

# Learning from Practice in Ministerial Formation: Experience and Potential

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SWF Paper

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## Preface

Methodism has always used practice as a central component in ministerial training and formation, in whatever mode it is undertaken. The history of this is explored in chapter 3 but it is given life currently by Standing Order 722 (5) which requires that training incorporates periods ‘in circuit or other placements in order that, under the guidance of a senior presbyter or deacon, the student presbyter or deacon may gain experience of presbyteral or diaconal life and work and become more acquainted with different aspects of the Church’s worship and mission.’ (Methodist Conference 2015:557)

The Fruitful Field Report wanted to give this experience particular emphasis within a new initial ministerial training pathway focused on practice-based formation (PBF). This has proved complex to implement due to a series of practical issues and philosophical reservations. ‘There are concerns about its pedagogy and accompanying curriculum, about establishing formational communities, safeguarding students’ well-being and learning, and sustaining appropriate roles and relationships’ (Ministries Committee 2015:3). Even the name has proved problematic and the pathway is now being called the Circuit Based Learning Programme (CBLP).

Against this backdrop, the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network commissioned the Susanna Wesley Foundation to undertake a research project to explore some of these concerns, drawing on material from within and beyond Methodism. The relationship of this final report of the research project to the original brief is outlined in appendix 1.

The project’s primary research question is ‘to explore how practice enables those in initial ministerial training for the Methodist Church to prepare for ministry.’ This is reflected upon, in chapter 1, in relation to the history of ministerial training and formation; in chapter 2, through a consideration of recent developments within British Methodism; in chapter 3, through some empirical research into the experience of those who undertook College and Circuit Training Placements and In-Service Training; in chapter 4, by considering the place of practice in training for local preachers and worship leaders; in chapter 5, by exploring some recent examples of practice based formation from beyond Methodism, and in chapter 6 through a comparison with the key learning from other professions which use this mode of training. Chapter 7 attempts to pull these strands together to explore the key learning points for the development of the Circuit Based Learning Programme.

Before embarking on this exploration, however, there is a brief introductory essay which falls outside the terms of the commissioned research. It is included because it explores some of the epistemological and pedagogical issues which form the context for discussions about learning from practice.

Within the literature on learning from practice there is often a marked divide between the university and the workplace (Lester and Costly 2010), the academy and the practicum (Higgins 2014:1), schooling and apprenticeship (Billett 2011). Each context is seen as having a distinctive pedagogy and attention is paid to how to 'bridge' the divide between them. This also reflects wider thinking about professional activity such as Shulman's work (2005) which divides the signature features of any profession into one of three fundamental categories: thinking, doing and ethical integrity.

This essay takes a slightly different approach. Instead of seeing these contexts as giving rise to particular and often opposing pedagogies, I want to suggest what is being noticed here are two different epistemologies. The confusion comes when the pedagogical approaches which flow from these epistemologies become equated to particular learning contexts, classroom and practice, rather than being seen as models for generating knowledge and knowing which can be applied universally. However, in doing this, I also want to acknowledge that the historic roots of these two epistemologies are emphasized respectively in the academy and through apprenticeship. It is in contemporary approaches to professional education, ministerial formation and discipleship education that they combine, each with an equally valid, but distinctive, contribution to make.

The first epistemology is about what is commonly thought of as knowledge, or, more accurately, propositional knowledge, created through evidentially based rational thought. This form of knowledge is increased and transmitted through the processes of didactic teaching and critical thinking. The historic roots are associated with the academy and, within theological education, what David Helsey (2003) calls the Berlin approach.

The second epistemology is about knowing. This involves procedural and tacit knowledge created through engagement in activity and communities of practice. This form of knowledge is increased and transmitted through the processes of mimicry and situational learning. The historic roots of this are in apprenticeship and the Athens model of theological education.

In any given activity there is likely to be a combination of propositional and procedural/tacit knowledge, so while for the purposes of this paper they are clearly divided, in the actual messiness of practice they exist symbiotically.

## **Learning for Knowledge**

Central to this epistemology is the desire to identify and transmit a body of knowledge which is deemed both culturally and socially to be significant. In

popular terminology this body of knowledge is called 'fact', although this term implies meaning and truth beyond the social group which ascribes it significance and there are differing views as to whether or not this independence exists. This form of knowledge has traditionally been associated with academia and, alongside the cultivation of virtues, forms the basis of ideas about the nature of Universities and scholastic activity.

Within this epistemology the need to identify new knowledge through learning and the transmitting of existing knowledge has different pedagogies.

In terms of generating new knowledge, either for an individual learner or for the wider society, this epistemology relies on a systematic method of critical thinking which, by the medieval period, was called the trivium, although its roots lie in ancient Greece and can be seen, for example, in Plato's dialogues. In this method truth is derived from information acquired by the senses through a process comprising of grammar (input), logic (process) and rhetoric (output). 'Grammar' is the art of inventing symbols and combining them to express thought; logic is the art of thinking; and rhetoric is the art of communicating thought from one mind to another' (Joseph 2002:3).

In terms of transmitting knowledge, this epistemology has become associated with the didactic method of teaching and the concept of 'schooling' (Billet 2014). The aim of this method is to provide students with the required theoretical knowledge. It is achieved through a teacher delivering content to a student who passively receives it through listening and memorization. Lectures are perhaps the most common form of this method in contemporary education.

This epistemology has tended to view learning from practice as an extension of the academy or schooling. Ideas, theories and techniques learned in the classroom are rehearsed through actual application in the context of practice and then reflected upon back in the classroom, with the aim of gaining competence in respect of measurable outcomes. Or put another way didactic learning is applied in practice and then evaluated. In a sense this is a form of hypothesis testing, the truth of an idea taught didactically is tested by its exposure to the complexity of the real world through occupational practice.

A major critique of this approach is offered by Donald Schön who describes this positivist epistemology of practice as 'techno-rationality' and is deeply critical of it because for him it neglects the centrality of thinking on your feet or reflection-in-action. Reflection-in-action 'involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings, and attending to our theories in use' (Smith 2011). When dealing with a new situation the practitioner 'reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation.' (Schön 1983: 68). Hence the practitioner's response does not

follow a learned didactic response but allows his repertoire of knowledge and experience to determine action, which in turn generates further knowledge for future action. The repertoire may be further extended by reflection on action at a later time.

## Learning for Knowing

In this epistemology practice does not simply provide a location for the continuation of declarative schooling but enables a discrete form of learning to happen which generates knowledge inaccessible in other ways. As an approach to learning it is perhaps 'the most common and sustained mode of learning occupations across human history' (Billet 2012:3) and while it is often associated with the development of technical proficiency it is also the mode of learning which creates the type of tacit knowledge which is identified when people say things like 'I'm good at doing that but not sure how I learned it'. Practice within this epistemology is viewed as participation in intentional goal-driven activity related to the profession, occupation or human activity being learned.

Lodge writes:

The son learned his trade by growing up in his father's family and participating in the family activities, imitating what he saw his father doing. At first, the imitation would be playful and childish, carried out with such toy tools as a child could handle. Later, it would become more deliberately purposive. Practice produced technical proficiency in details and the growing boy would act first as his father's 'helper', then as his associate, and would eventually himself become the head of a family, and the center from which further training in the family craft would radiate. (Lodge 1947:18)

What is remarkable about this account of learning *techne*, or technical capacity, in Hellenistic Greece two millennia ago, is that in essence it describes the pedagogical model which still applies to this form of learning from practice today.

The model involves a curriculum. This can be defined as a movement through a set of experiences and activities which leads the student from unknowing to subject mastery. It involves some form of planned, deliberate, ordering and intent. The flow of the curriculum is constructed in such a way that errors early on in the learning process carry relatively low risk, while as mastery increases, the level of risk, and the consequences of error, also increase (Lave 1990). Thus an apprentice does the rough cut of the stone statue, the master the fine carving of the finished face, or the consultant does the complex surgery while the junior doctor the sewing up of the patient afterwards. The ordering of the learning in the curriculum and the speed of progression of an individual through the curriculum is often determined by

Vygotsky's concept of a zone of proximal development. In this theory three zones can be identified: what a learner can do, what a learner cannot do and in between is the zone of proximal development which consists of tasks which the learner can do with guidance or mentoring (Vygotsky 1930:79-91). Learning from practice takes place primarily in the zone of proximal development.

The model involves a community of practice. The guidance necessary in the zone of proximal development needs to come from somewhere and in learning relating to occupational practice that is likely to be rooted in a community of practice. For the boy in Lodge's example this was also his immediate family but by the medieval period it was a guild or other occupational grouping in which apprentices advanced from peripheral but legitimate participation in the community to full participation as they gained occupational competency (Lave and Wenger 1991). They moved from novice to master. Communities of practice require both activity and conversation about that activity and through processes of reflecting, interpreting and negotiation this generates both individual learning and community learning, which in turn enhances the quality of the practice in respect of the particular shared domain of human endeavour. Thus practice is a communal lifelong activity in which individual learning influences the ongoing remaking and transformation of the practices which comprise the professional activities of a particular occupation.

The model involves learning through practice. The conventional understanding of the process of learning by doing begins with observation, progresses through mimicry (imitation) and ends in proficiency. However, observation and experience itself may not be enough to develop particular areas of competency because the student may not have the conceptual framework to notice the significant or they may need to be prepared for a situation which does usually arise in the normal course of practice. Therefore, there needs to be a range of pedagogical practices which enable a more experienced practitioner to guide the less experienced one. Traditionally this involved intentional instruction in which a master demonstrated the activity which a student then practiced, under a decreasing amount of corrective guidance, until they were proficient. Other teaching activities include the explicit exploration or modelling of unusual scenarios, sharing 'tricks of the trade' and, perhaps most fundamentally, verbalization of the practice, in which both master and student articulate what they are doing and why they are doing it. (Billet 2014). Central to contemporary understandings of this process is Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning which "takes as its focus the relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs" (Hanks 1991:14) rather than the transmission of knowledge. Within this mode of learning Stein (1998) suggests the emphasis is on reflection and higher order thinking skills to continually solve problems in occupational contexts to get the job done (rather than on the retention of content) and through this to increase in competency. By continually problem

solving in the course of everyday occupational activity, the learner creates, interprets, reflects and forms meaning from the social context they are in. So learning through practice involves both imitation and problem solving.

The model involves the judgement of competency or put another way 'the quality of work is evaluated through practice' (Nielsen and Kvale 1999:19). A master judges both the process and outcomes of occupational activity based on the outputs (tangible or intangible), quality, fitness for purpose, and user/customer feedback. Such judgements often involve tacit knowledge which is not easy to articulate within written criteria, although this often proves problematic in a schooling-driven educational culture demanding demonstrable learning outcomes.

Within this model there are also some specific epistemological assumptions. The first is the value of observation and copying in developing professional knowledge and competency (mimesis). This is not mindless mimicry but intentional learning of activity. The second is that professional competency is gained through the active participation in work tasks. The third, that knowledge is micro generated moment by moment while engaged in practice beyond the individual's ability to articulate what is being learnt and that this learning is 'rich' in that it develops procedural capacities for work performance, makes use of input from all the senses and deposits professional values, interests and intentionality. (Billett 2014)

Therefore, within the learning by doing epistemology there is a presumption that occupational activity is learned best by an apprentice/student working with a master/mentor with the particular forms of engagement, relationships and interactions this implies. Much of the learning is procedural (the strategic and specific capacities required for the work), embodied (learning through the senses, seemingly unconsciously) and orientated towards learning the dispositions (values and interests) of the occupation being undertaken. This learning emphasizes the close links between doing, learning and reforming practice in a particular occupation or area of human endeavour.

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## Chapter 1 | **A Historical Overview**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a very brief overview of the history of theological education focusing particularly on practice. It is mainly chronological although the first section 'Athens & Berlin' aims to frame the discussion that follows.

### **Athens & Berlin**

In his highly influential work, David Helsey (1993) suggests two normative models for theological education which he calls 'Athens' and 'Berlin'. Helsey's original intention was to gain a better understanding of the North American debate about the nature and purpose of theological education. However,

these models also represent distinctive threads which intertwine in contemporary Methodist formation. Each has equal value, each has a distinctive history and each has a particular approach to how the individual learns from practice.

The Athens model is a movement 'from revealed wisdom to the appropriation of revealed wisdom' (Helsey 1993:19). It is rooted in the Hellenistic host culture of early Christianity and reflects the Socratic and Platonic imperatives of schooling, cultivating virtues and character formation in public, which led to an individual knowledge of good. While 'good' was a concept of some debate for the Greeks, for Christians it is God. In this model the focus is on a student's personal formation and transformation as they increase in their knowledge of God and grow slowly from conversion to wisdom. This can either be in general discipleship or more narrowly in Christian leadership. The process takes place in community and emphasizes the formation of Christian virtues. Education in this model is not about instruction, as the teacher cannot impart revealed wisdom, but their role is one of guidance and mentoring in the necessary intellectual and moral disciplines to enable intuitive reasoning about God through the working of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the devotional study of scripture and, to a lesser extent, church tradition play a key role. In terms of practice, students in this model of theological education learn through their personal journey towards wisdom which is undertaken within a community of practice, is attentive to scripture and liturgy as 'living word', and guided by mentors.

Driven by the need to justify theology as a valid discipline within the new universities arising out the Enlightenment in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Berlin model moved theological education away from the confessional theology and canonical dogma of the Athens model and into the realm of Wissenschaft. In the Berlin model, 'theological education is a movement from data to theory to application of theory to practice' (ibid). It is a combination of Wissenschaft, the use of critical inquiry to establish reliable knowledge through rational theorizing based on data, and the application of that theorizing to professional practice. The role of the teacher is to 'to communicate to students that body of knowledge already believed to be reliable, and, above all, the ability to critique it and establish new bodies of knowledge.' (Leach 2015). The significance of practice is both to provide reliable data for theorising and to provide the context in which theory may be tested.

