

The Role of Faculty in Theological Education

Fritz Deininger

Excellence in theological education is a challenging objective to be achieved. It means preparing men and women well for ministry in the church and in the world. Giving them the tools they need to manage their own lives, and minister effectively is the task of the seminary and the training programs. Even though academic leaders and faculty play a prominent role in facilitating quality education, it should not be overlooked that other factors contribute to excellence in theological education as well. This is shown in figure 1.



Figure 1: Factors contributing to excellence

As academic leaders develop excellence in theological education, they need to pay attention to all areas in order to discern what needs to be improved. Their task is to define what role each area is playing in the overall achievement of the objectives of the seminary. Facilitating a working relationship among the faculty and staff, and an understanding of their important role together in the success, and effectiveness of the training programs creates an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. This needs to be highlighted because faculty members cannot fulfill their role in the seminary detached from relating well to other areas of the institution. They do not just teach in the classroom. They are part of the institutional culture.

Before proceeding to the role of the faculty in theological education, I want to clarify the term “faculty” because it does not convey the same meaning in all educational contexts. The term “faculty” can refer to a department of study, for example the “Faculty of Theology,” or the “Faculty of Missiology” in a university setting. In other contexts, the term “faculty” refers to the teachers, or professors in an institution, whether it is a university or seminary. This second meaning will be adopted in this chapter.

In this study, the role of faculty in theological education will be explored, first of all, from a biblical perspective. This seems to be mandatory because teaching theology requires biblical standards of life that are applied to the teacher. The role of Jesus and Paul as teachers

will provide some valuable insights for teachers today. Then, institutional aspects related to the role of the faculty will be considered. Academic leaders, and the institution are instrumental in facilitating the role of the teacher to be effective in teaching and learning. On the other hand, there are expectations on the part of the faculty member that academic leaders need to be aware of. Teachers fulfill their role within a supportive atmosphere in the institution. In a third step, the focus will be on some expectations on the role of teachers from an educational point of view. Their impact as educators on the students, the church, and the world depends on their personal life, as well as their professional expertise.

Role of Teachers – Biblical Reflections

The Bible is not explicitly a handbook for theological education, or faculty development, but there is much evidence that teaching plays an important part in establishing firmly the believers in their faith in Christ, and to prepare them for service in the church and in the world. Jesus told his disciples to teach the believers “to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt. 28:20). The early church adopted the practice to teach the Word of God regularly (for example in Acts 2:42). The apostles were aware that teaching, and preaching the Word of God focused on different objectives: “Preaching is for evangelization, to bring sinners to the Savior. Teaching, however, is for edification, to instruct and thereby spiritually nurture believers in Christ. One calls for repentance; the other for discipleship. One is to bring spiritual birth; the other is for spiritual growth.”¹

Many teachers played an important role throughout the Old and New Testament. However, two outstanding teachers shall be considered as examples, namely Jesus and Paul. Both were servants of God who preached, and taught the Word of God. They had an impact on the lives of people who became leaders of the church even without the formal setting of seminary training.

The Role of Jesus as Teacher

Teaching was certainly an important part of the ministry of Jesus. In his book “Teaching as Jesus taught”, Roy Zuck provides an interesting statistic: “Of the ninety-five occurrences of the verb *didasko* in the New Testament, more than half (fifty-seven) are in the Gospels, with forty-seven of them referring to Jesus' teaching. The Gospel writers thus reveal that teaching was one of Jesus most prominent activities. Clearly he was recognized as an eminent Teacher.”² The statistical evidence indicates that Jesus fulfilled his calling, and role as teacher while he was in this world. What made Jesus an effective teacher? How did he fulfill his role as teacher? What impact did his teaching ministry have on people? Some characteristics that made Jesus an outstanding teacher shall challenge us today as theological educators.

His Maturity as Teacher

Jesus was the Son of God, and yet from a human point of view he needed to develop like any other person. Luke tells us that Jesus “grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him” (Lk. 2:40). He also records “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Lk. 2:52). Both references suggest that Jesus matured in his life, and grew physically (in stature), mentally (in wisdom), spiritually (in favor with God), and socially (in favor with men). Jesus developed into a perfect, and mature person. His balanced personality made him a teacher who was loved by the people, so that Luke was able to report: “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips” (Lk. 4:22).

Teachers certainly can learn from Jesus that “Leading others to accept the things of God calls for teachers today to have balanced personalities - to be growing mentally, spiritually, and socially.”³ The role as teachers starts with the person that has developed to maturity, or is open to being developed in the various aspects of life. Effective teaching that impacts the lives of the students flows from a mature personality that has been developed in the school of the grace of God.

His Authority as Teacher

After Jesus finished teaching the Sermon on the Mount people “were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the law” (Mt. 7:28-29). The people who listened to the teaching recognized a difference between Jesus, and the teachers of the law. Jesus made an impression on the listeners because his teaching was inspired by God. The Jews could not comprehend that Jesus taught with authority because he had not studied the Scriptures as they did (Jn. 7:15). Jesus told them: “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me” (Jn. 7:16).

