Contested issues in training ministers in South Africa

morality
solutions
TECHNOLOGY
curriculum
ACCREDITATION ministerial VISION
AFRICAN LEADERSHIP VIABILITY
community truth gender research
DIVERSITY SPIRITUALITY formation biblical
identity
partnerships
contextual
relevant
philosophy
ideology
renewal
decolonisation
city culture
loyalty race
pastors

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DIVERSIFICATION IN TRAINING MODELS: A KEY TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES IN MINISTRY TRAINING

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Introduction

With the radical changes in world Christianity, any discussion on ministry training needs to consider the changing landscape of theological education. In South Africa, this would involve a reflection on the need to diversify models of training so that all people of God can access training and the missional vision of theological education can be reached. There is a very large need for ministry training²³ of pastors in less formal church settings, who, in the past, did not have access to formal training. There is also a growing need for formal training of ‘lay members’ of churches. The formalisation of training for these target groups should be taken seriously as part of future processes aimed at reshaping ministry leadership development in the country. The need to reshape training is relevant to informal churches. However, it is also valid for formal churches (such as the Dutch Reformed, Anglican and Lutheran churches), as they will have to fall back more and more on the utilisation of lay leaders within ministry who did not receive any formal training in the past. Diversification should play a key role in the process to rethink and redesign ministry training in order for it to meet the needs of these groups.

The concept of diversification of ministry training could be construed in different ways. One possibility would be to conceive of it in terms of diverse thematic emphases that would be relevant in diverse contexts. For example in Southern Africa, where the legacies of colonialism and apartheid are still freshly remembered and acutely experienced, a focus on themes such as justice and peace, race and human dignity, class and poverty, reconciliation, and social cohesion would be deeply relevant (Botman 2013:xx); or a focus on “raising self-awareness and self-discovery ... that would, at the same time, focus on the foundations of the faith” (Mofokeng 2012:149). In African contexts where the legacies of former, and even some recent and current, religious and ethnic practices are viewed as influential in communities, such as “evil foundations” and “strongholds” precipitated by “ritual killings, bloody inter-tribal wars, sacrifice of new-born babies, twins and virgins to the gods of the land ...” (Olukoya 2001:9), themes such as inter-faith relationships, spiritual mapping, deliverance from evil powers or witchcraft, and the breaking of strongholds, may be deemed essential. Another possibility of viewing diversification may be to deal with

²³ The term ‘ministry training’, as it is used in this chapter, is meant to imply a close link with and embeddedness in theological education. The term is also used instead of the more common ‘ministerial training’. The concept ‘ministerial training’ emphasises ‘who’ is being trained, namely the ‘minister’ – normally interpreted as the ‘professional clergyman or –woman’. The concept ‘ministry training’ relates to ‘what’ the training is aimed at, namely ‘preparation for ministry’. This is a wider concept than ‘ministerial training’ and should be interpreted as including any person who is being prepared for any kind of church or faith-related ministry.

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it in terms of teaching and training that focus on diverse categories of ministry and the need for specialist ministries. An example of this would be a focus on child ministry (such as presented by Petra Institute for Children's Ministry);²⁴ or a focus on sound Biblical interpretation and exegesis (e.g. the Veritas College);²⁵ or a specialist leadership focus (e.g. the Dael Institute of Leadership based in Lagos, Nigeria).²⁶ There could be several more angles towards approaching the concept of diversification.

This chapter, however, will deal with diversification from a different angle, namely that of the contested nature of our current models of ministry training. Existing challenges related to formal ministry training opportunities for pastors and other ministry leaders in the informal church environment, will be unpacked. It will be shown that few formal training opportunities are available to the disproportionately large group of leaders of informal churches. Most training initiatives currently available to this group are informal in nature in the sense that they are not formally recognised by the official qualification authority of the country. This leads to a series of consequential problems for the relevant group. It will be argued that two levels of diversification will assist in overcoming the challenges, namely diversification in the overarching framework that regulates training in the country, as well as diversification within ministry training itself. Reference will be made to new training policies recently introduced by the Government, and to a new initiative which aims at utilising opportunities in the new policies to bring about the relevant diversifications – and by doing so, contribute to the solution of the problems as identified. The discussion will commence with a theological motivation for training of all of God's people involved in ministry, with an emphasis on those who were marginalised by the formal training system in the past.

