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ȘCOALA DOCTORALĂ INTERDISCIPLINARĂ
FACULTATEA DE ȘTIINȚE UMANISTE ȘI
SOCIALE
DOMENIUL DE DOCTORAT „TEOLOGIE”

TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT

REZUMAT

COORDONATOR ȘTIINȚIFIC

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2023

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CHARACTER IN A WEEK?

Cultivating the Development of Virtue in
Transnational Modular Theological Education
in Serbia

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CHARACTER IN A WEEK?

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

THESIS METRICS

- 8 chapters
- 347 bibliographic resources
- 1038 footnotes
- 261 total pages
- 86904 words

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. CURRENT STATE OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN TRANSNATIONAL MODULAR SCHOOLS

Character and virtue have been topics of consideration in education for centuries, with well-known roots in the Greek concepts of *paideia* and *eudaimonia*. Most teachers, Christian or non-Christian, acknowledge that there is value in virtue and character

instruction. Theological schools may feel a greater duty to address character, as imparted in the Scriptures. Educational institutes often desire to address character in their students but are often unsure of the extent or how to implement such education. This elusive endeavor is exacerbated by the prevalent mindset that character education and formation is done over the course of years or lifetimes, and is best done by imitation, not transmission. Traditional Christian venues promote mentoring and discipleship. Residential schools sometimes attempt this practice by interacting with students outside of the strict classroom. Schools operating in modular formats may have only a few days for teacher-student contact hours. Limited direct contact between educator and student prevents many colleges and seminaries from knowing how best to implement educating for character. Character education may default to a sort of osmotic hopefulness, causing administration and faculty to feel it may only occur primarily through the vehicle of other theological courses.

Added to this dilemma is the growing trend of modular transnational education. Defined as the teaching of students from one culture by an instructor of a different culture, transnational institutions are often a necessary accompaniment for desired theological education to those with limited resources. Crossing cultures adds an element of contextualization and discomfort between teacher and student that can magnify the already difficult challenge of limited classroom interaction and cause education for character to disappear in intent.

The challenges can feel insurmountable for faculty and administration. As a result, intentional virtue education in most cases is diminished, haphazard, or does not exist at all in the curriculum. However, theological education without character and virtue instruction will result in mere intellectualism. This is a source of frustration, as the purpose of theological education for character lies in the person of God Himself. It is being transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may know the will of God.

1.2. THE PREMISE OF THE THESIS

The premise demonstrates the possibility of cultivating education for character in theological, modular, transnational schools, which are possibly the most challenging of educational structures. For support of this premise, experiences and implementation practices are presented using a real-world case study of the Baptist Theological School (BTS) of Novi Sad, Serbia. In this analysis, several necessary parameters of education for character are considered, including the aspects of contextualization of character education, the challenges facing western teachers to non-western students, and the cultural background of the Balkans. Benefits and drawbacks inherent in modular, transnational education are also presented to determine approaches and assessment of cultivating character education.

1.3. THE PURPOSE OF A WORK IN THIS SUBJECT AND ITS RELEVANCE

Previous research has been done on the need and application of virtue education in all academic

levels of secular and theological education. However, no research has been done to determine the possibility of character education in a modular, transnational setting. This is likely because little research has been done with regard to transnational schools at all.

The primary aim of this thesis is twofold: the need for transnational modular theological schools to cultivate character and ideas on how to cultivate character in such a setting. The results are based on the experience of BTS. To explore the possibility of character education in these circumstances, the need for contextualization is initially addressed. Presenting the Christian faith relevant to the cultural context is essential if a teacher desires to maximize the potential for virtue education. Contextualization, however, is not an end to itself in theological education. Too often missionaries and teachers believe that if the strict gospel message is properly contextualized, other biblical truth (including character) will be naturally imported into a given context with it. This is similar to the idea that the practice of teaching any theology imparts character to the learner by nature of the fact that

God's character is enveloped in any and all theological subjects. Analyzing contextualization methods and approaches assisted this research in cultivating character that seeks to be neither imperialistic nor compromising. Also included is the investigation and incorporation of the behavioral characteristics of honor and shame and other cultural dimensions found in the Balkan context.

