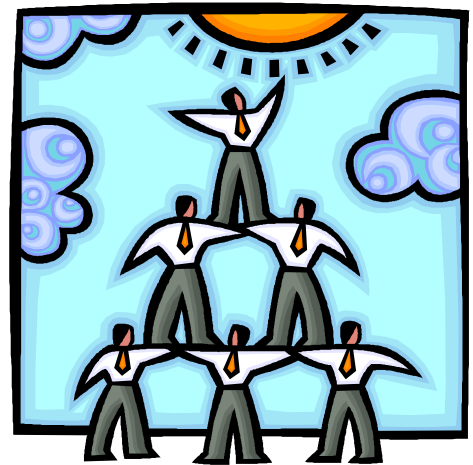


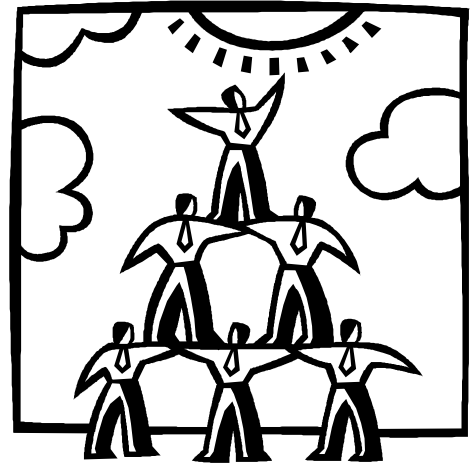
Achieving Excellence



IN BIBLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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Achieving Excellence



IN BIBLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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Reaching Through Teaching Ministries

INTRODUCTION

Five simple, one-syllable words disclose Jesus' purpose in coming to earth: "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). These words are so plain that a quick look at ten or twelve common Bible translations will reveal no difference in the terms translators use to express the Lord's mission. Everything Jesus did on earth was to fulfill – or to set the stage for fulfilling – the task of global evangelism and discipleship. Each mile walked, lesson taught, message expounded, and moment spent training His disciples focused on accomplishing this task. He continues to seek and to save the lost through us (Luke 19:10; John 10:10). He beckons us to become "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19), and workers in the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38). He calls us to go into the entire world and preach the good news to every person (Mark 16:15; Acts 10:42). He commissions us to teach others to observe and obey His Word (Matthew 28:19-20). He commands us to pass the truth from one generation to another (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 2:2).

The Wait of the Harvest

Jesus used the image of the harvest to illustrate the magnitude of the evangelistic task. "Look around you! Vast fields are ripening all around us and are ready now for the harvest" (John 4:35, *NLT*). Population growth will reach 8.5 billion people by 2025. What a tremendous opportunity! However, there is one problem. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" (Luke 10:2, *NIV*). Without workers the harvest could be lost.

A terrible storm ruined a fine crop. The farmer stood, in silence, devastated by the destroyed harvest. A stranger passing by said, "It is a sad sight, isn't it?" The farmer responded, "I couldn't get anyone to help me harvest the field." How sad to hear, "The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved" (Jeremiah 8:20).

There is one way to prevent the harvest from being lost. Reap it. This necessitates training workers. To borrow the words of John Wesley, do all the training "you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can." Completing the task – that is where Bible schools come swiftly to center stage. We can reach the world through the ministry of multiplication – reaching through teaching.

Training for the Harvest

The Bible school's primary reason for existence is to train and equip workers for the ripened fields (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 9:4). It stands in the gap for a lost world (Ezekiel 22:30). On one side of the divide are those that God calls into the ministry.

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Waiting on the other side is a ready harvest. We (in Bible school ministry) serve as middlemen guiding workers-in-progress as they cross the bridge.

It is a joy and an overwhelming responsibility to be involved in training workers for the harvest. Training the next generation of leadership in God's kingdom is a great privilege. John Maxwell said, "A leader who reproduces followers limits his success to what his direct, personal influence touches...A leader who produces other leaders multiples his influence, and he and his people have a future..." (Maxwell, 1995, 197-198) "True success comes only when every generation continues to develop the next generation." Not only are we involved in the ministry of multiplication – reaching and teaching others – but in passing on the baton of truth and leadership to future generations. Someone has said (and I wholeheartedly agree) "I teach, therefore, I touch the future."

The Challenge of the Harvest

The challenge of today's worldwide church is to develop leaders who are capable, anointed and hungry for the revival and church growth that God has promised in the end-time. To ensure success, Jesus spent time training others. He left twelve qualified workers to carry on the vital tasks that He had started. Jesus knew that His work would not fail. Why? He had trained the next generation. From the beginning, Jesus told these men that He would not always be with them. He trained the most successful team of all times. As a result, once their Leader departed, they continued to experience revival and growth as they followed His example by effectively training future workers. Their success after Jesus departed is strong evidence of His ability to teach.

The Workers of the Harvest

It is an honor to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to be a like Him. He was frequently addressed as "Teacher." Nicodemus said, "...We know that thou art a teacher sent from God" (John 3:5). An outstanding statement in the *Bible School Administration* study guide is: Jesus "was more – He *was* God who came to *teach*" (John 3:2). (Durasoff, 1998, 30) Jesus came with a determination to transform hungry hearts. Is not that the reason why Bible school teachers spend a lifetime in preparation for the classroom? That same burden grips the heart of every effective servant-teacher. They all have one thing in common – a strong belief in the training of laborers for the worldwide harvest.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). A Bible school teacher's greatest joy is to leave the trace of eternity on the hearts of men and women – the privilege of investing in the future. They take what they have been taught, live it and pass it on to others. Perhaps, one of the supreme evidences of quality

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education and teacher effectiveness is how graduates perform once they leave the Bible school.

The Receptivity of the Harvest

Every Bible school teacher has passion – a passion to teach. Their passion to train, and love for their students guarantees success in life’s classroom. But there is another side of passion and the willingness to teach.

We cannot teach unless someone is willing to be taught. God has placed within the human heart the natural desire to learn. It is also a spiritual thirst, a desire to know God. We see the passion to be taught in the eyes of countless people. That passion was recently manifested in village pastors – untrained – who walked fifty-five kilometers to attend a short-term training program. It was seen in a young man who begged for a copy of a Bible school textbook, and then clutched and treasured it close to his heart when he received it. Our passion to teach is only equaled by their passion to learn. They deserve our best – a quality training whether they are in a poor nation or a rich one, regardless of how developed or undeveloped the church in their nation may be. Let us just say, “We’ve been brought into the classroom for such a time as this! The harvest is ready. The workers are on their way!”

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP

Picture of the Bible School Leader

At the heart of our understanding of leadership within a Bible school should be the awareness that people are essential for growth and success. The vision of world evangelism and discipleship cannot be achieved without people. Leadership is more than getting things done through others, being served, or accomplishing tasks. It goes beyond the pursuit for prestige (desire for recognition); position (desire to be number one); and power (desire to control others). An effective leader – especially in the Bible school setting – is people-sensitive. He motivates students and staff to set goals, and to achieve them. He develops and influences others for successful apostolic ministry. He knows how to move from being the principal, teacher, or boss, to being a coach and mentor.

