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Approaches to ministerial formation in theological education in South Africa

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Abstract

The purpose of theological education is essentially the equipping of men and women for appropriate leadership and ministry within churches and associate institutions. This time is crucial for ministers in encouraging a mature development of occupational and personal identity and enabling a coherent understanding of role and function in ministry. However in forming ministers for service different emphases of approaches to theology are used along a continuum, where theological institutions involved in academic and or ministerial education in theological education may be operating with a variety of understandings as to what theology is and how theology, learning and learner relate. This article raises critical questions about what is required for faithful teaching and learning and how the choice of practitioner or academic educational method impacts on the formation of the theological students.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of theological education is essentially the equipping of men and women for appropriate leadership and ministry within churches and associate institutions. Ministers arrive at an understanding of their role through the complex interrelationship of responses from peer group influence, congregational, community and institutional role expectancy and professional training. The influence of the training experience is therefore a key factor in determining role understanding and ministerial practice, effectiveness and "success". This process of equipping is termed ministerial formation – the provision of what is needed to form theological students into people with the appropriate blend

of qualities which will enable them to work effectively in their communities (Harkness 2001:142).

In the new South Africa, theological education has already seen significant developments with the process of rationalisation within educational and ecclesiastical institutions (Richardson 2007), new accreditation standards and the impact of globalization (Werner 2009: 260).The increased levels of institutional change have contributed to the volatility of the environment in which theological institutions function. Each institution's struggle with identity – the definition, purpose and mission; the creation and abandonment of programmes; and the search for fiscal stability have profoundly affected the practice of teaching and learning. While restructuring and closure have been some of the responses to the crisis, another significant response has been to force a financial review of theological education. As a response to the crisis, many seminaries and Bible colleges are looking for "partners", especially among universities. The positive effect of these movements will hopefully be stronger ecumenical cooperation with various denominations participating together. However, some people have legitimate fears that the wheeling-and-dealing has lead to a "lowering of standards" in theological education (Maluleke 1998:14). In spite of the changing landscape of higher education, the increasing demand for theological education is also causing church authorities and educators to reconsider the product of theological education, to do more with less and hence the growing emphasis on theological learning as formation (Percy 2010). However, in formation for a professional career in Christian service different emphases of approaches to education are used along a continuum, where theological institutions involved in academic and or ministerial education in theological

education may be operating with a variety of understandings as to what theology is and how it is learned. This raises critical questions about what is required for faithful teaching and learning and it is worth exploring how this impacts on the professional formation of theological students. But before that few points of clarity on formation are necessary.

THE CONCEPT OF FORMATION

The word "formation" comes from the Latin word formosus meaning bringing out the beauty of each person, and is explained by Vatican II (1965) as "true education (aims at) the formation of the human person, in the pursuit of his final end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share"(Gravissimum educationis 3). It is personal and relational formation which seeks to promote encounter and cooperation with God and society as a whole. Formation is a life-long process of becoming, of being formed and developed in the likeness of Christ (Col 1:28; Rom 12:2) "suggests that the inner being of a person is radically altered so that he or she is no longer the same" (Dettoni 1994:15). Along with the more frequently used term "transformation," both a process and a contrast are suggested. People are constantly in a process of formation in their families, congregations and faith traditions and through society at large. Formation occurs inside and outside formal education. What is true is that students enter theological institutions deeply rooted in local subcultures; they are influenced by the values of advertising and popular culture, and have internalised prevailing views on race, gender, social and economic class and religious diversity. Likewise, when they leave these institutions they will have other experiences that will continue to impact on their formation.

