Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-Day Adventist

MASTERY LEARNING: A CHRISTIAN APPROACH

By

Franklyn N. Baldeo

Coordinator
Teacher Education Department
Faculty of Education & Human Sciences
Caribbean Union College
Trinidad. W.I.

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INTRODUCTION

The success of any organizational process is determined, to an enormous extent, by the promulgation and expansion of its philosophy, values, and ideals from generation to generation.

The success of Christian Education, as an organizational process, is largely determined by the continuous output of effective and efficient Christian Teachers. Keeping in mind that there is a distinctive difference between "a Christian teacher" and "a teacher who is a Christian," and that Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) philosophy requires all of its teachers to be Christian teachers, a great deal of responsibility is now placed on the SDA Teacher Education Programme of Christian Colleges to ensure that the better "commodity" hits the "market".

Such a challenge would require a total integration process of the academic with the divine. This is summarized and endorsed by the mission statement of Caribbean Union College Teacher Education Department which says, "...to undergird the student in the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and to stimulate each potential teacher to evaluate knowledge in the light of Scriptural truth."

This essay, in response to the challenge, seeks to show that when the Christian teacher utilizes the teaching strategy of mastery learning in the classroom, the principles that are laid down in the Word of God by the Master Teacher Himself, and backed by the "Spirit of Prophecy" are in fact being practiced. Mastery learning, resultantly, will be integrating faith in the learning process.

Chronologically, this essay takes a Christian perspective as it defines and classifies the issues involved in the integration of faith and learning in the field of education. Here, the nature, basis, purpose and objectives of Christian education are explored.

An introduction to the strategy of mastery learning and its intricacies are then discussed. This highlights the model as enhancing behaviour, principles and performance in the classroom.

The various mechanisms involved in the mastery learning

model is elaborated so as to emphasize the Christian characteristics and virtues practiced as a result of using the model. The unity and harmony of the philosophy of SDA Christian Education are addressed to show a merging of both paradigms. The essay ends by showing that the no shift in paradigm would indicate a teaching process that in actuality was practised by the Master Teacher Himself. The realization of faith and learning in the classroom would be seen in a new light. The practicing of mastery learning in the SDA Christian classroom would be seen as part of, and not an addition to, the process of integration, thus supporting the compatibleness to the ideology of integrating Christ, hence faith, in the classroom.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Characteristics

For the Christian, education must be centered in Christ if there is to be any worthwhile significance and meaning. This suggests that education involves more than an interaction with teacher and learner.

Byrne (1988) suggests four characteristics of that kind of education. Firstly, "education for the Christian is an outgrowth of God's revelation" (p.33). This is when the student becomes aware of God's interpretation through creation and revelation.

Secondly, "education is an outgrowth of the Christian's worldview" (p.33). Since God has revealed Himself through natural and written revelations, and since they are the only two sources of Truth, it would then be possible to set up working principles and patterns by which life processes can be directed. This is called world view. Since this view is all inclusive, education must be a part of it--leading to a clear interpretation of that world view. The function of eduction in this regard is to lead the student to a knowledge and practice of God's will.

Thirdly, "education is a well-balanced function", (p.33) and is influenced by social pressures as well as philosophical concepts. Through these forces, the Christian is propelled to

think of the interests of both society and the individual. It is
through such developments that salvation would eventuate in
service.

Fourthly, "education for the Christian is conceived in terms
of comprehensiveness" (p.33). This involves the development of
the whole man--physically, mentally, morally, spiritually,
socially and culturally. In terms of application, Bryne (1988)
continues "education is concerned with both instruction and
training. Instruction is primarily mental in character, while
training refers to the use of the knowledge" (p.33).

Christian education, therefore, means the kind of
instruction and training which leads the student to a knowledge
of the scriptures and of Jesus Christ. This kind of education is
realized through the agencies of the Christian school, the
Christian home and through the Christian church. It is through
these agencies the nature of Christian education is realized.

Purpose of Christian Education

For the Christian educator, education involves seeing and
behaving as someone whose mind is controlled by God. The first
purpose of education is to image God, while the second is to help
bring students into conformity to the revealed will of God.
Ellen White (1952) sums it up by saying, "the first object of
education [is] to direct our minds to His [Jesus Christ] own
revelation of Himself" (p.16). Thus revelation of God through
instruction and learning becomes the pivotal point, and the real
issue.