Ideal word pictures for a Bible school administrator or teacher are:

- ☑ *Servant*
- ☑ *Steward*
- ☑ *Shepherd.*

Model for the Bible School Leader

Robert Greenleaf (1904-1990) is considered to be the father of the modern servant leadership concept. He viewed leadership as helping people grow; lifting them to higher levels of possibilities. He thought that churches, Bible schools and seminaries were distinctively suited to producing servant-leaders for society. They are given the task of preparing students and members for lifetime service to God and to others. Unfortunately, he never had much response from Bible schools or churches that were ready to adopt servant-leadership as its working philosophy. (Jack Collins, 2003) This is ironic since servant leadership was originally taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ more than two thousand years ago. It transcends time and culture and should be the administrative standard today.

Biblical Example for the Bible School Leader

Servant leadership is foundational in the Bible school because it is the leadership model that our Lord Jesus Christ advocated and one that works best. Jesus provides the greatest leadership model for all times. In Him “we have a *practical and effective leadership model* for all organizations, for all people, for all situations.” (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003, 10). Jesus set the example for all of us to follow. He came in the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7). He testified, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27, NIV). During the final night that He had with His disciples He picked up a towel and basin

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and washed their feet. Why? He explained, “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). Jesus is the real leader of the church and its ministries. We are His servants and we please Him when we facilitate others in reaching their potential. We are called to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12, *NIV*).

Jesus taught James and John, the Sons of Thunder, a vital leadership lesson – *leadership is an act of service*. They came to Him with a request, “We want you to do for us whatever we ask.” This statement demonstrates not only ignorance but also a selfish attitude. Leadership is not about being served (receiving) but serving others (giving). They went on to say, “Let one of us sit on your right and the other on your left in glory.” The world today would likely applaud James and John but Jesus corrected them. They mistakenly thought that the Lord’s kingdom was the same as all the others. Jesus explained that his kingdom was not like those of this world that exercise authority over others, but that the greatest is the servant of all. (See Mark 10:35-37; 41-45.) Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve” (Matthew 20:28, *NIV*).

Jesus was the greatest leader of all times. He possessed unlimited power and used these resources to serve others instead of serving Himself. He set the example and has given His power to us (Acts 1:8). He requires that we be servants (Matthew 20:26; Mark 10:43-45; John 13:15). Notice the Psalmist’s words about David – the leader after God’s heart:

He chose David...his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed...his people...he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands (Psalms 78:70-72).

God places in our schools young ministers infused with a determination to impact their world. He trusts us to serve them with our hearts and hands. The task of training workers for the ripened harvest will be seriously hindered if we are self-serving instead of self-sacrificing.

Attitude of the Bible School Leader

Authoritative, autocratic or power leadership, although a popular and predominantly used model of leadership, does not work within the Bible school setting. It is diabolically opposite to servant leadership-- the leadership style that works best in service organizations. Its premise is to demand and control using power. It has been utilized by the military in time of war and is still adopted in secular leadership. Servant leadership creates an environment of teamwork, and fosters interdependence. It encourages people to work together as a body. It builds mutual respect and relationships that last throughout a lifetime. Servant leadership is not based on power

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but on love. "Today's successful administrators are more likely to be those who work with and for their people, empowering and inspiring them to achieve personal and corporate goals." (Clarence Dunbebin, 1999) We are people builders.

A servant-teacher equips others to reach their God-given maximum potential and helps them fulfill God's call, will, and vision for their lives. He establishes relationships now that will last after graduation, and throughout a lifetime. He is not self-serving but deliberately chooses to serve to others. Someone has said that you never diminish the flame of your own candle by lighting the flame of someone else. As he helps others he is also enriched. A godly servant-teacher exemplifies a self-sacrificing attitude of, "How can I help you achieve your best for God? I'm here for you!" His ultimate accomplishment comes through encouraging and empowering those under his leadership to be successful. Lee Brase states "I have discovered if you train a man, he will become what you are...But if you serve him, the sky is the limit as to what he can become." (Rush, 1983, 13 - 14) A fitting purpose statement for a servant-teacher is (among other things) "helping people become what God wants them to be by directing them to do what God wants them to do." (David R. Shumate, July/ August 1998)

Servant-teachers are servant-leaders. They view their ministry in the classroom as an act of service. They "look beyond their own season of leadership and prepare the next generation of leaders. Jesus modeled the true servant leader by investing most of His time training and equipping the disciples for leadership when His earthly ministry was over." (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003, 21). Jesus made sure that He taught and led in such a way that His students were equipped to carry on the task of taking the life-transforming truth to a waiting world.

"For you must teach others those things you and many others have heard me speak about. Teach these great truths to trustworthy men who will, in turn, pass them on to others"
(2 Timothy 2:2, TLB).

The chart that follows shows insights gained from various readings. It serves to contrast the biblical approach to leadership with secular leadership. It is hoped that the information gleaned will assist the reader in becoming an effective servant-leader or servant-teacher.

<i>Christian Leadership</i>	<i>Secular Leadership</i>
Servant-first.	Leader-first.
Chooses interest in others over self-interest.	Chooses self-interest or corporate-interest.
Emphasis on meeting goals and needs of others.	Emphasis on meeting personal goals and needs.
People oriented.	Task oriented.
Committed to growth of people.	Committed to growth of the organization and of

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	the leadership.
Wants others to succeed as well as himself.	Wants to achieve personal success.
Making disciples is paramount.	Profit (making money) is paramount.
Stimulates unity and being content.	Creates relationship problems and discontent.
Concentrates on doing the will of God.	Concentrates on doing his own will.
Encourages effective communication.	Real feelings of subordinates often hidden.
Advocates teamwork, participative management, and the understanding that we are part of the body of Christ. Each has a function and none are more important than the other. Promotes a sense of community.	Exerts authority from the top. Encourages rivalry and jealousy as people try to climb the leadership ladder.
Creates an environment of interdependence.	Creates an environment of dependence. Subordinate needs the organization to meet his needs.
Shares power in decision-making.	Makes decisions on his own.
Leader asks, "How can I help you accomplish your dreams?"	Subordinate asks, "How can I help you accomplish your dreams, and keep my job?"
Encourages trust. People believe the leader will do what is best for all of them.	Discourages trust. People believe that the leaders will do what is best for him and/or the organization.
Uses persuasion.	Makes demands, commands, and uses coercion and manipulation.
Asks others what would be best for them.	Decides what is best both himself and then others.
Listens to others.	Expects others to listen to him.
Maintains leadership based on people and serving others.	Maintains leadership based on power, and position.
Leadership is based on the Word of God	Leadership is based on modern methods and philosophy.
Leader is interested in giving God glory.	Leader is interested in being lifted up, given prestige and honor.

Servant leadership is the correct model for Bible school leadership and conduct within the classroom. Reaching this conclusion is simple. Following it is a problem. Knowing is easy. Doing it is difficult. It does not fit into the worldly view of leadership, and it does not please the desires of the flesh. We must constantly strive to be the servant-teacher that God wants us to be. In the end we will hear the Master say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, *KJV*).