Theological motivations for training

A missional understanding of the Church is fundamental for a proper understanding of theological education and ministry training. Training of leadership for ministry is an obvious task of the Church, embedded in God's mission. Ministry training has to be understood within "the movement of the Trinitarian history of God's dealings with the world" (Moltmann 1977:65). During the 20th century, especially since the paper read by Karl Barth at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, theologians began to understand mission as an activity of the triune God himself (Bosch 1991:389). This grew into a conviction that the Church does not have mission "as one of its activities", but rather that its existence is embedded in God's mission. Jürgen Moltmann states (1977:64):

In the movement of the trinitarian history of God's dealings with the world, the Church finds and discovers itself ... It finds itself on the path traced by this history of God's dealings with the world, and it discovers itself as one element in the

²⁴ Petra Institute – www.petra.co.za

²⁵ Veritas College International – www.veritas.org.za

²⁶ See ng.linkedin.com/pub/basil-ibeh

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movements of the divine sending ... It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the Church, creating a church as it goes on its way.

It is not the Church that brings the Spirit and the grace of God to the people. The Church is the witness and the instrument used by God in his act of reaching out to the world. And if this is the case, says Moltmann, the Church needs to understand itself “as one element in the power of the Spirit and has no need to maintain its special power and its special charges with absolute and self-destructive claim” (Moltmann 1977:65).

Ministry training should be understood within this wider perspective of the Trinitarian *missio Dei*. It is not ‘owned’ by the training institutions as if it is ‘our work’. Instead, teaching and training is part of God’s work to be done by members of the universal Church as the body of Christ. As Christ was sent by the Father, He sends his members, in the power of the Spirit (Jn 20:21-22) to do as He instructs. He sends them to serve, to bear witness of his death and resurrection (Lk 24:45-48; Ac 1:8), to make the peoples into his disciples, to teach (Mt 28:19-20) so that there could be life, and that in abundance (Jn 10:10).

Understanding ministry training as embedded in the *missio Dei* means that ministry training initiatives should be conceived of and designed around what Ross Kinsler calls ‘a mission paradigm’ – that is, around the core questions, “What was Jesus’s understanding of God’s mission?” and following from that, “What does it mean to follow Jesus in today’s world?” (Kinsler 2009:13). Based on this fundamental point of departure, Kinsler comes to the conclusion that ministry training practices should reflect Jesus’s emphasis. Jesus gave priority to “action on behalf of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner. His ministry on behalf of the ‘little ones’ ... was at the same time a denunciation of the powerful and the rich and the structures of oppression and marginalisation” (Kinsler 2009:15). Against this background, Kinsler makes two comments that have a bearing on content and organisation of ministry training. Regarding content of training he states: “To follow Jesus in our time ... we need to consider whether our programmes of theological education are equipping local church leaders to defend and support the weak ...” (Kinsler 2009:19). Regarding organisation and focus of training he states: “Priority should be given to the theological formation of local leaders, especially those who have traditionally been marginalised” (Kinsler 2009:15). This ties in with Bosch’s understanding of the new missional identity of the Church, and also that of ministry training initiatives – see, for example, the need for the local Church to be heard; the need to change the rather paternalistic idea of the “church for others” into a “church-with-others” (Bosch 1991:378); or the concept of “teachability” of those who find themselves in the stronger position (Bosch 1991:456); or that of “self-theologising” (Bosch 1991:451-452), which is easily forgotten today.

Providing this theological mandate does not imply that the importance of solid theological education is questioned. Important to note, however, is that the training of leaders for

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church ministry may never be structured as an elitist undertaking that disregards the needs and the contributions of the 'little ones' in the kingdom of God.

