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Supervised Field Education as an Arena for Practical Theology

*Abstract*

In addressing the topic of *New Horizons: Ministry in a Questioning Age*, the paper questions various aspects of the role and nature of Supervised Field Education (SFE) in theological curricula. In doing so, it presents a platform for establishing SFE as a dynamic arena for the activation of Practical Theology. Following a definition of Practical Theology (itself a slippery term), questions of the “why, how, where, who” of Practical Theology are posed, with some models for integrated SFE suggested. Answers suggested to such questions are offered as indicative means towards the attainment of the twin goals of theological integration of the learner and ministerial equipping of the graduate for effectual engagement with the as-yet undefined challenges of our ever-expanding future horizons.

*New Horizons: Confronting a Questioning Age*

Contemporary western (and increasingly other) society does not accept, but always questions. Traditional values are simply rejected if not convenient. A solid education and a professional skill set are no longer guarantees of recognized authority if what is presented is not conducive to the recipient. Unpalatable medical diagnoses provided by a physician are rejected if a more pleasing version can be found by recourse to Dr Google. Police officers are constantly under challenge by armchair critics and self-appointed bush lawyers, with a resultant decline in their social respect and operational authority. School classrooms are microcosms of this phenomenon. At a recent Secondary Principals conference, Associate Professor Rob Nairn spoke of how the traditional school, with the teacher as the font of all knowledge, has no chance of survival in the 21st century, since classes now contain “kids that are questioning and (who) learn differently – that ‘I know it all or I can find it out’ idea.” The teacher, he says, no longer merely informs, but needs to create a “collision of ideas” in the classroom.[[1]](#footnote-1) Society at large challenges authority and resists its imposition.

But so too do Christian communities closer to our home. Congregations question authority: things need to make sense, not just sound authoritative. During a school staff room conversation around the time of a papal visit, a good friend of mine expressed a thought which was warmly endorsed by all, when she said, “I’m a good Catholic, I go to Mass every Sunday, but I don’t let my religion affect my life.” Lest I be charged here with sectarian bias, let me add a further example of a polite, conservative young gentlemanly student in a theology class in an evangelical college where I once taught, who was moved to respond to a contentious point being expounded by the lecturer, “Oh, we don’t have to believe this garbage, do we?” Even my sweet little seven year old granddaughter, who enjoys a delightful relationship with her mother, holds her own in this regard. One day, when her constant chatter was disturbing her busy mother, she was ultimately warned in no uncertain terms that if she persisted, she would get a smack. The child paused briefly in her chatter, then calmly enquired, “Will it be the biggest smack I have ever had in my entire life?” The age of passive reception has been replaced by a new horizon of aggressive confrontation.

There is of course always the matter of resistance to such developing trends, especially in the interest of preservation of what we value or what has served us well. Jeff Astley cites the following extract:

Never mind what is Sanctifying Grace, Quigley. That’s none of your business. You’re here to learn the catechism and do what you’re told. You’re not here to be asking questions. There are too many people wandering the world asking questions and that’s what has us in the state we’re in and if I find any boy in this class asking questions I won’t be responsible for what happens.[[2]](#footnote-2)

While traditionalists may bemoan such a seemingly narcissistic societal trend, individual challenging of authority is none the less a reality that ministry practitioners constantly encounter in our questioning age and thus it is imperative that theological education equip them for so doing.

*Guiding Motif*

The overarching motif of this paper derives from the ideal of the integration of theory and practice to attain a desired praxis which in turn issues in an integrated person in ministry, who is well equipped to provide answers to real (even unanticipated) questions in a real world. As I look back over my nearly 40 years of engagement with theological education, as either student or teacher, I find myself questioning the permanent worth of much of what has been delivered, especially in terms of how it relates to my present world. The aim of my questioning is not to reject or to devalue, but to discern what has been of permanent worth, and more importantly, how I can factor into my current teaching those things which retain intrinsic value. For example, the ministry training I received in the late 1970s featured Christian education, in which I had a passionate interest. The teaching methodology taught included such cutting edge skills as the use of the overhead projector, in which I was quite competent. The need for that particular skill mastery was of course short-lived. What was of more lasting value was the confirmation of the centrality of the learner in the educative process: “You are not teaching religion; you are teaching people.” This is a philosophy that has strongly influenced – I dare say shaped - my teaching for over 40 years, in both secular and theological teaching, and has been the main basis of any success I have had in that career. But it is not just antiquated technology that becomes quickly obsolete. I recently pondered the question, “Could ministry training delivered as recently as 10 years ago answer questions of the impact of social media in today’s world?” In a rapidly changing and increasingly questioning world, theological education needs to be more than a compendium of theological and biblical dogma; field education needs to be more than the acquisition of vocational ministry skills. What I advocate is a theology-informed practice and a practice-informed theology, expressed coherently in and through a practical-theologically integrated person in ministry.

