

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

# **Self-educated Achievers: Can Unlettered Theologians Reach Their Potential?**

**Ruth Peterson**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

**Massey University  
Albany Campus  
New Zealand  
2002**

Found while browsing:

**Credentials à la Cyberspace**

University Diplomas

Bachelors, Masters, MBA, and Doctorate (PhD)

Obtain a prosperous future, money earning power, and the Admiration of  
all.

Diplomas from prestigious non-accredited  
universities based on your present knowledge and life  
experience.

No required tests, classes, books, or interviews

Bachelors, Masters, MBA, and Doctorate (PhD) diplomas available in the  
field of your choice.

No one is turned down.

The ultimate level playing field: provided you can afford the asking price  
of the diploma.

Confidentiality assured.

---

## Foreword

---

The past 20 years have seen a period of continuing change in New Zealand education. The change in overseas governments' entry requirements for New Zealanders to live and work in their countries, the evolution of "Education Permanente"<sup>1</sup>, Government policy to promote community education - have had an impact on the motivations of adults to enter formal education.

It seemed relevant to visit the topic of self-education to discover what, if any, changes have occurred in the motivations of self-educated theologians in the last two decades. It was my intention to identify any patterns used by the theologians for self-directed learning during this period.

The literature review established five themes relevant to the study. In brief these themes are that adults are self-directed to a greater or lesser degree; that meaningful learning takes place when adults are in control of their learning; that given the right environment, all adults can develop intellectually; that a variety of factors may determine whether adults choose to learn through formal or independent means, and that the context of learning is determined by who you are, how wealthy you are and what access you have to resources. It was important in this study to balance the assumptions of andragogy with the 1986 critique by Stephen Brookfield.

A range of research methods was used. The primary method used questionnaires and interviews administered to nine self-educated theologians who have practised theology within the past 20 years. Questions covered motivation, subject categories studied,

---

<sup>1</sup> The key philosophical ideas of "Education Permanente" are that education is no longer limited to a particular period of one's life, and encompasses formal, non-formal and informal educational activities.



acceptance by degreed theologians, expectations, strengths and limitations of the learning method employed. A second questionnaire was used to interview secondary respondents about self-educated theologians they had been closely associated with to confirm the findings.

## **Findings**

The changes the theologians observed in their own motivation included intolerance towards irrelevant or uninteresting courses, or inflexible schedules, a determination to solve their own problems and to acquire specific new knowledge quickly and inexpensively, and a devotion to the pursuit of truth.

Some influences which have affected their learning include specific life-changing situations, political changes within government, mission organisations and denominations, changing circumstances and personal preferences.

Strategies used by these teachers of theology to survive the ever-present pressure to become credentialed include accepting honorary doctorates to open doors previously closed to them, working within communities where credentials are not of significance, accepting that without a credential opportunities for status positions may be limited, and putting in extra effort to ensure that they can outperform professionals in order to justify their stance.

This study shows that although a credentials-oriented society is alien to the theologians' purposeful goals for learning, they have both resisted and worked with it, using diverse opportunities to develop and improve their thinking skills.

The significance of the case study is that while it will to some extent provide historical documentation of the experiences of nine theologians (and the impressions of respondents about a further five theologians) during a significant period of educational change in the history of New Zealand, it will primarily serve to add to the literature on successful self-directed teachers/learners and the implications inherent in this for polytechnics moving towards more flexible pathways to qualifications in a knowledge-driven society.

---

## Acknowledgements

---

I wish to thank the following people for their assistance in producing this research project:

The nine theologians who so willingly agreed to be interviewed and gave generously of their time to share their experiences and insights as self-directed learners.

The five people who knew of other self-directed theologians, who also willingly agreed to be interviewed and shared their memories of these individuals.

Associate Professor Peter Lineham, my primary supervisor who gave his enthusiastic support from the outset of the project, for his encouragement and patience throughout, his help in selecting potential participants, his critical suggestions regarding the shaping of the thesis and his expert edits of the chapters as they were produced.

Associate Professor Wayne Edwards, my second supervisor for offering to be available where needed.

Linda Leach, who readily proffered bibliographies suitable to the project and gave perceptive advice with regard to the adult education content in the early stages.

Natalie Stephenson for expertly transcribing the tapes, Andrew Lynch for reading and advising as the chapters emerged, for acting as a 'critical friend', and for thoughtful suggestions on many occasions.

And to Bex and Hannah, who helped me to keep things in perspective by carrying on as normal during most of the project, and then stepping into high gear in the roles of cook, cleaner, masseuse and encourager as needed towards the end.

---

# Table of Contents

---

Foreword.....ii

Acknowledgements.....iv

List of Tables and Figures .....vi

List of Appendices .....vii

Chapter 1 Introduction ..... 1

Chapter 2 Literature Review.....6

Chapter 3 Methodology .....36

Chapter 4 Data – Findings: Primary Respondents .....55

Chapter 5 Data – Findings: Secondary respondents.....116

Chapter 6 Analysis of the case studies .....140

Chapter 7 Conclusions and Implications .....162

References .....167

Appendices .....177

---

## List of Tables and Figures

---

Table 1.1	Number of private/public students in the theological sector	3
Table 1.2	Destination of pupils leaving primary schools in 1928	9
Table 3.1	Strategies Used to Generate Meaning	39
Table 3.2	Postulates of the research paradigms	43
Table 6.1	Reasons for self-education	143
Table 6.2	Number of students enrolled in formal programmes	146
Table 6.3	Age distribution of the sample	147
Table 6.4	Relative educational background of participants	149
Table 6.5	Similarities in language between Participants	152
Table 6.6	Scholarship versus Revelation Model	154
Figure 1.1	Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle	23
Figure 1.2	Self-directed learning model	25
Figure 6.1	Age analysis of self-educated theologians	148
Figure 6.2	Educational background of participants	149
Figure 6.3	Study Preferences	150
Figure 6.4	No. of students enrolled in Tertiary education 1999-2001	157
Figure 6.5	No. of students enrolled 1994-2000	158

---

## List of Appendices

---

Appendix 1	Ethical approval
Appendix 2	Initial letter requesting participation
Appendix 3	Consent Form
Appendix 4	Questionnaire
Appendix 5	Information sheet
Appendix 6	Semi-structured interview questions (primary respondents)
Appendix 7	Semi-structured interview questions (secondary respondents)
Appendix 8	Letter to transcriber requesting confidentiality
Appendix 9	Summary of self-educated theologians' responses
Appendix 10	Summary of respondents' responses

---

## Chapter 1 Introduction

---

“Traditionally New Zealand has not been a country with a high regard for formal educational qualifications.”

- Noeline Alcorn

### 1.1 Background to the research

The last twenty years have seen tremendous change in the area of adult education. There have been significant developments in approaches to learning and teaching, including flexible pathways to qualifications, there has been increasing pressure to have credentials and further pressure for the accreditation of learning. In addition, frameworks such as feminism and postmodernism have had an impact on practice. Educators recognise that adult education has to evolve and find its place within changing contexts. It can no longer be defined as learning which occurs outside educational institutions but needs to be redefined as learning which may take place inside or outside and may not necessarily be limited by what is considered appropriate by educators (Usher, Bryant and Johnston, 1997).

The purpose of this research project has been to investigate self-education as opposed to formal education, within the context of teachers of theology in New Zealand religious institutions during the period from 1980 to the present.

The results of the project will give substance and relevance to the development of flexible and on-line courses in theology in secular and religious tertiary settings. The data will also add to the few studies which have evolved in the field of self-education in New Zealand academic institutions.

From the beginning of the study, it has been clear that self-education is difficult to define

and its boundaries have been puzzling. According to Gerald Grow (1991) "few people have ever defined self-directed learning with precision; and even when they do, its meaning unexpectedly shifts to a new location." Alongside these difficulties, many have agreed that the proposed study would be worthwhile. There have been times when it would have been easier to have extended the parameters of the study to self-educated teachers from any discipline, and it became apparent that the group of self-taught theologians selected may have formally studied another academic subject. Indeed, during the interviews participants frequently deviated from talking about their theological studies to a broader discussion about their self-directed learning

My interest in this field of education has arisen primarily from memories of my childhood in rural New Zealand, where few people in my sub-set of New Zealand culture held degrees yet I encountered many remarkable individuals whose study of biblical doctrines went far beyond their educational status. My parents were hospitable and throughout my early years our home provided accommodation for many visitors, both from around New Zealand and from overseas. The vast majority of these were employed as teachers of theology, either through missions, in churches or in theological institutions. In the main, these people were self-educated. The second thing that has sparked my interest in self-education has been my experience as an educator of adults in South Auckland, many of whom bring with them considerable knowledge gained outside formal learning situations.

## **1.2 The research problem**

The overall reason for the study was to investigate the effectiveness of self education as opposed to formal education, particularly with respect to teachers of theology who have achieved some degree of recognition or success.

The exploration sought to challenge the notion that formal education is superior to self-education and to investigate whether the individuals concerned had put in place any systems to guide their learning.

Because a postmodern stance has been taken which recognises the significance of the individual, it has been considered relevant to use case study qualitative methodology. In

the 1970s, when case study method first began to emerge, it was not considered a proper educational research method. It is now one of the most widely used forms for studying educators and educational programs (Stake, 1995) and has been selected to answer the question “What is going on here?” with regard to the self-educated professional theologian.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Several factors indicate that it is timely to carry out this research. Firstly, it is now almost forty years since New Zealand universities started to re-evaluate theology as an academic discipline. Secondly, since the development in 1990 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), any individual organisation supplying education and/or assessment services can become a registered provider. In a conference paper by Bruce Knox (2000), the following statistics are given:

In 1998, the estimated total number of private and public students in the theological sector was an estimated 5000. These students were spread over 86 providers. Comparison of this data with the 1982 figures demonstrates significant growth in the sector.

ESTIMATED TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC STUDENTS IN THE THEOLOGICAL SECTOR				
Year	Est. no. of students	No. of providers	No. of closures	No. of new providers
1982	450	30	-	-
1998	5000	86	11	56
2000	?	89	15	3

Table 1.1

The first objective of the research is to determine whether there has been a pattern of self-educated theologians in New Zealand who have made a significant contribution to teaching and perhaps to theological publications.



The second objective is to ascertain whether current educational theory and practice, particularly as it relates to flexible delivery and on-line learning, is relevant to the needs of learners.

Benefits to participants are having the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their independent learning and others are able to gain from these reflections. The research provides documentation of the ten participants' educational experiences during a period of rapid proliferation of New Zealand's theological providers.

The findings may also help to clarify some of the reasons for the continued under-representation of fundamentalist theologians in the statistics of qualified teachers of theology.

Information will also be provided to the executives of theological colleges to enable them to address more comprehensively the flexible pathways to qualifications that they are offering.

#### **1.4 Outline**

The original intention was to structure the thesis in three parts – profiles of self educated people, links to adult education theory, and implications for flexible delivery of courses in polytechnics. It became obvious, however, that this approach should be abandoned in favour of a more rigid structure and the original structure is now discernable only in the second and fifth chapters. Within the other chapters there is a mix of theory and research into practice.

In general terms, the second chapter focuses on the evolving nature of adult education theory and why it is more relevant to talk about adult learning. The final chapters deal with the research, and challenges to adult education theory.

The intention of Chapter One is to provide a background to the research, to locate self-education within the period of the research, that is the past twenty years in New Zealand.

Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature and explores some of the key ideas behind self-education and self-directed learning, with specific reference to contemporary theories of adult learning, and the influence of politics on the currently popular concept of 'lifelong learning'.

Chapter Three outlines the research design used. The themes that were prominent in the literature prompted eight research questions which in turn led to the most appropriate design for the study. Ethical issues are considered and the research methods used are discussed.

Chapter Four profiles the primary respondents in the study whose stories are examined in separate case studies.

Chapter Five records the data gathered from the secondary respondents who shared their knowledge of other self-educated theologians, also in separate case studies.

Chapter Six pulls together the threads from the previous two chapters and attempts to analyse the data.

Chapter Seven presents conclusions from the study and considers learning opportunities for adults in New Zealand. Its aim is to crystallise observations made about the pros and cons of formal and informal education and to reflect on the implications of those observations.

---

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

---

### Key Sources

Initial searches for the literature on this topic focused on self-education in the history of New Zealand, in particular the literature on self-improvement/self-help among the working class of nineteenth century New Zealand. The search moved from learning for philosophy to employment education keeping in mind the concept that for theologians, education was broader than just "getting a job". The issues that required exploration were motivation, reasons for self-education, strengths and weaknesses, cost, the purpose and the scope of learning areas. These continued to be the foundation for the research carried out.

Other early searches explored the role of the public library, continuing education and bible schools, as well as the Workers' Education Association. Internet searches for self-education brought me to the site of the Autodidactic Press in the USA. Many hours were spent searching through the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography for patterns of self-educated people, especially those who had pursued theological studies.

As the study progressed it became clear that adult learning theory resources were key to the project. There has been considerable benefit in examining the characteristics of the respondents in the light of the works of Brookfield (1986, 1992, 1995), Knowles (1975, 1980), Kolb (1984) and Rogers (1969). A brief description of their contribution to the study follows.

The concept of self-directedness in learning is not new; in fact prior to the evolution of formal schooling self-education was the primary means people had for learning about their world. However, it has been helpful to view the cases studied through the work of Stephen Brookfield (1995), especially for those who practice self-directed learning but also engage in more formal educational experiences such as teacher-directed courses. Brookfield's

(1986) review of adult learning theory and his cautions about the potential overuse of the concept of self-directedness of adults who are learning also informed the researcher's thinking and helped to shape the approach to analysis.

Obviously, any work about the education of adults needs to consider the work of Malcolm Knowles. Knowles' theory of andragogy is an attempt to develop a theory specifically for adult learning. Knowles emphasizes that adults are self-directed and expect to take responsibility for decisions. The term *andragogy*, although not new, was made popular in the 1970's by Knowles. His work was developed on the basis that the characteristics of adult learners are different from those of child learners. Knowles (1970) argued that it is not always appropriate to apply the concept of pedagogy to adult learners because the assumptions on which it is based relate to child learners. His later work (1980) modifies this view somewhat, allowing that the choice of which model to use depends on the situation, rather than on whether the learner is an adult or a child.

The four-stage Experiential Learning Cycle developed by Kolb (1984) is based on the idea that an experience in itself does not guarantee that learning will take place. For meaningful learning to occur the individual needs to observe the experience reflectively, considering how it can be generalised to other situations, actively experiment with the learning by acting on it and evaluating the result, and then begin the cycle again.

As the ideas about reflection as a learning device were developed in relation to the self-educated theologians studied, it became increasingly clear that the learners were not equal in their ability to perform at the different stages in Kolb's cycle. Kolb attributes this to learning preferences but insists that the quality of a learner's reflection has considerable impact on the rate of their progress in learning.

Another of the themes that was explored in relation to self-education was *motivation*. According to Carl Rogers (1969), all individuals have a drive to self-actualize and this motivates learning. He theorises that learning is facilitated when: (1) the student participates completely in the learning process and has control over its nature and direction, (2) learning is primarily based upon direct confrontation with practical, social, personal or research problems, and (3) self-evaluation is the principal method of assessing progress or success.

The relevance (or otherwise) of these theories to the needs of the self-educated teachers of theology studied became an important framework for structuring and organising knowledge on the topic.

Closer to home, the New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning published an article in May 1992 by Noeline Alcorn entitled '*Creating a learning society: continuing education and lifelong learning*' in which she writes:

Traditionally New Zealand has not been a country with a high regard for formal educational qualifications" and "by the turn of the century only about ten percent of those completing primary school went on to high school...". Again, "In the fifty years since (the end of WWII) our national expectations of the education sector have risen .... The challenge of the 1900's is to provide learning opportunities for adults throughout their lives, (p.4).

Alcorn points to the role of politics in creating a flexible framework for continuing education as well as the role of society in forming partnerships between students, providers and community groups. She refers to the story of the loaves and fishes to suggest that sharing resources can provide a feast.

### **Reasons for self-education**

In a publication entitled *Schools in New Zealand*, two reasons are given for so many New Zealand children leaving school when they turned fourteen in the early part of the twentieth century. Firstly, many parents believed that a fourteen-year-old was old enough to work. Secondly, a free place at secondary school was only available if a student had passed their proficiency exam at the end of primary school and this resulted in 50 percent of all pupils leaving school at 14, when they completed their primary education. (Table 1.2)

The Destination of Pupils Leaving Public Primary Schools During, or at the End of, 1928				
Destination	Had passed Standard IV		Had not passed Standard IV	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Post Primary	6,046	5,587	255	212
Commercial Occupations:				
(a) Clerical (including typing)	72	71	14	12
(b) Shop and warehouse assistants	348	208	139	102
Trades:				
(a) Engineering	141	1	49	-
(b) Building	104	-	64	-
(c) Other	282	57	177	44
Agricultural and Pastoral	1,357	98	1,108	87
Other Occupations	447	314	356	330
Home	571	2,516	362	1,475
Not known	185	103	236	212
Totals	<b>9,553</b>	<b>8,995</b>	<b>2,760</b>	<b>2,474</b>

Table 1.2 (adapted from the Appendixes to the House of Representatives, 1929, E-1)

The reasons that people choose *not* to go into formal learning situations vary considerably, however. Taking examples from the pages of the Autodidactic Press, Frederick Douglass

was born into slavery in 1817 and forbidden an education by law. Taught to read by an abolitionist sympathiser, he furthered his education at every opportunity reading what he could and talking to people more knowledgeable than himself. On escaping from slavery in 1838 he became a great writer, orator and leader in the abolitionist movement.

In contrast, Thomas Edison was thought to be too stupid for school and was taught at home by his mother in the early years. Eventually this self-taught scientist became the big bang of technology, inventing the electric light and the phonograph.

Ansel Adams, one of America's most celebrated landscape photographers, was awarded an honorary doctorate by Harvard University, but as a young person was taken out of school because he despised the mind-numbing routine.

One of the most celebrated science fiction writers, Arthur C. Clarke, was too poor to go to college, and educated himself by reading magazines.

United States president Grover Cleveland was prevented from going to college by his father's death.

The list of famous achievers who either dropped out of school or had their education cut short includes Bill Gates, Steven Spielberg, Charles Dickens, Walt Disney, Florence Nightingale, George Washington, Joseph Conrad and Abraham Lincoln.

In New Zealand in 1992 the Department of Internal Affairs published *A People's History*, containing illustrated biographies of nineteenth century New Zealanders. Background for the study of self-educated theologians in New Zealand was provided through the stories of people such as Elizabeth Colenso, whose competence as a self-educated Maori scholar took her to Waimate where revision of the New Testament in Maori was being carried out. Later on she contributed to the publication of the first complete Bible in Maori in 1868 in England. On her return to New Zealand she wrote scripture stories in Maori and continued to prepare revisions of the New Testament for the press. She also taught at the Melanesian Mission in Norfolk Island and translated works into Mota, the mission's common language. Her primary impulse was evangelism despite the subordinate role resulting from her commitment to mission schools.



Elizabeth Colenso's motivation for Maori and biblical studies came from three main sources: the first was that she was born into a missionary family and went to Marianne Williams's school for missionary daughters in Paihia. The second was the limited contact with Europeans in an almost entirely Maori New Zealand. The third was an inclination for missionary work which doubtless led to her acceptance of a proposal of marriage from William Colenso, a CMS mission printer.

In contrast to Elizabeth Colenso the self-taught founder of the Sisters of Mercy in Auckland, Mary Cecilia Maher, was one of the first women religious to arrive in New Zealand. Other than running several schools and carrying out work among the poor, ill and deprived, Mother Mary Cecilia was the visionary who projected the current Mercy Hospital in Auckland. In her role as superior general of the Auckland Sisters of Mercy she was responsible for the Ponsonby St Mary's Convent, convents and schools in Parnell, Onehunga, Otahuhu, Wellington and Thames. Like Elizabeth Colenso, she was drawn to religious life while young, but her life's work was quite different in that she carried out a programme of social work as well as instructing nuns and students in religious studies.

Another missionary educationalist of note was Antoine Marie Garin whose achievements included his appointment as provincial of the Marists in New Zealand, his national prestige as an educationalist in the Nelson district and his founding of a library of 500 volumes to support adult education. Unlike the women above, Garin's learning came initially from an internship working alongside a more senior priest in France, but after he felt the call to missionary work in New Zealand his passion for religious instruction to be integrated into education and his exceptional skills as an educator drove him to continue his religious studies.

Louis Catherin Servant was another Catholic priest in early New Zealand. He is notable for his curiosity to understand the society in which he found himself, which culminated in an honest publication entitled '*Customs and habits of the New Zealanders*' (Wellington, 1973). Like Garin, Servant came from France but his training was in the seminary of St Irenaeus at Lyons. He was influenced by the tide of revivalist religious zeal which followed the French revolution.



All of the above were without formal qualifications, and driven by different motivations, and yet each made a considerable impact while carrying out their role as teachers of theology within their denomination.

There were also several Maori teachers of theology in these times. One who deserves mention is Matiu Parakatone Tahu. He became the missionary A.N. Brown's most trusted teacher and was a leading spokesperson of his people. Apprenticed to CMS missionaries like Brown and W.R. Wade, he describes his own motivation for studying and instructing his countrymen in biblical matters "...You forget what we were and what we have thrown away – our cannibalism, our murders, our infanticide, our Tapus, which were Gods to us. What prevents our return to these things but Religion?" (*A People's History*, p.208).

Rawiri Taiwhanga was another Maori whose theological education came from his association with CMS missionaries. Although his greatest achievement was making butter for sale (possibly making him the country's first commercial dairy farmer), the adoption of European farming methods and Christianity went together. An apostle of the new faith, Taiwhanga played a central role in explaining Christianity to various tribes, driven by the desire to take the Christian message to his countrymen. He was an outstanding teacher, despite his lack of formal theological education. The historical account of Rawiri Taiwhanga points to the source of his education – his fascination with the skills and knowledge of the European Christian missionaries, Samuel Marsden and George Clarke, observed at the Kerikeri mission station.

In each case, Maori studied theology mentored by a missionary from CMS and shared the common element of believing that peace would come to the tribes if the Christian message was accepted.

When Christianity spread to Otaki and Kapiti, Tamihana Te Rauparaha, son of the great Ngati Toa leader, helped to bring tribal warfare to an end by accompanying Bishop Selwyn on overland treks in the South Island to take Christianity to the southernmost parts of New Zealand. His accomplishments included being presented to Queen Victoria in 1852 and actively supporting the establishment of a monarchy for the Maori people to unite them beyond tribal unity and to bring law and security to the land. Unlike the other peacemakers and preachers above, Tamihana attended St John's College in Auckland but like them he

was motivated by a desire to see an end to warfare. His father's words also rang loudly in his ears: "Oh son! Both you and Matene, go to your people! And say: repay only with goodness on my account; do not incur ill-will with the Europeans on my account – for only by Goodwill is the salvation of Man Woman and Child." (*A People's History*, p.241).

The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography cites a number of people who were essentially self-educated, such as George Adkin (1888-1964), a controversial ethnologist arguing for amateur scholarship. He resented academic authority, but his own research was meticulously documented. Byron Brown (1866-1947) educated himself because his parents could not afford to let him take up a scholarship to Wellington College. Throughout his life he read Shakespeare and Dickens becoming one of New Zealand's youngest JPs, then an MP, a radio host and a filmmaker.

Another New Zealander who played an active part in education, Maud Russell (1863-1956) had been given the choice of Oxford University or travel abroad. She chose the latter and settled in Wellington in 1902. She held no degree but was called "the chief intellect among the women of Wellington" and a "beacon of erudition". (*Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. 4).

Nevertheless, other than the missionary teachers described earlier, there are few biographies of self-educated theologians in early New Zealand and the current research will serve to examine patterns of motivation and learning observed among some New Zealanders in this field who agreed to be interviewed.

The historical figure who most accurately represents those who have participated in this study is Charles Grandison Finney. Unlike many theologians of the twenty-first century, Finney was self educated and held no earned degrees. He had intended to enrol in Yale University in 1812, but a teacher persuaded him that he could learn more in two years of private study than he would by studying for four years at Yale. He taught himself Greek, Hebrew and Latin and then moved to New York to study law under Judge Benjamin Wright. As Finney researched various law cases he noticed how often the bible was quoted, so he began to read and study its text. Although he was encouraged to attend a theological seminary, he refused and entered into private study with his pastor. As a result of his success as a preacher, he was asked to serve as Professor of Theology at Oberlin

College, Ohio. While in the position of Professor of Systematic Theology he wrote his "*Systematic Theology*".

In a new book called *Soul Survivor* American Christian writer Philip Yancy (2001) describes the outcome of twentieth century journalist G K Chesterton's self-education:

As a thinker, Chesterton started slowly. By the age of nine he could barely read and his parents consulted with a brain specialist about his mental capacity. He dropped out of art school, and skipped university entirely. As it turned out, however, he had a memory so prodigious that late in life he could recite the plots of all 10,000 novels he had read and reviewed. He wrote five novels of his own as well as 200 short stories ... and tackled the lives of Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas and Jesus himself.

There were churches which as institutions rejected formal theological education. The Salvation Army began in New Zealand in April 1883 when the first officers arrived in Dunedin. Corps (churches) were established throughout the country. The early leaders in England had come from the radical fringes of the Methodist Church and most officers in its beginning years were uneducated and from the lower classes. The founder, General Booth was himself not a theologian, stating in 1889 that he had "neither time nor inclination for book writing".

In 1887 when an ordained Methodist minister, Samuel Logan Brengle, applied to join the Salvation Army, Booth said to him, "Brengle, you belong to the dangerous classes. You have been your own boss for so long ... We are an Army, and we demand obedience" (Hall, 1993, p.72). By this Booth implied that Brengle was both older and more educated than the average prospective officer who applied for acceptance into the ranks of the early Army.

The Army Mother (Catherine Booth) has gone on record as saying: "Give me someone able to cast out demons and I don't care if they can read or write, or put a grammatical sentence together!" (p.102).

The Methodists who came to New Zealand in large numbers in the 1870's were often from rural areas in England where Methodism had been strong. The Methodist movement had been most effective within the lower strata of English society. Owing to the fact that the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, had not been able to persuade many Anglican clergy to follow him, he had found it necessary to organise a number of men whom he personally selected to care for the developing Methodist societies. These itinerant preachers came mostly from among the lower classes of society; what they lacked in formal education, they made up for in evangelical fervour. The church structure Wesley put in place was a pragmatic response to the conditions of the day.

Most notable, however, among New Zealand churches that operated without formally educated clergy was the Brethren. In Brethren Assemblies, most people rejected the concept of an ordained clergy believing that God's work was done by ordinary people who were empowered by the Holy Spirit and the word of God, (Trew, 1996). In addition, the Brethren were strongly motivated to make the most of the time remaining to them, by their expectation of the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This makes them a key body in this study.

One of their number, James Kirk, was active in preaching at nineteen years of age and described his own training in this poem:

God would not send me forth to fight  
Unless I were equipped aright  
So friends increased and girded me  
To foreign shores – my home to be  
One special man did God prepare  
to counsel me 'gainst Satan's snare  
To pay attention to the Book  
and in it for instruction took.<sup>2</sup>

Apparently the "one special man" (Daniel McIntosh, a blacksmith) carried out a mentoring role to bring Kirk to maturity in his faith and ministry skills.