Training needs for Christian ministry

Formal, established churches such as the Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist churches and the like, have relatively strong structures for the training of their leaders. These churches all have a history of thorough theological education and ministry training for their pastors, most of that on tertiary level and at registered and formally accredited universities (Naidoo 2012:15-114; Landmann 2013:241-244). The position, however, with regard to training of leaders in the less formal or informal churches, is different.

Over the last century there was a significant change in the religious and denominational profile of South Africa, with a disproportionate growth in churches initiated by black Africans. The following statistics tell the story. The total number of Christians in South Africa in 1911 was approximately five million, of which about 50% were black and 25% were classified as white, while the rest were classified as coloured or Asian. By 1996, these proportions have changed dramatically. According to the national census of that year, the total number of Christians were more than 30 million, of which 78% (slightly more than 23 million) were black Africans. The proportion of Christians in other race groups has obviously decreased accordingly (Hendriks and Malherbe 2002:18,25). Amongst black Christians, nearly 11 million (42%) were reported being members of African Initiated Churches (AICs) in 1996 (Hendriks and Malherbe 2002:18). Five years later, the 2001 national census found a further growth in the AIC membership. A total of 14 254 031 persons were reported belonging to AICs, with another 3 422 749 persons reported as being members of Pentecostal or Charismatic churches (Department of Government Communication and Information Systems 2011:12).²⁷ Together these two groups of less formal churches made out nearly half of the Christians in the country (49.5% to be exact).

The important point to focus on is the estimated growth in the number of leaders in the informal church environment, and the training needs implied by this. Siaki's study from 2002 provided information on the average number of church members per pastor in several of the formal churches (Siaki 2002:38). Based on this, a rough estimate can be made of the number of pastors in these formal churches. The result of this calculation is shown in Table 1, where the estimated number of members per pastor is related to the number of members per church tradition as reported from the 2001 census. Siaki (2002) unfortunately did not report information on the average number of members per pastor

²⁷ It may be assumed that a certain proportion of this last number can also be deemed as 'initiated in Africa', especially churches from the so-called third wave Pentecostal tradition which position themselves as responsive to typical African needs, but are critical of certain trends amongst AICs that are interpreted as syncretistic. (Information from the orally presented course entitled Advanced Level of Studies in the Pastors/Ministers Training Institute in Africa, presented by Prophet Laurette Mkati, Sandton, February 2013, also from a discussion with Barr Emeka Nwankpa, leader of the Pastors and Ministers Prayer Network in Africa, Lagos, Nigeria, 2011.)

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in the AICs. To make a preliminary estimate of this statistic, information obtained by the Centre for Contextual Ministry (CCM) at the University of Pretoria in a small sample of nineteen AICs in the Rustenburg area, is used as a substitute. The number of members per pastor in this sample varied from 20 to 300, with an average of 83 and a median of 60. Due to a lack of better information this average of 83 is used to make a rough estimate of the number of pastors in AICs. The result of this calculation is also shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated number of pastors per denomination/church group

Church tradition/group	Number of members*	Members per pastor	Estimated number of pastors	Number expressed as percentage of AICs
Roman Catholic	3 181 336	2 897**	1 098	0.6%
Anglican	1 722 076	1 126**	1 529	0.9%
Methodist	3 305 404	1 373**	2 407	1.4%
Reformed churches	3 232 193	843**	3 834	2.2%
Pentecostal/Charismatic	3 422 749	246**	13 914	8.1%
African independent churches	14 254 031	83***	171 735	100%

Although these numbers and proportions may not be completely accurate, Table 1 shows that the number of pastors in the AIC and to a certain extent in the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition, is totally disproportionate to the number of pastors in formal churches. This relates to the phenomenal growth over the last century of Christianity in the global south.²⁸ A century ago, about two-thirds of the world's Christians lived in Europe, where most Christians were to be found for more than a millennium. This has changed dramatically. At present, only about 26% of all Christians lives in Europe, with approximately 37% in the Americas. About one-quarter of Christians lives in sub-Saharan Africa (24%), and the rest (about 13%) in Asia and the Pacific (Pew Research Centre 2011).

