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**CONTEXTUAL EDUCATION OF
THE REFLECTIVE
PRACTITIONER
PART 2: THE CATEGORIES OF
FIELD EDUCATION**

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Contextual Education of the Reflective Practitioner:

Part 2, The Categories of Field Education

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I am going to begin by telling you a story, which is fictional, about a student in a field education placement. We'll call her Lucy, and her placement is in a highly traditional, suburban United Church of Christ congregation. Lucy's supervisor, Martha, has given her a Sunday to call her own. Lucy is to decide the scriptures and order of worship, as well as to preach and lead the entire worship service. Martha plans to attend, but to sit in the pew and let Lucy "run the show." In the spirit of freedom of the pulpit, Martha has put no restrictions on what Lucy chooses as her topic, nor on how she constructs the worship service.

On the appointed Sunday, Martha settles into the front pew for what will be a very interesting experience indeed. Even before the service begins, Martha is surprised to see that the baptismal font, usually located in the back corner of the chancel, has been moved to the front and center of the chancel. The flags of the country and church have been removed from their customary perches at either side of the chancel, and are nowhere to be seen. When Lucy begins the worship service, she speaks not from the pulpit or lectern, as Martha always does, but from the center of the chancel.

Lucy shouts, with arms raised and a spirit of real enthusiasm, that today will be a celebration of the renewal of baptism. Everyone, she declares, will be invited to come forward, to dip their hands or faces into the font, and to recite their baptismal vows anew. She further explains that she has removed the flags, just for today, to emphasize that nothing else, dedication to family nor country nor work nor study should stand before our baptismal commitment to Christ.

Martha ponders what the congregation members' reactions will be to these events. She also considers what will be her role in reflecting with Lucy on the likely mix of responses. Martha wonders about what will undoubtedly be her added responsibilities of interpretation to the congregation of the learning curve for students. However, Martha is also secretly pleased that Lucy has refused to be bound by fear of reaction, and has done something that certainly will stir up what has been a rather sedate congregation.

Well, that's the story. I am certain you could write some very interesting "next chapters" to this story. Maybe yours would focus on the horrified reaction by trustees to the scratches on the chancel flooring, which resulted from Lucy's late night dragging of the heavy font across the distance. Maybe yours would focus on the mixed reactions to the disappearance of the flags, and the ensuing heated discussions of whether or not the country's flag ought to be displayed inside the sanctuary. A subsequent chapter might explore how this moment, when Lucy gets the congregation to contemplate their dedication to Christ above everything else, inaugurates a new era of refreshed worship in this congregation. There are many positive and negative possibilities that could follow on this type of incident, which I think is perhaps a little dramatic, but not terribly different from what happens in our field education programs every week.

The chapter that concerns *us* here today focuses on how Lucy learns about leadership through this event and the many events that follow. We will consider how we construct learning opportunities for Lucy as she lives through the initial incident and all that follows. For example, is Lucy's learning about leadership so tied up in the experience that she is not able to generalize

lessons from that experience? Or does Lucy learn mostly by watching how Martha responds to the many mixed reactions the congregation throws out following the worship service? Maybe Lucy learns the most about leadership by simply talking things through with Martha during dedicated hours mandated by field education, or just during a car ride from or to the hospital. Does Lucy learn by writing up a case study on this incident, and discussing it with the peers in her field education group? Or does Lucy learn mostly by bringing her multiple new insights about baptism, congregations, flags and leadership back into her various M.Div. courses, and using the wisdom of her experience to enlighten the content and process of those classes?

Today we will reflect on how we design educational processes that best capture and take advantage of golden moments like Lucy's enthusiastic embracing of baptism and removing of the flags. We will explore the ways different field education programs emphasize one approach over another, with the purpose of helping Lucy learn about leadership.

What Theological Field Educators Teach

Before we look at how we teach, let us consider for a moment what we teach. Our common purpose as theological field educators is to prepare leaders for service to God and the human family. Through out internship programs, students develop ministry abilities. However, our focus goes well beyond the cultivation of preaching and teaching skills. Many of us would say the core of our work is to develop what Donald Schön calls reflective practitioners.¹⁴

When I say that we develop the reflective capacities of our students in order to foster leadership, I want to state clearly that this is a rigorous discipline. We mean something more involved than simple contemplation of one's own experience. Instead, what we mean by reflective practice is more akin to archaeological digging. We help our students examine fundamental assumptions. We teach them to question their intuitions and reflexes. We show them disciplined approaches to linking faith concerns to experiences.

