Contested issues in training ministers in South Africa

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CONTESTING SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Introduction

Theological study comes with certain expectations that would not normally be found in other fields of study. One of these expectations on the side of the student, is that theological education implies spiritual formation (Glennon et al. 2011:360). Spiritual formation is recognised in the literature as an important aspect of theological training (Kanarek and Lehman 2013; Keely 2003; Naidoo 2008, 2010). However, should this necessarily be the case? Hence spiritual formation is not without contestation. In this chapter, recent spiritual formation practices in South African institutions will be broadly reviewed. Furthermore, possible challenges in spiritual formation will be discussed and, lastly, how spiritual formation influences the pastor in the congregation will be sketched.

What is spiritual formation? Lowe's (2010:2) statement that spiritual formation is a synthesis of a number of factors illustrates why there are so many definitions of spiritual formation. Some descriptions include the following:

- Engaging students in reflecting upon the spiritual life, as well as providing opportunities to deepen their own spiritual journeys (Keely 2003:202).
- Integrating of the intellectual, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of life in the educational process (Warford 2007 in Naidoo 2011).
- “A lifelong process of being formed and developed in the likeness of Christ... It is a personal and relational formation which seeks to promote, encounter and cooperate with God and society as a whole” (Naidoo 2010:187).
- “The intentional process by which the marks of an authentic Christian spirituality are formed and integrated” (Naidoo 2011).

For the purpose of this discussion, spiritual formation will be described as the intentional providing of opportunities to deepen the spiritual journey of students (and faculty) through the integrating of the intellectual, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of life.

Spiritual formation of the student at seminaries, Bible schools and public universities in South Africa, receives attention in different ways. Some contemporary examples of institutions of theological training referring specifically to spiritual formation, is the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary as well as the faculties of Theology at the University of the Free State and Stellenbosch University. The Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary describes itself on its webpage, “Thus, the seminary understood from the start that its task was not merely to produce graduates with strong academic credentials in theology, but also to

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form individuals of spiritual maturity with impeccable personal values and virtues” (Seth Mokitimi 2014). At the University of the Free State, the Faculty of Theology declares, “The Faculty embraces values that encourage cultural, gender and ethnic inclusivity, promote academic and intellectual excellence and innovation, and support spiritual and ethic integrity” (University of the Free State 2014). The curatoria of the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) and Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) established a seminary at Stellenbosch University’s Faculty of Theology to assist in the ministerial formation of theology students. Spiritual formation is specifically mentioned.

Formation happens through the modes of residential and/or distance-learning, with various combinations of full-time, part-time, online or correspondence training. At public universities, spiritual formation is often left to the churches represented by the students. It is usually not written into the curriculum and not used to assess the preparedness of the theology student for ministry. Regular prayer meetings for students and staff, as well as Bible study groups organised by the theological student organisations, are some of the ways spiritual formation is directly addressed. For example, in the reformed universities, like Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Free State, the Dutch Reformed Church is using a ‘curatorium’ (a body of ministers elected by a church denomination to oversee theological study) through which a mentor minister is assigned to a student for regular contact sessions. At inter-denominational seminaries and Bible schools, spiritual formation can be addressed more openly as part of their training without being overly sensitive to offend some specific church tradition. In Protestant institutions, spiritual formation happens informally, personally and implicitly with the focus on academic instruction and some practical exposures (Naidoo 2011:121). Githuku (2004:228) warns that it can happen that churches assume the university or seminary will give attention to the spiritual maturity of the theology student, and, on the other hand, the university or seminary might assume that the churches will give attention to this aspect. This may lead to spiritual formation not receiving the proper attention from either institution.

Spirituality is seen differently within various traditions. Naidoo describes four approaches to spiritual formation (2011:225), namely “... speculative/kataphatic – head spirituality, primarily a ‘thinking’ approach; affective/kataphatic – a heart spirituality, drawing on a charismatic, affective way of connecting with God; affective/apophatic – a mystic spirituality, more interested in being with God than expressing oneself to God, and speculative/apophatic – a kingdom spirituality that is committed to witnessing to God in the world.” It poses the challenge as to which approach towards spiritual formation should be chosen by a specific institution. This, in turn, will influence the content and the methods used for spiritual formation.

