# A Phased-Hybrid Training Approach for Frontier Missionaries

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## Abstract

Many missionaries go to the field inadequately prepared for the challenges they will face, resulting in high missionary attrition rates. This article describes a new approach for making integral ministry training accessible to more missionaries, especially those from the majority world. The article builds on modern missionary training approaches such as adult learning principles, reduction of cultural bias in training, hub-based phased training, and online e-learning. It then proposes a competency-based, phased, and hybrid e-learning approach to curriculum design. The approach can be used to make practical and affordable training accessible to more missionaries worldwide. The article briefly discusses a practical implementation of the curricular approach and the evaluation thereof. Finally, it calls for collaboration between mission organizations for the further development, implementation, and deployment of such training.

# 1. Introduction

Research has shown that missionary training reduces preventable missionary attrition rates. Mission organizations with higher requirements for missiological training exhibit lower rates of preventable attrition. Research also found that pre-field missiological training contributes significantly to a missionary's ability to persevere and to be fruitful in ministry. (Hay, Lim et al. 2007, 18, 55, 155, 156)

Nevertheless, many missionaries are still going to the field with little or no missiological training (Udall 2013, 1). Few churches and mission organizations have enough in-house resources to provide their own training. Even when such training is available, expenses such as course fees, travel, and accommodation place such training out of the reach of many missionaries.

Since the Reformation, so-called "Western" countries where the gospel is well-established, sent out most missionaries (Johnson, Bellofatto, and Hickman 2013, 76). From the 1950s onward, there was a major shift in the center of gravity of Christianity from the West to former colonies (Johnson, Bellofatto, and Hickman 2013, 15). As a result, the number of missionaries from the majority world (Majority World 2017) is on the increase (Lundy 1999, 147). This study focused on missionaries coming from China, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Conventional training is often too expensive for many majority world missionaries, who mostly come from developing countries. Therefore, it is important to find a way to make training more accessible to them. This study endeavored to design, develop, and implement a missionary training curriculum that combines technology and face-to-face instruction to make the training accessible to majority world missionaries.

This article explains the organization and delivery of learning content, including examples of hybrid missionary training in different phases. Didasko Academy implemented part of the curriculum in its course series "Discovering Missions," which is available online for free at www.dasko.org. This article provides an overview of the philosophy behind the design of the implementation.

## 2. Challenges in Training Majority World Missionaries

Because most existing training is aimed at learners from the Western world, it is important to identify the additional challenges majority world missionaries face. In addition to the difficulty they face in finding sponsorship to attend training in the West, they also need visas to get there. Many are not fluent in English, which is often the main language of instruction. There are also cultural challenges inherent in existing courses, for example, lecturers use unfamiliar examples to explain certain concepts. These reasons necessitate a new kind of training curriculum.

## 3. Designing the Curriculum

A curriculum is more than just a syllabus, it is a broader concept which includes the syllabus. A syllabus typically consists of little more than the list of the subjects and topics covered by the course of study. A curriculum addresses the entire persona of the learner, including their spiritual and character formation, the development of the specific skills they need, and a deeper understanding of their task. An effective and well-executed curriculum will produce the desired learning outcomes in learners. Therefore, the curriculum is a design for learning, similar to the design plan for a building, defining the intended learner experience (Wiles 2008, 3).

The philosophy behind the curriculum under consideration focuses more on the learner outcomes than on the content of the learning materials. The prioritization of course development is driven by the desire to reduce preventable missionary attrition and to help increase missionary fruitfulness in ministry. The greatest factors that reduce preventable attrition are early-on-field language and culture acquisition (Hay et al. 2007, 120) and pre-field missiological training (Hay et al. 2007, 18, 105). There are several factors to consider in designing a curriculum for missionaries. The first of these is the fact that prospective missionaries are adult learners.

### 3.1 Adult learning principles

The researcher conducted a study of adult educational principles, including formal, non-formal, and informal learning (Manolescu, Florea and Arustei 2018, 8), experiential (cf. Kolb 1984, 23; Kolb and Kolb 2005, 4) and situated learning (cf. Hwang et al. 2012 in Hwang et al. 2018, 137), coaching (Passmore 2015, 5) and mentoring (Clutterbuck 2004, 53), group facilitation (Bens 2005, 7), peer instruction (Crouch and Mazur 2001, 970) and reflective practices (Kolb in Keillor and Littlefield 2012, 5).