The term "formation" has a range of meanings in different contexts. Formation is a category largely adapted from the Roman Catholic experience, which in itself emerged from the monastic tradition of guiding individuals into a particular tradition of Christian discipleship. The Roman Catholic tradition has a sacramental conception of ministry as priesthood. Formation of priests takes place through the provision of programmes and resources organised around clear institutional goals which embrace four key dimensions (Schuth 1999:27), namely, human formation (compassion, integrity, affective maturity), intellectual formation (the habitus of theology integrated with spirituality), spiritual formation (prayer, liturgy and pastoral care) and pastoral formation (involving missions). The fourth edition of the Program of Priestly Formation, 1993, highlighted the need for a new emphasis on priestly identity with the insistence that the priesthood is unique in the church and therefore ought to have its own specialised programmes of learning and formation (Schuth 1999:29).

Within Protestant theological education, the expression of the three major dimensions of formation may be summarised as a cognitive or intellectual apprenticeship, a practical apprenticeship of skill and an apprenticeship of spiritual or character formation (Harkness 2001:142). However, effective integration of the three aspects has seldom been achieved in the Protestant seminary (Farley 1983; Wood 1985; Kelsey 1993; Banks 1999). Faculty members are well aware of the difficulty of balancing these three dimensions within the curriculum in theological institutions. For many years, administrators and teaching staff have been searching for ways to integrate the theoretical and practical disciplines (Cannell 2006:34). More than a decade ago the question of how to include spiritual

formation was brought into the discussion (Lindbeck et al 1980).

Many schools of theology are again envisioning theological education as a formational activity; an activity based on the assumption that the student's personal appropriation of theology is the most central aspect of theological education (Warford 2007; Marshall 2009; Percy 2010). Education is no longer perceived in terms of function and role or the transmission and absorption of information – instead it has become an ontological activity in which the primary goal is human development (Jarvis 2001). This has already involved a significant paradigm shift from pure education to training (Le Cornu 2003:15) intended to equip students with the ability and skills to perform a range of tasks. Reasons for the intentionality in formational practices point to reports that interpersonal and relational deficits[4] are associated with the vast majority of psychological and spiritual problems faced by pastors (Francis & Jones 1996; Hall 1997; Barna 2006) together with the growing awareness of professional misconduct by some clergy (Senior & Weber 1994:26). Also, the dislocation of traditional family life and the decline in church participation among many young people, particularly in mainline church traditions, results in many students having little sense of the history, customs and ethos of religious communities that they feel called to lead. Theological students also need to become aware that ministry in the form of ministerial leadership is a public and not a private role. Consequently, students must attune to the

[4] The George Barna Research Group conducted research in 2006 among a nationwide sample of Protestant pastors in the US and found, among other things, that 61% struggle with relational dynamics and expectations in personal relationships even though they felt confident in ministry. It was found that pastors need tools and methods to evaluate themselves and their ministries as candidly and accurately as possible (www.barna.org)

issues of behaviour and accountability also required of those who enjoy the community's trust. This requires some degree of psychological, anthropological and sociological understanding, as well as a theological grasp of the human condition before God (Van der Ven 1998:171). It requires insight and penetration and a multitude of other personal qualities which rest upon one's self-knowledge and on the character of one's spiritual life.

The word "formation" is also used widely in higher education, both secular and theological education. In higher education generally, the debate on "formation" hovers around the integration of three aims: preparation for work, development of analytical thinking and critical reflection, and induction into a culture of ongoing and creative learning (Overend 2007). This is seen in the professions of medicine, law and engineering. However, in theological education the Christian vision understands "formation" to mean the development of character with the context of the church's life. Of course, this implies a context wider than that of any training institution. It must also happen among the people of God where people are socialized into the Christian way of life.