---

<sup>2</sup> Trew, G. (1996), p.9

In the early years of colonial New Zealand, people sent out as missionaries from Brethren churches received little training prior to their departure. Their development occurred in the local church. These values slowly changed. In later years most potential missionaries considered formal bible training as necessary. Thus in 1958 a bible school was established in Auckland to prepare men and women for teaching the Bible, and in 1968 a second bible school was established by the Gospel Literature Outreach in Te Awamutu. In addition, in-depth courses on biblical books had been available for fifty years through the Emmaus Bible Correspondence School.

### **Adult learners**

It is reasonable to conclude that a significant factor in people attending classes and completing work in a course of study is motivation. The term is used to describe what energises a person to direct them towards a goal. Bill Bitel (1989) says that motivation as a concept is useful in that it explains goal-oriented behaviour. He uses examples of hunger or an aroma to show how people produce motivated behaviour as they interact with their environment. Other factors which combine with the environmental variables are interest, need, value, attitude, aspiration and incentive.

For Bitel this helps to explain the differences among adult learners which cannot be explained in terms of aptitude or ability. His comment that adult learners must experience enjoyment in learning and that enjoyment often only occurs after the goal is reached, is pertinent to adults who are self-motivated to study without the structure of a course with its inherent deadlines for assignments and inevitable end. The goal for the early New Zealand missionaries was to bring Christianity and peace to the warrior people who belonged to Aotearoa.

According to Stephen Brookfield (1986), adults are "continually engaged in purposeful learning in familial, interpersonal, community activist, recreational and occupational settings" (p.8). He cites Tough's (1979) claims that adults value formal education over self-directed learning. Credentialism has existed for centuries in one form or another as groups with an information or knowledge advantage have tried to maintain their position of superiority with guilds and associations and secret societies.

Reasons for adults being self-directed are given by Brookfield (1986) as the desire to acquire new knowledge and to purposefully explore a field of knowledge. Zemke and Zemke (1984) believe that adults are motivated to learn (irrespective of the mode) to help them cope with transition when they experience specific life-changing events such as marriage, divorce, a new job, a promotion, being fired, retiring, losing a loved one, moving to a new city. However they note that they are also motivated to seek out a learning experience because they have a use for the knowledge or skill being sought.

In a publication entitled *Self-direction for Lifelong Learning* Philip Candy (1991) explains that an ethos of self-improvement in late eighteenth/early nineteenth century Britain and America led to a wide variety of forms of adult education. Farmers wanted to become more successful economically, philanthropists wanted to pass on cultural benefits to those less fortunate, businessmen needed a better trained workforce, some dreamed of an egalitarian society where everyone could develop their spiritual and creative potential and clergy wanted the people to be able to read the scriptures for themselves. The proponents of self-education maintain that categories such as self-help and self-directed inquiry have been coined to disguise and set apart individual learning as an aberration so as not to displace the hierarchical power of educators.

Moving to the way organisations place barriers in the way of adult learning, Cross (1981, p.104) groups these barriers into five areas: scheduling; inconvenient location or transportation, lack of interesting, practical or relevant courses, time requirements; and lack of information about programs and procedures.

Some interesting observations are made by Finger and Asun (2001); they examine four aspects of Ivan Illich's argument critiquing the institutional monopolisation of core societal functions such as education and health:

Firstly, they identify the process of institutionalisation. Modern society creates more and more institutions; this process undermines people, diminishing their confidence in themselves and in their capacity to solve problems.



Secondly, experts and expertise – an expert culture always calls for more experts, who create institutional barricades by proclaiming themselves gatekeepers and control knowledge production (they decide what legitimate knowledge is)

Thirdly, commodification (Illich was a neo-Marxist). "Education ...becomes an economic commodity which one consumes, or to use common language, which one 'gets'" (Illich, 1996: ix, in Finger & Asun, 2001).

Fourthly, the principle of counterproductivity - a mechanism which turns a fundamentally good process – institutionalisation and organisation– into a counterproductive one. Schools make people more stupid once they reach a certain threshold.

Illich maintains that schools have acquired, or been granted by the state, a monopoly over education. As a result they have managed to make everybody believe that learning can result only from schooling. Knowledge and education then become an economic commodity which one consumes.

This process of institutionalisation is rather perverse – on the one hand, the more sophisticated the educational system becomes, the more people recognise themselves as being unable to learn and in need of formal education. As a result they are no longer able to learn outside the school system. On the other hand, teachers are a particularly vicious species of experts, as they reinforce this process on an ideological level by making everyone believe that they are the only ones entitled to define and certify knowledge and learning. As a result people are supposed to learn only from teachers and within their conceptual and institutional framework.

Illich believes adult education is the alternative to this situation. It is synonymous with learning, as opposed to formal education. In adult education, knowledge is created by the people not for the people. His philosophy of adult education embraces *learning*, as opposed to schooling; *conviviality*, as opposed to manipulation; *responsibilisation*, as opposed to deresponsibilisation; and *participation*, as opposed to control.

The idea of self-directed learners relating as equals to teachers, taking responsibility for their own learning and participating with the teacher in discussing their learning needs and then entering into a contract with the teacher to achieve their learning objectives was developed by Malcolm Knowles (a contract learning approach) in a small book published in 1975 called *Self Directed Learning*. He saw this as part of the practice of andragogy. His work has been criticised by several educators who say that learning *per se* is individualistic, but there is a danger in omitting the social context within which it occurs and the influence that that environment exerts on the learning process (Tennant, 1986, p. 18-20). This is a recurring theme in other key literature.

In particular, Stephen Brookfield has written eight books on adult learning, teaching and critical thinking and is a three-times winner of the Cyril O Houle World Award for Literature in Adult Education. He addresses four major research areas in adult learning, including self-directed learning and critical reflection, in order to explore the claim that adult learning is a discretely separate domain that has little connection to learning in childhood or adolescence.

The first problem in reaching an understanding of adult learning, according to Brookfield, is that there is *no universal understanding* of adult learning. Theory development is weak and blocked by myths (Brookfield, 1992) that suggest that adult learning is inherently joyful, that adults are innately self-directed, that there is a uniquely adult learning process. But Brookfield maintains that variables such as culture, ethnicity, personality and political ethos influence learning more than the age of learners.

He argues that apart from contemplative introspection or meditation, all other forms of cognitive activity involve interaction with external stimuli. Here he quotes Chene (1983, in Brookfield, 1992) who argued that autonomy can only be exhibited once the norms and limits of the learning activity are known, and that autonomy is only possible when learners can make critical judgements on the basis of this knowledge. Brookfield's conclusion is that one can become a superb technician of self-directed learning and yet be unable to question the validity or worthwhileness of one's intellectual pursuit (1986, p. 57). Religious zealots are used as an example of those who are completely unaware of alternative creeds but are skilled in certain technical activities concerned with the design and management of self-instruction.



The second issue he addresses is the work that has been done on self-directed learning and critical reflection. Questions have been raised about

...the political dimension to self-directedness and the need to study how deliberation and serendipity intersect in self-directed learning projects, (Collins, 1988; Candy, 1991; Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991). (Brookfield in A. Tuinjmman (ed.), 1995).

Brookfield looks to developmental psychology for answers about how critical reflection is experienced but blames the uneasy relationship between psychoanalytic and critical social theoretical traditions for the confusion that has resulted in studies on the topic, noting the valuable work of Jack Mezirow (1991) on perspective transformation in this regard. Mezirow's work has been criticised by educators in Canada, New Zealand, Nigeria, and USA for placing too much emphasis on individual transformation (Collard and Law, 1989; Ekpenyong, 1990; Clark and Wilson, 1991).

Brookfield takes a conservative approach to the current belief that experiential learning is the most appropriate for adults, saying that there are pitfalls to watch out for in any reliance on experience because, firstly, it is culturally shaped and, secondly, the experience of some people may have been extensive yet not necessarily worthwhile.

Most adult educators will be aware of two current trends, cross-cultural aspects of adult learning and flexible pathways to learning. There is little literature on cross cultural adult learning, but Brookfield points out that to think of culture as white and non-white is too simplistic. Even within ethnic groups there are tensions and rivalries. We need to examine our own assumptions about adult learning (Brookfield 1986) and allow each culture to teach their own communities. With greater options for learning available through a range of formats, case studies are beginning to materialise to inform practice, focusing on themes of empowerment, critical reflection and collaboration.

Recent significant research and theory on the topic of adult learning, including the context in which it takes place, who the participants are and the development of theory in adult learning have been brought together by Sharan Merriam and Rosemary Caffarella (1991).

They conclude that adult learning is determined by demographics, economics and technology, three forces which are closely entwined with each other. Our aging population is having an effect on the economy with the baby boomers causing a "promotion squeeze" (Cross, 1981, p. 6). In higher education, the student body has aged along with the population. Our fast changing society may be the reason why learning now has to take place in different contexts.

Of course, any discussion on adult education should include a comment on andragogy, a term popularized by Malcolm Knowles over 20 years ago. Knowles (1980) initially developed an argument on the basis of the assumption that the characteristics of adult learners are different from the assumptions about child learners on which traditional pedagogy is based.

Knowles later revised his earlier view, recommending two models that could be used depending on the situation, rather than the age of the learner. The first use of the term "*andragogy*" to catch the widespread attention of adult educators was in 1968, when Knowles, then a professor of adult education at Boston University, introduced the term (then spelled "androgogy") through a journal article. In a 1970 book (a second edition was published in 1980) he defined the term as the art and science of helping adults learn. His thinking had changed to the point that in the 1980 edition he said:

Andragogy is simply another model of assumptions about adult learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions, thereby providing two alternative models for testing out the assumptions as to their "fit" with particular situations. Furthermore, the models are probably most useful when seen not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum, with a realistic assumption (about learners) in a given situation falling in between the two ends (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

Knowles' work has nonetheless been challenged by Stephen Brookfield who believes that the need for a comprehensive theory of adult learning has still not been answered. He says "there can be few intellectual quests that, for educators and trainers of adults, assume so much significance and yet contain so little promise of successful completion as the search for a general theory of adult learning": (Brookfield, 1986, p. 25).

The principal challenge to andragogy is that its statements and assumptions are not effectively backed up with research (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981). Knowles' major assumptions are that:

- adults both desire and enact a tendency toward self-directness as they mature, though they may be dependent in certain situations.<sup>3</sup>
- adults' experiences are a rich resource for learning.
- adults learn more effectively through experiential techniques of education such as discussion or problem-solving.
- adults are aware of specific learning needs generated by real life tasks or problems. Adult education programs, therefore, should be organised around "life application" categories and sequenced according to learners' readiness to learn.
- adults are competency-based learners, because they wish to apply newly acquired skills or knowledge to their immediate circumstances. Adults are, therefore "performance-centered" in their orientation to learning.

(Knowles, 1980, p. 43-44)

These assumptions do not present andragogy as an empirically based theory of learning, painstakingly derived from a series of experiments resulting in generalisations of increasing levels of sophistication, abstraction and applicability (Brookfield, 1986, p. 91).

There have been efforts by researchers in the late eighties to synthesize their findings of adult learning into a central framework of principles, two of the best documented of these being the Principles of Adult Learning Scale devised by Conti and the Andragogy in Practice Inventory designed by Suanmali.

Carl Rogers' "experiential learning" identifies several key basic assumptions. First, that the human being is active and free. Second, that human beings have an inner drive, an intrinsic motivation for self-development. Third, that in a favourable environment all human beings can develop. Thus he advocates an unstructured method of teaching where the teacher's role is that of a facilitator and the student is allowed the freedom to pursue his or her own self-discovered learning activities.

---

<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Allen Tough (1979) examines how adults deliberately engage in self-directed learning projects throughout their lives.

This environment is more therapeutic than the andragogical process established by Malcolm Knowles, who starts with an intrinsic motivation for learning and puts it into a relationship with the ultimate goal of such a process. Knowles would think a facilitator ideal if they considered the learner capable of self-direction and the role of the facilitator that of a resource-person for the self-directed learner. Such a resource person would involve the learner in setting objectives and would develop sequential learning experiences, selecting active techniques and materials to encourage self-inquiry.

In *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (1984), David Kolb agrees that we only learn through continuous experiences and that in so doing we have the capacity to have a here-and-now experience followed by the collection of data and observations about that experience. The data are then analyzed and the conclusions of this analysis are feedback to the actors in the experience for their use in the modification of their behavior and choice of new experiences.

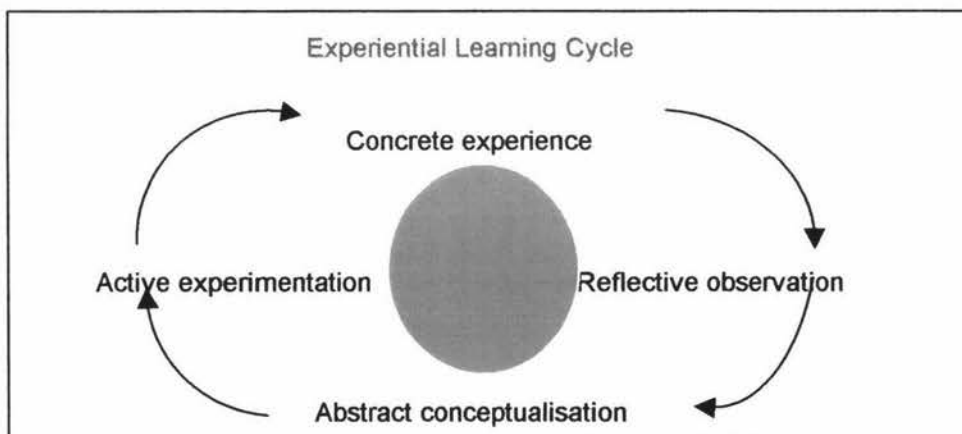


Fig. 1.1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984)

The cycle is based on the belief that an experience such as setting a learning goal and proceeding to study does not guarantee that the person will be able to succeed. All four steps in the learning cycle, says Kolb, are necessary in order to learn. The learner must reflect on the experience, relate it to other situations, make a plan to translate the learning into action, and then critically consider the result. Knowledge, then, is created through the transactions that lead to experiences which occur between the person and his/her environment.

In addition to the foregoing, the literature search located the work of Jack Mezirow (1981) on the role of critical reflection in transformational learning, and that of Roger Hiemstra (1991) on the impact of the learner's race and gender on the learning environment. A common thread in the works of both Paulo Freire (1970) and Mezirow is that the task of adult education is to assist adults to reflect critically on their internalised values, beliefs and assumptions.

The centrality of reflection in the process of moving towards learning from life experience was certainly fostered by Donald Schon's concept of reflective practice, although Schon was only one of many writers promoting the importance of reflective learning in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, Australian learning theorist David Boud actually changed his learning theory to correspond to Schon's. Originally his theories (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985) had incorporated reflection after a learning experience, but he later came to believe in Schon's notion that 'we experience as we reflect, and we reflect as we experience' (Boud and Walker, 1992, p. 167).

Stephen Brookfield (1995) also writes about the capacity of adults for critical reflection but agrees with those who say that much of the research in this area has been carried out on white middle class adults in North America and has excluded Hispanics, Puerto Ricans, native Americans, Blacks and Asians.

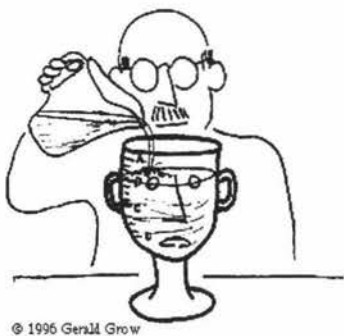
Another theme gaining favour with adult educators is cognition in adulthood and how the social and cultural context may affect the way adults function cognitively. In a paper entitled 'Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning', Brown Collins and Duguid explore the difference between didactic education that assumes a separation between knowing and doing and recent investigations of learning, which maintain that learning and cognition are fundamentally situated, so that situations co-produce knowledge through activity.

Why is this?

Apprentices acquire and develop the tools of their craft through authentic work in their trade. In doing this they enter the culture of their practice. In *A History of Theological*

*Education in New Zealand*, Peter Turner writes that Anglicans used a combination: theological colleges for those who could not go to university, and supervised curacy. Apprenticeship suggests the paradigm of situated modelling, coaching and fading whereby teachers or coaches promote learning, first by making explicit their tacit knowledge or by modelling their strategies for students in authentic activity. Then teachers and colleagues support students' attempts at doing the task and finally, they empower the students to continue independently.

Gerald Grow (1991) has developed a model for teaching learners to be self-directed. His cartoons illustrate the progression:



Learners of low self-direction  
 – taught



Learners of moderate self-direction  
 – moulded



Learners of intermediate self-direction  
 - led



Learners of high self-direction  
 – cultivated

Fig. 1.2

## **Major issues and debates about self-directed learning**

Over the last two decades research into self-directed learning has become more common (Merriam and Caffarella (1991)). The traditional position taken by adult educators is that adult learning is a separate domain from childhood or adolescence. But research into areas that have been proposed as uniquely processes for adult learning – self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning and learning to learn suggest a challenge to this claim.

There is in fact no universal understanding of adult learning. The development of theory is weak and blocked by five persistent myths. Illumination during the current study was assisted by bearing these myths in mind.

The first myth is that learning is inherently joyful for adults. The growing amount of literature on race and gender in adult education suggests that learning has not always brought joy to all groups of adults. The most prevalent trend is a focus on creating learning environments for diverse audiences, including appropriate strategies for teaching and learning.

The second myth is that adults are innately self-directed learners but Brookfield (1986) quotes Chene (1983) who argued that autonomy can only be exhibited once the norms and limits of the learning activity are known. Adult education theories favour the view that adults are field-independent – that is, they are analytical, socially independent, inner-directed and individualistic with a strong sense of self-identity. But Brookfield maintains that such adults are more likely to be found in open, democratic (e.g. White American/Northern European) societies.

The third myth – that good practice education always meets the needs articulated by adults has been challenged by self-directed learning researchers who claim that many adults, who could not succeed if personal responsibility for learning decisions was not possible, enjoy success as self-directed learners (Hiemstra, 1994). In fact, some adults will even achieve in ways they never thought possible when they learn how to take personal responsibility for their learning.



The fourth myth is that there is a uniquely adult learning process. A strong case is now being made that other variables are more significant than age.

The fifth myth is that there is a uniquely adult form of educational practice. Research into self-directed learning (which concentrates on the process by which adults control their learning) questions the quality of such learning and the breadth of the sample studied, as well as the wider social and political forces that may influence self-directedness (Collins, 1988; Candy, 1990). The research questions whether self-directedness is culturally learned or a personality matter and questions whether politics influence the decision to be self-directed. An Australian study on lifelong learning shows that to assist students to become effective self-directed learners, tertiary institutions need to incorporate the development and promotion of lifelong learning attributes into their programmes (Lifelong Learning Campus Review, July 25-31, 2001).

Recent studies have shown the importance of lifelong learning for today's workforce.<sup>4</sup> The 1999 European Conference on Lifelong Learning reported that a number of common threads had emerged. An attempt to summarise these threads follows.

The first is a tension between the underlying principles and origins of self-directed learning and the newer concept of lifelong learning. While all the terminology requires interpretation, it is generally felt that self-directed learning has its origins in adult education and has as an ethos an idea of choice, self-enlightenment and empowerment. On the other hand the idea of lifelong learning is often used in a prescriptive and pejorative way with regard to employability.

A second issue is where and how learning takes place. It is usually agreed that learning may take place in a range of circumstances, and that the workplace offers potential for learning. However it is also recognised that opportunity alone does not lead to learning. Motivation is an important factor, as is reflection.

A further issue is the role that various actors and social partners play in promoting self-directed learning. In particular there is debate as to what role the state should play in

---

<sup>4</sup> Lifelong learning refers to the individual's motivation and capability to continue learning throughout life.



supporting self-directed learning and what forms effective support could take. Do employers have responsibility for facilitating learning and is there a need for legislation to determine that support? If employers, or for that matter, governments are involved in funding self-directed learning, should they have a say in the subject matter of that learning?

A fourth debate is the interface between the education and training systems and self-directed learning. In particular, what are the competencies needed by individuals to undertake self-directed learning and could and should these skills be learnt at school?

The final theme is how to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of self-directed learning. Current evaluation is not rigorous and nor are the tools effective in measuring self-directed learning. This debate overlaps with the earlier one on how to define self-directed learning and what is the purpose and ethos of self-directed learning.

*"Education Permanente"*<sup>5</sup> differs from traditional education in three significant areas. Firstly, traditional education is elitist, theoretical and abstract, and removed from experience (i.e. artificially divided into distinct subjects); while Education Permanente is education for all, education which is popular, without selection or barriers, close to reality and experience. Secondly, traditional education is conservative, inequitable and perpetuates authoritarian teacher-student relationships, while Education Permanente encourages a democratic teaching relationship. Thirdly, traditional education perpetuates the split between rationality and creativity while Education Permanente criticises the split.

The key philosophical ideas of Education Permanente are that education is no longer limited to a particular period of one's life, and encompasses formal, non-formal and informal educational activities. Life is the main source of learning; education is for all; learning has no limits; all that counts is the will to learn (a flexible and dynamic approach); process is more important than content. Education improves one's quality of life as one adapts to change and participates in change. It is a social movement, as opposed to one that perpetuates the status quo.

---

<sup>5</sup> Fr. For lifelong learning – a buzz word in the educational world.

The main challenge of Education Permanente is that it sets out to humanise development without questioning it, and does so in a very Western way. Unlike Illich, it does not criticise institutions, is weak in terms of epistemology and pedagogy – not rooted in any social science, but rather in some ideological Western assumptions. It confuses education and learning, emphasising individualisation of learning, but stressing group work, participation and societal change.

### **Political standpoints**

The great advocate for lifelong learning, Charles D. Hayes (1998), founder of the Autodidactic Press, is dedicated to two propositions:

- 1        That lifelong learning is fundamental to living a full and interesting life.
- 2        That the learning necessary to gain competence in a job or career is far, far more important than *how* or *where* it is acquired.

Hayes (1998) says "autodidactic means self-educated" and gives a definition for the adjective "self-educated" – educated or trained by oneself, with little or no formal schooling. He argues that it is a recent phenomenon that the most intellectually and financially rewarding job opportunities are only available to the formally educated, but reminds us of some well-known self-educated personalities from recent history – Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Bill Gates.

Since 1949 UNESCO has organised five international conferences on adult education. With Education Permanente it has finally found its long sought-after specific place within the UN system. The core idea is quite simple: to create a society where everybody is learning all the time. It is an institutional movement, perhaps a discourse on social change, but not pedagogy. It answers four societal challenges:

- 1        cultural reproduction – the question of ensuring cultural continuity while facing accelerating development and change. UNESCO's position is that education's task is to help society keep up with change.

- 2 science and technology – Education Permanente's answer is that education and more education will ensure that we integrate these components into society
- 3 information explosion – Education Permanente's answer to making sense of quantities of information is through more education
- 4 political control – both people and entire societies will be empowered by more education.

Adult learning studies have provided us with some insights – first, the need to examine our assumptions about adult learning and second, that ethnic peoples do best when they are educated by their own.

Patterns are understood by practical theorising. Conversations and/or peer mentoring enable comparisons with colleagues' behaviours. Viewing through formal theory gives multiple perspectives and confirms one's own practice.

Significant adult education now occurs through distance education. It may be in weekend workshops, through the multi media, or by satellite.

### **Areas for further research**

Stephen Brookfield identifies ten issues to be addressed if research on adult learning is to have a greater influence on the conduct of adult education. Firstly, educators need to agree on a clear definition of the term "learning". Is "learning" behavioural change or cognitive development? Verner (1964) and Little (1979) in Brookfield (1986) argue that the term "learning" is confusing when used by different writers as a noun and a verb. They say that only the noun should be used to describe an internal change in consciousness, therefore "learning" should be reserved for internal mental change (external signs observed would be permanent behavioural change). They also say that the term "education" should be reserved for the process of managing external conditions that facilitate learning ("self-education" is the act of setting learning goals, locating appropriate resources, devising learning strategies and evaluating progress).

Secondly, there needs to be an understanding about how adults learn about their own emotional selves.

Thirdly, we need to understand adult learning more as a social construct of adult learning (Jarvis, 1987). Studies need to establish how adults use social networks and peer support groups, whether self-directed learning works against co-operation and is in fact a narcissistic pursuit of private ends with disregard to the consequences of this for others and for wider cultural interests. Adult learning is not wholly autonomous – there is a need to understand it as socially constructed. A number of important questions remain, says Brookfield, regarding our understanding of self-direction as a defining concept for adult learning. More knowledge is needed about how adults use social networks and peer support groups for educational guidance.

The cross-cultural dimension has virtually been ignored. It is simplistic to say that cultural diversity is white and non-white. We need more cross-cultural perspectives and intercultural differences. How different are the cultures in New Zealand? Here, Maori, Pacific Islanders, and Asians have points of tension. Within these cultures are rivalries between tribal groups, island groups, cultural groups, geographical groups and political groups. Insights into diverse cultures show that ethnic peoples do best when they are educated by their own.

Furthermore –

- There is a further need for exploration into the role played by gender in learning. Work carried out recently on gender has been critical of the patriarchal values reflected in the ideal of the self-directed learner
- a broader focus in instrumental skill development studies to encompass spiritual and significant personal learning
- more credibility should be given to adults' own descriptions of how they experience learning from the "inside"
- more emphasis on the value of qualitative studies of adult learning as compared to survey questionnaires or research through experimental designs
- much more integration of the research on adult learning with research on adult development and adult cognition. We do not know enough about the effects of

previous experiences (or the political ethos of the time) on the decision to be independent as a learner.

Further work is needed to understand the connections between adult learning and learning in childhood and adolescence. Studies in adult learning need to examine assumptions made about adult learners. It is often spoken about by educators of adults as if it had little to do with learning in childhood or adolescence. However, a closer examination of the plethora of literature on adult learning shows that there is in fact no universal understanding of adult learning. Myths abound that hinder the development of theory, claims Brookfield (1992) also maintaining that learning is influenced more by variables other than age (pp. 1-7).

Researchers of critical reflection as a dimension of adult learning have a lot more to do also. For example there needs to be a language that describes the process to educators, a language more accessible than the psychoanalytic and critical theory terminology.

The He Tangata Report of 1987 specified that "the essential element which distinguishes non-formal from formal education is that non-formal groups control their own learning independently of imposed curricula, of outside professionals or of institutions" (Tobias 1987). But what is a non-formal group? What is meant by control? What is an outside professional? Is non-formal learning the same as non-formal education?

The Hawke Report (1988) did not use the term non-formal learning, and defined non-formal education as structured learning opportunities in which groups control their own learning, independently of imposed curricula. Such a definition, says Tobias, does not preclude the possibility of professional and institutional involvement in non-formal education.

In a publication about library services, Raymond Fisher (1988) concludes that too many library users have a narrow view of the role of public libraries and there is a need to raise the awareness of library staff of the full dimensions of independent learning, and to publicise more widely the help they can give to adult learners of all kinds. Fisher's solution is to make people aware of the range of bibliographic sources and tools available, teach them how to use them effectively, offer assistance to users, encourage them to use new

technology (posters could provide information with basic instruction) and make a distinction between beginner/enthusiast/specialist-expert.

