TOWARD DEVELOPING A BIBLICALLY SOUND, SPIRITUALLY FORMATIVE, CONTEXTUALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM FOR THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS IN MYANMAR

BY

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PHD IN TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the spiritual formation practices in two selected theological schools (TSTS) in Yangon, Myanmar. It seeks to understand the spirituality of the students and to propose a curriculum that is a Biblically sound, contextually appropriate and spiritually formative for the theological school students in Myanmar. The ultimate goal of theological school students is to develop a Christ-like character by loving God and loving others.

The descriptive study used a mixed-methods research approach involving survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Based on the transformational learning theory of Jack Mezirow and the experiential learning theory of David A. Kolb, the study examined the spirituality of the students in TSTS. The Christian Spiritual Participation Profile (CSPP), developed by Jane O. Thayer, was utilized to examine the spiritual growth of the students. The profile includes fifty survey questions under ten spiritual discipline categories. The interview questions were developed by the researcher based on the research questions.

The statistical analysis yielded the following conclusions in relation to the null hypotheses. The first null hypothesis (“There are no significant differences between men and women for spiritual practices”) is accepted. Therefore, there were no significant differences when the participants were grouped according to gender. The second null hypothesis (“There are no significant differences in spiritual practices by the number of years of faith”) is rejected. There are three areas of spiritual practices that showed significant differences. Older Christians are more practiced in terms of prayer, repentance, and worship than newer Christians. The third null hypothesis (“There are no
significant differences in practice across the ten areas of spiritual practices”) is rejected because prayer, repentance, worship was used more among the ten spiritual practices. Stewardship, evangelism, and meditation were used less among the ten spiritual practices. The fourth null hypothesis (“There is no significant difference between participants from the two different theological schools”) is rejected. There were significant differences in four areas of spiritual practice between the two schools. Theological School A (TSA) used prayer, meditation, Bible reading and study less frequently than Theological School B (TSB). TSA showed more frequent use of service than the TSB.

The qualitative data shared the most used spiritual formation practices in the two selected schools and their effectiveness. The interview data demonstrated that the spiritual formation course contributed to the spiritual life and vitality of the students by providing understanding and meaning of spiritual practices. Moreover, the spiritual emphasis week helped them to become stronger in their spiritual lives through the solid and powerful messages preached by the speakers. The interview responses pointed out the most helpful practices for spiritual formation of the students in TSTS as Bible reading and study, prayer, fellowship, worship, discipleship, fasting, examen of conscience, and service.

Further study needs to be done in three areas: developing a Christian Spiritual Participation Profile in the context of Myanmar Christian churches; a review and comparison of the spiritual formation curriculum of theological schools of different faith traditions in Yangon; and a study on how to help students with different learning styles grow through their spiritual formation classes of theological schools in Yangon.
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v
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNATURE PAGE</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPYRIGHT STATEMENT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMIC INTEGRITY COMMITMENT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYMS</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND .......... 1

- Introduction ........................................................................ 1
- Background of the Problem ............................................. 4
- History and Challenges of Christianity in Myanmar .......... 8
- Statement of the Problem ............................................... 11
- Purpose of the Study ................................................... 12
- Research Questions ..................................................... 12
- Statement of Hypothesis ................................................ 13
- Theoretical Framework .................................................. 14
- Conceptual Framework ................................................... 18
- Brief Description of the Research Design ...................... 19
- Significance of the Study ............................................. 19
- Assumptions ...................................................................... 20
Definition of Terms................................................................. 20
Scope and Delimitations of the Study................................. 21
Overview of the Dissertation ........................................... 22

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Organization of the Chapter.................................................. 23

Historical Background .......................................................... 23
Spirituality and Animism in the Context of Myanmar ........ 23
Buddhist Spirituality .............................................................. 26
Buddhist Worldviews and Christian Spiritual Formation .... 30
Christian Spirituality .............................................................. 34
Comparison of Spiritual Practices and Values in Buddhism and Christianity ......................................................... 40
The Nature and Impact of Theological School Graduates .... 44
Need for Reconstruction of the Spiritual Formation 
Curriculum ............................................................................. 46

