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Towards a Practical Theology of Whole-Person Learning: Enriching Youth Ministry Formation through Pneumatological Perspectives

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This article explores an understanding of whole-person learning in faith-based, youth ministry training. I suggest that several challenges and cultural conditions have resulted in formational theological education becoming over-focused on academic and professional requirements, at the expense of supporting people to become integrated, self-aware, and spiritually-mature practitioners, who are able to sustain effective ministry with young people long-term. I propose that considering the 'whole person' in pedagogical processes provides a way of understanding and facilitating formation that will assist personal and spiritual growth as well as the development of the required theological and professional knowledge, understanding, and skills. These issues are explored through a pneumatological lens, considering the Spirit as metaphor and agent in key areas, namely formation processes, the facilitator's role, whole person engagement, the affective domain, and mystery.

KEYWORDS theological education, youth ministry, formation, integration, adult learning, pneumatology

Introduction

Miri, bright and articulate in the classroom, has a 'block' when it comes to writing, having been consistently labelled as 'stupid' at school. She finds herself simply staring at the computer screen and risks failing her course. Luke is capable of achieving excellent grades academically but is consistently let down by his organisational skills and self-discipline. Pam graduates with a first class honours degree but leaves ministry within a year, struggling to cope with the personal and emotional demands she experiences. Colin is a gifted worship leader and communicator but appears arrogant and standoffish to others, apparently unaware

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that his desire to be 'right' is resulting in rudeness to peers and the congregation. He confides to a fellow-student that he is struggling to believe in God any more.

These examples highlight challenges faced by educators in theological colleges and similar institutions, seeking to effectively engage students in personal and spiritual formation. Practices communicate as much as words and any pedagogy, whether explicitly articulated or not, carries strong formational messages. However, within Christian higher education there is often a much more clearly formulated commitment to developing Christian scholarship than to exploring what a distinctively Christian pedagogy might look like (Smith and Smith, 2011, 3). This article proposes approaches to pedagogy that engage with the whole of life and seek to bridge the divide between academic learning, professional skills, and personal and spiritual development. Although my field is youth ministry training, conversations with colleagues suggest these issues are pertinent to many broader theological education and ministerial formation contexts.

Having identified a number of contextual issues that suggest why a holistic approach might be beneficial, I highlight some pedagogical challenges and define elements of a whole-person approach. I then explore some perspectives on the Spirit to reflect on potential implications for those involved in theological education.

Context

The organisation I work for, the Institute for Children, Youth and Mission (CYM) is a national training agency, providing professionally validated and academically accredited courses for those training in ministry with children and families, young people, schools, and communities through five Regional Centres.[1] Soon after its inception, Bob Mayo, one of CYM's founders, described its pedagogy as seeking to discover a 'third way,' which would integrate academic theological study with reflection on practice (2002, 109). This praxis-based approach positioned itself within ministerial formation between residential training and distance learning (2002: 109). The tensions Mayo identified still prevail within youth ministry training, as courses seek to hold together diverse educational and developmental aims and agendas. These are potentially complementary, but time limitations and the requirements of validating bodies can result in institutions adopting either an over-cerebral approach or a reductionist one, which downgrades the professional aspects of training to 'hints and tips,' skills-development. Both these are inadequate in equipping youth ministers with the qualities needed for sustainable and fruitful ministry. This background of current cultural and disciplinary change makes this a good time to re-examine pedagogical values and practice.

Cultural Context

Youth ministers increasingly engage with young people who are unfamiliar with the Christian story and Christian language. The well-documented decline in

[1] For simplicity and reflecting my own professional background, this article focuses on youth ministry training. I see no difference between youth ministry and Christian youth work and use the terms interchangeably.

church-attendance and a broader culture that is increasingly post-Christendom and post-Christian, require ministers to develop the kind of missional understanding and skills that, in previous generations, would have been expected of those engaging in mission overseas. The gulf between church culture and everyday life often seems impossible to bridge. Christian young people, at a development stage in which they are seeking the approval and acceptance of peers, can easily end up living 'double lives' (Pimlott and Pimlott, 2008, 139), espousing one set of values in their 'church-life' and another the rest of the week. If youth ministers are to encourage young people to embrace a lived faith which eschews this kind of dualism, but rather influences and informs the whole of life, they need to model whole-life approaches to faith and discipleship.