In Lucy's case, for example, we would want her to examine what actually happened in response to her worship service in comparison with what she expected would happen. We would want Lucy to learn that moving a baptismal font without consulting others is predictably provocative, and why. We would like for Lucy to understand that embodied ideals are far more tricky and complicated than abstract values. Field education offers opportunities to move baptismal fonts *and* also to reflect on what happens after they are moved.

The reasons why we emphasize developing a rigorous ability to reflect while leading relate to the conditions our students face in ministry today. Conditions in our society, our churches, hospitals, military chaplaincies are ambiguous and are characterized by hard to define problems without easy answers. In many regions, such as Southern California, some churches wither in a culture of indifference, while other churches thrive. Although the majority of our students are Christians preparing to lead congregations, a significant number also get ready to serve in non-congregational, sometimes even non-religious settings. They must learn how to lead in contexts of divided loyalties, and where decision-making may be guided by multiple values.

Donald Schön explored the complexities of working as a professional in a time when the very meaning of being professional is shifting away from simple technical expertise and toward understanding the artistry of designlike practice. Schön wrote about how important it is for professionals in many fields to learn to reflect on action in ways that later enable those professionals to consider the things they intuitively understand about their professional practices

¹⁴ Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: BasicBooks, 1983), 4-5.

already.¹⁵ This capacity to ponder what Schön calls professional knowing-in-action helps leaders function in the difficult conditions our students face. Leaders must know how to step out of action, through reflection, to develop vision that is shaped by a perspective that goes beyond immediate impressions and needs.

The difficult conditions under which ministry takes place today mean our students must learn how to lead without necessarily providing answers. You may be familiar with the work of Ronald Heifetz, who declares that today's leaders face uncertain conditions that require long-term adaptive approaches. This means one crucial aspect of leadership is "disappointing people's expectations at a rate they can stand."¹⁶ I want us to consider together, how are we preparing our students to lead without easy answers? How are we enabling them to form vision with long-term, adaptive perspectives? How are we working with them as they develop a mature stance that understands how to disappoint people in order to help them move to a better place?

The Background for this Presentation

Over the past few years, the focus of my doctoral research has been the work of theological field educators. I have investigated how we prepare leaders. I am going to share with you what I found out through talking with a number of field educators. You might say that I am drawing a map of the terrain of field education. You may be able, after viewing this map, to better understand how your program is similar or different from other programs. The map shows that the territory of Theological Field Education is varied, and full of diverse approaches.

There are three main ways field educators teach the reflective habits our students need to become the servant leaders we hope will strengthen our churches. I will describe these modes that we use to teach reflective leadership, and how this makes for three basic types of field education. These essential models for field education enable us, as field educators, to reflect on our work in ways that I hope will strengthen our own capacities for reflective leadership. Just as our students benefit from reflecting on their practice, so also we here today may gain perspective by reflecting on the differing methods employed by theological field education programs.

Before I introduce these three models, however, let me give you a little background to the study and dialog with other field educators that has gone into the formation of the models.

I became interested in studying field education when I was hired to fill a new position as director of field education at the Claremont School of Theology in 1999. Like most field educators, I was a pastor who had no formal training or educational preparation for the job. I had taught part time at the seminary. I came in with plenty of ideas about the importance of leadership in the church, the worthiness of partnership between church and seminary, and the value of academic work being linked to practice.

I was interested to see what those already in the field had found to be the most effective practices. At first, I went looking for books or other resources to tell me what had been found through study of theological field education. I found a few articles that summarized some of what was happening within field education, but very little by way of comparative data or research-based information.

One of the most significant articles I found was a 1993 study in which Donald Beisswenger reported on his survey of theological field education's purposes.¹⁷ He found that

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1994).

¹⁷ Donald F. Beisswenger, "Field Education and the Theological Education Debates," *Theological Education*, 33, no. 1 (1996): 49-58.

integration was consistently named a top goal amongst field educators. Beisswenger, however, made note that further study needed to be done on field education's central purposes. In a way, the work I am doing is an attempt to do just what Beisswenger was calling for, to give us more detailed information about what field educators are doing, and why. Our field needs basic information to enable us to reflect on and compare varying approaches to field education.