Review of Literature Related to the Research Topic 
and Methodology ................................................................. 47

Literature on Spirituality ......................................................... 47
Biblical Theology of Spirituality and Spiritual Formation .... 48
Various Approaches on Spiritual Formation ......................... 60
Buddhist and Christian Spiritual Practices Compared ....... 71
Spiritual Practices in Theological Schools ............................ 73
The Transformative Learning of Jack Mezirow ................. 78
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Overview .................................................................................................................. 86
Research Methodology ............................................................................................ 86
Research Design and Instruments ......................................................................... 89
Selection of Subjects Dealing with Sample Population .................................. 90
Development of Instruments ................................................................................. 92
Pilot Studies ............................................................................................................. 95
Data Collection and Recording Procedures ......................................................... 96
Data Processing and Analysis ................................................................................. 97
Summary .................................................................................................................. 99

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

OF DATA

Pilot Test .................................................................................................................. 101
Document Review .................................................................................................... 101
Quantitative Data (Survey) .................................................................................. 106
Qualitative Data (Interview) .................................................................................. 127

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary .................................................................................................................. 170
Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 175
Recommendations ................................................................................................... 183
APPENDICES .................................................................................................................. 184

A. Spiritual Disciplines and Desires ................................................................. 184
B. Questionnaire (For Students)............................................................... 188
C. Interview Questions.................................................................................. 193
D. Document Review Checklist............................................................... 194
E. Letter to the Principal of Theological School X for Pilot Studies ................................................................. 195
F. Questionnaire (Burmese version) ............................................................. 196
G. Interview Question (Burmese version) .................................................... 211
H. Letter to the Principal of Theological School A .............................. 213
I. Letter to the Principal of Theological School B .............................. 214
J. Letter from the Program Director of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary to Theological School A ......................... 215
K. Letter from the Program Director of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary to Theological School B ......................... 216
L. Informed Consent Letter for the Interview Session with Current Students, Graduates, and Faculty Members ............... 217
M. Code for Determining Scales of Spiritual Practices ......................... 218

REFERENCE LIST ............................................................................................................ 220
CURRICULUM VITAE ....................................................................................................... 231
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Mezirow’s Theory of Transformational Learning........................................ 14
Figure 2: Kolb’s Model of Learning.................................................................................. 15
Figure 3: Theoretical Framework of this Study Based on Jack Mezirow, David
   A. Kolb, and O. Jane Thayer....................................................................................... 17
Figure 4: Conceptual Framework .................................................................................... 18
Figure 5: Means for the Spiritual Practices on the Christian Spiritual Participation
   Profile (n = 79)........................................................................................................... 119
Figure 6: Means for the Spiritual Practices on the Christian Spiritual Participation
   Profile by School (n = 79).......................................................................................... 129
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Gender of the Participants ................................................................. 107
Table 2 Age Ranges of the Participants ............................................................. 107
Table 3: Years as Christians of the Participants ............................................... 108
Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for the Spiritual Practices on the
Christian Spiritual Participation Profile by Gender (n = 79) ......................... 109
Table 5: Means and Standard Deviations for the Spiritual Practices on the
Christian Spiritual Participation Profile by Years of Christian (n = 79) .. 110
Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations for the Items of the Christian Spiritual
Participation Profile (n = 79) ................................................................. 119
Table 7: Assessment Report Form Based on the Four Scales of Spiritual
Practices ................................................................. 123
Table 8: Means and Standard Deviations for the Spiritual Practices on the
Christian Spiritual Participation Profile by School (n = 79) ...................... 124
Table 9: Themes of the Spiritual Practices in Qualitative Data ...................... 129
Table 10: The Matrix of Spiritual Practices in the TSTS and the Suggested Spiritual
Formation Curriculum ................................................................. 176
## ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology</td>
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<td>Theological School A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSB</td>
<td>Theological School B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSTS</td>
<td>Two Selected Theological Schools</td>
</tr>
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