Relevant knowledge, understanding and skills are not enough; youth ministers also need levels of self-awareness, emotional literacy, personal maturity, and integrity that will enable them to embody the life of God within today's culture (Bass and Dykstra, 2008, 1).

Disciplinary Context

Youth work as a professional and academic discipline currently faces a number of challenges.

Professionalization means that the nationally-recognized JNC (Joint Negotiating Committee) qualification is increasingly expected by many Christian employers and the recent 'upgrading' of the JNC to degree-level further emphasises academic learning within training. Simultaneously, uncertainties about the future currency of the JNC and drastic cuts to statutory youth services have revolutionized the professional landscape, presenting both challenges and opportunities to the Christian youth work sector. The development of Common Awards within the Church of England,[2] in which CYM hopes to participate, provides opportunities for deeper integration between CYM centres and the colleges in which they are situated, potentially challenging CYM's identity and culture.

The 'whole-person' approach to formational learning proposed here seeks to equip those training for ministry to be competent and theologically informed practitioners *and* people with the necessary personal qualities, character, and spiritual maturity to sustain ministry long-term in this challenging and changing context.

Pedagogical Challenges

A whole-person approach arguably runs counter to the prevailing culture within theological education, in which a number of challenges mitigate against this kind of holistic pedagogy.

Theological education, often contextualised within a higher-education setting, gives predominance to academic scholarship at the expense of an appreciation of

[2] Common Awards in Theology Ministry and Mission are a suite of higher-education awards that will be used for ministry training within the Church of England and other partner churches.

the whole person within the learning process. Methodologically, this often leads to theological educators adopting a lecture style of delivery and propagates a broader culture in which education is understood primarily as impartation. This separates 'knowledge' rather than integrating it and focuses institutional energy primarily on academic learning, rather than holistic maturity.

Farley (1983) criticizes both a rationalist understanding of theology as purely a scholarly discipline and the functionalist clerical paradigm of a skills-based approach. He argues that synthesis occurs for occasional individuals 'in spite of and not because of the pedagogy and curriculum of the theological school' (1983, 5). This kind of separation or 'fragmentation' is also evident in the way spirituality has been disconnected, becoming a 'poor relation' within theological education.

This culture is perpetuated by a Protestant tradition that prizes intellectual exposition and understands 'word' as God's primary way of engaging with humanity (Pattison, 2007, 93). A focus on Jesus as 'the Word' (Jn. 1·1) and the importance of Scripture and preaching (witness the status given to preaching and the centrality of the lectern or pulpit in many churches) all contribute to this.

The demands of academic accreditation also require a cognitive focus. Emphasising higher level qualifications and research within training institutions can propagate a culture in which those who achieve academically are regarded as 'successful,' but where skills, character, and maturity are not equally valued. Although universities are becoming open to different assessment methods, most still primarily use written assignments. It is an added factor that cognitive skills are easier to measure than softer skills and attributes. Pressurized module timetables also prevail, and in youth ministry training, this is exacerbated by needing to fulfil professional as well as academic requirements.

Whole-Person Learning

The danger of critiquing a cognitive paradigm is that of throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater and it is important to highlight my commitment to academic excellence.

Nor do I claim that integrative approaches to learning are new or revolutionary. As we have noted, Farley (1983, 151), back in the 1980s, called for a rediscovery of a more integrated approach. More recently, Smith invites the academy 'to re-vision Christian education as a formative rather than just an informative project' (2009, 18), and Ward critiques the way theological education problematizes the relationship between experience and theology, suggesting more rigorous engagement with culture as a means of integration (2008, 33–34).