Preparing teachers to instruct cross-culturally is not easy. There are challenges that involve the normal preparation all teachers face, but then add travel, exhaustion, and cultural unfamiliarity inherent in transnational teaching. Adding the component of preparing the teacher to take on the duty of intentional character education seems too formidable to be rational. Given that they often will only teach for a brief time and may actually never return to the institution, it was imperative in this research to also uncover how best to prepare an incoming teacher for the purpose of character education. Determining how a modular, transnational theological school can center on educating its students, faculty, and even administration

for virtue is a goal which will enhance the possibility of cultivating character.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND CURRENT RESEARCH

2.1. CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF MODULAR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Theological education encompasses what it means to love God as a Christian, a point at which character and education meet. If through theological education the student loves God more profoundly, they will indeed imitate Him in a greater way, as humans tend to become like what they worship. This initial encounter between character and education, however, is not the sum total of instruction in virtue. Many institutions make this mistake in considering any form of theological education as character education by default. Education in virtue must also be intentional and focused, with goals and outcomes.

To formally understand the landscape of modular education in Serbia, schools of Eastern Europe were reviewed, and it was found that many exhibit a

modular style of education. In fact, non-residential schools make up for over 50% of global training for ministry. However, modular challenges include robust contextualization and long-term interaction with students. Contextualization serves as the most difficult for transnational schools and may lead to a “nice to have but not necessary” attitude toward character education. Most current research in contextualization include research started by Ruth Benedict and the behavioral worldview of honor and shame. This has been expanded to include guilt and innocence, and power and fear. Additionally, social constructs such as individualism and collectivism factor into contextualization research.

The term contextualization itself has been controversial since it was developed at the World Council of Churches in 1970, and frequently disputes fall out along denominational lines. Whereas some theologians view all of theology as contextual and therefore able to be changed, others believe only certain aspects of theology should be alterable to fit a context. Some fall midway in their opinions, finding an

equivalent to biblical ideas from the local society. Specifically with regard to character, contextualization involves more than communicating definitions, biblical mandates, or even the gospel. It must include all of God's revealed word and must relate to all of a given society. However, the method of approach tends to be argued. Leading in the thinking behind approaches are theologians such as Robert Schreiter, Stephan Bevans, Dean Gilliland, Scott Moreau, and Charles Kraft.

2.2. METHODOLOGY

There are divergent thoughts on how best to approach teaching in transnational schools. Factors, such as constitution of faculty and students, background of teaching, and subjects, contribute to the difficulties. Character education specifically entails complicating factors. Some consider character subjective, or at least contextual, and do not imagine that cross-cultural virtue education is realistic. The key question driving this thesis is, "Can western theological teachers on short-term trips to transnational modular schools effectively teach character to national

students?” It is important to note that the research method used in this thesis is a theological method which uses educational methodological tools, as opposed to an educational or social methodology. This is evidenced in the theological substructure being used. First, the perspective of character which serves as the basis of this research is taken from the Christian Scriptures, specifically 2 Peter 1:5-9. Second, the goal of this research is strictly theological. Formation into Christlikeness for usefulness, fruitfulness, and discernment for Christian living is the purpose for which this research is conducted. Therefore, the character traits sought after are not those based on the standards of secular or educational society, but on the mandates of Scripture. Finally, the presuppositions and assumptions discussed in this methodology are expressly theological. The fact that the research being done here is for theological education impacts the definition chosen. Indeed, because of this, there are four aspects of character that must be considered for a proper methodological definition of character. These include the theological principle, the cultural basis, the

global nature, and the responsibility of character for theological education, which are further addressed in chapter five.

CHAPTER 3. CHARACTER AND CULTURE IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The seemingly simple idea of culture is difficult to define. Referred to as a “fuzzy construct,” culture is complicated because of the emotional and even political ideas that are attached to it. In this thesis, culture refers to the common ideas, feelings, and values guiding personal behavior and community. More simply, it is the constant conversation occurring between people and environment, with the common shared element of belief. For a theological school, that belief includes the aspects of God’s person which He shares with His creatures.