*What is Practical Theology?*

“Practical Theology” is not a simple term to define. Astley avoids what he calls “the rather obscure and slightly embarrassing label of ‘practical theology’” by using the expression “ordinary theology”; however, his audience is “ordinary” Christians who have received little or no theological education.[[3]](#footnote-3) For our purposes as theological field educators, a more useful discussion is provided by Bonnie Miller-McLemore in *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline*.[[4]](#footnote-4) She treats the “multivalent nature of practical theology” with reference to four distinct categories with different audiences and goals: a *discipline* among scholars; an *activity of faith* among believers; a *method* for studying theology in practice for theological educators; and a *curricular area* of subdisciplines in the seminary.[[5]](#footnote-5) It is the third area (a method for studying theology) that is the focus of this paper. Within these categories, however, all share in common a focus on local, concrete, religious expression and its transformation; all are concerned with the embodiment of religious belief in the day-to-day lives of individuals and communities; all seek to understand and to influence religious wisdom or faith in action. Thus, practical theology not only describes how people live as people of faith; it also considers how they might do so more fully.

In investigating “lived theology”, practical theology differs from pastoral theology, which has a primary focus on reflection on pastoral care and counselling. It also differs from systematic or doctrinal theology, with its traditional focus on proclaimed beliefs. Practical theology is ultimately a normative project guided by the desire to make a difference in the world.[[6]](#footnote-6) It involves not just theological knowledge applied via ministry competencies. Rather, it involves *theological praxis*: that is, value-directed and value-laden action, incorporating a circular movement from practice to theologically informed critical reflection and back to corrected practice, even to radically transformed practice. It requires a coherent and dynamic correlation between tradition (theology) and experience (practice).[[7]](#footnote-7)

*Why Should Supervised Field Education Become an Arena for Practical Theology?*

There are many possibly self-evident reasons why supervised field education should become an arena for practical theology, but I will focus on just three, which have arisen on so many occasions during my teaching career and have been encountered often in my research. First is the need to dispel the entrenched myth of the academic/practical, scholar/practitioner false dichotomy. Practical theology intentionally challenges the conventional divisions between classical and practical disciplines, between academy and congregation, between theory and practice. It strategically counters the misperception of theological education as being based on either the clerical paradigm (the acquisition of technical pastoral skills) or the academic paradigm (the acquisition of cognitive knowledge of doctrine).[[8]](#footnote-8) Since the classroom is typically set up for learning the theory and dialogically processing ways in which the theory may be worked out in practice, the arena of *in situ* field education provides an ideal locus for the actual implementation, refinement and further consolidation or even remediation of such theoretical considerations. It is important to note that field education disconnected from theological development is no more valuable than theological development without lived engagement: while both may have merit, such merit does not necessarily translate to value. Is there a difference between merit and value in your SFE programs?

My second reason for promoting field education as an arena for practical theology emerges from many years of personal observation and frustration, which have led to my personal crusade to correct the erroneous assumption of (meritorious) learning by “doing stuff” or what I call “theological osmosis.” Sadly, it is still not uncommon for field education placements to be not much more than a convenient construct to assume practical skills development. In my first year as a theological student, I was sent to a church I did not know, to be “supervised” by a pastor whom I had never met and who never observed any of my work, under the general direction of a college lecturer who neither met with me at any stage nor visited me or the pastor during the year. There was never any thought of a theological discussion about, let alone integration of, any practice; it was explicitly stated that I would simply learn by “being on the job.” Ancient history? Not really. In the past several years, I have reviewed many field education programs and processes and interviewed numerous students and supervisors. I have noted a marked development of vocational and performative skills in the field with generally (though inconsistently) more effective direct supervision by local ministers. There has been a greater (though far from universal) emphasis on reflection on the field practice “back in the classroom”, though such reflection is typically orchestrated by the field education lecturer, with rarely any engagement of the local supervisor or other theology faculty. The emphasis is typically on how to perform better, rather than a penetrating theological integration in either field location or classroom. The most common plaint voiced by missions directors and denominational superintendents during my recent research was the lack of integration of theology in the lives of theological graduates, who knew their doctrine well and had good skills, but who, when faced by problems, resorted to pragmatic expedience rather than a theological frame of operation. Many final year students and recent graduates noted the gap between intellectualized theological theory and practical life and ministry: “We tend to be more academic. We are very content driven.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Without doubt, we learn by doing. Without doubt, practical experience in the field will develop personal performative habits and methods. But if such learning is not grounded in a coherent theological frame of reference, how can we assure that effective learning is taking place? As well, if our teaching of theology is not furnishing such an operational frame of reference, does that teaching need to be reviewed and refined? I come back to my earlier statement about the value of what we do. Yes, we learn by doing, which is good; but is what we have learnt to do good enough to manage an ever changing and constantly questioning world if we lack an appropriately integrated theological worldview?