What made Jesus an authoritative teacher? Two kinds of authority can be distinguished. One is the derived authority which means that it has been given by others to someone who is elected, or appointed to a position, or role, and exercises authority on the basis of this appointment. This applies to teachers today. Teachers do not appoint themselves to a teaching position; they are called, or appointed by God, and also by the theological institution to teach (the calling will be dealt with in the third section of this chapter). The second kind is the inherent authority which means that authority is based on who the person is, or on the inherent position. This kind of authority belonged to Jesus because of his position as the Son of God. “Jesus had authority as a Teacher - not because someone appointed or elected him to that role, but because of who he is. His authority is inherent in his Person, as the eternal Son of God.”⁴

Teaching with authority in theological education is an important part of the role as teacher. The authority of the teacher is based on God’s Word. “It is not what we say that is authoritative; it is what God says in his written Word. Authoritative teaching lies in what we say *he* says!”⁵ Teachers in theological education today need to have a firm biblical foundation in what they pass on to the students.

His Qualities as Teacher

In his extensive, and profound study on Jesus as teacher, Roy Zuck, who served as professor of Bible exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, provides a summary of the qualities of the life, and personality of Jesus that made him an outstanding teacher:

The world's most masterful Teacher was the world's most popular Teacher! Why? Because he taught with authority, mastery, certainty, humility, consistency, spontaneity, clarity, urgency, variety, quantity, empathy, intimacy, sensitivity, and relevancy.⁶

These qualities characterize the teaching ministry of Jesus as can be seen in the way he taught individuals (the rich young man Mt. 19:16-22), answered questions of religious people (the Sadducees Mt. 22:23-32), groups of people (Lk. 5:3), and the disciples (Mt. 5:1-2).

As theological educators, it is essential to study the qualities that made Jesus an outstanding teacher. What qualities are needed, or expected of a teacher today in a certain context, or study program in order to be effective in teaching? Individual teachers are challenged to reflect on the qualities, and create a personal development plan that makes their role more effective. It also could be an edifying exercise for the faculty to study the qualities of Jesus together, and learn from them for their role as teachers. Academic leaders are instrumental in facilitating a discussion on the qualities of teachers in theological education.

His Impact as Teacher

Jesus certainly left an impression on many people, including on his opponents, through his preaching, teaching, and healing ministry. In this study, the focus is on the impact on the disciples as Jesus prepared them for ministry. What impact as teacher did Jesus have on his disciples? Why was his teaching effective in their lives, so that they became the founding pillars of the church? How much did their responsiveness to the teaching, and training of Jesus contribute to their spiritual, and professional growth? A few areas shall illustrate the lasting impact on those whom Jesus had chosen to carry on with the ministry he had begun.

First of all, the impact on the disciples is related to the fact that Jesus had selected the twelve men to be with him, to be trained by him, and to be sent out to serve him (Mk. 3:13-19). Their calling was the beginning of a journey in the development of their lives. They were willing to follow Jesus, and they committed themselves totally to him. Jesus became their teacher, mentor, and trainer. The two sides of their relationship with Jesus, the calling by Jesus and their commitment, provided the basis for the impact.

Second, the relationship of Jesus with the disciples was not just based on the formal roles as teacher and students. John tells us that Jesus loved his disciples: “having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love” (Jn. 13:1). This love is expressed in the concern for the disciples. He had confidence in their abilities, and enabled them to carry out the ministry (Mt. 10:1). As a teacher, Jesus cared for the disciples and their holistic development, which certainly prepared them well for the time after Jesus had left them.

Third, Jesus made an impact on the lives of the disciples by the way he trained them. Their preparation for ministry took place not in the formal setting of a seminary. Nevertheless, the training they received was the impact of Jesus through his teaching, and their practical involvement in many aspects of ministry. Roy Zuck tells us that “Jesus trained them by example, by verbal instruction by his miracles, by personal association, and by involvement. As a result, they were changed individuals, men who, because they believed him and were committed to him, were transformed by him.”⁷ As a role model, Jesus inspired the disciples so that they, for example, came to him when they saw how he communicated with the Father to ask “Lord, teach us to pray” (Lk. 11:1).

Fourth, the disciples were remarkably open to the teaching and training of Jesus (except Judas). This certainly contributed to the impact that Jesus had as teacher. They were open to be taught, corrected, and challenged by Jesus. The lives of the disciples have been touched and transformed, and therefore they also became leaders that touched the lives of many that started a movement of people coming to faith in Christ. The disciples also taught the believers as they have experienced it when they were with their teacher Jesus. When Peter and John were told that they should not speak, or teach in the name of Jesus they affirmed: “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20 NIV). What a remarkable testimony to what they had received from Jesus while they were with him.

Jesus was an outstanding teacher. He made an impact in his training of the disciples because of his mature personality, his authority as teacher, and his qualities of life. Even though theological educators today cannot be like Jesus, but they can learn from him in order to be effective teachers who impact the lives of the students.

