

From place to place: A comparative study of three models of workplace formation for theological students based at one campus

Darren Cronshaw

Baptist Union of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

darren.cronshaw@buv.com.au

Andrew Menzies

Stirling College, Melbourne, Australia

amenzies@stirling.edu.au

Higher Education providers are developing some innovative curriculum for work-place based training. Certain courses are being redesigned to develop professional practice and identity. Students are spending significant time experiencing and reflecting on their envisioned vocational place, whether training to be teachers, healthcare providers, chaplains or Christian ministers. But how can we best utilise off-campus places of learning and teaching? What is the student experience when the place of learning is a workplace or service context? This paper investigates the placement of theology students in church and community service contexts for learning and teaching. As a linked series of case studies, it analyses vocational/professional education in three courses based out of the one campus at EAST Alliance in Mulgrave, Melbourne: Supervised Theological Field Education at Stirling College; Urban Neighbours of Hope course in community development and urban mission; and Tabor College's Master of Arts in Vocational Practice. The theological education sector recognises that one of the key and growing contexts for transformative theological education is workplace or service learning. This is not just about providing unstructured "ministry experience" but placing and supervising students in a service context and inviting thoughtful reflection on what they experience and learn, integrated with their broader studies. The sector needs ongoing analysis in how best to place learners in stretching contexts to apprentice them as leaders. This paper evaluates the effectiveness of workplace learning in three courses and proposes implications for integrated practical placements and learning-in-context pedagogy for other places.