My final reason for employing practical theology in field education is to overcome the limitations of pastor-teachers teaching for “ministry yesterday not tomorrow.” While it is very common to require recognized ministerial success as a criterion for employment as a theological educator (especially as a field education director in a theological college), there is an increasing concern that such experience can become very quickly dated in the context of our contemporary world. When faculty were asked to indicate the ways in which their teaching was related to practical experience, most responded by referring to their own prior ministry experience as the natural field of application, which could be extrapolated to students’ practical understandings. However, while recent graduates in the early stages of their ministry generally agreed that the lecturers’ experience provided useful illustrations and real-world applications, many added a note of disappointment that such experience was often too far in the past or too culturally limited to be relevant to their current setting.[[10]](#footnote-10) If field education in particular engages the principles of practical theology, then a continuous dialogue is put in train that constantly reviews, refines and enhances both theological understandings and practical applications. If the model of ministry you are teaching me simply is not working, why not? What theological base is there for your model, and how may I legitimately adapt or even replace that in my practice? The challenges for both teacher and learner in such a questioning approach are as obvious as they are large, but they both need to be prepared to meet such challenges since these are precisely what will be encountered in the world beyond the college.

So, in short, supervised field education needs to become an arena for practical theology to ensure that theology is not divorced from practice and that practice is not isolated from theology. We need to promote both theologically informed practice and practically framed theology.

*How Can Supervised Field Education Become an Arena for Practical Theology?*

There would be little point in arguing a case for practical theology in field education if we did not consider ways of implementing such principles. So, how can supervised field education become an arena for practical theology? In essence, it involves establishing some operational frameworks for the marriage of theology and work integrated learning. I propose that there are three essential operational elements of such a marriage: facilitation, reflection and strategic implementation.

First, the ethos of such a marriage is *facilitation*.[[11]](#footnote-11) Facilitation involves a gathering of students with a leader (typically, though not necessarily, a faculty member) as an element in a specific unit of study. It may be scheduled for anything from an hour to five days. The purpose of this time is not to “teach” new material, nor to cram information into students in the form of a lecture or an intensive, but to help students to:

* process what they have been learning in the unit
* apply their learning to their individual lives and ministries
* question, challenge and explore confronting ideas
* seek clarification on difficult issues
* grow through healthy interaction with fellow students and a competent facilitator.

The role of a facilitator is not to be the “font of all knowledge” who dispenses wisdom to the grateful students. Instead, a facilitator helps students to understand, develop, refine and apply their learnings to their own real world context through leading a peer learning experience.[[12]](#footnote-12)

But facilitation needs clear guidelines if it is not to descend into aimless chaos. I will limit my comments to the work of two influential thinkers who have constructed a healthy and helpful approach to practical theology in action. While there are many others who have contributed to this field, these two have proved to be foundational for much of the later work.

Don Browning, a name well known to practical theologians, has provided a platform for appropriate *reflection* in practical theology.[[13]](#footnote-13) His method, which he terms “Critical hermeneutics”, involves a critical hermeneutic circle of four stages: Descriptive Theology; Historical Theology; Systematic Theology; Strategic Practical Theology. In line with Browning, I suggest that, for field educators, an important primary question is, “What is your approach to practical theological hermeneutics? Is it foundational (based on normative texts and systems), pragmatic (what works), pastoral (caring for people)? What is your starting point, what shapes your hermeneutics? Is it normative texts/theology as the basis of objective truth? Is it inherited historical traditions as the way our tradition has developed? Is it pragmatics - what works for me and my people in our particular context? Is it compassion - what is best for my people in their need? Perhaps it is even ambition - how can I establish a position of influence? While there is arguably nothing inherently wrong with any of these approaches, paradoxically there may well be something inherently wrong with all of these approaches, since a dominant focus on the strength of one approach rejects the strengths of all others. Whatever our fundamental approach to hermeneutics is, it will shape very much our approach to a practical theology of ministry.

