

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE & FRUITFUL NONFORMAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

1. Preamble

In November 2021, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) began promoting a dialogue between formal and nonformal theological education. The aim was to build understanding and partnership to serve churches more effectively. In the course of the dialogue, issues of quality assurance were raised. What could quality assurance look like for the great variety of nonformal theological education programs? ICETE scheduled a track to explore this question at an in-person working consultation in Ephesus, Turkey from November 15 – 18, 2022, *Relevant Quality Assurance by and for Nonformal Theological Education*.

The purpose of the Track was two-fold:

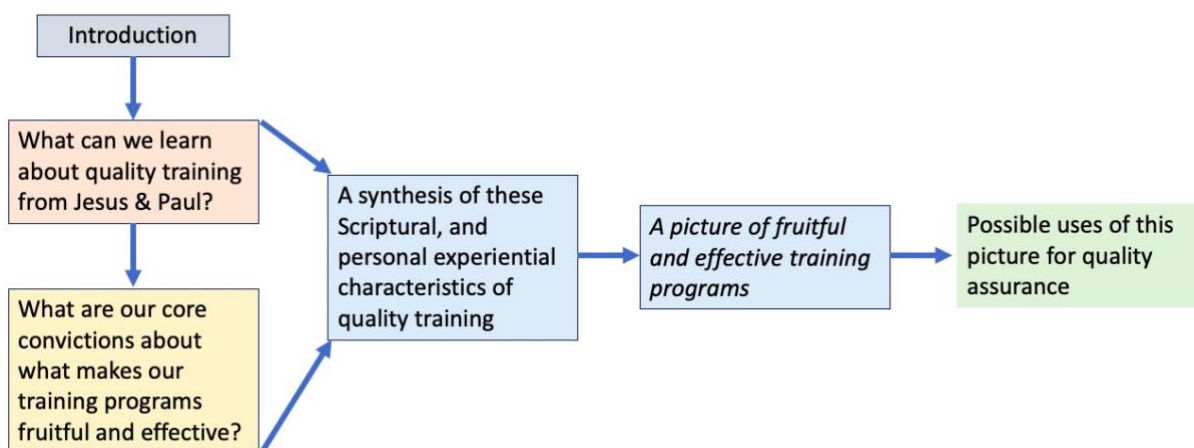
- to explore and describe the characteristics of effective and fruitful NFTE programs seeking to strengthen and accompany the church in its mission.
- to use these characteristics to generate possible processes of quality assurance for greater program effectiveness and accountability.

2. Process

The track process was prayerful and participative.

Table groups first wrote down the marks of quality training seen in the ministries of Jesus and Paul, and then shared their convictions about what was important for quality training in their own programs.

These insights were brought together to give an initial description of fruitful and effective training programs. That initial draft was discussed and revised by the track participants as a whole. After the Consultation, the track planning team continued work on the draft, and a further revision sent to the track participants for their comments.



3. Possibilities

This set of characteristics is offered for possible use as:

- a self-evaluation tool for an individual program to identify strengths and areas for growth and improvement
- the basis for a peer review process by a group of similar programs
- a tool that may be adapted and customized to serve specific programs in their contexts
- a selection tool for churches as they consider the services of a range of nonformal programs
- a set of guiding principles for new programs in development

Other uses may be found.

4. Product

Scripture passages given are not intended as proof-texts but rather as relevant passages for further biblical reflection and application. Many other Scripture passages could be added!

Characteristics of Fruitful and Effective Nonformal Theological Education Programs

1. Their programs are Christ-centered and gospel-centered. Above all, they seek to build learners' union with Christ and foster whole-life discipleship following Him as Lord. Their trainings therefore lead to whole-life transformation, not simply growth in knowledge. (*Romans 1.1-4; 1 Corinthians 2.2, 15.1-8; John 15.1-8; Mark 8.34-38; Luke 14.33; 1 Corinthians 8.1-2*)
2. They have a clear biblical vision and mission. They have healthy governance structures keeping them faithful first to Scripture and their vision and mission, then accountable to the churches they serve, as those churches serve the mission of God, to the wider church, and also to other stakeholders. (*Proverbs 15.22; 1 Corinthians 10.12, 11.31, 2 Corinthians 13.5; Philippians 1.9-11; Hebrews 4.12-13*)
3. They build vision and capacity in the churches and learners they serve to develop and run their own trainings, leading to multiplication. They also build vision and capacity in the learners they serve to keep growing after finishing their training. (*Ephesians 4.11-16, 2 Timothy 2.2*).
4. They serve from a place of abiding in Christ. They depend on their heavenly Father through prayer, follow Jesus as Lord and rely on the power of the Spirit in all they do. (*John 15.1-8; Matthew 6.8-13, 7.7; Luke 6.46; Colossians 2.6-7; Ephesians 5.18 and many others*)
5. Their training content and their methodology are both thoroughly biblical. They engage deeply with, and apply, learnings from Scripture, especially the training methods of Jesus and Paul. (*Mark 3.14-15; 2 Timothy 2.2; 2 Timothy 3.10-17*)
6. Recognizing the Church as the bride of Christ, they design, run and evaluate their training in partnership with the churches they serve. (*Ephesians 1.22; 4.11-16, 5.29*). Their training intentionally connects closely with the spiritual life, ministry, relationships and experiences of the local churches (*Acts 2:42-47; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8*). They have a clear path for identifying appropriate learners, again in close connection with the life of the churches. (*Luke 6:12-13; Acts 16:1-3*)
7. They recognise that most whole-life transformation takes place not in the classroom but informally in day-to-day living, so their programs are designed to connect and interact with their learners' ongoing life and relationships. (*Romans 12.1-2, 2 Corinthians 3.18*)
8. They care for their leaders, trainers, facilitators, volunteers and all who touch the lives of their learners. They make sure their personnel are well-equipped and help them to grow in their roles. These personnel live authentic lives as disciples of Jesus and are models of Christian maturity for learners. (*Philippians 3.17, 1 Corinthians 11.1, 2 Timothy 3.10-17, Hebrews 13.7*)