The Role of Paul as Teacher

Besides Jesus, as one of the greatest teachers in history, we have the example of the apostle Paul who was dedicated to God and served in a multi-faceted ministry, as Roy Zuck in his exposition on Paul's teaching ministry describes: "He served God as pioneer missionary, a commissioned apostle, a zealous evangelist, an energetic church planter, a prolific writer, an insightful theologian, a vigorous apologist, a dynamic preacher, a warmhearted pastor, and a stimulating teacher."⁸

Paul had an extensive teaching ministry. He reminded the leaders of the church in Ephesus that he spent much time and energy in teaching the believers. "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:11 NIV). Paul's teaching ministry is also shown clearly in the first letter to the Thessalonians where he describes how he cared for the Christians. For example, he says: "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God" (1 Thess. 2:11). It is true how Roy Zuck describes the teaching ministry: "Teaching requires a heart of concern, comforting and guiding those taught which in turn calls for careful instruction in biblical truths, the "food" needed for spiritual growth."⁹ Paul's personality was unique, and what he accomplished in his ministry is remarkable. His dedication to teaching, and as a teacher can be inspiring for theological educators today. Out of his many qualities, three areas that made him an effective teacher shall be considered.

His Ambition as Teacher

His personal ambition is expressed in the words "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:10). Paul had an excellent theological training under his teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). His profound theological knowledge and understanding can be seen in the way he referred to the Old Testament, and in his interpretation of events in the history of Israel (for example, 1 Cor. 10:1-13). After Christ had revealed himself to Paul (Acts 9:1-19), he made it an ambition to preach Christ (1 Cor. 2:1-5), and to develop his relationship with him.

On the basis of his personal ambition he included in his teaching the value of true knowledge, but also aimed at spiritual growth, and maturity of those who studied with him. Paul longed to see that "Christ is formed" in the believers (Gal. 4:19). Their lives should evidence maturity in their relationship with God, in their relationship with Christians, and those who do not believe in Christ, and in the way, they express their faith in the circumstances of the daily life. For Paul, spiritual maturity was expressed in the ambition to live for Christ (2 Cor. 5:15). To him spiritual development was a matter of "learning" which is related to both content and experience (Rom. 6:17; Eph. 4:20; 2 Tim. 3:14).

Theological educators need to reflect on their personal ambition as teachers. Is the knowledge of Christ, and the relationship with him as important as it was to Paul? The personal ambition is certainly expressed in the teaching and learning objectives. The concern

for academic knowledge must be accompanied by the objective to lead the students to spiritual growth and maturity.

His Qualities as Teacher

Roy Zuck provides an impressive list of Paul's qualities as teacher. The focus clearly is on his character, and only the last quality emphasizes his knowledge and teaching skill as part of his exemplary life as a teacher, which tells us something about his commitment to God, and his genuine interest in people:

The New Testament information on the church's outstanding apostle repeatedly manifests his godly devotion; his God-given authority and confidence; his personal integrity, honesty, and consistency; genuine humility; thoughtful courtesy; compassionate sensitivity to God and others; bold severity against his and God's opponents; unquenching fervency; dauntless tenacity when beset with numerous adversities and difficulties; deep-seated serenity; heartfelt felicity; and comprehensive mastery of doctrinal and ethical subjects.¹⁰

Can Paul function as a role model for teachers today? The qualities of his life are certainly desirable of those who are involved in theological education according to the summary of Roy Zuck:

These twelve characteristics-piety, authority, humility, integrity, courtesy, sensitivity, fervency, tenacity, severity, serenity, felicity, mastery-marked the apostle Paul as a truly outstanding teacher, one who stands as a supreme model for all teachers today.¹¹

What qualities are expected of teachers in theological education today? The academic leader faces the challenge when inviting or hiring faculty to find teachers who have the academic qualification, and the qualities of life as role model for the students. In my experience from the Asian context, I know that students desire a teacher who knows the subject of teaching well, and at the same time is an example who demonstrates through the life the biblical values. Therefore, Paul would have been an excellent teacher in the Asian context.

His Impact as Teacher

Achieving the objectives in teaching can be measured by the outcome in the lives of the students. Paul's role as a teacher shows us how he was used to impact people in his time and beyond. Two areas shall be highlighted where Paul made an impact: he was effective in building the lives of people, and he left a legacy of written documents.

His impact on people. Paul related to diverse audiences in his teaching and preaching ministry. It is remarkable how he adapted to people from different walks of life, or religious backgrounds:

Paul's amazing evangelistic and pedagogical abilities are seen in the varied audiences and individuals he taught. He debated with religious leaders and spoke boldly to political rulers. He talked with an intelligent government administrator, uncultured pagans, well-to-do craftsmen, sophisticated philosophers, prominent women, prisoners, and Roman soldiers. He addressed huge crowds, religiously oriented groups, families, and individuals in private.¹²

An outstanding example of how Paul impacted the life of individuals, is Timothy. Both spent much time together, so that Paul became a mentor, model, and teacher to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:10-17). Paul testifies: “You know all about my teaching, my way of life” (2 Tim. 3:10). He goes on to exhort Timothy: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you have learned” (2 Tim 3:14). Timothy absorbed the teaching and example of Paul, so that he became a church leader who in turn impacted people.

Paul’s teaching intended to focus on multiplication as he reminds Timothy: “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 Tim. 2:2). The principle of multiplication became an important factor in the church, and in the evangelistic ministry. Those who believed in Christ spread the gospel (Acts 13:49; 16:5; 1 Thess. 1:8). It must have been encouraging to Paul that his teaching motivated the learners to pass on what they had been taught.

Another aspect seems to have contributed to the impact on people: the time he spent in different locations. This gave him the opportunity to teach in depth the Word of God, and instruct the believers in the will of God. The time Paul and Barnabas spent in Antioch certainly contributed to the fact that the church became the center of missions because they had an extensive teaching ministry there (Acts 14:28; 15:35; 18:23).