A very large proportion of leaders of the informal church environment who need training, do not hold the necessary prior qualifications that afford them access to registered or accredited ministry training. Many leaders in informal churches do not have the literacy skills and academic proficiency that are needed to successfully enter or enrol in formally accredited courses. Theological education on tertiary level is currently only accessible to a relatively small 'academic elite' – certainly not to the masses of leaders with lower levels of prior learning who need training. Another reality is that most leaders who are in need of training are in full-time ministry, or are in part-time ministry while employed elsewhere to earn a living. They cannot attend courses that would take them out of their ministries or other places of work for extended periods of time.

²⁸ This term is to a large extent becoming synonymous with the concept of 'non-Western Christian' (Charles 2009:15).

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Training challenges related to non-formal education

There is a surprisingly high number of non-formal (i.e. not formally registered or accredited) ministry training institutions that provide training to this group. In a recent report compiled by the Centre for Contextual Ministry (CCM), approximately 80 training institutions that are active in this field were listed (Van der Walt 2014:21–26). Some of these institutions are entities within universities, for example CCM at the University of Pretoria, Shepherd at the University of the Free State, Ekklesia at Stellenbosch University, and the short course programmes of Unisa and North West University. Most are, however, private initiatives that were developed by visionary individuals who had the training of untrained pastors at heart. This varies from private tertiary institutions offering bridging courses to leaders of this group of churches, to Bible colleges using material by institutions such as the Nehemiah Bible Institute, small institutions that developed own training material, etc.

Several problems related to the training of pastors and other leaders in AICs and related churches are experienced by these institutions. Research done by CCM amongst a sample of 53 ministry training institutions that provide training to leaders in the informal church environment, highlighted the following as important challenges (Van der Walt 2014:32–38):

Table 2: Problems reported by ministry training institutions

Issue	Intensity of problem			Percentage of institutions participating in study experiencing the problem
	Serious	Slight	None	
Curriculum/course design	2	26	25	53%
Developing or finding appropriate training material	2	21	30	43%
Determining and maintaining appropriate training standards	5	23	25	53%
Finding well-qualified/effective teaching staff	5	24	24	55%
Accreditation of courses in South Africa (including courses on tertiary level)	22	15	16	70%
Accreditation of courses on sub-tertiary level	44	0	9	83%
Accreditation of the training institution within South Africa	25	11	17	68%
Financial constraints/financial viability	19	27	7	87%
Lack of physical resources	8	23	22	58%
Limited geographic reach/geographic restrictions	24	7	22	58%

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Table 2 suggests that formal accreditation issues and financial constraints are amongst the most serious problems experienced by ministry training institutions in South Africa. Problems with regard to accreditation are especially important in the case of institutions that focus on the training of leaders in the informal churches of whom a large proportion have to be trained on a pre-tertiary level (National Qualification Framework Level 4 and lower).

A core issue is that most ministry training institutions could not succeed in registering as a Further Education and Training (FET) College which is officially entitled to award qualifications on the pre-tertiary level. Virtually all pre-tertiary courses presented by ministry training institutions in South Africa fall outside the ambit of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and do, therefore, not carry credits towards recognised qualifications. Discussions with the leadership of the training institutions revealed that there are several reasons why registration is so difficult. A factor often mentioned, is that the process to register courses and institutions is extremely complicated. Problems with the complexity of the process are compounded by the fact that theology and church ministry are ‘strange birds’ with no ‘home’ within the framework for the registration of FET level courses and institutions. Registration of pre-tertiary theological and ministry courses had to be done via the framework of Sectoral Education and Training Agencies (SETAs),²⁹ all of which are designed in terms of the needs and realities of other sectors and none for the specific realities of the religious sector.