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN ORGANIZATION

A general attribute that should prevail in the Bible school is a quest for excellence, doing one's best, and striving for continuous improvement. This attitude permeates the life of each person, and all that they endeavor to accomplish in the Bible school setting. They strive to do their "utmost for His highest." Leaders and individuals are works-in-progress. It takes a lifetime to develop each person into what he needs to be. They press toward the goal of preparing (and being) quality leaders. Such men are able to appropriately evaluate both themselves and others. Consider the story of the seventy who returned from their ministry trip. They reported their successes to Jesus. He took time to evaluate, assess the situation, and help them focus on the big picture. John Maxwell said, "Practice doesn't make perfect; practice with evaluation makes perfect." In Luke 10:17-20 we see a master Teacher who evaluated his students, guided them in learning opportunities, and helped them assess the value of their experience. (Maxwell, 2002, 1249)

Achieving Excellence in Unity

Each team member on the Bible school staff possesses the ability to work together toward accomplishing a common vision. This requires unity. Paul describes this type of group as a "building fitly framed together" (Ephesians 2:20, *KJV*), and advises us to have "one mind striving together for the faith" (Philippians 1:27, *KJV*). An old proverb teaching the importance of unity says, "One hand alone does not clap." Each team member is a link in the organizational chain. Unity is essential. Why? The Man of Wisdom said, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work" (Ecclesiastes 4:9). We are investing in the Lord's kingdom, and expect great returns. The magnitude of the task demands that "all hands are on deck" – everyone is working together to accomplish the mission. "Two heads are better than one." The Book of Judges refers to a group of men that were "knit together as one man" (Judges 20:11, *KJV*). Unity creates synergy – the result of combined efforts will be greater than what can be achieved separately. This phenomenon is seen in the Old Testament equation: one can chase a thousand, but two can put ten thousand to flight (See Leviticus 26:8; Deuteronomy 32:30).

God is pleased with unity (1 Corinthians 12:25; Psalms 133:1-2). Jesus said, "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25). He developed an incredible team, and prayed for them (and us) "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:22-23). It is rightly said, "United we stand, divided we fall!" The collaborators building the infamous Tower of Babel possessed unity. When God assessed what was being done, He concluded, "...Nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them" (Genesis 11:6). Dedication to a common task and unity in working toward fulfilling it gets the job done.

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Achieving Excellence in Planning

God plans. The human body, Tabernacle plan, blueprint for Noah's ark, wonders of nature, heaven (a prepared place for a prepared people), plan of salvation, and God at work in our past, present, and future attest to this. The effective Bible school operates according to a pre-determined plan (a way of proceeding) in order to achieve its God-directed purpose and objectives (expected outcomes). This plan consists of purpose, policies, procedures, and periodic problem-solving. This provides understanding of how things are done, and strengthens relationships and communications. Planning provides the necessary directions in knowing where we are going, how we are going, and how long it should take to get there. Without planning it is difficult, or even impossible, for the Bible school to fulfill God's expectations.

Good planning guidelines are imperative for Bible school administration because they provide boundaries to help (a) focus thinking on the planning process; (b) explain how to reach objectives (how to get where we want to go); (c) guide planning at all levels of the structure; (d) involve more people in the planning process (increasing the likelihood of their commitment to the organizational vision). A lack of good planning guidelines leads to confusion, frustration, and communication breakdown. It causes us to fall short of God's expectations. The Wise Man wrote, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22, *NIV*). "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33, *KJV*) and expects that "things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40, *KJV*). Planning is a continual process and requires guidelines to carry it on its journey. It helps determine how we can do things better and develops us as process-thinking people.

Achieving Excellence in Organization

God is a god of structure. This is evident in creation, the family, the Tabernacle plan, the building of the ark, and in numerous other ways. A strong organization provides a structure, and brings people and functions together to reach common goals. It identifies the type of work to be done, groups related activities, and places people within the framework. Policies and procedures strengthen communications, and assist in achieving consistency, continuity, and continuous improvement. Organization helps determine the best use of the available resources – manpower, money, and materials. (Ed Roebert, 1986/1996) An organization has a culture (the way we do things around here). A strong culture is the driving force behind organizational success. (Daniel T. Seymour, 1992, p. 144)

Job descriptions are a biblical and important part of organization. God gave a job description to (among others): (a) Moses (Exodus 3:1-10); (b) Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11); (c) disciples (Matthew 28:19-20); (d) Paul (Acts 26:16-19). Job descriptions serve as an

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agreement between an employee and employer or supervisor. They reveal: (a) responsibility; (b) authority; (c) and accountability. (Roebert, 1986/1996, 92-93)

Delegation, organization, and communication are strengthened by effective job descriptions. Each team member should understand his responsibility, and be clear with his authority. Boundaries and perimeters of each position need to be better understood. Consider three levels of authority: (a) act (here the individual can act without informing his supervisor of actions); (b) act and inform (here he can act and then inform his supervisor of actions taken); (c) act after approval (here he does not act until he has informed his supervisor and until approval has been given). He also needs to understand responsibilities in three areas: (a) to whom do I report; (b) who reports to me? (c) With whom will I work closely? (Roebert, 1986/1996, 94-96) Each team member could also develop a ministry action plan. Three measurable, reachable goals could be projected for the year, approved by administration, with feedback and results required.

Delegation. What do you do when the task is great, and the few men in leadership cannot do everything? The task can get done – and done on time – through sharing the responsibilities with others. Share the burden. It increases the commitment level of others and relieves us of burdens that can be easily and efficiently shouldered by subordinates. This allows for each person to concentrate on what they can do with excellence, and empowers others to reach their fullest potential. It begins with understanding the tasks and talents that are available, and matching the two. Delegation is a great way to mentor or train others. Jesus delegated the task of world evangelism to us (Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15). A classic example of delegation is found in Exodus 18:13-26. Jethro counseled his over-worked son-in-law to get the task done through trusting others with a portion of the lesser responsibilities.

Organizing is a never-ending task. Reorganization is needed for continued success. The early Apostles saw the need to restructure when widows were being neglected in the daily ministrations (See Acts 6:1-7). Deacons were chosen and the men of God were refocused on their priorities of prayer and the ministry of the Word. As a result “...the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Groups that organize are able to (a) accomplish more; (b) pursue excellence; (c) and involve more people in the task.

Organizational Chart. An old maxim says, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” An organizational chart easily, quickly, visibly and concisely communicates the Bible school’s structure. It gives an overview of the organization’s departments, leadership, responsibilities, titles, relationships and channels of authority. It allows everyone to know how working together as a team gets the job done. Together they can accomplish the school’s vision, goals, and objectives. “No document carries in it such important information, so concisely, as an organizational chart.” (Human Concepts, 2003) The

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attached organizational chart shows the structure of the hypothetical West Africa School of Theology. This reflects the ideal and is easily adjustable to fit the realities of a small Bible school. One person can care for multiple responsibilities.

Achieving Excellence in Communication

God is a communicator. He speaks but also listens. The Holy Bible conveys His Word—our manual for victorious, daily living. It was written as He communicated with men of old (Hebrews 1:1). Throughout Scripture, God used a variety of creative—and sometimes unusual—communication methods ranging from a talking donkey (Numbers 22:21-35), to a burning bush (Exodus 3:2) to a flying scroll (Zechariah 5:1-2). God continues to communicate to us through—among other ways—the (speaking) gifts of the Spirit. He provides prayer as our way to communicate with Him.