A study done by Walvoord (2008) showed that students and faculty had different ideas about theological education. While the students expected that they will also be spiritually formed, faculty saw their task as creating critical thinkers (see also Glennon et al. 2011:360). According to research done in South Africa, theology students perceive their training

institutions to attend to their spiritual formation (Naidoo 2011:133). Furthermore, it was found that Pentecostal and Charismatic theological institutions working with a vocational model for training, showed greater commitment to the different dimensions of spiritual formation than Reformed and Presbyterian institutions (Naidoo 2011:137). This also coincides with whether it is a denominational seminary, Bible college, or a theological faculty at a public university. The focus of spirituality is often marginalised within higher education. The question can be asked whether theological training should be done within a paradigm of higher education if the critical area of spiritual formation is problematic or overlooked.

Pobee (2010:339) describes spirituality as integral to theological education: "... the subject of theology is God, the Ultimate Reality, and, therefore, spirituality cannot be an extra – it is integral to theological construction." Looking at theology in this light, the 'subject matter' calls for spiritual formation. Through information, formation also takes place. To distinguish between information and formation in education is to use illusory dichotomised language, according to Moore (Glennon et al. 2011). Information leads to formation and in the case of theology, one aspect of this formation is spiritual formation. Furthermore, spiritual formation plays an important role in equipping students for ministry. An essential aspect of a minister's work is the spiritual dimension of human lives (Naidoo 2008:134). Therefore, the theology student needs knowledge and experience of spiritual formation. The experiences of theology students' spiritual life will influence their leadership in church (Keely 2003:202) as well as other aspects of their ministry. Through theological study the student's ministerial identity is shaped, spiritual formation being an important aspect of this identity (Naidoo 2008:141). Marty (2008:321) goes so far as to say that "... (all) of the best thinking and learning in the work of theology will be pointless if it is not at the service of forming lives that matter." Spiritual formation, therefore, seems to be critical to theological education. However, it is not a straightforward issue.

Contestations in spiritual formation

From the brief background sketch, some challenges become apparent. Spiritual formation was earlier described as the intentional providing of opportunities to deepen the spiritual journey of students (and faculty) through the integrating of the intellectual, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions of life. In the light of the definition and other aspects mentioned above, contestations within spiritual formation will be grouped into four categories: conceptual, institutional, operational and communal. These four categories resemble aspects of spiritual formation as spelled out in the definition.

Conceptual issues

The first category deals with how spiritual formation should be conceptualised. As seen earlier, definitions include terms such as process and content. Which processes are to be included as part of spiritual formation? Giving more attention to either the human or the

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Divine aspect of the process, will influence the conceptualisation of spiritual formation. Can spiritual formation take place without human agency (Hess 2008:21)? The role the Divine plays in spiritual formation must be acknowledged in any conceptualisation of spiritual formation. The essential content for spiritual formation is also described in the definition. Content to be included will differ for various church traditions. The aim and goal of the formation process can vary from institution to institution, and church tradition to church tradition. In the Protestant tradition, the expectation the Church has of its leaders is seen as the goal of spiritual formation. The Roman Catholic tradition has a sacramental view of ministry as priesthood and “formation takes place through the provision of programmes and resources organised around clear institutional goals” (Naidoo 2010:186).

Spiritual formation has a developmental agenda which needs to be acknowledged in its conceptualisation (e.g. compare Fowler’s stages of faith development in Elias 1983:119–136). The scope of spiritual formation is also a lifelong one which will not be completed during theological training. There are thus limits to what can be achieved during theological education. Scharen (2008:266) expounds on this aspect stating, “No instruction of programme can simply transmit the wisdom and imagination that good pastors seem to have ... these emerge over time.” Students are only there for a limited time and their maturity, psychological and emotional growth can all influence their spiritual formation. Due to the wide field of theological studies, including at least six sub-disciplines, students rarely have prolonged contact with one specific lecturer, minimising the possible contact time for spiritual formation by a specific lecturer. Furthermore, students are already formed by different experiences with congregation, family, school, etc. when they come for theological education (Scharen 2008:265). Some students start studying theology directly after school, while others experience a calling to study theology in their later years. This can result in different age groups going through different stages in their lives, studying in one class. Being in different stages of faith development (compare Fowler’s stages of faith development) will translate into different developmental needs in this regard. These differences between students will have to be taken into consideration when looking at their spiritual formation.

A distinction is often made between formation and information; however, the one cannot really be seen without the other (cf. Jacobsen and Jacobsen in Glennon et al. 2011:361). This should be taken into consideration in conceptualising spiritual formation. Where spiritual formation is conceptualised as an ‘add-on’ to theological education, spiritual formation can be left to the students themselves. However, if spiritual formation is conceptualised as integral to formation of the theology student, it will need to be integrated into the curriculum.