The impact of Paul on people is beyond imagination and comprehension. His commitment to lead people to maturity in faith, and to train individuals for ministry made him an outstanding teacher:

The number of people who heard the gospel from Paul, the thousands who became believers through his ministry, the many groups of Christians who received instruction from him over extended periods of times, and the scores of individuals who worked with him or were associated with him in some other way-these all evidence the remarkably widespread and deep impact of this man whose life was given totally to Christ and his cause.¹³

The example of Paul is a challenge to theological educators today. Like Paul, teachers need to adjust to the audience of the students. Each class is different, and might call for adaptations in the way of presenting the course material, interaction in the classroom, or in the assignments. The role of the teacher is to foster multiplication. This can start with the course assignments to help the students to understand that the papers they write can be used in teaching others. It is obvious that the role of the teacher is very much related to the development of the individual student.

His impact through his writings. Paul’s letters have had an impact on the churches, and the lives of individuals in his time and until today. Through his writings he laid the foundation for the Christian life and for theology. His written legacy had a lasting impact because as a theologian he established biblical principles that were valid for generations to come. Paul responded to questions in the churches, or in the lives of individuals (1 Cor. 7:1). He warned against false teaching, and corrected errors (Col. 2:8,16-19). Paul was concerned about the unity of the church and the Christian life (Eph. 4:1-3). Other examples could be added. Important is the fact that Paul used his writings to teach the Christians in the ways of the Lord. His role as teacher was not limited to the classroom, and to the development of individuals for ministry; it was extended to the Christian community.

The role of teachers in theological education today should also be seen as an opportunity to provide solid biblical foundations for the Christian community. Theological educators are in the best position to teach, and write about contemporary issues, how to live the Christian life in modern society, or how the church deal with heresy or false teaching. The legacy a teacher leaves behind can be of great value.

Role of Teachers – Institutional Considerations

Teachers are at the heart of the seminary, or training program. The responsibility of the academic leader is to create an institutional environment that enables the faculty to be free for their relevant work of teaching. Therefore, it is essential that the academic leader invests much time and energy into the relationship with the teachers, and in faculty development. Two aspects from the institutional point of view need to be considered: the institutional environment contributes to the successful role of the faculty, and the expectations of the faculty concerning their role in the institution.

Institutional Environment for the Faculty

The successful role of the faculty in the institution, and in theological education depends on the integration into the institutional culture. It certainly starts with the selection of teachers that fit into the purpose and mission of the school, and the introduction to the institutional culture. Gordon Smith is right when he says that “integration with the culture, mission, ethos, and values of the school is a profoundly significant indicator of likely success as faculty member.”¹⁴ Academic leaders should adopt the principle that they want to make the faculty feel committed to the institution right from the beginning when they join the teaching staff:

The success of individual faculty members and the strength of a school's faculty long-term depend on advanced planning for the shape and composition of the faculty, initiative in the cultivation and recruitment of able candidates, care in their selection, and active concern for the integration of new faculty into the academic community. The dean's leadership and pastoral care for faculty are critical at each stage of this process.¹⁵

It is essential for the institution to communicate clearly to the teachers the expectations besides the role in teaching and learning. This also includes the part-time teachers. Are the teachers expected to attend chapel and worship times? Are they expected to be part of seminary activities? What is their role as mentor? It is the task of the academic leader to introduce the faculty to what is expected of them.

Academic leaders need to facilitate the work of the faculty, and assist them, so that they succeed in their role as teachers because they are the heart of the school. The students benefit from teachers who are satisfied in their teaching ministry. Jeanne McLean concludes from her research about the relationship between academic leaders and faculty:

Through their teaching, scholarship, and service, faculty carry out the mission, establish the school's reputation, and, through curricular and hiring decisions, determine its future. If the faculty succeed, “the rest of it works.” When chief academic officers facilitate the faculty's essential work, they also serve the students, the seminary, and the church in the process.¹⁶

The institution needs to assist teacher in the career development, and also show appreciation and care. “A smart institution can help faculty navigate the ebb and flow of a teaching career, because teaching is what suffers when we are too busy with other obligations.”¹⁷ This is a call to academic leaders to make it a priority task to attend to faculty, and the holistic development of teachers. It includes a pastoral role that strengthens the role of the faculty, and honors achievement. “An implication of the new and complex demands on our time is that *institutions have to work harder to help faculty feel valued and honored in their vocation as teachers* (italics in the original).”¹⁸ Therefore, the relationship between the academic leader and the faculty impacts the role as teacher and facilitator:

Caring for faculty takes many forms, including knowing them, communicating openly and honestly, involving them in projects by consulting and delegating, dealing with them fairly and with understanding of their difficulties and differences.¹⁹

A powerful tool to develop the role of the faculty, and make teaching and learning more effective is the ongoing assessment of the performance of the teacher in general, and the evaluation of the outcome of a particular course of study. The academic dean can assist the teacher to reflect on the teaching, and also develop an action plan for improvement.