Faithfulness to culture includes theological instruction on how to apply Scripture to culture’s questions, without redefining or reinterpreting culture itself. In many parts of the Christian Scriptures, character traits are overtly detailed and listed with the

intent to grow in them. Not only are elements of character outlined, but teleology as well. Character education is for God and His glory, and we glorify Him when we are like Him. If character is to be realized in any modular transnational school, the entire school must adopt education for virtue as an ethos, wherein every faculty member, administrative worker, or staff member reflects what it values in character. Culture does not supersede character, but neither is it completely separate. Culture and character are linked and therefore a natural road for character to traverse. Key to this are the principles of missiologist Andrew Walls in his idea of Pilgrim and Native mentality, which served as the underlying guiding force in the methodology for this research.

One rebuttal of transnational character education is the call to avoid imperialism, the forced ideologies of a more powerful culture onto a subjugated culture. This is such a palpable danger in cross-cultural work that some teachers eschew the idea of transnational teaching whatsoever. There are several problems with overreacting to the fear of imperialism.

First is a wrongly placed identification with imperialism. Transnational teaching in itself is not imperialistic unless it uses abusive power, which is typically not present in a theological school. Imperialism is also not simply teaching what a Bible passage means. On the contrary, being unwilling to reveal one's thoughts on biblical interpretation can itself be imperialistic, as the teacher assumes the student does not have sense to discern what is true for themselves. Transnational teachers can avoid imperialism by asking questions and seeking to understand. An unhealthy fear of imperialism must not prevent educators from the freedom to impart what the Bible says about character.

CHAPTER 4. THE CHALLENGES IN CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MODULAR THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

Many challenges stand in the way of effective character education. The idea that education for virtue happens automatically through teaching theology is perhaps the most insidious challenge. This perception negates the

need for intentional character education and causes a false sense of security that a school does not need to think about it. This foundational problem can only be addressed by the highest level of the individual school.

Faculty recruitment must take into consideration the idea of an educator's character. Many times, faculty are recruited based almost entirely on their academic credentials, under the assumption that if those are good, then the teacher must subsequently be good. Vetting for character must be done, but this can be an even greater challenge for transnational schools which are dependent on finding even a qualified person to teach. Poor character can cause educators to have little impact on students. Once in the transnational school, translation issues or cultural misalignments can further wreak havoc on a teacher unprepared to operate with cross-cultural intelligence. This can result in a total lessened educational experience for the student.

Finally, a lack of administrative staff, resources, and funding can cause cultivation for character to be stymied. If the national workers are overwhelmed with the work of operating and financing the school, there is

no time to work with teachers to help them understand the importance of character education. Most instructors believe that they do not have sufficient time for their class anyway, and adding the pressure of thinking about character can be quite stressful. Recognizing these challenges helps the school and faculty overcome issues and move toward virtue instruction.

CHAPTER 5. THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CHARACTER EDUCATION IN MODULAR TRANSNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

5.1. THE ESSENTIAL ANALYSES FOR CHARACTER

Within the doctrine of God, there exists two determinate worldviews in elucidating character – human speculation or divine revelation. In theological education, there is an overlap of these two as education is often speculation on God’s revelation. However, this path must follow one direction, from revelation to speculation. This theological principle demands that a revelationist approach be taken to inform any scheme

of character development. It follows that defining character begins with a Scriptural or revelational understanding, not with the secular. Contextualization is making this revelation applicable, but the message is given for all people by an all creating God. A theological principle of character also dictates which character traits are to be focused on from the hundreds of possibilities. The goal is Christlikeness, not Christ-ness, and the ultimate achievement of Christlikeness will be in the new kingdom of heaven. Conclusions from this methodology results in a theological principle of character. Character is best defined by God's revelation as it reflects Him. In that way, all theological education, even if it is slight, is in some form a focus on character. However, there must be an avoidance of the idea that theology itself instills character to the point that it is not necessary to be focused on intentionally.