The twenty-first century libraries of polytechnics and universities in Auckland do provide training sessions, and training for librarians now includes sessions on presentation and teaching techniques.

Other issues to be addressed in future research are the types of populations studied (Brookfield, 1984, 1985) and the data collection technique.

Although other types of groups have been studied, verification studies (verifying the existence of self-directed learning as a form of study) have focused on the middle classes. Even so, there is sparse reporting on the socioeconomic status and ethnicity of the subjects in the study.

In his research into the learning projects of adults, Allan Tough (1979) arrived at the notion that most adults spend seven hundred hours each year in deliberate self-planned learning projects. Cross (1977) also drew conclusions about the learning efforts of adults: "Almost every adult undertakes some sort of learning ... each year, with the number of activities falling between three and thirteen". Criticism has been leveled at the instruments used (Brockett, 1985; Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Field, 1989; Landers, 1989) in the research about self-directedness, in that they have the potential to contaminate the findings.

The outcome of these criticisms is that future research to verify the existence of self-directed learning as a form of study should endeavour to include greater diversity in the subjects and represent a range of cultural groups. Then the study should be compared with the earlier studies on highly educated females. Variations of the interview schedule should be used to collect data, e.g. learning diaries, conversational interviews (Brookfield, 1981) and standardized instruments, should be explored. Again the studies should be compared.

One framework for studying self-directed learning is that which has been carried out as a form of study. In this the initiative is taken by people involved in self-education, for planning, conducting and evaluating their own learning activities (Knowles, 1975). In *The*



*Adults Learning Projects*, Allen Tough (1979) describes this type of self-directed learning as a "series of related episodes, adding up to at least seven hours" (p. 7).

Wider study needs to include spiritual and personal learning. How do adults feel their way through learning? More recognition needs to be given to qualitative studies. More integration is needed between adult learning/adult development/adult cognition. More links should be made to childhood and adolescence.

## **Conclusion**

Themes of relevance to the study that have emerged from the literature are as follows.

First: adults are self-directed (Knowles, 1980) and are continually engaged in purposeful learning (Brookfield, 1986), but whether they are technicians of self-directed learning or merely able to design and manage their self-instruction is a question to be explored (Brookfield, 1992). It may be necessary to view adults as having degrees of self-direction from low self-direction where they need to be taught, to high self-direction where they merely need occasional cultivation (Grow, 1991).

Second: learning occurs when adults are motivated by having control over their learning, when the learning is practical, and when assessment is by self-evaluation (Rogers, 1969). However, learning is only meaningful when an experience is reflected upon, linked to other situations, action is taken to test the learning and the outcome evaluated (Kolb, 1984). Reflection may be multi-directional as Donald Schon suggests – we experience as we reflect and we reflect as we experience (Boud and Walker, 1992).

Third: It is possible that deliberation and serendipity intersect in the learning projects of adults (Collins, 1988; Candy, 1991; Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991), but all adults can develop given the right environment, where the human being is active and free and has an inner drive for self-development (Rogers, 1969).

Fourth: The inconvenience of schedules, location, lack of relevant courses and social context may influence adults when choosing whether to involve themselves in formal or self-directed learning (Cross, 1981; Illich, 1986; Tennant, 1986).

Fifth: Three closely linked forces - demographics, economics and technology – determine the context in which adult education takes place (Merriam and Caffarella, 1991).

This study attempted to investigate these themes which were developed into research questions as outlined in the following chapter.



---

## Chapter 3 Methodology

---

### Introduction

The research was a case study of the pattern and contributions of teachers of theology in New Zealand who had opted to direct their own learning away from the support of an accredited institution. This chapter outlines the features and usefulness of the research design and methodology developed. The purpose of the study was to identify the motivations, credibility and effectiveness of such self-education during an era of high credentialism.

In addition, to enable the readers of this research report to judge whether the knowledge claim contained herein is valid, the chapter will endeavour to provide some justification on the basis of how the claim was made.

The literature review sought to place the study in the context of adult education in general and self-directed learning in particular in order to examine the learning of the participants from the perspectives of current educational theory and practice. From the themes that emerged the research questions were constructed in order to facilitate the investigation into self-educated theologians in New Zealand:

- 1     What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?
- 2     To what extent are the motivators different according to personal characteristics (e.g. age, marital status, educational background, studying alone or with assistance from a mentor)?
- 3     To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?
- 4     Do non-traditional models of education attract older people more than younger?

- 5 Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?
- 6 What general subject categories attract theologians?
- 7 Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?
- 8 Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?

The methods used to investigate these questions are discussed later in this chapter.

### **Approach to the research**

In New Zealand instances of educational case study research are relatively recent and although some may link the case study with special education and the evaluation of individuals in a remedial setting, the method can be used in quite different ways. Examples are:

- Gender, the hidden agenda: A case study in educational decision making (Cocklin & Battersby, 1987).
- The accuracy of teachers' predictions of pupils' marks in School Certificate' - a quantitatively based case study (McCausland & Hall, 1985).
- Decision at Waihi: New Zealand's flag-saluting case of 1941 and its present-day significance' - a historical case study (Openshaw, 1984).
- Family Strategies of Cultural Reproduction: Case Studies in the Schooling of Girls' – a study which uses primarily in-depth interviewing (Middleton, 1985).
- Tikipunga experiment: a case study in modular learning: developing a qualifications framework in New Zealand (NZQA, 1992).

Judith Bell (1999, p.10) comments that the case study approach is "particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale". In this instance, the issue was whether individuals studying on their own are able to access levels of learning that equate to the learning that occurs in higher education courses offered by theological institutions or universities. The time scale was limited by the constraints of a post graduate programme. The bounding of the study to persons with a desire to teach or write on theological topics was necessary because all the information was to be gathered by a

single researcher, so the area for study and presentation in the final report had to be carefully selected.

Case study methodology can be used as a creative alternative to traditional approaches to description, emphasizing the individual's perspective as central to the process. Contemporary researchers have come to appreciate the individual richness of people recounting their experience and the meanings implicit in them to help guide future practice. My desire is to share a useful research methodology with other adult educators.

### **Defining case study method**

There are many definitions of case study method. Stake (1996, p. 236) says it is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used. Data in case study research come largely from documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artefacts (Yin, 1994). Case studies of individuals often involve in-depth interviews with participants and key informants; observation; excerpts from personal writings and diaries. When the unit of analysis is an individual, as it was in the current study, an important concept to consider is life history. Stake (1995) maintains that the case study researcher may be somewhat of a biographer focused on a phase or segment of the life of an individual.

The case study design must have five components (Yin, 1994): the research question(s), its propositions, its unit(s) of analysis, a determination of how the data are linked to the propositions, and criteria to interpret the findings.

Stake (1995) emphasises that the number and type of cases studied depend upon the purpose of the inquiry: a collective case study is the study of a number of cases in order to inquire into a particular phenomenon, similar to the present study. He recognises that there are many other types of case studies based on their specific purpose, such as the teaching case study or the biography.

In order to generate meaning from the data, the tactics described by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 245-246) were considered. Those underscored in Table 3.1 were used in the case study currently being described.

<b>What Goes with What</b>	<u>Noting Patterns</u> Clustering Seeing Plausibility
<b>What's There</b>	Making Metaphors Counting
<b>Sharpen our Understanding</b>	<u>Making Comparisons</u> Partitioning Variables
<b>See Things and Their Relationships More Abstractly</b>	Subsuming Particulars Into the General Factoring <u>Noting Relations Between Variables</u> Finding Intervening Variables
<b>Assemble a Coherent Understanding of the Data</b>	<u>Building a Logical Chain of Evidence</u> <u>Making Conceptual/Theoretical</u> <u>Coherence</u>

Table 3.1 Strategies Used to Generate Meaning (Adapted from Miles and Huberman, 1994)

As part of the case study protocol, Yin (1994) suggests that the set of case study questions are the heart of the method. The main function of questions is to keep the researcher focused and on track. In the study presented here, the interview questions were used as a script for moving the interviewer closer to eliciting experience and meaning from participants in each interview. The interview questions were loosely structured, following the intent of the research questions (Appendix 5).

Generalisation of case study findings is limited to the case itself or types of cases. Nevertheless, attention to selected details enhances the analysis and increases clarity of reasoning. Some general techniques are mentioned here that have been useful in focusing this analysis. According to Yin (1994), analysis hinges on linking the data to the propositions and explicating the criteria by which findings are to be interpreted. While generalisation may limit the use of case study method by some social scientists, Yin (1984) argues that theoretical generalisation is to the domain of case study, what statistical generalisation is to the true experiment.

The stand taken by Stake (1978) focuses on context-specific generalisation. This approach resonates with the readers' tacit knowledge, and helps people to make connections without the benefit of words. Both Stake and Yin have devised analytic techniques that have informed this case study design and analysis.

In this study, multiple cases were studied, analysed and conclusions drawn to increase the extent to which generalisability was possible. There were a number of similarities and common experiences. The cases studied have the potential to be generalisable to other situations. Having said that, a postmodern perspective justifies an examination of the contemporary condition of adult education, that is, that individuals have different starting points and different end goals, the "anything goes" view.

Cross-checking information was difficult and admittedly increased the risk of distortion. Critics of case study method highlight this and the fact that generalisation of the findings from the case study is limited to the similarity of this to other case studies (Denscombe, 1998, pp. 36-7 in Bell, 1999). Yin (1994, p.137) points out that case studies stand a better chance of staying within reasonable limits if they contain specific propositions. In this respect, the proposal was to explore the effectiveness of self-education in the context of teachers of theology in New Zealand religious institutions in the period from 1980 to the present. The term "self-education" is used here in the sense of informal independent learning.

One of the weaknesses of case study research is the influence of bias on the design of a study. Subjects may not be equally credible; some may be previously influenced in a way that affects the outcome of the study. Background information necessary to interpret the data may be missing. The subject (or sources) may not be representative of the larger population in question. These factors are acknowledged as a reality in this study.

Anderson (1988, p.154) cites defining the case as a difficulty in case study research. He says that the researcher should have a clear vision of what the case is and that the choice of a case implies knowledge of some interesting issue or feature and that sets the parameters for the "why" question and permits the researcher to set the boundaries. For this researcher, interest was initially sparked because her own father was a man with no credentials, leaving school at the age of twelve to help on the family farm, yet throughout his life he remained well-informed on a wide range of subjects. With a preference for theology, he spent fifty years of his life reading, teaching and debating the complexities of biblical topics.

Furthermore, the researcher herself spent three years studying theology in a formal institution. Over the three years, topics studied included New Testament Greek, Exegesis, Ethics, Church History, Contemporary Theology, Systematic Theology, Missions and Homiletics. It is difficult to gauge whether the issue of who she is as a person influenced interpretation of the data gathered from participants.

Because the researcher has taken a postmodern perspective on the study, it is pertinent to outline some of its key features, and to explore the nature of knowledge. This aspect has particular significance for the second objective of the research; that is, to examine the relevance (to the needs of learners) of current adult education theory.

### **Features of post modernity**

The foundation of post modernity is said to be the change from knower to consumer of knowledge (Usher, Bryant and Johnston, 1997). Knowledge becomes something which can be produced (by educational researchers) or consumed (by teachers and learners), (Clark, 1997). The emphasis is less on universal truth than on localised knowledge. The knowledge explored in this research exercise was the effectiveness of the learning conducted by individuals who studied without the structure, authority and guidance of an educational institution or the support of a community group.

Changing paradigms resulting from the move away from mass production to service-sector employment has clearly affected adult education. The transformation of the work-place into a place of learning is a result of the current trend (Usher et al, 1997, p. 2). Adults need to carry on learning beyond formal schooling so that they can function effectively at work and in their communities. Some learning is undertaken in formal settings, other opportunities are provided by industry and business organisations, or may occur in places such as churches, hospitals, fire stations or military bases.

Postmodernism is increasingly being embraced by researchers working in the field of education, despite there being no definitive interpretation of what it involves. To quote Hargreaves (1994, as cited in Packwood and Sikes, 1996), "the position involves denying the existence of foundational knowledge on the grounds that no knowable social reality exists...". Consequently this study involved putting aside prejudices the researcher may



have developed during almost thirty years of teaching in formal institutions in order to listen to stories about the participants' experiences as self-directed learners.

From a postmodern perspective there is no final knowledge, its purpose is to deconstruct what people are saying. The experience of the researcher has been that people are saying different relevant things about their learning depending on the factors that significantly influence them – there is no absolute relativity, "anything goes".

A recent essay suggests that "a moment of high postmodernism dominant in the sixties, seventies and eighties" has been replaced by *late postmodernism* and *other than postmodern-ism* (Palmeri, 2001). The late works of Foucault (*Madness and Civilisation*, 1961) and Pynchon (*V*, 1963) see humans less as automata, and more as beings with a certain capacity for effective action, self-discipline and self-control. During the course of the interviews for this research, the researcher was continually struck by the clarity of the subjects' intentions with regard to their decision to study theology outside of educational institutions. They were individuals for whom self-discipline was inherent and self-control a driving force.

Table 3.2 presents questions about the nature of reality and ways of conducting research. These questions are answered by a set of postulates that make a claim for a way of conducting research. The table, adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985), shows some major differences between positivism and postmodernism.

The educational research community has gained new forms of social inquiry through postmodernism. A form such as storytelling conflicts with more traditional approaches. In a chapter titled *How to Destroy Lives by Telling Stories*, Burton Blatt (1987, p. 142) warns that individuals have different starting points and end goals. Some stories enhance life, others degrade it. He says "the storyteller holds a certain power (and responsibility)" and "we must be careful about the stories we tell, the ways we define ourselves and other people".

Questions	Postulates of the positivist approach (quantitative)	Postulates of the postmodern approach (qualitative)
1 How does the world work?	Reality is one. By carefully dividing and studying its parts, the whole can be understood.	No knowable social reality exists beyond the signs of language. Scientific knowledge exists in addition to narrative knowledge.
2 What is the relationship between the knower and the known?	The knower can stand outside of what is to be known. True objectivity is possible.	The knower becomes a consumer of knowledge.
3 What role do values play in understanding the world?	Values can be suspended in order to understand.	Researchers are not value-neutral, but value-explicit. The social world is examined from a variety of perspectives, such as class, race, gender, culture, religion.
4 Are causal linkages possible?	One event comes before another event and can be said to cause that event.	Past, present and future are an evolutionary dynamic, which are coherent and meaningful.
5 What is the possibility of generalisation?	Explanations from one time and place can be generalised to other times and places.	The contemporary condition is explained through the discourses of voices previously excluded.
6 What does research contribute to knowledge?	Verification or proof of propositions is sought.	Postmodern science produces the unknown.

Table 3.2 Postulates of the research paradigms. Adapted from Lincoln and Guba, 1985.

Recently social science has been used to explain human behaviour, but studies have faced two conflicting views of social reality. The positivist approach, which assumes the social world is imposed upon the individual, and that humans respond mechanically to their environment, is one view. The other side assumes that social reality is created by one's own mind, and that humans initiate their own actions. The interpretation of the stories in the current study assumes the second premise.

In the 1982 movie *Blade Runner* it is intentions and feelings that make the difference between humans and humanoids. Taking a postmodern perspective involves an encounter with experiences and ideas that challenge accepted ways of thinking and doing, and provide new ways of seeing. It may not compare well with positivism in terms of precision, but its scope is greater.



Another debate has been waged between the advocates of qualitative and quantitative research. A qualitative research methodology compares the characteristics of one educational entity with another. The choice of method depends on the nature of the question, and sometimes both are necessary (Thomas, 1998). In this study the question “How effective is self-education compared to formal education?” sought illumination from comparison of a small sample of self-educated theologians.

**Research methodology**

The research sought to discover the perceptions of participants on what motivates them to develop a program of learning and how appropriate support systems could be developed. An interview approach was identified as the most appropriate method and the following (pseudonyms) participated in the interviews:

<u>Primary interviewees</u>				<u>Secondary interviewees</u>	
i	Allan	vi	Frank	xi	Gavin
ii	Bob	vii	Lloyd	xii	Wiremu
iii	Chris	viii	Maxine	xiii	Isobel
iv	Don	ix	Nigel	xiv	John
v	Eric	x	Sandy	xv	Katherine

**Selecting the sample**

The research question limited the population to be investigated to self-educated theologians. New Zealand has examples of self-taught people in many fields but time and the need to focus on academic study prevented the use of random sampling.

Bouma (1996) says that it is important to remember that “the manner in which the sample is drawn determines to what extent we can generalise from the findings”. He goes on to say that “if the sample studied is not representative of the larger population the conclusions drawn from the research must be limited to the sample studied”.

Efforts were made to select a sample that was as representative of the particular population as possible. However, it became increasingly difficult to find subjects that were suitable. A list was drawn up and discussed with my supervisor. Of the original list, it was found that some had died, one had Alzheimer's disease, and others declined on the basis that they were too busy, about to go overseas, or had recently earned a degree in theology.

## **Ethical approval**

As face-to-face involvement with human subjects was required ethical approval was necessary. This was obtained through Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Appendix 1). Potential ethical concerns were the risk that information normally confidential to the researcher and themselves will be recorded on audio-tape and that the research could be linked to the participants. To avoid this, the tapes have been secured in a locked cabinet and pseudonyms have been used.

## **Data Collection**

The methodology used for the study consisted of several phases of data accumulation including the telephone contact with the theologians and secondary sources, the interviews, and the transcripts of primary and secondary interviews.

### *Telephone contact*

The initial procedure was to identify and contact self-educated theologians. The first contact with each person was by telephone, using the list which had been compiled from personal knowledge of individuals and names suggested by my supervisor and other acquaintances. The purpose of the telephone contact was to:

- determine whether the contact was, in fact, self-educated in regard to theology
- request individuals to participate in interviews planned at a later date
- ascertain whether the individual was prepared to complete a questionnaire prior to the interview.

Consent to be interviewed was sought in June 2001. Participants were then posted or emailed copies of the consent form and questionnaire to complete and return, and an information sheet (Appendix 5) outlining the purpose of the research.

### *Face-to-face Interviews*

Interviews conducted during the research proceeded along a line of questioning that led to information about the extent to which the participants had developed higher order thinking skills.

One of these thinking skills, reflective practice, occurs when we focus on the values that underlie our practice. It is being open to self-criticism, being an active life-long learner as compared with a passive recipient of learning. The individuals interviewed tended to view their experiences with formal education as surface learning and their independent studies as deep learning. In the words of one respondent:

I can remember a certain incident at university; they were teaching me about substances in physics that didn't exist. And they were teaching me about how these substances react with other substances that don't exist. And I thought, well that's a real useful tool to know. I'm going to benefit from this greatly, so I really lost interest straight away.

Another of the respondents made the following observation:

I think that's one of the things that self-education does. It allows you to synthesise, which is the same thing as lateral thinking, its relating seemingly surface unrelated issues to draw out a third issue from it, um, and I think that's one of the things that happens because you tend to do it, a bit on your own, and apart from that I found (organization deleted) a huge disappointment.

Bell (1984, p. 177) identifies a major advantage of interviewing as its adaptability. Personal interviewing was chosen here as an appropriate method for attempting to draw from interviewees the understanding of and approaches to self-education as related to

academic study, because the interviews could be adapted to the specific backgrounds of each subject. For example, the advantage of the focused interviews was that a framework was established and this simplified analysis greatly.

Once the final list of participants had been established, a schedule of interviews was set up at the participants' place of work or home. Initial scheduling problems encountered in arranging interview meetings for this project included:

- Unavailability of participants at times suitable to the researcher
- Conflicts in scheduling and availability at the participants' locations
- Distance of participants from the researcher
- Lack of opportunity to visit the city of the participant due to distance.

Between June 2001 and May 2002, a total of fifteen interview sessions were held throughout New Zealand with ten primary respondents and five secondary respondents.

Participants identified in i to v above were invited to participate in a semi structured interview during the second half of 2001. Those identified in vi to x were invited to participate in early 2002 (Appendix 2). All responded positively and the interviews were completed using an interview schedule (Appendix 6).

Thomas (1998) talks about the way technological advances, like the internet and the worldwide web, have increased the researcher's ability to gather data from a distance.

In two cases, interview questions had to be asked by email over the period of a week due to the fact that the participants were situated overseas at the time of the research. This worked very well and the responses were more concise than was the case with the conversational interviews, perhaps because the participants were able to edit their responses prior to sending them. However the opportunity for the researcher to read body language along with the conversations was negated by the methodology.

Transcripts were returned to each interviewee requesting alterations to be made and the scripts returned to the researcher. Those identified in xi to xv above participated in a semi structured interview, during 2001, using an interview schedule (Appendix 7).

## Questions

Youngman (1986, in Bell, 1999, p. 119) lists seven question types: verbal or open, list, category, ranking, scale, quantity and grid. The study used verbal/open interview questions and both list and open questions in the questionnaires. Respondents were encouraged to give their own views on the topic being researched.

Although Youngman accepts that responses to verbal questions can produce useful information, his criticism is that analysis can present problems. Certainly the coding of data was made much more difficult because of the narrative style of the responses. Further difficulties in posing questions are noted by Bell (1999, p. 121), who warns beginning researchers that questions may mean one thing to the researcher and another to the respondent. The following example of this occurred in the current research, when the researcher asked this question:

How do you learn about your emotional self, making meaning via your emotions –  
how do you think that can happen?

The objective was to draw out ways by which the respondent experienced the making of meaning from their independent study. The first respondent, however, interpreted the question from a teaching perspective and answered:

I think it's the style of what people are.

Another respondent interpreted the question like this:

...whether carpentry or ministry the way, the best highest call of learning is with a system where you've got hands-on, doing it, not sitting in a sterile environment listening to all the theory of it.

The question needed to be worded more precisely so that it meant the same to all respondents.

Another of the difficulties noted by Bell (1999, p. 122) relates to the ability of respondents to remember events that may have occurred ten to twenty years earlier. She suggests that a list which can be ticked would ensure that the main information needed was covered. A questionnaire (Appendix 4) was completed by all respondents. This was administered during the weeks leading up to the interview so that perceptions were identified before interviews commenced. The questionnaire used in the current study endeavoured to establish the level of education each respondent had experienced and a list was designed to overcome these tricks of memory: The excerpt below illustrates the "list" type of question used:

<b>2</b>	<b>Education</b>
a	Secondary school completed 19 .. (please complete)
b	Highest educational qualification _____
c	Tertiary studies Years full-time _____ Years part-time _____

Qualitative researchers doubt whether social "facts" exist and whether a "scientific" approach can be used when dealing with human beings, yet there are occasions when qualitative researchers draw on quantitative techniques and vice versa. In her guide for first-time researchers in education and social science, Bell (1993) points out that a study making use of a questionnaire will inevitably be quantitative, but it may also have qualitative features, and that whatever the method it should always be examined critically to assess its reliability and validity. The preliminary questionnaire sent to participants contained a mix of questions, some of which could be used quantitatively:

**PART A**

1

Age range:

(please tick)

20-30 years

☐

30-40 years

☐

40-50 years

☐

over 50 years

☐

2

Education

a

Secondary school completed 19 ..

(please complete)

b

Highest educational qualification

---

c

Tertiary studies

Years full-time \_\_\_\_\_

Years part-time \_\_\_\_\_

3

Work Experience

a

Number of years in employment

\_\_\_\_\_

b

Type of post-school employment

---



---



---

c

Number of years teaching theology

\_\_\_\_\_

Fig 3.2

A specific line of questioning was outlined for the interviews. Appendix 6 contains the question outline used to guide discussion at the ten primary interviews. Appendix 7 contains the questions used to guide discussion at the five secondary interviews. These lists of questions were provided to participants in advance of the interviews. The intent was not to limit the answers of the participants to these questions but to provide a

semi-structured, guided discussion allowing for participants to elaborate on areas of special interest during the sessions. The open nature of the questions provided initial focus and a broad framework, while still allowing the participants flexibility in their responses. This approach is consistent with a grounded theory methodology (Glasser & Strauss, 1965) of qualitative research which uses answers to directed questions but also allows the discovery of new directions of inquiry identified as interest areas by the participants. The two broad objectives which directed the focus of this study were:

- 1 to determine whether there has been a pattern of *self-educated* theologians in New Zealand who have made a significant contribution to teaching and perhaps to theological publications
- 2 to ascertain whether current educational theory and practice, particularly as it relates to flexible delivery and on-line learning, is relevant to the needs of learners

In-depth questioning of the learning experiences of the participants proved that confusion exists as to what self-education is. Hiemstra (1994) notes that many related concepts are often used interchangeably or in similar ways. Examples include self-directed learning, self-planned learning, learning projects, self-education, self-teaching, autonomous learning, autodidaxy, independent study, and open learning. In this study self-education and self-directed learning have been taken to refer to a form of study in which individuals have primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and even evaluating their efforts. Specific areas of inquiry which identified practical aspects of implementing independent learning programmes were drawn from initial discussions. The directed questions were as follows:

- Subject Choice: What did you hope to achieve from your theological studies?
- Planning: How did you expect to be able to do these things?
- Support: What communication channels did you have with other self-educated theologians?
- Motivation: What primarily motivated you to educate yourself?
- Guidance: Did you educate yourself with or without the assistance of a mentor?



## **Bias**

The researcher was aware of the danger of bias creeping into the interviews, and acknowledges the risk of extracting answers that support her own preconceived ideas. Qualifications in polytechnics, whether gained by formal or experiential means, are currently seen to be a valued pursuit in the sector. Consequently the researcher became aware of the fact that it was possible to look for responses that would confirm a personal view of what should constitute quality education. A positive attempt was made throughout the project to avoid bias. Care was taken to ensure that the interview schedule did not contain leading questions which would influence the responses. The proposed schedule was initially discussed with my supervisor and adjustments made where necessary.

## **Participation**

Of the ten primary respondents, five had undertaken some formal education in another field; three had completed an apprenticeship for a trade. Of the five who had not had any formal academic education outside of secondary school

- 1 had never entered a structured course
- 1 had begun a short course but had gone overseas within the first few months of it
- 1 had been granted an honorary degree in theology
- 1 had entered a distance learning course in theology at one time
- 1 was unable to be considered in the final analysis due to withdrawal from the project.

Of the five secondary respondents

- 2 were overly eager to participate but were almost certainly biased in their views
- 1 provided only limited information and was unwilling to be further involved.

A total of 14 individuals provided input into the study.

The interviews were very time consuming, particularly when one includes traveling time and delays caused by respondents arriving home late, as well as unexpected interruptions during the interviews. In addition, extensive time is required in going through the interview

notes, transcribing the tapes or getting them transcribed, checking the transcription, returning it to the respondent to check, and awaiting their confirmation that they are satisfied with the content.

## **Data Analysis**

Two primary methods were used to compile and analyse the data from the interviews. In the first method the audio tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed and the narrative results entered into a qualitative research computer software programme. This software enabled the researcher to code the data, build code frameworks, sort information into categories, and structure specific search analyses to determine patterns important in this research. As the data was processed a large amount of information was generated. A qualitative software programme greatly enhanced the ability to analyse a broad base of data including interviews and transcripts from the two groups of respondents.

The second method was a systematic reading and review by the researcher of the transcripts, notes and observations from the interviews. This data included notations on verbal emphasis by participants and visual impressions not reflected in the transcript data. This method also provided confirmation of computer information and refinement or addition of data codes.