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY

In the classical Greek version of education, the name given to the desired pedagogical outcome was *paideia*, meaning "schooling", "culturing", "character-forming" and "education or training of a whole person" (Neuhaus 1992:70). Within the universities of Christendom this was religiously understood as "virtue." However, since the early nineteenth century, the "virtue" goal of liberal education for academic and scholarly teachers of religion has been scientific objectivity, personal detachment and public knowledge open to debate. This

Berlin model of theological education, *Wissenschaft,* featured the integrity of rigorous, critical, research-informed theorising on the one hand, and the application of theology in practice for the sake of professional education on the other (Kelsey 1993). Thus, in practical theology the socially indispensable practice of church leadership is given cognitive and theoretical foundation by *Wissenschaft* (historical and philosophical theology). Theology could be included in a research university by maintaining the interdependence between education for *Wissenschaft* and professional education. This bipolarity was the central structure of the "Berlin" type of excellent theological education (Kelsey, 1993: 18).The result was professional education cast increasingly in functional and individualistic terms, and academic education increasingly focused on research (Kelsey 1993).

In the 1980s Edward Farley's influential *Theologia* called for a reform of theological education aimed at challenging the lost unity between knowledge and discipline as shared aspects of the nature of theology. Farley was concerned that theology's acceptance of the objective scientific method as the locus of knowledge has reduced theological education to elaborating techniques of ministry, resulting in a "clericalization of practice." Farley (1983:96) charts the fragmentation of "clergy education" through two stages: rationalistic challenges to authority stemming from the Enlightenment combined with the pursuit of "theological encyclopaedia" to de-couple the study of theology from *theologia.* As a result, theological sciences may be (and are) pursued apart from a context of faith. This decoupling effect was universalized by acceptance of the fourfold pattern: Bible, church history, dogmatics and practical theology for theological education. Farley (1983) dates the current period

in clergy education from the 1940s. At that time seminaries became concerned that the education they offered was not preparing graduates for the tasks assigned by their congregations. This resulted in curriculum changes which Farley identified as "the functionalist form of the clerical paradigm". This path to renewal of theological education entailed a more detailed analysis of the tasks of the pastor and a more careful preparation for clerical roles. Although intended to close the divide between theological institution and the church, the effect was to widen it (Stackhouse1988, Banks 1999).

In contemporary literature the most pressing challenge affecting the practice of ministerial formation is the consensus that theological education is in a crisis (Stackhouse 1988:135; Kelsey 1993; Banks 1999:1–13; Cannell 2006: 35–43). Concerns about the state of theological education persists: the curriculum is specialised and fragmented, and therefore hinders equipping leaders adequately; a coherent purpose and compelling vision for theological education are lacking; historically, efforts to integrate the curriculum around theology have been lost; theology itself is undefined, fragmented, rationalised and specialised; theory and practice are in perpetual tension; and education is not sufficiently concerned with learning. The analysis of the problem (Cannell 2006:36) shows that theological institutions have failed to produce the desired product (a skilled leader), or that the purpose of theology is not understood[5] and therefore the theological curriculum is

[5] The literature presents various perspectives as to the purpose of theological education: the nature and reform of theology to restore the unity of theology (Farley 1983); the mission and purpose of the church (Hough & Cobb 1985); the development of vision and discernment in theology (Wood 1985); the professional image of the ministry (Glasse 1988); the nature of Christian witness (Kelsey 1992); and the missional model (Banks 1999).

in disarray with minimal integration among the disciplines and a tendency to functionalism.[6]

EDUCATION FOR MINISTERIAL FORMATION

There are many ways to approach the concept of ministerial formation. Ballard and Pritchard (1996:57–70) offer four "models of practical theology" which include the applied theory, critical correlation, praxis and *habitus* model. While all four models are used in the church, the model of critical correlation represents the focus of how academia tends to engage with theology internationally, bringing methods of a wide range of disciplines of enquiry into dialogue with theology and ecclesiastical practice. In South African universities, it is the critical correlation and contextual models that are well established. The concept of ministerial formation is embedded in the *habitus* model in which the theological training institution as a distinctive and historical community fosters values through shared discipleship, forming a "disposition of the heart" of the student (1996:69).[7] Over a continuum, on one side are areas of ministerial formation, an embodied reflective wisdom tradition while on

[6] In *Theologia* Farley (1983:29–124) argues that the standard theological curriculum is a haphazard collection of studies that has been handed down from earlier periods and is now entrenched in separate academic guilds. The pieces cannot be fitted together from any vantage point because the disciplines we have now were never part of the larger whole in the first place. What once held theological study together has been lost, that is *theologia* (a sapiential knowledge of God which disposes the knower to God and deeply informs the knower for Christian life and ministry). Theology as "habitus of wisdom" has shifted to the "clerical paradigm" which is made up of critical methodologies without the material unity that *theologia* provided.