One of the most powerful tools for a faculty developer is cultivating a commitment to reflective practice on the part of faculty members, helping them to adopt a “scholarship of teaching and learning” strategy to assess systematically the effectiveness of their instructional design. Systematic assessment logically follows systematic design, and it is the action that leads to improvement.²⁰

The individual teacher is able to fulfill the expected role in the institution when the academic leader establishes a trusting relationship, cares for the development of the teacher, and creates the institutional environment for faculty to be satisfied in their multifaceted task. The atmosphere at the institution depends very much on the satisfaction of the teacher with their clearly defined role and expectations.

Institutional Expectations of the Faculty

The institutional expectations include both what the faculty expects, and what the institution expects. Looking at the amount of work teachers need to cope with, Gretchen Ziegenhals suggests that faculty might find more time if they would learn to trust the administrators to do their share of the work. She goes on to say something that needs to be considered by the teachers with regard of their attitude towards the administration of the institution:

The faculty preference for group or consensus decision making, while democratic and honoring of diverse opinions, often eats up hours of time and energy. As we educate students for the church's ministries, perhaps doing less, better-by trusting others to do their work-would help us see the myriad ways in which God moves and works in our history. Our vocation as theological teachers need to affect the quantity of what we do.²¹

The effective working relationship between faculty and academic leadership depends on the mutual understanding of their respective roles, and the expectations of each other. The academic leader needs to know the expectation of the faculty.

Faculty expect deans not only to be competent academic administrators and to possess the infinite list of attributes and skills the work entails, but they also expect deans to

know and understand them, to advocate for their interests, to protect them from administrative busy-work, and to focus their attention on important issues informed by broad institutional and theological education perspectives. Within the context of these mutual expectations, deans and faculty in the study identified the characteristics they consider essential to an effective working relationship²²

The institutional expectations certainly vary in different contexts. Often, they include a variety of tasks that demand much time and energy. Is it possible to fulfill adequately all responsibilities? Teachers need to have a disciplined life in order to manage all tasks assigned by the institution.

Faculty are expected to stay current with their guilds, publish, teach, serve on multiple committees, lead worship, be multilingual, provide online courses, deliver PowerPoint lectures, be available to students for counseling and formation, grade effectively, tutor, support students through the transitions and crises of seminary life, and keep the scattered community from falling to pieces.²³

Teachers can be expected to develop personally and professionally. The academic leader can assist the teacher in a self-reflection exercise about their personal and professional development. "Professional development is not exclusively a matter of acquiring job-related competencies and skills (although this is critical, but it also must support activities that foster the growth and renewal of the whole person."²⁴ The academic leader should motivate the teachers to rest, research, and to write.

Role of Teachers – Educational Expectations

Teachers are a gift from God to the church to teach all believers (Eph.4:11). Their teaching is used for spiritual growth in faith, so that the Christians understand the truth, and apply it to their daily lives. The church carries the responsibility of teaching the believers "to obey everything" Jesus had commanded (Mt. 28:19). The task also includes to teach, and to prepare students for ministry in the church, in society, and in the world. The training for ministry has been delegated to the seminary, or study program that has been designed for that purpose. Theological educators are called to an important ministry. Therefore, high expectations are placed on their performance as teachers. The following is an attempt to create a definition to describe an excellent teacher:

An excellent teacher is an educator whose quality of life, teaching skills, ministry experience, and academic knowledge are blended together to be effective in teaching and learning, and in the personal interaction with the students inside and outside the classroom. The personal, spiritual, academic, and professional quality of the person matches the role as teacher, mentor, and facilitator in theological education.

Some institutions might have their specific expectations on the role of teachers according to their context. It could be a valuable exercise for the faculty to write a definition that encapsulates those expectations. The definition could also be known to the students, and serve in the assessment of the faculty.

There are many expectations concerning the role of teachers. Three of them shall be highlighted because they are especially relevant in theological education. Teachers need to be credible. What they teach should flow from their lives. Their professional expertise as teachers builds trust in the students as they explore areas of knowledge for themselves. They know that they can rely on the teacher who will guide them in their studies. And finally, the impact of the teacher shows that the role in teaching and learning has been effective.

The Credibility of Teachers

In theological education credibility belongs to the role of the teacher because the personal walk of life, and the academic teaching in the classroom cannot be separated. From my own experience in academic leadership, I can testify that students observe the life of the teacher whether it conforms to what is being taught. In their assessments, they sometimes express disappointment when teachers do not live up to their own standard. Therefore, it must be expected that teachers are credible because they should be examples of how to integrate into their lives the praxis of faith, and relate it to teaching and learning. This can be a powerful role model for students that they want to follow when they are in ministry.

An outstanding example of how to integrate personal study, practice of faith and teaching is Ezra who “devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). As teacher in Israel he had great influence, and made an impact on the people.