Communication is necessary to maintain unity, understanding, and to reach goals. While speaking one language the workers at the Tower of Babel were unstoppable. When God confused their communications, they were rendered ineffective (Genesis 11: 6-8). “A group’s survival becomes jeopardized when communication loses its effectiveness.” (Kenneth O. Gangel, 1983/2002, p. 156) Leaders that communicate are able to influence people and events. A successful Bible school—or any other organization—needs an effective communication system. Such a system moves ideas from one person to another, is the key to cooperation, and the “lifeblood of the organization.” (Rush, 1983, p. 16, 120)

Experts refer to downward, upward, and horizontal communications. (Ball, 2003) Within the Bible school setting this translates into multi-level communications that include: (a) administration to staff, (b) staff to staff, (c) staff to students, (d) students to staff, (e) student to student, (e) school and the public (including the community, potential students, and those that support the Bible school).

Administration to staff. To achieve excellence in communication at this level the administrator should (a) maintain an atmosphere of open communication; (b) prepare Job Descriptions for all staff; (c) practice good listening skills; (d) show a willingness to receive suggestions for improvements within the school; (e) cultivate a team culture; (f) prepare a policy manual; (g) ensure that staff meetings are held regularly and are positive, upbeat, and interesting; (h) involve others in setting agendas for meetings; (i) distribute agendas in advance (encourages thinking ahead); (j) provide the minutes for the previous meeting (stimulates reflection and recall); (k) conduct routine evaluations of staff (l) visit the classrooms (if only for a few minutes); (m) use memos to follow-up on discussions; (n) use e-mails, notes, and cards to encourage and motivate individual staff members; (o) maintain an open door policy for those who need to communicate one-on-one; (p) provide a staff memo; (q) host periodic seminars to enhance communications skills; (r) develop a school calendar; (s) build relationships with staff

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and students; and (t) plan an occasional staff retreat. Utilizing some of these should also ensure cordial relationships between staff members.

Staff to students. Persuade instructors to excel in communications with their students. This may include: (a) teaching students how to communicate effectively (and setting a good example); (b) providing a syllabus and grading scheme for students so they understand what is in store; (c) articulating course objectives (expected outcomes) clearly; (d) getting to know students better; (e) making sure that students understand school policies; (f) evaluating the student's progress on a regular basis; (g) making announcements to the student body to keep them informed; (h) hosting an occasional open forum; (i) providing orientation for new students acquainting them with the school's culture.

Students to staff. Encourage students to (a) provide feedback; (b) offer evaluations of classes taken; (c) provide open forums to express views for continuous improvement; (d) organize student council meetings and committees with clear guidelines for operation; (e) develop an alumni association; (f) set up a student's wives fellowship to foster rapport and understanding with the family units represented in the school.

Student to student. Administration and staff may consider the following: (a) plan social events, field trips and other extracurricular activities for student interaction; (b) provide classroom activities that compel students to communicate (brainstorming, role play, public speaking, debates, group assignments, to mention a few). Campus and dormitory life should present many opportunities for building communication skills.

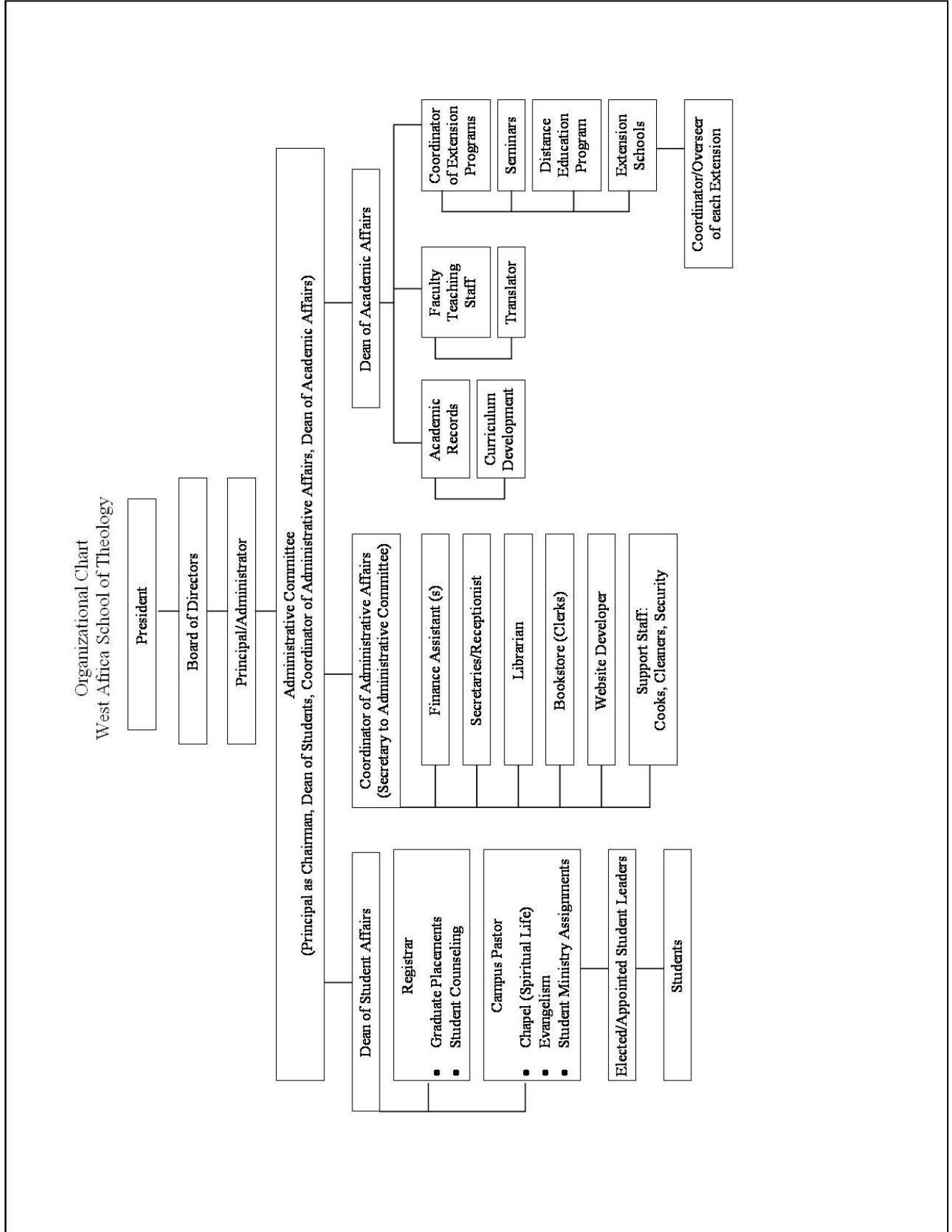
School and the public. Communication with the community may include: (a) reports to supporters and overseers; (b) a web-site that promotes the Bible school and its programs; (c) a prospectus and a catalog for potential students; (d) exposure and ministry opportunities for students in local churches; (e) opportunities for community or church involvement in supporting the school or its students; (f) writing articles, press releases and news stories to secure public awareness.

The Bible school and the Internet. William Gibson invented the word "cyberspace" to "describe his vision of a global computer network, linking all people, machines and sources of information...which one could move...through a virtual space." (Cyberspace, 1993) Estimates of one million people join this global network each month. (Michael Strangelove, 1994) Africans, and others in developing countries around the world, are finding ways to benefit from this opportunity. Cyber cafés abound in major third-world cities. Bible school instructors and students increasingly have e-mail addresses and visit cyber centers to surf the Internet. The World Wide Web is a huge advantage to Bible schools with limited libraries. A virtual library is at their fingertips. Schools could consider (a) providing Internet access on campus; (b) offering workshops on using electronic communication; (c) teaching "Information Technology" as part of

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the curriculum; (d) hosting a distance education program via the World Wide Web; (e) using a web page to promote the school, or as an evangelistic tool. Matthew 24:14 tells of an explosion of the gospel that will take place around the world in the last days. Effective use of this global network accelerates world evangelism and discipleship. The use of the Internet in Bible schools in Africa may be futuristic. If so, remember that the world is quickly progressing – Africa included – and it is good to plan for tomorrow. When the time comes for the Internet to be used in the school careful guidelines and supervision will be necessary.