In a social constructivist curriculum, learners construct knowledge through mental and physical learning activities. Such activities include projects, solving problems, conducting experiments, participating in simulations and having real-life experiences. A constructivist curriculum improves learning by facilitating the sharing of meaning between individuals through collaboration with their peers. (Seyyedrezaie and Barani 2013, 64).

The study explains learner assessment, including the use of formative (cf. Crooks 2001, 1; Black and Wiliam 1998, 8) and summative

assessments (cf. Clough 2007, 40; Meyers and Nulty 2009, 9) and Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives to test the assessment framework and develop practical assessments (Krathwohl 2002, 212). Important contributors to the field of adult learning are Freire (2014, Spener 1992), Knowles (cf. Hatcher 2008, Bryson 2013), Vella (cf. Hatcher 2008, Vella 1994) and Kolb (Keillor and Littlefield 2012).

For adult learning to be effective, a curriculum should be learner-oriented. This means taking into account that adults are self-motivated, self-directed, have life experience and knowledge, are goal- and relevancy-oriented in their approach to learning, are practical, and need to be respected for who they are (Fidishun 2000, 6; Keillor and Littlefield 2012, 4). The material needs to have immediate relevance to learner performance and problem-solving abilities. Small groups and mutual accountability improve such learning.

A quote attributed to Winston Churchill may serve to sum up the attitude of adult learners: "I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught" (BrainyQuote 2018). This attitude to learning among adults can be addressed through non-formal and informal training. Because the cultures of majority world missionaries differ from those of the West, it is important to take culture into account when designing a curriculum.

## 3.2 Culture and curriculum

### 3.2.1 Cultural bias

Western curricula often contain unintended cultural bias, which can lead to "trained incapacity" if missionaries are taught praxis from the point of view of another culture (Herppich 2014, 212). Trained incapacity happens

when certain types of training or experience render an individual unable to think beyond the set of assumptions that they have been taught. Students learn "lessons" that were not openly intended as part of the curriculum (Martin 1983, 123). This has been called the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson 1968, 41). Reducing cultural bias requires a study of cultural characteristics of learners.

### 3.2.2 Geert Hofstede's six cultural dimensions and training

Prof. Geert Hofstede has been a major contributor to the field of comparative culture. The clearest and best proven comparative data on cultures is based on research by Hofstede himself, first published in his 1980 book *Culture's Consequences*. Many reviews of the validity of Hofstede's approach have been conducted, all validating Hofstede's results at the country level. Litrell (2012, 3) confirms the validity of Hofstede's findings by referencing later studies by Fernandez et al. (1997); Kirkman, Lowe, and Gibson (2006); and Tsui, Nifadkar, and Ou (2007). Even though Hofstede's studies focused on countries rather than cultures within countries, the results are nevertheless useful for this article. The study found that three of Hofstede's six cultural dimensions affect training courses, namely Power Distance Index, Individualism vs Collectivism and Indulgence vs Restraint (Vermont 2020, 139).

The cultural Power Distance (PD) Index measures the degree of acceptance of inequalities in society (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010, 54). A low PD score indicates an egalitarian society, where people try to equalize power, unless there is good justification. In cultures with a high PD score, people tend to accept a hierarchical order (Hofstede et al. 2010, 55).

People from a high PD culture expect and accept the fact that power is distributed unequally. Therefore, learners will expect the instructor to

have higher status than they do. For example, in Chinese society, instructors are seen as role models, knowledge transmitters, and at the center of the educational process. (Pratt 1991, 304) Learners from high PD cultures (e.g., majority world missionaries) prefer this greater social distance to the instructor than those from Western cultures (Hatcher 2008, 9). High PD learners tend to become uncomfortable with informal instructors who prefer to be called by their first name. To the instructor, they appear quiet and reflective in high-interaction classroom situations (Joy and Kolb 2009, 69). This has been the researcher's personal experience teaching such learners in a highly interactive classroom.