In his book *Knowing God*, James Packer wrote a chapter entitled “The People Who Know Their God”. He points out that it is possible “one can know a great deal about God without knowledge of Him”. This certainly is an important, and challenging statement for theological educators. Is it possible to teach biblical subjects, teach theology, and teach about God without knowing him personally and intimately? He goes on to say something that theological educators need to use for reflection about their own role as teachers of the Word of God:

We read books of theological exposition and apologetics. We dip into Christian history, and study the Christian creed. We learn to find our way around in the Scriptures. Others appreciate our interest in these things, and we find ourselves asked to give our opinion in public on this or that Christian question, to lead study groups, to give papers, to write articles, and generally to accept responsibility, papers, informal if not formal, for acting as teachers and arbiters of orthodoxy in our own Christian circle.²⁵

James Packer continues to use Daniel 11:32 “the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action” (RSV) as the basis for four characteristics of people who know their God. I will just mention them without any comments, but teachers (and of course all Christians) need to reflect on the meaning and implication for their lives, and teaching role: “1) Those who know God have great energy for God. 2) Those who know God have great thoughts of God. 3) Those who know God show great boldness for God. 4) Those who know God have great contentment in God.”²⁶ These certainly are challenging statements. The credibility of the teacher depends on the relationship with God.

Another example that highlights credibility as important part of the role of the teacher comes from Asia. Ken Gnanakan and Sunand Sumithra emphasize the importance of the personal experience of the theologian that relates to what is being taught: “Relevant theology for Asia must come from men and women who have personally experienced the power of Christ and who possess a passion to make this power known.”²⁷ The role of the teacher in theological education is to demonstrate the power of Christ and the Gospel to the students:

Theologisation in Asia has to do with credibility and creativity that will show from the courage of the theologian who is bold enough to release all of the potential of Christ

for our context. But this can only be done when the living power of the Gospel is demonstrated in our lives.²⁸

What has been described as relevant for theologians in Asia is certainly applicable, and true for other parts of the world. Those who teach theology need to demonstrate that they approach God not only on an intellectual level, but they live out what they teach. It is true that “the appropriate approach to God is the doxological approach.”²⁹

The credibility of the teacher contributes to trusted role as educator. It is part of the hidden curriculum in teaching and learning. The impact on the students should not be underestimated. I have listen to many students who testified to teachers, and their exemplary lives. They also benefitted much from the teaching because of the credibility of the teacher.

The Professional Expertise of Teachers

According to Paul, teaching is a gift from God (Rom. 12:7). Some assume that this means that good teachers are born with the gift of teaching. Others maintain that completing a degree in higher theological education automatically makes someone a good teacher. Do teachers still need to develop their teaching skills? It certainly is true that God enables the teacher, and provides his gift of teaching beyond expectations. At the same time, teachers need the expertise of teaching, and develop their skills as Maryellen Weimer points out:

Being a good teacher entails more than a decision to be enthusiastic, organized, clear, stimulating, and knowledgeable. It involves translating those abstract ingredients into tangible behaviors, policies and practices and then assembling from that wide repertoire of possibilities a set of instructional nuts and bolts that fit the requirements of our own style proclivities, the configuration of our content, the learning needs of our students, and the instructional context in which they will occur.³⁰

Effective instruction in teaching and learning fits first of all the person of the teacher, and second the content, and needs of the students. The teacher is challenged to develop the personal capacity in teaching that fits the personality. Teachers can learn from others, but they cannot copy the way others fulfill their role in teaching and learning. Therefore, it needs to be taken into account that

Effective instruction “fits” the individual - it is a suitable, comfortable set of activities, policies, and practices for the teacher involved, but that is not the only relevant “fit.” Effective instruction *fits the configuration of the content, the learning needs of students, and the instructional setting* (Italics in the text).³¹

Lee Wanak asserts that the Holy Spirit makes us teachers, and he also is active in our development as teachers. It is our responsibility to nurture, and develop the gifts. The educator functions as someone who makes the Bible relevant in the contemporary context, as well as applies the text to the personal life. He concludes that

The task of the theological educator is to bridge the ancient text and the contemporary context, ancient pedagogy and modern approaches to academic, spiritual and ministerial formation. The Holy Spirit is our guide in this process (1 Cor. 2:9-16), not only in the relationship of text and context, but also in our personal outworking of being both theologian and educator.³²

Even though when in our time information becomes easily available through the internet the professional expertise of teachers is still important in theological education. Information that is available needs to be processed, and evaluated under the guidance of an expert. The role of the teacher can be compared to a guide who points into the right direction, and assists in sort the pieces of information, so that they fit together. At the same time, teachers share from their own experience and academic knowledge. They know that their role is defined as preparing “God’s people for works of service” (Eph. 4:12). How can teachers remain relevant even after many years of teaching? Maryellen Weimer suggest that

One way to keep your teaching fresh and invigorated across a career is to change always to new things: new textbooks, new strategies, new assignments, new questions. Sometimes you can recycle, bring something back after a break, but you always need to be on the lookout for new ideas, new approaches, and new challenges.³³

Assessment of teaching and learning practices can be a powerful tool to develop the role of the teacher in theological education. Teaching effectiveness includes both the teacher and the learner. We are just concerned with the experience of the teacher. His or her willingness to improve the processes, and practices in areas such as teaching methods, teaching techniques, evaluation of teaching outcomes, or skills, and ability to engage the students in the learning process contributes to the effective role in achieving the learning outcomes. Teachers need to have knowledge of the content they are teaching, pedagogical knowledge about teaching and learning strategies, and curricular knowledge related to teaching the required course of study. Michael Theall and Jennifer Franklin sum up the requirements of the three areas of knowledge:

Curricular knowledge also involves the ability to identify important principles and to translate complex concepts and ideas into understandable and usable form. Curricular knowledge embodies instructional strategic thinking since teachers with curricular knowledge are able to assess student learning and to respond to and remedy issues and problems impeding learning. Assessing teaching involves examining the extent to which a teacher possesses these three kinds of knowledge, and assisting teachers involves helping them to move from being primarily content experts to enhancing the connections between content and effective pedagogy.³⁴

The professional expertise of the teacher that can be expected is related to the development of teaching skills that suit the person of the educator. Good teachers know their subject well, and are able to relate the content to the lives of the students, and to the context in society and in ministry.