Such revelations, in this context, refer to the issue of
integration of faith and learning. This issue creates a desire
to bring every thought and concept under the captivity of God's
word. This concept, when practiced in its fullest, should then
form the basis of the teacher education curriculum. Bryne (1988)
summarizes this concept, "the Christian curriculum begins
properly with the Bible, the Word of God" (p.56).

The next question would then be, what is integration of
faith and learning? Let us begin with the definition of

integration. Wilhoit (1993) says, "integration reflects the idea of harmonizing or a bringing together of separate parts into a coherent unity" (p.1). Byrne (1988) adds that "integration means to make whole, to unify, to bring parts together" (p.69).

The real dilemma comes with the terms faith and learning. We must ascertain, not their denotations (dictionary meanings), but their connotations within the confines of the Christian community and in particular SDA colleges. It seems obvious that the existence of the two terms--faith and learning, suggests two qualitatively different spheres of comprehension (Wilhoit, 1993, p.3). Faith is the area of personal communion with God, its value traits being trust and love. Stott (1972) surmises that, "faith is a reasoning trust which reckons thoughtfully and confidently upon the trustworthiness of God" (p.34). The Bible says, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrew 11:1)

Learning on the other hand, "is represented by cautious generalizations of philosophy or the carefully controlled inductive truths of empirical science" (Wilhoit, 1993, p.2). Put another way, learning represents those things we can verify by scientific methods, while faith relates to those things we cannot test or rationalize.

The Bible suggests the characteristics of learning to include doing God's will and knowing the Holy Scriptures. (John 7:15-17; 2 Timothy 3:14-16). Ultimately, "the difference between faith and learning is a question of origins" (Wilhoit, 1994, p.2), with faith representing the sphere of understanding and truth as revealed by God in His word, and learning, representing the sphere of understanding and truth as discovered and recorded by man.

From these perspectives of varying truths, it can be said that integration of faith and learning is a conscientious and contemplated approach to enhance learning from a God-fearing perspective, and with specific aims and aspirations so as to better equip the learner to face the world beyond school and even beyond life.

Within the general context of this perspective, we as teachers in Christian colleges, face the rather daunting task of

reconciling what might be called the supernatural with the natural or the sacred with the secular. Yet I believe that teachers should not attempt to integrate or harmonize two separate or differing spheres of the understanding of truth. Rather, they should demonstrate the unity of truth since God in the author of Truth.

It is in such dichotomy that unity of truth must abound. This may seem anomaly, but with truth, whether from human knowledge or revelation through scripture or nature, (and coming from the same source) such oneness is inevitable. Holmes (1994) summarizes the issue, "all truth, no matter where it is found or by whom it to be discovered is still God's truth" (p.53). This represents the real concern of integrating faith and learning in the classroom.

The next question that comes up is, why is there a need for the integration of faith and learning? I want to propose three reasons here: firstly, there is a need for the integration which is driven by the influence of non-biblical philosophies and world views present in our society. This would help create the balance that is so sadly lacking; secondly, our students can witness for Christ in such a way that others will find them intellectually or logically sound, and the perception that Christian-trained students are limited or deficient must be dispelled with conviction; thirdly, we are not only to "outlive" and "outsense" those who do not stand for God's truth, we must also by God's grace "out-think" them. With God being the source of our wisdom (James 1:5), there is nothing to fear.

What then is the basis for such integration? De Witt (1991) suggests that the basis for such integration "is the belief that our life and mission is a whole, inspired by the wholeness and holiness of our Lord in whom all things owe their origin, substance, and integrity" (p.1). This belief is one rooted in the scriptures. As the Christian educator in his teaching inculcates and passes on these principles to his students, true integration of faith and learning would instinctively take place.

The model of mastery learning is one such vehicle which brings out that kind of involvement from the educator. In such

involvement would be seen the practicing ideals exemplified by Jesus Christ Himself, the Master Teacher.