The study also found that the Hofstede Individualism vs Collectivism dimension affects training. Cultures with higher values in this index have greater individualism. In these cultures, the group expects individuals to care for themselves and their own nuclear family. Cultures with a low value for this dimension prefer a tightly-knit fabric of society, where relatives or members of a specific group expect total loyalty from others in the group and that they will look after them. Collectivists will involve more people before making decisions than individualistic people, preferring a consensus-style of decision making. They often express their self-image in terms of "we" rather than "I" (Hofstede 2001, 112). This can affect the situation in the classroom.

Hofstede's Indulgence vs Restraint Index also affects training. The Indulgence vs Restraint Index is an indicator of how strict social norms are in a culture. Stricter cultures value restraint and have lower scores on the scale, while those with more tolerance for allowing people to enjoy life have higher scores (Hofstede 2001, 280). A high indulgence score is also an indication that a culture allows more freedom of speech than a low score (Gómez-Rey, Barbera and Fernández-Navarro 2016, 227).

Cultural differences in learning do not end with Hofstede's indices. Culture also influences people's preferred cognitive learning styles.

### 3.2.3 Cognitive styles

Cognitive style describes the way individuals "think, perceive, and remember information" (Cognitive Style 2017). The cognitive aspect of culture has to do with how people think about things and how they gain knowledge and understand concepts. Therefore, people of a culture share a certain predominant "thinking style." A culture's cognitive style directly affects the way people of that culture prefer to learn (Hiebert 1985, 31) and is therefore pertinent to this study. According to Hesselgrave (1991, 305) there are three main cognitive styles: conceptual, intuitional, and concrete-relational.

People from Western cultures usually have a conceptual learning style and tend to prefer abstract thought, centered around concepts and driven by abstract ideas (Vail et al. 2002, 7–5). In such a cognitive environment, disciplines such as systematic theology are highly regarded and three-point sermons are the norm. This approach stems from Hellenistic thought which influenced early Christianity (Braaten 1968, 3).

Cultures with intuitional cognitive styles tend to revolve around psychical experiences, that is, driven by mystical experiences (Vail et al. 2002, 7–5). Hesselgrave (1991, 225) typifies Indians, presumably specifically Hindus, as having an intuitional cognitive style.

In contrast to the Western conceptual (abstract) cognitive style, cultures where concrete-relational thinking dominates use stories, parables, myths, analogies, and similes (Hesselgrave 1991, 223). People in such cultures view reality and life graphically in a setting of active emotional relationships in concrete situations (Hesselgrave 1991, 223). Such communication tends to revolve around concrete relationships, driven by

environmental realities (Vail et al. 2002, 7–5). Hesselgrave (1991, 225) typifies the Chinese as having a concrete-relational cognitive style.

Although there may be a predominant cognitive style within a culture, individuals from the culture will have a differing mix of cognitive styles. For example, when explaining a given topic, Western people usually start with the conceptual (the "big picture"). They may follow with some short illustrative examples (concrete-relational), but rarely explain the intuitional ("gut feel") aspect of the concept. Concrete-relational cultures, such as the Chinese, usually start with a story, then progress to intuitional and lastly to conceptual. Indians tend to follow the opposite cognitive progression to Western people (Hesselgrave 1991, 208). The table below demonstrates this progression.

| | **Starting point** | **Progress to …** | **Perhaps** |
|---|---|---|---|
| The West: | Conceptual | Concrete-relational | Intuitional |
| China: | Concrete-relational | Intuitional | Conceptual |
| India: | Intuitional | Concrete-relational | Conceptual |

(Adapted from Smith in Hesselgrave 1991, 208)

People of the majority world (in the above table, China and India) least preferred the conceptual thought processes that dominate Western-culture training. This difference in learning preference has implications for the training approach needed.

Most modern missiology courses originate in Western countries and, as such, have been designed and presented in conceptual form. The strength of this form is its presentation of missions in a theological framework and as a set of principles. For people with intuitional and

concrete-relational cognitive styles, this approach is too theoretical (cf. Lee 2000, 139; Hesselgrave 1991, 224). While discussing a correspondence course aimed at majority world pastors, Hesselgrave (1991, 224) said that the course was too theoretical and abstract and failed to engage the audience. The developers revised the course to include images and the resulting improvement in response was "nothing short of overwhelming" (Hesselgrave 1991, 224).