The Impact of Teachers

Paul uses the image of the body (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-30) to convey the idea that we do our work, and fulfill our vocations with a high degree of interdependence, as Gordon Smith points out: “We cannot speak of the individual vocation except in the context of the community. All vocations are fulfilled in solidarity with others; each person fulfills an individual vocation in partnership with another.”³⁵ He also is convinced that “Our individual potential is achieved in collaboration and partnership with others, whether it is our potential of personal transformation or the potential of making a difference in the world.”³⁶ The impact of the individual teacher depends on the vocation and the part in the community.

Teachers play an important role in the lives of students. They teach important knowledge; they stimulate quality learning experiences; they challenge students in critical

thinking, so that they are able to integrate knowledge and experience. Good students value teachers that have high ethical and academic standards, and expectations. One day a student told me that he had taken a course with a certain professor who was very demanding in terms of assignments. He had high standards for his own life, and applied these to the students. The student admitted that he decided not to study another course with this professor. After some time of reflection, he came to the conclusion that he should enroll in another course with him. The student told me that he realized that he gained much in studying with this professor even though it was demanding.

The impact on the students also comes from a teacher who is enthusiastic about the subject and material of teaching. I personally realized this when I taught introduction to Greek, and Greek exegesis at the seminary in Bangkok. Naturally, students found it difficult to study the ancient language because of the Grammar which was so different from their own language. To motivate the students, and be enthusiastic about the importance of knowing the language was a challenge, but it was rewarding. The students were eager to learn. I can echo what Maryellen Weimer writes:

Enthusiasm is the component students regularly identify as the most important ingredient of effective instruction. It has such priority for them because it stimulates, motivates, and involves them. The instructor becomes the plug that connects students with the power source. Our enthusiasm energizes them. They come to care because we have shown them how much we care.³⁷

Another role of the teacher is to build the capacity of the student, so that the student discovers God's calling for effective ministry. The teacher entrusts students with knowledge that they pass on to others as we have seen from the example of Paul (2 Tim. 2:2). Teachers are not only lecturers, but they are involved in the lives of the students. Joy Oyco-Bunyi was involved in accreditation visits to many seminaries. From her experience in meeting students she was encourage that many testified to the value of the faculty in their lives:

Student after student interviewed during accreditation expressed the impact of faculty on their lives. Because of the faculty's singular impact on theological education, schools cannot be lax in faculty recruitment and development. Investing in the personal and professional growth of faculty is worth every effort.³⁸

The impact of the faculty is not limited to classroom teaching. Teachers should make a contribution in the area, or the field of expertise, related to theology, or to contemporary issues. As theological educators, their voice will be heard, and they can impact the church and society. This fact has been highlighted earlier when looking at the teaching ministry of Paul.

Teachers have unique opportunities to impact lives that are the future leaders and teachers of the church. Therefore, to be a theological educator is a high calling with challenging expectations. Teachers need to remember that "whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17).

Conclusion

Teachers play an important role in theological education, related to the institution, and the expectations of the students. They follow the example of Jesus and Paul, and learn from them how to be effective in building people, so that they can have a fruitful ministry. I want to conclude with the words of Stave Hardy, and his description of excellent teachers:

Good teachers are the greatest resource that any school or training program has. We are blessed if we have teachers who know how to pastorally care for and equip students so that they will be ready to take on the ministries to which God has called them. We need those who know their subject matter well and who model what they know. We also want them to know the techniques of teaching so that they can creatively help their students explore the real world, as well as the world of ideas and books.³⁹

Reflection and Action Points

1. Faculty should study together the life of Jesus and Paul as teachers. What made their teaching ministry effective? What are the lessons learned for the personal development as teacher?
2. Discuss the following statement among the faculty: "The school is only as strong as its faculty."⁴⁰ Do we agree? Why? Do we disagree? Why?
3. How conducive is the environment of the institution to the effectiveness of the role of the faculty? What adjustments would be needed? What are the expectations of the faculty?
4. In what ways can the academic leader support the role of the faculty in your institution? Develop an action plan that can be implemented realistically.
5. How can the teachers support each other in fulfilling their multiple tasks in teaching and learning? The discussion could take place in a workshop organized by the academic leader.

¹ Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Paul taught* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1998), 39.

² Roy B. Zuck, *Teaching as Jesus taught* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1995), 29.

³ Zuck, *Teaching 1995*, 63.

⁴ Zuck, *Teaching 1995*, 45.

⁵ Zuck, *Teaching 1995*, 57.

⁶ Zuck, *Teaching 1995*, 90.

⁷ Zuck, *Teaching 1995*, 121.

⁸ Zuck, *Teaching 1998*, 11.

⁹ Zuck, *Teaching 1998*, 34.

¹⁰ Zuck, *Teaching 1998*, 61.

¹¹ Zuck, *Teaching 1998*, 108.