Secular researchers have attempted to compose a list of virtues that are common amongst all cultures resulting in two responses. A situationist response claims cultures do not share character traits but hold

their own character in isolation from other societies. The end result of this understanding is the negating of character at all. If no character trait can be shared, then character simply is another word for culture. The opposite view, the dispositionist, is closer to the driving initiative of this research. Character traits in this view are based on internal beliefs. Theological education takes this a step further in that these beliefs are not simply internal, but are internal convictions based on external revelation.

The oldest arguments for character education center around the idea of whether or not character is taught or caught. Is virtue something imitated only, or can it be learned by transmission of information? As Christians, character has been determined to be that which is imitative of worship. In this way a theological methodology can involve a more “caught” aspect of character. However, the revelation of God has included instruction and mandates on character. Christians are told to grow in specific character traits and to learn Christ without exception. Therefore, a theological

education institute must include intentional character education in its curriculum in some fashion.

5.2. CULTURAL ANALYSES USED IN ASSESSING CULTIVATION OF CHARACTER INSTRUCTION

In a cross-cultural study, proper methodology requires a review of the perspective, worldviews and cultural syndromes inherent with any transnational project. Overriding all cultural syndromes are three main analysis perspectives including postmodernism, dimensionalism, and particularism. While the first two approach culture and character from anthropological and theoretical understandings respectively, a particularist view is concerned with the subject matter of character itself and is the view of this research. When specifics are considered, several facets of culture and character come to the forefront. It is important in the methodology to isolate particular societal traits that can influence character education. The fact that specific cultural syndromes exist that have been identified with

all cultures shows that there can be homogenous character values that can be studied and indeed taught.

Made famous in the 1950's, the ideas of honor and shame can illuminate any methodology for transnational character education by noting what societal regulations govern behavioral patterns, which can either reinforce or weaken education for character. For example, if the virtue of accountability is in some way overridden by the behavioral regulator of shame in an inappropriate way, at least some ground will be lost in an attempt to impart this Christian value. Cultural dimensions should not be ignored, but worked with to shape how biblical accountability can include honoring another, and indeed is the essence of it.

Values researcher Geert Hofstede determined that specific cultural dimensions are shared among cultures. These cultural dimensions were narrowed down to five behavioral aspects, including attitudes toward time, context, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism. This affects how character is taught between cultures. As one teaches character, there is not a limitation based only on what

the local culture deems good traits. Instead, an educator can take into consideration what overriding cultural dimensions describe the culture and then inform the Scriptural directives to better apply them for the students. Cultural researchers like Hofstede share a commonality in discussion, revolving around that which is general to a society versus that which is specific, the etic or the emic. Each society exhibits both, and Hofstede's dimensions relate more to the etic. In reflecting on the emic of Serbian society, for purposes of methodology, one facet is the understanding of existing character education in schools, which has been anemic. Past socialism taught character but defined it as patriotism to the country and duty. The biggest theological educational facility is the state Serbian Orthodox Seminary. Herein, character is almost entirely tied to doctrinal acquiescence, and to a lesser extent moral fidelity. The closest aspect of character education in this institution is a course in fortigenesis, concerned primarily with individual perseverance but in a self-defensive way. Biblical character education, in opposition, does not simply

teach how to endure the world, but how to transform the world through transforming ourselves.

Serbia as a nation has been shown to be collectivistic more than individualistic. Therefore, individual success, even in developing character, is not as important as the higher good for society. Educators must be aware of this so that they can draw students to a common reason for pursuing character development. Collectivism can also inform the teacher that students are unlikely to discuss their individual progress in character for their own sake, but more on how individual character growth can improve the Christian community. Teachers who come from a western, individualist background can also rely on students in Serbia to provide insight, to them and the other students, into how individual efforts can translate into societal benefits. Regardless, the methodological process needed for research on cultivating character included the analysis of societal regulatory behaviors as preparation for the discussion on cultivation of virtue development.