Appendix 10 shows the coding scheme used for this research. The coding was based initially on the questioning guidelines used in the interview outline. Additional codes were added as the data was compiled, reflecting other concerns expressed by the participants. Each code listed has a corresponding description for that code.

## **Conclusion**

The research design and methodology developed have incorporated eight research questions which emerged from the themes in the literature review. Because the study focused on a particular aspect of the individual participants' lives, a collective case study methodology was used. Narratives were interpreted on the assumption that the individuals involved had initiated their own self-directed learning.

Tools used were a questionnaire to gather preliminary data and a semi structured interview to guide the responses of the participants towards the research questions and to provide a base from which conclusions could be drawn.

---

## Chapter 4 Data – Findings: Primary Respondents

---

### Introduction

The period during which participants to this study conducted their education has been characterised by rapid change. For most of the individuals involved, life has been beset with problems, has followed various patterns and phases, each one unique yet having several aspects in common with the lives of those around them. No life is one-dimensional and human beings are complex creatures.

In the study of these complex individuals, as in other qualitative research, data analysis was inductive: that is theses presented themselves from the data. Data analysis has been ongoing throughout the course of the interviews. After each interview I made comments in my research diary to keep track of any emerging themes and patterns. To a certain extent, each interview built on the earlier ones, and the data collected have guided subsequent collection of data. In addition to tracking insights through comments on field notes, analytic memos were written in the research diary to summarize what I had learned to date and make a plan for the coming weeks and months. By discussing them with a “critical friend”, I endeavoured to keep checks on my insights. This confirmed some of them but caused me to cut out or change others.

A further check on the data analysis was built in through meeting with a research adviser in my place of employment to discuss findings. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) refer to this approach to guard against a researcher’s bias as “triangulation.” This term is also used to refer to the ways qualitative researchers draw on different types and sources of data to gain a deeper understanding to make sure that their insights are valid. Both these forms of triangulation were used in this study.

The final checking of the analysis was done by reading and re-reading the data, creating a table to compare different pieces of data relating to the themes and patterns already identified. At this point new insights and concepts were added to the previously-gained insights.

Like other qualitative researchers who have conducted interviews with participants, I experienced some of the problems discussed in the literature. For example Stake (1995, p. 66) talks about the meaning of the respondent being more important than the exact words used, and questions the cost of transcribing audiotapes. The greatest challenge at the outset of this study was my ability or inability to use audio equipment effectively and at the same time concentrate on asking the questions. A comment in the research diary reads:

Wonderful interview. Problems with recording – first I failed to get the good machine so was stuck with poor equipment. Next (the wife of the interviewee) had to get an extension lead so that I could plug in the recorder as I hadn't put batteries in. Third the distance from A was too great for good sound. Then I forgot to turn it on to record, then initially forgot to put the tape in. It is such a bad recording that I'll have to use the EQ on the Mac in D's office to hear it. Won't be able to use N to transcribe it.

During the interview I had checked with the respondent to ensure that I had extracted the intended meaning from various comments, and the transcription of the audiotape was sent to him to check and modify if necessary. I had also made notes throughout the interview and relied heavily on these to make sense of the audiotape. A later interview would have been totally lost had I relied on the audiotape alone because the microphone I was using had an on-switch as well as the audio machine and I omitted to turn it on. Fortunately, my field notes were thorough and have been adequate to work from. In addition the participant had written extensive notes in response to the questionnaire. This too formed part of the data gathered.

## **4.1 The self-educated theologians**

### **Case Study One**

The rationale for selecting A to participate in the study was that it was important to include people over a range of age groups in the study in order to gain an understanding of how the pattern of self-education may have changed in the past twenty years. A is not the oldest participant in the study but he is older than the majority of participants. Also, it was of interest to learn how a person who has worked in a setting alongside highly qualified colleagues is able to gain credibility.

#### **Introduction**

A was born in Wellington in the late 19XX's. He spent his youth there, being educated to University Entrance level, and then training as a draughtsman. During secondary school he attended church and began discussing Christianity with his bible class teacher. These discussions led to his commitment to Christianity.

In 1966 he became a Physical Education teacher at X College where his only training was with the Headmaster. He later taught at another College in Auckland, during which time he lectured on how to conduct research to post-graduate doctors at the Auckland University Medical School.

#### **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

His life has been full of variety. He has changed his occupation many times. He worked as a draughtsman for several years before moving to Auckland to attend a theological college. However his mind wanted more definitiveness and he found the lectures scholarly but lacking in substance, so decided to study on his own, after which he became a lecturer at a bible school.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

A is convinced that self-directed learning allows you to think outside the square, beyond the parameters. In terms of his own teaching techniques he believed that his success was largely due to the understanding he had of intelligence and of theology itself. Insistence that the personality of the teacher is what makes the difference seemed like a contradiction in terms for one who had not believed that the teacher could teach him in the lateral way he wanted to learn.

On the other hand he acknowledged that the self-educated person could lack breadth, particularly if they specialised. He believed they could become fanatical unless something happened to them that forces a shift in perception. This is what happened to him with both family crises and depression.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

During the interview with A the subjects he referred to were the nature and character of God and Faith; Ephesians; Post-evangelism; Cultural Literacy; Righteousness; Creationism and Evolution.

### **Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?**

He believes a lot of people don't get the opportunity to participate in higher education because the ability to help themselves is limited, especially in relation to fees for education. He strongly believes in the social welfare system because without it he himself would not have been teaching and enjoying his life for thirty-seven years. He feels that people need social welfare not so much as a safety net, but as a ladder out.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

Throughout A's story he wove a pattern of mentors being significant in his developing thought. The following explores how he supported his self-education with mentors at various stages:

### *1 War Veteran*

A man came back from the war and taught the bible class and he was everything A imagined Christ would be. Largely because of this person A became a deeply committed Christian. The teacher was an exceptional person, a great rugby player, badminton player and a profound lateral thinker. The two of them would go out after church to someone's place for supper, and then walk home, through the Mt Victoria tunnel; at one in the morning they would still be talking and arguing about creationism and evolution. He spoke very fondly of this early coach:

And we would argue the toss and here am I a fifth former, arguing the toss, and he would always have me stretched out, and thinking I have, I've got it wrong. His jumps of logic were wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

He introduced A to C.S. Lewis and paid him the compliment of listening to his ideas, of giving him the opportunity to become a critical thinker.

### *2 Army Major*

Upon moving to Auckland, A met the founder of the Bible College at which he was to lecture. This retired army major had a somewhat macho style which appealed to A and he was strongly influenced by it, but family circumstances forced him to make some shifts in his thinking, and eventually caused him to outgrow the relationship.

### *3 Doctor*

The third person A identified as a mentor was both a doctor and a lecturer in a bible college. With this mentor it was the lateral jumps that he found fascinating. He explains the outcome of this mentoring relationship:

Which is really I suppose a major part of my education because I think that's one of the things that self-education does. It allows you to synthesise, which is the same thing as lateral thinking, its relating seemingly surface unrelated issues to draw out a third issue from it, and I think that's one of the things that happens because you tend to do it, a bit on your own.

A's thinking about God underwent a revision when in 19XX he and his wife went to Europe. He says it was as though he "stepped off the aeroplane into a great hole of depression



which lasted for five years". In pursuit of a theological explanation in this crisis, A made a deliberate choice to study the writings of Scott Peck, *A Road Less Travelled*, because he had been unable to find satisfying answers from the knowledge he had about God:

Peck, Scott Peck, he became a Christian in a spiral of depression. He's got an illustration that depression is a vortex that drags you down and you must embrace the darkness to find the light.

He also belongs to a private discussion group in which the members share a common admiration for C.S. Lewis' writings. The group has been meeting for twenty years to debate such issues as creation and evolution. The discussion is based on the idea that everyone's view is heard. A finds this interpersonal exchange of ideas fascinating.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

He felt that if you were ambitious, you would not be able to climb the tree because formal qualifications are taken more seriously. However, when asked how he was viewed by his colleagues he replied:

I'm a genius ... in terms of many of the teachers. They come up and ask me stuff um and it's nothing, not that I'm clever, I just KNEW.

### **Summary**

A's story demonstrates clearly how he became engaged in continual purposeful learning (Brookfield, 1986) and how his learning was motivated by everyday life experiences. He has experienced two educational paradigms, the institutional paradigm and the paradigm of self-education.

Integral to his choice of self-education over formal education is his critical appraisal of the validity of his intellectual pursuits which suggests that the level of his cognitive activity was greater than merely being able to design and manage his self-instruction (Brookfield, 1992):

The brain receives information randomly. And it works best by trying to put those random pieces together and I think that's what self-education is. We as teachers over the centuries have taken that fascinating task away from kids, and at university, and we have said "This is what it is". Now you do wonderful and creative things with them, but it still is doing the job for them.

A's life crises were the point at which he took personal responsibility for his learning. At this point he was highly self-directed and able to be cultivated by Scott Peck's writings (Grow, 1991). His learning can be likened to the apprenticeship paradigm where there is modelling followed by coaching and eventually the teacher fades away and the student continues to develop his/her knowledge.

Three important aspects of A's self-directed learning are the freedom to be himself, the freedom to solve problems for himself and the conclusion that the only way it could happen was to move away from formal education. Carl Rogers (1969) says that learning happens when students are motivated and motivation occurs when the student has control.

The experiences he describes of being mentored gave him more control over his self-directed learning. His institutional experiences confirm arguments put forward by Ivan Illich in Finger and Asun (2001) that the process of specialisation diminishes people's capacity to solve problems and that experts decide what legitimate knowledge is. While interviewing him my respect for the way he developed his thinking over his sixty-odd years grew. His years of depression demonstrate how true learning took place by reflecting on a concrete experience, relating it to other situations, translating the learning into action and then critically considering the result (Kolb, 1984). In A's words:

So that really brought me to the conclusion that God runs the world with his hands in his pockets and he does not intervene very much, but the promise is there, he is with us always. That makes far more sense to me now than the other way.

Moving away from formal education did not mean that A could solve all his own problems when major crises arose. For example, before the reading of Scott Peck's book, he was almost as powerless to make meaning out of his depression as he was in the theological

institution. But, despite his experiences, A would never wish to revert to the confines of the formal learning situation. Although the events he describes are problems that many people face, he maintains that they have played a major role in shifting his thinking about God. The crises are examples of deliberation and serendipity intersecting in A's learning projects (Collins, 1988; Candy, 1991; Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991). Because he has learnt to think laterally and make jumps of logic A has been able to develop a theology that has relevance when life takes a turn for the worse.

A recurring theme in the interview with A was that self-education frees you to think outside the confines of a curriculum. Patricia Cross (1981) agrees that barriers to learning may be the lack of relevant courses. The mentors he was most influenced by were people who he believed were able to make lateral jumps or jumps of logic. In his opinion, self-education "allows you to think outside the square, beyond the parameters...".

The move to Auckland to attend theological college did not bring A the intellectual stimulation he was hoping for. Instead he was disappointed.

I wanted more.... I suppose my mind wanted more definitiveness. I wanted to know. And I thought to myself, if this is all there is, it's a waste of time.

He was trying to relate the Bible to life and to see how theology works. His continual question was "Well, what does it mean?" He was continually questioning the validity of the intellectual pursuits in which he was engaged. It seemed to A that the lecturers were sidestepping issues that were tricky, and refers to the way the theological college wanted the students to have a particular "graduate profile":

And I've found that there was a lot of, um, mental engineering going on, to fit you into the evangelical mould which I was part of, frankly. And so I decided, well I'll do this on my own.

At that point he decided that he would take responsibility for his own theological education.

In talking about his reasons for choosing self-directed learning, A doesn't mention the inconvenience of schedules or location, in fact he was happy to relocate to attend the

institution initially. The context for his self-education was determined by his personal characteristics, his preference for studying alone with the guidance of a mentor, rather than cost or technological issues.

Overall, the impression one gets from talking with A is that having broken away from the evangelical mould, he is quite satisfied that he could not have benefited more from going to theological college than he did through his self-directed learning.

## **Case Study Two**

There were three reasons for inviting B to participate in the study: he is in his forties and has operated in the field of theology only within the past twelve years; he writes books from a theological perspective; and teaches part-time in a college alongside degreed theologians.

### **Introduction**

B lives in Auckland with his wife and two children, working as a communicator to all ages but specialising in the needs of young adults. He teaches students at a Bible School in the Waikato region on a regular basis and is the author of four books, which explain topics pertinent to youth from a theological perspective.

He completed his secondary school education in 19XX and continued on with tertiary studies for a further three years full-time and one year part-time. He has a degree in Biochemistry from Massey University. He also spent three months at a Bible school in Auckland because he wanted to go there while a person who impressed him was the Principal, but gained no qualification from that period.

In all, he has spent twenty-two years in work, gaining experience as a research technician, church youth worker, in the timber industry, as a communicator to high school students and as a Bible teacher. The last twelve years have been spent teaching theology – as a lecturer at various Bible schools, training students, teaching and preaching in churches, at youth events and school programmes.

## **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

B became interested in Apologetics, and went to a conference run by the Apologetics Society. He found the ideas espoused at the conference inspiring and decided to leave secular employment. It was this interest that prompted his self-education.

The initial motivation to study theology arose from the need to improve his knowledge to a level equal to his ability to communicate. His writing employs a combination of scientific explanation and conversational jocularity in his book about relationships. For example in a chapter about choosing a partner he writes:

A friend of mine said jokingly, "First she advanced my pulse. Then she repulsed my advance".

The book is one of his earlier works, and the level of theology contained is fairly basic in comparison to later books on evolution, apologetics and teenage suicide.

The primary reason for B to get into self-directed study was that he had been engaged in some discussions with people of very different persuasions and needed to resolve the conflicts that arose in his thinking. He discovered that an Apologetics Society existed in New Zealand and began attending events organized by the members. He found the arguments for and against different sets of beliefs stimulating – the scientific background he had had gave him an ideal framework on which to build his Apologetics. He explains the reason for not continuing with formal education:

I have done both. My self study has been due to not wanting to take time for further institutional study and cost, it is cheaper to study independently.

B chose to study Christian apologetics because its grasp is more powerful to him than any other area.

## **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

B believes that learning on his own increases his motivation because he is able to study

areas of interest, increases his focus because he can study areas of need, and is more innovative because the thoughts are not a regurgitation of the status quo.

The only thing that would persuade him to take a course in a polytechnic or university would be if it had practical relevance – for him, it is easier to use the library, the internet or books. He has a negative view of online learning in that it is curriculum-based. As with self-education he believes you need plenty of self-discipline, but he acknowledges that with a choice of distance learning, online learning and/or face-to-face learning, a flexible package is a good middle road.

Self-directed learning in his view requires self discipline more than formal education, but has the advantage of being interest and need focused rather than curriculum-based, and is not limited to a time frame of terms or semesters. In addition, self-learning, if it has immediate practical use like preparing a series of lectures, has direct and worthwhile assessment which is perhaps more useful than marked exams.

He suspects that self-educated people could become lazy or self-indulgent in their learning and that less input from others could have the downside of their not being forced to think laterally and not being challenged as to the logical connections of their knowledge.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

B has taught and written books on the subjects of apologetics, evolution, biblical sexuality and dealing with grief.

### **Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?**

His self study has been due to not wanting to take time for further institutional study and the cost because it is cheaper to study independently.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

He acknowledges the existence of two people who mentor him, one of them guides him more in developing wisdom on Christian matters, the other is a mentor in the sense of

coaching him in his theological studies, but because the mentor lives a considerable distance from Auckland the opportunity to be guided by this person is limited. He uses different people to mentor him for different things.

He safeguards his theological studies by choosing books which have been recommended by others, or bought at Christian bookstores. He attends conferences which are geared to his areas of interest. The advantages to him of going to conferences are that books are frequently recommended on the very subject he is studying. The danger of self-education in B's view is that you only learn what you need, and don't do the background reading so there is not the same breadth.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

Although he teaches part-time in a Bible college, B does not believe he would be able to get a full-time position in a theological institution without a PhD or Masters or a Bachelor of Divinity. On the other hand, his lack of credentials has not impeded his progress as a communicator of theological ideas to young adults, probably because of the non-conformist nature of the churches he works with. He believes that the Holy Spirit endowed him with the gift and this makes the way for him. In his words, "Once you become known you don't need a degree".

### **Summary**

Insights into the effectiveness of B's learning came from data gathered from the interview and also from reading his books. An attempt has been made to analyse the different themes that have been identified from the narrative about his self-education.

B has studied in both formally and independently. His self-directed study of Apologetics resembles the research described by Allan Tough (1979) where he found that adults spend 700 hours each year in deliberate self-planned learning projects. His self-education continues to be driven by the bio-chemist's thinking he draws upon, and like the scientist who consciously or subconsciously draws a conclusion before the evidence is sufficient to be "beyond reasonable doubt", his book on different faiths opens with a clear bias towards Christianity. Nevertheless he is alert to the opportunity to use critical thinking as much as a tool in theology as it was in scientific research.



As an author, his writings show the influence of his academic study on his self-study. His book on evolution is a careful scientific examination of the evidence for the origin of life. His argument moves from an examination of scientific theory and an explanation about how cells come into existence, to questions that lead to an assumption that there is an X Factor in the universe. His book on Christian apologetics combines allegory and humour with logically ordered facts. Again, the scientist in B emerges as he directs his readers to examine the evidence to determine which is true.

B's learning in the university culminated in his becoming a research technician. His training in the importance of triangulating his findings has made him aware of the need as an independent learner to allow peer review of his learning. As a scientist he also knows that it is difficult not to read into results what you expect to find there or what you want to find there, and so he is naturally concerned that self-educated people may not be challenged as to the logical connections of their knowledge.

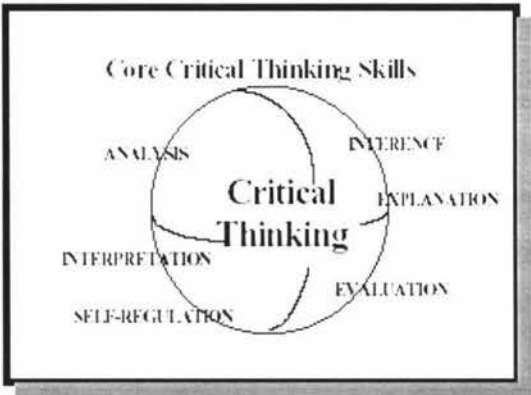
When B got interested in Apologetics, he was drawn to the nature of the thinking needed. People who study Apologetics need to use *reasons* to try to convince others of their claim. They offer *evidence* and *evaluate* the significance of the evidence and that presented by opposite views. They *interpret* what has been said. They *analyze* and *evaluate* the arguments advanced by the other side. These are the skills of a scientist, and were second nature to B after ten years in scientific exploration.

A theme that emerged from the data gathered from interviewing B concerned the lack of peer review that may surround self-learning such as his own. He observed that:

Self-educated people can become lazy or self-indulgent in their learning. Less input from others could have the downside of their not being forced to think laterally or not being challenged as to the logical connections of their knowledge.

B's view is that self-educated people need to have their work challenged so that hobbyhorses and obsessions don't dominate their learning.

Therefore, his experiences in the university where he was learning to support his views with claims that could be tested and evaluated have been invaluable in the field of theology, despite the fact that he has done this particular study outside the structure of an institution. The diagram below shows the skills that are demonstrated by a critical thinker:



It is clear from B's own story about his self-education and the style of his writing that he practices these skills as much now as he did under the roof of the research laboratory. His learning is not contemplative introspection and he is competent to question the validity of the intellectual pursuits in which he is engaged (Brookfield, 1992).

Motivation has been a major factor in B's successful learning from two perspectives. The first fits with the experiential learning cycle attributed to Kolb (1984). B writes in one of his books:

During a time of personal questioning as to the existence of a superior being, I got into serious trouble diving at sea. I ended up clinging to a rock with the waves threatening to sweep me away. It was not time and chance that I called out to for help ... it was someone greater.

His learning had to take place in a short space of time, but there is no doubt that in the midst of this concrete experience, he reflected and experimented and then later was able to critically evaluate the result.

A second motivational perspective comes from the work of Patricia Cross (1981) and can be used to consider B's motivation. Access to learning was increased because B was able

to study areas of special interest to him; greater focus on his studies was possible because he could study the areas he needed to at a given time; and his studies were more innovative than is possible with the regurgitation of status quo ideas. He chose to study alone because he didn't want to take time out for further institutional study and because independent study is inexpensive.

He also believes that if one's self-learning has immediate practical use it is directly and effectively assessed either by yourself or by your students, and this has greater value than a marked examination (Rogers, 1969). His experience has been that students want material to be well presented and logically connected, they want evidence of practical experience supporting the teaching and they want the opportunity to test any thesis by questioning.

### ***Case Study Three***

The reasons for selecting C to participate in the study were the fact that his age placed him midway between the ages of A and B, the additional fact that his self-learning had earned him an honorary doctorate, and the further fact that he has spent time teaching in a university.

#### **Introduction**

The formal education of C went as far as the first year of a bachelor programme at university. He is a missionary who served for many years in Kenya, East Africa. This was followed by a period in Hawaii where he taught theology at a University. He has taught in a diverse range of seminaries, including Anglican, Assembly Of God, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Methodist, as well as in different mission organizations – conservative, liberal, Pentecostal, non-Pentecostal. He currently operates out of Auckland, where he teaches both at a mission centre and throughout the country to Pakeha and Maori church groups on reconciliation from a biblical point of view.

He was granted an honorary doctorate by a Californian seminary run by a fundamentalist denomination, for his work in East Africa in developing a theology of missions to do with taking care of the poor.

### **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

In C' case it was imperative that he have the flexibility to study every day for a week when he is at home, or early in the morning when he is "on the road", because the nature of his work is that it involves a punishing itinerary. During May, June, July and August 2002, his teaching took him to nine different towns throughout New Zealand and five different countries.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

What he appreciates about self-directed learning is that he is not required to answer to somebody else's standards or their belief systems. He doesn't see himself as a reflective person as much as a person who listens or has attempted to listen to God. Learning to hear the voice of God is to him a key in understanding theology.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

C does a lot of topical studies, like taking various aspects of the character and nature of God, starting in Genesis and going through to Revelation. He says that the scriptures are so vast and there is so much different understanding you can get out of a particular verse, that he simply asks God for understanding of a topic.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

He described a friendship he has that functions as a check on his learning and in this way he is able to interact with another person in regard to his studies. He explained this friendship:

...You also have relationships of accountability on intellectual levels, spiritual levels. I have a friend of mine ... he and I are like salt and pepper theologically. Every conversation that I think we have had in the last 20 years eventually some how or another gets around to my contention that we live by the spirit and his

contention that we live by principle. ... I can hang out with this guy; we can discuss all kinds of stuff.

Later in the interview he again referred to the importance of having accountability structures when he said:

You go to people who tend to agree with you and people who tend not to agree with you. You listen. I think those are safeguards.

The interviewer pursued this line further asking if he thought he used different people in that way over the years that he had been studying theology and he remembered two significant people who had guided his thinking:

There was a man named Sam – he was a pastor in Hawaii for many years, a tremendous man of God. Once a week we would spend a minimum of an hour together. We would share the things God has been showing us. It was a two way thing, but he was my elder – we shared as friends. He would say what is God telling you this week – what are you saying. I would share with him and he would tell me if he thought I was wrong and if he thought I was right.

He described another man, an Episcopalian Bishop, in much the same way. He could go and talk with him about his understanding, even though he came from a very different theological persuasion.

One of the richest times of his life had been some years earlier when sitting around a table at a meal. A discussion started about some aspect of God's character and everyone got their Bibles and some reference books and they sat there collectively, until they came to an answer.

C referred to resources that had supported his studies several times throughout the interview saying that he does use other people's resources and when something new comes onto the market he takes it and compares it with what he already holds to be true to see if he needs to change his thinking.

In terms of specific authors, he acknowledged that the writings of A.W. Tozer, Charles Wesley, and Charles Finney, all self-taught theologians in the evangelical Arminian

tradition over the past 250 years, have greatly influenced him. He has reference books like Strongs Concordance, and about thirty different versions of the Bible. For many years he was reading from six to eight hours a day.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

C has spent most of his life debating with people about theological issues. Seminaries and different organisations have asked him to teach. He has taught with the Anglicans, Assemblies of God, mission organisations, Baptists, Catholics, Methodists, liberal, Pentecostal, non-Pentecostal, a diverse range of places.

The only benefit he can see in having a credential is that it opens doors. In fact, almost as soon as he received an honorary doctorate a church that allows no-one to speak from their pulpit unless they have a doctorate asked him to speak because of this piece of paper. He is convinced that in all of life he would rather have the mechanic that knows how to fix the car, than the person that sat in school and learnt about mechanics.

### **Summary**

The study indicates one possible explanation for C's success: the intense interest that he has in theology increases his motivation to learn. In his own view, the reason he got into theological study was not to conduct his own theological studies. He said that he was just pursuing the knowledge of God. He has been continually engaged in this learning for many years.

He strongly believes that what educators call *reflection* is the spiritual part of life. For C it is the listening he has developed so that he can hear what God is saying to him. The norms and limits of the learning activity he is engaged in (Brookfield, 1992) are quite apparent from his references to the dangers in theology, such as the danger of presumption on the one hand and the danger of passivity on the other. This pattern emerges again when he insists that true theology is developed in the market place, and not in seminaries. In this he shows that he is motivated by practical learning (Rogers, 1969). Although he maintains that he doesn't think less of seminarians, and agrees that students need to be questioning, his idea of questioning is that it should be the student asking what theology means to them,

what God is saying to them. He uses the Socratic method of teaching to ensure that this happens. His self-direction is highly technical in that he demonstrates the value of having validity checks in place throughout the course of his studies. He is most certainly at the high end of Gerald Grow's (1991) model of self-direction.

He says that much of what he believes and teaches comes through dreams and visions that God has given him. But he goes back to the Bible to see if those things are valid. He is capable of questioning the validity of his intellectual pursuits. Then he bounces them off other people that he respects – some of them he doesn't particularly respect at all and sometimes he has looked for people that he knew would think contrary to what he thinks.

C's motivation to study comes from within, rather than a need to have a qualification. The assumptions of Carl Rogers (1969) about "experiential learning" are that the human being is active and free and that human beings have an inner drive, an intrinsic motivation for self-development. This freedom is treasured by C especially with regard to freedom of individual thought – "I am not required to answer to somebody else's standards or their belief systems", but he holds his freedom in balance with an acceptance that there needs to be accountabilities along the way.

Rogers (1969) maintains that adults are motivated by practical learning. Others (Collins, 1988; Candy, 1991; Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991) call it the intersection of serendipity and deliberation. During his time in East Africa, C came face-to-face with abject poverty to the point where he was sometimes overwhelmed. He saw people dropping dead in front of his eyes in the midst of famine. He felt their desperate need for assistance and care. He described it as real life forming theology because he had a lot of questions about justice:

I was seeking God and asking God to show me other people. That is one of the things I do – God lead me to books or bring books to me where there is somebody you have already given this understanding to, that will help form my thinking. ... I was walking along one day and this thought came into my mind – go into a Catholic bookstore and I went in and there are all these liberation theologians.



The Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire, told literacy teachers in 1971 that to be a good liberating educator "you need above all to have faith in human beings. You need to love", (Freire, 1971, p. 62). He was a world leader in the struggle for the liberation of the poorest of the poor. Motivated by compassion echoing that of Freire, C developed a theology of missions that had to do with taking care of the poor. Consequently, caring for the poor became a major part of the work that he did in Africa.

The ability to solve problems, as demonstrated by C in developing a theology of liberation for the poverty-stricken Africans, is a key skill to develop as a self-educator. Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning is exemplified in this situation. He saw the abject poverty and dead bodies from the famine, reflected on this experience, developed a liberation theology, experimented with it and evaluated the results. There are certain personality characteristics (such as independence) that are important in an autonomous environment which some students in a formal setting may lack. C showed time after time that he is an independent thinker and has control over his own learning – one example is when he says:

What I do teach and I know that a lot of what I teach is contrary to traditional mainstream Christian theology ... That has to be a basic assumption of all teachers – there has to be something that we are imparting.

On the other hand, the more independent a person becomes, the more seemingly biased they are about the quality of their learning. When asked about the likelihood of bias creeping in when one chooses to educate themselves, he was confident that self-education takes learning from the best sources – the bias in his view is in the seminaries.

While self-study increases the responsibility of learners to set their own goals, it also makes it possible to be much more flexible in terms of when the work is done and allows the learner a great deal of flexibility in terms of schedule and location. This was important for C as demonstrated by his itinerary above and resonates with the barriers to adult learning described by Cross (1981). Although he has deadlines for completing preparation for lectures, these deadlines do allow time (days or weeks) to do the study. C's preference is to get up early. For instance, when he was in Rarotonga he was up at 3.30

a.m. to prepare for teaching at 10 a.m. In the space of three or four hours of quiet, he can accomplish his teaching preparation, leaving him free to pursue other interests for the rest of the day.

While C says he has nothing against formal education, he believes it is not in his journey. He feels there are built in weaknesses in the system, especially when we are talking about theology because he believes it is biased according to the denomination that it represents and the belief system of that group of people. C observed that people who have come out of academic structures err towards grace and away from truth. He says that he tries to maintain a gracious attitude in his heart:

I know that I tend to move more towards truth than grace.... But I am jealous for the truth.

He criticises scholarship because he believes that people who study theology from an academic slant become presumptuous, exaggerating their ability to know a God who is hidden from finite eyes. He strongly believes that the only way you can know about God is through revelation and that this is not taught in seminaries or bible schools. On the other hand he acknowledges that people who believe they have received a revelation can become arrogant, thinking that all truth resides within them.

## **Case Study Four**

Reasons for selecting D were that it was judged important to include people in the study who covered a range of ages in order to gain an understanding of why people born in a period where theological education was readily available would choose to educate themselves. D is the youngest participant in the study. Also, D is the Principal of a college which is accredited to offer certificates and diplomas. It is assumed that the college encourages its students to gain credentials.

The greatest challenge at the outset of the interview with D was the open plan office that we were in, and the use by a staff member of a very noisy old photocopier a few feet from where I was sitting. Fortunately for the recording of the interview, D eventually asked the

person if they could delay the photocopying until later. However, the initial part of the interview was difficult to hear, as a result of the noise. In this situation I had to rely heavily on my field notes and on developing a relaxed relationship with the participant. Attempts to gather information about him from other sources, such as the website of the college, have proved fruitless. It is true that the dependence of qualitative researchers on conversation provides a challenge when field work is conducted with people in public environments. At first I wondered how I was going to communicate with D under the circumstances (noisy photocopier). However, it did force me to concentrate carefully and not to be tempted to talk any more than I needed to in asking the questions. Afterwards I wrote in my research diary:

I found it very awkward when I couldn't hear what D said. I wondered if this was going to be an ongoing problem throughout the interview. I wasn't sure whether to ask if we could go to a different place, or just to make the most of it.

Several comments in the margin of the transcript at the start note that the questions were slightly off-centre and the responses were not as exact as I would have liked.

## **Introduction**

D is a man who began student life going for a double major in Maths and Computer Science. His grandfather was an Engineer/Maths teacher, and there was family pressure for him to continue the tradition, but he lost interest when he found he was being taught about substances in physics that didn't exist and about how these substances react with other substances that don't exist. He thought "well that's a real useful tool to know", dropped out of university and became a computer teacher for nine years with a training organisation, keeping just one step ahead of the students. At the end of that time he and his wife had paid off their mortgage and decided to study at a bible college north of Auckland and then go overseas.

He had intended doing a Certificate in Christian Ministry and then a Diploma in Christian Ministry but managed to do only the certificate because he was asked to be Deputy Principal at the College, a role which soon developed into the role of Principal.

As well as his work at the College he runs a small tourism operation to support his family and teaches maths as a tutoring service on a part-time basis.

**What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

When D spoke about his year at university he talked about the loss of motivation that came about by being out of control of the learning process, the content and the resources. D has spent over 15 years of his life inside various learning organizations and when asked why he chose to study theology by himself, he surprised me by saying that he has done both and has now gone back to Otago University studying by correspondence in order to get a recognized qualification. No doubt the accreditation requirements of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority have been a major factor in this.

D had readily agreed to participate in the study and described himself to me as a "self-educated theologian". I understood that to mean that he had conducted his studies on his own, without the support of a formal educational institution, and was well into the interview with him before it became obvious that this was the case for the nine years that he was teaching computing, and the first two years that he was on staff at the bible college, but that he had now moved into distance learning mode.

**To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

Firstly, he likes studying. He sets himself goals and then sets about achieving them. He does the same thing in regard to the quality of the work he is doing. He sets himself a standard and then thinks about how much time it will take to achieve that standard. Secondly, teaching motivates him to study. He is never satisfied with his lectures, always thinking he could have done it better if he had known more, or a student asks him a question and he hasn't got the answer so he goes away to study more intently.

**What general subject categories attract theologians?**

When he first began the job, he had little knowledge to do it, so started teaching subjects like study skills and then taught a small section in a biblical studies paper, and gradually

extended to taking the whole paper, little by little. Following that he moved into teaching Systematic Theology and found this to be the area he was most interested in.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

The most useful support D gets comes from people he meets along the way; however there are at least three different types of support which have helped him to develop his learning:

1      *Friends.* The most obvious support in the university days when D was demotivated was that he met a friend and she introduced him to another person and he started programming their computers for them and then they offered him a full-time job. This was where his self-education began, staying just one step ahead of the students he was teaching.

2      *Mentors.* This aspect of the support structure is both positive and negative. He made a lot of progress under his youth leaders when he was in his late teens. The person who took an interest in him at his job further helped him by training him. The pastor and assistant pastor who decided to mentor him tried to direct him but their plan was nowhere in his character, he believes. His lecturer at a Polytechnic taught him a valuable lesson, to be critically reflective, and his fellow staff members at the college now assess his teaching at his request. The distance learning programme he is now enrolled in provides him with a two hour telephone conference every two weeks with a tutor. In addition, he is able to communicate with the management team at his college, or the members of the Board of Trustees, to bounce ideas about.

3      *Written materials.* These are things like the reshaping of the lecture notes from his computer programming course at the university, the reviewing of his notes from the certificate course at the bible college, reading lists from lecturers, workbooks from his correspondence course at a University, cross references from one book to another, books from Basilea Publishing, and books by academic fundamentalist theologians Gordon Fee, Dr Vern Fromke and George Eldon Ladd. In the context of both self- and distance-education, these are crucial for D. Many of the readings are difficult to understand and although they are brilliant resources, they are not written for lay people so

his students ask him to interpret the books for them.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

Credentials have not played a role in D's rise from student to Principal of the college. However, part of his motivation for enrolling on a distance education programme with the University has been to get a qualification that other people will recognize. He insists nonetheless that he is not a career person and that if there was a better person to do his job, either as teacher or Principal, he would be quite happy to stand aside.

### **Summary**

The proof of D's self-direction and continual engagement in purposeful learning (Brookfield, 1986) is that the framework of his theology has been developed out of the resources he has selected. A large part of it has come from two books: *The Ultimate Intention* by Dr Vern Fromke and *The Gospel of the Kingdom* by George Eldon Ladd.

During the interview D said that he read widely, but when questioned about this he explained that he read books written by Pentecostal, Charismatic and Fundamentalist writers. He believed that the range of books that he had read covers the whole spectrum. How does he avoid bias in his self-study? He doesn't. His own response to this question was:

A lot of people are quite biased in their stance, they come from a certain perspective and because that perspective is where they come from it colours their whole thinking, and I'm coloured as well so....

To counter bias, the advice his Board gave him was to study at an institute that holds different views to his own.

He divides theology into three levels – essentials, essentials which can have different processes, and uncertainties. He explains this third category as follows:

Who's got a full handle on end times? No-one knows everything about it. ... And there are things like, does God know the whole future tied down or does he just know parts of the future. Does God stand inside of time or outside of time? Now all of those questions which the bible doesn't actually tell us the answer to, and we can theorise, and debate about these, and it's really interesting to, but we shouldn't shoot each other about it.

Is he technically skilled to question the validity of his intellectual pursuits? D claims to have always been a questioning person. In his seventh form year at school he and his friends would spend Friday nights going from the Revivalists on one street corner, to the Mormons on another and then to the Christians, asking them what they believed.

He has pretty fixed views, however, and other points of view don't cause him to re-evaluate his beliefs. He believes there are foundational areas of knowledge which shouldn't move:

There are essentials of our faith, in which there is no compromise and you can put those things in regards to salvation and in regards to what you need to be saved, Jesus Christ died, rose again on the third day, is seated in the heavenly realms, sent out his disciples so he would propagate and draw other people back to himself.

Then again he believes that there are other areas on which people can hold different views from his which are nonetheless acceptable. He identifies methods of baptizing people as one of those where he is happy to allow people to work within their own framework of church reference, or denominational reference if that's good for them.

Given the reasons for including D in the study, the initial focus was mainly on learning about his disillusionment with formal education and the role that teaching himself computer skills played in his ability to conduct his own theological education. His one year at university had given him some computer programming knowledge, but he says that during the next four years he reshaped everything he had been taught. He had really struggled through that year at university because he had lost all his motivation.



This loss of motivation was brought about as Rogers (1969) suggests, by his being out of control of the learning process.

The method that he used to go about studying was to review all the notes he had from the little learning he had done, then got the recommended reading lists of the past lecturers, and read all the books, until he had a shelf of books that he went through, read and researched, slowly but surely putting his notes together. As he had at university, once again he encountered some obstacles to his learning. He likes to be practical, and believes that theology is not meant to be an academic exercise; he doesn't want to acquire mere head knowledge. Again, he fits with Rogers' (1969) views about what motivates adults to learn. He says:

Christianity is supposed to be a practical religion, not a head religion, so I find a lot of theology in what has been written is really for theoretical ideas and academia again, and it's a little like the physics story – I get turned off by stuff that's just for your head rather than that we can actually use.

An important component of D's move from self-education to assisted learning by correspondence is his belief that it is the combination of academia, God, the power of God in his life, and people who care enough to get into people's lives to influence them to change, that will make an impact on society. He makes it very clear that in his view it is a mistake to train people for knowledge. He says that people in the current era want to experience God and that the whole Western culture has made a major shift, from the modernist era that emphasized structures and knowledge to the post-modern.

During his time at his job he did a certificate in adult teaching through a Polytechnic. A requirement of the course was to reflect upon his teaching. Self-assessment has become a habit. In addition, he asks his peers to assess his teaching style. Thirdly, he wants to give his students the best. He doesn't do the job for money – he supports himself and his family through having two part-time jobs outside the college. He is motivated by the desire to see theology change the lives of the students.

The way D has interwoven formal and informal education in his adult life has been by using support structures from both. As a paid employee he accepted the training and

guidance that was offered to him. As a voluntary employee he is proactive in seeking out support structures. He believes that although the lack of formal education may have limited him in his teaching, it has perhaps also liberated him to think outside the box, rather than keeping him confined to academia. He is concerned that the influence of university on a young person could shape them for a long time unless they are taught to think differently.

D's return to university learning demonstrates that if a course has relevance to him, he will engage in formal education. Interestingly however, his choice of a university when he resides in a small town a great distance away suggests that he still wants to be free from the constraints of a timetable (Cross, 1981).

## **Case Study Five**

The main reason for selecting E for the study is that he is one of the younger participants and has studied throughout the years when theological courses have become legion.

The research diary records that although the recording of this interview was successful, there was not much clarity in the data on E's educational processes – a very different interview from that with A and D.

## **Introduction**

E was born in Christchurch in the early 19XX's. He was educated in Christchurch and started his working life apprenticed to a carpenter. After doing "time" as a carpenter and finding it was not to his taste, he started working part-time for a church. The assistant pastor was his mentor.

In February 1981 he travelled north to attend a Bible College. The course was to be a four-and-a-half-month training course which would not lead to a qualification of any kind, as the school had no accreditation at that time. However, he had also applied for a visa to go to Zimbabwe; the visa arrived and he left New Zealand with his wife to take up a position with a mission, teaching at three bible schools in Zimbabwe.

On his return to New Zealand seven years later, he accepted a post at a church in Whangarei, where he remained for the next eleven years, teaching in a bible school and carrying out pastoral duties. In 20XX he was invited to join the staff at a church in Auckland with a view to becoming the senior pastor at a new extension church.

**What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

E's transformation to teacher of theology began as a matter of necessity. Immediately after arriving in Zimbabwe he was thrown in the deep end, as he puts it, where his role was to look after a mission work. There he taught at three bible schools - one called Acts, a second known as X bible school, another bible school at Zeke as well as other different bible schools around the country.

He had to develop some strategies for coping with this sudden induction into teaching. The first strategy was that he used and re-used his few notes until he had completely exhausted their usefulness. Another strategy was to begin studying intensely on his own. He expected to take responsibility for his own decisions, a characteristic Malcolm Knowles (1970) identified in developing his ideas about andragogy. The third strategy involved his practical background - he had done a carpentry apprenticeship – in his own words “so I always have believed in training”.

**To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

While there was a preoccupation with leadership, it became increasingly clear in talking to E that there was arrogance about being better fitted for the job than educated theological scholars. Typically, he would become fairly passionate when the subject of degreed theologians was introduced:

My personal opinion is that a good percentage of people that have the three year qualifications and they end up losing their joy for the Lord and their zeal and their faith....

He revisited this idea later in the interview with even more passion:

I also have a major concern and a problem that you have people lecturing at Bible Schools that in the real world of ministry they could not hold a church of twenty-two, they couldn't even run a decent life group yet they are teaching on church growth. It's a major concern I have.

Still later he asked what these people have produced apart from hot air. They drive him crazy he says, because they just talk around in circles. His concern is made clearer when he explains:

What I am hitting here is so-called teachers that train and impart into the students and all it is, is head knowledge and there is no spiritual impartation therefore there is no ongoing fruitfulness in the students.

So he critiques formal education saying that it is just knowledge that is accumulated in the head. He is impatient with academia, finds it boring, because he himself is a kinesthetic learner. To this end he says "I just get sick of playing mind games with people – its yawn material".

As the interview progressed, he kept coming back to the idea that teaching (and learning) in a theological environment is quite different to what happens in a traditional academic setting. First of all, the teaching process is linked to a belief system that results in mission instead of being restricted to a mere academic exercise on a particular day. So there is the need to try to achieve more than simply teaching concepts. Furthermore, theological teaching does not involve simply a presentation like classroom instruction. Instead, it involves the communication of a revelation of truth:

I can't see somebody sitting studying their navel and talking about all the different things produces much in the Kingdom of God and my tolerance is getting less and

less as I go on because I see them as getting greyer and greyer and fatter and fatter and they do nothing for the kingdom of God but talk.

E believes that the learning experience for students of theology is much richer than traditional academic classroom experiences. Since students are required to respond to questions from a personal standpoint, as well as listen to the responses of their fellow students, they spend a lot of time thinking about their own relationship to the subject. Once again, E's passion for his subject emerges:

I get extremely disappointed at these people that sit on their diff and discuss theology – woop-de-doo - it means nothing, who cares what they think?

In a theological environment, says E, students are expected to think about the questions and come up with their response and every student makes a response of some kind, be it a commitment to serving in the church or mission field or dropping out of the course. He believes these are:

people that are not just talking they have actually done it – not people that have done sixteen degrees and have never pastored a church, never experienced leadership on the coal face and that would be the difference.

Furthermore, it is his opinion that learning about God needs to be "hands-on" learning. Having to read and respond to the views of their fellow students requires them to evaluate many different views on a topic or issue. Figuring out how to reconcile their differences, and at the same time agree to differ on non-essentials, requires some character building. The practical hands-on E restates his belief in situated cognition:

You must put it into practice – so I think from an early age, obviously having done a carpentry apprenticeship realising the value of the impartation of practical experience.

And revisits his antagonism towards formal theological study in an academic institution:

you don't realise how slowly the death of religious stuff gets on and you..... what happens if you go with it, it actually sets you free.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

When asked what he considered his major contribution to be he came back to this theme

As far as helping in the body of Christ I would say developing leaders, encouragement and evangelism would be the three areas that I could be most used here.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

Mentors have played a significant role in his development. Although he did not identify a mentor during the Zimbabwe period, prior to that he had started working for the church part time – in New Zealand. The assistant pastor was a very good mentor who didn't hold E back but saw clearly the best direction to point him and had the courage to take decisions that would develop him. In E's words:

You sort of have blinkers on and you say this is all I am, this is what I am doing so it is very important for you to have people around who can see the bigger picture.

The idea of being in leadership recurred frequently in the interview with E. When talking about his current position he quickly identified the senior pastor as a mentor. It was not the personality of this person so much as his strong leadership gift that attracted E to the job.

He has got a very very strong leadership gift which has been mentored by two pastors in Australia so most senior pastors have developed their leadership gift but they haven't got anyone that has really mentored them...

## **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

Working in a theological college was not an interest for E, however he did concede that professional theologians would probably think he was an uneducated fool. He said that in the early days of his missionary work he would have defended himself against such impressions, but that he knows who he is now and the opinion of other people is not an issue for him.

## **Summary**

With no formal training in teaching or theology, E had very few resources for teaching in bible schools - only a handful of notes acquired during the short time he was at Faith Bible School. The three "coping" strategies he developed out of necessity became the core of his approach to teaching...to the point where he could successfully run a course without the need for the training he himself had originally started out to do. Instead of formal training he learnt some strong leadership skills because he found himself in a situation where he was the director of the organisation and had no choice but to take responsibility for his own learning.

E demonstrated a high level of independence and self confidence when talking about his self-directed learning. On the one hand he was able to identify the potential pitfalls in learning alone –

The weaknesses ....compulsive – you've got to be very careful that you keep on...let the main thing be the main thing because you can get enthusiastic about a lot of things.

On the other hand, he always came back to leadership as the key to his development:

You have just to make sure that you focus on what you are really meant to do. Because I think as you grow in your leadership gift there are many things you can do.



The narrative by E describing his experiences shows again how the direction the learning takes is determined by daily events. Tennant (1986) warns not to overlook the influence of environment over the learning process. The experience that he had in the short time he was engaged in formal learning fitted with his kinesthetic learning style, and the direction his life took after that was the reason for his self-education, rather than being a deliberate choice to move away from institutional learning. Nevertheless, E indicates that the only learning situation he would engage in these days is one that matches the social context (the church).

His responses to questions about formal education show that he believes the learning must go hand in hand with the practical experiences. His life's journey has involved him in some pretty spectacular events which have shaped his thinking. In Africa he came face-to-face with the realities of extreme poverty, and when he was in the north he was called out to some situations that bore striking resemblances to the African experience.

As Rogers (1969) points out, the learning for E happened when he had control of the content and when the learning was practical.

He provides an example of Schon's (cited in Boud and Walker, 1992) notion that "we experience as we reflect, and we reflect as we experience" when he says:

When I am driving home in the car I have a think about it. I don't spend hours on it. You know when you are doing well and when you are not and when you have stuffed up or whatever and so you just adjust that. All the time if you have got a desire to communicate you are going to have to reflect.

These occasions are central to his comparison of academic versus practical learning - he explains his aversion to academic learning by saying he is thinking of "somebody who just wants to sit around and talk talk talk". The life experience he has had is where he is coming from and he doesn't believe that experiential learning can happen in a theological seminary. The difference as he sees it is that the people who teach theology must have had practical experience at the coal face. He has no time for people who have merely gained degrees and have never had practical experience of the theology they teach. Illich (1996) calls this commodification when he says "getting" an education is like consuming

an economic commodity. E insists that impartation and experience are two essential parts of a whole.

While discussing E's experience as a self-educated theologian, he kept returning to the training angle. He said he had always believed in training. As he recalled:

I suppose if I look back our weakness in the north would have been to do more training but when you are a senior pastor you don't have the money to call in someone who has got a teaching gift to do that full time.

E is a typical adult learner according to Malcolm Knowles' concept – he much prefers practical, hands-on learning. His experiences are a rich resource for learning, he learns more effectively through experiential techniques of education such as discussion or problem-solving. The one time that he had attended a course that he enjoyed it was cut short by the arrival of his visa and he had to discontinue it. Of this course he said:

That was a fantastic time, it was very very good, it was a practical outworking... There was some really good training there.

His accountability is to "ordinary people". He tells a story about being called to a tangi in a skyline garage where the body is on a mattress on the floor and the flowers are dog daisies stuffed into bricks. He says this is how he is accountable and what is important is how the people react to that.

There are disadvantages for E in not studying at an institution, such as being left out of tutorials and other events that involve on-site interaction. Oddly enough he is currently involved in developing a programme which aims to be a three year course leading to a qualification.

## **Case Study Six**

F delivers lectures on the biblical and naturalistic worldviews and the conflict between them. The reason for choosing him to be part of this study was essentially because of this,

his "median" age, and the fact that he has written and published a book with which my supervisor was familiar and together we agreed that he would be an appropriate person to interview with regard to his self-education.

## **Introduction**

F lives in Wellington where he juggles politics with working in a trade and pastoral work in a church. He has been self-employed for thirty-five years, specializing in house additions. He has twice been a political candidate. One of his primary concerns is to see victims of crime put in first place in the justice system, so he has helped shape his party's policy of "victim restoration" as the focus of sentencing.

For the past ten years he has directed summer camps for teenagers, has taught Bible classes over an extended period of time, and currently runs two youth groups. His achievements beyond teaching theology include writing books and articles, running his own radio station and standing for parliament in the national elections. He is a prolific writer of letters to papers, with many hundreds published. He has written an eight page piece on writing letters to print media.

He has also presented a paper at a conference on crime and punishment.

## **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

In response to a question about what motivates him, he explained that his commitment is to the Lord, because the world he lives in is God's world. His learning about it and about God as its maker is what F feels God expects of him. Right from the start, however, he took umbrage at the idea that what he was doing was studying theology:

"Theological studies" sounds far too heavy for me. I think of it basically as reading the Bible - and miscellaneous material about the Bible, talking with others about all of this, and reflecting on it all so as to accurately further my understanding of God, the world, the universe and everything.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

He believes the self-directed learning experience develops a far richer knowledge base than formal education and that independent learning increases the quality of output that a presenter delivers. He feels his self-learning is "far better, non-compulsory, interest directed, and real-life determined" compared to the learning he did when at school.

What he likes about the way he learns is that he is free from the constraints of course time-tables and reading lists. He can go any way he wants, for as long as he likes, to the depth he likes. There is no pressure to go for grades or to merely study for papers. For him it is more life related and more holistic because it arises out of and speaks to his whole of life commitment to Christ with its daily tasks in serving others in business. He believes the way it relates to life in a holistic way is stimulated by his desire to challenge the secular culture with the Biblical worldview and the daily challenges this results in.

F believes the quality of formal education depends on the institution chosen and the teachers there. He says that people go to Bible College to lose their passion. His concern is that given the all-pervasiveness of secular thinking, theological institutions may actually be teaching a secularised theology. The chances of coming out secularised are so high he feels it would be counterproductive. He is opposed to secular thinking and has observed that plenty of it is to be found in theological institutions.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

During his early years with his parents and brothers he would likely have been impressed by his father's large library of the works of J.N. Darby, the great dispensationalist whose writings influenced the Brethren sect. Currently he is passionate about Christian apologetics, science related issues, biblical law, and the relationship between God and government.

### **Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?**

Because F believes theological institutions may actually be teaching a secularised theology, in his view to go to such a place to "learn" theology would be a waste of time and money.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

F claims to educate himself without the assistance of a coach, mentor, guide or counselor, but acknowledges that there have been times when certain people have figured more prominently in his life than others. However he denies that it was ever in any sort of formal "mentor" role.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

In a series of reflections about situations he had been in, he described an occasion where he was presenting a paper at a conference. He was in the minority; most of the other speakers were credentialed theologians. He expressed annoyance at the presumption of those "academically proud" people with degrees in theology who spoke longer than they should have:

One thing I have noticed is that a person who is qualified has status and may/will be listened to, whether or not they have something to say. ...At one conference I spoke at, I was one of the only peasants speaking, and felt intensely that I had to out-perform all the others in terms of my content, simply to justify my inclusion as a speaker....some of the others who cruised in on their status, went way over time – as though it was their right – and I thought said little, and blandly.

He has a lot to say about the lack of respect he has been accorded in academic circles. When he publishes a book, he invites feedback on his website and some of the commentators have questioned his ability to think critically through the issues about which he so passionately writes. The following is from one such commentator:

On the surface there are several factors which may dissuade the serious Bible student from purchasing this book without a second thought:

- (1) the author is a layman with no formal training in Bible or theology;
- (2) the book is self-published.

F's view of such comments emerges when he says:

I know some people who see themselves as superior to me and better able to think than I am because they have had 'theological training'. I'm unimpressed by such people.

Later in the interview he was asked whether any training would have helped him to do his work better. He came back to his motivation:

Theology to me is not a career or a job to be done but a whole of life devotion to the knowledge of God, and the meaning of life the universe and everything.

Even within his own church community he believes he has not been accorded the same kudos that he may have gained had he satisfied a credentials-driven society with the proof they valued – paper qualifications from an accredited organisation. He said:

Some people who are 'theologically trained' have marginalised me. Personally I think these people are incompetent as spiritual leaders.

He was uncomfortable with the term "theologian" in relation to himself and indicated that the use of the term put people who studied theology into a particular class, a class from which he may have felt excluded. This feeling of exclusion continues to emerge throughout the interview, when he talks about his church involvement and how he cannot seem to gain the recognition he feels he deserves. A visiting speaker will be talked about by the community as though they were a celebrity, he says: "There seems to be something about doctor so and so coming to speak".

## **Summary**

In the Foreword to his latest book, F is described as a man of passion and integrity who takes on scholars who may be respected because of their academic positions rather than

the quality of their arguments. These sentiments became a well-developed theme throughout the interview.

There is no doubt that F prefers to study alone despite his initial response that he didn't "choose" to study theology. He said he had "just been learning about God, the world and everything all my life in a whole of life way".

Not only was F reluctant to identify with the term "theologian", there was in fact a reluctance to accept that there is such a thing as a theologian among the people he mixes with. While trying to reduce the terminology to a status he felt more comfortable with, he made this somewhat remarkable statement:

Every human being is a theologian in that every individual alive has a theology and lives his or her life in the light of it. Of course every human being who has died also had a theology that they lived their lives in the light of.