¹² Zuck, *Zuck Teaching 1998*, 128.

¹³ Zuck, *Zuck Teaching 1998*, 141.

¹⁴ Gordon T. Smith, "Attending to the Collective Vocation," in *The Scope of our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, ed. L. G. Jones and Stephanie Paulsell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 241.

¹⁵ Jeanne P. McLean, *Leading from the Center: The Emerging Role of the Chief Academic Officer, in Theological Schools, Scholars Press Studies in Theological Education* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 126.

¹⁶ McLean, *Leading from the Center*, 109.

¹⁷ Gretchen E. Ziegenhals, "Faculty Life and Seminary Culture: It's About Time and Money," in *Practical Wisdom: On Theological Teaching and Learning*, ed. Malcolm L. Warford (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2004), 65.

¹⁸ Ziegenhals in Warford, 65.

¹⁹ McLean, *Leading from the Center*, 123.

²⁰ Theall, Michael and Jennifer L. Franklin, "Assessing Teaching Practices and Effectiveness for Formative Purposes," in *A Guide to Faculty Development*, 2nd ed., ed. Gillespie, Kay Herr, Douglas L. Robertson, *The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 158.

²¹ Ziegenhals in Warford, 63.

²² McLean, *Leading from the center*, 113.

-
- ²³ Ziegenhals in Warford, 53.
- ²⁴ McLean, *Leading from the center*, 223.
- ²⁵ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 21.
- ²⁶ Packer, *Knowing God*, 23–26.
- ²⁷ Gnanakan, Ken and Sunand Sumithra, “Theology, Theologisation and the Theologian,” in *Biblical Theology in Asia*, ed. Ken Gnanakan (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1995), 45.
- ²⁸ Gnanakan, Ken and Sunand Sumithra in Gnanakan, 45.
- ²⁹ Gnanakan, Ken and Sunand Sumithra in Gnanakan, 41.
- ³⁰ Maryellen Weimer, *Improving your Classroom Teaching*, vol. 1 of *Survival Skills for Scholars* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993), 16.
- ³¹ Weimer, *Improving your Classroom Teaching*, 13.
- ³² Lee C. Wanak, “Theological Education and the Role of Teachers in the Twenty-first Century: A Look at the Asia Pacific Region,” in *Educating for Tomorrow: Theological Leadership for the Asian Context*, ed. Manfred W. Kohl and A. N. L. Senanayake (Bangalore, India, Indianapolis: SAIACS Press; Overseas Council International, 2002), 171.
- ³³ Weimer, *Improving your Classroom Teaching*, 27.
- ³⁴ Theall, Michael and Jennifer L. Franklin in Gillespie, Kay Herr, Douglas L. Robertson, 155.
- ³⁵ Smith in Jones and Paulsell, 241–42.
- ³⁶ Smith in Jones and Paulsell, 242.
- ³⁷ Weimer, *Improving your Classroom Teaching*, 23.
- ³⁸ Joy Oyco-Bunyi, *Beyond Accreditation: Value Commitments and Asian Seminaries* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 2001), 79.
- ³⁹ Steven A. Hardy, *Excellence in Theological Education: Effective Training for Church Leaders* (Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Edenvale, South Africa: The Publishing Unit, Lanka Bible College and Seminary; Distributed by SIM, 2007), 183.
- ⁴⁰ Oyco-Bunyi, *Beyond accreditation*, 79.

Resources for Further Studies

- Gnanakan, Ken and Sunand Sumithra. “Theology, Theologization and the Theologian.” In *Biblical Theology in Asia*, edited by Ken Gnanakan, 39–46. Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1995.
- Hardy, Steven A. *Excellence in Theological Education: Effective Training for Church Leaders*. Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Edenvale, South Africa: The Publishing Unit, Lanka Bible College and Seminary; Distributed by SIM, 2007.
- McLean, Jeanne P. *Leading from the Center: The Emerging Role of the Chief Academic Officer in Theological Schools*. Scholars Press Studies in Theological Education. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999.
- Oyco-Bunyi, Joy. *Beyond Accreditation: Value Commitments and Asian Seminaries*. Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 2001.
- Smith, Gordon T. “Attending to the Collective Vocation.” In *The Scope of Our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher*, edited by L. G. Jones and Stephanie Paulsell, 240–61. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Wanak, Lee C. “Theological Education and the Role of Teachers in the Twenty-first Century: A Look at the Asia Pacific Region.” In *Educating for Tomorrow: Theological Leadership for the Asian Context*, edited by Manfred W. Kohl and A. N. L. Senanayake, 160–80. Bangalore, India, Indianapolis, IN: SAIACS Press; Overseas Council International, 2002.
- Warford, Malcolm L., ed. *Practical Wisdom: On Theological Teaching and Learning*. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2004.

Weimer, Maryellen. *Improving your Classroom Teaching*. Vol. 1 of *Survival Skills for Scholars*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993.

Ziegenhals, Gretchen E. "Faculty Life and Seminary Culture: It's About Time and Money." In *Practical Wisdom: On Theological Teaching and Learning*, edited by Malcolm L. Warford, 49–66. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2004.

Zuck, Roy B. *Teaching as Jesus Taught*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1995.

———. *Teaching as Paul Taught*. Grand Rapids MI: Baker Books, 1998.