Institutional challenges

The debate over whether or not theological training should be done at a public university, has been held in various places (Tolmie and Venter 2012; Venter 2011). In South Africa,

theological education takes place at public universities as well as seminaries and Bible schools. For theology to be intellectually rigorous, spiritual formation plays an important role. Hauwerwas (2007:183) describes it in this way: “According to D’Costa, theology can be done with intellectual rigor only in the context of a love affair with God and God’s community, the Church.” On an institutional level the importance of spiritual formation needs to be recognised as part of the ‘love affair with God and His community’, influencing the intellectual rigor of the discipline.

Where theological institutions are attached to a specific church tradition, ‘spiritual formation’ is not as problematic. In these seminaries it is sometimes assumed that the theology student is spiritually formed through the rigorous selection processes in the church. Furthermore, it is expected that the students will take responsibility for their own spiritual formation. This can result in seminaries ignoring this aspect of theological education. Intentionality in spiritual formation is, however, of great importance, as this is a critical component in the growth of theology students (Lowe 2010:9). Spiritual formation cannot be left to take place on its own. According to Githuku (2004:229), the teaching of Biblical studies and regular devotions at a theological institution do not adequately capture the spiritual formation of students. He suggests it should be incorporated into the programme of study.

In theological institutions that form a part of a public university, spiritual formation becomes problematic, although Keely (2003) argues that spiritual formation can be effectively integrated into the curricula of liberal, ecumenical seminaries. Is it possible to think about a ‘generic spiritual formation’ if some studies show differences between denominational institutions? At public universities, theology students are often from various Christian denominations or may even have different religious backgrounds. Can there be spiritual formation that is acceptable to all denominations? The ethical requirement of academic teaching is to preserve student autonomy, and the overarching goal of a university education to promote critical thinking. This raises the question whether spiritual formation might go against critical scholarship at a university. Martin (2008:213) argues that faith development (which can also be described as spiritual formation) can actually deepen the learning experience of the student, amidst these characteristics of university teaching. Spiritual formation can provide a valuable deepening of pluralism, autonomy, and critical thought in the educational experience of students (Martin 2008:213).

On the institutional level of the university there must be an understanding of the importance of spiritual formation in theological education as a deepening of their educational experience (Martin 2008:213). There must be an ‘institutional will’ within the institution to integrate spiritual formation into theological education, otherwise spiritual formation will become the responsibility of a few interested people. An institution that decides corporately to give attention to spiritual formation, should supply the resources to do so (Naidoo 2011:125). In the light of many other budgetary needs to be met, this might be a contentious issue.

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Another institution that plays a role in spiritual formation is the sending churches. The task of spiritual formation is not only the challenge of the theological institution, but also that of the Church. This is illustrated by the URCSA's policy document of 1997 on theological training. This document states that the purpose of theological training "... (is) to shape and equip candidates spiritually, intellectually and practically for their service in the Church of Jesus Christ" (URCSA 1997:718ff). Palka (2004) found that the local congregation where the theology students were involved had a significant influence on their spiritual formation. The kind of knowing that comes from practising spirituality through different modes (prayer, worship, etc.), is the kind of knowledge which congregational leaders look for in a candidate for ministry (Scharen 2008:266). Where classroom-based formation is not complemented with congregation-based formation, the best theology curricula are wasted (Wood 2008:291). Theological training in all its aspects should be thoroughly discussed and monitored by the different churches involved. This can prevent the criticism by congregations that universities and seminaries turn out students who are skilled in the cognitive disciplines, "... but (are) essentially clueless when it comes to the skills necessary for ministry" (Wood 2008:302). It should especially be discussed with the local congregations of the students. Nevertheless, how this can be monitored is another matter.

Operational issues

Once spiritual formation is conceptualised by the theological institution, the question remains how this can be operationalised in the students' education. The inclusion of spiritual formation in the curriculum is contestable, especially at a public university. As stated earlier, spiritual formation can be included in the academic work of the student and/or through activities aimed at spiritual formation. Classroom worship services can be very meaningful in shaping spirituality. Laytham (2010:110) highlights four aspects which make it a powerful pedagogical instrument:

(Classroom worship) focuses teaching and learning on God... It positions the entire class in dialogical relation to the divine Thou, in communal relation to each other, the larger church and the wider world, and in personal relations that risk spiritual transformation. Third, it frames theological education as an integrative practice of faith and learning. Finally, it invites teachers to know their students as whole persons and students to trust their teachers as spiritual guides.