Just as many of you have done, I got my introductory education about theological field education by interviewing outstanding field educators. During my first year, I visited Lynn Rhodes at the Pacific School of Religion, Julieanne Hallman at Andover Newton Theological School, and Kathleen Talvacchia at Union Theological Seminary. They helped me understand the basics, including interviewing students, working with supervisors, and teaching theological reflection. Talking with them and visiting their schools was as valuable as taking a graduate level course on the subject of theological field education. I am certain many of you have been equally impressed with the ethic of professional generosity that permeates theological field education.

My process for studying field education and building a theory developed further when I administered surveys and conducted over thirty interviews to collect information. I asked basic questions such as how students were placed, how supervisors were trained, and what the field education manuals contained. I compiled field education materials that build a snapshot of theological field education.

Next, I looked for patterns in the data. I eventually developed categories of approaches to field education, which formed a grounded theory of how we do theological field education. I did not, however, develop this theory alone.¹⁸

I used a process in which those who are studied also advise the researcher and determine the use of the research results. You may know this process as participatory action research.¹⁹ The participating field educators have been closely involved in interpreting the research. I invited many of the directors of programs I studied to read my periodic research reports, and then to suggest areas for further research, and also to critique the accuracy of my findings. Participants came together in a series of regional gatherings. Although many field educators have graciously participated in these ways, they of course do not share blame for the outcome. Instead, their contributions should point to the cooperative nature of theological field education.

Introducing the Three Models

¹⁸ One particularly helpful text about developing grounded theories is by Barney G. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity* (San Francisco: University of California Press, 1978). Glaser summarizes the history of the development of grounded theory. Here is Glaser's summary of grounded theory: "Grounded Theory is based on the systematic generating of theory from data, that itself is systematically obtained from social research...How the analyst enters the field to collect the data, his method of collection and codification of the data, his integrating of the categories, ...and constructing theory—the full continuum of both the processes of generating theory and of social research—are all guided and integrated by the emerging theory. In contrast, traditional methods of theory development rely on standard methods of social research that are not directly...related to how the theory will be developed" 2.

¹⁹ According to Paul McNicoll, PAR is a methodology that "incorporates subjects in the research and indexes results to transforming the lives of those involved."¹⁹ Further, according to McNicoll, "it is what happens when researchers are both part of the population to be researched and beneficiaries of the findings...Academic and professional researchers serve not only as experts but as co-learners who share their research skills and also recognize and benefit from the skills and knowledge of the other group members." Since I was not just a researcher into TFE but also a director of field education myself, I was both a part of the population to be researched and also received immediate benefits from my own findings. Paul McNicoll, "Issues in Teaching Participatory Action Research," *Journal of Social Work Education*, 35 no. 1 (Winter 1999): 51-62.

The three models that I discovered in theological field education are: a) the *Reflecting Through Mentoring* model, b) the *Reflecting Through Practica* model, and c) the *Reflecting through Curriculum Integration* model. These models arise from the ways different programs emphasize one of three elements that are present in nearly every theological field education program. These three fundamentals are mentoring or supervision, reflective practica or integrative seminars, and integration throughout the M.Div. curriculum.

One other word before I go into the three models in more detail. I want to be quite explicit that I do not believe that any one of these three models is the “right” model for field education over the other two. Each has significant strengths as well as challenges inherent in their functioning. I believe that theological field education has matured to where we can see a diversity of approaches as being legitimate, depending on the context, mission and type of institution in which the field education program operates. In other words, in some cases the mentoring model is the best, but in other situations or institutions, one of the other models would work much better.

Furthermore, no program devotes itself solely to one model. Every program mixes various aspects of all three elements. You may emphasize mentoring, but that does not mean you do not have practica and work to integrate field education with other parts of the M. Div. curriculum.

The Mentoring Model

Let’s begin by looking at the mentoring model. I will first give a general description of it. Then I will give a concise description of one program that focuses on the mentoring aspect of theological field education.

Programs in the *Mentoring* model share a common value. They believe that working with a supervisor in a ministry setting gives a student the best opportunity to learn the arts of ministerial leadership. These programs share the educational perspective that timely reflection, held soon after action heightens learning and improves students’ formation as leaders. Thus while these programs often also use some type of reflective practica to instill theological reflection, the mentoring aspect of the program is the most highly focused arena for learning the arts of theologically reflective leadership.