Achieving excellence in Bible school administration requires a strong organizational structure, prevailing culture, guidelines to accommodate the continuous planning process, and a communication system that enables all to work together to accomplish the vision.



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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN TEAMWORK

A variety of groups operate within a Bible school – Board of Directors, Administrative Council (Committee), advisory groups, faculty, student unions, and committees. What do all of these have in common? People brought together to accomplish a task. To achieve excellence, leaders knit people into a team. Bill Russell, a legendary basketball player, offers an ideal description for groups working within the Bible school environment. He said, “By design and by talent, we were a team of specialists. And like a team of specialists in any field, our performance depended on individual excellence and how we worked together.” (Williams, 1997, 14)

A united – yet diversified leadership team – is indispensable in carrying out the Bible school’s task. This includes (but is not limited to) the multi-talents of the board of directors, president, academic dean, dean of students, business administrator and faculty. The team is made up of “servants...through whom...the Lord has assigned to each his task” (1 Corinthians 3:5). They “work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work” (1 Corinthians 3:8, *NLT*). The team possesses a diversity of gifts but pursues the same goal. Someone has defined a team as: together each accomplishing more. It is important to remember “there are no superstars in this task, only team members performing their own special roles.” (“Life Application,” 1996, 1805) Like the assortment of ministerial gifts given to the church, the Bible school team strives to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13, *NIV*).

Board of Directors Team

Board of Directors. Woodrow Wilson once said, “We should not only use all the brains we have, but all that we can borrow.” (Maxwell, 2001, 7) The Board of Directors decides the way things are done. It serves as the head of the organization.

Brains. The Board points the way and provides direction. It is the organization’s compass. They think through the vision, purpose, plans, priorities, policies, goals, strategies, and code of ethics that become the road map for the school’s operation. It exercises brainpower through the administrative functions of decision making, problem solving, assessing needs, designating limited resources, managing funds, projecting budgets, recruiting staff, evaluating staff performance, approving proposals, improving curriculum, and expanding existing programs.

Eyes. The Board articulates the God-given vision of the Bible school. It looks into the future – beyond the known – sees the vision, focuses in on it, and guides people toward accomplishing it. The Board has an eye for change in order to achieve

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excellence. Vision should not change every time the school gets a new leader. The Board casts the vision—administration, staff, and students take ownership of it. People follow organizations and leaders who see through the lens of vision.

Look around and ensure that priorities are sharply focused, are being followed, that people are doing what they are supposed to, and within the period agreed upon. Assess results compared to the plan provided to the body.

The Board keeps a watchful eye on the staff of the school, matches talents with positions, and outlines ministry (or job) descriptions.

Ears. The Board is comprised of those that are willing listeners, sensitive to the opinion of others. They want to know how they can help the school and its staff accomplish ministry. They provide feedback and evaluation. They are perpetual learners, and keen listeners, with an ear for progress. The board listens carefully in cases of conflict, and does its best to resolve it peacefully or takes necessary action.

Mouth. The Board serves as the legal and public relations voice of the organization. It communicates vision, constantly reemphasizes priorities, and through their words, empowers people to use talents to accomplish the needed work. Vision is fruitless if not communicated. Communicate the vision, mission, plans, goals, and objectives verbally and in writing. . Break them down into bite size chunks. Communication should be simple, clear, and concise. Priorities and/or objectives should be few so everyone will understand them. Communication should extend to effective follow-up and follow-through to be complete. Make staff accountable for realizing desired results. Follow-through individually or in a group (where everyone listens and learns).

Within Board meetings, communication and feisty debate should be encouraged. Heighten understanding and discover reality through discussion. “Dialogue is the core of culture and the basic unit of work. How people talk to each other absolutely determines how well the organization will function.” (Bossidy & Charan, 2002, 25) Encourage the Administrative Committee, college President, and staff to talk to you (the Board). Communication is a two way street. Ask for proposals, input, feedback, and monthly, quarterly, and yearly reports. The success of the school depends on working together – at all levels.

Dean A. Dalton claims the basic functions of a Board of Directors are four-fold: “*integration* of all activities toward a common objective; *correlation* of personnel, time, activities, and energies; *unification* of purpose; and *distribution* of responsibility.” (Gangel, 1970/1981, 276)

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Qualities of Board Members: The future of the Bible school depends on the quality of its leaders (not to mention the quality of its students). A board is only as good as its members. A Chinese proverb states, "Behind an able man there are always other able men." The CEO, President and/or Chairman of the Board need quality board members in order to attain the school's mission and vision. For a look at the characteristics of the ideal board member, refer to Appendix A. It will be difficult to find one board member with all needed qualities. That is another reason for the board – bringing together people with diverse skills, strengths, backgrounds, cultures to work toward a common vision and accomplish the school's mission. This facilitates passing projects back and forth based on the specific skills required. A diverse board meets the diverse needs of the organization. Max DePree says, "Organizations simply cannot survive without all kinds of people." (DePree, 1992, 39) Change Board members periodically to bring new insights, ideas, abilities and a fresh perspective to the group.

Many regard Peter F. Drucker as the father of modern management. He suggests that board members ask the following questions: (a) What needs to be done? (b) What can I do to make a difference? (c) What are the organization's vision, mission, and goals? (d) How can I set an example? (Hesselbein, 1996, xiii) As a group, board members ask: (a) Who are we as an organization? (b) Why are we here? (c) What is our purpose? (d) How can we make a difference?

Boards and Committees in Africa. In African perspective, the Board of Directors and Administrative Council are indispensable to the smooth running of any group. Africans see that "capabilities and talents, as human beings, are plainly limited and not adequate for the realization of individual potential and fulfillment of basic needs." (Gyekye, 1996) Shared values are important. Consider this proverb: "If all the people were to carry the heavens, no one individual would become humpbacked." If people share burdens together (regardless of its size), no one person suffers. People fail when they assume certain tasks alone. A chief or a king rules traditional African society. He depends heavily on a council of elders, and hosts community meetings to hear public opinion and advice. Discussion is lively and never complete until every one has the chance to speak. Talk and/or argument continue until consensus is reached. The chief never acts without consulting his counselors. In Africa, it is said, "one head does not go into council." This means that deliberation by several minds on matters of community concern is always better, and more fruitful. (Gyekye, 1996)

Administrative Council Team

A tremendous complement to the school's Board of Directors is the Administrative Council. This specialized group works with the day-to-day activities of the college, implementing the policies, and directives of the Board. The council's unique and specialized knowledge is a great asset to the school's officials. They lend expertise in advising the President, determining basic policies (not decided by the Board of

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Directors); yet do not exercise formal power in governing the school. They make recommendations, prepare schedules, teaching assignments, and provide key information, reviews, appraisals, proposals and reports to the President and the Board.

