

ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

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Newsletter - March 2014

How We Are Adapting Our Curriculum

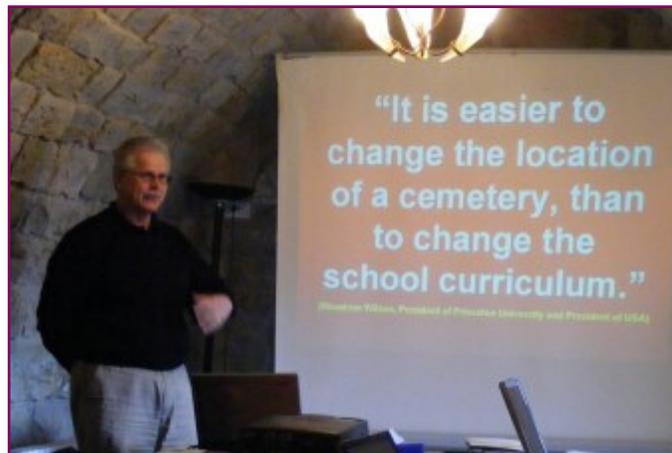
In the following article, [Perry Shaw](#), Professor of Christian Education at ABTS, shares about the adaptation of our curriculum in response to the educational needs of our students who come from different Arab countries and from diverse ministries, each with a unique vision for how to serve God in the future. In 2008, Perry led the efforts for the revision of our curriculum.

Despite our limited capacity, we are seeking to be responsive in the educational services we deliver to our students. As we equip our students with the right tools they need for their ministry, we are working towards equipping a strong church that will serve its community and the Kingdom. Following are the main steps we have taken over the past year as a response to what we are seeing in our current students as we walk them until they graduate.

Strengthening the integrative modules.

One of the greatest strengths of our curriculum is the integrated structure of our modules. For the second-third year

core cycle integrative modules we look at a theme through four lenses – biblical-theological, historical-theological, contemporary-contextual, and personal-ministerial. However, we have found that the actual integration is not taking place to the degree we hoped. In seeking to promote greater integration, we have taken substantive steps in the two most recent modules.



Perry Shaw presenting to ABTS faculty and leadership on curriculum revision, 2008

First, in the “Empowering Leadership” module we shifted from individual final projects into a group problem-based learning (PBL) approach. Students worked in teams in the process of developing an extended case study from their own experience, with theological

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reflection through the four core lenses. In addition, students were asked to develop integrative principles – principles that are seen equally through the lenses – that could be applied in quality reflective practice. In facilitating this process, the project workshop involved three faculty members (instead of one, as has been previous practice) working with the teams to ensure that quality integration was taking place. The approach was so successful that we are planning to use a comparable approach elsewhere in the integrative modules.

Second, in the “Missional Church” module, the

four-member development team met five times prior to the start to talk through the structure of the module, ensuring that all knew where their piece fitted into the overall purpose. The faculty member responsible for the final project met with students early in the Module to ensure that they also knew how the pieces integrated.

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[Continue reading this article on our website to know how we moved away from specialist tracks and are seeking to avoid the educational gap post-graduation.](#)

Conference: Research-Based Curriculum Revision

In February 2014, presidents and academic deans of ten seminaries were invited to take part in a conference at ABTS on “Research-based Curriculum Revision”. This conference was organized by [Overseas Council](#), [Overseas Council Australia](#), and ABTS. The invited seminaries came from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Colombia, and Argentina.



Riad Kassis, ICETE director (on the right), facilitating a panel of seminary representatives from Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, Ukraine and Columbia

ABTS Mission: *to serve the Church in our region as it realizes its Biblical mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord by offering specialized learning resources and equipping faithful men and women for effective service.*

The aim of the conference was to discuss the basis of curriculum reconceptualization based on a missional-ecclesial vision of theological education. Principles and tools for assessment were also reviewed. Each of the seminaries shared its own journey of curriculum revision and related challenges. The conference ended by brainstorming strategies for implementing curricular revisions based on realistic evaluation



Conference participants

and assessment, and each seminary left with a specific action plan that will help move the process forward. The Overseas Council Network is committed to walking this journey alongside the seminaries, providing advice and consultation as needed.

ABTS had its own journey of curriculum revision that started a number of years ago. The implementation of the revised curriculum started in 2009, with the first cohort of the three-year program graduating in June 2012. We asked Perry Shaw, ABTS Associate Academic Dean and the chief architect of this new curriculum, why ABTS went through all this hard work and implement changes that very few seminaries have attempted before. He answered by giving us his personal motivation for this: “I had become disillusioned with theological education. I have seen way too often students passionate about the Church entering seminaries, and leaving passionate about academia without much interest in serving the Church”. Something had to be done. Perry has documented the ABTS story in his article “[Integrated Theological Education: A Practical Model](#)”.

During the conference, Elie Haddad, ABTS President, commented on the factors that lead to success in such a major undertaking: “This curricular revision was a collective journey. The curriculum was not designed by one person or a small group of people sitting behind a closed door...”

[Continue reading this article on our website.](#)

Thanksgiving | We thank the Lord for two new members who joined the ABTS family in the past weeks: a new born baby girl to our staff members Joyce Saddi and Elias Ghazal, and a new born baby boy to a Moroccan family studying at ABTS. We have also recruited an academic coordinator, Sisil al-Agha, to replace Patricia Hazim, who is becoming a full-time student at ABTS.