Missionary training differs from general theological training in more than just subject material. To be effective, it also requires a practical component.

### 3.3 Integral ministry training

The concept of integral ministry training (IMT) is widely accepted in the world of missionary training (Armstrong and Sells 2006, 17, Kayser 2003, 30, Whiteman 2008, 11, Wiseman 2015, 189, Wiseman 2016, 2, Udall 2013, 17). IMT is defined as follows:

> Integral training delivers a learning experience that intentionally addresses the needs of the whole person, including their character and spiritual formation, skill development and their understanding. (Brynjolfson and Lewis 2006, 5)

In educational circles, these three areas of learning are called the cognitive (understanding), affective (character and spiritual) and psychomotor (skill) domains. IMT adds spiritual formation to these (Brynjolfson and Lewis 2006, 8). Good IMT-style training should rely on formal, non-formal, and informal learning and should be outcomes-based. The primary goal of IMT is to develop all the competencies missionaries need. Therefore, the next section discusses competency-oriented missionary training.

### 3.4 Competency-oriented missionary training

The outcome of good missionary training is missionary competencies needed for effective ministry. The goal of a missionary curriculum is not only to increase learners' effectiveness in serving Christ, but also to motivate and assist them to grow in him. The training should include numerous methods in several contexts. This flexibility caters for different learning styles to achieve understanding and to develop certain skills and attitudes. Both trainers and learners accept responsibility for the achievement of these outcomes, because both parties are fellow servants who are committed to extending God's kingdom. Therefore, based on their experience, competence, and authority, trainers guide the training process, accepting the uniqueness of each person's gifting, calling, and personality. Learners gain knowledge through learning obedience and diligence, which leads to maturity, understanding, and, ultimately, competence (Brynjolfson and Lewis 2006, 22). Learners are not only dependent on the input from their teachers but also learn from their peers with whom they interact during the training. The dissertation's IMT section provides a detailed list of competency categories.

This discussion on traditional missionary training gives the background for looking to how technological developments can contribute to the process in future.

### 3.5 E-learning and hybrid learning

#### 3.5.1 Definition

There are numerous and diverse definitions for the term e-learning. Understandings range from "any learning that uses ICT [information and communication technologies]" to "a fully online course" (Boezerooij

2006, 18). In this article, e-learning means learning delivered, facilitated, and supported through the internet, using multimedia and social media technologies to enhance learning. It can be presented synchronously, asynchronously, be instructor- or self-paced and can be combined with coaching and facilitation in a blended approach.

### 3.5.2 Synchronous and asynchronous e-learning

E-learning can be either synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous teaching methods include the use of text-only "chat" software, telephone-like voice over IP (VOIP) talks, video conferencing such as Zoom, web conferencing, or internet radio (cf. Huang 2002, 30; Meloni 2012, 2). Asynchronous methods include the use of virtual libraries or repositories of documents, illustrations, audio or video files, email, online discussion forums, social networking, wikis, and other forms of collaborative documents (cf. Huang 2002, 30; Meloni 2012, 3).

Even though most institutions use primarily asynchronous courses (Leo, Manganello, Pennacchietti, Pistoia, Kinshuk and Chen 2009, 489), effectiveness does not so much depend upon whether the training is asynchronous or synchronous. Research by Hrastinski (2008) and Wang and Newlin (2001 in Falloon 2011, 448) demonstrate that both of these approaches play a role in the effectiveness of e-learning. The issue is not to choose between the synchronous and asynchronous approaches, but rather to identify an effective and practical balance between the two (Falloon 2011, 448).

### 3.5.3 Hybrid instruction

Hybrid instruction is an intentional combination of e-learning and non-formal learning techniques such as coaching, mentoring, group facilitation

and situated learning (cf. Hwang, Chen, Shadiev, Huang, and Chen 2012 in Hwang, Chen et al. 2018, 137). Such an approach adds the advantages of traditional classrooms to e-learning. Coaches and facilitators need not be subject experts to achieve their goals. The expertise can reside in a combination of the online video mini-lectures and expert mentors who can interact with learners through online synchronous video conferencing.