[7] Ballard and Pritchard note their indebtedness for this to Farley (1983:35–36). Farley argued that seminary curricula lack the *habitus* of theology. He seems to mean that every person of faith is constantly searching out God's will. Such a search of God's will is immediately related to personal faith and to the study of Scripture.

the other are ideals of liberal education (Overend 2007:134). Both paradigms are present in every institution of theological education to greater or lesser extents, often with some degree of internal dissonance. Each type of education has definite implications regarding a number of features of theological education, such as the relation between teachers and students, the characteristics looked for in an excellent teacher, what the education aims do for the student, what the movement of the course of study should be, and the sort of community the school should be (Kelsey, 1993:6).

Within an exclusive *habitus* community, teachers and students would normally share a similar faith commitment. Regular attendance of community worship services would be expected of teaching staff and students alike, whilst "spiritual" growth would be an explicit aspiration for both. Academic study is likely to be valued and undertaken as an expression and outworking of the shared faith meta-narrative. Some aspects of the faith meta-narrative are likely to be deemed authoritative and beyond question. Part of the role of teaching staff is to offer spiritual support and to model a mature outworking of their own faith commitment.

Within an exclusively academic community teachers and students may or may not uphold a personal faith commitment. Attendance of any acts of worship organized within or without the department or institution would be optional, and likely to be the object of rigorous and critical study. Where an academic community was responsible for ministerial training, public worship and other aspects of church life would be a source of theory used to inform professional practice. The key task of teachers would be to develop the critical scholarship of students -all aspects of faith would be subjected to rigorous questioning. Teachers'

roles would be restricted to developing research and academic knowledge and skills.

Although all professions struggle to reduce the gap between what the "community of education" provides and what the "community of service" wants, closing this gap poses special problems for theological institutions (Williams 1998). Not only are theological institutions expected to provide an education with intellectual integrity and practical applications, they are also expected to guard the faith. Conrad Cherry's (1995) historical study of divinity schools, *Hurry Toward Zion*, documents this ongoing struggle between intellect and piety. It is the struggle between guarding the free inquiry and scientific objectivity revered by scholars and protecting the beliefs and religious traditions values by the local churches.

Here we see ministerial training (Warford 2007; Marshall 2009) emphasise a way of inhabiting the Christian theological tradition which forms personality and character, relationship and leadership qualities, faith and spirituality and in which wisdom marries the pursuit of intellectual inquiry with holiness of living. By contrast, academia emphasises the development of knowledge and cognitive skills (evaluative, analytical and critical skills) of the student. Both of course take place within reflective traditions of inquiry: the former consciously and deliberately takes place from within an ecclesiastical theological tradition, which it questions, evaluates and challenges, and the latter from within its own philosophical and cultural tradition. Both ministerial formation and academic education also have a mind to the skills development of the student for ministry deployment and both are concerned with transformational learning. These similarities make conceivable the possibility of forming partnerships between the practitioner and

academic institutions, the Church and the university (Overend 2007). Yet what distinguishes these practitioner and academic models of theology, at the opposite ends of a continuum of approaches to studying theology, are different ideas of how theology[8], learning and learner[9] relate.