Descriptive

Critical

Moment

Historical

Strategic

Systematic

Browning’s critical hermeneutics is a practical method of theological reflection. It involves an epistemology that prioritizes *understanding* over *explanation* and that leads one to take seriously the effective history of the past as it moves forward to strategic practical action in the future. It begins with the description of concrete questions; moves backward to the interpretive concerns of historical theology; goes on to systematic theology as ordered reflection on this interpretive process; and finally moves forward to strategic practical theological reflection about ways to proceed with concrete and faithful action.

Browning’s ideas have been progressed by Richard Osmer, who proceeds to the step of *strategic implementation* of the principles of practical theology.[[14]](#footnote-14) In effect, he translates Browning’s stages of theological reflection into four applied tasks of practical theology. He begins with four basic questions:

* What is going on?
* Why is this going on?
* What ought to be going on?
* How might we respond?

Accordingly, he constructs four corresponding core tasks of practical theology:

* The *descriptive-empirical* task: gathering information to discern patterns and dynamics in current situations or contexts (*Priestly Listening*);
* The *interpretiv*e task: drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to understand and explain why these patterns are occurring (*Sagely Wisdom*);
* The *normative* task: using theological concepts to interpret particular situations or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide responses, and learning from “good practice” (*Prophetic Discernment*);
* The *pragmatic* task: determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the “talk back” emerging when they are enacted (*Servant Leadership*).[[15]](#footnote-15)

A significant aspect of Osmer’s method is that the tasks are not linear but interpenetrative, not so much circular as spiral, constantly circling back to tasks that have already been explored. While there is of necessity an initial order in their execution (we should not start a four lap race at lap three), as they proceed, each task is in ongoing dialogue with each of the other tasks. As a pragmatic outcome is enacted, it resumes the dialogue with interpretive and normative analysis. It is this continuous “interaction and mutual influence of all four tasks that distinguishes practical theology from other fields.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Thus, not only is pragmatic action conditioned by theological parameters and traditional processes, that very undergirding theology and its traditions of being understood and communicated may come to be seen as needing review and modification in the light of that pragmatic outcome. This is a true marriage of theology and work integrated practice, in that it is not only field education that is shaped by theology, it is also theology that is refined by field education.

*The Four Tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation*[[17]](#footnote-17)

Descriptive

Empirical

Driptive

Empirical

Pragmatic

Interpretive

Normative

*Where Can Supervised Field Education Become an Arena for Practical Theology?*

Traditionally, theological field education is structured around an individual placement of a student in a local church (or para-church) setting under the supervision of a local minister. Such an experiential apprenticeship model has much value for those headed for a church-based clerical ministry, the traditional goal of most field education programs. Assuming capable and committed supervision, it provides opportunities for a student to develop skills by observation and active participation in many of the tasks of ministry, and opportunities for some reflection on various aspects of personal and vocational development. However, many reports from graduate ministers and their employers indicate that such a process, while useful in developing performative skills, has attained limited results in terms of the integration of theology and practice and personhood. As well, recent research has shown that significantly fewer than half of theological students proceed to vocational church-based clerical roles, which means that the majority of theological students either do not undertake field education or they receive a field experience that is not geared to their future role.[[18]](#footnote-18) In an age of increasingly intense questioning of traditional modes of operation, perhaps we need to think more expansively and creatively about the location of theological field education.

I suggest that there are ways of establishing new horizons of practice and integration within field education. Even in the church-based model, there is room for integrative development, even in such simple ways as promoting forums including multiple faculty, supervisors and students in integrative exercises. Browning’s system of critical hermeneutical reflection and refinement is well served by such an approach. But do we need to limit ourselves to church-based placements? If we look at the stated learning outcomes of our field education programs, could the skills and values incorporated therein not be attained equally well in a context that reflects the actual world environment of most graduates? The church is not (and perhaps even should not be) the world in which most theological graduates will live and work for the majority of their lives. So, could not the non-church world – even the non-Christian or non-Christendom world - provide a realistic context for valid theological field learning? Logistically, the task of extending field placements beyond the readily available network of churches creates another layer of organizational complexity. However, even in places such as large universities, such community placements in a wide variety of creative locations are happening.[[19]](#footnote-19) Churches typically have good networking capacities, so I suggest that such creative expansion of field locations is practical and will provide opportunities for a richly enhanced arena for the integrative approach of field based learning. There, the learner’s theology is taken beyond the cocoon of church into the more challenging domain of “the world”, thus requiring a more refined conceptualisation and implementation of practical theology.