Business Administrator. One of the key members of the Administrative Council and school staff is the Business Administrator. His success depends on adequate finances and for others to adhere to the budget restraints and financial policies. It is imperative that he has expertise in business administration, accounting, and personnel management (within the academic setting). His primary function is with financial control—supervision of financial affairs, accounts (general, accounts receivable, accounts payable, payroll, student fees, etc.); serves as the purchasing agent; ensures that the school operates within the budget, and signs checks. He provides financial reports periodically, assists in preparation of the budget, and works with the auditors (on a yearly basis). He provides input and recommendations on all matters regarding finance within the school. Finances are limited within many overseas Bible schools. Everyone must work together to keep expenses to a minimum, remain focused on priorities, and to operate with the strictest financial integrity. The administrator also maintains all properties within the campus and oversees clerical and auxiliary staff. (Anglin, 1986/2003)

Delegation. An effective Board of Directors, Administrative Committee, College President, or leader gets the job done—and done on time—through sharing ministry with others. Leaders maintain what they do well, but train others through delegation. This frees the leader to do what he does best, yet empowers others to reach their highest potential. It is an excellent process for people development, which is essential to the growth and health of the organization. Delegation begins with understanding the tasks and talents available, and matching the two. It is foreseeable that some staff members will excel in any areas where the leader does not. A leader should work according to his strengths and organizational priorities, and delegate his areas of weakness or routine assignments to those with strengths in those areas. Two things are essential with delegation: the leader must be willing to let go; and the subordinate must be willing to accept the responsibility. (Rierdan, 2001). Coaching, follow-up, and feedback are needful. The key to success is to delegate gradually as confidence heightens. In addition to getting work done through others, delegation is a close ally to mentoring, preparing leadership successors and is widely practiced throughout Africa.

How can you realize a vision? That is simple. Bring together a diversified team, and build a board, council, or committee that reproduces by training the next generation. A team that will not stop until it wins the victory, and fulfills God's plan for the Bible school. Mission accomplished!

Qualities of Board Members

Spiritual	Is spirit-controlled, spirit-motivated – given to prayer, and able to call upon heaven’s resources.
Team player	Able to work together, to lead and to follow. The board is a team or community of members working with and through others.
Realistic	About himself – his strengths and weaknesses – and those of the organization.
Perpetual learner	Must be willing to improve his skills; listen and learn from others, to know the organization, and to encourage others to do likewise. Continuous improvement is imperative to overall growth.
Pioneering spirit	Willing to take risks, be a pathfinder, an explorer and pacesetter.
Open-minded	Open to innovative new ideas, methods, and ways of accomplishing the vision, yet remains faithful to the truth of God’s Word.
Servant	Willing to serve others and help them reach their maximum potential.
Growth-oriented	Have a personal growth plan as well as be committed to organizational growth.
People lover	Loves people, is empathic, and caring. Must be student and staff oriented for there is no reason for existence without them.
Change Agent	Be open to change.
Implementer	Not just involved in casting the vision but also become actively involved in governing the organization. Do not just tell, but also do.
Facilitator	Fosters understanding, and brings together people with diversified gifts and talents.
Passionate	His heart should be in it. People connect with men of passion and

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	vision. Passion is loving what you do. It shows!
Energetic	Possess a high energy level, be a man of action, and get excited about the plans of the board. There is no room for a lazy board member in a progressive organization. Excitement is contagious.
Extensive world-view	Global leaders know how to perform cross-culturally through understanding cultural differences.
Specialists	Excel in a specific field that adds value to the board.
Capable	Must be experienced, and competent enough to help the organization succeed.
Credible	People of integrity – they do what they promise, possess a godly character and foster trust.
Enablers	Assist others in achieving goals
Integrators	Take the best from one place, assess it, and adapt it for use within the organization.
Problem-solvers	Able to think through problems, provide alternatives or solutions, and strategies for implementation.
Diplomats	Possess ability to resolve conflicts and work within any culture.

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMICS

A Bible college or school is an “institution of higher education in which the Bible is central and the development of Christian life and ministry is essential.” (Accrediting, n. d.) Theological education and/or Bible school training implies integration of theology (faith) and education (learning) that aims at life transformation and spiritual formation.

Each Bible school develops and equips men and women to reach their maximum potential in apostolic ministry. Our comprehensive objectives (expected results) should include:

Preserving the Message. Nurture a faith community and a center of life-long learning to preserve apostolic doctrine for generations to come (2 Timothy 2:2; Philippians 3:1; 2 John 1-2). Equip ministers to continue steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 2:1); and to defend it within their cultural context (Jude 3; 1 Peter 3:15).

Providing the Methods. Explore the needs of a diverse and ever-changing society, and develop innovative print and non-print training and learning resources that are relevant to our cross-cultural environment.

Producing the Ministry. Prepare spirit-filled, spirit-empowered, and spirit-directed students for excellence in apostolic ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Propagating the Mission. Train and motivate students to possess a vision for, and participation in, global evangelism – preaching and teaching the whole Gospel to the whole world (Proverbs 29:18; Luke 24:47). Cultivate leadership development to facilitate, and sustain the harvest the Lord continues to give His Church.

To achieve its purpose and objectives the school needs a strong, versatile leadership team. One indispensable player is the academic dean. (In some schools the principal may fulfill the role of the academic dean.) He is a person that has a heart for, and giftedness in, developing the academic community: (a) trainers (faculty development and education); (b) trainees (students); and (c) training (curriculum and resources). His guiding principle is “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2, NIV).

The academic dean realizes that it takes several ingredients to make an effective, quality Bible school program. These include (yet are not restricted to): (a) a faculty strong in faith, character, experience and expertise; (b) students eager to explore and

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expand their God-given ministry and potential; (c) a curriculum that transmits our Christian heritage; is relevant, applicable, and educates the whole person created in God's image, allowing them to be functional in an advancing society.

The Board of Directors appoints the academic dean. Qualifications sought for include (a) credentials within the church organization and academia; (b) strong Christian character (1 Timothy 3:1-7); (c) evidence of academic competence; (d) ability to work with others on the Administrative Committee, and among the faculty; (e) an aptitude for leadership within an academic environment; (f) an interest in academic program excellence through continuous improvement, and curriculum design, development, and implementation.

As mentioned above the academic dean's responsibilities are three-fold: development of (a) training; (b) trainers; and (c) trainees – he is involved in the process of training trainers and trainees. Let us take a closer look.

Trainees. The academic dean works along with other members of the faculty to equip men and women for life-long ministry and learning. A quality curriculum, faculty with experience, and a spiritual environment facilitate students in reaching their growth potential. An ongoing, communal relationship is built among administration, faculty, and students that extend far after graduation day. Letters of encouragement strengthen graduates causing them to re-focus on their mission. Faculty can also encourage graduates through visits. An Alumni Association provides a continuous link between the graduate and the school. Consider hosting seminars, workshops, and retreats that bring faculty, graduates, and current students together for spiritual refreshing and fellowship. Some schools utilize one or two week extensive courses that allow graduates and students to gain credit toward a higher degree. (Rodney Pell, 1998) Each of these initiatives could fall within the jurisdiction of the academic dean.