CHALLENGES OF LIBERAL ACADEMIC EDUCATION

Since the time of Schleiermacher, many have espoused the notion that theological scholarship can be completely or largely detached from concerns related to the faith commitment of the theological student, which has led to the question of what is "theological" about theological education (Kelsey 1992). The rise of philosophical rationalism and confidence in the physical sciences led on to a scientific and secular positivism. The "Berlin' paradigm did not recognize overarching authority from any quarter including that of theology. This was further embedded by the culture of academic freedom promoted by the new university. "Freedom to learn" – *Lernfreiheit* – and "freedom to teach – *Lehrfreiheit* – were its mottos. Any attempt to restrict the scope of scholarly debate or questioning because of some

[8] For example there are different ideas of the human person involved in theology as the model of perfect personhood from Christ (Thatcher 1998:73-82) described as the "dogmatic" model of theological reflection (Watkins 1996:36-50). There is also the notion of theological anthropology and developmental theory where humans do not simply move toward a specific objective that becomes the goal of life; rather there is a fluidness to life and there are multiple identities embodied in Christian ministry (Cooper-White 2009).

[9] John Hull using the method of critical correlation states that autonomy or critical openness is an essential attribute of personhood (1990:313) which should move Christian learning away from its associations with authoritarianism and indoctrination (1990:308-309) and embrace critique and evolve as a tradition. However, Paul Overend argues that Hull does not offer a theological critique of autonomy, and questions whether autonomy is as essential to the Christian vision of personhood as inter-dependence or dependence on God as understood within the life of the Church (2007:137).

esoteric theological pre-supposition (or superstition) was not acceptable! *Paideia* was also recognized to be critical, in that "it involved testing what was studied for clarity, logical validity, and coherence" (Cannell 2006:98).

In this model of liberal education critical inquiry focuses simultaneously on questions about the subject being researched and on questions about the method of research to discover as directly as possible the truth about the origin, effects, and essential nature of "Christian" phenomena. The focus is on the development of a critical perspective in students, creating a commitment to the necessity of interrogating all religious knowledge to avoid distortion and to seek after the essence of faith. In this way students develop knowledge, understanding, vision and normative patterns to guide the church. An understanding of church leadership and the skills needed are acquired in theological education through a variety of courses, practicums and field engagements. Those who follow this model often say that one cannot be trained in church activities, but should instead be schooled in how to study critically. However, students often experience fragmentation and wrestle with combining the academic and vocational perspectives. They describe their overall academic experiences as "traditional" and "theoretical" approaches to teaching and learning which rely heavily on imparting knowledge and developing their minds (Foster et al 2006). The teaching and learning process depends mostly on teachers' lectures in the classroom, followed by assessment and examination that rely on memorisation. This training methodology in universities and the conception of ministry operates essentially individualistically and encourages competition. Such a dependence on individual patterns of learning and behaving does profound psychological damage to the individual

ministers and to the church system as a whole (Mascakill 2000) as it does not foster an enabling, interpersonal, mutual and corporate model of ministry.

University faculties have also become so diversified that theological disciplines are no longer able to converse meaningfully with one another. Each discipline has its own methodology and language, and loses its capacity to reflect on a common goal and concern in contributing to forming effective ministers. Furthermore, the openness of the curriculum itself aids the "consumer mentality" of culture, thus reinforcing the character and values of students and frustrating the theological faculty's attempt to form them if desired (Neuhaus 1992:117). It would be difficult to seek to instil a specific *habitus* among theology students in a university classroom where similar church backgrounds or at least shared vocational trajectories cannot be assumed. Teachers are appointed less for their personal capacities to be midwife of students' coming to an understanding of God and of themselves; rather the focus is on the ability to cultivate capacities for scholarly research in others (Kelsey, 1993: 22–23).