INTRODUCING THE TEACHING MODEL OF MASTERY LEARNING

Teachers, who are involved in the field of education, have been plagued throughout their profession by what is called "individual differences" among children and young people – physical, home background, family, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, or differences in individuals. These stereotypes are labeled "abilities" and "aptitudes," and lead to some students being tagged as learners that are "good" or "poor," "fast" or "slow." There is also the belief that the educational system can do little except to weed out the poor learners, or make schooling as palatable as possible for them while encouraging the better learners to get as much education as possible.

History

Within the last thirty to forty years, there have been many educational and administrative innovations in an effort to help weak learners. Streaming, grouping, tracking, to name a few, have been admirably tried but proved insufficient to improve the learning of most youngsters; even curricular changes, better environments and facilities, and physical changes were tried. Teachers were given smaller classes, but it was to no avail. What has not been done is to develop practical instructional techniques/methods to go along with the innovations.

The shift in the right direction began in 1963 when John Carroll proposed a move to individualize instruction. He argues that student aptitude was essentially a concept describing the amount of time that a student need in order to learn. If teachers did not allow sufficient time for those who needed more because of lower aptitude, those students would not learn successfully. If students were encouraged to spend as much time trying to learn as they needed in order to learn, all would achieve similarly (p.725). Aptitude (time needed) would no

longer predict achievement; it would simply indicate the time
that must be spent trying to learn before achievement could be
attained. Similarly, Carroll (1971) argues that individual
students needed different kinds of instruction (p.29). Thus if
both instruction and time were adapted to the needs of the
individual students, the achievement distribution could be
changed dramatically. This theoretical model of individualize
instruction provided the base for a working model of mastery
learning as devised by Bloom (1968).

Definition and Concept

Mastery learning is not a new concept but one that was
revitalized in the last twenty-five years. It is an alternative
to the unsuccessful traditional methods of teaching and learning.
Davis and Sorrell (1995) define the concept of mastery learning
as "an alternative method of teaching and learning that involves
the student reaching a level of predetermined mastery on a unit
of instruction before being allowed to progress to the next unit"
(p.3). Through this process students achieve the same level of
content mastery, but at different intervals. In fact, based on
the concept that all students can learn when provided with
conditions appropriate to their situation, mastery learning is an
ideal way to work with potential student dropouts. Davis and
Sorrell (1995) continue, "mastery learning reduces the academic
spread between the slower and faster students without slowing
down the faster students" (p.4). Besides, the more capable
learners can be used as peer tutors. The less able students
would then be able to develop in their abilities, confidence
which allow them to achieve mastery at a faster rate.

Bloom (1968) suggests that students must be given as much
time and instruction as necessary to bring them all to a
reasonable level of learning. If some students appear to be in
danger of not learning they should be given additional
instruction until they learn (p.3). In fact, mastery learning
suggests that all students, regardless of their level, are
capable of learning once the method of teaching and the

motivation process or technique are adequate. They must, though, be given a common level ground in terms of achieving and learning.
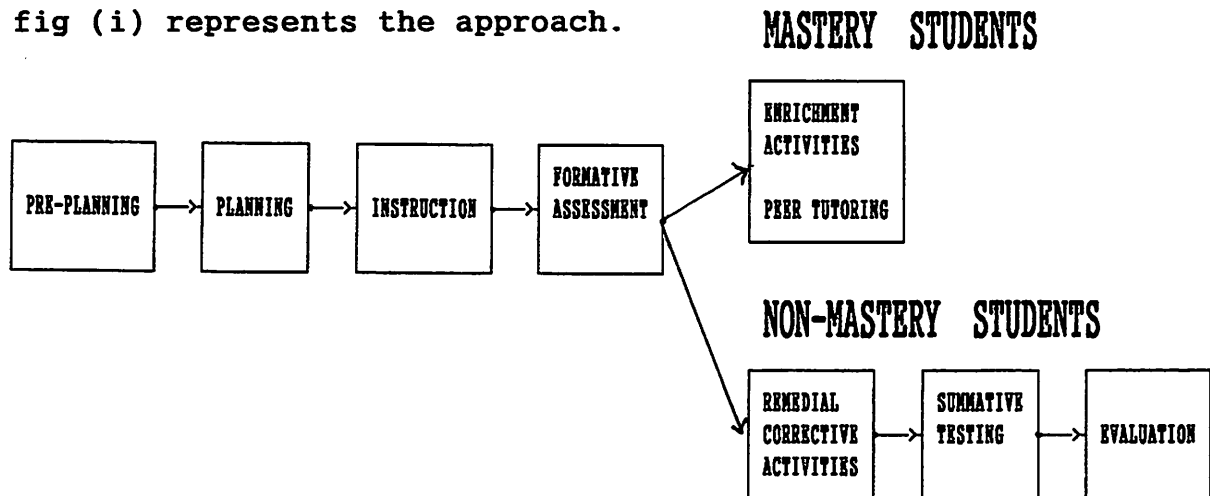
Carroll (1963) proposes, "the focus of instruction should be the time required for different students to learn a given amount of material." The author further suggests "the degree of learning is a function of time allowed, perseverance, aptitude, quality and instruction, and ability to understand instruction." (p.725-726)

