Theses/dissertations - PhD(Education)

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Binsen Samuel Sidjabat (2017)

Adult religious education through devotional books in Indonesia: An investigation of Andar Ismail’s Selamat series and its significance for theological education

This research examines the works and thought of Andar Ismail, Indonesian Presbyterian pastor and Emeritus Professor of Christian Education, specifically in his 27-volume Selamat Series of devotional books. This dissertation describes the teaching contents of the books, and then identifies Andar Ismail’s understanding of the reason, purpose, curriculum and learning strategy for effective adult religious education. It shows that, informed by the Bible and by the psychology and sociology of adults, he considers adult religious education in the church as a fundamental need as it guides adults towards experiencing God’s shalom (selamat), living a Christ-centred life and being motivated and competent in understanding the Bible. Based on his understanding of adults’ roles and tasks in family, church, society and market place and their need to grow spiritually, Andar Ismail has designed creative learning materials by integrating curriculum construction theory, the Bible, theology, knowledge, a descriptive teaching approach and journalistic principles. Finally, this research explores the extent to which Andar Ismail’s model, thought and work may have significance for theological education in Indonesia.

Supervisors: Edward Sands and Allan Harkness.

If you would like to read a copy of the dissertation please contact Samuel directly: samsidjabat@gmail.com. The dissertation is available in both Bahasa Indonesia and English.

Casey Ng Kong Chiew (2015)
Contextualising theological education: An emic study of practical contextualisation of theological education in Singapore

Contextualising theological education has been a popular buzzword since the 1980s. However, little research has been done to evaluate the success of contextualising theological education in Singapore. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between the espoused understanding of selected theological institutions and their practice in practical contextualisation of theological education.

The theory of action framework, as developed by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, was employed in this research to critically analyse the practice of contextualising theological education in Singapore. In theory of action, finding congruence between espoused theories and theories-in-use is essential for effective practice. In this research, espoused theories of 47 participants from four theological institutions were gathered and analysed against the theories-in-use implied by their actions, and triangulated by data gathered from interviews with a focus group composed of eight other theological educators from different theological institutions. A comparative thematic analysis reveals varying levels of congruence and dissonance between espoused theories and theories-in-use in 12 areas of practical contextualisation in theological education (grouped under five broad dimensions - structural, sociological, historical-cultural, pedagogical, and missional). Consequently, four recommendations are presented to bring congruence to the dissonances so as to contextualise theological education more effectively in Singapore. The findings of this research can contribute towards helping theological institutions to re-examine themselves and address the gap between their espoused theories and theories-in-use so that significant benefits will accrue in the training of Christian leaders.

Supervisors: Graham Cheesman and Allan Harkness

If you would like to read a copy of the dissertation, please contact Casey directly: hi2casey@gmail.com.

Soh Hui Leng Davina (2015)

The motif of hospitality in theological education: A critical appraisal with implications for application in theological education

Taking an interdisciplinary conceptual approach, this dissertation establishes the viability of hospitality as a practice in theological education for teachers to create a hospitable
teaching-learning environment for the holistic formation of students. It accomplishes this by examining how hospitality has been proposed by educators to address the perennial ills and challenges in Christian higher education, theological education, and higher education. Its interpretation of the biblical metaphor of hospitality then provides the conceptual framework to approach the application of hospitality by teachers in theological institutions seeking to form their students holistically. This research uses the cluster concept to define hospitality and identifies the constitutive elements of hospitality as inclusion, presence, care, and reciprocity. It proposes ways theological educators can practise at least one, if not more, of the constitutive elements to create an effective environment for the holistic formation of students.

Supervisors: Graham Cheesman and Allan Harkness

If you would like to read a copy of the dissertation, please contact Davina directly: davinasoh@gmail.com.

Alex Tang Tuck Hon (2012)

*Till we are fully formed: A conceptual investigation of a Christian spiritual formation paradigm in the English-speaking Presbyterian churches in Malaysia*

This study examined the current spiritual formation approaches in the English-speaking Presbyterian churches in Malaysia. A conceptual inquiry was conducted to assess the appropriateness of these approaches. These spiritual formation approaches were found to be inappropriate for holistic spiritual formation in these churches. A more holistic approach to Christian spiritual formation (CSF) which is comprised of the formative strands of person-in-formation, persons-in-community formation, and persons-in-mission formation in a CSF paradigm was proposed. In this approach CSF was defined as the intentional and ongoing process of inner transformation to become like Jesus Christ, become a people of God, and be God's agents for his redemptive purposes. This dissertation recognised that the ontological, epistemological, and pedagogical foundations of CSF are restoration of the imago Dei and the making of shalom.

Supervisors: Jennifer Turner and Allan Harkness
Rosalind Yeet-Wah Lim (2009)


Historically, the goal of childhood faith formation in Baptist congregations has been to nurture children to become regenerate believers, persons in community, and persons in ministry and witness. However, empirical observation and field survey showed that Malaysian Baptist English-Speaking (MBE) congregations are not aware of this faith formation goal for their children, and existing formation practices reveal inconsistencies in approaches and styles. Furthermore, most MBE congregations view faith formation of children more of a parental responsibility than a co-nurturing process with parents and congregation working together. This dissertation proposes that the Vygotskian sociocultural approach is appropriate for MBE congregations to recover the original goal for faith formation of their children in a way which is biblical, contextually meaningful, and consistent with the Baptist confessions, as the formation of their children's attitudes, beliefs, and personalities is influenced by knowledge, sociocultural variables, and personal meaning making.

Supervisors: Cynthia Dixon and Allan Harkness