Farley was concerned that theology's acceptance of the objective scientific method as the locus of knowledge has reduced theological education to elaborating techniques of ministry, resulting in a "clericalization of practice." As an antidote, he proposed mending the rift between knowledge and disposition by emphasing that the former is grounded in habit or character. Farley argued that knowledge be understood as an "orientation of the soul" (1983:35). Ellen Charry has called for a return to what she calls "sapience" which "includes correct information about God but emphasises attachment to that knowledge" (1997:237). In the same vein, Stanley Hauerwas challenges the norms of

modern liberal education, asserting that "Christian discourse is not a set of beliefs aimed at making our lives more coherent, rather, it is a constitutive set of skills that requires the transformation of the self to rightly see the world" (1994:32). As Kirk suggests the academic model is based on an unreal claim to be methodologically scientific because one can question whether theological education could be genuinely detached and critical activity (Kirk 1997:21). Theological education requires a personal commitment and engagement, including a solid identification with the community. The simple and obvious reality is that the mind cannot be separated from the person and his or her history and context. It would be much better therefore, for all approaches to theology to admit the particular commitment from which they begin (Kirk 1997:22).

All of these scholars, like Farley, charge that the division between belief and practice is a symptom of modernity, one which has relegated theology to the private sphere, resulting in an over-emphasis on the individual subject at the expense of the community, as well as a blindness to the formative power of culture and embodied existence. The primary task of theological education then is to have formation as its signature pedagogy (Foster 2006:33). Rather than developing a toolbox of techniques, students are apprenticed into a vocational identity, that the "special role of a pastor is embodied in his or her very being" (Foster et al 2006:10). John Milbank argues that it is only through being formed by a certain vision and practice that one can be authentically shaped by a tradition (2000:39-58).

THE THEOLOGICAL TURN TO *HABITUS*

An alternative to the "Berlin" approach to theological education is the "Athens" approach (Kelsey 1993) rooted in

the culture of ancient Greece where *paideia* was a process of "culturing" the soul or forming character. The goal of education as *paideia* was something both very public and very political: the cultivating of politically skilled citizens for an idealized "democratic" self-governing *polis* or city (Kelsey, 1993:7). During the course of two millennia *paideia* evolved considerably, not least in moving from the public domain to the private world of personal faith and religious transformation. Nonetheless, Kelsey observed (1993:38) four recurrent features from Plato onwards to create "an ahistorical construct, a type of excellent education." The first feature was the knowledge of the "Good" itself – inquiry into a "single, underlying principle of all virtues, their essence." The second feature was that the Good related to the highest principle of the universe – the Divine. The goal of *paideia* was thus religious as well as moral. The third goal was less about the transfer of information and more about knowledge of the Good through contemplation, leading to intuitive insight. Here teachers can only aid students indirectly by offering disciplines that may or may not be helpful in their expansion of insight. The final and fourth feature of *paideia* involved a "conversion," a turning around from pre-occupation with outer appearances to focus on deeper reality – the Good. Such conversion was a slow process. It required the support and nurture of belonging to a community, "education as *paideia* is inherently communal and not solitary" (Kelsey, 1993:9).

It is this formational notion of theological education which Farley (1983:36-37) labels as *theologia,* the unity and goal of which is the saving knowledge of God. Understood as *habitus*, formation may be distinguished from cognitive development (Jean Piaget), moral development (Lawrence Kohlberg), personality development (Erik Erikson, Roger

Gould), skills development and human development (Malcolm Knowles), self-actualisation (Abraham Maslow) or social conscientisation (Paulo Freire) – all of which have influenced educational theory.[10] Though these may inform the practice of formation, formation is a process of the development of faith. This does not mean James Fowler's idea of faith as an individual's psychological development, but the inhabiting of a tradition of belief and meaning which forms attitudes, understandings, values and relationships and lifestyle choices, and which for the Christian tradition is a participation in God's life and mission (Overend 2007:136). Theology here has a particular meaning, which is not intended to be based on dogmatic method. Theology as *habitus* is personal, self-engaging and constantly active. In this approach the teacher shares his or her struggles to appropriate wisdom to the student.