There are differing ways these programs relate to their supervisors. Some ask the supervisors to teach skills to students, while others support a view that mentors are spiritual guides who reflect with students but do not focus on instructing students in the skills of ministry. Programs differ in how they train or select mentors, but they share a common emphasis on the way leadership is best developed by engaging in the actual experiences of leading, with excellent supervision.

It should be noted that not all programs use the term mentoring.²⁰ Some programs prefer the term supervisor, in order to connote a distance from the special and voluntary type of relationship for which they feel the term mentoring should be reserved. I use the terms mentor

²⁰ In a phone interview with Jeffrey Mahan of Iliff School of Theology, October 27, 2003, he explained that he prefers not to use the term mentoring because for him it was important to preserve the distinction between a mentoring relationship, which is entered into voluntarily, and supervision, which is assigned by another in order to address specific tasks. For Mahan, mentoring is the deeply personal type of relationship that may rarely occur within the context of Theological Field Education, but would not be the norm. “I resist the use of mentor because I think the mentor is a voluntary relationship that may or may not occur between a more experienced person and someone earlier in their career. Supervisor is a role that you can assign and implies particular power and authority...many field educators are now adopting the term mentor because it is a less hierarchical and more collaborative term...”

and supervisor virtually interchangeably, but would note that this stands in contrast to how the terms are used in practice. The benefit of using the term supervisor is that it denotes a relationship that is part of an assignment, and is focused on issues of performance and skill-building. The disadvantage is that this can undermine the other agendas also embedded within Theological Field Education relationships, namely the developmental work that is tended by a senior advisor and experienced by the student. The term mentor captures these two functions, of supervising work and supporting development, in a way that makes it useful to many programs.

Programs in the mentoring model share a similar place in the overall curriculum of the school. Theological Field Education programs in these schools are one part, but not the defining center, of the M.Div. curriculum. Schools with this emphasis regard the work supervisors do as important but not necessarily at the heart of the entire curriculum. In schools that emphasize mentoring, supervisors are essentially adjunct faculty who are free to do what they do best, to work as excellent practitioners who host and supervise students. They are not necessarily expected to tie their work into the heart of the seminary coursework.

To return to our earlier story, of Lucy, we can see how programs in this model use mentors to teach leadership. Martha might wait to see what Lucy says after the worship service, and then use key moments to draw Lucy into further reflection. For example, Lucy might begin by saying something to Martha like, “wow, I couldn’t believe it when Bob, the trustee came up to me and blasted me for moving the baptismal font! Isn’t he just impossible?” And Martha might respond by saying, “well, Lucy, let’s look at that in a little more depth...” One can see the advantage of a skilled minister observing and being part of the action that is the basis for Lucy’s own growing self-awareness. Martha might even suggest to Lucy that they look together at the theological issues in the incident. This might involve exploring her theological stance of centralizing baptism, but also might include exploring theological perspectives on relationships and sharing decision-making. One hopes also that Martha herself is receiving some kind of support as she struggles to help Lucy grow into her own special person as a leader.

The schools that emphasize mentoring appreciate the ways that students develop their own leadership styles as artistic living legacies of prior generations’ learning through leading. Thus leadership is not something that is written on a blank slate, but is inherited, given as a legacy from one generation to the next. This is a powerful paradigm of leadership, one that is rarely made explicit, but is carried implicitly within models that emphasize the unique opportunity for a student to work with a person in an authorized leadership role.

This view, that leadership is something that is handed down, affects our conviction of where best to teach leadership. The notion of leadership as legacy tends to appreciate the way that mentors embody values. Mentors live out ideals, rather than just explain or analyze them. Martha might tell Lucy a story of some incident from her own ministry in which she learned to temper her enthusiasm by consulting others, or in which she wishes she had been more bold and energetic.

Although all field education programs use supervisors or mentors, not all of them rely heavily on the mentors to do the core teaching. In mentoring programs, if the supervisor does not teach it, there may or may not be other aspects of the field education program designed to teach it. This means that the quality of the field education program is heavily dependent on the quality of the mentors who teach students. Mentors who fall short of ideals show the rough edges behind the veneer of professional functioning. Although students can sometimes learn just as valuable of lessons from flawed leaders as from saints, the heavy reliance on mentors can leave students

vulnerable to problematic experiences. However, few of us can deny the power of a truly inspiring leader whom we have known well and who stands up to the test of close scrutiny.