As understandings of what integration actually means differ significantly, I summarize here my understanding of a whole-person approach as learning which:

1. Does not focus *solely* on the academic and cognitive but also engages intentionally with social and emotional aspects of learning and development. This has resonances with holistic (Schreiner, 2009) and integrative education (Palmer and Zajone, 2010) and necessitates engagement with the affective as well as the cognitive domain.

2. Seeks to encourage spiritual development and, in a confessional context, relationship with God.
3. Engenders deep learning (Marton and Säljö, 1976), which engages with attitudes, values and dispositions as well as knowledge, understanding, and skills and seeks to go beyond a surface memorisation of facts and information.
4. Embraces emotional engagement and multi-sensory experience as part of learning.
5. Recognizes and values different learning preferences and personality types.
6. Seeks to encourage integration and nurture wisdom.

Within this article I consider how a pneumatological perspective might inform theological understandings of this kind of education. As the person of the Trinity who is most immanent in creation, human experience and personal transformation, reflection on the Spirit seems particularly apt in exploring formational processes. It is the Spirit who mediates experience of God as educators mediate between learners and what is to be learned.

The constraints of an article such as this prohibit an extensive, comprehensive, systematic pneumatology of education and as a practitioner-researcher and practical theologian my approaches are informed by the idea of critical conversation. This article presents more of a speculative reflection for theological educators who are seeking to work holistically, using some fragments, images, ideas, and possibilities to explore possibilities and make suggestions. My hope is that a theologically-informed, speculative, undergirding set of creative ideas and theories might encourage those who are already working holistically in their practice and begin to engage those who are word, measurement, and intellect-oriented in meaningful and constructive conversation.

Theology of the Spirit[3]

To avoid the danger that the Spirit becomes all things to all people I first put down some markers and boundaries, identifying key strands of pneumatological thinking, which I will later return to, develop, and expand upon. Within the Christian tradition the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The nature of relationships within the Trinity is contested, but I consider it a model of mutual, self-giving community (Fiddes, 2000), which speaks powerfully to those in search of practices and approaches that are 'more participatory, communal and respecting of diversity' (Boff, 2000: xiii).

Both in Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*) the etymology of 'spirit' is by no means straightforward. The words encompass various possible meanings, including breath, wind (Num. 11·17,31), divine energy or presence (Ps. 139·7), human dispositions (Hos. 4·12), angelic or demonic beings (Ps. 104·4; 1 Sam. 16·16), and the human core (Ps. 77·6) (Sakenfeld *et al.*, 2007). In the creation

[3] I use 'Spirit' rather than 'Holy Spirit' as 'Spirit' is more commonly used through Scripture. I also capitalize the word in most instances to reflect that I understand the Spirit as person, an area I explore later in this article.

narrative the Spirit of God hovers over the waters (Gen. 1·2), an image echoed by that of the Spirit as dove at Jesus' baptism (Mt.3·16). This expression of the Spirit's creative power has resonances with the birth of Jesus (Mt. 1·18; Lk. 1·35) and the rebirth and experienced by new believers. Scholarship suggests that the Old Testament phrase the 'spirit of the Lord' reflects an understanding of a force emanating from God, an expression of God's divine power (Firth and Wenger, 2011, 17). This by no means negates a trinitarian interpretation, but rather nuances differences between the testaments in terms of how the Spirit is understood.

In the Old Testament the Spirit empowers individuals, particularly for leadership. This is sometimes, but not always expressed in revelation and wisdom, which reflects the tradition within Judaism of understanding the Spirit as the 'Spirit of prophecy' (Turner, 1996, 5), who inspires revelation and guidance, wisdom and skill, prophetic speech and charismatic praise and worship. These enablings could be viewed as forerunners to the gifts outlined in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14.