Another critical challenge is that of financial viability, which has a limiting impact on the level of service that institutions are able to provide. Viability problems are mainly due to the fact that the vast majority of informal churches operate in less affluent to very poor communities. Many churches have difficulties to pay their pastors who, in turn, find it difficult to pay for their tuition. The tuition fees of most of the training institutions serving this target group represent only a fraction of the fees of ‘financially sustainable’ training in the corporate environment – and yet the experience is that most leaders from the informal churches struggle to afford even the highly subsidised fees of the courses they want to attend.

An important challenge is the absence of a common vision and strategy regarding ministry training needs. A total of 98% of the respondents in the CCM study stated that “there is no joint vision amongst the relevant training institutions regarding the desired outcomes of Christian leadership training in the country and over the continent” (Van der Walt 2014:5). Training institutions stated that most of the training institutions seem to be working in

²⁹ See for example http://mobi.careerhelp.org.za/page/mobile/learnership_information for a list of SETAs. There are 21 of these agencies, each designed to provide for the specific training needs of the sectors they represent. The SETA operations are funded from the national Skills Development Fund. There is, however, no sectoral agency which provides for the specific characteristics of religious and church-related leadership training. At the same time, the Skills Development Fund does not provide for training in the religious and church ministry environment

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varying levels of isolation towards own objectives. It was reported that there was a lack of coordination and optimisation of effort towards jointly formulated objectives. It was found that many of those involved in more or less the same kind of service, were “at best blind or indifferent to the work of the others, and at worst even offensive and working in opposition to one another. The result is that much energy is wasted due to a lack of clubbing together of forces” (Van der Walt 2014:15).

Although reported on a slightly lower level, the remaining problems identified by training institutions seem to be a fairly general experience: problems with curriculum and course design, obtaining appropriate training material, determining and maintaining appropriate training standards, finding well-qualified and effective teaching staff, limited geographic reach, and a lack of physical resources. These should also be taken into account when re-thinking ministry training in the country.

Diversification of training models as a solution

Diversification of theological education and ministry training can significantly contribute to the solution of the challenges identified above. Diversification on two levels is intended – in the overarching framework that regulates education and training in the country; and in the internal world of theological education and ministry training itself.

1. Diversification of training within the overarching national framework

Many leaders in the informal church environment have years of ministry experience. However, officially approved methods and procedures to quantify and to recognise this, do not exist. Ways should be found to enable pastors and other leaders to enter the ministry training framework on any level as the need may be – from ABET level 1 (where there is only rudimentary or even no literacy skills and academic proficiency), to pastors who could successfully make a first entry on post-graduate level. Ways should also be found to allow for the recognition of prior learning in a way that will recognise relevant learning that has taken place through practical ministry involvement and to present this as part of the process to identify the appropriate access level into formal ministry training, while identifying gaps that need to be filled through bridging courses. Current deficiencies related to these issues lead to a very large proportion of informal church leaders remaining excluded from the formal training system.

A fundamental challenge that deserves attention is the ‘homelessness’ of pre-tertiary ministry training within the overall regulatory framework of education in South Africa. As stated in a previous section, ministry training institutions presenting pre-tertiary courses currently have to work through educational and training agencies (SETAs) that are geared towards the characteristics and realities of other sectors of the national activity structure. Theological and ministry training institutions and their courses do not fit properly into the ‘moulds’ of these agencies that were actually designed for other sectors. Thus, while the other sectors (e.g. agriculture, banking, construction, health and welfare, engineering,

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mining, public service, etc.) can successfully develop and register training institutions, unit standards, courses and qualifications within the pre-tertiary (FET) bands, this proved (for all practical purposes) not possible for ministry training since this sector had no say in the design of their regulatory ‘home’.

Since there are deficiencies in the interaction between the national education regulatory environment and training provision in the religious and ministry sector – specifically on the lower (pre-tertiary) levels – there is a need for further diversification within the national regulatory framework to provide for an own ‘tailor-made home’ for ministry training. The good news is that an innovative opportunity for this has recently been created through the introduction of a new set of education and training policies by the Government. This was encompassed in the National Qualifications Framework Act of 2008, which *inter alia* provides for the establishment of non-statutory professional bodies for the wide variety of professions that are included in the Department of Higher Education and Training’s Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) (SAQA 2012:5).