## **The Early Church**

The emphasis in the Apostolic Age (up to c.100 CE) was on charismatic gifting as the primary form of equipping for ministry. The point at which this gave way to other approaches is unclear but Cole (2001) suggests that both catechumenal schools, with an emphasis on the instruction of new converts, and catechetical schools, focusing on instruction in Christian Life and Doctrine for Christian leaders, emerged at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. The reason for the catechetical schools (such as at Alexandria) was a need for

Christian leaders who were trained in both the authoritative interpretation of scripture/doctrine and apologetics so that they could defend the faith against both pagans and the Gnostic heresies. The responsibility for this was seen as part of the ministry of the Bishop, although, particularly in the East, it was often delegated to specialist instructors or 'Master'. The school met in the house of the master, where the scholars also lived, and the master was expected to model discipleship to this community as well as offer instruction.

The ministry of the bishop also suggests a second reason why training began to emerge for clergy. As the number of churches for which a Bishop was responsible increased, the day-to-day work of the bishop was delegated to the presbyters, deacons and others and carried out under his guidance and supervision. 'This intimate personal association of the bishop with his clergy was a source of inspiration and direction to untried clergy' (Rowdon 1971:75).

Modelling and instruction were therefore characteristic of very early forms of equipping for ministry but no formalized training existed.

Finally, it is worth noting the emergence of the complex model of minor as well as major orders in this period. A member of the clergy progressed through these by examination of their conduct and the final authority lay with the bishop (see Basil ep LIV). However, for at least some offices there appears to have been a practical element as well and possibly a form of probation. St Cyprian, in writing to his clergy, comments that 'In the case of Saturus we gave him the reading several times on Easter Day' before appointing him a Reader (Cyprian ep XXIX), so his practice was observed and judgement given.

## **The Medieval Period**

The turmoil of the early medieval period in Europe pushed learning into monastic institutions and cathedral schools under the care of the diocesan bishop while increasing the need of educated priests for missionary service. The collapse of other forms of education with the decline of the Roman Empire and a general decrease in the level of literacy across Christian Europe meant that the Second Council of Toledo in 527 required that all bishops provide on church premises a school for children destined for the priesthood. Two years later the Council of Vaison in 529 urged all parish priests to take a child under their care and teach them the psalms, liturgical rites and Christian morals so that they could succeed them (Jones 1986:1007). The purpose of monastic and cathedral education was to train monks and priests 'capable of understanding scripture, of reading the office correctly [and] of performing liturgical functions exactly and intelligently' (Lagarde 1915:519).

From the perspective of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the explicit linking of childhood education to preparation for major orders may seem strange but the contemporary concept of vocation expressed in adulthood lies with a later

age. Therefore, as we move onwards into the late medieval period we see three forms of ministerial training emerge for boys and young men.

The first was where a family benefice was transmitted by hereditary succession. It is unclear what, if any, preparation was undertaken here but for at least some a period was spent in a bishop's household and the obvious inference is that this was similar to a squire training in a nobleman's household. A squire would spend five to seven years assisting a knight in practical ways, learning the chivalric code and hearing stories of the knight's activities. Stories provided a way of learning practice in a range of situations the squire may not have directly encountered. Similarly, a well-connected candidate for priesthood could learn about the practice of ministry but also episcopal and secular politics within a bishop's house. This was particularly important if their later ministry was to involve some representative role on behalf of the bishop.

The second model of training emerged out of the reaffirmation by the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council of 1215 of a bishop's responsibility to teach theology within the context of their cathedral church (Rowdon 1971:79) (although in practice and long before this, the bishop's actual teaching duties had been devolved to the cathedral chancellor and in part, from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, into the new medieval universities. Here a scholastic model of ministerial formation was established in which lectures and disputations aimed at mastery of the whole field of learning, with theology as the pinnacle, dominated. A course could take up to 17 years to complete and tended to neglect both pastoral practice and homiletics.

The third and most common form of preparation for the priesthood essentially followed a model of trade apprenticeship and there were even examples of formal apprenticeship agreements for priesthood akin to those used by Guilds (Bornstein 2009:11-113). There is a lack of evidence about the intensity or quality of this training and while the bishop's pre-ordination examination was meant to test for a sufficient level of learning to participate in the liturgy and ecclesial administration, alongside assessment of personal qualities and character, the assessment could be subverted (Salonen & Hanska 2013:250-253). There is also evidence that by the 1400s the timescale for movement from acolyte to priest had become so short that there was little time to gain the learning and experience traditionally associated with the intervening stages.

However, particularly following the 'pastoral revolution' of the 13<sup>th</sup> century which focused priestly activity on the cure of souls, there is some evidence that post-ordination training was provided by participation in the diocesan synod and chapter meetings alongside access to a wide range of written instructional works for those who could read sufficiently well. (Anderson & Peters 2015:18)

## The Reformation

Calvin's new Geneva Academy, founded in 1559, became a prototype for protestant seminary training across much of Europe. Its distinctiveness was to refocus ministerial training through sound biblical exegesis, in the original languages of the scriptures, rather than the study of secondary texts or doctrines, and to prepare ministers for the missionary work of spreading Calvinism throughout Europe. 'Human vessels were equipped and refitted in this haven...that they might launch out into the surrounding ocean of the world's need, bravely facing every storm and peril that awaited them in order to bring the light of Christ's gospel to those who were in the ignorance and darkness from which they themselves had originally come.' (Hughes P. quoted in Beeke 2010). This preparation was not just theoretical and students would spend time in practical work in the comparative safety of French Switzerland before venturing, for example, into the more hostile France.

Elsewhere the method of 'prophesying' developed by Zwingli at Zurich around 1525 offered a way of initial and continuing ministerial training not based in academies or universities, although it was also practiced there. While there were variations, the basic pattern involved a panel of preachers, under the guidance of an experienced facilitator, debating a particular scriptural text, piece of systematic theology or pastoral question for a set period of time. This was done in public although sometimes less experienced preachers were examined by their more learned brethren using this technique in private. In Zurich the model was used at eight every morning and attended by all the clergy and scholars in the city. It found particular favour with the English Puritans who used it to raise the general standard of ministerial competence. Pedagogically, prophesying was 'an academic exercise in the spirit of biblical humanism, replacing logical discourse, as the principal discipline for the schooling of future ministers' (Collinson 1967:169).

From the perspective of practice therefore we see in this period an emergence both of probation done in preparation for more challenging duties and formalised debate within a community of practice as a central mechanism for raising ministerial competence.

## Wesley and The 18<sup>th</sup> Century

The question was asked at the first Methodist Conference in 1774 'Can we have a seminary for labourers?' and was answered 'If God spare us till another Conference'. The following year the question was asked again and this time answered 'Not till God give us a proper tutor'. (Brash 1935:11) Methodism had to wait another 90 years for that tutor and the first theological Institution opened in a blaze of controversy over whom it was to be because Dr Samuel Warren had challenged the appointment of Dr Jabez Bunting as the

Institution's first President in the Wesleyan Conference.

However, the lack of a theological institution does not imply a lack of commitment by Wesley to the proper preparation and continuing education of his preachers, both local and itinerant. Early Methodism desired to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land through evangelisation (entry into the Kingdom) and education (knowledge of the Kingdom's ways and laws). This required a particular type of preacher, one who had 'a passion for souls, will use their minds, read the bible, submit to training and grasp every means possible to improve their knowledge' (Brash 1935:13).

For a limited number of the inerrant preachers, these characteristics had been developed through their university education and preparation for Anglican Orders. However, for the majority their training was 'on the job ... supported by mental stimulation and practical guidance' (Rowdon 1971:85) which was provided in a number of ways:

The first was reading. Wesley expected preachers to read at least 'five hours in the four-and-twenty' (Wesley 1774:315) and across a wide range of disciplines.

The second were lectures on theology, logic and pastoralia which Wesley would periodically give to groups of preachers. These were often given at Kingswood School, for example in Lent 1749 (Wesley Journal 23<sup>rd</sup> March).

The third was practical experience. Wesley expected preachers to save souls. 'You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.' (Wesley 12 Rules for Preachers).

The fourth was Christian conferring. Wesley expected preachers to be regularly engaged in 'conversation .... seasoned with salt, fit to minister grace to the hearers' (Wesley Sermon 42) as a means of 'mutual support and accountability for the basic spiritual and pastoral disciplines of the Christian life [and] the skills and disciplines of spiritual and practical leadership' (Methodist Conference 2005:2.17). This conferring took place in bands, class meetings and the church's decision-making bodies.

The fifth was the process whereby preachers emerged through their developing ability as natural leaders. Warner (1930:257) summarises this process as follows: 'From a display of initiative in the smallest group, they became band or class leaders, exhorters, and then served as local preachers within striking distance of their secular employment. At length, over a period varying in time, but sometimes extending over years, they became itinerant preachers, by the appointment of Wesley and the Conference'.

Within the Anglican church, the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period in which almost all clergy were trained within a university context; for example 'in the diocese of Norwich, all but five of the clergy between 1663 and 1800 were university trained' (Rowden 1971: 82). However, the quality of the training is often questioned and, for many, university education was principally a social, rather than educational, activity devoid of serious study or examination, a situation which didn't improve until the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **The 19<sup>th</sup> Century and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

For many Anglican ordinands the pattern of training continued as before. A university education, although of better quality as the century progressed, was combined with a period of practical training while a curate. 'If incumbents give a title to a young curate, it seems to me that the incumbent is just as much bound to teach the curate how to do the work to which he is called as a joiner would be to teach an apprentice his trade' (Bishop Fraser 1874, quoted in Bullock 1955:125). However, for others there emerged, in a cathedral or other episcopal context, theological colleges. These colleges usually adopted a model of theological study, devotional training and practical work in a parish. At least one accepted non-graduate ordinands. The small size of these residential colleges meant they tended to be reliant on the character and knowledge of the principal, although reforms in the teaching of theology within universities meant that by the end of the century most colleges had some form of association with a university.

In the early part of the century, a Methodist who wished to be appointed as an itinerant minister would become a local preacher and, following a period of further experience, reporting and examination within their Circuit, would be placed on the list of reserve. When a suitable station became available they were appointed as junior preacher 'on trial' for four years before, if successful, being recommended to the Conference for entry into Full Connexion. During this time, they would undertake the duties of a minister alongside annual examinations on their theological reading.

Reform to this process was slow. Those in favour of reform sited the difficulty preachers had in obtaining books and gaining assistance with study at a time when, in general, congregations' income and education was rising. Those against were afraid 'lest the godly simplicity of the candidates should suffer in the educational process, and lest Methodism should come to put certain artificial qualification for its preachers higher than the 'grace, gifts and fruit', which it had always held to be essential and paramount.'. (Bunting quoted in Brash 1935:28) Eventually, however, the Wesleyan Conference of 1837 did set up a committee to arrange a plan for the better education of its ministers.

Having examined and dismissed various approaches, the committee's final plan laid the foundation for a new institute in Hoxton Square which opened in

December 1834. This provided, in its essential characteristics, the model which would be used for all Methodist Colleges and initial ministerial training until conversations in the 1960s about part-time and non-residential forms of training. The theological Institution trained residentially all those on the list of reserve for a period of one to three years' dependent on individual circumstances, and study then continued into the circuit based 'on trial' period (or in today's terminology 'probation'). Alongside an academic programme students would be involved in preaching and pastoral work each Sunday and continue to meet in class, prayer meetings and for other services. Initially the curriculum consisted of theology, biblical studies, homiletics, English grammar, science, mathematics, history, geography and philosophy although as the level of general education of students increased as the century progressed the amount of time spent on secular subjects decreased. (Johnson 2001:50-51)

### **The Rise of Pastoral Studies**

Perhaps the most major shift in the formational curriculum for ministers came in the 1960s with the emergence of pastoral studies. Ballard suggests that a general growth in professional training, the professionalization of clergy and the influence of practices in other parts of the world (for example liberation theology and Clinical Pastoral Education) led to an inevitable reform of the relationship between academic and practical components of ministerial training (Ballard 1986:9-18). Writing of contemporary practice, he said 'no longer is it possible to assume that it is enough to provide as a basis for ministerial practice what was once called 'hints and tips' from experienced practitioners ... for better or worse, preparation for and the sustaining of ministry is seen to need conscious formation and reflection.' (ibid 26) It needed pastoral studies.

Pastoral studies was not so much a discipline as a methodology. It attempted to integrate theology and the social sciences in the active movement of praxis and challenged the model which suggested 'practical theology was at the pinnacle of a deductive process deriving from first principles' (Clarke 2015: 76). One no longer read theology but did theology. At the heart of the formational process was the need to 'think theologically in the sense of being able to relate theology to contemporary realities ... and to function theologically through the whole range of pastoral situations.' (Russell 1967 quoted in Clark 2015:76).

While the terminology has moved on and we tend now to talk about theological reflection or reflection on practice, defined as 'interdisciplinary engagement and reflective practice that connects learning with the complex relations of church and society' (Common Awards 2014:5), this remains key to ministerial training. It is, however, important to recognise the breadth of what is meant by practice here. There is a tendency to view practice as simply the thing which is done on placement. This report resists that narrow definition

and views practice more widely as the intentional activity of ministry. Participation in a college Eucharist or individual prayer is as much practice as a pastoral conversation on placement.

## Mixed Mode Training

Finally, the balance in initial ministerial training between the time spent on placement and time in college has been the subject of intense debate in recent years. This led in 1995 to the House of Bishops giving in principle permission for five pilot projects which combined appropriate theological training and formation with long-term parochial experience. Two schemes came fully into existence. One was based at St John's Nottingham, which combined paid lay work with blocks of college experience before and after ordination, and the other was the Peterborough Project which provided long-term placements for theology graduates integrated through theological reflection with a MA in contextual theology. The formal review of mixed mode training conducted by the Church of England in 2002 came to very positive conclusions but noted that the scheme only attracted strong candidates and in limited numbers. (Church of England 2003: 10 & 121) Since then the number of institutions providing mixed mode training has increased and this is discussed further in chapter 5. The distinctively Methodist forms of mixed-mode training, College and Circuit Training Placement (CCTP) and In-Service Training (IST) are discussed in chapter 3.

### Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways does a circuit-based learning pathway (CBLP) enable both the development of knowledge and the acquisition of wisdom (Berlin and Athens)?
2. Implicit in the medieval models was the observation of role models (Bishops and Priests). Does CBLP need to provide opportunities for similar close observation of an experienced minister over an extended period? And how would students be enabled to learn effectively from this?
3. Debate, conversation, conferring and prophesying became central to the formational process following the enlightenment. How does CBLP enable student ministers to engage in this process, particularly within communities of ministerial practice?
4. Given its historical significance to Methodism, how does CBLP encourage reading?
5. How does CBLP use and integrate theological reflection?

The purpose of this chapter is to explore some of the recent developments and thinking within Methodism as they relate to the provision of mixed mode training.

### 2010/11 Proposals

During the 2010/11 connexional year The Queens Foundation, Birmingham, The Wesley Study Centre, Durham and Wesley House, Cambridge all submitted proposals to the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team offering to pilot models of initial ministerial training which envisaged students spending considerably more than the usual 6-9hrs per week on placement.

The Queens proposal *Formation, Education and Training for Ministry: Learning on the Job and in Context – A new mode of ministerial formation* (Hewlett & Cameron 2011) was a development of a slightly earlier paper from 2010. It is the most developed of the proposals in terms of creating a new formational pathway. Central to the proposal was a collaborative relationship between the college and a local circuit in which each was seen as a 'primary context for learning, but together they enable integration of theory/practice, action/reflection' (ibid). The model presumed the person would remain in the circuit for five years, first as a student minister (years 1 and 2), then as a probationer (years 3 and 4) before serving as an ordained presbyter or deacon in year 5. The time spent in college directed activity would decrease from 80% in year 1 to 20% in year 4 and similarly the time spent on circuit work would increase from 20% to 80% across the same period. Housing would be provided in the circuit. The strengths of the model were seen as:

- Continuity for the student and family and a reduction in dislocation. One move into circuit rather than two moves, to college and then to circuit.
- The ability to grow gradually into ministerial identify and enhance the development of their ministerial skills.
- Preparation and training being rooted in circuit life and with circuits sharing in the responsibility of shaping ministers through good practice in supervision and training.
- Circuits and Circuit staff receiving a student's gifts, commitment, energy and vision.
- The student's training becoming a resource for learning and development in the circuit.
- An effective and deep integration of learning and skills through interweaving the two contexts of learning, supporting the development of the skills and habits of reflective practice which lie at the heart of ministerial formation and preparation. This process is variously

described as context based learning, dialogical learning or 'learning on the job'.

- Potential cost benefits within a financial model which is fair to the student, circuit and training institution.

The proposal stresses the importance of a strong Methodist cohort and teaching staff to ensure, as a proper expression of connexionalism, that appropriate attention is paid to the diversity of Methodist identity, history and practice which might not be represented in the student's placement circuit. It also identifies the need for adequately trained supervisors in circuits, a commitment by the circuit to being a place of learning and development, and the development of a new curriculum which integrates initial ministerial training and probationary studies, alongside a number of issues relating to how allocation, stationing and oversight might work. Circuits would need to be large enough to provide a variety of experiences and within travelling distance of the college.

The Wesley House proposal *The Case for a Partnership of 'Training Circuits'* (Luscombe & Leach 2011) is much less detailed than that of Queen's and deals with principle rather than detail. The college wished to 'develop robust and sustainable training circuits which are accessible from Cambridge in which students can be reliably placed for placement and attachments' (ibid). These placements and attachments were seen as key to the college's strong tradition of pastoral theology and rigorous reflection. As well as standard placements, these circuits would be used to develop a pattern of extended placement work for suitable students in collaboration with a local supervisor and to 'develop a rigorous apprentice model of pre-ordination training for suitable candidates' (ibid). In addition to ministerial formation, the college circuit relationships could also be used to develop other forms of training, and through the high profile this would give to ministry, an increase in vocations to all forms of ministry and roles would be likely. The stationing process would need to ensure these circuits would have suitable supervisors, which is not always the case, and there would be likely to be additional costs associated with staffing the development of blended learning programmes.

The Wesley Studies Centre's proposal (Ramsden and Samuel 2010) is different in that it focuses on the development of 'learning circuits' and proposes a pilot scheme in partnership with the Middlesbrough and Easton Methodist Circuit. The primary purpose of a learning circuit is to deepen discipleship in the service of mission through appropriate learning and development opportunities, although it is noted that some circuits are better equipped for this than others. Within this there is a desire that 'such circuits may also be able to serve training institutions by providing student ministers with well supervised placement experiences and even possibly to enable student ministers to train for ministry in a context in pathways which are endorsed by training institutions'. It is noticeable that the circuit chosen for the pilot already had a strong commitment to learning and development

alongside an extensive programme of activities, a circuit steward specifically responsible for this area of the church's life and a superintendent with some existing tutorial/teaching links to WCS. It was envisaged that WCS staff would contribute to the circuit and the circuit staff to WCS. The circuit would provide an increased number of placements while also exploring the possibility of pioneering a training pathway rooted in the circuit context. Money was needed to staff this through a presbyteral and a diaconal appointment in the Circuit.

While none were implemented, the 2010/11 proposals are recorded in some detail because of the obvious links between this thinking and what eventually appeared in the Fruitful Field Report to Conference.

### **The Fruitful Field Report and Practice Based Formation**

The intention of the Fruitful Field project was to assess current and future use of the Connexion's learning resources with the aim of offering a 'vision for a new way of equipping the Church, equipping the Methodist movement and equipping God's people for discipleship and mission.' (Fruitful Field Project 2011:1).

Neither the term, or explicitly the concept of, practice based formation appears in the original consultation document issued in November 2011 (Fruitful Field Project 2011). It arose out of that consultation, leading the Ministries Committee to discern in its interim response 'the importance of pathways, opportunities, programmes and resources which: ... enable practice-based formation for a significant number of ministerial students preparing for ordained ministry' (Fruitful Field Project 2012:5) The definition offered for Practice-Based Formation (PBF) was 'a programme of initial formation during which the primary context of formation, learning and development is the context in which ministry is being exercised and in which disciples are being formed. There is a crucial role for centres, spaces and the team of expert staff, as well as for learning churches or circuits, in supporting and enabling practice-based formation. This model is sometimes called 'apprenticeship-style formation' (ibid:66). Slightly reworded, this definition was carried forward into the final conference report (Methodist Conference 2012) where one of the goals of the DLMN is stated as 'supporting full-time residential pathways and part-time pathways for those preparing for ordained ministry, alongside the development of practice-based formational pathways for a number of those preparing for ordained ministry.' (ibid:694).

Four issues are worth noting here because they became problematic later on. Firstly, the terminology of practice-based formation was too imprecise as all formation is related to practice and therefore was not the uniquely identifying feature of this pathway that the title implied. Secondly the use of 'apprenticeship style' formation was both loved and hated in equal measure partly because without further definition it was being interpreted to mean

wildly different things. This is evident in the extracts from the consultation submissions recorded in the interim response from the Ministries Committee (Fruitful Field Project 2012:26-30) as well as nearly all conversations about it at the time. Thirdly, the explicit linking of PBF with learning circuits reflected the WCS proposal from 2011 but also implied that PBF was consequential on the development of learning circuits, which was not the case, and it took some time for that to be unpicked. Fourthly, the reference to PBF was very brief but it created a wide range of expectations about PBF which were unrealizable, and the lack of detail on a range of major issues made implementation difficult.

## **The Implementation Management Team**

Following the adoption of the relevant sections of the Fruitful Field report, the Ministries Committee established an Implementation Management Team (IMT) to take forward the proposals. One piece of work produced by the group was a draft specification for PBF. This was sent for consultation to the expert staff (TD, DDEs and Tutors) and the District Chairs. Following some revision, it was presented to the January 2013 Ministry committee (Ministries Committee 2013) as the basis for wider consultation with the aim that it could be piloted from September 2014. The Ministries Committee made a considerable number of suggestions but agreed in principle to the consultation; however other urgent work related to the staffing, finance and governance of the DMLN meant this never happened.

The model suggested in the paper involved the first year being part-time with the student engaging in a range of learning and activities from home. Years 2-4 would involve stationing as a probationer in their PBF circuit while continuing to study, initially with a 50/50 college and circuit split, decreasing to 75/25 in year 4. The paper also made detailed suggestions about supervision, finance, oversight, implications for stationing, allocating students and criteria for selecting circuits. What discussions of the paper revealed was that these were all areas around which no consensus existed or was going easily to be reached and it is noteworthy that previous and subsequent proposals avoid this by working within the long-established criteria for CCTP.

Three further areas are noticeable about the paper:

Firstly, it became apparent that for some there is great significance attached to whether the person in training is a student or probationer and how this relates to the activity of ministry - in relation to the sacraments, pastoral charge, and to formation. In hindsight a number of issues with the model could have been resolved by viewing those on the PBF pathway as student ministers within the established CCTP model rather than as probationer ministers, drawing from the rather less used IST model.

Secondly, the Fruitful Field Report to Conference (Methodist Conference

2012) named PBF as a distinctive pathway and by implication 'practice' as a distinctive mode of formation. Neither of these is true but political pressures surrounding implementation and the intense time pressure meant that the framing of the model (particularly in section 4 on the emphases of practice-based formation) attempted, rather unsuccessfully, to place clear water between this and other forms of IMT. The distinctiveness the paper argues is weak and no evidence for it is provided, a fact tacitly recognised in the identification of the pedagogical and formational underpinning including what is meant by practice as ongoing work.

Thirdly, the Conference report had also explicitly linked PBF with learning circuits. While this was helpful in terms of political rhetoric, it also proved highly problematic for implementation as the PBF and Learning Circuit discussions had been tied together in people's minds. PBF would have benefited from a separate existence, as the learning circuit concept was also underdeveloped and problematic. There remains no empirical evidence that learning circuits are 'vital' to PBF even if the report claimed they were (Methodist Conference 2012:694).

### **Circuit Based Learning Programme**

In September 2013, a Practice Based Formation working group was established to progress the work on PBF. The original intention was for this group to present a report to the 2014 Conference which would explain the pedagogical and formational principles underpinning PBF, provide detail on the shape, finance and implementation of PBF, and outline the implications of PBF for various committees, processes, offices and stations (Discipleship and Ministries 2013). At this stage it was still envisaged that PBF would be sufficiently different from other existing pathways that it would require consideration by the Conference.

However, the eventual proposal presented to the January 2015 Ministries Committee (Ministries Committee 2015) was sufficiently modest and contiguous with the already authorised College and Circuit Training programme that it did not need to be presented to the Conference, although the work was reported to the Methodist Council. The proposal involves students in three years of training, the first on the Queens Connexional course and the latter two in full time training linked to an approved practice base. Students will be 'student ministers' and receive a bursary.

Working within these broad parameters and the principles agreed for the pathway (see appendix 2), an implementation group has been working to establish a five year pilot with the first students starting on the pathway in September 2016.

## Queens Consultation

To assist their work, the implementation group organised a consultation that took place at Queen's in November. To summarise David Hewlett's admirable summary (Hewlett 2014), some of the main themes and observations were:

- Discussion, but no agreement about, Mike Higton's concept of 'Faithful Improvisation'. (Higton 2014)
- Polarisation of academic and practical and academic and formational is a false dichotomy. 'Good academic learning corners with wide and deep conversations which are primary concerned with the formation of virtues, not knowledge for its own sake.'
- 'Paying attention to context is essential but takes a long time (Mike Higton)'. What is the impact on the context of the student's engagement with it?
- 'All learning and formation ... is concerned with practice and is rooted in practice', therefore for some PBF is a misnomer.
- Following on from Gary Hall's presentation (Hall 2014), ideas of movement, transition and the essentialness of disruption were given attention. 'If learning and formation happens because of disruption it was not predictable when or how such learning would happen - learning is unique to each person - but the shape of learning had to include multiple opportunities for such disruption.'
- Presentations about the experiences of learning in context were shared but it was deemed too early to 'judge how far integration of learning and practice takes place' and how this enables deep learning.
- Ken Howcroft suggested that there needs to be continued attention paid to:
  - 'A developmental model of learning which enables access for a wide range of people to learning, training and formation;
  - A vocational model in which particular people are educated, trained and formed to be and do what the church needs to participate as fully as possible in the mission of God.'
- 'The evidence has not been presented to establish that the learning/training of the ordained can or does in itself help form the Church as a learning community.'
- The overall need for a separate PFB pathway was questioned and some felt there was a need for the agenda surrounding this to be more clearly identified.

## Queen's Conversation

Finally, as part of the research for this paper a conversation was had with four members of the Queen's staff to explore what is meant by practice. A number of useful points were made which have already been covered but the naming of these within the church's current political context enabled further

learning to emerge which is reflected on below.

There is a general problematisation of theological education within the church at the moment which has led to a desire by some to root training in circuits because of their lack of confidence in theological institutions.

One driver for this is a belief that you can transplant practice from a 'successful' circuit into one which is less successful, although this doesn't take into account either issues of transferability between contexts or the extent to which this generates localised, rather than connexional or universal, criteria for success or understandings of church. There is a need to enculture an aspiration for what has not been done before in students. Context and practice within ministry provides an opportunity to notice and improvise not replicate.

Another driver is a loss of confidence in the practice of ordained ministry. There is an increasing tendency to see no differentiation from lay people and IMT is increasingly seen as preparation for leadership of a discipleship movement shaped for mission rather than ordination. Local church ministry is therefore being emphasised over the ordained as representatives of the church catholic and this can skew approaches to IMT. There is a need to root all discussions of formation in a clear theology of ordination.