In the New Testament, varying portrayals of the Spirit are evident in the Gospels and Epistles. Broadly, New Testament writing reveals an understanding of the Spirit as *person* (Firth and Wenger, 2011), a dimension that is illustrated in John's use of the personal pronoun to describe the Spirit's work (Jn. 14·16; 15·26; 16·7–8) and reflected in the Spirit's will, relationships, and actions. The Spirit empowers and remains on Jesus (Jn. 1·32) and in John's Gospel is presented as Jesus' 'successor, substitute and presence' (Turner, 1996, 79), enabling the spiritual 'birth' and sanctification of believers (Jn. 3·5–8). The Spirit's role in this transformative process is resonant of areas of learning, growing, and becoming, which are central to the issues I explore here as I consider how the Spirit might serve both as a *metaphor* to inform issues around holistic formation and also consider Spirit as *agent*, at work within the learning process.

The Spirit and Formation

Throughout the Epistles the Spirit is presented as sanctifying believers through a progressive, ongoing work of grace (Oden, 2008). This work is personal and unique to each individual, part of an ongoing movement towards maturity that involves the work of the Spirit and the response of the individual concerned. Effective formation processes should have the potential to be transformative for those who engage with them. The *telos* of formation though is not about self-actualisation *per se*; rather transformation into the likeness of Christ.

This individual transformation needs to be held firmly in the context of the faith community and wider world. The Spirit works in and through individuals for the benefit of the whole body of Christ (Eph. 4·11; 1 Cor. 12). Being part of the community is particularly important in a culture in which personal development agendas, self-help literature, and popular psychology can combine with a consumerist approach to faith to produce a 'moralistic therapeutic deism' (Smith, 2005, 162), which in no way impacts the whole of life.

One concern about taking the Spirit as a model for formation is the potential for pressurising discourses of wholeness, some of which already appear to pervade the

Western Church. Talk of transformation and holiness can lead to unattainable models of perfectionism that are inauthentic, and can encourage learners to adopt a false 'persona,' rather than wrestle with and work through issues. Those in ministry are likely to be subject to unrealistic expectations and projections and formational processes should be grounded in the realities of struggle, authenticity, and vulnerability. Betcher proposes understanding the Spirit 'not as the power to rescue and repair according to some presupposed original state or ideal form, but as the energy for unleashing multiple forms of corporeal flourishing' (2007, 50). This helpfully suggests that formation should support processes of growth into holistic well-being and maturity, rather than seeing people socialized and formed into some preconceived 'ideal.'

The Spirit as a Model for Facilitation

Elsewhere I have considered the way in which the Spirit provides a helpful model for facilitation (Nash *et al.*, 2008; Whitehead, *et al.*, 2013) and I now move on to explore this in more depth in formational contexts. In three passages John uses the term paraclete or *parakletōs* (14·16, 26; 15·26; 16·7) to speak of the coming Holy Spirit (Turner, 1996). This Greek passive verbal adjective means 'one who comes alongside' (Vine, 1985, 208), and suggests the idea of offering support, counsel or assistance in a court or other adversarial setting (Turner, 1996). The word 'advocate' has been suggested as the best translation for this (Turner, 1996), although other terms have also commonly been used. I have concerns about this terminology. Advocacy is specific and does not necessarily imply relationship or commitment. In legal settings, advocates speak for, rather than empower the individual.

Counsellor (NIV), helper (NASB), and comforter (KJV) are all quite loaded and power-laden terms. The notion of 'accompanying' brings us closer to the actual meaning of the word, encompassing the idea of presence, solidarity, and mutuality. Actively accompanying youth ministry students as they learn also models ways of working with young people which are congruent with good youth work practice (Green and Christian, 1998).

In the New Testament, the Spirit performs several educative roles: speaking (1 Tim. 4·1), opening understanding (1 Cor. 2·12), leading into truth (1 Jn. 2·27), teaching (Jn. 16·13), enabling (Jn. 4·23–24), and empowering (Acts 1·8). Significantly, however, the Spirit does not override the will of individuals, who can resist, quench, grieve or respond to the Spirit.[4]

Transformation thus is a co-operative process linked to personal choice and responsibility. Similarly, facilitators serve as process designers, boundary markers and maintainers, encouragers, supporters, and imparters of information, but learners choose whether to engage, think, reflect, study, consider, and respond.