This approach allows for a non-expert to be a facilitator of a learning group. Such a non-expert may be a group leader at church or a missionary team leader in the field. Such a person may not yet be an expert in the subject field that the group is studying, because the expertise resides in the video lecture and discussion questions. This approach introduces a paradigm shift in learning, because it is now possible to rethink where, when, and how quickly training should happen.

### 3.6 Rethinking the pace, the time and the place of training

#### 3.6.1 The optimal time for training

Malcolm Knowles' "readiness to learn" principle indicates that adults prefer to learn information close to the time they need to use it (Hatcher 2008, 32). Immediate practical use of new knowledge leads to learning on a higher level on Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. Such knowledge is also more likely to be in the learner's long-term memory (Krathwohl 2002, 212). This is called just-in-time (JIT) learning, a term originally borrowed from supply-chain planning in the manufacturing and distribution industry (Merriam-Webster 2020).

In traditional classroom situations, JIT poses the problem of the optimal time for the learner not always being a feasible time for the instructor. Asynchronous e-learning has changed that because learners can

start a course any time they like. Because e-learners are not tied to a specific time and place where they receive training, classroom and instructor availability is no longer an issue (Huang 2002, 28).

### 3.6.2 Course pacing

A side effect of asynchronous e-learning is that course designers can choose between instructor-paced or learner-paced courses. With learner-paced courses, learning no longer needs to be compressed into a short time, which reduces learners' cognitive load (Krathwohl 2002, 237). This independence from pace, timing, and place makes the concept of phased training possible.

### 3.6.3 Phased training

Parks (2016, 18) described an innovative four-phase approach to missionary training. In this approach, missionaries receive training at hubs situated in different locations and at different times of a missionary's development (Coles and Parks 2019, loc. 3229).

Coles and Parks call the first phase "internship." This phase is completed in the missionary's home country. This phase consists of both theory and practice. They call the second phase "residency," and it is completed at a training hub at the missionary's starting point on the field, culturally close to their ultimate target people. The third phase, "launch," is where they start applying their earlier experience among their target people (Parks 2016, 18). During this third phase, the coaches and trainers from phase three continue to assist and guide them. In the fourth phase, the missionary becomes involved in the training of other missionaries who are in the first three phases, and/or leads a new team (McBride 2018, 37).

This hub-based phased training model challenges the assumption that missionary training has to happen in a single location over a specific time. It implies that adult missionaries should ideally be trained just before they need a new skill or knowledge. While this is a great improvement over the traditional model, it can be made even more effective by combining the phased training with hybrid e-learning and situated learning. For example, purely cognitive training can be done with online e-learning that learners can complete without the presence of a training hub. For certain subjects, the affective (character and spiritual) and psychomotor (skill) domains can be taught using a hybrid combination of online e-learning, non-expert facilitators and synchronous video conferencing.

This hybrid approach makes more than four phases viable. The proposed curriculum's phases include the following: church, preparation, short-term visit, trade language and culture acquisition, heart language and culture acquisition, evangelism, initial disciple-making, church planting, and return.

A very important aspect of hybrid training is the inclusion of lecture videos.

### 3.7 Online video mini-lectures

Online video mini-lectures, or lecture sequences (Breslow, Pritchard, DeBoer, Stump, Ho and Seaton 2013, 14), are fast becoming the most prominent medium for instruction in e-learning (Scagnoli et al. 2015, 115). Video mini-lectures are focused messages that cover a specific topic (Scagnoli et al. 2015, 129). They are "mini" in that they are short, usually in the order of six to twelve minutes each. Mini-lectures "chunk" content into meaningful pieces (Miller 1956 in Scagnoli et al. 2015, 116), which helps to enhance learner memory (Dirksen 2012, 91).

The pedagogical roots of this approach lie in cognitive memory theory and specifically in the cognitive theory of multimedia learning. It has also become one of the best practices for online instruction (Scagnoli et al. 2015, 116). The most effective videos show the instructor's face, making eye contact with the viewer for at least part of the video (Guo, Kim, and Rubin 2014, 42). Such purpose-made videos create more of a one-to-one connection between the instructor and the individual learner than videos recording during a lecture (Scagnoli et al. 2015, 129). Based on a large-scale study of video engagement (6.9 million video watching sessions), Guo et al. (2014, 46) found that using close-up videos of the instructor making eye contact with the learner resulted in higher engagement levels compared to in-class filmed lectures.

