³

Subject	1983	1984	1985	1986
Old Testament	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel	Revision 1 Kings 2 Kings	1, 2 Chronicles Ezra, Nehemiah Esther (Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Jonah?)
New Testament gospels epistles	John 1, 2 Corinthians James 1, 2 Peter	Mark Galatians Ephesians Philippians 1, 2, 3, John, Jude	Romans 1, 2 Timothy Titus Hebrews	Luke Colossians 1, 2 Thessalonians (James, Revelation)
Devotions Quiet time	Psalms	Proverbs		Psalms 120-150
The church	Acts CBC beliefs	CBC beliefs	CBC beliefs	CBC history CBC beliefs
Book study and other studies	<i>Samting bilong bus</i> Social studies	<i>Strepela rot</i>	<i>Rot bilong laip amamas</i> † <i>Bun bilong tok baptais</i> <i>Jon i lusim kalabus</i> ‡	<i>Samting bilong bus</i> <i>Kamap disaipel</i>
Practical	Sunday School	Evangelism Outreach Open Air	Evangelism Outreach Open Air	Sunday School, RI Youth work Rally

† The full title is *Amamas, God i save helpim yumi long taim traim i kamap*.

‡ The full title is *Jon i lusim kalabus long tin bia*.

⁹³ Source: Fountain, *To Teach Others Also*, p. 89.

Table 1.4: Four-year plan, National CBC curriculum⁹⁴

Bible Study Week	Bible Study Week	Bible Study Week	Bible Study Week
OT Genesis-Joshua	OT Judges-Esther	OT Isaiah-Malachi	OT Job-Song of Solomon Lamentations, Ezekiel
NT Acts, Romans, Revelation	NT Hebrews-Jude	NT Matthew-John	NT 1 Corinthians- Philemon
Our Beliefs Bible Jesus Christ Satan and angelic beings	Our Beliefs Salvation Holy Spirit	Our Beliefs God Last things	Our Beliefs Land (creation?) Mankind The church
Doing God's Work True worship Communion Giving to God	Doing God's Work Prayers of the Bible Fasting	Doing God's Work Spiritual warfare Witnessing to unbelievers	Doing God's Work Love, Compassion Dealing with wrongs Christian marriage and family
Other Classes Study project: Jonah Bookkeeping	Other Classes Study project: Galatians Writing skills	Other Classes Study project: Job Typing	Other Classes Study project: Ephesians Planning, Admin

⁹⁴ Source: Translated into English by the present author from Howard, "Kirikulom", p. 5.