Contextualization for Social Change

Derrick Snow

Omega Graduate School

December 8, 2023

Professor

David Moser

Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course. The Learning Journal integrates the essential elements of the course within your professional field of interest. The objective of the course journal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to communicate with your professor insights gained as a result of the course. The course learning journal should be 3-5 pages in length and should include the following sections:

1. Introduction –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.

2. Personal Growth - Describe your personal growth–how the course stretched or challenged you– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the week and through subsequent readings – what new insights or skills you gained.

3. Reflective Entry - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or adaptation and relevant application) of new learning in your professional field. What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your study?

4. Conclusion – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional, religious, and educational goals.

Introduction

This course of Contextualization for Social Change has been the conceptual application of Christian contextualization being “the process whereby Christians adapt the forms, content, and praxis of the Christian faith to communicate it to the minds and hearts of people with other cultural backgrounds” (Boubakar, 2015, p.7), that could be geared toward missiology, but moreover in social research from a Christian perspective. For Christians to make positive social change they need to understand the cultural/subcultural context they are working within not only that Christians need to sympathize with the people in that culture/subculture. What this provides is a sincere interest in the people we are contextualizing to and thus the transformational message may be more widely received. The apostle Paul put it nicely in 1 Corinthians.

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Personal Growth

I was pleased to be able to focus my studies on the sociology of religion, which applies to this course very well. In my sociological background I understand that culture is foundational to people’s beliefs and lives, and in order to connect with people we must have some kind of understanding of the cultural context they exist within. Likewise, with contextualization the need to openly learn and have a sincere interest in the people within a culture/subculture before the contextualization takes place. I was able to learn more about the sociology of religion through this course, this curse allowed me the opportunity to use the sociology of religion and apply it to the concept of contextualization for social change, mainly in light of Christian gospel contextualization.

I really appreciated the conversation we had about OGS and my feeling of whether or not OGS was the right program, given that it seems to be a ministry focus, from my limited experience. Not that is bad for it to be ministry focused, I think that is great and I know that a social science perspective is exactly what the church needs, I think we as the church have a lack of understanding of people, society, culture, and social phenomena. It is just, that I am called with the vocation of social research, and though there may be an aspect of ministry, I just have a different job to do than others who are called into the ministry. You have reassured me that this program does fit what I am seeking. I do appreciate the flexibility to focus on our different topics in courses. I remember in some type of meeting, and I am unsure of the context, but Dr. Ward mentioned to “trust the process” at OGS, that is what I am relying on, that these other types of courses will make me the social researcher God wants me to be. Now don’t get me wrong, I really appreciate OGS and its mission, but sometimes I feel out of place, where students are learning how to become social scientists, whereas I am already one through my past education and career, thus questioned whether OGS was the right program for me. Nevertheless, OGS is exactly what I have seen the need for in our Christian community, it is like OGS mission is what my mission has been to utilize the tools of sociology/social research to support the church in its calling of the gospel and to have Christian make positive social change, and in order to do that we must understand the social dynamics of our social world. I am happy and grateful to be part of OGS and will trust the process and trust that I am where God wants me to be.

Reflective Entry

This course allowed me to focus on the sociology of religion and the importance for Christians to take a step back from their faith and look at it from an outsider's perspective. This allows us to see possible barriers outsiders may see, and then in our contextualization, we could address those barriers, as well as it helps us place ourselves in the outsider’s shoes, to be able to sympathize with their cultural context, and allows for productive contextualization. In studying social science we tend to get this sense of cultural relativism, where we can see people within their own cultural and historical context, as opposed to ethnocentrism where we judge other cultures based on our own culture (we are civilized, they are savages), this is not to say that we must accept everything they may do in their culture as right, but it does provide us the context of why they may belief in certain concepts or practices.

Conclusion

This course provided me with a great opportunity to apply the sociology of religion to the course topic of contextualization. I thank you for your course and am always happy to find you as my professor for the course. I thought the resources you provided for the course were well put together and helpful. Contextualization is very important not only in Christian presentation, but also in sociology, in particular in public sociology.

WORKS CITED

Sanou, Boubakar, *New Testament Precedents to the Practice of Contextualization in Contemporary Mission* (2015). Faculty Publications. 473.

NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible (John. H. Walton, Graig S. Keener). (2016). Zondervan.