*Who Should Make Supervised Field Education Become an Arena for Practical Theology?*

I openly acknowledge that, over the course of a 45 year teaching career, my philosophy of teaching has progressively moved from its initial content focus (what must I teach?) through a stage of teacher focus (how can I teach better?) to a more intentionally strategic learner focus (whom am I teaching?). So, it is no surprise that I start any discussion of who should make field education an arena for practical theology with the learner. It is the learner who is the centre and the end of the field experience; therefore, it makes sense that the learner should also have at least a significant role in initiating the experience. The starting point of any individual field education experience is most profitably the learner’s aspirations and personal and vocational objectives and needs. Learners need to have the opportunity to describe, understand and evaluate their own individual situation if the principles of practical theology are to be engaged. But in today’s questioning age, an individual learner needs to operate within a social context, where such questioning by others will realistically hone the individual’s concepts and practices. One method of achieving this within the framework of due care for the welfare of the learner is the creation of a “community of practice” within the field education structures, with an emphasis on peer learning and processing.

Steve Taylor of Flinders University recently reported on his theology program’s community of practice, which includes an important element of repetitive questioning and feedback.[[20]](#footnote-20) His approach involved asking the same four questions at the start, the middle and the end of various topics, an approach which could well be adopted in the field education program.

* What are you most interested in learning?
* What resources will best support your learning?
* How valuable is it to have choice?
* What aspects of the topic are you concerned about (if at all)?

At the start, students’ focus was on the content of the subject and their excitement about choice. At the mid-point, the focus shifted from a 100% anticipation of content to a 50/50 split between content and how they were learning, especially the learning dynamic of the class and the diversity of their peers; there was a strong feeling of support in their learning by the resources and through the lecturer engagement; choice continued to be seen as positive, in extending learning and enhancing motivation. By the end of the course, responses maintained appreciation of content but also included reflection on how they were learning. In particular, the role of fellow students remained significant with the diversity of the class named as a significant factor in learning. Choice continued to be perceived to increase engagement and to have a positive impact on learning.[[21]](#footnote-21)

While the learner may legitimately be seen as the starting point, the role of the lecturer is vital in facilitation of learning. I suggest there are two levels in which the lecturer may operate in establishing field education as an arena for practical theology. First, the teacher actively *employs* the principles of practical theology (see Browning, Osmer) in the classroom or other learning setting. By so doing, the pedagogic approach of an empirically researched examination of current practice, the interpretive analysis of its development, the critical appreciation of the normative base of good practice, and the strategic action for realistic implementation will provide an operational model for practical theological thought and action. Second, as a natural adjunct to such modelling, intentional *teaching* of the principles of practical theology is incorporated into the standard curriculum of any field education course. To train learners in the processes of practical theology in both demonstrated action and didactic words will help to produce graduates who can appropriate such principles and take them into their ministry and general life.

Beyond the campus setting, similar principles apply. The importance of the field supervisor as a partner in ministry training has become increasingly well recognized. So, it is essential that supervisors also buy into the principles of practical theology, rather than seeing their role merely (or mainly) as the development of performative skills with (at times) tangential reflection. The higher domains of empirical analysis, interpretive understanding and the critical interplay of theology and practice are not automatically prominent in much local ministry experience, so local supervisors need to be encouraged and assisted to reach those levels. Here, the colleges can play a key role in providing ongoing education to field supervisors as practical theological mentors, even to the point of establishing required standards for registration as a supervisor. As well as the local ministers, there is a role for the congregations of laity to serve as communities of practical theology. It is from the congregations that an understanding of the community’s unique culture, resources and processes will emerge. Even in non-church or non-Christian settings, such local “communities” provide significant cultural insights (for example: refugee centre; community youth facility; school; hospital; aged care; local council project). It is therefore important that the field learner engage in thorough-going critical dialogue with such communities, or else a valuable learning resource will be lost. In short, learners, lecturers, supervisors and local communities need to operate as a coherent team, committed to advancing the learner as a practical theologian. Ultimately, it comes to the college to facilitate such a team ethos.