Linked to this is a third driver because for Methodists any discussion of ordination inevitably involves a discussion of itinerancy and therefore whether training enculturates movement, dislocation and learning from diversity within a connexional church or focuses on individual ministry within a local church. Movement away from the local and return is seen as a vital competency for forming connexional ministers.

A fourth driver is a category error in which knowledge and practice, or knowledge and skills, are seen as fundamentally different things. The current emphasis on learning outcomes has led to the reduction of learning to that which is measurable by separate knowledge based outcome and skills based outcomes and this model tends to ignore the development of virtue all together. This is perpetuated for example in the common awards framework. However, in a truly formational learning model, knowledge, skills and virtues are indivisible from each other. All learning includes critical reflection, observation, and intentionality towards a transformative end but, crucially, this must be informed by reading and writing.

A fifth driver is the perceived needs of the stations.

Fundamentally therefore one cannot make decisions about pathways before agreeing and articulating the nature and theology of the ministry for which people are being trained.

### Questions for Reflection

1. To what extent do the current CBLP proposals meet the political drivers in the debate?
2. CBLP has been developed within the existing polity with regards to status, oversight and station. How has that limited or enhanced the pathway?
3. What does the CBLP proposal say or imply about the relationship between formation for ordained ministry and learning for the whole people of God as expressed in contemporary Methodism?

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## Chapter 3 | College & Circuit Training Programme and In-Service Training

It has been recognized since at least the late 1980s that some ministerial candidates would benefit from a form of initial ministerial training which includes extensive circuit work beyond the normal placement provision of most courses. This was historically provided by training institutions in two different ways. The most common form was the *College and Circuit Training Programme* (CCTP) and, more rarely, through *In-Service Training* (IST). 'The major difference was whether the appointment was 'on the stations or not' (FinM 2004) as in CCTP the participant was a student minister and in IST a probationer. Both forms of training were designed to allow the participant to 'undertake some ministerial duties in a circuit under close supervision on a regular basis and over an extended period of time' (FinM 2004).

While not explicitly stated, the implication of the Fruitful Field Project Report to the 2012 Conference was that both these forms of training would be superseded by what was then called Practice Based Formation and more recently the Circuit Based Learning Pathway. The purpose of this part of the research was to capture the experiences of students who undertook either of these earlier forms of training with the aim of identifying insights which might assist the development of CLBP.

### Methodology

Participants who had completed either CCTP or IST were recruited through an advert placed in the Connexional Team's 'Friday Mailing' email sent to all ministers. Those who responded were then invited either to complete an online questionnaire or to be interviewed by telephone. In both cases the same questions were used. Copies of the questions are in Appendix 3. Anyone who completed the questionnaire was also asked to identify others they knew who undertook these forms of training and who might be willing to participate. These people were then approached by email. At the end of the two-month survey period, 12 presbyters and no deacons had responded electronically and one had been interviewed by 'phone. Of the electronic

responses two were incomplete but are included in the findings in relation to the answered questions only. Whether this response rate is statistically significant or not is difficult to tell as data on the total numbers of presbyters and deacons who undertook CCTP or IST is not available. Therefore, the approach taken in analyzing the data was to notice recurring themes and significant exceptions which might offer insights for further reflection or data collection. All italicized quotes from respondents are verbatim.

## Analyzing the Data

### Where and Why Did People Undertake CCTP or IST?

All but one of the respondents undertook CCTP under the oversight of Queen's, Wesley College Bristol, Wesley House Cambridge, EAMTC or STETS between 1991 and 2011. The one IST respondent did academic and other formational work at Wesley College Bristol beginning in 1998.

Most of those who did CCTP had done at least one year in foundation or pre-ordination training before continuing in this mode for one or two years. The reasons for allocation to CCTP fell broadly into two categories. The first was where a student had completed an undergraduate degree in theology before beginning training and CCTP was undertaken to provide significant practical experience alongside a Masters level qualification either in practical theology, missiology or New Testament Studies. A notable variation on this was a 22-year-old student who did CCTP alongside a BA because the college felt he would benefit from more practical experience in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year. The second category was where CCTP provided a solution to a particular set of personal, family or learning needs, with one respondent praising the '*creativity of the scheme*' in enabling this.

The respondent who undertook IST did so because they had been a very long-serving member of the connexional team at the interface with local churches and had been a tutor on one of the regional initial ministerial training courses. Given this experience they were considered to have met the conditions of theological knowledge, reflective practice, professional working and Methodist understanding necessary for stationing under IST (FinM 2004).

### Points of Significant Agreement

Four areas of significant agreement emerged from the responses:

Firstly, all the respondents reported the training experience as having been positive, one even went as far as to say '*it was amazing training*'. It wasn't without its challenges, and these are explored below, but all those who responded found it to be beneficial and four made positive comparisons to either their earlier experiences or colleagues' experiences of other modes of training. The reasons for this are possibly linked to the other three areas of

significant agreement.

Secondly, most respondents noted that CCTP or IST provided the opportunity to 'be' a minister in terms of inhabiting the role. This was considered immensely beneficial and significantly different from other forms of placement. The uniqueness of CCTP was *'BEING a minister - rather than learning about things I would be asked to do as a minister'* (emphasis as in original). Perception is important here and CCTP students and IST probationers were perceived by members, colleagues and the wider community to be ministers, rather than students. This changed the nature of the relationships and responsibility. Many of the respondents also noted the generosity with which others handled their 'rookie' mistakes as they made role adjustments and tried new things.

Thirdly, respondents engaged in the tasks of ministry both intensively and repetitively. So instead of involvement in one funeral or one baptism as on some placements, they did several and were often expected to take the lead from early on, if not on day one. They were also usually expected to deal with the business of the day-to-day ministry in their churches with supportive but remote supervision, so practiced on a daily basis the skills of working with stewards and dealing with conflict etc. which most considered prepared them well for probation. As one put it *'I would not have survived the early years of ministry without this experience'*.

Fourthly, respondents suggested that they grew in confidence during their placement and they carried this into their future ministry. This confidence was about their ability to be presbyters and, through the experience, a reaffirmation of confidence in their vocational calling. One CCTP respondent wrote, echoing several other responses, *'I enjoyed an incredibly fruitful probationer's appointment and I'm certain a lot of this was because I had a confidence in the role of Presbyter that I would not have had, had I been 'straight out' of college.'*

### **The Pedagogy of CCTP and IST**

Most respondents combined CCTP with the either completing a BA or MA/MTh in theology and ministry, practical theology, missiology or New Testament Studies. The IMT student completed a Diploma, although that was not usual for the period in which he trained. Almost all combined their placement with studying at college for one or more days a week. For most this was also an opportunity to take part in various formational activities with other students, although the perceived value of this was varied.

Those who studied a course which emphasised theological reflection noted the significance of the CCTP/IST placement in providing material for that reflection, although one noted that other *'students had little understanding of my situation and could be rather theoretical in their approach to their studies.'*

*Occasionally there could be some resentment if I tried to bring conversations back to the reality of the circuit work I was undertaking.* Two respondents had completed the EAMTC Peterborough Project which was based on a model of weekly theological reflection facilitated by a staff member. Both wrote very highly of this experience but emphasised the importance of the staff role in managing process. As well as providing material for reflection the reverse was also true and two respondents noted that the placement gave them opportunity *'to reflect what I was learning in a practical way'*. For some at least therefore a real sense of praxis was created *'study informed the practice and the practice informed and rooted the theory'*. Several respondents reported using their CCTP placement as the context for their dissertation or module assignments.

However, for those doing courses in other disciplines or where the relationship between the college's academic programme and the opportunities offered by CCTP had not been properly thought through there was little perceived connection between their academic studies and the placement.

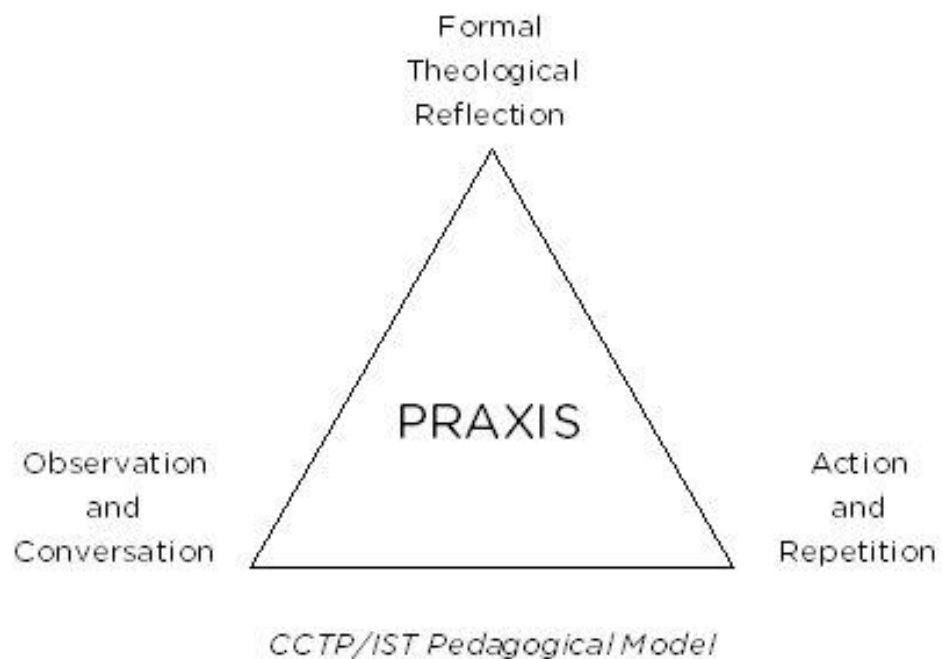
Beyond the relationship between formal academic studies and the placement, two other areas of learning emerge:

The first, which was mentioned by a number of respondents, emphasized the range of ministerial tasks in which they were involved and the importance of doing and repetition within a comparatively 'safe' environment. The same task was often completed several times during the placement and improved upon through experience. *'It was an opportunity to try things out, and when I made a few mistakes, we got over them together.'* The length of the placement added to the feeling of safety because it was long enough to build relationships and gain trust but short enough that, having made the mistakes, they could move on; most placements lasted only 1 or 2 years although a few extended into probation.

The second was the significance of conversation with others, particularly within the context of sharing a task with a presbyter and the action of observation and discussion which inevitably accompanied this. *'My experience of working WITH someone in one place was what I found most beneficial - in terms of learning from them.'* (emphasis in original). As another respondent noted the skill here is to *'Listen carefully, engage fully, learn to be present and observing at the same time.'*

Combined, these three elements of theological reflection, doing and repetition and observation and discussion create what one respondent described as an immersive learning environment (fig 1). Engagement with this learning environment left respondents feeling that *'the whole approach was distinctive and significant. I felt thoroughly prepared for ministry with skills and knowledge.'*

**Fig 1 | CCTP/IST Pedagogical Model**



### **The Challenge of Time**

The most consistently reported challenge for respondents related to time. For some there were simply too many things to be done and a lack of experience made prioritising effectively difficult, particularly where college and placements had conflicting demands. For others, the problem was a discontinuity in the rhythms of the academic and church year, the lulls in one always being at the peak of the other, so respondents got no breathing spaces. *'The college holidays are the busy circuit times of Christmas and Easter, so start the new term exhausted and behind on reading, as a circuit minister I can take the time off after the festivals but not when it is the start of term. So missed recovery time on both sides.'*

### **The Importance of Relationships**

Respondents were asked to comment on their relationships with a number of groups of people involved in their placement:

#### Church Members

Respondents found the members in their placement churches to be *'Welcoming and supportive and interested in my well-being.'* They were recognised as being *'Essential! They welcomed me and gave me privileged*

*access to their lives'* as well as being *'very patient'* and *'prayerfully encouraging'*. Several respondents commented on their increased understanding of pastoral dynamics through these relationships including the importance of spending time with people. One commented that they were *'kind and thoughtful - no critique'*.

#### Lay Office Holders

Respondents found the lay office holders in their placement circuits to be supportive and with some understanding of CCTP/IST and the skills someone on CCTP/IST brought. Some office holders offered critical feedback to respondents but others did not.

#### Ministerial Colleagues

Respondents found their ministerial colleagues to be supportive and often generous with their time. Two respondents commented on their positive involvement in staff meetings.

#### Superintendents

There seems to have been no consistency in the Superintendent's role in CCTP placements. Some Superintendents had limited contact with the student while others took on more defined roles as supervisor, mentor, tutor in practical matters, or line-manager (where the placement included employment as a lay worker).

#### College Staff

While all respondents had some contact with college staff, the nature of this varied from facilitating weekly theological reflection to forgetting the respondent existed much of the time (particularly in relation to their inclusion in other college activities). One respondent found them unhelpful, particularly in relation to clarifying where authority lay in their placement (with the Principal or with the Superintendent). Overall, college staff were felt to be *'supportive and flexible'*.

#### Other Students

The majority of respondents had some contact with other students through college groups or informal encounters, although this was perceived as of varying worth. Other students were particularly valued by those on the Peterborough Project where *'group sharing and thinking was fundamental to the PP methodology.'*

#### Mentors

Most respondents did not have an appointed mentor but one did comment that their mentor provided *'A space to talk and think things out away from the college context.'* Two respondents had support groups instead. Another found their own mentor - a supernumerary in the circuit with relevant experience and skills.

## **The Size and Type of Placements**

A typical CCTP placement seems to have been one church of 75 – 90 members at which the student did everything to be expected of the presbyter in pastoral charge, except for presiding at communion. Variations included acting as an ‘assistant minister’ or being responsible for particular areas of mission across more than one church. One was responsible, with the help of a part time lay worker, for 6 small rural churches. Interestingly, given that both are usually avoided in probationer appointments, one placement was as the Methodist minister in an LEP and two respondents reported managing major building projects.