5.3. METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

This research, while being very distinctly theological, used social science instruments including questionnaires and field observation. These tools were used here to better inform the research on how to cultivate character in the specific Serbian setting. The questionnaires used in this research were subjective and have the goal of understanding, from a cultural standpoint, how Serbian students and teachers understand character. Practically, the method used was both quantitative and qualitative, a mixed method. The quantitative approach focused on the taught aspect of character education, that which can be imparted through information and transmission of knowledge. Qualitatively approaching virtue development, the “caught” aspect of character education, insisted that questions were open-ended and reflective. Interviews were conducted to aid in the understanding of key practices. For teachers who seemed to have the biggest personal character impact on students (i.e., loving, patient, kind, godly), students were asked how the

teacher imparted this attitude to students, and how the student could imitate them.

Further, questionnaires were given to faculty to uncover if they incorporated any intentional character instruction, if this was done unprompted, and if there was any attitude that character was automatically taught in theology. Students in the school were given questionnaires for different reasons. These were to ascertain what character and virtue traits were commonly respected in the Balkans, and what the student considered to be lacking in the general community. The demographic questions were the same in all groups. Questions were kept simple and few in number to encourage participation. Within the qualitative analysis spectrum, it was determined to use two types: Discourse Analysis and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Both of these are useful for analyzing language within the culture, and character education in this situation is dependent on how the Serbian culture understands it.

5.4. PRESUPPOSITIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

For this research, character education was focused on specifically evangelical theology. Four presuppositions stemming from this perspective were essential to progress the research past an introductory stage. Firstly, it is presumed that God exists and has revealed Himself in His world. Secondly, humans are to reflect His character. This gives the purpose and mandate with which the research operates. Thirdly, humans are sinful and therefore do not naturally or automatically reflect God's character. Without this understanding, there would be no felt need for research. Finally, it is presupposed that people must have faith in order to acquire biblical virtues. Without faith, the enterprise of true virtue development would digress to an exercise in moral formation only.

5.5. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE

The point of this thesis is not the design of a program for character, but an investigation into the possibility of cultivating character education in the

specific setting of modular transnational education. This research is limited to character development in modular schools. Because of this, a limiting factor is naturally time. Not having much contact with students was the precipitating factor in choosing this theme to begin with. That is, whether or not character can be taught in such an environment. Although character education in transnational schools require some knowledge of contextualization, an exhaustive overview of all the models of contextualization is not feasible. Instead, a guiding principle of contextualization was chosen precisely because it was not a model, but an operating ethos.

5.6. DETERMINING A CONTEXTUALIZATION MODEL AS AN OPERATING PRINCIPLE

Given the authoritative anchor of Scripture that undergirds this research, there is an assumption that the epistemology requires a mimetic worldview, a given order and meaning which requires straightforward human confirmation. To determine the

contextualization model for this research, it was beneficial to acknowledge two important elements, theological and instrumental, which bind most contextualization models together. The theological question that underlies contextualizer's approach is the question of God's revelation. Are the Scriptures themselves God's word, or do they merely contain God's word or limit themselves to being only inspired? The answer to this often dictates the contextual approach. Because of this, most contextual models are tacitly built on a continuum, with a sliding scale of how much of the Scriptures can be safely discarded or at least altered to fit culture. Though evangelical models are more prone to the belief that the Bible is all God's word, there still is an amount of the Bible that is deemed as more important for contextualization (usually the gospels) with the rest being of lesser importance.

In opposition to a continuum approach to contextualization, the inspiration for the most fitting framework of contextualization for a theology of character and virtue for this research came from

Andrew Walls, Historian of Missions at the University of Edinburgh. Walls developed an epistemology of contextualization based on his nomenclature of Native and Pilgrim. Wall's ideas give inspiration for the attitude that appears the most biblical and well-rounded in approaching contextualization for character, and this is indeed borne out in Scripture. His passion for this stemmed from his desire for the community of saints. In this concept, all aspects of a society are considered, with all aspects of Scripture placed on top of that society like two concentric circles. By adopting both mindsets, at the same time, believers in this world receive instruction in the faith and respond as a new race in a hostile world, living concentrically, not in animosity, with others. There is no relinquishing either of culture or of revelation. Both are considered fully, with revelation informing culture, and the goal being a united global community. This is the mindset and approach that this research took in cultivating education for character.