There are some well-developed models out there for training supervisors, such as the programs at Andover Newton Theological School and Harvard Divinity . However, these rely on economies of scale that other programs do not always have available to them. The Boston area schools are able to share the training of supervisors, and thus can sustain extensive supervisory training. Other schools that are more isolated and have more restricted resources, may still be working to develop adequate training for supervisors and those who teach the practica. This means that the ways of training supervisors varies widely across schools, in a way that is heavily dependent on the resources available. The next steps for some programs would be for them to look beyond simply selecting excellent mentors toward engaging all mentors in more regularized training. This of course opens up questions about staffing for field education programs, in order to provide a higher level of training.

I am not taking time to go into depth just now about just how we train supervisors and those who teach our reflective practica. However, if there is interest, we might take more time to look at these issues during the afternoon workshop I will be leading. For those of you with further questions in the area of training and developing mentors, I encourage you to stop by the workshop.

Example of the mentoring model: Fuller Theological Seminary

One example of a school that operates out of the mentoring model is Fuller Theological Seminary, one of the largest theological schools in the world. Fuller's field education program focuses on the influence of supervisors in the learning process for students. As the manual explains: "The supervisor's practice of ministry will become a model for the student's own ministry. The relationship developed between supervisor and intern often becomes the most crucial relationship the student has during his or her seminary career."²¹

Gwen Ingram, Fuller's field education director, explains that the focus on supervisors enables the field education program to respectfully support the varied needs of students. Fuller's student body is highly diverse, ethnically, denominationally, and theologically. Ingram believes that the emphasis on individualized instruction with excellent mentors is the best way for students in such a setting to develop spiritually as Christian leaders.

Reflecting Through Practica Model

The next major approach is the reflecting through practica model. The reflective practica programs are similar for the ways they emphasize learning leadership in the seminary context. These groups, which I also will call practica or seminars, normally take place on the seminary campus. Usually these groups meet weekly. The seminars often focus on case studies in order to draw meaning from ministry incidents that students report to the group. Group leaders most frequently are practitioners with expertise in group facilitation. These programs place a high value on learning from peers as well as on learning from mentors.

These programs see theological reflection as something that is taught best when it is somewhat removed from, but in no way disconnected from action. In other words, these programs take the educational theories of praxis seriously, in a way that places significant emphasis on the ways disciplined reflection on action informs future action.

²¹ From Fuller Theological Seminary website www.fuller.edu, September 20, 2004.

The fact that seminars are somewhat distant from actual ministry experiences means that these programs bring intentionality to the teaching of reflective habits, but they may do so in ways that are more abstract than the ways mentors model reflection in action. In the supervisory model, the work with mentors is messy and full of the impracticality of real life. In the seminar-based model, it is possible to discuss issues in a detached way that requires extra hard work to establish immediate connections with the complicated realities of actual situations.

For example, Lucy might write up her case study on the worship service in a way that focuses on the theological concerns she brought to her worship service. It would be possible for a seminar to therefore avoid the more thorny issues of who decides to move flags and baptismal fonts, when and how. These issues were probably more likely to be part of her discussions with her supervisor, and might not arise at all within a seminar setting. The mentoring model benefits from the fact that until one actually experiences the movement of a baptismal font, the discussion of such a move misses some vital points. However, the seminar model allows a number of reflective experiences that are also valuable.

In a seminar, for example, Lucy might experience a fuller learning cycle by not only experiencing and reflecting on the event, but also then bringing some theoretical or textual wisdom to that reflection. For example, Lucy might read Shared Wisdom in order to learn new steps of engagement with her experience.²² Additionally, the seminar setting will allow peer reflection on the event. Peers can engage empathetically with students in ways that few supervisors or directors of field education are able to do. They might, for example, have been part of the same worship class that suggested Lucy do precisely what she did, and they might therefore bring interpretive wisdom to the discussion that no one else could bring. One of the strengths of the reflecting through practica model is the way students learn to accept challenge and support from others, which is crucial to leadership.

Often the schools that focus on reflective practica assign texts for these seminars, and structure them with a syllabus that reinforces the similarities between the seminars and other courses. The programs that emphasize learning through reflective practica build in a type of analysis that protects against students reflexively assimilating inappropriate conclusions. The learning through practica model places weight on the benefits of observing incidents, analyzing them, and bringing new insights back into the experiential learning process. Its use of the praxis model balances embodied ideals with abstract analyses of what happens when those ideals meet realities.

The Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry

At the Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry, the distinction between the teaching assigned to mentors and that relegated to seminars is quite clear. Dick Cunningham, the director of field education, explains that “the onsite supervisor is the person who has the skill set, they’re not being asked to do theological reflection. They are a supervisor because they are already an expert.”²³ He adds, “(mentors are expected to) review and plan student activities and assignments, discuss vital issues, debrief student’s work, provide encouragement and challenge to the student.” They also engage in evaluative interaction.²⁴

²² Jeffrey H. Mahan, Barbara B. Troxell and Carol J. Allen, *Shared Wisdom: A Guide to Case Study Reflection in Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

²³ Quote from telephone interview with Richard Cunningham, July 15, 2003.

²⁴ Quotes in this paragraph are also from telephone interview with Dick Cunningham, July 15, 2003.

While mentors may themselves be highly capable of theological reflection, this program does not assume that this means they will be highly capable of teaching a student how to do theological reflection. A quote from the manual clarifies this type of distinction: “The internship provides the contextual arena for the student’s primary work. It is here that the student finds source material for doing theological reflection.”²⁵

This quote demonstrates one way of distinguishing a program using the mentoring model from one using the practica model. The distinction is in how they view the student’s work in context. Programs in the practica model see the work in the ministry setting as a way of gathering materials that make the work of the seminar possible. This shows that the emphasis is on the seminar as the location of primary learning about theological reflection on experience. This stands in contrast to the perspective of mentoring programs, which see seminars as exercises that support the learning that occurs primarily in the context of the ministry placement itself.

The Third Model: Reflecting Through Curriculum Integration

The third model, *Reflecting Through Curriculum Integration*, is based on a new paradigm that is emerging in professional education. Within schools of nursing, social work, architecture, and teacher education, as well as theological schools, there recently has been a shift toward an integrative model of education.²⁶ Recently, some theological schools have developed curricula with integrative learning as a core organizing principle. In these schools field education often has a different role than has traditionally been the case.

The field education programs in this third model are part of a larger dynamic in their institutions, which places integrative learning in the forefront of the curriculum’s purposes. Other disciplines, such as theology or ethics either coordinate with, or independently echo the types of integrative learning that field educators have been advocating for many years.

Most of these schools use an organizational theme for learning to focus integrative energies. These themes might be formation for ministry, training and mentoring for ministry, or something less overtly framed as professional ministry, like incorporating values of diversity. Such themes give an organizing principle to the way that various disciplines interact within the curriculum.

In the first two models, the field education program is a somewhat isolated though highly valued part of the overall curriculum. In general the curricula in these institutions are marked by some degree of fragmentation between academic disciplines.²⁷ Professors from differing

²⁵ Quote from online manual, <http://www.seattleu.edu/theomin/Fielded/fielded.asp>.

²⁶ Several recent articles point to these trends. In Lynda Baloche, John Hynes, Helen Berger “Moving Toward the Integration of Professional and General Education” *Action in Teacher Education* v.18 (Spring 1996): 1-9, for example, the idea of curriculum integration is explored through looking at a professional course in education foundations that is paired with a general education course in sociology. The integrative model they use calls for an experienced learner to attend both classes and “help students make connections between disciplines and among each other.” In this program, “the centerpiece is an integrative, field-based research project,” 1.

²⁷ In a 1996 article, Donald F. Beisswenger examines this issue. Beisswenger, Donald F. “Field Education and the Theological Education Debates,” *Theological Education*, 33, no. 1 (1996) : 49-58, He begins by summarizing David Kelsey’s analysis, which focuses on one strand of theological education, which he calls “Berlin,” in which, as Beisswenger explains, there are “two discrete areas of theological work: (a) helping students develop an understanding of Christian faith through exposure to persons doing research in biblical, historical, and systematic fields and (b) educating students for church leadership.” (53) David. H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

disciplines teach students largely in isolation from each other, with students learning biblical disciplines simultaneously with historical disciplines, but not in a coordinated, intentional way.

In the third model, professors see the work of integrating their own field with others as a key part of their teaching. They look to field education as an indispensable resource for this integration. It would be an overstatement to describe the theological schools in this third model as being the only ones in theological education who achieve integrative learning. Neither should the schools in the third model be interpreted as being unique in placing a high value on field education. Instead, these schools place field education into a particular role in relation to the overall commitment to integration. The distinction I am making here is between schools where integration has become the single most important organizing principle of the whole curriculum vs. schools where it is one of many values within the overall educational plan.