*Some Models of Integrated Supervised Field Education/Work Integrated Learning to Promote Practical Theology*

I have intentionally linked Work Integrated Learning with Supervised Field Education in this heading to highlight the distinction between Work Integrated Learning and Work Based Learning, the latter of which stresses the experience undertaken while the former stresses the outcome of that experience. It is that integration which places field education squarely in the realm of practical theology. To conclude this paper, I offer a few samples of the kinds of pedagogical approach which may prove useful in the generation of a practical theological ethos.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Problem Based Learning (PBL) | Inquiry Based Learning (IBL) | Group Project Based Learning (GBL) |
| “Felt Need”Identification of a ProblemAnalysis of CausesAnalysis of Possible SolutionsAction Plan(Treatment) | **Appreciating****Valuing the Best of “What is”****or****“Where I have come from”****Envisioning “What might be’****or****“What I might become”****Dialoguing “What should be”****or****“What I should become”****Innovating “What will be”****or****“What I will become”** | **Defining a Possibility****Articulating aspirations and identifying “like minds”****Establishment of a Working Group****Analysis of Situation and Resources****Establishment of Possibilities****Establishing Course of Action****Implementation of Action** |
| Basic Assumption:Person Has/Organization Is a problem to be solved | **Basic Assumption:****Person is a Continuing Work in Progress with past/existing successes that can be built on** | **Basic Assumption:****Group Dynamic Maximises Energies with potential to incorporate PBL and IBL** |

Finally, the overarching goal of establishing supervised field education as an arena for practical theology is to respond to the demands of an increasingly questioning age, where simple task competency is no longer sufficient. Rather, ministry will need the capability to address complex emergent issues with increasing integration and constant refinement of both theologically held positions and traditionally practised methods.



*Moving from competence to capability* (Smith & O’Flynn, 123)

*Some Helpful References*

Ball, Les & James R Harrison (eds). *Learning and Teaching Theology. Some Ways Ahead*. Preston, Vic: Morning Star, 2014.

 See esp Stephen Smith & Leon O’Flynn, “Responding to Complexity: Moving from Competence to Capability”, pp 119-128;

 Darren Cronshaw & Andrew Menzies, “From Place to Place: A Comparative Study of 5 Models of Workplace Formation at 2 Colleges on 1 Campus”, pp 217-227.

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Chapter 1 (pp 3-30) gives a summary of his seminal work, *A Fundamental Practical Theology.*

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See esp James Dalziel, “Developing Scenario Learning to Theological Education”, pp 17-29.

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1. “iTeachers lead the way”, reported in *The Courier-Mail*, 6 June 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Frank McCourt, *Angela’s Ashes: A Memoir of a Childhood* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 130. Cited in Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2002), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 1, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Bonnie J Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice: Discovering a Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), see esp Chapter 4, “Practical Theology: A Definition”, 100-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bonnie J Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice,* 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bonnie J Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice,* 103-106. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 2-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Bonnie J Miller-McLemore, *Christian Theology in Practice,* 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Les Ball, *Transforming Theology. Student experience and transformative learning in undergraduate theological education* (Preston, Vic: Mosaic Press, 2012), 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Les Ball, *Transforming Theology. Passim.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Australian College of Ministries (ACOM) has developed a thoroughgoing and highly successful system of facilitation as a central plank in its extensive online and distance learning delivery in all subject areas. I am indebted to my colleagues at ACOM for the general ideas expressed in this paragraph. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See ACOM. *Contractor Handbook.* 2015, 17 *et seq* for a detailed treatment of that college’s distinctive facilitation. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See Don S Browning, *Equality and the Family. A Fundamental, Practical Theology of Children, Mothers, and Fathers in Modern Societies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007). Chapter 1 (pp3-30) gives a summary of his seminal 1991 book, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Richard R Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Richard R Osmer, *Practical Theology,* vii, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Richard R Osmer, *Practical Theology,* 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Richard R Osmer, *Practical Theology,* 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Les Ball, *Transforming Theology*, 53-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. The University of Queensland has a WIL network which operates across all faculties. Australian Catholic University’s core unit *Community Engagement and Transformation* incorporates a supervised community placement in locations as diverse as churches, youth centres, aged care facilities and refugee centres. See Les Ball, *Transforming Theology*, 105. Is there a potential role here for regional chapters of ANZATFE? [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Steve Taylor, “A class above: Evidence based action research into teaching that is connected, mobile and accessible in a higher education context”, HERGA Conference, Adelaide, September 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Steve Taylor, “A class above,” 11-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)