The most meaningful experiences for students are focused on the teacher's relational skills and personal qualities, and in-class interactive teaching and learning methods (Foster et al 2006). For students, developing community and relationships within an academic setting is not only important, but also necessary in facilitating learning. The goal is to help students undergo a deep kind of formation – a personal appropriation of wisdom about God, the self and the world where learning is not just a personal matter but is done for the sake of public life, ecclesiastical life and church leadership (Foster et al 2006). This is in line with what Groome refers to as reflective practitioners[11]: "they should

[10] For a summary of these theories, see Wickett (1991:19–25)

[11] The reflective judgment literature and those concerned about praxis assert that theological education is a reflection on the practice of ministry while one is involved in that ministry. The assumption of a theory-to-practice linearity is replaced with the assumption that practice can also influence theory (Cannell 2006:36).

be invited to discern and express their own critical understanding of both praxis and theory and be sponsored through judgment and decision to see for themselves and responsibly choose what is appropriation to lived Christian faith" (1989:71). Groome states that people do theology "on their feet" rather than "in their heads" (1989: 71). Formal theological study has made of theology an objective study, a matter of knowing the history of the arguments and issues. Objective knowledge about theology has replaced the personal, self-engaging search for God's will that goes on in the life of every faithful person. Here we see an ecclesiological understanding of formation concerning more than the object of study: it is a model of learning in which faith, study and tradition inform one another, and thereby foster the development of the person.

Ministerial Formation for the South African Context

In the African context, the prevailing paradigm of theological education and even current proposals for its reform exist within a Western frame of reference which reflects the tension between African communal culture and tendencies to isolation, individualism and competition. The diet has been pre-packed theologies, ethical systems and pastoral methods that have all been imported from the West (Mugambi 1995:8). In the new South Africa with its rapid rate of economic and social change, theological education has already seen significant developments. Ours is a context of different realities – one which is full of contradictions at the levels of race, class and gender.

For many years, theological institutions, particularly vocational ones, have acknowledged the need to keep an eye on what end product is required, asking what sort of person the churches need and designing programmes of

study accordingly. At the same time, the goals of the traditional intellectual approach to the academic study of theology found in universities often omit personal formational elements, despite evidence that students in these courses often enroll for formational reasons (Graham 2002:230). Educators as well keep calling for educational integration and in theological education, for integrating faith with learning. A major study on clergy's education (Foster et al 2006) found that reintegrating the academic, pastoral and spiritual dimensions provides the greatest challenge. A recent study on the intentionality of spiritual formation in theological education in South Africa found that theological institutions using practitioner or vocational models were more focused on integrating spiritual formation than institutions that were based at universities (Naidoo 2011). The reality is that the new scramble for accreditation under South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) without which theological departments and seminaries will be hamstrung for the future, has had severe consequences for theological institutions. The intention of ministerial formation may be obscured by accreditation demands, the compartmentalization of theological disciplines and the marginalization of spirituality in the life of theological institutions.[12]

[12] An unavoidable issue for those involved in theological education is the extent to which "spirituality" can be assessed. Commentators like Hill (1998) have highlighted that assessing an assignment in a course is quite different from making value judgments on a person's formation – whether spiritual, social, or emotional, which will be shaped across the wider curriculum for ministerial training. The issue of appropriate assessment and its limits needs to be flagged as it is an area which is more challenging and more difficult to do appropriately than assessing written assignments by typical academic criteria, as this lies at the heart of the stated outcomes of much theological educational endeavour.

