

Global Perspectives: A Meeting of Leaders in Amsterdam

by Steve Hawthorne

The Perspectives Global Desk convened a consultation of mission mobilizers who have been involved in mission mobilization by education. The particular focus was upon how the Perspectives course has been adapted in other languages and lands with a view toward how it can be done effectively in many more settings. The gathering took place April 24-26, 2003 in Amsterdam.

The meeting emerged out of an earlier conversation of three leaders who had agreed to invite a few others to join them with the help of the newly formed Perspectives Global Desk at the USCWM. It was not intended to be an exhaustive representation of leaders who are working to adapt the Perspectives course. But the fourteen leaders who attended did represent efforts to adapt the bundle of missiological vision found in the Perspectives course in Asia, Africa, Australia/New Zealand, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America. Some participants were just beginning their efforts, but most had been involved in this work for many years.



Fourteen leaders met in Amsterdam to work together to encourage development of movements which convey the vision of Perspectives in strategic languages and lands.

Examining Our Roots

The opening session reviewed the story of how the course was initially developed. The course, conceived and developed by Ralph Winter, had always been framed around the realities of history. Early course designers working with Winter had realized that the scripture passages supporting mission were even more powerfully seen as a single unfolding story. Linking that biblical story with the history of the advance of the Christian movement, with the strategic imperative of finishing world evangelization, has made the essential vision of the Perspectives course a matter of God fulfilling His global purpose. The course is not a matter of presenting facts with challenge about the desperate need. It has always been a course about the sure hope of God’s purposes being fulfilled. In its later rendition, this feature is even more brightly presented. Another radical feature of the course was that it was not just for aspiring missionaries. This vision was seen from the start as something which could bring integration and significance to every Christian’s life.

A Mutual Learning Process

Nearly a full day was given to reviewing eight different case studies which exemplified the diverse ways that the Perspectives course and its derivative courses, have attempted to contextualize the course. Case studies were presented from Nigeria, India, New Zealand/Australia, Korea, and Latin America. Other case studies included reports on the Condensed World Mission course in the Philippines and beyond, the World Mission course as it was initially developed for use in schools, and how the course materials are being developed for non/semi-literate people. The case studies exposed participants to a wide array of cultural and educational challenges and creative innovations.



We reviewed the programs underway and at one point used a map to consider how to support fresh initiatives.

Seeking to Serve Multiple Curricula

The launch of the Perspectives Global Desk (PGD) was announced. The Perspectives Global Desk is a circle of leaders of the USCWM who aim to encourage and support *Perspectives* study programs and mission mobilization efforts based on *Perspectives* in strategic settings beyond North America. The PGD hopes to serve as a reference point and clearinghouse for inquiries about what plans and programs are underway. The PGD will seek to help course initiators and adapters with development documents and consultation to assist in the development of "Perspectives" curricula, both standard and specialized derivatives. The latest version of the first of the development documents, called "Core Ideas," was distributed and discussed. The value of using multiple curricula in the same setting was a major point of

agreement. The PGD presented the great value of using two or more curricula in the same setting in order to reach different audiences or impact the same people with introductory or follow-on materials. In light of this affirmation of the value of different curricula for different audiences, the group seemed to rise with hope and unity toward a vision of conveying the core content of the Perspectives course in diverse ways using different formats and styles. When someone expressed the idea that there seemed to be a “Perspectives family” of curricula, it seemed to perfectly describe the mood and shared goals of the participants. There remains a concern for the use of the name “Perspectives” because of the confusion of having multiple curricula in given context identified as “Perspectives.” Participants recognized the right of the USCWM to maintain the content integrity of the standard Perspectives course. Shared vision to serve the emerging churches and mission structures far outweighed the still important concerns about content differences.

Looking Forward with Hope

At the close of the first day, participants offered suggestions about how time could be best spent during the remaining hours. As a result, the remaining unscheduled sessions the following day were focused on dealing with the challenges and opportunities of furthering mission education courses. Time was spent reviewing the major languages of instruction and commerce as possible indicators of future course development. While poring over an outspread global map, dozens of initiatives presently underway were noted in order to more clearly identify which languages and lands would be most strategic for new efforts.

Discussion intensified during the final hours while working over what kind of tools would be most helpful to deal with the enormously different contexts of education, finances, anti-Christian hostility, and many more. Ideas were exchanged about using different media, different classroom and instructor arrangements. One session reviewed some of the intricacies of publishing and distributing materials. The overall focus was on the future and how course developers, coordinators and initiators could become resourceful to one another.

The collegial friendship that emerged will certainly accelerate efforts to multiply appropriate forms of mission mobilization by education. Momentum carried forward as dates and settings were identified for a larger, more comprehensive gathering of “Perspectives” course developers in early December. Much more effort will be made to invite many more course developers. The emphasis will be primarily upon how the Perspectives course itself can be developed, but much time will be given to developing supporting, introductory, or follow-on courses as well.