Mastery learning always puts the needs and interests of the students first. Arrendondo and Block (1990) claim "teacher decision-making about learning situations is always done from the learners point-of-view" (p.5). This learning method assumes that all students have the capabilities and potential to learn. They further suggest that the basic differences among students should be measured not by how much they can learn in a fixed period, but rather how long it takes the student to learn a fixed amount of materials (p.6). This is far different in the traditional system, where research, (Bloom, 1968), has shown that only one-third of all students will adequately learn what is being taught (p.4). Such expectations lead to disastrous self-fulfilling prophecies in students. As Slavin (1991) puts it, "as instruction goes on, the rich gets richer and the poor gets poorer" (p.292-293), --is high achieving students gain more than low achievers. In contrast, mastery learning proports that as additional instruction is given to low achievers their performance can come to some semblance to that of the high achieving students. Arrendondo and Block (1990) quoting research done by Slavin (1987), and Brandt (1988) say, "mastery learning approaches almost always produce greater student achievement when compared to non-mastery ones, regardless of the subject, grade level or instructional period" (p.6).

Achievement is further enhanced with increased thinking skills, level of knowledge, and when teachers focus on higher mental processes (problem solving, application of principles, analytical skills and creativity) within the mastery learning format (Arrendondo and Block, 1990 p.7). The writers encourage

the process in the classroom by suggesting that since thinking is a knowledge-based activity, the coordination of the optimistic tenets is truly a way of teaching for thinking, thus making way for a viable-enabling education for our students (p.7). Such teaching of thinking skills will find virtually all students assuming responsibility for their own learning.

Looking further at the mastery learning model being designed for classroom situation, Ryan (1980) proposes a multi-dimensional approach. This involves pre-planning, where objects and summative tests along with desired mastery levels are set. Teacher then plans and develops initial instruction and initiate student activities. Testing is then done, not to evaluate but to help teachers decide what reteaching is needed. Enrichment activities (for those who have mastered the process) and remedial or corrective activities (for those who have not mastered the model), then follow. Lastly, there is summative testing which is used to evaluate students (p.18-19). The diagram below in fig (i) represents the approach.

MASTERY STUDENTS

PRE-PLANNING → PLANNING → INSTRUCTION → FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES
PEER TUTORING

NON-MASTERY STUDENTS

REMEDIAL CORRECTIVE ACTIVITIES → SUMMATIVE TESTING → EVALUATION

<u>Approach to Mastery Learning</u> <u>Fig (i)</u>

In order to maximize the effects of testing, tests should be announced before examination date and should be based on objectives covered. After doing the tests students should be graded carefully and promptly as possible, and tests should be discussed, and returned. Make-up examination times should be scheduled with the teacher, making himself/herself available for tutoring at least the day before the actual exam. Tests should

be used as a teaching strategy to diagnose and instruct. It must
not be used to discriminate. In that way, mastery learning
minimizes the competitive pursuits of grades and test scores. In
fact, mastery learning, even if it is structured mostly from
individual learning theories, promotes cooperation among
students, because it reduces competition that results in winners
and losers. Such conditions should allow teachers more time to
provide better instruction for slow students, who learn less
easier and slower than their peers. Brehler and Snowman (1990),
citing Carroll (1971), suggest nine learning approach. These
are:

> (a) specify what is to be learned, (b) motivate pupils to
> learn it, (c) provide instructional materials to foster
> learning, (d) present materials at a rate appropriate for
> different pupils, (e) monitor student's progress,
> (f) diagnose difficulties and provide remediation,
> (g) give praise and encouragement for good performance,
> (h) give review and practice, and (i) maintain a high rate
> of learning over a period of time (p.632).