The way in which different denominational traditions can be accommodated in these services, will have to be taken into consideration.

Would typical 'academic activities' be useful for spiritual formation? According to Kanarek and Lehman (2013:18), assignments may also be used to help students integrate their faith lives with their learning. Classroom discussions alone cannot help students to integrate their knowledge – written assignments can help to make the connection between knowledge and application. The assignment must challenge the student to apply the knowledge to a contemporary issue and voice their own opinion. In this way, students can be helped to see

the connection between academic study and spiritual formation. In a study done by Astin, Astin and Lindholm (2011:10), it was found that study abroad, interdisciplinary studies, and service learning had a big impact on students' spiritual growth. Employing these different ways of learning also for spiritual formation purposes can lead to an enriching experience for the theology student. Although these activities can be very useful in spiritual formation, these aspects mentioned in the study are not always possible within a theology curriculum.

Faculty members can play a significant role in students' lives through mentoring, amongst other things. The mentor/mentee relationship can play a significant role in the formation of the theology student (cf. Wood 2008:297). Mentoring 'postures' which may be helpful in spiritual formation include welcoming, sitting, listening, and reflecting on what the student has to share (Yaghjian 2013:221). Experiencing a sense of welcoming in the contact between the student and the mentor encourages the student to be open to discussion of his/her spiritual journey. In listening thoroughly and refracting the student's experience through the knowledge and experience of the mentor, spiritual formation can take place.

However, are faculty members adequately equipped for the spiritual formation of students or for mentoring them for the sake of spiritual formation? Criteria for appointing academic staff are primarily based on their academic credentials. Academic staff may see academic formation as their main responsibility, even though this neglects the fact that students are being prepared for a spiritual career. Furthermore, not all academic staff are involved in ministry and might lack experience in spiritual formation. The format of the relationship between the student and the lecturer can be problematic as to how much the student will be prepared to share for the sake of faith formation on the one hand, and the academic assessment by the lecturer on the other. Higher education has certain requirements that need to be met, and spiritual formation is not one of them. Within institutions assessment of work performance of lecturers mainly focuses on research and teaching responsibilities. Especially in public universities, this institutional focus does not encourage lecturers to spend time on the spiritual formation of students.

If spiritual formation is to form part of theological education, the question remains whether it should be measured and how? "Around the world, academic accrediting bodies are requiring educational institutions to demonstrate the achievement of expressed competencies" (Brynjolfson 2010:198). How can this be done for spiritual formation? Assessment of spirituality has been the topic of various studies (Hall and Edwards 2002; Emmons 2000; Naidoo 2011). Emmons (2000:3) proposes that spirituality be studied within an intelligence framework. He identifies five components of spiritual intelligence (2000:3): a) The capacity for transcendence; b) the ability to enter into heightened spiritual state of consciousness; c) the ability to invest everyday activities, events and relationships with a sense of the sacred; d) the ability to utilise spiritual resources to solve problems in living; and e) the capacity to engage in virtuous behaviour. Using an intelligence framework

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opens new ways of seeing and measuring spiritual formation. This can unfortunately also give rise to problematic issues, like equalling intelligence, to spirituality.

The Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI) of Hall and Edwards (2002) was developed as they sensed a need for an instrument that integrates a clinically-relevant theoretical framework, a design for clinical application, as well as a sound psychometric foundation. They propose a theistic model and measure for assessing spiritual development. This tool measures a more 'spiritual dimension' (awareness) as well as a more 'psychological dimension' (relational maturity). It can be used as a clinical tool to assess spiritual development, as well as help identify an individual's strengths and weaknesses (Hall and Edwards 2002:353). Being more 'theologically informed', this measuring instrument can be useful in measuring spiritual formation. Naidoo (2011:130) suggests six dimensions of spiritual formation: Intentional commitment towards spiritual formation; services offered by the institution; formal and informal learning; community life; staff involvement in spiritual formation, and spiritual activities on campus. These dimensions can be utilised in a measuring instrument to assess spiritual formation at different institutions. It can also help develop more integrated educational and nurturing environments for student spirituality in theological education (Naidoo 2011:141). When taking different dimensions of spiritual formation into consideration, a broader picture can be drawn of the spiritual formation practices of an institution.