## **Ecumenical Engagement.**

Most respondents reported ecumenical engagement in their placements and three talked of active involvement in a local clergy or Churches Together group. In one case they were instrumental in reforming this group, and another commented that *‘I was viewed by ecumenical colleagues as the Minister of my placement church’*.

## **Living in A Manse**

While only three respondents commented on this it was significant for them because, as one wrote: *‘The chance to live in a manse was helpful as it helped us as a family understand what this would mean for our family living’*.

## **Prayer, Spirituality and Worship**

This was the most polarized area of response. Respondents were asked to comment on how, if at all, their own prayer and spiritual life been shaped by the experience of IST/CCTP. About half identified no shaping while the others identified changing patterns or embedding of lifelong practice. The Peterborough Project respondents commented on the importance of the pattern of prayer built into this form of CCTP.

Commenting more generally on the role of prayer and worship in CCTP, learning to work with context was important for some. *‘The opportunity to study liturgy whilst using and creating liturgy regularly with congregations enabled me to discover a different [approach] to worship, just as exploring pastoral theology whilst regularly leading prayer in local churches gave a reality check to its language and theology.’*

## **A Few Final Thoughts**

Three other challenges and insights were offered by only one respondent but are recorded briefly here as they offer other areas for reflection:

- *'A circuit and the churches need to understand the arrangement and how the boundaries may be different to those of other ministers'* - which suggests the need for careful preparation in the circuit.
- *'This form of training demands an openness to seek help when needed and admit difficulties when they arise'* - which offers a criterion for selecting students.
- CCTP offered *'space to be me, to find and accept my own rhythms in life, health and ministry'* - which suggests the formational nature of CCTP.
- *'The need to end well and leave former appointments behind has been a valuable lesson learnt'* through CCTP - which suggests that careful consideration should be given to the transition points in and out of placements as this learning impacts future experience.

And finally, as this is primarily an account of student experience on CCTP, the last word goes to two respondents. They said, using words which were echoed in many different ways in the other responses, CCTP offered the opportunity to be *'Sunk into ministry but not overwhelmed'* and *'I absolutely loved this and benefited immensely – recommend it'*.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. CCTP and IST were often used to meet a range of individual circumstances and formational needs. Is this desirable? And if so, does CBLP offer the same flexibility?
2. How does CBLP enable students to inhabit the role of a minister?
3. Given the most reported challenge of CCTP was around time, how will CBLP address issues of workload and the demands of the various constituencies?
4. What are the key relationships for CBLP students and how do they relate to each other?
5. Is the CCTP pedagogical model of theological reflection, action and repetition and observation and conversation helpful for CBLP?

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## Chapter 4 | Local Preacher and Worship Leader Training

Standing Order 563 (2)(i) reminds us that it is the duty of local preachers 'to lead worship and preach with knowledge, conviction and competence' (Methodist Conference 2015:563). The responsibility to judge that an individual who wishes to be a local preacher is capable of this lies with the

Circuit within which they reside, through an interview (historically 'examination') conducted in the local preachers meeting by the Superintendent Minister (or their representative). The learning and training which gets them to this point has two distinct parts: preaching and leading public worship through the on-note and on-trial process, and a system of assessed formal study. To understand the role of learning through practice within local preacher training requires some understanding of how this dual model developed.

## Historical Development

The on-note and on-trial process has remained remarkably unchanged since Wesley's death and was fairly consistently used in all branches of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Methodism. In terms of its pedagogy it was 'something like a craft apprenticeship system, with skills learned by practicing them, under the watchful eye of more experienced operators, with the trial sermon and oral examination as the final tests of competence and suitability' (Milburn & Batty 1995:78). The process emphasises the development of the gifts and graces of those with a genuine call to preach and, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at least, an ability to convince hearers of their need for grace. The oral examination focused on 'our doctrine' and Wesley's Sermons, which still form part of the final interview for admission as a local preacher to this day.

It was though the emphasis on exhortation that finally convinced Methodists that on its own this process was not an adequate way to prepare local preachers. While gospel sermons aimed at converting unsaved sinners served the fast growing church well in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by the end of the century they were proving wholly inadequate for congregations who were looking for teaching and encouragement for those already converted. Combined with a changing social landscape this has led to the suggestion that 'in the increasing educated and culture-conscious late nineteenth century local preachers had become a liability'. (Rack: 1983:156).

The solution lay in better training for local preachers. While the practically based on-note and on-trial process could help develop the style of worship and sermons, it was of limited use in developing the substance. Basic errors, particularly relating to scripture, tended to litter sermons and a way needed to be found to increase the general level of local preachers' knowledge. Wesley had always encouraged Methodists to read: 'A reading people will always be a knowing people' (Wesley 1790) and the various branches of Methodist supported this through their connexional magazines and book rooms. There was a presumption therefore that a local preacher would acquire knowledge through reading alongside the on-note and on-trial process but many did not. Therefore, a more systematic approach to ensuring local preachers had the necessary scriptural and doctrinal knowledge was needed and the 1876 Wesley Conference, while expressing appreciation for the work of lay preachers, noted that 'The spread of education renders it

necessary for the standard of education to be raised'. The heated debate to which this was a contribution was echoed in other parts of Methodism and eventually led to the introduction of connexional examinations by the Primitive Methodists in 1904 and the Wesleyans themselves in 1927. The taking of these was optional until after Union and the need to pass them as an absolute condition of admission as a local preacher did not happen until 1972, although from 1947 onwards the results of the examinations were reported to the local preachers meeting before the vote on admission. Study materials were in the form of textbooks and correspondence courses.

This model of training, which incorporated the development of practical ability through the 'on-note'/'on-trial' system and the didactic acquisition of knowledge through a study course, remained until the introduction of *Faith and Worship* in 1990. Built on 'the philosophy and methods pioneered by the open university' (Lampard 1995:125) it contained three elements which deliberately sought to narrow the gap between study and practice. The first was a curriculum which incorporated biblical study, theology and liturgical practice into integrated thematic units. Secondly, assignments replaced 50% of the connexional examinations and were focused on the practice of preaching through the preparation and assessment of sermons and other worship material. Thirdly, through the interaction with a local tutor and a study group (where they existed) the local preacher in training had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of preaching and leading worship in dialogue with the study material and an experienced practitioner (the tutor). At its best this led to effective theological reflection on their practice as preachers but the quality of the process was rather reliant on the knowledge and skill of the local tutor, which varied somewhat. Relatively minor revisions were made in 2001 include the updating of the material, the addition of a personal study unit (unit 19) to help people begin continuing local preacher development (CLPD), and the removal of the examination, which was replaced by coursework.

## **Contemporary practice**

By 2011, *Faith and Worship* had begun to look rather dated and its continuing effectiveness for training the types of preacher necessary for the diversity of contemporary British Methodism was being questioned. In turn, the increasing role and use of worship leaders made the original and never revised 1996 training course feel equally dated, so the Ministries Committee commissioned work which led to the new combined *Worship: Leading and Preaching* course begun in September 2015.

In terms of engagement with practice three things are immediately noticeable about this course:

Firstly, the retention of the split in the learning model for local preachers. They still work with a mentor following the traditional apprentice pattern of

skills development through being on note and on trial and they still acquire more didactic knowledge through a study course, although the introductory presentation says that in *Worship: Leading and Preaching* 'There'll be a stronger focus on the skills required for preaching and leading worship, but without any dumbing down of theological and Biblical study.' (Connexional Team 2014:1)

Secondly the study course has changed, with a new focus on the 'practical application of learning' (Connexional Team 2015:1). It is an applied rather than an experiential learning model, having learned x in the 'explore' section of a unit, you go out and try it in the 'apply and reflect' section.

Thirdly, the switch in assessment to a portfolio model requires engagement in practice to collect the necessary evidence.

Finally the introduction of Unit 19, to be completed after admission as a local preacher, has made the link between initial and continuing learning explicit.

## **Focus Groups**

### **Methodology**

Moving beyond history, the project wanted to explore the actual experience that local preachers have of learning through practice as they train. To facilitate this, five circuits were invited to hold short focus group sessions based around five questions as part of their Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Meeting. Two circuits declined, one because of pressure of business in the next meeting and one because the timing of their next meeting was outside of the research timeframe. Two circuits explored the questions in their meetings and the third ended up using the focus group questions as a questionnaire which local preachers completed independently. A copy of the handout for participating local preachers, which was given out in advance of the meeting, may be found in appendix 4. What was noticeable about the responses is that participants in each circuit made largely similar responses but different ones from the other circuits. This is partly to be expected due to meeting dynamics and the absence of a trained focus group facilitator, although in each case the Superintendent was effective in encouraging responses. More unexpectedly was that the circuit which used the questions as a questionnaire also ended up with similar responses. Most of those involved in the focus groups had either trained using Faith and Worship or through correspondence courses leading up to the earlier exams. Direct quotes from research participants are in italics.

### Significant Parts of Local Preacher Training

Three areas emerged as significant in local preacher training:

The first, explored more fully below, was the key role of the mentor.

The second was biblical study and, particularly, exegesis. For many, local preacher training was their first engagement with formal biblical studies and this was hugely beneficial to the leading of worship, preaching and their own discipleship. Within this, *'the most difficult but most important'* aspect was the discipline of biblical exegesis and the need to understand the text in its original context, to apply it to the present day and to draw action from the text to form a response.

The third was collegiality. There was a sense in which as preachers *'we are all in this together'*. The most significant learning came either through working in a group, drawing on the *'tutor's wisdom, others' experience and the blessings of fellowship'* or working individually with a tutor where there was nowhere to hide and you *'had to answer all his questions with the help of the Holy Spirit'*.

#### Mentors and The 'On-Note' System

The system of having an experienced local preacher (mentor) who *'supported and guided through the first tentative steps'* of preaching was almost universally appreciated and valued. The one person who reported a poorer experience was with a mentor who did not understand the role and left them *'too much to their own devices'*. The relationship seems to have been particularly strong where careful consideration had been given to matching the mentor to the person on note. The value of continuous feedback from the mentor over a period of time before having to lead worship independently was also mentioned.

From the responses, a number of characteristics for being a good mentor are identifiable:

- The ability to offer guidance and to be *'critically helpful'* rather than *'just give a pat on the head'*.
- Offering encouragement to try new things, even if these do not become part of your usual preaching e.g. narrative sermons.
- Input on practical issues where the student lacks knowledge or experience e.g. *'I'm not a musician but my mentor taught me about meter when choosing hymns.'* and timing in worship.
- Advice on diction and reading well in public.
- Assistance in developing in the person on note a critical awareness of diversity in worship and how to evaluate this.
- The ability to rescue a person on note where necessary. For example, *'my first full service planned to last an hour took fifteen minutes and my mentor saved me'*.
- Approaching the task as a shared learning experience.

The flow of the on-note period is also significant, *'observation leading to taking responsibility for parts of the service and then the whole, gradual'*. The

usefulness of being able to take parts of a service before needing to do the whole was commented on by several people.

Two weaknesses of the system were identified, with both arising from having a mentor who only used one approach in their preaching. The first is that the person on note tends to mirror the style of the mentor and if they are only using one style that becomes normative for the person on note. The second is that congregations tend to expect the person on note to follow the style of the mentor who has been planned and this can be difficult where it is very distinctive.

#### Learning from Leading Worship and Preaching

There was widespread agreement that you cannot learn how to preach and lead worship without actually doing it. One person used the analogy of learning to swim, you have to do this in water rather than on dry land. A number of things were suggested that you can only learn through preaching (practice) which cannot be learned in other ways:

- *'How to stand in the gap between God and the people'* and the responsibility this brings.
- Responding to how the congregation is responding and using *'feedback about how the congregation is feeling as you go along'*
- How to focus as a preacher and not be distracted by other things that are going on.
- Not to overplan and to craft the service in such a way as to enable the *'Spirit to work and inspire'*.
- *'Practical things such as the need to make sure your PowerPoints are readable at the back and microphone technique.'*
- Learning to work with others such as the organists and stewards while encouraging them to try new things.
- The relationship between assurance and forgiveness in a liturgical context.
- *'You don't know where God is in your sermon until you preach it'*.

#### Formal Learning

The focus groups said less about the impact of the formal learning component of local preacher training than they had about either the being on-note or what they learned through leading worship. Responses highlighted the importance of biblical studies and *'gaining a broader appreciation of the bible and theology'*; the value of the Faith and Worship Unit 19 to enable pursuit of personal interests; learning about service structure, and encouragement to *'read, study, think, write, speak'* as lifelong learners.

#### What Should Be Assessed?

Finally the focus groups were asked what should be assessed in a trial service. The significance of this question to the research was to gain an

understanding of what people felt was important about the practice of leading worship. A number of common elements emerged and two distinctive ones, each of which was suggested with some passion.

Common elements:

- Style and structure
- Public speaking skills, diction and audibility
- *'Theological and doctrinal soundness.'*
- Engagement (rapport) with congregation
- How it enabled the congregation to experience God and grow spiritually.

The two distinctive ones:

- Leadership, rather than process, and that the congregation should know they are in safe hands.
- Congregational conviction that you, as the leader, are worshiping and enabling a response in their hearts and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Interview

As well as the focus groups, a semi-structured interview was conducted with Peter Relf, a former Connexional Local Preacher Secretary, on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015. The purpose of the interview was to better understand the pedagogical model of local preacher training as it applied to practice. Responses to the prompt questions are recorded below based partly on the interview and partly on notes that Peter supplied beforehand.

What was the role of practice in LP training?

Threefold, to learn practical skills with the help of a mentor, to learn to shape worship to particular congregations in a particular circuit and to apply learning from the Faith & Worship units in worship with the aim of helping to continue to develop rather than preserve tradition.

How did you understand Local Preachers learned from that practice?

Through the use of a mentor as a critical friend; through observing how another preacher prepared and led worship when on-note; through accountability to and the support of other local preachers (practitioners in the pew; through practical tasks in faith and worship designed to build confidence in preaching; through feedback on those tasks from the tutor (as an experienced practitioner).