I would like to add a tenth approach here which is the assessing
of students progress to help provide appropriate feedback for
constructive all-round improvement of the product.

Advantages of Using Mastery learning in the Classroom

The use of mastery learning in the classroom brings with it
many advantages. Six of them are documented here. Firstly,
students must have prerequisite skills to move to the next unit.
Learning would be enhanced with as little struggle as possible
from the student. Secondly, it requires teachers to do task
analysis enhancing their preparedness to each unit. Thirdly, it
requires teachers to state objectives before designating
activities. In addition, students are given precise information
about their learning progress at regular intervals throughout the
instruction module. This feedback, which is both diagnostic and
prescriptive, helps students identify what they should learn,
what they have learned well, and what they did not learn
adequately. In this way, more time can be allotted to achieve
mastery of learning. Fourthly, it can break the cycle of

failure, especially for students considered as "disadvantaged."
These at-risk students tend to become frustrated with the
seemingly endless educational cycle of repeated failures.
Mastery learning allows these students to achieve success at
their own pace, and not the teachers' pace. This can change the
perceptions of students as well as the teacher. Fifthly, slower
students are able to experience success by school standards for
the first time. These students approach learning tasks with more
enthusiasm than is normal. This leads to significant improvement
in the classroom. In addition, student attendance, involvement
in learning, and attitudes towards learning, will show
improvement. Finally, mastery learning provides a way for pupils
to learn better and feel better about themselves. Students
develop a sense of pride that affects their entire academic
outlook. They feel better about themselves and their learning in
the classroom. When students are successful in school, their
self-concept is heightened and self image is improved. This
success influences future learning and behaviour. Consequently,
when students are interested in school, at-risk factors such as
truancy and indiscipline decline.

Although the mastery learning strategy was developed during
the era of innovations, it did not join many of the others in the
innovations graveyard. Its support has grown slowly but
steadily. Various research have provided evidence that the
strategy does improve school learning for most students. The
innovation is more alive than ever today because it provides a
means of helping students to achieve the competencies they are
required or expected to acquire.

CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO MASTERY LEARNING

"The goal of mastery learning is success for the student"
(Davies and Sorrell, 1991 p.2). Success can only come about when
there is a deliberate effort from each student to perform his
best, based on his potential. Christian education seeks to bring
out the best in every student. George Knight (1980) affirms
"every student is, in Christian perspective, an individual

potential" (p.226). Ellen White (1952) speaking of Christ says, "in every human being He discerned infinite possibilities" (p.80).

Practicing of mastery learning techniques leads to mastery teaching on the part of the teacher. The goal of integrating faith and learning requires that mode of teaching. It is in this kind of teaching that the student is brought in focus with the plan of salvation. Ellen White (1952) supports this when she says, "the work of education and the work of redemption [salvation] are one" (p.80). Knight (1980) echoes the thought when he suggests that the teacher should become an agent in the great plan of redemption (p.188).

To reach mastery teaching, there must be equality on the part of the teacher as interaction takes place in the classroom with his/her students. The practicing teacher of mastery learning sees each student as being equal and having potential. The Apostle Paul confirms this equality, "for ye are all one in Christ" (Ephesians 3:28). Christ Himself saw all men as equal. He always treated His disciples as equals, even when on one occasion James and John requested to be close to His side. There was another occasion (Matthew 13: 48-50) when He even equalled His mother and brothers to His disciples. Here the equality message was seen and demonstrated by the Master Teacher Himself. As the Christian teacher sees all students as equal, class, race, abilities, socio-economic background would not be criteria for labelling or being partial to any student. Ellen White (1952) cautions teachers when she said, "under no circumstances should the teacher manifest partiality" (p.280).

Mastery learning seeks to have the student reach a predetermined mastery on a unit of work before going on to a more difficult task. Ellen White (1952) also suggests the same principle when she emphasized that students must not be forced, but be allowed to learn at their own pace (p.288). Even Christ in His dealings with the disciples worked with them at their own pace. He took some of them as ordinary fishermen, and molded them into stalwart disciples, to continue His ministry.