CHAPTER 6. SERBIAN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND FOR CHARACTER

Suffering is in the ethos and psyche of the Serbian idea of virtue. It is embodied in the national Kosovo epic of 1389 wherein Serbians are seen as willingly giving up their nationality to the Ottomans as a sacrifice. The geographic location within the Balkans targets Serbia as a prime location for political and ecclesial territorial disputes. Its many wars have perhaps contributed to its reputation of being incomprehensible, maverick, unpredictable or even volatile. The first step toward character education in Serbia is understanding the Serbian mentality on virtue. Honor and sacrifice or suffering contribute the Serbian idea of virtue instead of virtues itself.

Serbian education is oddly individualistic, contrary to the overriding cultural climate of collectivism. Students learn by theory rather than interpersonal practice. Students may earn a degree, but there is nothing of their individual selves incorporated into the education except their memory. A theological

degree therefore should be more than just knowledge and theory, but it should reflect upon the student an imprint of the Savior whom they studied. Throughout the educational system in Serbia, mainly dating from the 19th century, ethics was taught in schools. It was a moralism that sought to make a safe and calm society. This changed for the worse in the era of communism, where all initiatives for religious, and hence virtue, education were rejected.

Serbians have been taught that to be Serbian is to be Serbian Orthodox. The goal of Christlikeness can be equated to the Orthodox ideal of theosis, in that one should become more and more like the Savior and therefore regain some of this likeness. The character goals of fruitfulness and usefulness in ministry advocated by 2 Peter 1 would be somewhat foreign to the average Serbian. Ministry is for priests, with the duty of the church member being that of worship only. In Orthodox schools, character is almost entirely limited to faithfulness to the dogma of the church.

National evangelical education is said to be underdeveloped in Eastern Europe in general. Most

schools, especially if they are seeking to offer a degree, must meet specific criteria in their faculty. With preparation, this is attainable for nationals. What is not attainable is to be able to recruit faculty that requires no remuneration for teaching. This is part of the reason that transnational education has grown so steadily over time. Western teachers not only pay their way, but often bring funds that helps the school economically. Western instructors also constitute a much bigger pool of qualified potential faculty, so that the theological school can choose instructors who are very close to the denominational or doctrinal position of the school. With a smaller pool of national teachers to choose from, schools are often forced to compromise things they normally would not have to. This can lead to theological eclecticism, which if not checked, can cause the school to lose respect in the long run.

Western evangelicals attempting to teach character and virtues will be able to approach the subject of character education more wisely if they do so from an understanding of the Serbians' mindset about virtue. There also exists many relational

problems between the Evangelical and Orthodox Churches, which cannot be overcome simply by doctrinal teaching. Therefore, there is a redemptive need for character education among the evangelicals, and development of this education is informed by the Serbian historical background.

CHAPTER 7. CULTIVATION OF EDUCATION FOR CHARACTER IN THE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF SERBIA

7.1. DUTIES AND CAUTIONS FOR CULTIVATING CHARACTER EDUCATION

Theological schools, tasked with preparing, equipping, and training men and women for service in the kingdom of Christ, have a responsibility to consider how to cultivate character in their schools. The term cultivating has been intentionally used in this thesis to clarify that it is not a program that is sought but a mentality and ethos that is needed. A theological school must have an intentional plan for virtue education and a specific epistemology for how it will enact a plan. Especially for transnational schools, incoming teachers

cannot be overlooked in the pursuit for character development. Schools will need to help teachers see that they are not only crucial in the process, but that they are subject to it themselves. It will be impossible for students to learn character if their teacher claims to have no specific recommendations or offers perspective from their own morality.