[4] See, for example, 1 Corinthians 14·32. This contrasts with some Old Testament prophetic utterances, where people appear to speak ecstatically rather than volitionally (for example, Num. 11·26; 1 Sam. 10·10).

Whole Person Engagement

Although the Spirit clearly works within the human spirit (Rom. 8·16), it would be wrong to limit the Spirit's activity to this dimension alone. The Spirit also renews the mind (Rom. 8·5–6) and Paul's understanding of life in the Spirit has ethical and practical lifestyle implications (Gal. 6·6–10). Moltmann (1992, 84) argues that the separation of spirituality from the whole of life is unbiblical. For him, the Spirit is the 'spirit of life,' not distant or estranged from life, but deeply involved in everyday experience and living.

Without wishing to idealize Hebraic holism, Old Testament spirituality appears to value emotion and feeling, stay earthed in the practicality of everyday life, pursue change in both individuals and communities, and seek obedience to God both at and individual and corporate level (Sheriffs, 1996, 14, 73, 104, 159). Those in youth ministry (indeed, any ministry) need to be able to connect with people in the ordinary places of life and formational process that encourage this will surely assist them in developing these qualities.

This holistic understanding is congruent with adult learning approaches, particularly those with an experiential focus. Here, learning is understood to be 'a combination of processes whereby whole persons construct experiences of situations and transform them into knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, values, emotions and the senses, and integrate the outcomes into their own biographies' (Jarvis, 2004, 111). The educational philosophy articulated by the team I work in at Midlands CYM (MCYM) illustrates how this might work in a higher-education context.

Over the past few years we have sought to articulate our educational ethos more clearly through developing a seven-stranded model of learning and development (Nash *et al.*, 2009). This proposes that learning in our context occurs within seven different areas, namely personal, spiritual, social, ministerial, theological, professional, and academic. These strands are not distinct and self-contained, but rather interact, weave together, and overlap to provide a multi-faceted and holistic learning experience.

Students are introduced to the strands model at interview stage and effectively 'buy into' the process when they join MCYM. Induction for students, Line Managers and tutors focuses around the strands to enable placements and practice tutors to support students in integrating them within practice experience. They are used to inform students' Personal Development Plans as they set goals annually, which they review at the end of each year.

They also inform and shape module teaching, with tutors seeking to balance the different strands within teaching days and modules as a whole.

This model provides a framework for students to consider and evaluate their formation, and helpfully serves to articulate the different responsibilities and stakeholders within the formation process. Although no formal research has as yet been undertaken as to its effectiveness, feedback during third year exit interviews suggests that students have engaged with, reflected on, and experienced development across all the strands. Significantly, a broader focus in no way appears to have adversely affected academic results or professional skills development.

Spirit and Encounter

If learning is to impact and influence the whole person it needs to engage deeply. Taylor, exploring the Spirit as 'go-between God' (1972), highlights the difference between knowledge of and encounter with, describing the Spirit as 'the invisible third party who stands between me and the other, making us mutually aware' (1972, 19). In engaging with spiritual experience I am aware of treading on potentially contentious ground, but encounter is part of learning. In essence students 'encounter' all the time, whether the encounter is with the facilitator, the subject material, their peers or their own internal responses. Expecting to encounter the divine in a confessional, formational context should not be incongruous.

Spiritual practices[5] may provide a way of engendering greater integration and the potential for transformative encounter within the classroom context as well as outside it. Smith and Smith understand such practices to be 'at least in part, pedagogical devices to form the self in particular directions' (2011, 18), yet within theological education they are often kept separate from academic learning. Worship is usually within discrete services and prayer may top and tail teaching, but except for spirituality modules, where some experiential learning may occur, there is often little connectedness between the 'chapel' and the 'classroom.'