What would the purpose of measuring spiritual formation be? Measuring could be used by the student as a method of self-improvement, to ascertain whether certain goals were achieved, or maybe to evaluate the readiness of the student for ministry. In the last case, the assessment of spiritual formation influences the outcome of the student's studies. Can the student be awarded a degree but not be accepted for ministry on account of the spiritual formation assessment? This will have implications for new students enrolling into programmes. Students will have to be informed, from the beginning, that a degree in theology alone will not guarantee work in the ministry, but that their spiritual formation will be a significant part of their assessment.

Communal realities

From the different definitions of spiritual formation it is clear that experiencing the sense of community is also one of the important aspects of spiritual formation. Vassiliades, Kasseluri and Kalaitzidis (2010:608) even go so far as to say that "... theological education should always refer to communion as an ultimate constitutive element of being." The relational dimension is of utmost importance. Experiencing community on a vertical (with God) as well as a horizontal level (people) is shown by various studies to play an important role in spiritual formation (Hess 2008; Lowe 2010; Naidoo 2011). Interactions with faculty on an intellectual and social level had a positive impact on spiritual formation, according to Lowe (2010:7). The communal aspect of spiritual formation can be seen in community experienced between students and faculty. This immediately raises the question of whether

there is enough possibility for students to experience this community with faculty. The opportunity for contact can be influenced by the model used for theological education, e.g. where distance learning is utilised. Studies done on the influence of distance education in theological training, indicated that spiritual formation can take place; however, a combination of face-to-face training and online training could have more benefits in this regard (Naidoo 2012a; Lowe 2010). In the African context with its growing need for ministers, distance education can help fulfil that need (Nguru 2004:245). However, special attention will have to be given to students' spiritual formation.

Another aspect regarding the communal facet of spiritual formation, is a sense of community experienced amongst fellow students. Gaikward (2010:270) refers to a team spirituality that must be cultivated amongst theology students. It can enrich their relationships and let them experience the grace and joy of being part of the body of Christ. This 'team spirituality' can prepare them for collaborating with fellow-ministers when they are in a congregational setting. A Training in Ministry (TiM) project was launched in a collaboration between some seminaries and congregations from different denominations in the United States. The aim of this project was to help prepare theology students with the transition from university/seminary to a congregational setting. It was found that the deep engagement between peers in this programme established a deeply formative experience (Wood 2008:298). Where students come from diverse cultural backgrounds and different denominations in a public university setting, experiencing this community might be more difficult. This is also true of theological training through distance education. Physical as well as cultural and other boundaries may pose a challenge for the communal aspect of spiritual formation. Formal and informal learning of spirituality should take place in the context of shared lives (Naidoo 2011:125). This should happen both inside and outside the classroom. With the academic pressure of finishing a certain amount of work, this 'sharing of lives' becomes problematic. Perhaps not enough attention is given to informal learning as an opportunity for spiritual formation.

Other aspects that also refer to community in spiritual formation, were used by Naidoo (2011:144-145) in her research to assess spiritual formation in institutions. These include: A nurtured sense of community; chapel and worship services for students and staff; recreational/fun activities available for the community, and the ability of the whole community to pray and work together. These community activities not only include 'spiritual aspects', but also non-spiritual social aspects like recreational activities that can foster communion. The social aspect of spiritual formation can also be traced to the Biblical metaphor of the Church as the body of Christ, growing together in faith. Theological institutions should ask themselves: Are enough methods used to foster communion amongst our theology students? A fellowship of faith is "... born out of the matrix of community" (Marty 2008:314). The community aspect of spiritual formation should thus never be underplayed.

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The influence of spiritual formation on the pastor in the congregation

A particular sort of spiritual maturity is asked of church leadership – a spiritual maturity that internalised the religious tradition, a theological grasp of the human condition before God, and also some personal qualities where one's spiritual life plays an important role (Naidoo 2010:190). All these form part of the ministerial identity to be formed in the theology student during and after his/her studies. An important role of the minister is to shape a rich communal life in the congregation (Marty 2008:312). For this role, a theology student must be prepared through knowledge, skills and spiritual formation. Forming theological students to become this kind of minister, is a daunting task. Spiritual formation, together with theological study and ministerial practice, play important roles in the developing of ministerial identity (Cahalan 2008:96). What kind of ministerial identity will the student be formed into with a specific kind of spiritual formation (Naidoo 2010:225; 2012b:165)? Where spiritual formation mainly takes place on an intellectual level, the ministerial identity will be more that of a 'scholar pastor'. However, spiritual formation taking place mainly through religious experiences might result in an identity of the 'mystic pastor', whereas focusing on experiencing spiritual formation through practical deeds of faith can give rise to an 'activist pastor' identity.

