

Leadership in Theological Education. Vol. 1: Foundations for Academic Leadership

***Leadership in Theological Education. Vol. 1: Foundations for Academic Leadership.* Deininger, Fritz and Orbelina Eguizabal, Eds. Carlisle, Eng.: Langham Global Library, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-78368-218-8; eISBN: 978-1-78368-221-8.**

The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) commissioned this as the first of a three-volume set of textbooks to support its International Programme for Academic Leadership (IPAL), especially academic deans, in Majority World countries. The second volume examines curriculum design; the third will address faculty development. This volume focuses on planning and assessment. Each of the twelve chapters are written by one of eleven authors; each author has experience as an international educator, although several are currently based in the United States. Deininger has taught in Thailand, teaches at Columbia International University, and coordinates the IPAL; Eguizabal has taught and served as an educator in Guatemala, teaches at Talbot School of Theology, and leads IPAL seminars in Central and South America. Other writers have had administrative experience in the Caribbean, Philippines, Argentina, Europe, Lebanon, and Singapore.

Four topics organize the chapters: 1) foundations of theological education as drawn from the Bible as well as from management theory; 2) the nature of academic leadership; 3) assessment in academic administration; and 4) two necessary leadership skills — implementing change and managing conflict within an academic institution. Each chapter contributes to the book's overall purpose; a few chapters will stand out based on the reader's interest. Why might this collection — or any of its chapters — interest a theological librarian?

First, although this book is written for top-level administrators, theological librarians also have a significant administrative role in their institutions. Libraries, and those who make them work, receive only one paragraph (92), but they are included among the eleven factors that contribute to excellence in theological education (chapter 4). Steve Hardy, the SIM International Advocate for Theological Education, concludes: “While . . . facilities [and libraries] do not determine excellence, the absence of . . . a good working library can keep a program from becoming excellent — or at least from being perceived as excellent” (93).

Second, since theological libraries are integral to theological education, librarians cannot ignore the foundations of theological education. Dieumemé Noelliste, president of the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association and a faculty member at both Denver Seminary and the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology, presents theological education as the “Handmaiden to God's Economy” (chapter 1), not an inconsequential add-on; it conserves the well-being of the People of God, advances the mission of God, and preserves the integrity of the Christian faith as it treasures, transmits, and teaches the doctrine and traditions of Christianity. Theological institutions teach not just to inform, but “with a view to obedience” (21) and with passion for the glory of God (22-24). Encouraging critical thinking helps preserve Christian integrity (26). Librarians who also consider themselves educators can ponder these and other insights as they reflect on their role as librarians.

Third, library administrators share many of the responsibilities and characteristics of presidents and academic deans, which Deininger discusses in chapters five and six. For example, just as an academic dean must work with a president, so the library director must work with the academic dean to accomplish a library's program objectives. As in many other relationships, personality, corporate culture, open communication, and trust affect the relationship. When tensions arise, they should be resolved. Deininger's discussion of deanship as a ministry lists, rather than details, the possible ways a dean can minister to others in the institution as he or she leads as the middle-level manager whose work facilitates and complements the work of both the president and the faculty. He also explains how and why novice academics should develop a personal mission statement. All this is applicable to librarians in administration as well.

Fourth, the final chapters address planning, assessment, and accreditation — issues also important to librarians. Along with chapters on strategic planning (chapters 2, 3) they provide a good introduction or refresher for those with limited experience with these tasks. Drawing from the American system of accreditation, which “has taken on global significance as it is adopted [and contextualized] throughout the world” (189), Bernhard Ott, dean of a German branch of Columbia International University, USA, and Accrediting Director of the European Evangelical Accrediting Association, answers common objections to seeking accreditation and identifies possible pitfalls. It is not “just” a label, or “just” about the degree, or “just” an administrative exercise (206-07); it is a process, and one that, when done thoroughly, shows tangible proof of institution-wide commitment to its mission and purpose.

Planning, assessment, and accreditation should result in positive change. This produces a need for persons who can bring about change, which may also mean a need for someone who can lead through crisis and conflict. These dual responsibilities often fall on an academic leader. Eguizabal (chapter 10) concludes a well-organized literature review by discussing the generally accepted characteristics of change agents. Interested readers can use them to evaluate their own potential for leading change. Ray Sanders, a retired administrator with experience in Europe and the Middle East, explains conflict management using biblical illustrations (chapter 11), and implies that it can be addressed as a problem-solving exercise.

The book offers little new about the administrative processes, but like a good textbook, brings professionally written summaries together in a structured format with suggestions for personal reflection or group discussion. Through footnotes and examples, it introduces Western readers to organizations with shared values in the Majority World. The chapter bibliographies testify to how much there is to read about academic administration. Its intended audience (academic leaders new to the culture of assessment, enrolled in seminars led by knowledgeable instructors such as those who contributed to this volume) will find this a valuable guide through their program and a valuable resource for implementing what they have learned.

A theological library in North America may want to add this title to its collection if it supports courses in education leadership. The bibliographies provide a way to evaluate the relevant parts of a library’s collection; few, however, were published after 2012. Perhaps its best use in the library would be as a professional development tool for librarians new to theological libraries.

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