How did different contexts for practice affect learning ... was there an ideal circuit?

The people involved in the process, more than particular contexts, affected learning. The background, education, current circumstances, strengths and weaknesses of the student, mentor and tutor all impacted on the experience.

What were the challenges and the opportunities of the system?

From the church's perspective the challenge was to get the balance right between support and pressure, staying alert to changing circumstances (for all involved) and having enough people with appropriate skills for the different roles involved. The opportunity was making use of the new thinking that a local preacher in training brought and their fresh approach to worship and preaching. For students the challenge was always finding the time for both studying and preaching and to develop confidence in thinking theologically for themselves rather than jumping through the course hoops. The opportunity was a mainly supportive learning environment where everyone wants you to succeed.

In conversation Peter emphasized the role of the local preachers meeting as a community of learning in which practice is explored and developed and, in this sense, a local preacher is never on their own in the task of lifelong learning and development as a preacher. From this community of learning flow the learning opportunities for new preachers as they engage with mentor, tutor and other preachers. The mentor has a particular role in modelling practice and creating learning through enabling preachers on note to do things, to engage in practice. Yet this engagement should not be uncritical and unreflective, so part of the tutor's role is to ensure that faith and worship engages those on-trial in critical reflection on practice. Such reflection builds a reservoir for future practice and, while not evident early on, this leads to the ability of 'sensing people in the moment' of worship and responding accordingly (reflection in action).

Peter also suggested that acting as a mentor is as exposing for the mentor as it is for the person on-note. The mentor allows observation of their practice (for example how the sermon is prepared) for the specific purpose of learning and critique by the person on-note, so there is a modelling of the vulnerability necessary for effective learning.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. The mentor's role in Local Preacher training was considered crucial and this is reflected in other forms of professional training. What is the role of Mentoring in CBLP?
2. Collegueship of other preachers is significant for local preaching. How does CBLP understand collegueship and communities of practice?
3. What can you learn through the practice of ministry which cannot be learned in other ways?
4. How does the CBLP student relate to the circuit's local preacher meeting?

The purpose of this chapter is to review some of the approaches and experience of mixed-mode or context based training beyond the British Methodist Church. This has proved more challenging than was anticipated because there is a lack of published critical review of most of this work and primary investigation was beyond the terms of the project brief. Therefore, the initial idea of including three case studies proved impractical and instead three different sets of experience are explored in this chapter. The first looks at perhaps the most established context based model worldwide - theological education by extension (TTE). The second offers some insights from the USA through a summary of the recently published findings of a five-year research project focused on the question ‘How is pastoral imagination formed through practice in ministry over time?’ (Scharen & Campbell-Reed 2016:2) The third looks at the current situation in the Church of England.

### **MCSA and Theological Education By Extension**

One of the arguments made against the concept of practice based formation during the Fruitful Field Project was the ‘failure’ of a similar model used by the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and their return to seminary based training. While this has some truth, it does not take into account the complex political and economic realities in South Africa and confuses the difficulties of a particular incarnation of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) with the general approach.

The recent history of theological education in MCSA is recorded in a paper entitled *From Ecumenical Experiment, To Denominational Necessity, To Holistic Vision: The Methodist Journey in Ministerial Training*. (Richardson & Leleki 2009). As a title, it nicely tracks the failure of the ecumenical vision in theological education in SA through the necessity of working with a denominational solution which was far from ideal, to the holistic vision of seminary based training offered by the new Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) which opened in 2009. It is this middle period which is problematic and leads to criticisms of TEE which, while contextually valid, are not universally applicable. The key difficulty was that changes to the way education providers in South Africa were registered, and the enormous cost involved in this, meant that for a period of time in the mid-2000s the Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC) was the only viable provider of accredited theological education for MCSA. TEE, as explained below, has a distinctive pedagogy which MCSA therefore needed to graft onto its training work at the John Wesley College. The resulting model included a period of college residency and stationing during training as a probationer in a cross-cultural situation over a five-year period, which, while

visionary, suffered from a number of issues in implementation. The current three-year holistic approach provided by SMMS offers an approach with has wider coherency and ownership within MSCA.

However, the theological college only provides for a small amount of the ministerial training within MCSA and the majority of MCSA's lay preaches and clergy still gain their formal academic qualification through TEE (Foster 2016). This is driven by issues of finance and geographical mobility. The challenge is how the church provides for the formational aspects of training alongside the academic work provided by TEEC. At its most effective, this is achieved through the combination of 'study groups and fellowships-of-vocation' at a regional level (Moody 2012). This has not always been done leading to some confusion about whether difficulties with TEE were pedagogical or resource-related in nature.

However, to evaluate whether TEE has anything useful to say about CBLP it is worth standing back from the MCSA experience to consider TEE as a whole.

The roots of TEE lie with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala which had the enviable problem that the church was growing much faster than traditional seminary based methods could train sufficient clergy to serve it (Harrison 2004:315). In addition, the new pastors tended to be mature men whose work and family commitments made impossible moving to a seminary. So if the pastors could not come to the seminary, the seminary needed to go to the pastors, and TEE was born. Rapid growth of the model in many poorer parts of the world followed, either as an emergency measure to cope with church growth, as a cost effective approach to providing leadership training, or, sometimes, because of a commitment to the distinctive TEE approach.

While subject to some variation, the core components of TEE are as follows (Kinsler 2008: 26-28):

1. Daily self-study usually using written materials from the TEE provider at an appropriate educational level and culturally contextualised.
2. Weekly or bi-monthly discussion groups of two or three hours in duration facilitated by a TEE provider faculty member.
3. 'Ongoing, practical testing or application of the substance and issues of the course material in the student's local ecclesial and social contexts'.  
(ibid 27)

Underlying the model is a desire to make the most effective use of students' and tutors' time. Students maximize the time spent in discussion and debate with tutors and peers through gaining the basic course content (cognitive, affective, practical) on their own. 'The tutorials [discussion groups] are

intended to be highly participative learning experiences, and to include an important element of bonding through workshop, sharing and mutual pastoral care' (Harrison 2004:320).

Therefore, TEE extends in a number of ways. It extends the geographical reach of the seminary. It extends accessibility and the potential student body, notably to working family men, women and the poor who could not afford seminary education. It extends the lecture through the study material. It potentially extends theological education beyond student ministers into a whole church activity.

There has been a desire to try and establish whether TEE 'works' and in doing so it has both strong advocates and opponents. The difficulty with any assessment is that, while TEE is a coherent approach, questions of effectiveness and quality are about specific provision in specific contexts. There are however a number of general concerns which need to be considered:

1. The quality of the written (and occasionally recorded, televised or computer based) resources needs to be exemplary and prepared by staff skilled in this form of writing. More recently this has been expanded to include how the written materials respond to different learning styles. Paraphrasing of existing textbooks without contextualisation has been a major issue in some contexts (Ekpunobi 2005). Materials should also be written in such a way that they encourage critical thinking and, again, this is not always the case (Rutt 2005). However, at its best, the process of writing encourages the creation of new approaches to subject pedagogy which work with the TEE method.
2. The provision and quality of group facilitation needs also to be exemplary and failures of TEE are often associated with this either not being provided, at which point the pedagogical model collapses into simply being a correspondence course, or the facilitators lacking either subject knowledge or the skills to enable others to learn through discussion. Whilst not every facilitator needs to be a subject specialist, they do need general subject knowledge. Facilitators also need a 'prayerful dependence on God' (Greeff 2005).
3. The linking of clergy education and lay education which is done in some contexts through TEE, should be a denominational policy decision based on a theological understanding of process, although sometimes it is not.
4. While recognising the pragmatic basis of TEE, TEE should be used because of a conviction of its value, not simply as a cost-effective way of training. A rough estimate by MCSA suggests that three ministers can be trained through TEE for the cost of one in a residential seminary.

5. There are huge presumptions in the model about how students learn from reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action which need to be explicitly understood.
6. The relationship between TEE, as essentially an academic vehicle, and other parts of the formation process need to be clear. This is particularly challenging when the TEE provider is responsible for academic work and the denomination for other formational aspects, however that is understood in a particular context.
7. The academic level of TEE materials and facilitation has to be such as to offer credibility both to the course and the ministers trained through it.

Finally, the language traditionally associated with TEE such as student, tutor, study material, emphasises its pedagogical roots which go back to the emergence of extension studies in universities at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A re-invigoration, such as that offered by Jose Duque (2008) who talks about self-development, accompaniment and resources within the context of personal, social and ecclesial transformation, may offer new ways of seeing TEE and ways of beginning to see how it could work as a more formational model in the current western sense of this.

### **Pastoral Imagination and How New Ministers Learn in Practice**

As the research for this report was being undertaken, the Auburn Theological Seminary in the USA published the results of a 5-year project (Scharen & Campbell-Reed 2016) tracking how new ministers used the form of relational and embodied capacity for ministry that Craig Dykstra describes as 'pastoral imagination' (Dystra 2008:41-61) to learn in practice.

Unlike previous recent studies in the USA which focused on teaching in seminaries and the period students spend in them, the authors of this report were interested in how students learned by attending to the long arc of learning ministry. 'Our conviction is that this capacity for wise pastoral leadership is often sparked early in life, and only comes to fruition through years of learning in the daily practice of ministry' (Scharen & Campbell-Reed 2016:2).

This report marks the five-year point in a longitudinal study which aims to understand better how pastoral imagination is formed through practice in ministry over time. During this period, the authors have been tracking a diverse group of 50 ministerial students from a number of denominations as they finished seminary and either began or continued in ministerial practice as ordained or certificated ministers (ibid:3).

Conceptually, the project draws on the idea of simple, complicated and complex problems (Westley, Zimmerman & Patton 2007). Simple is making a

cake, complicated is sending a man to the moon, complex are those problems which are not subject to predictable results based on technical expertise, such as raising a child. Dykstra argues that too much theological education focuses on notions of practice which are merely about action or technique (simple or complicated problems) and argues instead that ministry is about complex problems which need pastoral imagination, 'an individual's capacity for seeing a situation of ministry in all its holy and relational depths, and responding with wise and fitting judgement and action.' (Dykstra 2008). The authors of the report extend this further by drawing upon the 'notion of *phronesis*, which is practical knowledge and judgement derived from experience in practice over time. Through connecting *phronesis* with the gifts and work of the Holy Spirit, we argue, pastoral imagination emerges as an integrative, embodied and relational capacity. It is a capacity for situational perceptions that are skilled and make use of multiple types of knowledge about self, context, relationships of power, and ritual practices of ministry (pastoral care, preaching, presiding, teaching, leading) to take risks and act with responsibility.' (Scharen & Campbell-Reed 2016:5).

The major findings of the report are (ibid 14):

- *Learning pastoral imagination happens best in formation for ministry that is integrative, embodied, and relational.*

The research suggested that students 'experience the most formative learning by immersion in ministry practice ... and in seminar experiences (classroom or otherwise) that have the horizon of ministry explicitly in view' (ibid 18). These formational experiences have three key intertwined features: 'the clash of abstract, decontextualized knowledge with lived experience, a sense of being overwhelmed, which comes from dealing with multiple variables in these situations, and a sense of responsibility for the risk entailed in choosing a course of action' (ibid 21).

- *Learning pastoral imagination centres on integrated teaching that understands and articulates the challenges of the practice of ministry today.*

Participants reported that the most influential teachers, on placement or in the classroom, were those 'who stand in both classroom and context - and who help to put their subject in the context of the whole complex practice of ministry today' (ibid 23). To do this effectively teachers need to use 'junior versions of the whole game (the practice of ministry) so students can see how the specific topics in a class make sense in relation to the whole' (ibid) rather than splitting their disciplines off from the practice of ministry.

- *Learning pastoral imagination requires both the daily practice of ministry over time and critical moments that may arise from crisis or clarity.*

The combination of the formative forces of daily practice and critical moments work together to 'shape a minister's capacity for seeing a situation and knowing how to act responsively in a moment.' (ibid 29) Through this the minister 'accumulates multiple instances of pastoral situations, by the repetition of doing what is needed in the flows of the day, the experience of how to do it becomes intuitive, as if without thinking'. (ibid 30) Reflection plays an important role in this because learning from experience 'does not really solidify in one's practice unless processing and reflection help the moment stick and leave a lasting, formative impression'. (ibid 33)

- *Learning pastoral imagination requires both apprenticeship to a situation and mentors who offer relational wisdom through shared reflection and making sense of a situation.*

It is through 'steady attention to the place and people where a pastor serves' that there is a 'shift from speaking to or acting upon a situation to a more improvisational response that embodies practice wisdom in the moment' (ibid 33). This process is enabled for new ministers when they 'apprentice themselves to the particular world where their ministry is situated, and find mentors who help them process their thinking, feeling and action in the world' (ibid 33). The outcome is finding 'the way that works relationally for them in dialogue with the ancient wisdom of the Gospel and values of their particular tradition'. There is however also a recognition that 'sometimes mentoring failures can be a pathway to extraordinary learning'. (ibid 36)

- *Learning pastoral imagination is complicated by the intersection of social and personal forces of injustice.*

The researchers found that 'regularly the participants themselves describe the challenges of their ministry situation in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation and the like. We think it essential to explore the shape and location of the brick walls they come up against, as well as the ways that ministers draw upon their emerging pastoral imagination to work around the barriers'. (ibid 37) Within this 'the [ministerial] work of leading the fight against oppression has looked a good deal more complex than it did from the halls of the divinity school' (ibid 38) and affects ministers both personally and as pastors.