Additionally, a school must determine what disciplinary action will be necessarily taken if character failures occur in their students, and what events will precipitate that. All schools have policies on moral behavior of its students. Building in an intentional character program may require these policies to be reviewed. A theological school must not, however, conflate character growth and development and moral formation. Students all too easily fall into a legalistic trap of earning favor, be it with school leaders or with God. Requiring a checklist of behaviors to prove that the student is learning character is dangerous and can lead to spiritual confusion. A sort of legalism can also imbue the school curriculum itself, if character education is fulfilled with one or two classes on

subjects, or if a prepackaged kit of character education is artificially applied to the school. Character and virtue should be a part of the very psyche of the theological school, not checked off a list of required subjects.

Character education must start with the gospel. Whenever the Apostle Paul sought to impact his non-Christian hearers regarding their need for Christ, he did so by first establishing common ground with a reminder of humanity's shared desire for rescue from evil. For any school to have a character development initiative, whether it is a religious school or not, it must have a basis for doing so. For the theological school, the gospel must be the starting point, for without it, there is truly no possibility of students developing character. The Bible does not differentiate between moral and intellectual virtues. What it does differentiate is between shallow morality and transformative character change. This is only possible with the heart and soul changing ability of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A second beginning necessity for character development is the establishment on the part of the school of biblical standards and presuppositions. For

example, a commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture and the authority of God's revelation in it will enable a school to have firm backing in its decisions on teaching character and dictating its focus in the lives of its students. With this in mind, there are many aspects of a theological school that can contribute to character formation. Taking the example of BTS, suggestions were offered in this research that illustrate that an elaborate plan for character may not be necessary in modular transnational schools, but simply the idea that the school will make attempts.

7.2. FACULTY SELECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Aside from gospel and doctrinal foundations, the next most important factor in cultivating character and virtue in modular transnational schools is the faculty. This element lies at the heart of this thesis, namely, the ability of transnational faculty to teach character to modular students. Teachers must be selected with a view to their character, not just their academic credentials. This section describes practical

advice on questioning incoming teachers, requiring flexibility in the design of their curriculum, professor surveys and reflections, and compiling students' input on the classes. One of the clearest learnings that BTS gained from these surveys was that character instruction as well as many aspects of contextualization centers on asking questions. If a teacher simply learns to always be asking in order to learn, and not to meet an agenda, they will achieve a large portion of the effort to demonstrate character.

BTS also provides all transnational teachers with translators. This is not only to translate the words the teacher is saying, but these interpreters act as cultural bridges for the teacher to understand how and why a lesson may or may not have worked and to make suggestions on possible questions to ask. Interpreters are common in transnational schools, but many educators may not see their interpreters in this light.

Without feedback and reflection, much in the way of the character of an instructor can be missed, to the detriment of students and other teachers alike. Additionally, perceived barriers were solicited in order

for the school to learn how to mitigate them. The results of surveys and feedback can be used to prepare future teachers who may feel inadequate to incorporate instruction in virtue.

7.3. STAFF, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY'S ROLES

Teachers may be a singularly important element in the development of character in students, but other personnel factors include school staff and community. BTS requires each student to have a community proctor, a person who will oversee not only aspects of their work, but who will be a partner in their learning, development, and spiritual oversight. Additionally, every staff member is taught to reach out to students when they perceive a potential problem, and staff communicates this concern to others involved in the student's education.

Students themselves yearn for this attention in theological schools, and often cite this as a reason for attending the school to begin with. Students often desire to be changed as persons and see the staff at the

school as a way to facilitate knowing how to accomplish this. Students are interviewed to self-evaluate character before enrolling at BTS and upon graduation. Questions around character can be asked and evaluations on growth made at these times.

The job of character formation does not reside solely with the academy. The Christian community surrounding the students at BTS may not have a formal role in the education of the student, but they do affect the student. The way they do this is by being a sort of laboratory in which the student applies what he or she has learned, learns from mistakes, and grows from observation. These labs take place all throughout the time between modules, so that they also serve as a real-world source of questions for future classes. In truth, the community aspect of BTS is what makes modular education a better choice in Serbia than a residential format. They provide opportunities for virtue development, especially in the area of brotherly kindness and humility, which may be missed if the student were away for years.