Through the use of confidence-building techniques and

activities in the classroom, mastery learning strategies reduce
the gap between slower and faster students. That principle was
very much evident in Christ dealings with His disciples. Peter,
the uneducated fisherman, and Luke, the doctor, were all able to
work together to fulfill Christ's mandate of spreading the
gospel. The patience of Christ towards Peter resulted in his
increase confidence, so that later he actually became the
spokesman for the disciples. Teachers patterning their teaching
styles after mastery teaching will especially be patient with
slower students. Ellen White (1943) confirms this when she says,
"teachers need great patience [when dealing] with slow students"
(p.177).

Another principle in the teaching model of mastery learning
is that all students, once motivated, can learn and feel better
about themselves. In His ministry on earth, Christ demonstrated
numerous incidents of that principle. One that stands out is His
dealings with Zaccheus (Luke 19: 2-10). Zaccheus had quite a low
self-esteem until Christ invited Himself to Zaccheus's home.
Christ saw in Zaccheus the potential to learn and to be a good
follower or disciple. Ellen White (1952) notes that "Christ
discern[ed] the possibilities in every human being" (p.232).
Christian educators should model their teaching after this
principle. Each student must be seen with all the potential
he/she possesses, just waiting for an avenue for release. It is
the duty Christian teacher to make their students feel they have
worth and value. Through such motivating effort on the part of
the Christian teacher, the real potential of each student will be
seen and realized.

Putting the needs and interests of the student first, is one
of the hallmarks of mastery learning. Christ, the Master
Teacher, was always interested in the needs of others. On one
occasion while walking through a corn field on the sabbath, He
plucked corn and gave to His disciples. (Mark 2: 23-28) Even if
the decision was an unpopular one among the Pharisees, He was
more concern about the hunger needs of His disciples than what
would have been said by the Pharisees. Christian teachers, in
order to better reach and help students effectively, must have

the needs and interests of students in the classroom as a priority. For quality learning to take place, there must be genuine concern for the needs of "others" especially when that need may be a hinderance to the learning process. Besides, the Christian teacher must be able to justify whatever is done in the classroom. The teacher must be able to defend his/her position the same way Christ had to defend His position in the cornfield as He was taking care of the needs of His disciples.

Mastery learning suggests that all students, regardless of their level, once motivated, would assume responsibility for their own learning, and be capable of that learning. The Master Teacher was in the forefront in practicing those principles. In the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10: 38-42) it was most evident. Christ motivated Martha through a slight rebuke and by focusing her attention to her sister Mary. Through that action, she was to assume responsibility for her learning by prioritizing her action. He did not discourage her by mentioning her mistakes but actually told Martha that she was capable of learning if she would just leave what she was doing and listen to the Master Teacher. Ellen White (1952) reiterates the fact that "all students can learn" (p.208) regardless of their circumstances. She continues, "teachers must bear patiently with dull students." (p.420) since "dull students need more encouragement" (p.192). White further emphasizes "teachers should not discourage students when they make mistakes" (p.481). The Christian educator should always seek to bring out the best from all students, regardless who the students are, or their circumstances or academic potential.

The teaching model of mastery learning is one which the teacher seeks to bring out from students the higher mental processes. This process was brought out very clearly in the incident with the disciples on the boat, across the sea of Galilee. The disciples were experiencing a great tempest at sea. After exhausting all resources, they turned to the Master problem-solver to calm the storm (Matthew 8:23-26). Teachers, in an effort to help students develop their mental processes must give them a chance to work out or think through on their own

problem first. Having guided them, they must go through a step
by step approach, seeking solutions to their own or any given
problems. As this process is followed on a personal level,
learning will automatically take place.

Related to this process is the privilege students get to
acquire greater achievement through increased thinking skills.
Mastery learning as a teaching model seeks to inspire each
student through such a process. The aim here is to have each
student go through a developmental activity, which at each level,
would produce some measure of increased achievement. The
encounter of the woman of Samaria (John 4:7-26) with Jesus by the
well is an example of the Master Teacher leading one of His
students through a lesson involving thinking skills. At each
stage the student asks questions which is met with an answer and
a further lesson to induce more inquiry. Her thinking skills,
questions and responses from Jesus led her to come to a
conclusion at each level of questioning. This produced greater
achievement of learning at each stage. Ellen White (1952) says
that our students should be taught "to be thinkers" (p.18). The
Christian educator can pattern this principle from Christ.
Students must not be "spoon-fed" in our classes. They must be
able to move from one level of thinking skills to a higher level
of thinking skills. Whether it be cognitive, affective or
psychomotor skills involved, there must be increased student
achievement at each stage, ensuing that progressive learning will
result.