- *Learning pastoral imagination is needed for inhabiting ministry as a spiritual practice, opening up self and community to the presence and power of God.*

'Learning pastoral imagination perhaps matters most as a core integrative capacity which recognizes the holy depth of a person, a

moment, or a situation. Leaders who embody this capacity in their ministry are able – even under quite difficult circumstances – to open up ways to engage the sacred depths of life ... through inhabiting the core practices of ministry ... and inviting their communities of faith to join them ... [in] opening self and community to the redemptive presence of God'. (ibid 42)

Finally the report notes that 'when we ask about their most formative educational experiences, our study participants consistently turn to such contextually grounded learning experiences' (ibid 47). Combined with the above, this led the authors to suggest a number of implications for theological education, ministry and church and society:

1. Shift from a textual paradigm to a contextual paradigm.
2. Take account of the education and formation of the whole person – especially concerns for the personal impact of social injustice upon students.
3. Support developmental learning over a lifetime.
4. Cultivate teachers who know the game of ministry.
5. Relationship to God is at the heart of forming wise pastoral leaders.

### **Mixed Mode and Context Based Training in the Church of England**

Over a decade ago, the authors of *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church* (Church of England 2003) commented on the very positive conclusions that the review of Mixed-Mode Training (Ministry Division 2003) had reached about this form of training but noted that 'so far only strong candidates had been attracted to the schemes and that they were few in number' (Church of England 2003:131). At this point only two schemes, out of a possible five which had been given outline permission to 'combine long-term parochial experience, including lay ministry, with appropriate theological training and formation for ordained ministry', (ibid 10) were in operation. The Peterborough project, run by EAMTC, for theology graduates which combined a long-term placement linked to an MA in Contextual Theology and the St John's scheme which combined paid lay ministry with blocks of study in college both before and after ordination.

Today a review of the websites of the 24 Theological Education Institutions recognized for the training of Church of England Ordinands suggests that 8 (33%) offer contextual or mixed mode training in which 50% or more of the ordinands' training time is spent in parochial work or other forms of ministry, such as chaplaincy. The following quotation from the Ridley Hall website sums up the experience:

"Training on the contextual pathway gives me opportunities to link my academic learning with the practicalities of ministry. Spending more time in parish, especially behind the scenes, brings to the fore questions which I

can then take back into college, whether into biblical studies, doctrine, or ethics classes. Gathering regularly as a contextual learning community means that we can respond through theological reflection while issues are fresh in our minds, and apply the ideas we generate for praxis. Celebrating communion and eating lunch together with the midweek congregation in Chesterton is really important to me, building community as well as providing opportunities for weekly feedback on our preaching. Overall, I feel this pathway is giving me a more rounded training, with deep opportunities for academic development as well as practical skills and spiritual development.” (Cope undated)

Training is offered either on a ‘locally mentored’ basis, where the student identifies and works on their own in a contextual setting under the support and guidance of an experienced minister, or in a ‘hub’ context where they work as part of a group of students, alongside an experienced minister. A number of common structural features can also be identified in the training:

- For college based courses, all ordinands attend college for at least one day a fortnight, although one to two days per week is more normal. The college time includes: academic work, which in some cases is augmented with online study; pastoral or formational group time with other students and on other pathways; the opportunity to participate in the college community. The limited number of courses which offer contextual training offer a similar provision but adapted to deal with the lack of a residential community.
- At least some of the ordinands’ academic assessment is tied to the placement context through common awards modules.
- While the pathway is considered particularly attractive for those considering ordained pioneer ministry, several institutions promote it more widely than this.
- The model of using context in both IME Phase 1 and Phase 2, identified in the Hind report as the St John’s approach, seems to no longer operate in any institution.
- Many of those who undertake contextual training are paid as lay workers for their contribution to the ministry setting.

Little research has been undertaken on the effectiveness of these pathways in delivering IME phase 1. Somewhat unfortunately the recent Institute of Education’s project *Resourcing Ministerial Education* (Reiss, Mujtaba and Sheldrake 2014a) commissioned by the Resourcing Ministerial Education Task Group should have addressed this but noted instead that ‘The low number of those who had studied on contextual pathways (15 individuals from those who completed the questionnaire [4%]) ensured that statistical analysis could

not cover all three pathways, so was restricted to the residential and course pathways.’ (Reiss, Mujtaba and Sheldrake 2014b:6) Given this, the value in considering the Anglican experience is more about the questions it raises than the good practice it has to offer.

#### Questions for Reflection

1. What does the TEE model offer to CBLP?
2. What does the idea of pastoral imagination offer to CBLP?
3. What does current Church of England practice offer to CBLP?

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## Chapter 4 | Practice Beyond Methodism - Other Professions

The purpose of this section is to identify issues from the use of practice based learning in other professions with might help inform the development of CBLP. This is done by providing a brief snapshot of how learning in practice happens within these professions.

### School Teaching

School teaching in the UK has always been heavily reliant on practice based learning. For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the most common form of teacher training for intelligent, but poor, boys and girls was to act as apprentices through the ‘pupil teacher’ system. Pupil teachers would teach the younger children under the direction of the school master/mistress until they were mature and experienced enough to seek employment as teachers themselves. This system was eventually replaced for the vast majority by college based teacher training but, even then, long periods of time were spent in schools, beginning with observational periods in the first year up to term long placements in the final one in which they were effectively the class teachers.

However, alongside the college based training there has continued to be the possibility of training in schools. The current landscape of school based training is complex, consisting of three major schemes, one of which has two variants. The largest is School Direct which offers both salaried and bursaried options. The salaried option is for trainees who have a good degree and at least three years’ post-graduation work experience in any field, while the bursary is for those who have recently graduated. In this scheme the trainees are based in a school and complete a PGCE + Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) with support from a university provider. Some 8,000 people train this way each year. The second option is Teach First, which aims to train 2000 highly qualified each year through employment in a school in a low-income

community over a two-year period. Training begins with a six-week intensive training course and has traditionally been targeted at shortage subjects and those who have the potential to become exceptional school leaders. The last option School Led Initial Teacher Training (SLITT) enables schools or consortia to run their own teacher training delivered by practicing teachers separate from a university provider but still awarding QTS. (Roberts & Foster 2016, DfE 2011, DfE undated)

A number of points about these schemes are worth considering in relation to CBLP:

1. Training normally involves a steady increase in the teaching of a normal timetable from 30% at the beginning to 90% in term three of a one year programme. So time spent in face to face practice, rather than preparation and reflection, increases over time.
2. In some schools, students teach whole classes on their own with another teacher providing mentoring support from a distance. In others 'team teaching' is used until a sufficient standard of practice (or ability to cope in the classroom) is reached.
3. Opportunities are provided to teach in other contrasting schools during the training period.
4. Two contrasting supervision models are in use. In one (school direct) a university lecturer acts as tutor and another teacher the mentor. In the second (SLITT) the teacher acts as both tutor and mentor.
5. QTS is awarded on the basis of a portfolio of evidence, lesson plans, observations and other experiences judged against 33 'standards'. The portfolio also needs to include evidence of research in the form of written assignments. England but not Wales also requires a skills test.
6. There is some evidence (OFSTED 2001) that while students on school based pathways meet QTS standards they usually only do so at the adequate level rather than at the higher levels they should be capable of.
7. Dunn's Research (2005) suggests that "*The quality of the relationship with the school-based tutor was felt to be of paramount importance in influencing the trainees' development and the extent to which they regarded their training in a positive light.*" But mentors often poorly understood their role, did not have enough time to do it properly or had little interest in helping the student develop beyond their contractual obligation.

Nurse education has been transformed in the last 30 years from an apprentice model which in 1989 accounted for 98% of nurse training to an all graduate profession on entry, in 2013 (Zhang and Lathlean (2012:2). Pedagogically the shift has been from 'an apprentice-based model where the routine practice of tasks and activities are emphasized, to a university based preparation that educates students to understand situations and seek and judiciously use evidence in practice' (Henderson et al 2012:299). This reflects a wider shift in nursing practice from a profession based on prescribed behaviors to one where nurses are able to 'recognize deviations to normal health and proactively structure health care arrangements to respond to these' (ibid 300).

Such a shift has required changes to the clinical learning environment and how students engage with it. Students value a sense of belonging to the team and 'being in practice' is a significant part of the socialization process of becoming a nurse (Levett-Jones et al, 2007). Belonging is in relation to staff, the system and patients/client group (Henderson et al 2007). This is engendered most effectively by teams which encourage nurses to take a critical reflective stance and offer opportunities through discussion to 'advance abstraction skills for professional practice' (Kell and Jones 2007:275). This process of creating generalized learning for future practice from a specific case is key and linked to ideas of reflection-in-action. The environment also provides a context in which to learn the cultural 'norms' of nursing practice (Eraut 2000) and the value of questioning (Henderson et al 2005). From a student's perspective the important elements of practice learning are identified as practicing skills for their future role, learning routines and learning how to develop relationships with staff and patients (Roxburgh 2014:40). Mentors play an important part in this process but, as Holland et al (2010) note, they can also act as 'gatekeepers' in determining what students experience and often have to choose between supporting new staff and patient care.

The format of a student's practice learning experience is also changing. Traditionally a student undertook a rotational model in which they did a series of placements in different clinical settings but these were often randomly ordered with no clear integration with the student's academic learning and with only tentative connections to individual learning needs (Roxburgh et al 2012:783). Such an approach can lead to students lacking in confidence and feeling anxious about the care environment (Campbell 2008). This model also leads to over-exposure in acute care environments and does not enable students to develop an understanding of contemporary health policy based in a social model of health. A student will also regularly swap mentors, having three in a typical year. An alternative is the hub and spoke model which attempts to increase consistency of experience and relationships by locating a student for longer in a primary hub and exposing

them to its spoke services as well as making specific progressive links between hubs. For example, a student might work in a community child and adolescent mental health service hub with spoke exposure in a parent support group and schools work before moving on to the hub of a young persons' in-patient unit and its associated spokes (Roxburg et al 784). From the perspective of CLBT this raises issues of both how a student operates in the main placement in relation to other connected activities and its relationship to any other placements the student might undertake.

Finally, Zhang and Lathlean (2012:6) note that those trying to implement new nurse training programmes often do so under time pressure and in difficult circumstances. 'These situations have been created as a result of wider policies, the stimulus for which was not necessarily driven by an over-riding priority that focused on the development of nursing.' (ibid). The resonances with ministerial training are obvious.

## **Social Work**

Social work education has 'been exposed to regular revision, development and review mirroring the complexity of social work practice in an ever changing society' (ref) but, within, this learning in practice has remained a central component both in the UK and internationally (Finch and Taylor 2013). The latest revisions to UK training in 2013/14 introduced or reaffirmed a number of issues which are of interest in relation to CBLP.

The first is the centrality of the role of the 'practice educator' as teacher, mentor and coach. Unlike teaching or nursing, a social work practice educator must hold a qualification, the Practice Teaching Award. This was developed as 'a means of ensuring the quality and standards for students on placement' (Walker et al 2008:3). The award has two levels, the first allows practice teachers to supervise first stage placements on a day to day basis, stage 2 allows the supervision of final stage students and responsibility for the final assessment. This is significant because, unlike many other professions, the practice teacher is asked to make final judgements about the student's capacity to practice, rather than simply providing an assessment. In order to do this, practice teachers themselves need to gather evidence through observation and supervision of the student which, alongside the student's portfolio, demonstrates capacity, and identify areas in which students still need to work to demonstrate their practice. However, it should also be noted that 'there is a growing body of qualitative research that suggests that the experience of failing a student in a practice learning setting can be very challenging to the point where some students may be assessed as competent when the evidence suggests otherwise'. (Finch 2013:7)

Practice educators may be based in the same agency and team as the student but can also be independent of that setting, visiting the student as

necessary to fulfil the role. They need to model good learning practice through understanding themselves critically as learners, undertaking personal and professional development and keeping up to date with evolving social work theory and practice (Plenty and Gower 2013:53). The role can be quite isolating and provision needs to be made for their ongoing support, particularly given the moral obligation many practice educators feel to train the new workforce even when their own workload is exhausting.

The second is a shift from competency to capacity in the regulatory framework. The issue was not so much about the concept of competency but about expressing it in an assessable framework. It was being noticed that 'in order to achieve competence students were too focused on finding work that would provide evidence rather than taking a holistic approach that mirrors the dynamic complexity of social work' (O'Hagan 1996:14). 'Whilst competency revolves around a set of guidelines that can measure ability and skills [the shift to] capacity ensures the measurement of skills through actual practice over a period of time set against specific tasks, goals and objectives'. (Plenty & Gower 2013:52)

The third is in the structuring of the placement experience. Traditionally social work students undertook 100 placement days in each of the three years of training on an undergraduate qualifying programme. This has now been split for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students into 70 days' practice and 30 skill development days partly in recognition that practice alone did not necessarily develop the specific skills needed to demonstrate capacity.

The final point is who is involved in assessment. While the decision about capacity lies with the practice educator, moderation and confirmation of those decisions is usually dealt with by a Practice Assessment Panel set up within the awarding institution. This panel also deals formally with processes relating to failing or failed students (see, for example, Manchester Metropolitan University, undated). A distinctive feature of these panels is that they often include service users and their carers in line with the Department of Health's desire to involve them in all aspects of social work training (DoH 2002). Finch (2013:21) found that 57% of panels involved service user and/or their carers but discussions tended to be dominated by university and local authority staff even when panel Chairs specifically sought their input. The situation was improved when service users formed a greater percentage of the panel and it was noted that this is an area for further research and reflection.

Therefore, in relation to CBLP social work practice raises questions about the training of supervisors, who makes judgements and what is being judged (capacity or competency), whether there is a need for skills training and the role of congregations and others in student assessment.

### Questions for Reflection

4. Does the approach to learning through practice used in teaching offer any valuable insights for CBLP?
5. Does the approach to learning through practice used in nursing offer any valuable insights for CBLP?
6. Does the approach to learning through practice used in social work offer any valuable insights for CBLP?

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## Conclusion

Within the discussions generated by the fruitful field process, there has been a tendency by some to equate ministerial formation with training for other professions and occupations. This is not surprising given that such training is the only experience most lay people have and, from this position, learning which is heavily reliant on being apprenticed or articulated is seen as a valid way of preparing for a job. It is also not surprising given its relatively recent roots in the skilled working and lower middle classes that these attitudes are often particularly prevalent in Methodism and were vocally expressed during the Fruitful Field process.