However more attention is being focused on the product of theological education for our context as there is growing debate on the place of theology in public universities. This must be followed with a reconsideration of the educational approach used that involves training and equipping pastoral leaders to *do* theology by involvement on a grassroots level and developing responsiveness to historical, biblical and pastoral dimensions within its context in order to have relevance. Curriculum relevance to the churches is critical, hence in our context there is a need for the development of contextual theologies (Botha 2010:194), Africanisation (Maluleke 1998:14) and increased content on moral and spiritual formation (Naidoo 2011). What is needed in ministerial training is "practical knowledge" which requires engagement as a condition of knowing. Being practical seems at first glance an inappropriate adjective for theological scholarship. However, when held in tension with the quality of being professional and rescued from false oppositions to "academic" or "theoretical" being practical is the essence of knowledge and of the search for knowledge. This missional value in theological institutions may be reflected in strategies for assessment which encourage students in their assignments to integrate critical analytical, factual content with insights and reflection that relate to spiritual development and ministry practice. In this way the common but artificial distinction between "academic" and "practical" courses will be challenged. One possible test of theological scholarship is whether it is related to the "needs" of the church. The issue is not whether theological scholarship should be practical, but how and for whom.

In spite of the developments towards a more holistic view of the individual learner in higher education, the dissonance between educational philosophy and theological

understanding of the person and of formation would not seem to suggest that universities are an ideal partner in learning for ministry (Wilton 2007; Naidoo 2011). An exception to the case in South Africa is the Reformed tradition that is connected to four historically white universities for the training of their ministers. While higher education develops individuals within a market context of competition, the Church seeks to form individuals to inhabit theological understandings, involving an understanding of personhood in community (Overend 2007). Structural partnerships are generally difficult because of divergent institutional aims (Wilton 2007: 158). For partnerships between the churches and academia to work, academia needs to recognize the distinction of the practitioner otherwise this relationship will not be seen in Christian circles as a partnership of equals meeting with equal respect for one another's approaches to learning (Wilton 2007). What is needed is for denominations through reviewers and inspectors to conduct a theological audit of the ecclesiastical nature of the training institution and its students on the basis of benchmark statements true to its tradition but also engaging with the wider Church's life and mission. An example of this is the Church of England Report, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* ("The Hind Report" 2003) in which a "Statement of Learning Outcomes" was developed as criteria of evaluation for ministerial formation. Accreditation bodies cannot be the only source for the assessment and accreditation of theological institutions (Wilton 2007). The church will need to assist the theological institution in redefining the meaning of ministerial profession, the role of leadership and the educational formats that will serve the goals that emerge from these conversations.

Perhaps as Cannell suggests the more appropriate way to think of the involvement of the theological institution in ministerial education is not as preparatory but as developmental (2006:38). In other words, since the curriculum is already hopelessly mired with courses, the curriculum could be configured to allow an appropriate sequence of courses while other courses are removed from it to become part of a lifelong learning component of the graduate's experience. Professional education except in ministerial education, presumes that the development of the professional capacity takes place over several years; it does not end once a degree is in hand. Further, the continuance in the profession is contingent upon regular and continuing education where the individual interacts with other professional fields and is guided in reflection-on-practice. It would be better to strip the theological curriculum and surround the theological institution with institutes and non-formal experiences able to offer the best of professional development. Robert Banks has suggested a missional approach to theological education (1999:144) that is shaped more by a praxiological agenda, the issues and concerns arising in and from ministry involvement of learner and teacher alike so that theology is taught pastorally and missiologically in an integrated way. Adequate attention to these concerns will demand greater inter-disciplinary initiatives than is currently given in most theological institutions and teachers of ministerial formation may need to allocate a greater proportion of their time in ministry activity, most frequently as co-participants with their students (Harkness 2001:152).

Conclusion

Shaping ministerial identity is one of the main reasons why pedagogies of formation should play a significant role in

theological education. Ministerial formation should keep the whole institutional environment in mind in order to have a holistic view to create a consistent context for learning. Unlike academic learning on its own, it offers to help students develop their full potential by enabling students to be focused and disciplined in exploring and evaluating the full range of ministerial attributes, spiritual, intellectual and practical. Clearly, the approach to theological education that is foremost in a theological institution will shape the nature and content of the curriculum and the kind of church leader envisioned for ministry.

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