Practitioner-research into the use of particular Christian practices (Smith and Smith, 2011), highlights their value in higher education generally. Certain themes and findings have particular relevance to this discussion.

- The use of spiritual practices appears to engender a potentially 'deeper' learning experience for participants (Smith, 2011).
- Students respond largely positively to the use of spiritual practices in the classroom, reflecting on the sense of community generated, opportunities for reflection or engagement with others and personal challenge and/or change (Call, 2011).
- These practices appear to engender a greater sense of collaboration and participation in terms of the learning process (Call, 2011).
- The use of Christian practices in learning demands a greater degree of emotional and spiritual energy from facilitators and there are self-implicatory aspects, including the need for integrity and 'modelling' of practices in the facilitator's personal life and a personal investment in the process (Call, 2011).

The use of spiritual practices within teaching is something we are committed to as a staff team and which, anecdotally at least, appears to be bearing fruit. Approaches such as *lectio divina*, the examen, contemplative prayer, silence, hospitality, and imaginative meditation have all been used to good effect and we continue to develop and explore this on an ongoing basis.

[5] I see Christian practices as 'patterns of cooperative human activity in and through which life together takes shape over time in response to and in the light of God as known in Jesus Christ' (Volf and Bass, 2002, 3).

Spirit and the Affective Domain

The area of spiritual practices leads to consideration of the affective domain in learning. It could be argued that the Spirit works predominantly here, often appearing to bypass the cognitive to enable deeper engagement with God. The apostle Paul, exploring gifts of the Spirit, suggests different modes of engagement, 'I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also' (1 Cor. 14·15, NRSV). This 'both/and' emphasis is important. In highlighting the value of the affective I do not advocate an unthinking, unreflective approach to learning. Conversely, I believe affective engagement can bring deeper insight to our thinking and reflection, assisting integration.

Genuine experiential learning will encourage the use of right-brain activities such as imagination, multi-sensory engagement, images, and music. Although multi-sensory approaches are widely used in work with children, they remain relatively under-researched in adult learning. I regularly use visuals, music, touch, movement, food, and fragrance in teaching to support and layer learning. Importantly, multi-sensory activities should not be seen as 'ice-breakers' or ways in, before the 'real' educational material but as ways of facilitating deeper learning that engages different learning preferences and creates resonances for those participating.

Another important area within the affective domain is that of emotion. Within adult learning contexts, particularly those that emphasize social and relational factors, individual emotional responses, and indeed those of the whole group, are often near the surface and may manifest, sometimes quite strongly. Negotiating the terrain of this emotional landscape can be challenging and it can be tempting to create learning environments where emotions are kept under strict control. However, assisting students to understand themselves emotionally and grow in emotional literacy and emotional intelligence is vitally important (Dirkx, 2008).

Working with emotions provides opportunity to develop awareness of issues which may, if not addressed, emerge later and potentially unhelpfully in ministry.

Obviously, facilitators need a clear understanding of the focus and boundaries of their role.

The classroom is not for individual or group therapy and individuals may need signposting to specialized sources of therapeutic or pastoral support. Nevertheless, a safe and boundaried environment, with effective group contracting and skilled facilitation can provide valuable opportunities for helpful recognition, acknowledgement, naming, and understanding of emotional responses.

Spirit and Mystery

There are times in the classroom when everything seems to fall into place and a dynamic is generated in which the group, the subject under exploration, and myself as facilitator seem to flow together seamlessly. The energy in the room at these times feels almost alchemic. I have no formula for this. I know when it happens but there seems to be little pattern or blueprint for it. I do know that in these moments teaching is easy; I feel a sense of flow in my own communication, a

connectedness with the students and they appear deeply engaged. These experiences remind me that my planning, preparation, and skills can only take me so far.

There are aspects of mystery to facilitating learning that helpfully remind me of my own inadequacies.