However in making this equation a key distinction is lost about the nature of practice. Professional practice is defined by the activities or actions of the profession; therefore the actions of which the practitioner is capable in relation to the profession prescribe what it means to be a teacher, nurse or social worker. Ministerial practice is different; here action flows from 'being' rather than defining what being is. A minister is called to 'be' and it is from that being that pastoral practice, in its widest sense of liturgy, teaching and care, flows. The role of practice in preparing for a professional accreditation or ordination is therefore also different. Professionals learn from practice: ministers are formed in practice.

Those who undertook CCTP or IST recognized this when they emphasised the importance of 'being' a minister and having the opportunity to regularly undertake the tasks which flow from that. It is through ministerial practice that knowing and wisdom develop to enable effective reflection in action as they meet new ministry situations and pastoral encounters. Or, to put that another way, pastoral imagination grows. This process is partly implicit but also needs to be intentional so that the reflection in action is informed by rigorous theological reflection on action, so that the actions and being of ministry is linked inextricably with scripture and tradition and informed by rational thought from other disciplines.

This understanding of formation in practice aligns with contemporary ideas

about habitus in which ‘we become what we habitually do’ and ‘learning by doing forms a person’s dispositions’ (Foster et al 2006:4). Habitus intertwines classical ideas of knowledge and the good life and suggests that theology ‘can only be taught by forming the student into the lifestyle it calls forth’ (Brittain 2009:427), ‘the unity and goal of which [in protestant thought] is the saving knowledge of God’. (Naidoo 2011:124). Central to this process is the idea of community, which, through corporate worship and shared discipleship, forms the requisite ‘disposition of the heart’ in students. (Farley 1983:69).

The core issue for CBLP is how this community is created, sustained and resourced when the student is located in the circuit. For the CBLP student this community has two loci - the theological institution and the circuit - and they sit in the intersection of the distinctive community of practices present in the theological institution and in the circuit (see figure 2). There is a need to make this intersection as large as possible and to define the roles, relationships and pedagogical model which gives it coherency for the student.

**Fig 2 | Location of CBLP Students**



It is in working out what happens in this intersection that models and experience from beyond, as well as within, theology and ecclesiology may be helpful and this research suggests a number of issues which CBLP needs to consider as it develops:

- Students will develop in capacity and wisdom during CBLP and the activities and support within the circuit need to adequately reflect this.
- There needs to be conscious progression in what a student does leading them from inexperience towards mastery, recognizing that this is a lifelong process.

- The measurement of progress within this is about developing capacity rather than competency, and consideration should be given to which ministerial capacities are best or uniquely developed through circuit placements.
- Supervision and support needs to more visible at the beginning of CBLP and supervisors need to be trained and themselves engaged in continuing ministerial development. The ‘cost’ of being a supervisor in terms of time needs to be recognized.
- A mentoring relationship with another minister and the circuit’s community of practice is vital and needs to include opportunities for the mentor and the community to model good practice as well as enable reflection.
- Reflection is both on and in action and this needs appropriate resourcing in both institution and circuit.

None of these are unique to CBLP but the amount of time spent in the Circuit mean that they are more significant for CBLP students than those engaged on other pathways. It is also possible that this longer exposure will develop some ministerial capacities at a different rate to other pathways and this needs to be accommodated or intentionally included in the pathway design. The challenge for the implementation management group therefore is to make CBLP an attractive pathway which recognizes the distinctive opportunities provided by the increased time in Circuit.

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## Appendix 1 | Structure of Report

This table shows how the chapters of the final report relate to the original research brief.

<b>Research Task</b>	<b>Chapter</b>
i) Review of past and present practice-based non-Methodist provision, in UK and beyond – using reports and articles, including those produced by the Churches.	Chapter 5 ‘Practice’ Beyond Methodist - Ecumenical and Worldwide
ii) Review of accounts, reported research and outcomes from various relevant recent consultations and conferences on formation for ministry, with a particular emphasis on ‘practice’- cf Queen’s Consultation, November 2014; Durham Conference;	Chapter 2 ‘Practice’ in Methodism - Recent Developments

meetings of PBF Working Party.	
iii) Review of Methodist programmes – IST and CCTP: information about allocations and arrangements using Minutes of relevant Committees; interviews with a range of people who trained on these programmes.	Chapter 3 ‘Practice’ in Methodism - CCTP & IST
iv) Review of circuit-based learning in existing pathways.	See below
v) Some, limited, research into the operation of LP and WL training to extract insights about providing practice-based training and formation	Chapter 4 ‘Practice’ in Methodism - Local Preachers & Worship Preachers
vi) Literature review looking at practice-based training in various professions, such as social work, nursing and teaching.	Chapter 6 ‘Practice’ Beyond Methodist - Other Professions
vii) An account of the history of ministerial formation, extracting useful insights about the place of ‘practice’.	Chapter 1 A Historical Overview

The original brief asks at (iv) for a ‘*review of circuit-based learning in existing pathways*’. This was considered to be more appropriately the task of the Quality in Formation Panel and Queen’s internal Quality Assurance processes rather than independent researchers. Therefore, with the agreement of the CBLP implementation group is wasn’t completed.

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## Appendix 2 | CBLP Principles

Whilst some of the detailed arrangements for the proposed pathway require further discussion, a number of principles have emerged from conversations in the Working Group, as below. These provide the parameters for further work:

### *In relation to the student experience*

1. Students will be part of a cohort. They will benefit from being part of a group, separate from the local context, with whom they can reflect and share their experiences. They will form a community with other students on the same pathway but will also connect with students from other pathways, enabling them to access a range of communities.

2. There will be multiple loci for student learning, with exposure to a range of contexts, locations and learning methods and situations.
3. The Queen's Foundation will take students out of their local context and provide opportunities for them to reflect at a distance.
4. Students will be given opportunities to learn from others who are different from themselves – through ecumenical weekends, through placements, through worshipping with others amongst the different student cohorts, through undertaking modules with other groups, through inter-faith and other residential events.
5. Students, although living in their own homes, will not be connected to their home circuit but to another within travelling distance to enable them to make a fresh start in an unfamiliar setting.
6. Discussion about those students who could benefit from this pathway is ongoing, with a range of suggestions about appropriate criteria. It is agreed, however, that such students need a high level of self-awareness and well-developed interpersonal skills and a heightened ability to reflect theologically. Ultimately, however, determining who is suitable will be a decision for the Allocations Committee.
7. Oversight – as student ministers, students on the pathway will be under the oversight of the local oversight committee of the Queen's Foundation. Further work will be completed to draw up guidelines about how the partnership between learning institution and circuit might function when decisions are being made about continuance in training and entry into initial stationing drawing particularly on learning derived from CCTP and other forms of partnership developed between learning institutions and circuits in recent years.

*In relation to receiving circuits*

1. The approved practice base will be a circuit not an individual church.
2. Circuits will not see students as an 'extra pair of hands' but will celebrate the fact that they are playing a vital part in the student's development. They will be self-sacrificial and generous.
3. Circuits will share the responsibility for student learning and formation with the Queen's Foundation – it will be a partnership.
4. Circuits will normally be able to demonstrate a track record of good practice in supervision and support of learning for a variety of ministries or will, at least, be able to demonstrate how good practice in this area is being developed. There will be continuity in the supervision of each individual

student with someone fulfilling the role of formal supervisor throughout their training. The supervisor will be from and identified by the relevant circuit, part of the team in which the student is based, allowing for accountability and informed supervision, and modelling an appropriate relationship whilst enhancing the student's learning and experience. The supervisor will be expected to undertake the connexional supervision course at the Queen's Foundation. More work needs to be completed on the inter-relationship between the various kinds of supervision that a student receives, including the relationship with personal and oversight tutors at the Queen's Foundation, to ensure a pattern of supervision that is coherent and consistent. It is noteworthy that the Queen's Foundation has significant experience of doing this in relation to a variety of programmes and denominational partners.

5. Students will expect to learn not only from ministers but from the whole people of God - and, equally, will themselves help others to learn, both ordained and lay. The pathway will provide opportunities for collaborative learning and the deepening of discipleship across the circuit.

6. Theological reflection in and on action will be central to the learning process: ministers in the circuit will model this approach and will encourage and support the student.

7. Circuits identified as being appropriate practice bases will be able to offer: an active engagement with the development of discipleship; a willingness to be part of a process of developing a learning culture; a vision of what the circuit can offer to the student (and of what the circuit can learn); a willingness to support a student through their learning, recognising that they may well make mistakes, and to bear the consequences; a plurality of approaches to mission and ministry; an upholding of Methodist practice and discipline, with sound governance, trusteeship and safeguarding; and an understanding of what constitutes good practice and an awareness of where improvement or change is needed.

8. The identification of appropriate practice bases will be a partnership between the DMLN, regional forums (including Chairs of District) and the Queen's Foundation and will need to be agreed by the Allocations Committee.

#### *In relation to the Queen's Foundation*

1. The Queen's Foundation will work in partnership with the circuit.

2. The academic programme and the connection to the Queen's Foundation will sustain the students and help them to capitalise on the learning opportunities available in the local context and to make sense of the challenges they face and the situations which they observe and in which they

participate.

3. The connection between CBLP and that of existing accredited routes will be discussed further over time with a view to an authorised programme with clear learning outcomes. It is hoped that the planned research, noted above, will provide some creative thinking around the interface between 'practice' and learning and help in the development of an appropriate programme. Provision by the centre, however, will depend in part on the criteria applied in allocating students to the pathway and their prior theological learning.

4. It is expected that a number of students, and certainly all those who embark on the pathway in 2015, will start out on the Queen's Connexional Course.

5. It may be helpful for students allocated to the pathway who are identified as potential future theological educators to embark on higher level study.

*In relation to connexional processes and committees*

1. The Allocations Committee will determine who is to be allocated to the pathway. The decision will be based on information collected prior to the allocations process – the mechanism requires further discussion.
2. The oversight process will need to draw on a number of voices in monitoring the students' learning and formation. Partnership and dialogue will enable proper reporting to both local and connexional oversight committees. Whilst there is considerable experience both at a connexional level and at the Queen's Foundation in enabling such partnership, it is recognised that the working group needs to do further work on the roles and responsibilities, boundaries and relationships of those working in the formation and oversight process in relation to this pathway.
3. An accompanist will be allocated to each student: these accompanists will have a comprehensive knowledge of each student's case and make a thoroughly informed contribution as members of the Queen's Foundation Oversight Committee.

Source: *Ministries Committee 1415-2-H*

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### **Appendix 3 | Questions used in CCTP & IST Survey**

1. Name
2. Training Institution
3. Name of Senior Methodist/Oversight/Personal College Tutor
4. Year of entry to training as student (CCTP) or probationer (IST).
5. Please tick the mode of training you undertook:  
IST (In-Service Training)

CCTP (College and Circuit Training Placement)

6. Why did you choose, or why were you selected for, IST or CCTP?
7. How many churches/members did you work with and what activities did you undertake with them?
8. What formal academic work did you do alongside the placement/station?
9. How well, if at all, did these formal academic studies connect with your placement work?
10. What formational/student groups (if any) were you part of?
11. What opportunities for ecumenical engagement were there?
12. Was there anything else about the placement/station which was distinctive or significant for your formation?
13. In what ways, if any, did the following provide support during your training:
  - a. The Circuit Superintendent
  - b. Ministerial Colleagues
  - c. Lay office holders in your churches/circuit
  - d. Church members
  - e. College/Course staff
  - f. Other students
  - g. A mentor (if appointed)
  - h. Anyone else?
14. What do you see as the main advantages and challenges of IST/CCTP?
15. How did you understand and develop the relationship between academic learning and ministerial practice while undertaking IST/CCTP; was there anything in particular which helped you with this?
16. What, if anything, did you learn from your ministerial practice during IST/CCTP that could not have been learned in other ways?
17. How, if at all, has your own prayer and spiritual life been shaped by the experience of IST/CCTP?
18. Which of the following has been impacted most by your experience of IST/CCTP? Please Provide a few words about this impact.

Prayer  
Personal relationships  
Pastoral relationships  
Ability to organise and to manage resources  
Other

19. From your current perspective as an experienced minister, what advice would you offer your younger self to make the experience of IST/CCTP an effective learning experience?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about IST/CCTP which might be valuable for the research?
21. We are trying to involve as many people who did IST/CCTP as possible. ... Are you aware of colleagues who undertook these forms of training who would be willing to be approached to take part in the survey?

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#### **Appendix 4 | Information Sheet for Local Preachers**

The Methodist Church in Britain has commissioned the Susanna Wesley Foundation to do some work on the nature of practice within training and formation for authorized ministry. As part of this research we are interested in people's experience of the 'practical' aspects of local preacher training. We are very grateful that your Local Preachers meeting has agreed to be part of this research which involves you as a group in discussing the questions below as part of meeting. Your superintendent has arranged for notes of the conversation to be kept and passed to the researchers and where practical for an audio recording also to be made.

Questions for discussion:

1. What was the most significant part of your local preacher training and why?
2. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of being 'on note' and working closely with an experienced preacher (the mentor) at the beginning of training?
3. What have you learned from the actual leading of services that could not be learned in other ways?
4. What impact has the formal learning component of your local preacher training (e.g. Worship and Preaching) had on how you conduct worship and preach?
5. When considering a trial service, what do you think should be assessed?

Your responses may be quoted within the final research but will always be anonymized so there is no linking to particular people or circuits. A copy of the section of the research report which deals with the experiences of local preachers will be available upon request to all participants at the end of the research period which we anticipate being May 2016.

If you have any questions or concerns about this please do not hesitate to contact Luke Curran, the principal researcher on this project using the details below.

Many thanks for participation and insights.

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Figure 2. Location of CBLP Students