Programs in this third model may also teach reflection by using mentors and seminars. However, this model contains elements not always seen in the other programs. Schools in this model rely on the way the integrative work necessary to the entire curriculum happens through contextual learning. This model therefore is called *Reflecting Through Curriculum Integration*, in order to signify that these programs view field education as a crucial lynchpin for the integrative work of the entire curriculum.

Lucy would, if she attended this type of school, find many places where professors would work with her to intentionally integrate her experiences into the content of their courses. She might, for example, reflect on the incident during the integrative discussion section of her ethics and theology course. She might be able to challenge assumptions present in the group discussion in a way that could re-shape their theoretical understandings. At schools in the first two models, it is quite possible that Lucy's other professors do not even know what she is doing in field education.

The field education programs in this third model do not simply serve as a relief valve for other parts of the curriculum, doing the integrative work that is neglected elsewhere. Instead, in these programs, the integrative work of field education is hardly distinguishable from integrative work occurring elsewhere in the curriculum.

Sometimes the field educator is the resident expert on how to contextualize learning, but that is not necessarily the reality in all of these programs. Other faculty persons are often equally focused on integrative work that includes contextualizing the materials in their courses. The field educator is a resource, but he or she works alongside others who are also conversant with methods and approaches of integrative learning.

Denver Seminary

Denver Seminary focuses its entire M.Div. program on what it calls "Training and Mentoring." The school has absorbed the field education program into the overall curriculum with many courses explicitly addressing issues traditionally covered just in field education.

Donald Payne, who is the field educator at Denver, makes it clear that integration is the focus throughout the curriculum, not just within field education. He explains, "five years ago we

This division between classical studies and preparation for leadership was first noted by Edward Farley. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). Schools in the first two models may or may not be stuck in this paradigm of fragmentation between classical studies and practical preparation. However, the disciplines in these schools do tend to work somewhat independently of each other.

replaced all field education with an intensive mentoring program.”²⁸ Every M.Div. student spends five semesters in what they call a process rather than a program. The process involves students setting learning goals for the M.Div, which they then strategically plan to address either through course work, field-based learning, or some combination of these. The students participate in campus-based spiritual growth groups that are led by faculty. They must have two mentors that are from off-campus for the entire five semester sequence.

What is distinctive about Denver is its effort to intentionally coordinate all of the work of the M.Div. around a theme, training and mentoring, which usually is associated primarily with just one aspect of the curriculum, field education.

Conclusion

These three models for field education are intended to help us be reflective about our practice as theological field educators. The categories do not serve the same function as a coin sorter. Coin sorters enable you to separate a large collection of coins into each type. These models for field education instead help us to reflect on where the major educational energies flow within our own programs. Programs that might be in the same category still might look quite different from each other. Certainly not every program even fits into just one of these three categories. The purpose, therefore, is not to sort programs, but is instead to give us language tools to enable us to compare and contrast the ways that we build educational experiences for our students who are developing as leaders.

One of the issues I have not addressed in detail here today is how institutions might best determine the model that suits their context. One might even wonder if it could be possible, or optimal, to have excellence in all three areas in an ideal program. Without going into detail, let me suggest that having all three elements equally emphasized in one program is probably not the Holy Grail it might at first appear to be. First of all, the third model, of curriculum integration, sounds like an educator’s dream model. However, it is not suitable in every setting, and it requires a buy-in by the entire faculty. That may be an unattainable goal in many cases, but it also may not be an appropriate goal in every setting. Similarly, some programs may be able to develop mentoring and practica in nearly equal degrees, but this may not be optimal in every setting. I would summarize by reminding you of what I said at the beginning: within theological field education we are maturing to a stage in which we recognize there are diverse and equally valid ways to educate and form leaders.

The Reflecting through Mentoring programs emphasize the way that leadership develops in context, under the guiding care of excellent supervisors. The Reflecting Through Practica programs place greatest emphasis on the ways that students learn the rigorous disciplines of reflection that lie at the heart of leadership when they take extra steps to analyze and review their assumptions and insights. The Reflecting Through Curriculum Integration programs focus on how the contextualized learning of field education provides experiences that energize the heart and soul of the entire M.Div. curriculum. These three models capture the main impulses at play throughout theological field education, the dynamic interplay of mentoring, peer-guided reflection, and the intersection of experiential learning and coursework.

²⁸ Telephone interview with Donald J. Payne, May 20, 2003.