The last principle of mastery learning to be focused on is
based on the thought that students assume responsibility for
their own learning while they achieve it at their own pace. The
Master Teacher demonstrated this principle in His dealings with
the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22). The young man came to
Jesus and asked a question. The Master Teacher skillfully asked
him a series of questions which as the rich young ruler answered,
gave him his own answers. The young man, first of all, learned
at his own pace, and secondly, assumed responsibility for his
learning, since he provided his own answers.

The Christian educator would do well to pattern his/her

methods after the Master Teacher. Educational research has shown that most learning takes place when it is initiated by the learner. The teacher needs to induce that measure of confidence in his/her students knowing too well that it would trigger off and sustain the learning process.

Outcome

Looking at the mastery learning model of teaching, and seeing it being supported in many ways by the teachings and directives of the Master Teacher, there seems to be a common thread running through: Christ personalized teaching with the varying elements of the teaching process being exemplified. Referring to Christ, Ellen White (1952) declares, "What He taught, He lived ... in His life, Christ's words had perfect illustration and support. And more than this; what He taught, He was" (p.78). Christ individualized learning by setting objectives, carrying out processes, evaluating, practicing reinforcement and feedback. These are all principles associated with mastery learning to produce the desired outcomes, and I doubt if any better example of the integration of faith and learning in the interaction of the teacher with the student can be found.

Mastery learning, for the student that has or is acquiring mastery in the classroom, is in fact exemplifying and integrating faith in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

One of the prominent issues in Christian higher education today is the issue of biblical integration or the integration of faith with the teaching and learning process. To achieve such a coalition, the teacher must be equipped and cognizant of the method of biblical integration that are inter-related to learning theories in education. The goal of such integration is to bring each student to maturity in Christ.

The success or failure of the educational system depends, to

a large measure, on the teacher. He/she determines whether
integration takes place or not, and even decides on the kind of
integration. Ellen White (1923) recognizing the fact that one is
unable to speak or teach out of a vacuum, notes, the personal
habits, principles and moral strength of a teacher are more
important than his academic qualification (p.19). The teacher,
because of his teaching, influence and example, is looked upon as
a character-shaper and a mind-molder. In the final analysis, if
students are to integrate both faith and learning and make them
an active part of their life, the teacher must be an effective
mediator of both. The teacher who is unwilling or unable to
integrate in practice can effect far-reaching consequences to the
spiritual and Christ-centered intellectual development of
students.

Most teachers in the educational system today are
apprehensive of the process of integration of faith and learning.
The integration of faith and learning is not only a concept of
relating certain portions of subject matter to spiritual
thoughts, using lavish biblical illustrations into academic
classwork, nor is it beginning each class with prayer or mini
sermonettes. It is the means by which the knowledge of God is
passed on through the teacher himself. It means that the
teacher's life must be so inspired with a Christ-centered world
view that it is evident in every aspect of his life. Gabelein
(1976) sums it up when he said, "the most effective way to
integrate every subject of study with Christianity is through
teachers with a genuine Christian world view" (p.36). In a
fitting example, Christ said, "And for them I sanctify myself
that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:
19)

Mastery learning, in this essay, has been described as a
teaching model, which, by its very mode of functioning aids the
teacher in performing tasks which, by their very simple nature,
would be integrating faith in the learning process.

The teacher education programme at the college setting is
now faced with a two-fold task. Firstly, to have its
teachers/lecturers versed in the teaching model of mastery

learning, and secondly, be able to influence teacher-trainees to go to the primary and secondary school classrooms and to execute mastery learning teaching techniques to the students that come under their care.

If this paper would have helped at least one person, teacher or teacher-trainee, to be more capable to reflect the Master Teacher in the classroom, its function would have been fulfilled.

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