On this aspect too, the Spirit can shed light. Biblical and historical metaphors emphasize the unknowable and indefinable facets of the Spirit's work; the elemental, almost uncontainable qualities of water, wind, and flame being good examples of this. The wild goose, the traditional Celtic symbol of the Holy Spirit, seems in this regard a more apt metaphor than the more domesticated dove. In thinking about this sense of mystery it is pertinent to remember that it is the Spirit who drives Jesus into the wilderness (Mk 1·12), into a time of temptation, suggesting that learning is not always comfortable, but may involve challenge, struggle, and fragmentation.

The motif of wilderness connects to the traditional understanding of apophatic and kataphatic spirituality. An emphasis on kataphatic (visible and quantifiable) approaches to learning characterizes much educational practice and literature. However, apophatic qualities, the traits embraced in desert spirituality – the invisible, hidden, mysterious – have much to offer whole-person processes. Apophatic knowing would incorporate silence, meditation, listening and kinaesthetic exercises, poetry, symbolic knowing, mindfulness, mindful walking or sitting in the bush, a rainforest or other natural environment. It would embrace 'intellectual darkness,' irony, paradox, and acknowledge experiences such as crying, grief, suffering, and death. It would accommodate issues arising from the great questions of human existence (Mudge, 2009, 623).

We see the fruit of the Spirit's work but much of what occurs takes place in hiddenness. Similarly much of what happens in the learning process is invisible to the human eye. Faith, trust, and 'unknowing' are good qualities to embrace in this regard. Facilitators need to learn to value not only on what is seen but also on what is unseen (2 Cor. 4·17–18). It sounds obvious but I am learning to trust that God is at work in the lives of learners, learning to pause and pray instead of intervening too quickly, recognising the Spirit's transformative power and cultivating an expectation to see this outwork, as students engage in learning and connecting with God themselves.

It often appears that in teaching (as perhaps in life itself) practitioners long for certainty; a guarantee that if they do x, y, and z then learning will be effective, students will be engaged, and the job will be completed. However, the constellation of factors involved in facilitating learning, particularly, I would suggest, in formational settings, mitigate against this kind of certainty. Even without taking account of the mysterious work of God, individual motivation, personal prior experience or learning, group and relational dynamics, the learning environment, the content of what is being learnt, preferred learning styles, the methodologies chosen, the person and practice of the facilitator – all of these factors, and many more contribute to education being more of an art than a science, more like making a mosaic than putting together a jigsaw.

Conclusion

This area of mystery is a helpful place to seek to draw together my thinking, as inevitably more questions are raised than answers given. While seeking to keep hold of that which is good in terms of academic excellence and practical skills development, I suggest that intentionally adopting a 'whole person pedagogy' is more likely to prepare people for the rigours of ministry in an increasingly post-Christian context. If I am right, a number of areas in particular invite further consideration. The locus of the Spirit within education and how both learners and educators understand the Spirit's presence is an area that provides significant scope for further exploration. Similarly, issues of power – its complexity and multi-faceted texture – are fundamental in considering both the work of the Spirit and that of educators. I am also keen to explore in more depth the use of spiritual practices and multi-sensory approaches within academic learning. There is also much potential for investigating the boundaries and overlaps between educational and therapeutic work in this kind of learning, including the implications of this for practice.

Inevitably, engaging with a number of broad themes in relation to pneumatology runs the risk of creating dissatisfaction, but I hope this is a conversation in which both practitioners and theorists will find it worth participating. Perhaps more structured and systematic investigation would be beneficial in creating a more robust argument and underpinning theoretical framework. However, I would not want to lose that sense of uncontained mystery that the Spirit helpfully contributes, lest the over-simplicity of human logic stifles and chokes the very life which education has the transformative potential to nurture. The Spirit's invitation to connectedness, affective experience, and encounter with God suggest the need for processes that embody and reflect the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the individuals and communities they seek to engage with.

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