The fact that learners can rewind videos reduces the need for the use of repetition in lectures. A study has found that well-planned videos reduce the required lecture time. For example, material that took 400 minutes in classroom lectures were reduced to only 260 minutes in video format, a 35 percent reduction. (Cummins, Beresford, and Rice 2016, 3)

Videos form only one part of the structure of a complete course.

### 3.8 Course structure

Each course consists of one or more modules. Each module contains a sequence of learning units, followed by a summative assessment. The course concludes with a course evaluation survey, an online suggestion/comments forum, and a discussion of next steps.

Dirksen (2012, 91) recommends presenting information in these shorter chunks because it allows for better retention of information. When the chunks of material are grounded in a rich context of other chunks, learners are also more likely to remember the connection between the

chunks (Dirksen 2012, 92). A typical learning unit (or chunk) contains a video mini-lecture using a concrete-relational approach, a formative assessment in the form of a multiple-choice quiz, a question for personal reflection, classroom discussion question(s), an online discussion forum with its own question, and, finally, a resource page which contains references and/or suggestions for further reading.

An individual online learner will typically ignore the classroom discussion questions while using the personal reflection question; classrooms (virtual or actual), could use both. Both individual online learners and facilitators have given very positive reports of this approach. The next section discusses how to identify course content that addresses all the required competencies.

## 3.9 The CPL Training Matrix

The objective of missionary competency profiling is to identify curriculum and training goals (Brynjolfson and Lewis 2006, 127). To be able to design a competency-driven curriculum that is taught in phases using hybrid methodologies, the researcher synthesized a three-dimensional matrix called the Competency-Phase-Learning domain (CPL) Training Matrix. The CPL Training Matrix makes it possible to analyze which learning domains should be targeted for each competency and during which phase. This analysis makes it possible to determine which training can be done purely online and which need a practical component. Illustration one below shows a simplified CPL Training Matrix.

The vertical axis contains the individual competencies. The researcher compiled the full list of over 240 competencies from Hesselgrave, Hiebert, Hoke, Kane, Kwast, McGavran and Mulholland (2009), Brynjolfson and Lewis (2006), Ferris (1995), and Brogden (2014). Competency categories

include biblical and theological knowledge, preparation to go into the field, fund-raising competencies, cultural adaptation, and language acquisition skills. The horizontal axis of the matrix contains the phase codes, indicating in-church training, missionary preparation phase, short-term visit, trade-language culture and language acquisition, heart-language culture and language acquisition, evangelism, disciple-making and church planting.

## Illustration 1: The CPL Training Matrix



| Phase / Competency | CHURCH | PREP | STM | TCLA | HCLA | EV | DM | CP | Cognitive | Character | Spiritual | Skill |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Biblical | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Church commit | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | | | | |
| Ethics | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Missiological | | 5 | 3 | | | 5 | 5 | 5 | | | | |
| Preparation | | 5 | | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | | | |
| Practical | | 5 | 3 | 5 | | | | | | | | |
| Fund raising | | 5 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Culture adapt | | | | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | | | | |
| ... | | | | | | | | | | | | |

The depth axis shows the domains of learning for each competency. A good example is the competency needed to learn a language and its culture. Acquiring this competency starts before a missionary leaves for the field (PREP phase). While raising funds, missionaries have to understand more or less how long it takes to learn a language. Once they do, they can explain to their supporters why they won't be fully involved in ministry for the first year or two on the field. Learning to explain the reasons for this is a purely cognitive activity and can be learned online through e-learning. Once they

are on the field and are learning language (TLCA /HLCA), missionaries have to know (cognitive) and be able to apply (skill) language acquisition methods so that they can learn the language effectively.

Each cell of the matrix contains an estimated instructional effort level between one and five. One indicates little instructional effort, and five indicates high instructional effort. Illustration two (below) will be used to explain how this works.