Training. The academic dean is responsible for developing a quality educational program that is under continuous curriculum review. This includes ongoing development of both staff and students. Develop curriculum through consultation with the regional association, school administration, content specialists, faculty and students. Curriculum development encompasses the school's vision (purpose) and comprehensive objectives. The academic dean develops and maintains course files, and works with curriculum design, development, and implementation. He ensures that the faculty follows the regional guidelines of (for example) AATS (Africa Association of Theological Studies); academic standards of excellence; and adherence to expected course content, approved textbooks, and appropriate credit (classroom hours). Each instructor should use a syllabus or course outline. Lesson plans should be encouraged. At the conclusion of the teaching assignment, faculty should turn in a course file of all assignments, handouts, tests, and examinations to the academic office.

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The majority of course content and teaching methods used in our Bible schools tend toward rote learning, and indoctrination. Indoctrination is not enough. Rather than just teaching theological conclusions, teachers should also explain how such deductions were attained. Students should know how to critically evaluate and defend their conclusions. ““Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...” (1 Peter 3:15). Care should be taken to provide a variety of teaching strategies that appeal to the different types of learners. Problem-solving techniques should be used to teach students how to work through and deal with real-life situations. Administration needs to consider classroom visits and conduct performance evaluations that will help foster improvement. Faculty development in educational evaluation, measurement, and teaching strategies should go along way in boosting teacher performance.

A Note on AATS Curriculum. Schools within Africa may be members of the Africa Association of Theological Studies. Therefore, it would be good to include some information about that program here.

The AATS curriculum spans fifteen hundred classroom hours of instruction and results in an associate degree in theology. Courses are designed to suit the African context, yet remain faithful to biblical truths. A large portion of the curriculum (*Ministerial Development Series*) has been written by missionaries and nationals involved in cross-cultural teaching in the two-thirds world. It is designed to be life applicable and relevant to developing nations. The curriculum is simple and contextualized. It teaches the “never-changing truth...in simple, ever-changing terms” students can understand. (Smith, Not Published, 160) A total of 1,044 classroom hours make up the core curriculum, with the balance of hours given over to electives. The core curriculum is designed around four objectives, and seeks to equip and train God-called men and women to effectively accomplish apostolic ministry. The facets of the program covers a variety of courses in: (a) Christian living; (b) Bible and theology; (c) evangelism and practical ministries; (d) leadership development; and (e) ministerial development. Evangelism Practicum is part of the curriculum and students are sent out on weekend ministry or are involved in other ministry opportunities. Prospective students for the bachelor program must have (among other prerequisites) two years of successful ministry within the UPCI in order to be accepted. The curriculum is under constant revision, and raising the standard of ministerial excellence is paramount to the school’s administration.

Trainers. A quality faculty is indispensable to the Bible school. Why? A student becomes like his instructor. “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40, NIV). Everything reproduces after its kind (Genesis 1:12, 21, 24, 25). One proverb says, “The fruit never falls very far from the tree.”

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The academic dean works closely with the faculty. He approves course syllabi, teacher assignments, coordinates instructor preferences with available courses, schedules classes, provides an annual report of the academic program, and produces the academic calendar. He supervises the registrar, administrative assistant of academic affairs, and subsequently, all academic records.

The academic dean provides orientation to new staff (incorporating organization structure, school's purpose, objectives, policies and the individual faculty member's place within the curriculum). Ongoing faculty development is a priority. Each staff member needs to be involved in life-long learning, and have a personal growth plan. A faculty member should strive for excellence in his area of concentration. Specialization is essential in current educational trends. Continuing education produces faculty that are experts, content specialists, who are both effective and on the cutting edge of theological education within the culture. New technology, improved teaching methods, and understanding the learning styles of adult learners, all serve to better train the trainer. In faculty education, we ask: (a) What are we doing? (b) How well are we doing? (c) How can we improve what we are doing? (Rita J. Wolotkiewicz, 1980, 210) Approaches to faculty development may include: (a) distance education options; (b) faculty retreats; (c) seminars; (d) professional development days; (e) sub-regional faculty education programs; (d) mini-courses; (e) visits to other schools (to learn what they are doing); (f) educational sabbaticals; (g) taking courses at local institutions of higher learning; (h) discussions/ and brain-storming; and (i) articles, cassettes, or books – anything that promotes continuous improvement.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6, *NIV*). The directive of this passage (intended for parents but equally applicable to teachers) is to pass understanding of truth and God's instructions to the next generation. “The love of God is expressed in obedience to God's commandments and in giving oneself wholly (heart, soul, mind, and strength)... Truth is to be integrated into all of life...” (Pazmino, 1997/1999, 20-21) All aspects of life belong to God. Instructors should model a love for God with all their hearts, be obedient to His Word, and challenge students to give a “total life response” to Him. We prayerfully trust that students will follow. In essence, instructors join with Paul in saying, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you” (1 Corinthians 11:1-2, *NIV*).

Instructors value students because they are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1-2), and are capable of change, growth, and spiritual formation to conform to the image of Christ. Teachers understand that “education is both the process of acquiring significant learning experiences as well as the product of a desired change of

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personality and behavior.” (Gangel, 1983/2002, 121) Although each instructor teaches a different portion of the overall curriculum, he realizes the role it plays in the development and life transformation of each student. “To educate the whole person, to encourage disciplined learning and the quest for excellence is a sacred trust...The educator’s task is to inspire and equip individuals to think and act for themselves in the dignity of persons created in God’s image” (Holmes, 1979/1999, 16)

There is tremendous value in a well-conceived curriculum. It forces us to focus on the needs, objectives and reasons for the school’s very existence. Jesus said, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost...” (Luke 14:28, *NIV*). Someone has said. “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Excellence is never an accident. A carefully planned curriculum ascertains what the school is trying to accomplish; and determines: (a) why? (b) when? (c) where? (d) who? and (d) how? It ensures that there is a balance between curriculum content and experience; between learning and doing. Truth transforms (John 17:17). D. L. Moody said, “The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.” A good curriculum and comprehensive objectives require careful planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Curriculum comes from a Latin word that means “race course” and shares the same root word as “current” -the flow of water moving in the same direction. A well planned curriculum will enable students to run the race, move in the right direction, reach their goals, and say with Paul, “...I have finished my course...” (2 Timothy 4:7).

A school armed with a vision, solid objectives, excellent curriculum, quality academic dean, dedicated faculty, and diligent students that explore academic excellence can one day say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:6-7, *KJV*). They will hear the Master Teacher respond, “Well done!” (Matthew 25:21).

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ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE – A CONTINUOUS PURSUIT

Jesus was gripped with concern as he gazed over the masses of helpless humanity. He said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few” (Matthew 9:37, NIV). A huge harvest and few harvesters present a tremendous challenge for the Bible school. What shall we do? Pray for workers (Matthew 9:38), and comprehensively train those that are available for ministry (2 Timothy 2:2). The Bible school’s central reason for existence is to develop and equip quality men and women to meet the opportunity of a ready harvest and to fulfill the Lord’s great commission (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Mathew 28:19-20).