In an attempt to include every possible type of person, he gathers in the dead as well. It is this inclusivist approach that leads one to think he is somewhat threatened by the thought that having no degree in theology may place him outside a group of people who may be respected. Oddly enough the first email I had received from him agreeing to participate in the study did not reflect the same degree of antagonism to the term. He agreed to be a respondent and offered to sell me his book to see what theology he was "peddling".

In this correspondence he was seemingly happy to use the term theologian and to talk about his theology yet throughout our interview he showed resistance to both terms. His scorn for qualifications and his opinion of degreed theologians were a common theme. He had clear views about formal theological education in that he did not believe a degree gave people more insight, in fact he considered it could give them less in some institutions. It was as if he resented theologians, because in his experience people like himself who held no degree, were not referred to as such.

F's story is a good example of the self-planned learning and learning projects in Tough's (1979) research where people obtain information on a series of related episodes, and



where "more than half of the person's total motivation is to gain and retain certain fairly clear knowledge and skill, or to produce some other lasting change" (p.7). In fact he is characterized by being highly motivated to direct his own learning. This motivation comes from within – a principal of effective motivation is that internal motivation is longer lasting and more self-directive than is external motivation.

An examination of F's experiences shows how an individual learner can become empowered to take more and more responsibility for various decisions associated with their learning. He is a unique individual whose study involves various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, electronic and other dialogues and writing activities. Furthermore his learning is currently being influenced by the political themes he is engaging with, such as criminal law versus biblical law.

While reading through the transcript I was struck time and again by a resistance to status-quo behaviour and thinking. On the one hand he objected to the notion that he is a theologian, while insisting that every human being is a theologian. His reception by others in a fundamentalist denomination and associated conferences has culminated in him feeling marginalised by those who have been formally educated in theology. In one of his publications there is a clear indication that he likes to "swim against the tide". He writes:

People who don't think clearly or deeply enough about an issue, can come to think that the dominant way of looking at things is the only way to look at it.

Brookfield's (1992) approach to current views that say experiential learning is the most appropriate for adults, is to warn about pitfalls caused by the cultural shape of the experience. F's motivation stems from his life as a child, which was shaped by fundamentalist biblical doctrine. His experiences in a society oriented towards credentials highlight some difficulties of self-education. Some educational institutions are finding ways to support self-directed study through online learning programmes and other innovative programmes, but F has reached a point in his life where nothing would persuade him to enroll in a course of study, no matter how individualized or non-traditional. There were clear indications that credentials were of little or no interest to him. Given his anti-timetable, anti-curriculum, anti-grade, anti-pressure, anti-fees and anti-intellectual stance, he seems to be in agreement with Patricia Cross (1981) that educational

organizations create barriers to learning. All of these represent constraints, and F does not like to be restricted. He is not prepared to give any credence to formal education, nor in fact to credit another person with his learning.

F would probably be surprised to know that in as much as he would spend about five hundred hours a year in learning planned by himself, he is typical of ninety percent of adults.

### **Case Study Seven**

L withdrew from the study.

### **Case Study Eight**

The primary reason for selecting M was that she was one of the few participants who were female and her inclusion was an attempt to address this deficiency.

#### **Introduction**

M was born as a result of an illicit relationship and grew up with a step-father who never forgave her mother for the fact. As soon as she was old enough she left home and went to the city furthest away to study. She spent one year at university studying for a Bachelor of Commerce, and did fairly well, but gave up. At about the same time she got involved in an extremely fundamentalist church and started a small business, offering word processing services to other small businesses. She enjoyed some success but found that full-time Christian work beckoned her.

She became a missionary, and spent twenty-five years in church work before developing a school of theology for the congregation. She had been successful in the world of business between university and missionary life, and had a strong entrepreneurial bent, later on getting sponsorship for several small projects.

**What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

Towards the end of 19XX a change occurred in M's mission organisation's policies about the roles that women missionaries could play. A paper had been prepared outlining the new policies, and circulated to all missionaries who worked within their mission. This had a significant effect on the type of work that M could be involved in and she was enthusiastic about the new openings.

The prospect of getting involved in some kind of Christian education forced her to develop a strict study routine.

I always contributed to the work of the mission, but in restricted ways, because the policy was to exclude women from teaching mixed groups or from leadership. I really got very little pleasure from making patchwork quilts with other women or doing endless visitation, because my real gifts weren't being used.

The congregation she worked with began to rapidly increase. Many of the newcomers had no church background and she saw the need for a systematic course of teaching that would satisfy their curiosity. Over the next ten years she gradually developed a school of theology and was herself a key teacher in the school.

The costs of running the school were significant and so she approached several Christian businessmen in the church in which she was involved to seek sponsorship. It was difficult for them to refuse on sympathetic grounds so the money needed was raised and suitable rented facilities were found. Overnight she found herself in the classroom, teaching adults:

Yes, you see I went out as a missionary working with women who had young families, but then found myself teaching about social justice. I suppose its like swimming, being thrown in, you've got to learn what works and what doesn't otherwise you drown.

Although the growing church population fluctuated in the early 1990s, the school population remained fairly stable throughout each year, and the one-year programme gradually evolved into several courses. Both M and the other teacher involved in it worked diligently, but they were isolated, receiving little direction for their work and even less support for doing it. She reflects on those days:

We had no idea about what we should be emphasizing and what should be taught. We didn't know what we were doing. So we hid in our lecture rooms and worked really hard at developing the content. We didn't talk about it. I think that was part of the missionary culture, the popular idea of collaboration wasn't so big in those days.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

M said that the whole experience of self-education had fascinated her. To explain this fascination with her own learning, she painted a verbal picture of a young relative of hers:

Look at my niece, she is about to graduate from (name of theological college) and she has had a lot of quite liberal theology in her courses. I have never quizzed her on it, but we sometimes chat about things. And even though she had some pretty forceful lecturers, she's worked out her own opinions about it. She said she still had an open mind, but I can see that she has come to some conclusions for herself. Now that was what I never had to work through. I never had time. I was sometimes interested in books I saw in bookstores but I was too fascinated with the content I had to cover for my courses to branch out. The interesting thing is it's not like you are grappling with the unknown. It feels as if you are being guided by a spiritual force.

Compared with her year at university where there was nothing to inspire her to put in more than one year, she described her studies during her years at the mission as being riveting. She was forced to study so that she could get into the type of work that really interested her, but it was her own inner drive that made her do it. She wanted more out of the missionary role, and she saw how desperately the congregation needed the learning she could give them. The two parts made a lot of sense because the satisfaction was huge.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

Her preferred subjects were evangelism and social justice although she was from time-to-time called upon to teach church history.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

When asked whether she had had a mentor, she interpreted the question in a different way:

I got involved in mentoring people on the courses – my own subjects that I was teaching – looking after their personal spiritual development.

However she also responded by saying that she got up early each day and studied for two to three hours, poring over books and lecture notes borrowed from clergy in nearby churches:

So I basically took the bones of what they did and .... I disagreed with some of their theology but picked up on the basic content.

She also wrote to people she knew who had studied theology formally and asked them to provide her with book lists and other resources to support her self-study. Whenever she came up against something she couldn't understand, she kept a note of it, and would later send off her questions to two "learned" acquaintances. In turn, they would write back, sometimes enclosing their lecture notes from their formal theological courses, sometimes giving what she described as "coaching" to help her with teaching the content. The style of one of them in particular, was to lead her in a kind of conversational "dance" where the letters would bounce back and forth for weeks at a time, exploring a topic more and more deeply until both were satisfied that they had exhausted it.

## **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

M feels that if she had known what was ahead of her, she would definitely have done things differently. Instead of going to university to study commerce, she says she should have gone to a bible college to study theology. What she did do, was the next best thing: she took advantage of the learning of other people who had studied formally. She was very determined to show that the policy decisions of the mission were justified and so she worked extremely hard to bring her learning up to a standard that could not be criticized by anyone. She said of this:

It's a fact, people can do anything they set their minds to – provided they are given the space in which to spread their wings. Restrictions, constant interruptions and other distractions are killers of the creative spirit within.

The lack of support that was available from the mission staff at the time was simply a sign of the times, says M. Organizational norms and practices have changed dramatically during the past few years. Teachers would now engage in regular conversations and meetings about classroom practice and student achievement. They would plan together and share their ideas and resources. They would visit each other's classrooms, observe one another's teaching, ask questions about content, and advise one another about their teaching practices. That, she says, is how things are done now. But back in the early 1980's people were very independent of one another, especially in mission work.

As she reflected on this, she made one final comment:

I guess I was lucky. I asked for help and I got the help I needed from two kind friends at home who had achieved great success in their theological studies. I had absolute confidence in what they said. Because of them I was able to progress pretty quickly to the place where I was put in charge of the school of theology. No, I don't think the lack of a qualification stopped me. I just think it would have made me feel more confident myself about what I was doing.

## Summary

Over the course of our interview M explained that there wasn't a time when she sat down and devised a master plan for her future. In her words:

All I tried to do as a missionary was to follow the path that God led me into. It is important to understand that I merely used what God gave me.

Nevertheless it is clear from the discussion with M that her learning was both purposeful and continual and that she was very much engaged in a major self-directed learning project.

If we were to apply Gerald Grow's model to her, the picture she has provided may look something like that of the learner of high self-direction, that is she was more or less



© 1996 Gerald Grow

cultivated, rather than led, by the mentors she described who coached her when she requested their help, and by the clergy who loaned her their books.

When talking about her self-directed learning, she exhibited a high level of independence and self confidence as did most other participants. Her belief about learning being a continually rewarding process ("The measure we use will be measured back to us again") arose from the two major factors: first that she was able to get involved in richer aspects of the work with the mission and second that she was able to satisfy the needs of the people she taught. At all times she had control over her learning and where she drew resources from. The learning had a very practical purpose: to teach her students. In the climate of the 1980's, she was her own assessor. These principles of motivation were all present in M's experience.

She had earlier on decided not to continue with academic studies and had chosen instead to set up her own business prior to entering missionary work. However, her passion for the work in the church put a different slant on learning in preparation for teaching.



Unlike other participants in the study M makes no mention of things like schedules or lack of relevant courses being barriers to education for her as an adult (Cross 1981). On the contrary she reflects that if she had her time over again she would choose formal education over self-education to prepare for her future. She is the first participant in the study for whom gender has had an impact with regard to her work. The issue was not significant in relation to the choice of self- over formal education, however, as she had had the opportunity to attend university when she left school.

## **Case Study Nine**

Although N has now moved overseas, he was chosen for the study because of his determination to study without attending an institution's lectures. He is in the upper age limit of the participants studied, and is a published author. The interview had to be conducted via electronic mail, and was done on a question-by-question basis so that further elaboration could be sought where necessary.

### **Introduction**

Born and educated in the Bay of Plenty, N grew up with an elderly mother and father and a brother who had polio as a young boy and was slightly crippled as a result. N's mother was a Bible teacher and full of admiration for her, he grew increasingly passionate about the spiritual condition of the Maori people all around him. He approached the deacons of his Church to ask them to help him start this ministry. They declined and refused to give him any financial backing or materials to enable him to accomplish his goal. That made him more determined to follow "his calling" so he put all his money and effort into teaching the Bible to Maori.

By the time he was in his early twenties, he had moved to Auckland where he got involved in the work of Open Air meetings. A couple of years later he got married and had two children.

He eventually became a pastor and led churches in a variety of areas prior to being invited to go to the United States to carry out pastoral work.

Now retired from church work, he has remained in the USA where he lives with his second wife and is somewhat estranged from his children because of his divorce from their mother to remarry.

**What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

N's high level of determination against the odds was the characteristic that was to mark his direction over the next few years. He says of this:

It almost seemed that I was a misfit for going out on my own but when I got something into my head to do something, my determination would make it happen.

He took up art and photography as hobbies, studying by correspondence and reading then decided that he wanted to study with a theological College but he didn't want to spend time in class listening to lectures. The authorities at the college did not have a correspondence course in theology and were adamant that he had to attend face-to-face lectures, like everybody else:

I wanted to study by correspondence and this was a long drawn out battle because they wanted me to go the same route as everyone else.

He was very determined and had no intention of spending hours sitting in lectures. His determination was borne out in his mannerisms as well. He recalled an incident with his wife's mother:

I remember my mother-in-law marching down the long passage at her home with heavy steps and long strides and when I asked her what she was doing she said, "I'm trying to walk like you do with such determination in each step".

Even the book he wrote a few years later reflected this determination. The steady stream of despairing people who came to see him for help with their personal failures were the inspiration for his research into psychology and the bible.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

Studying was a driving passion for him – it was nothing for him to study all day and be totally exhilarated when he discovered something new in the Bible.

When asked what he believed his greatest contribution had been he replied:

Several areas, definitely evangelism. Sunday night attendances doubled when I was pastoring – in a few churches. Also invitations came regularly to teach at camps, rallies, high school graduations and ministers' conferences. I know how to appeal to an audience. Leadership too, some very successful church building happened but strong leaders are not always popular. And helping people, counseling came naturally and took up more and more time.

The areas he felt he could not contribute to were hospital visitation, which he found difficult, and social occasions. If he liked someone he would go out of his way to spend time with them. If not, he would make all kinds of excuses to avoid an invitation to dinner or another function. His inability to "fit" into society made it hard for him to form close relationships too, as if he had shut himself off from people.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

A topic that he studied extensively was the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. He studied a book written by a Dr. Pierre Babet, who claimed that the Catholic Church had the shroud that had been around the body of Jesus. It gives a detailed account of crucifixion and N's teaching on the subject was very graphic and made the audience sit with rapt attention. Sometimes a signer for the deaf would act it out and people would be moved to tears. He said he liked to appeal to the depths of a person's soul. Other topics studied in depth were the life of Christ, the letters to the Churches, and the book of Revelation.

He conducted a home Bible Study where interested parties could have an in-depth discussion about such concepts as the unpardonable sin; the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer; the second coming of Christ; prophecies in the Old Testament book of Daniel; predestination.

He taught himself New Testament Greek and became a Greek scholar. There wasn't a book of the Bible with which he wasn't fluent with the content. His resource library was huge and he continued to learn and study throughout many years.

### **Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?**

He never had a lot of money or the possibility of inheriting any money which was a drawback to going to University. His parents were very poor, so there was no availability of financial assistance from them.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

Any assistance N sought was mainly by means of his extensive library. He read all the time and could hold a knowledgeable debate regarding any doctrine or biblical topic. Books were his main source of knowledge. Indeed, his library seems to have been his dominant "teacher", although he did receive some coaching from a Professor with regard to New Testament Greek. He educated himself by reading, and almost exclusively without the assistance of a mentor. Two or three special people were used as a sounding board. One author whose books he read extensively was Francis Schaeffer:

When Francis came to the city for a week of lectures, I went every night. He was laying a foundation of belief in order to preach the last message.

N was never intimidated by anyone, no matter what their status, whether preachers, professors or school teachers. He loved to debate doctrine with others of similar intellectual capacity. A fellow pastor, X, was always a target.

He now recalls his move to Auckland as a young man with some amusement. Standing on the steps of the Baptist Tabernacle in Queen Street, he would preach a powerful sermon on a Friday night. He most definitely wanted to "reach the lost for Christ". His commitment never wavered, no matter what the cost. He did not acknowledge any particular person as a mentor in these times, but he now sees this period as significant in the overall picture saying that "it was a wonderful training ground".

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

He believes he could have gone further if he had had letters after his name. He was offered a principalship at a Bible College at one stage but the offer was withdrawn for mysterious reasons. It may have been his forthright insistence that he bring his own assistant to the job or it may have been his lack of credentials. Either way, he lost out on the job and did not have an explanation.

He believed that he was successful in several respects. As an evangelist he was aware that he could have a powerful effect on his audience. In his role as a teacher he knew that people found his teaching to be dynamic. He was chosen to be a speaker at conventions, youth rallies, high school graduations and ministers' conferences. As a keynote speaker he knew how to appeal to the audience. He was a very capable leader. He led a large church in a very successful building program. He had a natural ability to help people, so he also got involved in counselling in a big way.

### **Summary**

N's life illustrates how personal characteristics can be a primary motivator for self-educated people. Although Brookfield (1992) maintains that adult education theory development is blocked by myths that suggest that adult learning is inherently joyful, and that adults are innately self-directed, N's learning could certainly be described this way. It was very clear that he thrived on studying by himself.

The question is whether his study was mere contemplative introspection (Brookfield, 1992) or cognitive activity where N knew the norms and limits of the learning activity. The only critical appraisal of his learning that occurred was from his immediate family, a few trusted

seniors and the comparisons he could do himself with books in his library. He had little capacity to take criticism from others, especially those close to him, and when an older man advised him not to preach again, he became even more determined to make his mark as a preacher.

He was prepared to take up formal study only if he could do so by correspondence, a preference which led to him studying independently because of the unavailability of distance theology courses. What he liked was to be able to further his studies at the same time as doing his job. Approval of other people was not a consideration in making decisions, and his strong sense of autonomy came to the fore.

He conducted his own learning, being influenced mainly by the books he bought to add to his library. Throughout his career he was frequently put down by his superiors, but not intimidated. He was protective about what he had discovered in his private study sessions, because he had given all he had and a negative analysis would dash his spirits.

From the interview with N it was increasingly obvious that he was highly self-directed to the extent that he became his own assessor. The books he immersed himself in were scholarly tomes and he was able to digest their ideas and compare one with another before making a decision about which aspects he would take on board and which he would discard. Over an extended number of years he believed that the intellectual pursuits in which he was engaged were totally relevant and valid for his work.

In examining the narrative throughout the interview with N, a pattern emerged very clearly. His early years of learning had a practical outcome. Here was a person whose self-learning was first motivated by a deep desire to reach out to the Maori people, a person with a high level of determination despite odds that were frequently against him, a person for whom the approval of others was not a serious consideration. Passionate about preaching, he also had a passion for studying. He alone took responsibility for his learning. He built a wall around himself and found it difficult to get close to other people.

N epitomises Carl Rogers' (1969) theory that learning is facilitated when the student participates completely in the learning process and has control over its nature and direction, that learning is primarily based upon direct confrontation with practical, social,

personal or research problems, and that self-evaluation is the principal method of assessing progress or success.

He has been around for a sufficient length of time to experience the evolution of pathways to a qualification. Evolution, that is, from face-to-face lectures, to flexible delivery. His studies now are being influenced by the emerging availability of online courses. His earlier experiences with educational institutions were frustrated by the unavailability of a range of relevant options for his learning preference (Cross, 1981).

N has not felt that his self-education has caused him to have a sense of isolation although his experiences in seeking support from religious communities in which he has been involved highlight the difficulties highly autonomous individuals may have in achieving their goals. N was living within the religious community but wanting to operate outside its bounds.

Illich (1986, in Finger and Asun, 2001) talks about experts and expertise, claiming that an expert culture always calls for more experts, who decide what legitimate knowledge is and create institutional barricades by proclaiming themselves gatekeepers and control knowledge production. N experienced these barricades throughout his working life, first when he was denied financial support to carry out his passion, next by being denied access to learning through the distance option he preferred. The knowledge he acquired through his own studies did not earn him a Masters degree or a PhD despite the consistency of his high level efforts over many years. His successes in theological studies have been made possible by his own determination to do things his way.

## **Case Study Ten**

The participant has fallen ill since he participated in the interview but was originally chosen because his theological studies had spanned the years leading up to and during the 19XX's when he was in his prime.



## **Introduction**

S was born in the 19XX's in a small town in the North Island of New Zealand. He lived there until he was five, when his father and mother shifted to the city, after which they moved house frequently.

He remembers an unhappy childhood, because his parents' marriage was in turmoil. His mother suffered from depression and the atmosphere in the home was tense. Shortly after the family moved to the city his father left and returned to his native country. His mother was left to take care of him.

Not long after moving to Auckland some neighbours took an interest in S, and after attending church with them he took on their faith. He began to make friends and his outlook improved considerably.

### **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

His motivation to study theological matters came from his fervent desire to become an evangelist first, then later when he realized that his talent was teaching he was motivated to study for this purpose.

As a twenty-year-old, who had partially trained as a lawyer, he grew interested in studying the Bible in depth. He decided to go to a Bible school.

He loved the Bible school and did very well. He was the top first-year student, and the staff wanted him to join up with a missionary society to go to New Guinea. However, over a holiday break he attended a small conference, which he describes as possibly the greatest crisis in his life. He realized that he had to make a choice as to which way he was going to go. The crisis was related to doctrinal issues. If he embraced Pentecostalism, the Bible school would not accept him back. He had planned for years to be in Bible school, and had completed only one year there.

Having previously completed two-thirds of his training as a lawyer, he was in a quandary

as to whether to go back to his legal studies, or what he ought to do.

At about the same time he was invited to assist a pastor to start a new church in the city. He moved into this adventure and several new churches were started. He was left to manage one of them. He was nineteen, and only had three sermons.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

S's learning had begun in the first Bible school and after he left and joined the older pastor, he struggled with his poor knowledge of the Bible until eventually the pastor gathered together a group of young people to study together. He says:

They called it Bible school, but really it wasn't. We had only two lectures in three months. It was virtually just waiting on the Lord.

He acknowledges now that there were weaknesses in the ad-hoc way that learning took place throughout many years. One weakness was the tendency to be bigoted, and towards a self-righteous exclusiveness. Another weakness was that the emphasis on one or two narrow aspects, while he doesn't consider them wrong in themselves, was insufficient in terms of a theology.

### **Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?**

S's early years had been marked by financial difficulties. His mother was a heavy smoker and funds were scarce. However, once S had left school and begun to earn money he had sufficient funds to take himself off to a Bible school.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

The emphasis of the denomination S was with was on the Holy Spirit, the feasts of Israel, the tabernacle of Moses, and eschatology. These were the subjects he studied, for the most part.

## **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

S recalled three particular people who were significant in the development of his theology. Two of them had been traveling in the East together and entered S's life at the same time, but had very different strengths and guided him in quite distinct ways. The following describes the effect of these mentors on his self-education:

### *1 Evangelist*

The guidance of this man really set S alight. He was an evangelist and encouraged S to shadow him whenever he was preaching and teaching. This was the first time that S had gone into a school as an evangelist and he was impressed at the way the older man related to the children, using poster paints on newsprint to illustrate biblical themes and telling stories to help the children to understand spiritual concepts. Through this coach he learnt to inspire, challenge, interest, entertain and impart knowledge to young children in a way he hadn't thought possible.

Another type of evangelistic work that S was introduced to was called an open air meeting. They would stop anywhere, in the street outside a shop, outside the racecourse, or a pub, and start preaching to anyone who would listen. The charisma of the older man would attract people to stay and listen for half an hour at a time. He had an endless store of stories about real life events that he would tell and then he would challenge his listeners to think seriously and deeply about their spiritual condition. S observed the master storyteller at work and learnt the power of this method of teaching. Occasionally the coach would tell S to preach and afterwards they would sit down in his house and go over it, identifying the things that were done well and the areas needing improvement.

Eventually he encouraged S to team up with one of the others in the study group. They went to Australia and hitchhiked everywhere looking for places to preach. Nothing came of this so they returned to New Zealand and did the same thing.

What he learnt from this experience was that although he was inspired by the enthusiasm of the other man, he was still very young and lacked the confidence and communication skills to be effective in evangelism.

### *2 Missionary*

S had met a talented young woman who was a singer. They got married and he took up a

role pastoring another church in Auckland. He describes his ability to do this job:

Then I was offered a church in Auckland. I was in my twenties then, but still very green. We took over the pastoring of the church, which had a congregation of about forty. I pastored there for almost a year but became very discouraged, and gave up.

When the two travelers met S, he was in the study group. One of the men began to talk with the group about his experiences as a missionary. He was very ardent and when a member of the group said that he didn't really feel he was a pastor, this man went to each one asking what each of them thought his strength was. His aim was to teach them that there were many roles they could play, and what suited one may not suit another. From this S realized that he was not suited to pastoring or evangelism, but had really enjoyed studying and teaching in the Bible school and his strength was basically teaching. This event had a major impact on the rest of S's life. He felt as though he had been passed a torch to shine on the path ahead.

### *3 Father figure*

The third person whose help was a major influence on S's theological development was a man who filled the gap his father had created when he left the family to go back to England. This man had also been a missionary in previous years but had returned with his wife and son to New Zealand, and the son and S became firm friends. The father treated S as his own son and they developed a very rich relationship.

He was a father to me, because I had no natural father in my life. I lived in their home. Their son and I were great friends. We would spend hours discussing Pentecostal themes, many of which were very controversial at the time. And his father would join us and his wisdom was invaluable.

S describes his new father as a man of great integrity and dynamism, who was not afraid to look into new ideas about doctrine, and provided many insights into his own learning.

## **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

He believes that many of the accusations he received over the years were a direct result of the enthusiastic but ignorant way he adopted any new ideas that he encountered in his younger days. From time to time people would accuse him of narrow teaching which excluded many of the central theological concepts that mainstream Christians believed to be fundamental to the faith

He had enjoyed his time at the bible college but once he moved into the Pentecostal stream there were no colleges specifically for them, so he studied on his own. There existed at that time a lot of antagonism between Pentecostals and mainstream Protestant churches. During the late 19XX's/early 19XX's, the hostility was extreme. He recalls a threat they received from another fundamentalist group:

If you will join us we'll open every door to you. If you don't join us we'll bankrupt you. We'll fight you.

Some of the new ideas S was interested in, like the teachings of Latter Rain revival, were considered heretical and warnings were put out to other people to keep away from those who taught about it. The advantage of studying outside a formal institution in those days was that people could study interest areas like this one, without fear of reprisals.

## **Summary**

S's story illustrates the serendipitous way a person can become involved in self-directed learning and how his learning was also motivated by chance circumstances and people who crossed his path. He has experienced life in a Bible school which he enjoyed, and study outside formal education which became a necessity.

S was not innately self-directed, although when he came to self-direction he was very clear about the limits of the activities he was engaged in. The fanatical nature of the sect he belonged to combined with personality traits caused him to study within a narrow range of topics to the exclusion of others.

He faced several life crises which sometimes broke his heart. At one point he was very upset because he was unable to persuade his listeners that he was not a heretic:

We faced a major crisis because the people in all the churches we'd been to said they didn't agree with (the new teaching); they didn't believe it.

Although this was not the beginning of his taking personal responsibility for his learning, he was forced to become highly self-directed and his only cultivation came from chance meetings with people who inspired him and coached him along the way. His learning in some areas was like an apprenticeship where he experienced modelling followed by coaching and then the teacher fading out of the picture.

Some important aspects of S's self-education were the freedom to explore new ideas when he was confronted with them, the freedom to rise above antagonistic opponents and the support of a few people who were able to shine a light on his learning from time to time. He was motivated by the nature of the sect he was involved in. Conclusions of research by Merriam and Caffarella (1991) are that adult education is determined by several factors, including the context in which it takes place and who the participants are.

The experiences he describes of being mentored gave him more insights into the direction of his self-directed learning. His experiences in the bible college, while positive for him as a student there, confirm Illich's (1986) arguments that experts decide what legitimate knowledge is. The knowledge he wanted to pursue was not considered legitimate and so he was thrown out.