## Illustration 2: CPL Training Matrix shown in spreadsheet layout

| | Category | Competency | CHURCH #1 | | | | | PREP #1 | | | | | STM #1 | | | | | TLCA #2 | | | | | HLCA #3 | | | | | EV #3 | | | | | DM #3 | | | | | CP #3 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass | Cog | Char | Spir | Skill | Ass |
| 2 | | Numbers (1-5) indicate instructional effort. Assessment columns: "o": observe, "p": phone conversation, "x": exam / summative assessment, "q": question, "i": informal evaluation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 104 | COMMS | Discern what is cultural and what is biblical. | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | o | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | x | 1 | 1 | 1 | | x | | | | 5 | x | | | | 5 | o | | | | 5 | o |
| 105 | COMMS | Can detect cross-cultural bridges for evangelism / disciple-making. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 | | | 3 | x | 3 | | | 3 | x | 5 | | | 5 | x | | | | 5 | o | | | | 5 | |
| 106 | | **Culture and language learning** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 107 | CLA | Recognizes the importance of language learning as ministry. | 5 | | | | x | 1 | | | | | | | 2 | | q | | | | | | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 108 | CLA | Is committed to achieving ministry-level fluency in the language. | 5 | 5 | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | 5 | | | o | 5 | 5 | | | o | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 109 | CLA | Understands the need for and takes responsibility for life-long language learning. | 1 | | | | x | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 3 | 5 | | | | 3 | 5 | | | | | | 3 | | | | | 3 | | | | | | 3 | |
| 110 | CLA | Knows language acquisition techniques. | 1 | | | | x | | | | | | | | | 1 | o | 5 | | | 5 | xo | 5 | | | 5 | xo | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 111 | CLA | Knows how to select language school or helper(s), and how to learn language and culture from the community. | 3 | | | | x | 1 | | | | | | | | | o | 5 | 3 | | 5 | o | 5 | 3 | | 5 | o | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 112 | CLA | Knows the rules of phonetics and importance | 1 | | | | x | | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | 5 | xo | 5 | | | 5 | xo | 5 | | | | | 5 | | | | | | | | | |

In this sample part of the matrix, the competency heading "Culture and language learning" and its detailed competencies appear on the vertical axis. The training phase codes (CHURCH, PREP, etc.) appear along the horizontal axis.

Each phase along the horizontal axis contains the four learning domains of learning for that phase and an assessment column. The instructional effort levels found in each element lie on a scale from one to five. These numbers indicate the estimated amount of instructional effort needed to achieve the required competence in a missionary. A 1 means that little instructional effort is necessary, while a 5 indicates that a significant

amount of instructional effort is required for that competency during that phase in that learning domain.

The researcher estimated instructional levels for each competency, phase, and learning domain and placed them in a database. Computer analysis made it possible to construct a phased syllabus from the CPL data that indicates the degree of hybridity necessary per training phase.

The next section looks at how the curriculum performs in practice.

## 4. Findings

A small team at Didasko Academy implemented the initial part of the curriculum concurrently with the research. One of the courses, "Discovering Missions," was used to evaluate the effectiveness and accessibility of the curricular approach.

The researcher evaluated the courses using a combination of pre-development opinion polls, a paper survey at a blended learning workshop, analysis of database log files, online course surveys, video analytics, informal interviews, and email exchanges. An analysis of the learning management system database found that learners from many countries had enrolled and completed courses and that most of them were from the majority world. This analysis was necessary to gain an overview of course usage and demographics, learner registration, course enrollment and completion.

The researcher evaluated each of the most important aspects of the curriculum design. These aspects were accessibility, phased/JIT, adult learning principles, competency-based syllabus, cultural issues, hybrid instruction, experiential learning and the social constructivist approach. The evaluation within just over a year of operations indicated that the early parts of the curriculum are effective and it is reaching its goals. Cultural

bias in the courses seems negligible, as the vast majority of learners who completed courses reacted positively to the culture-related questions in the course surveys. Most hybrid use has been via Zoom, because the coronavirus pandemic limited face-to-face blended use. Even though only one of the courses had been used in two face-to-face workshops, the survey results indicate that presenting such blended learning workshops can be effective in many settings. A total of forty-six missionaries who came from fourteen countries attended the two workshops. Learners indicated that they would have been more satisfied with their learning experience if the videos had subtitles and if they could have discussions in a manner and pace suitable to their specific culture. Because of the mixed audience, this was not possible but would have been, had the workshops been presented in their own countries by local facilitators.