9. They build learners in community. They obey Jesus's new commandment and build loving relationships between learners and learners, between learners and trainers, and between learners and their church communities, that are mutually transformative. (*John 13.34-35*)
10. Their training is accessible for those they aim to serve in terms of delivery methodology, content, cost, location, timing, life circumstances, technology needed and educational level. (*1 Corinthians 3.2*)
11. Their learning resources are contextually relevant. They respond to the questions and real needs of their learners. (*As Paul in 1 Corinthians 6.12, 13; 7.1; 8.1*) Their training design and delivery are culturally appropriate for the churches served and the communities in their context, while faithful to the challenges Scripture brings to the context. (*As Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.17*)
12. They build rigorous and relational whole-life assessment into their programs' designs. They can show that their learners actually demonstrate the whole-life transformation they plan for. (*Matthew 7.16-20; James 2.18-20; 1 John 2.3-6*)
13. They have ongoing evaluation of their training design, the training itself, and the outcomes and impact of the training. Evaluation involves their learners, churches, donors and other groups invested in their work. In this way, they keep learning and serve more fruitfully and effectively. (*Matthew 7.16-20; Mark 6.30*)
14. They have the organisational capacity and financial sustainability they need to maintain their work. (*Luke 14.28-30*)

6. Prospect

This picture of fruitful and effective nonformal theological education programs is the product of one group of people – even though this was a diverse group with representation from different regions. We welcome your comment and feedback!

Please send any comments to: increasegensec@gmail.com

Appendix: People involved in the November 2022 ICETE Track

The track planning team responsible for planning the process:

Graham Aylett, General Secretary, *Increase Association* increasegensec@gmail.com
Elesinah Chauke, Director, *Stepping up to Her Place*
Ashish Chrispal, Senior Advisor, *United World Mission – Overseas Council*.
Paul Hemming, Associate Project Director, *Re-Forma*
Anneta Vysotskaya, General Director, *ORTA*
Malcolm Webber, Executive Director, *LeaderSource*

Track Participants:

Alan Perdomo *Seminario Bíblico Centroamericano de Honduras*
Anneta Vysotskaya *Increase Association; New Zealand, Russia and Central Asia*
Babu Abraham *Operation Agape, India*
Brendan Roach *Axx Global, Australia*
Bryan Wallace *Regent College of the Caribbean CETA Executive Member Jamaica*
Douglas Boisvert *TRI-M (Mobile Modular Ministry) United States*
Elesinah Chauke *Stepping Up to Her Place, South Africa*
Ella Rodgers *Ambassador of Grace Global Outreach Ministries, Inc United States*
Ernest Clark *United World Mission United States*
Errol Joseph *Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association Trinidad & Tobago*
Evans Katanga *Church of the Nazarene Ghana*

Gul Mahak Younis Theological Educators' Forum/ Open Theological Seminary Pakistan
Ingeborg te Loo IBTS Netherlands
Jack Messarra United World Mission United States
Jason Richard Tan RREACH-GProCommission Philippines
Jim Moore Association of Theological Schools United States
Joshua Lorin Oriental Theological Seminary India
Ken MacGillivray Partnership of Pastors International United States
Kioko Mwangangi Africa Inland Church Kenya
Lisa Beatty Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE) United States
Larry Nees BEE World United States
Malcolm Webber LeaderSource United States
Matta Marcio AETAL Brazil
Paul Hemming Re-Forma South Africa
Ralph Enlow ICETE United States
Rick Weymouth ATA / PTEE / Increase New Zealand
SooiLing Tan AGST Alliance Malaysia
Stephen Kemp Antioch School of Church Planting and Leadership Development US
Tamiko Riley Ambassador of Grace Global Outreach Ministries, Inc United States
Theo Faber EMIT South Africa