Although the events S describes with the other churches are appalling in the current postmodern climate where "anything goes", they were perhaps the only events that caused him to question the validity of his new learning at all. He maintains that since that time all five streams of Pentecostalism in New Zealand have to some degree come to believe the same thing.

A recurring theme in the interview with S was that self-education allows you to explore concepts outside the confines of a curriculum. This is an extreme interpretation of the "lack of relevant courses" barrier to adult learning put forward by Patricia Cross (1981).

The task of adult education as set forth by Paulo Freire (1970) and Jack Mezirow (1981) is to assist adults to reflect critically on their internalised values, beliefs and assumptions. There is no evidence that S and his colleagues reflected at all, certainly not critically. They believed they had the truth. It is only in later years that he is able to acknowledge:

You see, each separate Pentecostal denomination had a truth. The Apostolic denomination definitely had a truth. But they kept it to that one denomination, primarily because no-one else would accept it. But now that the other parts of the body accept that truth, there is no need for them to exist as a separate body.

In discussing his reasons for becoming involved in self-directed learning, S doesn't complain about the inconvenience of schedules or location, in fact he loved the experience at Bible school. The context for his self-education was political, rather than personal. He explained that "the Bible school told me they didn't want me back; I was too dangerous".

The overall impression from speaking with S was that given different circumstances, he would not have chosen to educate himself. He enjoyed the interaction and support of the formal situation, and in hindsight he realizes that the path he embarked upon was forked. It was inevitable, but he and his contemporaries were violently opposed by others, because they believed in laying on of hands and worship and other things from Latter Rain.



---

## **Chapter 5 Data – Findings: Secondary respondents**

---

In the next five studies secondary respondents were interviewed about their impressions of self-educated theologians, as a way of triangulating the data. Because the previous studies were possibly slanted by the theologians themselves, the intention was to gather impressions from those who had observed a theologian who had been self-taught to see if there were similarities between the perceptions of the two groups.

### **Case Study Eleven**

Interviewing a member of my family about this self-educated theologian was a strange experience. Instead of the interview being relaxed as it was with other participants, the respondent controlled the interview to a certain extent by reading out prepared answers based on the questionnaire I had sent in advance. She seemed tense as if she herself was being assessed. I interpreted this as her desire to assist in a professional manner and to put the relationship to one side in order to do so.

### **Introduction**

The respondent's father (who will be referred to as "G") had left primary school at twelve years of age, able to read and write fluently, and use maths and problem-solving skills. His family was poor, and unable to pay for further education so he eventually became apprenticed to the New Zealand Railways. Between the two world wars there was no opportunity for him to go to an educational institution. By the time World War II began he was married with a young family to support. He had already begun his evangelistic ministry, starting from being a baker at a Children's Home and then conducting a tent

ministry throughout the north of New Zealand.

At the outset of the war he was asked to be padre at a Military Camp, and the family moved to Wellington. Following the war he moved the family to Wanganui where he continued his teaching ministry. Later the family moved twice more; in both places he was involved in church planting, teaching fundamentalist doctrine to his parishioners who were spread throughout the Waikato, Thames Valley and Coromandel Peninsula. He never studied theology formally, although two siblings went to the Bible Training Institute before becoming missionaries.

A highly practical man, he was frequently called upon to repair vehicles for other people and to assist with practical skills such as house painting, building, wallpapering and general maintenance. His father had been a painter and paper-hanger and he had learnt the skills from him.

**What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

His motivation for conducting his own study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the doctrines and teachings of the Bible so that he could expound on them and make practical applications that would be of benefit to his students. His students were all the people who attended his meetings, his bible classes, his study groups, his cottage meetings; all the people he met in the course of his work, children at Bible in Schools. He was passionate because he saw the need to educate ordinary people about the value of Biblical understanding to enrich their lives and guide their decision making. His deep faith in God was the driving force to study theology. The needs he saw in the lives of others compelled him to train himself, motivated not by greed but by a sense of need.

His motivation also arose out of his vision to share the message of the New Testament, while comparing and contrasting New Testament and Old Testament types (typology in theological studies being the doctrine that symbols for events in the New Testament can be found in the Old Testament).

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

The respondent believes that he was a successful cognitive thinker, and cited this example of his ability to synthesise apparently unrelated issues:

He did a study of Isaac's lamb, the lamb of substitution, Abel's lamb, the lamb of propitiation, and Isaiah's lamb, the lamb of expiation and he cited Abel's lamb as the fact that the Lord Jesus was accepted as the propitiation for our sins. God accepted Abel's gift and he rejected Cain's. Isaac's lamb, the lamb of expiation - he linked this to Jesus paying the penalty for or making amends for our sins and he stated that Isaac's lamb, the lamb of substitution for all those who believe in Jesus, the lamb that died for us. He used to expound quite a lot on this. He talked about the dilemma that Abraham faced - "take your son, your only son, Isaac...." and he expounded on how through the death of Isaac's lamb great blessing came and through the death of Jesus great blessing came to all people.

She is satisfied that his knowledge of God and relationship with God were second-to-none, and that he was very effective in reaching out to needy people, meeting them at their point of need and wisely and caringly teaching them "a better way."

She feels satisfied too that his understanding of theology as he taught it was adequate for his needs at that time, his memory for scripture was very accurate, and his wisdom in comparing one scripture with another for illumination was quite deep.

### **Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?**

He came from a poor background, there was little money around after World War II and when he got married he had five pounds to his name.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

He taught many topics throughout his career. A few were Old Testament topics, such as the Passover and great Bible leaders. He also taught on the atonement and the meaning of the Levitical feasts.

Some of the New Testament topics he taught were the Holy Spirit; the gospel; the role of women in the church; the church and its functions; the work of elders and deacons. He gave excellent teaching for new believers, and taught about the role of the high priest, baptism, the family, the narrow path. In regard to the life of the believer, he taught about how the Torah could be lined up with New Testament righteousness. The respondent claims that the outcome of his learning was "synthesis all the time", drawing out themes from unrelated stories.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

A dominant theme throughout the interview about G was the reliance on mentors to guide him. Apart from having an extensive library himself to draw upon, as a young man he lived and worked in the Marton Children's home under the leadership of a man named Norman Hyde, a noted theological teacher and writer, who he revered and from whom he learned vital principles and practices of Christian living. This gentleman took G under his wing and trained him in the art of teaching biblical doctrine.

He also relied heavily on the writings of a Dispensationalist leader, Dr Charles Scofield. One could say that this man was practically a mentor, if only from a distance. Certainly G's doctrinal beliefs were strongly shaped and influenced by Dr Scofield, a lawyer turned Christian who popularized the doctrines of J.N. Darby, a British clergyman and an early leader of the sect called the Plymouth Brethren. Scofield had been ordained by a Congregational Council, which did not require any formal theological training on his part, and produced the Scofield Reference Bible, which was the King James version with a system of chain references and footnotes setting forth the doctrines of Darby. G used this Bible exclusively, and thus had a very narrow viewpoint.

Another person who had a remarkable impact on G was a man by the name of Gypsy Smith, the Methodist revival preacher from Britain, whose religious broadcasts heard in a Hunterville garage in 1926, sparked the young G's motivation, making him aware of the amazing potential of radio. G shadowed Gypsy Smith for some time during a visit to New Zealand in the 1920's, absorbing his teaching and when the teacher became ill, G continued the teaching in his place. He said he knew it all by heart. Later he prepared

regular teaching programmes for radio in New Zealand and overseas.

Although his contact with academics was limited, he did meet other self-educated theologians at teaching conferences - the Brethren held quarterly conferences every year, where he was able to share and interact with many noted teachers, people such as American author Edwin Orr and NZ-Scottish preacher Robert Auld, but only within the Open Brethren movement. He also interacted with preachers at camps that people attended mainly for teaching ministry and for fellowship.

He went regularly to the monthly Ministers' Fraternal, but was shocked at the whisky-drinking, pipe-smoking men he met there who in G's view had nothing to set them apart from the needy people he tried to teach. He accepted the Baptist minister, but was totally against others like Pentecostal, Apostolic, and Seventh Day Adventist. He believed they were wildly inaccurate in their doctrines and if he mixed with them they would contaminate him.

He didn't encourage his own children to go to university, because he thought there was too much erroneous teaching there, especially in theological courses, he was afraid of error.

G was an excellent teacher, applying knowledge that he gained during many hours of study, revising to get it right, using the Bible and his extensive library. He had an incredible memory, and could accurately quote true stories, and anecdotes, and long poems, which he used wisely to reinforce a teaching point. He became widely known and respected throughout his denomination in New Zealand as a sought-after teacher and preacher who could inspire, challenge, interest, entertain and impart knowledge to any audience he was asked to speak to.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

Credentials did not impede his career because people were not university oriented in the country. He had no desire to push himself forward and did not like the idea of being a "big shot".

## Summary

The need to source informational material for himself for a specific purpose motivated him to detail and to major on the important aspects to enable him to achieve the goals set by himself. The sense of purpose was not imposed by others, so G was able to take full ownership of his learning. Brookfield (1986) maintains that this is an important aspect of adult learning.

As a self-directed learner he would probably be described in Houle's (1961) terms as having two main characteristics. First, he was activity-oriented - he participated in self-directed learning projects for the purpose of having fellowship with like-minded people. Second, he was goal-oriented – his participation was in order to achieve the end goal.

His own life experiences were rich resources for learning and he was motivated by internal incentives – his devotion to God, his passion for bringing a better quality to the lives of those around him. Knowles' (1980) major assumptions are that adults' experiences are a rich resource for learning and that adults are aware of specific learning needs generated by real life tasks or problems. These assumptions match the approach of G very well.

In addition he had the personality characteristics that made self-directed learning successful. He was ready for self-direction after being inspired by his early mentors, the experiences he had had as Padre in a military camp during the war contributed to his passion to meet the spiritual needs of the people around him, his learning style suited the methods he chose, whereby he was able to devote many hours to studying at times that suited his hectic traveling schedule. Cross (1981, p. 104) lists five areas that may discourage adult learners from enrolling in formal education courses and two of these are echoed in G's case: the lack of interesting, practical or relevant courses and time requirements.

His understanding of theology as he taught it was adequate for his needs at that time, his memory for scripture was very accurate, and his wisdom in comparing one scripture with another for illumination was deep.

The weakness of his self-education was that he would not listen to other points of view and accept that they might be valid. For example his theories on dispensationalism were immovable. There was undoubtedly a need to enhance his thinking skills so that he could ask critical questions and reflect on his learning, however without such training being imposed on him, he remained narrow in his views. He was a critical thinker only as far as it applied to the study he was involved in. Once he had satisfied his own questions that was it, for he relied on God to direct him.

G read widely, but apart from his peers there was not a lot of cross-checking - his friends would be quick to criticise if they disagreed with him, and he would then re-examine his own point of view in the light of scripture and current thinking within accepted circles. Without the benefit of dialogue with other teachers and students, and the opportunity to study under others who were considered qualified to teach, there were areas of incomplete knowledge and understandings, and a great deal of prejudice due to ignorance.

He put his own interpretation on things, he wasn't restricted by the teaching of an institution, he didn't have to conform to the approach of a particular course, he had a free approach.

## **Case Study Twelve**

The subject of this case died in 1992, but had been actively engaged in theological activities right up to that time. His wife agreed to participate to provide information about his self-directed learning activities as she remembered them. Her recollections were useful, if somewhat biased. Other information was provided by her in the form of an article published by Moody Press.

### **Introduction**

W was born in 1930 in the far north of New Zealand, the eldest of six children, and left high school in the fourth form. His father, a seaman-turned-sheep farmer, died when he was nine. His mother, whose brother was a bishop, had dreams of him becoming an Anglican



clergyman, but at that stage he merely wanted to lead a dance band, being extremely musical and at that stage having little interest in church.

At sixteen he moved to Auckland to finish his education, and while living at a Mission hostel became a Christian, started preaching and never wanted to do anything else from that time on.

**What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

His motivation to study theological matters came from his fervent desire to become an evangelist. He was very concerned about the permissiveness of society. His passion was for a moral and spiritual revival in New Zealand.

It was his objective to get people to accept responsibility for their nation by making a covenant to pray to God for the restoration of high moral principles. He achieved impressive results, especially in the Solomon Islands.

**To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

He began with very few resources and used and re-used his material with great fervour. His material was very effective; he was guided in his learning by a gentleman who later became a prominent clergyman, and conducted most of his knowledge development by studying biographies. Pictures of him on top of the television in their home show him to be young and full of vision, but towards the end he became extremely cynical - those pictures are not put out for viewing. He was widely acclaimed in the area of revival preaching. He wrote prophetically about events in the future and the events of today prove him to have been correct.

**What general subject categories attract theologians?**

He preached about revival using a range of topics from the Bible. He wrote about what was happening to Israel – the respondent says he was the "prophet of doom".

## **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

Throughout the story the respondent told about W, there was a recurring pattern of mentors being significant in his self-education. The following explores the role they played in his theological development.

### *1 Evangelist*

The person in charge at the Mission hostel was a sincere, genuine man who made the spiritual development of the boarders at the hostel a priority. This deeply impressed the young W. Although he was born with a hole in his heart and was often quite ill, even propped up in bed he would devour the biographies of famous preachers and evangelists that this mentor gave to him. This was during the period in 19XX when he first came to Auckland. The respondent said:

His rounded shoulders gave evidence of hours and hours of reading – he even read the back of his bus pass.

### *2 Open Air Preacher*

Early in 1954 a quick witted and humorous character arrived in Auckland from the UK to set up a New Zealand branch of Open Air preachers. W worked alongside this man and observed his audacity and refusal to allow difficulties to stand in his way. A new confidence emerged, confidence to be Maori, confidence to be unorthodox in his style, and somewhat aggressive in his approach.

### *3 Pianist*

Very musical himself, W fell in love with a young woman who was a talented pianist. He married her and she became his coach, encouraging him to pursue his theological studies to a deeper level and supporting his ministry with her talent throughout their marriage.

Other resources that assisted his education were varied. He started off in ministry with a

good grounding of memorisation of scripture but after 1963 when he married the respondent, she nagged him about teaching in more depth. Still reading voraciously he kept up with what was going on in the world, reading about General Montgomery, Malcolm X, and Winston Churchill – secular books of people who had made their mark in the world. Initially his reading had consisted of books given to him by his first mentor, but gradually he built up his own large library of wide ranging Christian material as well as many biographies of famous people, both good and bad.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

Despite the late appeal of educational pursuits, W was an orator who could mesmerise a crowd. He had “a way with words” that was unique and often quaint. During one particular visit to hospital he was told that he had only a fifty percent chance of surviving an operation on his damaged heart. He said he didn’t like “the other percent” and checked himself out of the hospital. He could hold a crowd of 20,000 in spite of his small build, speaking like a statesman. In 19XX, he was the chief spokesperson at the concluding part of a major March. A powerful orator, he spoke to the crowd in short but powerful sentences:

We are not here telling the government what to do. We are telling the government and the national what WE intend to do. We are not telling other New Zealanders how to live and how to act. We are covenanting to pray for this city, to pray for this nation.

His enthusiasm for oratory swung around to include rhetoric about the permissiveness of society. His passion was for a moral and spiritual revival in New Zealand. He was the spokesperson at marches that were held in major cities throughout New Zealand. Seventy thousand people marched, holding placards that clearly stated their cause. His mastery of language was envied greatly by a politician-friend.

In May 19XX he preached to overflowing churches in South Auckland. In September of the same year it was reported that his evangelistic campaign in South Auckland was, in the words of the respondent, "the greatest thing that has ever happened in Papakura".

In the 19XX's he held revival meetings in the Pacific Islands, especially in the Solomon Islands. There was deep and loud repentance, much confession, signs and wonders and transformed churches.

A Christian newspaper published his thoughts about the destiny of the Maori people. He predicted trouble in New Zealand with racial disharmony in the 1960's before any hostilities emerged. During the years 19XX to 19XX he was a mediating and reconciling voice with regard to contentious issues about the Treaty of Waitangi.

## **Summary**

The narrative indicates that the self-directed learning of W was not particularly well-rounded or complete. Although gifted as a communicator, he continually struggled to improve the depth of his teaching. He was always striving to deepen his listeners' learning in theological matters though hundreds of people flocked to listen to this vibrant man. His learning activities had no bounds other than to examine the leadership styles of famous leaders, and to provide a vehicle for evangelism. There is no evidence to suggest that he made critical judgements with regard to the validity of his learning (Brookfield, 1992), although he did rely on the wisdom of a mentor.

His motivation arose from a passionate desire to communicate his knowledge. One of his learning activities was writing; another was speaking. In these two areas, he excelled. He had complete control over his learning, and his own evaluation was the only assessment. He was not constrained by the barriers identified by Patricia Cross (1981) – schedules, location, lack of relevant courses or time requirements. His mastery of language could be attributed to voracious reading of well-written books during long bouts of illness.

He was not concerned with academic excellence beyond reading but continued to work to build strong morality and to bring about reconciliation between Maori and Pakeha. The characteristics that enabled him to do this work were that he was:

- able to listen to both sides
- able to empathise with people
- always looking for reconciliation
- accepted and trusted by radicals and reactionaries alike
- always present at the Waitangi celebrations.

Coming from a poor background as a child, with the underachievement that has typified so many young Maori, W achieved educational goals that some people would have thought impossible. His success came from his many hours of reading, forced upon him by repeated periods of being bed-ridden, along with his interest in keeping abreast with political, national and world events.

Two important components of W's self-directed learning are that he stood back from belonging to any set group and was not too concerned as to which denomination had the "whole truth". He had the freedom to minister wherever he saw an opportunity, whether that be in a church, on a marae, out-of-doors or at a conference. Carl Rogers (1969) talks about the basic assumptions of "experiential learning" being first and foremost that the human being is active and free; second, that human beings have an inner drive, an intrinsic motivation for self-development; third, that in a favourable environment all human beings can develop. All three assumptions are present in the experiential learning of W.

### **Case Study Thirteen**

Although "I" died some years ago, she was selected for the study because she was a woman, in the first instance, and because she represented an older age group than the other women in the study who had been actively engaged in their self-directed learning in the specified period. The respondent who agreed to talk about her self-education was unfortunately unable to remember very much about I's learning in detail when it came to the interview. The result was disappointing and the case study lacks quality data.

## **Introduction**

The respondent explained that "I" had spent the first part of her life as a spinster until her sister died leaving a husband and family. Somewhat late in life she married her widowed brother-in-law to provide his children with a mother, and gave birth to two sons of her own. Her husband was more than twenty years her senior, and by the time her boys were in their early twenties, he had become quite senile and had for a long time been unable to earn a living.

The family lived very humbly, even though the children from the husband's first family were by this time adults and had left home. "I" pursued an interest in theology and became well-known in her local area (a small city in New Zealand) for her excellent bible teaching within the church at first and then on radio. The respondent said that she wishes now that she had taken more notice of I's radio talks because they were of such good quality.

One of her sons became a preacher, and was very proud of his mother's abilities, saying that it was her fine preaching and teaching that had inspired him to take a similar path.

### **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

I's motivation to educate herself on theological matters arose out of her deep abiding faith in God and her need to make a worthwhile life for herself, while caring for her senile husband and two growing sons. She was totally sold out to God, and her desire to communicate her learning about God and Christ sparked the presentation of biblical ideas on radio. For many years she had been an avid listener to other preachers who gave radio messages, and found the medium fascinating. She particularly liked the fact that you could listen whether you were at home, in the car, in the garden or on holiday.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

In endeavouring to respond to this question accurately, the respondent struggled to remember what "I" had said about her learning. She did however recollect the older woman's frustration when she was unable to purchase a book that she had heard

mentioned on the radio, because her own learning was totally dependent on these and on what she heard preached over the air.

The respondent had listened to some of I's radio talks and remembered being very proud to know such a talented woman, especially knowing the circumstances she had to suffer at home with her husband's deteriorating mental condition.

### **Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?**

There was no doubt little money for "I" to spend on education for herself as the family was very short of funds and she had two young adult sons whose education was dependent on her ability to pay expenses. For this reason, and because she was unable to leave her elderly husband unattended, her own learning came from buying study books and listening to preachers on the radio.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

She had a passion for communicating with other people about God and this drove her to study evangelism in the New Testament gospels.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

To develop her learning during the years that her circumstances kept her homebound, she used study books as her guide and was coached by listening to other preachers on the radio.

When asked how effective the self-directed learning had been, the respondent told this rather touching story:

She was presenting a gospel message one morning and her elderly husband was sitting at his house hanging on every word and at the end of the message when she asked people to place their faith and trust in Jesus, he responded and gave his heart to Jesus.



The real proof of her effectiveness, however, was the ever growing pile of letters from grateful listeners that she received every week after she had been "on air".

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

Although her listeners and the local congregation thought very well of her, the clergy didn't seem to advertise her talent. Whether this was because she was a woman or because she held no formal qualifications is difficult to say. There was considerable personal praise for her ability from them but they didn't see her as their equal. Her younger son became a Baptist minister and was always impressed with her ability.

### **Summary**

Several things that are known about self-directed learning are relevant when examining I's experience. First, as Hiemstra (1994) points out, that self directed learning does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from others and second, that self-directed study can involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading. Some of I's learning would have taken place within the church setting, taking careful note of the weekly sermons. The study books she purchased were used for self-guided reading, the main activity associated with her developing theology.

Also true of "I" is the observation made by Malcolm Knowles in his 1975 publication *Self-directed Learning*, which argues that self-directed learners are motivated by various internal incentives, such as a need for self-esteem and satisfaction of accomplishment. In her kindness she had married her sister's widower to care for his children, only to find that within a relatively short space of time she was caring for a senile old man.

Tough's (1979, p. 7) research on people engaged in learning projects is also pertinent in that she engaged in a series of related episodes, adding up to at least seven hours, where more than half of her total motivation was to gain and retain fairly clear knowledge and skill or to produce some other lasting change.

In essence, learner self-direction refers to the individual characteristics that lead to taking primary responsibility for personal learning, a description that fits "I" well. Motivated by her

devotion to God, she was fully in control of her ceaseless efforts toward an unselfish goal.

## **Case Study Fourteen**

The respondent for this case has been a member of the church that the subject (J) was connected with for many years and during the time he was in ministry there, has had many opportunities to observe the outcomes of J's self-education.

### **Introduction**

J was actively engaged in teaching evangelism for around 20 years, throughout New Zealand and on occasion in Australia. He was involved in camps for young people as well as a few conferences and had also lectured at a private school of evangelism.

Married with teenage children, J was in his mid fifties and had a background in horticulture from his upbringing in a family who owned an orchard.

Perhaps it is not surprising that he applied a high level of practicality to his study of theology as well. He and his wife had been through both hard times and good times, which served to strengthen their relationship. These ups and downs also moulded their attitudes towards the people they worked with. J's attitude towards his students was characterised by care and commitment.

### **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

Throughout his youth J spent most of his holidays and weekends helping out in the family business. The family members were practical people, who had learnt their skills "on the job". When J began making arrangements for his entry into church work, it seemed perfectly natural to him and his family that he too would learn the necessary skills "on the job".

The challenging situations J and his wife and family had faced, and the immediate

opportunities that J got to teach people about God, were the most likely motivators for studying on his own. Going to a formal place of learning to study had not appeared to be a consideration. He grew up working in the family orchard, often spending long periods of time alone, and it probably didn't seem any different to spend hours on his own studying the Bible and a few related books.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

J had friends who held different theological views to his own, but felt they were misguided. He sent letters to help them and anyone else with whom he happened to hold theological conversations. His intention was not to be controversial but to clarify the issues concerning what he believed the Bible to teach about such things as speaking in tongues, divine healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is worth noting that he did not have an extensive library, but preferred to spend hours and hours going over relevant parts of the Bible, noting down points that interested him, and comparing them with other related sections. He believed that he could immerse himself in the scriptures, and the Holy Spirit would be his teacher.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

Typical of several people in fundamentalist churches, J had a particular interest in the subjects that dealt with speaking in tongues, divine healing and the Holy Spirit. His interest was in proving that they were still relevant gifts for the church for today, that their time was not past.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

Introspective by nature, J spent a lot of time with his family and on his own. As a result, some people found him distant and emotionally reserved. Others found him arrogant, because he did not seek out the opinions of others.

## **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

When the respondent was asked to comment on the ability of J to teach theology she was somewhat uncertain whether what he did could be described as theology or not:

Well I would say that most of time he wasn't teaching theology but he would have liked to. He was preaching most of the time in our church on Sundays, but not teaching theology. He would take some bible studies for members within the church, and I suppose there he would be teaching basic bible doctrine... but I wouldn't call it theology.

On questioning her further about her comment "but he would have liked to", she talked about a certain arrogance in his point of view. According to her, he would have been well equipped to teach theology, but some didn't like the way he considered people to be "off the rails" if they disagreed with him.

He had equipped himself to teach by being a person of extreme self-discipline. The respondent commented on his rigid pattern of behaviour:

Oh well, I suppose you would say he was a perfectionist. Not many people could keep up his routine. He was a stickler for time management, I guess ... if you were talking to him he would be glancing at his watch all the time, and you knew he was thinking "Got to end this, time to revise my notes for Sunday".

The result of this strict routine was that although he cared for people and was committed to helping them, his personal style and perfectionism demanded that unless dialogue with other people was part of the plan he had drawn up he found it difficult to be flexible.

His teaching was very effective, to the point that most people listening to him for the first time assumed he had done some formal study. His interpretation of difficult biblical passages was outstanding. He once told the respondent that from an early age he had been fascinated with the ideas debated by his elders and even then had spent long hours reading and re-reading the text of the Bible to try to understand it. By the time he finished High School he had bought himself a Greek lexicon and had begun to make extensive

notes on a range of words that people had been arguing about. The things that intrigued him most were tongues, healing and the Holy Spirit.

He contributed to the understanding of the people he taught by mentoring them individually as well as teaching them in groups; in this way he was looking after their spiritual development. He had a very strong belief in doing that. He himself may have had a mentor, but the respondent didn't know about it. He did, however, have a small set of books on the subjects he was interested in.

His lack of credentials was irrelevant in the situation he was in, because the socio-economic area was very depressed and the people mostly worked in factories. However, the respondent felt that he might have adopted a more tolerant view towards other positions if he had spent some time in a place where many divergent views were tossed around. The respondent notes that on occasion he would make assertions without backing them up sufficiently and more often than not offered dogmatism rather than argument.

## **Summary**

In short, the education J gained in terms of everyday learning consisted of constant hard work and taking responsibility for the management of that learning. Much of the work he did was a series of demanding mental exercises that a lot of people would find difficult (such as learning to understand Greek words without having the advantage of a full knowledge of Greek). He is a person who fits with Malcolm Knowles' (1970) definition of "andragogy".

Another important learning function in J's case was the management of time. The difficulties he experienced were largely to do with the conflict between his own plan for his time and that in the minds of others.

The fact that he does not subject his learning to critical appraisal by peers or a mentor would place him outside the bounds of Brookfield's (1992) description of a technician of self-directed learning in that he does not appear to be capable of questioning the validity of the intellectual pursuits in which he engages.

An important component of J's achievement is the successful mentoring of individuals with whom he is in contact.

## **Case Study Fifteen**

K was selected for the study because she is a woman and represents a younger woman's perspective on the issue of self-education. The respondent who talked to me about K has got to know her through the church they belong to.