The researcher also analyzed online video statistics to measure learner engagement time with the video mini-lectures. The average watch time was high, indicating good learner engagement. The highest average learner engagement was for videos between six and ten minutes in length. This finding is useful for determining the length of future mini-lecture videos.

Over 80 percent of majority world learners used mobile phones to access the courses. This fact shows that free online e-learning that is compatible with mobile devices makes courses financially and geographically widely accessible, especially in the majority world. In one case, a family of four in a township in South Africa did the courses together using a cellphone with mobile data. The courses were not as widely accessible linguistically as desired, with learners requiring at least some English comprehension over and above the translated subtitles. A significant portion of English second-language speakers activated subtitles in their own language.

The researcher also found that it is possible to produce video mini-lectures with negligible cultural bias when the lecturer appears in smart-casual clothes, standing before a neutral background. Learners from all cultures reported that they like the concrete-relational approach to teaching, surprisingly also those from the West. Concrete-relational teachings start with an illustrated and concrete anecdote or story, followed by an exposition of the concepts in the story, instead of starting by explaining concepts and then using anecdotes as illustrations.

Learners reported that they found the availability of reflection questions, group discussion questions and online discussion forums, in addition to optional reading material after each video, to be beneficial. This finding proved that the "chunking" of learning into small learning units works well for different cultures, as long as the video mini-lectures are kept between six and ten minutes in length. This blended learning approach also proved effective in two classroom situations.

Furthermore, the study found that a broad range of learners could be effectively trained using a hybrid combination of online e-learning and non-formal coaching by collaborating with non-expert local-culture facilitators. Non-expert facilitators or team leaders who are sensitive to the local culture can lead such hybrid training, making IMT possible. Initial findings from the limited on-field use of the approach indicate that ongoing IMT using hybrid training is viable for training missionary teams on the field. This viability makes it possible for the entire curriculum to be designed from the ground up, using a phased approach.

The CPL training matrix data showed that the required pre-field training was mostly cognitive, making it possible for online e-learning to play an important role in pre-field missionary training.

## 5. Recommendations

The researcher believes that mission organizations and seminaries can use the CPL training matrix as a basis for developing effective missionary training syllabi. However, the instructional effort level estimations in the CPL training matrix would need to be refined through usage and further research.

As mentioned earlier, the practical application of hybrid instruction for IMT on the mission field requires the collaboration of mission organizations and churches to further the development and utilization of such courses. Collaboration is important, as few organizations have sufficient resources on their own to develop all the courses necessary to develop the competencies missionaries need. The researcher recommends that organizations investigate the viability of using such training in their contexts and decide how they can collaborate with other organizations to implement a joint training program. Once such collaboration is established, further research into the effectiveness of using on-field hybrid training should be conducted.

## 6. Concluding Observations

Mission organizations and churches from all countries can benefit from the findings of this research. Missionary candidates usually come from diverse geographical locations and some are still in full-time employment during their preparation period. Therefore, it is difficult and expensive to gather them together for pre-field training at a time and place that suits them all. Because the research found that pre-field fully online missionary training is a viable approach to prepare candidates, the researcher hopes that more mission organizations and churches will adopt this approach. Distributing

training over time by using hybrid training both before and on the mission field can reduce learner cognitive overload caused by missionary training intensives. Team leaders can act as course facilitators, even if they have little or no missions experience themselves. This approach implies that the combination of pre-field online training and in-field hybrid training can serve to reduce the length and cost of current intensive pre- or in-field training courses. Such courses could then be repurposed as organizational orientation. The rapid increase in the use of Didasko courses in many countries, as well as the positive comments and referrals by the vast majority of learners, lend strong support to the hypothesis. All indications are that mission organizations and churches will be able to use this approach to training, as it will help overcome limitations of resources and will serve their missionaries better. The researcher hopes that this will ultimately result in the expansion of God's kingdom and thereby glorify the name of Jesus.

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