To achieve our purpose we look at what students need in order to be better equipped for the task of global evangelism and discipleship. “The Bible school was made for students and not students for the Bible school.” (Durasoff, 1998, 33) We endeavor to train students to function as citizens and ministers in a diversified, ever-advancing third world environment. How can we best accomplish this? We seek to find a balance between knowing (learning); doing (ministry); and being (living). It is not enough to know the message (cognitive domain). We should strive for students to believe the message (affective domain), and to act on the message (behavioral domain). We cannot divorce knowledge from beliefs, and behavior (James 4:17). We integrate these elements into our Bible school culture. We strive to promote (and see) personal, spiritual, emotional, and social growth in each of our students. Paul places emphasis on teaching various groups “to be.” He mentions this phrase thirteen times in Titus 2 (NIV). His primary concern is character formation. He instructs Titus in what to teach (content, curriculum) and how to teach it (methods). (Pazmino, 1997, 239-241) Teachers best teach others “to be” by setting the example. Paul said, “Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies” (Philippians 4:9, *The Message*).

To assess and meet the needs of students, and to prepare them for the ready harvest, Bible school leaders should look closely at classroom learning, supervised ministry opportunities, and the informal educational environment received through campus life.

Classroom learning experience. Learning is a life-long responsibility (2 Timothy 2:15), not something that students achieve in three or four years of biblical and general study. We should teach our students how to develop a positive attitude and to understand change. William Lay, Jr. suggests that we integrate their learning with real world, problem-solving situations, and teach decision-making skills. Students need to know how to function in society – both now and in the future – and should look at all change critically. As we teach the absolutes of Scripture, and principles that transcend time, location, and culture students can project trend outcomes, and give appropriate biblically based responses. (Lay, Winter 1993-1994) Bruce Lockerbie says that this calls for a “correlation between what we believe and how we respond to the world we live in.” (Gangel, 1983/2002, viii)

A variety of learning exercises will effectively assist students in meeting their educational needs. This may include: (a) action or active learning (where students actively

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work with peers in analysis and critical thinking); (b) Problem-solving situations that clarify alternatives and teach students how to make the best choices; (c) Make learning personal and student oriented. Individualized instruction encourages the student to take responsibility for learning. (d) Give meaningful assignments and not busy work. Students excel when they work on tasks that they feel meets their needs. A basic law of education is that students prefer to learn what they perceive they can use in life. (e) Provide assignments and teaching methods that meet the needs of different learning styles – visual, auditory, and tactile. (f) Assess the student’s present knowledge (could use pre-tests), and start teaching from there. The early preachers in Acts knew how to discern a person’s stage of spiritual growth and lead him to further truth. (g) Learning contracts provide a way of mentoring students in various issues of competence and character. This is a written agreement that provides specific goals and steps that lead to improvement in a mutually perceived weakness. (Gehman) (h) Teachers should devise clear, meaningful course objectives that allow students to know what we expect from them.

Classroom learning should not be a spectator sport. Students learn effectively while participating in the educational process. Indoctrination and rote learning is not enough. To reach or merely state a doctrinal and/or theological conclusion is incomplete. Students need to understand how we reach such deductions (much like a math student being required to show his work in solving arithmetic problems). Teach students to critically evaluate (think through) and defend their ideas and conclusions. To better understand the needs of students: ask them. Provide many opportunities for interaction with students, and receive their input. This gives them a voice in what is happening to them.

Ministry opportunities. Bible schools need to balance education (content) with experience. This requires us to translate theory into practice. Howard Culbertson has coined the slogan: “Ministry Across the Curriculum.” This reflects a “hands-on, field ministry involvement by all students and faculty...we intend for an attitude of ministry to permeate all that we do on campus.” (Culbertson, n. d., 5) A variety of student ministry opportunities should be made available through: (a) student evangelism teams; (b) weekend ministry; (c) assisting in a local churches; (d) starting church plants or preaching points; (e) internship; (f) preaching in chapel services; and a host of other practical opportunities that allow students to discover, develop, and dedicate their ministerial giftings. Student development in our cultural context requires that a student be faithful, and dependable in student ministry assignments.

Informal education. A student learns in more areas than the classroom. Informal education includes all areas of community life: chapel, devotions, prayer meetings, spiritual emphasis week, dorm life, casual interaction with teachers, extra-curricular activities, student associations, and social events. Plan activities that will promote a healthy, community life within the Bible school setting. Campus life should develop a love and concern for others, and the ability to work on a team. The student’s personal and spiritual growth should be of interest to us.

Before a student completes his Bible school training there should be clear evidence of academic competence (derived from classroom learning); ability to accomplish ministry

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(assessed through ministry opportunities and field education); and adequate spiritual growth and character (developed through personal devotion, and experiences gained through community life). This provides a wonderful blend of expertise, experience, and example that equips and empowers the student with what he needs to reach the world. This necessitates a quality staff; quality students; and a quality curriculum. Continuous improvement must be intentional. It is progressive.

A means of measurement or criteria for evaluating the quality of our Bible school will greatly assist us in raising the standard of ministerial and educational excellence.

Create a culture of quality. We assess and inspect what we value. Look critically at teaching methods, curriculum, administrative policies, etc. Be on the watch for ways to improve. Provide a feedback or evaluation system for each area you want to inspect or improve.

Ask questions that encourage evaluation. Ask faculty: (a) How well are students learning? (b) How can we assist students in achieving their life purpose? (c) How can we better teach students? (d) How effectively are we presently teaching? (e) How can our Bible school become better? How can we improve on what we are trying to achieve? (f) How can we develop our curriculum to correlate with our purpose?

Ask individual instructors: (a) What are you trying to teach? (b) What truths are contained in this subject? (c) What are the objectives (expected outcomes) for this course? (d) How can you improve in teaching this subject the next time? Self-evaluation is effective.

Ask students and graduates: (a) What are the ingredients of a quality instructor? (b) How can we improve our Bible school curriculum, teaching, and environment? (c) What did we omit, overlook, or overdo in the curriculum?

Open discussion in staff meetings. Periodically reassess the school, and make plans for improvements. List needed areas of development, and parallel recommendations for action. Prioritize the list, set measurable goals, and deadlines. Follow-up and celebrate milestones that are met.

Encourage various types of classroom assessment techniques. Teachers evaluate students. Students can offer feedback to teachers. Students could evaluate each other. A student might even be involved in self-evaluation. The assessment and testing tools should be varied. Test according to the objectives for the course. Faculty should receive instruction on the different evaluation methods available. Look at entry-level (pre-test) and exit-level (post-test) understanding to see improvement among students.

Apply for accreditation or membership in an educational association (like AATS – Africa Association of Theological Studies). This provides external appraisal and confirmation that your school has acceptable quality and reaches a prescribed standard.

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Be there. There is power in presence. Inspect. Someone has said, “You can only expect what you inspect.” Be visible in the classroom and on the campus. We call this concept, “leadership by walking around.” (Whitaker, 2000, 117).

Make classroom visits. Keep staff and students on their toes by taking short visits to various classes. Provide feedback to the instructor. Praise, correct, encourage, and offer ways to improve. Make evaluations factual. Be specific!

Encourage each staff member to undertake a personal growth plan (setting objectives or goals for personal improvement). Some call this a ministry action plan. Others may use a professional development plan. The instructor and the supervisor outline a goal or objective that the teacher wants to achieve. Reach an agreement, and confer on progress. Establish, in advance, how you will know when progress is made. This is equivalent to the learning contracts described above (for students).

Paul confessed, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect...I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do...I press on toward the goal...” (Philippians 3:12-14, *NIV*) This attitude permeates the Christian life, and is an important premise in the Bible school. We strive for excellence – for quality – and we accomplish this through continuous improvement. We want to do better – to be better. Our purpose is to prepare (and be) quality leaders. Let us push toward our goal!

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