In terms of the new policy, any ‘industry’ (individuals and institutions involved in a specific category of professions or vocations, referred to as a ‘community of expert practitioners’) may jointly form a professional body to formally represent that ‘industry’ in its relationship with the national qualification authorities. Significantly, the OFO includes what is referred to as ‘religious professionals’ and ‘religious associate professionals’ (Department of Higher Education and Training 2012: Codes 2636 and 3413). The fact that ‘religious professionals’ are included in the framework for relevant occupations, implies that religious professions are now formally recognised within the regulatory framework, and that a dispensation can now be created that will specifically deal with the unique realities of the Christian ministry training environment.³⁰ SAQA may now formally recognise such non-statutory professional bodies. A recognised professional body may *inter alia* define and register professional designations (recognised types of profession), determine the underlying qualifications for those designations (the qualifications an individual must obtain in order to register for a designation), be involved in the development of curricula and assessment standards, formally recognise³¹ suitable education and training providers, and develop Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) strategies and guidelines (SAQA 2012:5).

This novel development in the country’s official educational and training policy constitutes an important opportunity for diversification on the regulatory level in the sense that an opening has now been created for the ministry training fraternity to establish their own, diverse track within the national regulatory framework. It is now potentially possible

³⁰ During meetings held with the SAQA Directorate for Registration and Recognition, SAQA representatives have indicated that, although the policy states that a “(p)roliferation of professional bodies within the same community of practice” will be discouraged, different religions (Christian and others) will be allowed to develop their own, unique bodies. This was *inter alia* reflected in the resolutions of the November 2013 convention of training institutions (Van der Walt 2014:10).

³¹ The term ‘recognise’ is used instead of ‘accredit’ in the relevant legislation and policy documents.

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to deal with regulatory issues of ministry training ‘within its own house’ – forming the professional body in a way that will fit the unique characteristics of this ‘industry’, defining its own ‘house rules’, etc.

Obviously, having the opportunity to establish an ‘own house’ is not equal to having the ‘house’ already built and fitted out. An intensive process and much hard work will be required before the opportunity will actually have come to fruition. A first step towards the utilisation of the new opportunities has recently been taken with the establishment of an Association of Ministry Training Practitioners (AMTP). The association was established in August 2014 by representatives of 25 theological education and ministry training institutions, who acted upon a suggestion by SAQA. They convened to discuss the challenges jointly experienced and to respond to the opportunities that exist for overcoming those challenges. One of the main objects of AMTP (apart from opening it up to all training institutions who would want to opt in to the initiative), will be to work towards registration as a professional body which will be in a position to open up the new opportunities for ministry training institutions (AMTP 2014). The emphasis will be on realising the benefits of being recognised as a formal role player within the regulatory framework for education and training for the affiliated institutions, as well as to pursue solutions to the problems that were identified in previous sections.

2. *Diversification within ministry training itself*

It was shown in previous sections that formally recognised ministry training is nearly exclusively available on tertiary level, where it is inaccessible to a disproportionately large component of ministry leaders in need of training. Minimal education and training services that are formally recognised or accredited within the South African regulatory framework and that constitute formal progressive learning paths towards recognised qualifications, are available to the very large body of pastors in the AICs and related churches (Mofokeng 2012:149–150). What is needed is a diversification of formal, recognised ministry training that will allow access to formally recognised training opportunities for leaders with prior qualifications, academic proficiency, and literacy skills on any level – from the lowest to the highest.