Theological education should be a dialogue between academy and people of faith, and contribute to the self-understanding of faith communities (Ackerman 2013:6). Where a minister's theological education does not contribute to the self-understanding of faith communities, something went amiss. This can easily happen when a future minister is just prepared academically for ministering in faith communities. A minister trained in only the academic aspects of theology will be challenged to minister to people in a holistic way – addressing their spiritual needs, not only their cognitive need for knowledge. His/her ministerial identity must be formed holistically in order to minister to all aspects of congregation members' needs.

Theological studies inform students' knowledge, shape their skills and also their spiritual life. Stepping into ministry, the pastor brings these aspects with him/her into the congregation. The knowledge and skills gained will influence their sermons, pastoral care, managing of the congregation, and all other aspects of their ministry. However, the spiritual formation that took place during their theological studies will also shape their ministry in more ways than one.

Resources secured through interpersonal attachments refer to social capital, while the degree of mastery of and attachment to a particular religious culture, refers to religious capital (Finke and Dougherty 2002:106). Theology students build relationships with one another, congregations where they participate, institutions where they do practical work (e.g. old age homes, etc.), faculty, as well as relationships with people outside their study circle. In this way they gain experience and acquire social capital that can be useful in their later life. Through constant connection with churches in one way or another, students' attachment to their religious culture is strengthened. Theological knowledge

of the religious scripts helps students to ‘master’ their religious culture. While studying theology, the theology student thus accumulates social and religious capital that he/she takes to the congregation which he/she serves as pastor. Spiritual formation in the sense of ‘attachment to religion’ forms part of the religious capital that students accumulate. Theological education has a responsibility to build the social and religious capital of the student in preparation for ministry. Where this capital is only scantily built, if, for instance, insufficient attention is given to spiritual formation, an insufficiently equipped pastor is sent into ministry. The pastor will not be able to effectively address the spiritual needs of the members of the congregation due to ‘insufficient religious capital’. However, Finke and Dougherty (2002:108) found that the religious capital of the pastor is often distinctly different from that of the congregation. Knowledge and experience gained at the theological institution shape the pastor in ways that might differ from that of the congregation. A church tradition will, therefore, do well to assure that the spiritual formation of their students that is received at a seminary or public university, is in tune with the general spirituality of their tradition.

The growing awareness of the professional misconduct of some clergy (Naidoo 2010:190) has made spiritual formation an even bigger priority for churches. This spiritual formation should take place during theological studies, but also while in ministry, to prevent misconduct amongst clergy. As stated earlier, spiritual formation does not only happen during theological education, but also takes place before and after theological studies. Unfortunately, due to changes like unstable families and less participation by youth in the church, it can lead to the situation where many theology students might not be as well versed as one would expect in their church tradition before they start their theological studies (Naidoo 2010: 190).

Churches have a responsibility to make sure that their future ministers not only receive spiritual formation during theological training, but that they also give ongoing attention to their own spiritual formation. Theological training should equip ministers to sustain their own spirituality. Spiritual formation is a lifelong process to which the minister must attend. Sustained spiritual disciplines in the lifelong journey of spiritual formation should be encouraged for the minister to be a good steward of his/her spiritual formation (Hess 2008:23). The responsibility of the church towards the minister’s spiritual formation starts before their theological studies, then continuing as a lifelong responsibility – a responsibility with consequences for the whole church. Examples of this responsibility taken seriously are centres like *Communitas*, *Excelsus* and *Shepherd*, offering courses in the continued development and enrichment of pastors, including their spiritual formation (cf. communitas.co.za; excelsus.org.za; theology.ufs.ac.za).

Conclusion

Spiritual formation forms an important part of theological education. Spirituality is integral to theological construction (Pobee 2010:339), although spiritual formation is not without

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contention. Addressing the conceptual, institutional, operational and communal issues mentioned above may resolve the queries regarding the spiritual formation of theology students. Conceptually, spiritual formation should be filled with the same meaning for all involved at the same institution. Spiritual formation is not just something for churches to decide, but should be addressed on an institutional level. The 'how-to' (operational issue) of spiritual formation needs to be planned carefully in line with how it was conceptualised. Lastly, emphasising the communal aspect of spiritual formation, interpersonal intimacies between the individual, God, other human beings and oneself, can be developed in order to shape the spirit of the minister-to-be into a person who is well-equipped and ready for the challenges of ministry (Hess 2008:21).

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