The primary advantage to modular education lies in its inherent practicum-like nature. Students attend modules, then go back to their local contexts and apply what they have learned, intentionally or not. The benefit of this is not only to the individual student, but the church at large. Knowing this, many assignments at BTS are designed to incorporate the community or local ministry. Students take part in interviews, conversations, teachings, and other forms of community interaction. This enables character to be developed in the areas of being a servant, patience, perseverance, and other character traits.

7.4. BOOKS AND LITERATURE USED IN THE SCHOOL

It has been noted that one of the most critical needs amongst evangelical communities of Eastern Europe is for literature in their own languages, preferably produced by national authors. It is suspected by this author that there is a correlation between the number of national writers a context has and the growth of the church in that context. Because of this, BTS

revised its goals to include the development of national writers. In encouraging national writers, virtue is developed in several ways. Christian writing itself is a virtue in that the author is putting their thoughts about God onto a form that causes others to worship. Additionally, the practice of devotional reading encourages Christian growth in character. Students and community are naturally more prone to read work published by a countryman who understands the culture and its specific issues. Finally, if character and virtue is a focus of the school, and the school develops writers, the author of books will naturally interweave character into the written work and increase the voice of Christlike character for the community.

7.5. EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT OF CHARACTER

It must be understood that cultivating character is a worthy end in itself. There is no imperative that character growth be measured in students. However, while it is not necessary, some form of measurement can be helpful. This does not have to occur in the classic

way of examination but can be part of practicums or papers as discussed in the thesis. Students can also be evaluated subjectively through discussions with mentors and proctors. However, if it is done, it must be on an individual basis, and it should be recognized that predictable results are impossible. This is because character, at its core, involves an accurate assessment of one's *own* nature. Assessment of character should also not be limited to students but should include faculty as well. Most schools assume faculty members have good character unless they do something so egregious that it proves otherwise. Wisdom calls for theological schools to implement some form of regular observation and feedback so that faculty can be accountable to grow in character as well, for the sake of their students in particular.

CHAPTER 8. GENERAL CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Modular transnational schools are desired on the part of teachers and schools alike. Theological schools in many parts of the world continue to operate with

national students but few national teachers. The global commitment and material resources of the West have resulted in invitations to teachers to cross cultures and teach. It is an easy request in some ways, as a great number of evangelical educators embrace the idea of teaching cross-culturally in a desire to expand the knowledge of Jesus Christ, to practice servant leadership, and to strengthen the global church. Additionally, many of these schools are modular in format, being conducted in week or even days-long intervals. This thesis has demonstrated that, in all the fervor for transnational teachers, an important element in teaching may be overlooked, namely, character education. Already a difficult subject to address in residential schools, educating for virtue can seem impossible given the constraints in transnational modular schools. Teachers traveling to teach face many unknowns including cultural knowledge, school ethos uncertainties, fatigue, language, and security fears. Schools are often too preoccupied with staying viable to be concerned about character, and may relegate character education to the sideline, hoping that the

students pick it up automatically with the theology they learn. This thesis demonstrates that character education is not only necessary for modular translational schools, but that it is possible. With intentional minimal effort, steps can be made toward at least increasing virtue knowledge and practice in the school. Simple methods of incorporating character into a school's operating ethos can be done with proper forethought. To illustrate this, the case of the Baptist Theological School of Serbia was used to show implementation of many elements useful in the development of character in students.

Future research should be done with regard to evaluation of character in modular transnational schools, as well as other types of structures such as distance learning and seminars. As this thesis is not a "how to" on character education programs, it is best to consider how to cultivate character rather than how to implement a program. With character education, formal programs are not the goal. The purpose for a theological school to cultivate character in its students is to increase discernment, fruitfulness, and usefulness

in the life and ministry of the students, school, and faculty. To accomplish this, all schools must be convicted of the need to incorporate stratagems to cultivate character.

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