The new SAQA policy framework, together with the AMTP initiative, has the potential to bring about a diversification that will allow leaders from all levels to successfully enter and exit formal education and training on any level. The NQF Act determines that “where a professional body that is recognised ... wishes to give formal recognition to an occupational qualification ... it must enter into a formal agreement with SAQA’s Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO), to attain authority to develop and/or quality assure such occupational qualification” (SAQA 2012:6). This means that

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the work of the professional body must be done in close cooperation with the QCTO, which is one of three quality councils within the SAQA and NQF environment.³²

The role of the QCTO is to oversee training provision in the trade and occupational environment, from NQF levels 1 to 8. Recognised professional bodies may enter into agreements with the QCTO regarding the development and recognition of qualifications (including part qualifications and training modules), curricula, courses, assessment, and the recognition of prior learning on all levels, up to NQF level 8. If correctly dealt with, this opportunity could be used to create fully diversified (flexible, modular) courses and qualifications that will allow those ministry training institutions that are affiliated with the professional body to offer courses and award occupational qualifications on all levels – from the lowest ABET and NQF levels, up to NQF level 8 – and will provide access and exit points to learners at any level, from the lowest up to NQF level 8 (Hlekane 2014:2-10). The intention is to create such a level of diversification that learners will be able to choose a progressive learning path that will take them from where they are in terms of previous qualifications, if any, prior learning, relevant workplace experience, literacy level, and academic proficiency, and ‘deliver’ them on the level where they want to exit.

To do this, the professional body will have to facilitate a process to develop curricula, to implement assessment systems, and to formulate RPL policies and strategies that will allow the required level of diversification. The process will involve the QCTO, Development Quality Partners and Assessment Quality Partners designated by the QCTO, and a community of expert practitioners to work out the detail surrounding this whole process (Hlekane 2014:12). The point is that the opportunity to develop a fully diversified and flexible training dispensation for leaders in the informal church environment who need access to formal, recognised training (irrespective of their prior qualifications, literacy skills and academic proficiency), can finally be opened up.

The QCTO-related qualifications (occupational qualifications) do not only provide access on the different NQF levels. Provision is also made for what is called diverse learning contexts (vocational, occupational, academic and professional), and diverse teaching or training environments (classroom, laboratory, field, clinic, community, etc.) (SAQA 2012:4). Occupational qualifications overseen by professional bodies have to provide for teaching and learning that take place in a diverse variety of settings – there needs to be a knowledge component, a component of practical work during training, and a workplace-experience component. Qualifications and courses can, therefore, now be designed to form a perfect fit to the situation of practising ministry leaders who want to enrol for formally recognised ministry training, by being responsive to their contextual experience as well as the informal and non-formal learning environments that fit their situations best.

³² The other two are the Council for Higher Education, which oversees the functioning of tertiary educational institutions that operate on NQF levels 5-10, and Umalusi, which oversees the functioning of public and private schools that operate up to NQF level 4.

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These distinctions (level, context and environment) form useful parameters of differentiation and diversification that can now be used in developing an appropriate future ministry training dispensation. In terms of these distinctions, the challenge in diversifying education will be to determine the optimal combinations of course content levels, context of learning, and environment of training that will be adequately responsive to the situation and needs of church leaders who want to enter a training path – a combination that will guarantee the most effective achievement of the required teaching and learning outcomes.

Conclusion

There is a massive need for formally recognised ministry training that will fit the needs structure of pastors, in particular those of the informal churches and the growing number of ‘lay’ workers in informal as well as formal (historic) churches. Formal (accredited, officially recognised) training is mostly available and accessible only to the very small minority of leaders of formal churches. A creative, strategic drive is necessary to ensure that the very large need for good training of leaders in the AIC and related churches will be met with a sufficient offer of relevant and formally recognised training on appropriate levels, with an appropriate response to context and environment.

The recent establishment of the Association of Ministry Training Practitioners (AMTP) is seen as a first step towards the creation of a framework that will be able to utilise the new opportunities in the national regulatory framework that were recently created. It holds the potential for ministry training institutions to overcome the challenges that, in the past, prevented a large proportion of leaders from entering into a recognised progressive path of theological education and ministry training.

There is thus an expectation that a new training dispensation stands to be developed where the diverse needs of the large number of leaders in the informal church environment – many of whom can be described as little, marginalised ones for whom there is a special place in the heart of the Jesus we met in the Gospel – will be met with appropriately diverse and adaptable training solutions.

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