### **Introduction**

The personal details about K are somewhat sketchy, but provide a little information about her. She is in the thirty-five to forty age group and has no children of her own. She belongs to a Christian community of people who believe that they should offer their membership relevant courses based on the philosophical views of the church they are in.

K has recently been appointed to teach in the small bible school run by the church, a school that is endeavouring to survive in a world where private providers are in abundance. Despite her newness to the role, she is regarded as more effective than many of the other teachers at the school. She has introduced some innovations in the short time she has been with the school that she hopes will provide a means of improving the overall standard of teaching and enhance the odds of survival. The respondent who was interviewed about K made the following observation:

She is conscious that the checking on people's learning is not done properly and this is something she's picked up on and well, she is well thought of by the other teachers so hopefully they will make it possible for her to work on it.

During the interview, there were several references to K's ability to teach and evaluate the effectiveness of her teaching.

### **What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

The reason she has entered the field of teaching (and as a result the field of learning on her own) in her late thirties, is because her marriage has ended and she is now free to pursue interests that she has had for some time but which had been put to one side because her husband didn't share them, and did not wish her to be involved in such things. When the school was first started, she wanted to be involved with it and now the opportunity has come, she has taken advantage of it. However, she has no teaching background and no theological training. The culture of the church is very much one of "learning-on-the-job", despite the emphasis on credentials in most learning establishments. Nevertheless, because this is not an accredited provider of education; the teaching is tailored to the nature and purpose of the church community.

### **To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

The respondent believes that K is effective for several reasons. First, the new role provides her with a welcome diversion from the problems she encountered in her marriage and she has thrown herself into it wholeheartedly. Second, she has been willing and able to benefit from the experience and guidance of her two mentors. Third, there is a small library which she has been free to access and fourth, she has been given time to immerse herself in the topics prior to making contact with her students. Opportunities for conversations about the concepts she has been studying are plentiful, as the college is residential and the staff enjoy collegial discussions over meals and recreational activities. Challenging other teachers is not part of the culture of the college and the respondent sees this as the major weakness of K's learning:

I don't really think she could be described as a critical thinker ... because she wants to grow and she wants the college to survive so at this point in time she is keen to fit in and learn everything she can from the others. She is very defensive of everything there, whenever you ask her about it she is on the defensive straight away. I think she's just so grateful to them, it's a bit of a block to growth in my opinion but maybe it will change.



The main contribution that the respondent believes K can make at the college relates to teaching and evaluation. She is by nature interested in people and how they "tick" so when she began meeting with her group of learners, she would spend the first session acquainting herself with their preferences for learning. During this time she was alerted to the students' uncertainties about the learning they had already been involved in, and discovered that they didn't always know what was expected of them. It seemed obvious to K that this was fundamental to their success and she immediately set about drawing up some templates to share with other staff to encourage more questioning and interaction as a check on learning throughout sessions. She had a very light teaching load so she had time to develop some ideas:

The environment at the school was very non-threatening, so she sat down and talked with the other teachers about what she was doing to make sure that it was okay with them. They encouraged her to pick up the responsibility for designing the templates, although she still had to make sure that the guy in charge agreed with her ideas. It was all very nice and no-one wanting to upset anyone else. That would be the bonus of them all not having, you know not being qualified, at least I don't think many of them are, they don't think they're better than each other.

The more K became involved, the more she realised that she had some gaps in her own understanding, both of the biblical content and the role of a teacher. She wanted to develop, so she bought books from a Teachers' Resource Centre on a range of teaching matters: activities to introduce variety into lessons, learning preferences for adults, and theories of teaching. She spent hours devouring the content of these books.

### **What general subject categories attract theologians?**

The church provided a lengthy induction period for K, to allow her time to get to grips with the subject matter – mainly based around New Testament topics. However, much of her learning related to the teaching side of her role. She became fascinated with the theoretical basis for teaching, and ways to help all students learn. Then she realized that one of the best teachers was the Jesus of the New Testament, so she began to study his teaching methods with great interest.

### **Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

When she was invited to take up the position by the person in charge of the school, who recognized her ability and had for a long time held her in high esteem, she spent many useful hours with him and one of the other teachers discussing the particular style that they preferred.

The way that she has gone about it has been to take a particular book of the bible at a time and tease it out with these two men, asking them how they would approach this concept, or that. Her learning has been very much guided by their approach. However, this has been more to do with distinctive style than content learning.

### **Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

In the opinion of my source, K is very conscious of her own limitations to fulfill the demands of the position she has taken on, due to the fact that she has no formal qualifications and no background in teaching theology. She seems to be born to teach, despite the lack of a teaching background, because she is able to establish rapport with her students very easily and has a natural appreciation of the different learning styles that people have.

There are some things the respondent believes K will not be able to do unless she does some formal study herself. She will be limited in the amount of theology she can teach because she hasn't studied Greek or Hebrew and won't be able to get into exegesis.

The school actually offers its students the opportunity to study Greek or Hebrew so that when they want to they will be able to competently exegete the scripture texts. There's only one teacher who's studied it there himself so he's the only one who can teach it.

Overall, the respondent believes that K is well suited to the role she has recently chosen. She is a willing learner, empathises with the students and has adapted to the new environment well.

## Summary

In this case study, the context and personality of the subject have been a major factor in the effectiveness of the self-directed learning that has occurred. She has been well supported by the community around her and is herself a person who approaches her work with care and diligence. There is no training provided for those who teach at the school, the assumption being that a sound knowledge of the Bible is all that is needed. K is astute enough to realize that there is more to it and has been at pains to ensure that her teaching style meets the needs of both students and the organization.

Her method of self-learning closely followed the form recommended by Kolb (1984) when he says that adults only learn through continuous experiences. She began by reflecting on the experience she had with students, related it to her own learning at school, made a decision to take action on what she had observed and sought out resources to assist her. She took the theories of teaching and learning that she read about in books from the library and compared them with the teaching techniques she found in stories about Jesus in the New Testament. When she had developed an outline of the principles of good teaching, she translated the learning into action by using them in her own teaching. She then critically considered the result. The learning cycle began again immediately. So her knowledge of teaching and learning, and of theology itself, was created through the transactions that led to experiences which occurred between K and the Bible school in which she taught.

In learning about K's (discovery) learning method, it is obvious that she is a person of high self-direction, according to Gerald Grow's (1991) model shown on page 26, one who used deliberate strategies to conduct her own learning projects.

Her motivation came from the practical outworking of the learning which occurred almost immediately, and being in control of the learning and assessing its effectiveness.

The method she used enabled her to make critical judgements and to question the validity of her intellectual pursuits (Brookfield, 1992). The weakness has been a lack of critical review of her learning by peers and a tendency to be uncritical of the views of those around her.

---

## Chapter 6 Analysis of the case studies

---

The study of self-educated theologians in New Zealand has been guided by eight research questions which arose from the literature review undertaken in Chapter Two:

- 1      What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?
- 2      To what extent are the motivators different according to personal characteristics (e.g. age, marital status, educational background, studying alone or with assistance from a mentor?)
- 3      To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?
- 4      Do non-traditional models of education attract older people more than younger? (e.g. self-education)
- 5      Does cost influence the decision to self-educate?
- 6      What general subject categories attract theologians?
- 7      Do they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?
- 8      Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?

The themes that emerged from the interviews are evident in the literature on self-directed learning, especially in the writings of Stephen Brookfield (1986, 1992, 1995), Malcolm

Knowles (1975, 1980), David Kolb (1984) and Carl Rogers (1969). The literature clearly supports the notion that control and motivation are very important to self-directed learners.

The research questions are treated separately in the summary of the fourteen case studies.

**What reasons do religious professionals give as primary motivators for being self-educated?**

Penland (1979) in Merriam (1998) responded to a similar question in a national study of adult learning in the United States and found that the reasons people gave for planning their own learning emphasised having control over both the learning style and the learning process. Merriam concludes that control, freedom, and flexibility are the major motivators for engaging in self-directed learning.

A slight shift on Merriam's opinion was given by Stephen Brookfield in 1993 who contended that self-direction is affected by the degree of control adults have over their lives as well as the amount of access they have to learning resources. A few years later, he observed that “self-directedness—that is, autonomous control over aspects of work life, personal relationships, societal structures, and educational pursuits” is rare (Brookfield 1986: 94) and Peter Jarvis (in Long, 1990) agrees that self-direction may be the exception rather than the rule in contemporary society.

Despite this, the literature reviewed identified a number of further reasons for people educating themselves and the participants in this study were diverse in their own reasons. Their responses have been matched against the reasons given by key writers in the literature reviewed in the following table:

### Reasons for self-education

Lack of interesting, practical or relevant courses (Cross, 1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decided that what they were learning at the university was actually rubbish.</li> <li>• had lost their motivation to study at university</li> <li>• lectures lacked substance</li> <li>• could study interest areas.</li> <li>• wanted to study certain subjects in depth</li> <li>• want to give their students the very best</li> <li>• want to see changes taking place in students' lives.</li> <li>• don't teach for the sake of them knowing something, they teach to change their lives.</li> <li>• can construct meaning out of the study by staying in the real world.</li> <li>• have to teach courses that are specific to the church community</li> </ul>
Scheduling (Cross, 1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need flexibility because of workload</li> </ul>
Inconvenient location (Cross, 1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visas arrived and they left New Zealand</li> <li>• often ill and spent time reading while in bed</li> </ul>
Time requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need flexibility to fit with punishing schedules</li> <li>• to go to such a place to 'learn' theology would be a waste of time</li> </ul>
Lack information about programs/ procedures (Cross, 1981)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NZ public is poorly served in Christian literature</li> </ul>
Desire to purposefully explore a field of knowledge (Brookfield, 1982)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• needed to resolve the conflicts that arose in their thinking.</li> <li>• had a vision to teach Christian doctrine.</li> <li>• needed to improve their knowledge to a level equal to their ability to speak.</li> <li>• could study interest areas.</li> <li>• commitment to God</li> <li>• wanted to study certain subjects in depth</li> <li>• to gain an in-depth understanding of the doctrines and teachings of the Bible</li> </ul>
To cope with life-changing events (Zemke & Zemke, 1984)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the mission policy was changed</li> <li>• marriage has ended</li> <li>• challenging personal situations</li> <li>• had experienced a personal trauma which caused them to start questioning</li> </ul>
Control, freedom and flexibility (Merriam, 1998)  Control over lives and access to learning resources (Brookfield, 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• motivation came from within rather than a need to have a qualification.</li> <li>• allows you to synthesise, think laterally</li> <li>• able to source informational material for oneself and to major on the important aspects to achieve goals set</li> <li>• NZ public is poorly served in Christian literature.</li> <li>• could study interest areas.</li> <li>• wanted to study certain subjects in depth</li> <li>• like studying, can set their own goals and just set about doing it</li> <li>• easier to use the library, internet or books than go to a course</li> <li>• Sense of purpose has not been imposed by others, can take full ownership of the learning</li> <li>• didn't have to conform to the approach of a particular course:</li> </ul>

Because they have a use for the knowledge or skill being sought. (Brookfield, 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• needed to prepare sermons</li> <li>• saw a need to educate ordinary people above their status.</li> <li>• the way for training is practical work – a system where you've got hands on</li> </ul>
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• between the two World Wars there was little opportunity to go to university.</li> <li>• one had a young family and no money.</li> <li>• one was very short of funds and had married an old man with a family which she had to care for.</li> </ul>

Table 6.1

In comparing the responses by the participants, several similarities and differences stood out. For instance, B believes that staying in the real world while conducting study privately is superior to the artificial experience of being cloistered in a theological college. (These thoughts are mirrored by E when he talks about “a system where you’ve got hands on it, doing it not sitting in a sterile environment listening to all the theory of it”.) Constructivists believe that learning can only occur if the new information relates to something already known that gives it meaning. Likewise, B says that he can construct meaning out of the study from staying in the “real” world.

A's decision to drop out of the formal education system seems to be an echo of Boud (1989, p. 40-3) who holds that the self-directed or andragogical tradition of learning in adult education seeks to remove the restrictions of didactic teachers from learning.’ The respondent said that he was

Disappointed with (name of organisation). I wanted more.... I suppose my mind wanted more definitiveness. I wanted to know. And I thought to myself, if this is all there is, it’s a waste of time. He was doing Ephesians, I remember so well, and it was scholarly but it had no ... bite in it., and it went back to... but it had no bite to it. And so I decided well I’ll do this on my own.

In line with this and perhaps more commonly phrased among the interviewees, was the comment from E that theology is a practical subject, not intended for head knowledge:

I think most probably ... from an early age I have always most probably picked up a spiritual truth – the whole thing over the carpentry apprenticeship – the whole thing and I believe that is the way for training – is work, practical work – there has got to



be people – whether carpentry or ministry, the way, the best highest call of learning is with a system where you've got hands on it, doing it, not sitting in a sterile environment listening to all the theory of it. And I think even now that would be proved that that is the best way for education.

Zemke and Zemke (1984) would wholeheartedly support this view. In an article entitled *30 Things We Know For Sure About Adult Learning* they maintain that straightforward "how-to" is the preferred content orientation of adults. A response from D was similar to the previous one:

Decided that what I was learning at the university was actually rubbish. I can remember a certain incident at university; they were teaching me about substances in physics, that didn't exist. And they were teaching me about how these substances react with other substances that don't exist. And I thought, well that's a real useful tool to know. I'm going to benefit from this greatly, so I really lost interest straight away. .... I really struggled through that year because I'd lost all my motivation.

In an article entitled "Losing their Religion", Garance Franke-Ruta (2000) argues that many college students dream of an education that will give them the power to make a difference. Why this fades he argues, may be because adolescent dreams disappear, or it could be that the system crushes their aspirations.

The interview with B supports the claim that in a formal education setting there is no time to pursue one's own vision. When asked why he chose to study theology by himself, rather than a formal place of learning, B replied:

I have done both. My self study has been due to not wanting to take time for further institution study, and it's cheaper to study independently. I believe that staying in the real world while conducting study privately is superior to the artificial experience of being cloistered in a theological college. I can construct meaning out of the study by staying in the real world. I had been in some discussions with people of very different persuasions and needed to resolve the conflicts that arose in my thinking. I experienced a personal trauma, which caused me to start

questioning. The subjective aspects of my faith disappeared and I found myself questioning deeply.

C was another participant who would agree with this hypothesis. When asked what he hoped to achieve from his theological studies, he said:

I never thought about it as being theological study, I was just pursuing the knowledge of God which I mean that is what theology means – just seeking a relationship with God.

Like A, B experienced a period of personal crisis where there was an intersection of serendipity and deliberation (Collins, 1988; Candy, 1991; Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991) and where a concrete experience paved the way for reflection, generalization to other situations, experimentation with the new learning and critical evaluation of the outcome (Kolb, 1984). B described this situation:

I was motivated to study more deeply as the result of a personal trauma, which caused me to start questioning. The subjective aspects of my faith disappeared and I found myself questioning deeply.

C's response to being asked what had motivated him to get into theological study was somewhat similar to that given by F. He said:

I never thought about it as being theological study I was just pursuing the knowledge of God which I mean that is what theology means – just seeking a relationship with God.

We can compare this with F's response:

"Theological studies" sounds far too heavy for me. I think of it basically as reading the Bible ... and reflecting on it all so as to accurately further my understanding of God.

In both cases their prejudice against scholarly activity was apparent from the outset of the interview.

The self-educated theologians interviewed were alike in a further respect: the likelihood that they have done a mix of formal and non-formal education within the past twenty years is far greater than it might have been more than twenty years ago. By the 1990's it was becoming increasingly common for New Zealand adults in professional occupations, to participate in employment-related courses. The following statistics are available from the Ministry of Education for 1999:

**Number of students enrolled in formal programmes**

Field of Study	Post-Graduate Level	Degree Level	Diploma Level	Total
26. Religion & Theology	58	415	13	486

Table 6.2 Ministry Of Education – Data Management And Analysis Section

Although trends in participation increased more dramatically in the early 1990's, the practice was similar to that which had been evident in the 1980's. A had begun a course in a Bible college, B had completed a 3-month course in a Bible school, D had completed a Certificate course in a Bible college, E had managed 4-and-a-half months in a Bible college before his visa arrived for Africa, N had done some theological courses by distance learning, and S had completed a year in Bible school before being asked to leave on the grounds of his "dangerous" beliefs. Of the ten theologians, only C and M did not identify any courses.

Another similarity between E and other participants was that despite his strong belief in training on the one hand, on the other hand he clearly had some issues with theoretical training. When talking about this in regard to students, he maintained that students want you to share things from your life that showed that you are not perfect, but had got over certain things. What he believed was that "people want a lot of how-to's, they want more honesty from the communicator". In this, E is revisiting one of his themes, that practical hands-on learning is best.

Whilst none of the five respondents believed that the theologians they were talking about had done any courses of study, it must be remembered that G, W and I were all well

established in their lives by the 1980's, J was not predisposed to attending courses, and K seemed keen to do something more formal in the future.

**To what extent are the motivators different according to personal characteristics**

Basic principles of motivation exist that are applicable to learning in any situation:

- The environment is important in focusing on what needs to be learned.
- Learning is motivated by incentives.
- Internal motivation last longer and is more self-directive than is external motivation.
- Learning is most effective when an individual is ready to learn
- Motivation is enhanced by the way in which the instructional material is organised.

In examining the participants in the light of Brookfield (1983), Penland (1979) and the basic principles of motivation above, only one of them saw self-study as giving them greater control over their life, two were motivated by the amount of access to resources, four believed self-education gave them greater control over the learning process, and the remaining seven were influenced either by environmental factors, internal motivation or their own readiness to learn.

A statistical comparison of the participants is useful in determining whether the motivators were different in relation to factors such as age, marital status, educational background and preference for studying.

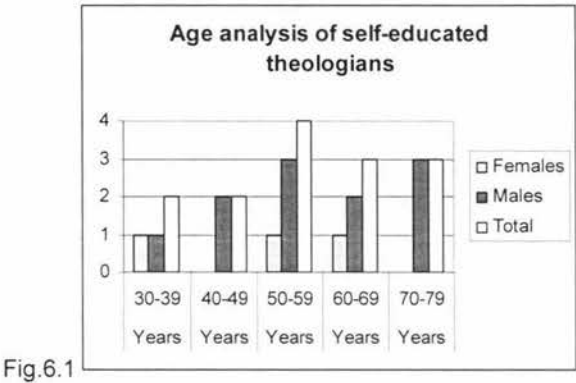
The age distribution of the sample is shown in Table 6.3. Males outnumbered females by 11:3.

Age Distribution of the Sample (N=14)							Total	Median
	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-59 yrs	60-69 yrs	70+ yrs			
Male	1	2	3	2	3		11	57
Female	1		1	1			3	51
Total	2	2	4	3	3		14	55

Table 6.3

By ensuring that participants were selected from a range of age groups, the age of the sample selected spanned four decades so that it would be possible to observe a pattern

across time, as well as across individuals. Despite the widely differing ages of the individuals, all were able to identify goals they had set for self-study.



The graph (Fig. 6.1) makes it fairly clear that of the people studied, the majority who had chosen to be self educated were over 50 years of age. Only four were younger and it is significant that these four have all been teaching theology during a period of increasing credentialism.

All had been married except one, and one of those married was separated. The marital status of the participants could be considered as a factor for motivation, however since no reliable comparison was possible with people who were not married, such an assumption would be an estimate and therefore not a valid basis for drawing any conclusions.

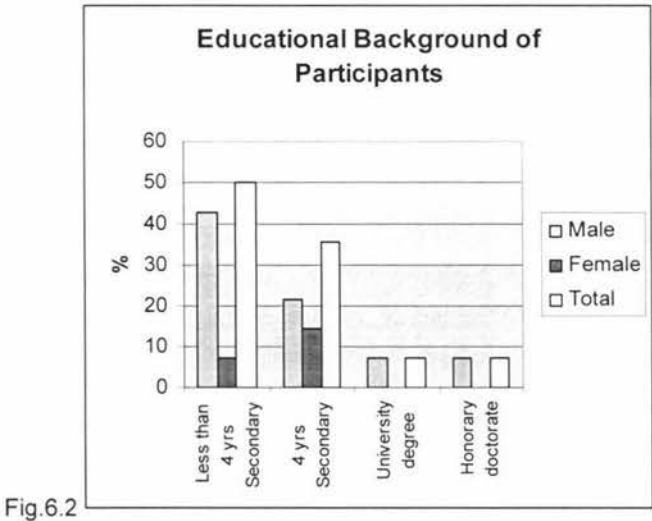
Table 6.4 shows the relative educational background of the participants. Of the fourteen people studied, 12 had not completed a university degree. Six of these set out to do training in a Bible College or Bible School, and of these one decided not to proceed because the experience was disappointing, a second was not allowed to proceed because of his views, another had his study cut short by reason of an overseas visa being issued unexpectedly early, two others did a short course which did not result in a qualification, another did a Level 3 (National Qualifications Framework) certificate course. One had begun university studies in science but became disenchanted early in the first year and dropped out. One had received an honorary doctorate for his work in developing a specialist theology. Another had in fact completed a university degree in science; however their theological studies had been carried out independently.

Relative educational background of Participants

	Less than 4 yrs Secondary	4 yrs Secondary	University degree	Honorary doctorate
Male	6	3	1	1
Female	1	2		

Table 6.4

Again, educational background did not seem to have any bearing on the motivation of the participants. All were passionate about their motives for study. What the data did show was that although the participants selected claimed to be self-educated, in fact the purist independent learner is rare and a proliferation of courses and degree programmes now available in New Zealand has made access to supported learning in theological fields easier. Prejudices against theological study in formal settings amongst some fundamentalist persuasions have been broken down as the need for credibility and accreditation have forced a rethink about institutional learning, however others expressed strong suspicions about the outcomes of formal theological education.

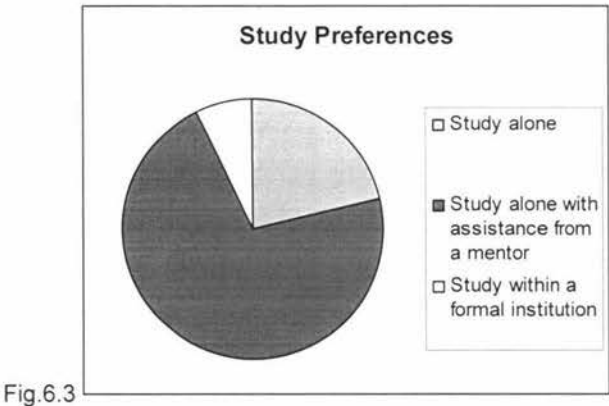


The graph (Fig. 6.2) infers that males were in the majority for both staying at school longer and for leaving school earlier, as well as for gaining a degree and an honorary doctorate. However it should be borne in mind that females are outnumbered by males 11:3.

More relevant is the fact that half of the participants had less than four years at secondary school, and only one has earned a university degree by attending lectures and completing assignments; the only post-graduate qualification was awarded in recognition of a

self-directed learning project to develop a liberation theology that was meaningful amid severe famine in Africa.

Of the fourteen cases studied, only three appeared to have studied without a mentor of some kind, be it a critical friend, a formal mentoring arrangement, or an informal type of guidance. Their preferences for studying alone, studying alone with assistance from a mentor or for studying within a formal institution, are shown in Fig. 6.3.



By far the majority saw the benefit of guidance from at least one other person, in most cases more than one and in some cases more than one at one time. Two of the three who preferred to study alone tended to do so because of personality type, rather than choice.

**To what extent are they satisfied with their learning experience?**

An analysis of the participants in terms of their satisfaction drew out some interesting patterns. Several believed that without the constraint of a curriculum or the imposition of a lecturer's opinions, self-directed learners were better able to think laterally than others. Developing this theme was the view that when you can select a range of authors you get a better range of ideas than in a lecture with one person.

Another common aspect was about constructing meaning. Constructivist learners actively take new knowledge, connect it to previously assimilated knowledge and make it theirs by constructing their own interpretation. In this case the teacher becomes one of the resources, just as the mentors were resources for the participants in this study.



A comparison of the transcripts of A and D reveals a number of remarkable similarities in their use of language. Like A, D believes that self-education lets you think outside the box. He says:

We talk about exploding boxes. Christianity is often, people are in square boxes, they have square thinking and they limit God to their square understanding and I come along, and go, I don't see God that way at all. I see God as being outside of our own understanding, our own box, and He explodes most of our boxes.

Another comment by D that was reminiscent of A showed how his mathematical background has influenced his view of theology:

The Bible is like the source of light – when you put it through a prism, it radiates all different colours.

However, the writer who had introduced D to this concept was not Robert Capon (who had influenced A) but Ron McGatlin who owns Basilea Publishing. The parallels with A are interesting, and comments like the following were like echoes from the interview with A when he found that there was a lot mental engineering going on, to fit people into the evangelical mould:

And I think if I'd gone to university and done a degree in theology when I was 19, I would have come out of the cookie cutter, being in the right shape, but not being the person I am today.

Table 6.5 demonstrates some of the similarities in the language used by A and D:

A number of participants believed that studying independently was superior to formal education in that it fitted people better for the job (E) and gave them a richer knowledge base (F). Others said that their motivation was better because they could study areas of interest to them (B). Language like "exhilarating" and a "driving passion" (N), "fascinating" (I and K) and "riveting" (M) was used to describe the experience. The only person who acknowledged some problems in his self-education was S who regrets the haphazard way

that learning took place for him and the bigotry and self-righteous exclusiveness that developed.

Similarities in language between A and D		
	A	D
Defining self-education	it allows you to think outside the square	if you ask the students what the thing I do the most is, we talk about exploding boxes
The Bible	The Bible is a box of coloured lights, coloured torches that we shine on God. So that we get different interplays of colour, and hidden things come up that we would never have seen before	Bible is like the source of light – when you put it through a prism, it radiates all different colours.
Formal theological education	that there was a lot of, um, mental engineering going on, to fit you into the evangelical mould	I would have come out of the cookie cutter, being in the right shape
Aim of theological study	It's got to lead somewhere that enlarges your mind, and your being.	I don't teach theology for the sake of them knowing something, I teach theology to change their lives

Table 6.5

Another pattern that emerged from the case studies was linked to the conviction that taking an academic approach to the Bible is a sure way to lose touch with the spiritual dimension. The following quotations from E and F demonstrate this view of scholarship versus revelation:

Scholarship	Revelation
<i>They are not teaching the knowledge of God, they are teaching about knowing God. They don't teach people how to know God.</i>	<i>Your excellence of understanding in that area can hinder you from moving on with God.</i>

Like E and F, C believes that the more academic the theologian, the less spiritually minded they were likely to be. Compare these comments from the three participants:

C	E	F
The testimonies of how many people have lost their faith in these Bible Schools and these Seminaries is staggering. Absolutely staggering. Because of the liberalism that is there	I also have a major concern and a problem that you have people lecturing at Bible Schools that in the real world of ministry they could not hold a church of 22...	The saying goes that you go to Bible College to lose your passion for the Lord. Given the all-pervasiveness of secular thinking, theological institutions may actually be teaching a secularized theology.

It appears then, that in C's view, the pattern could be progressive as depicted in Table 6.6 (below), that is at the earliest stage those who believe in revelation and those who take the scholarly position are not so very different except that on the one hand the revelation school encourage students to gain an understanding of God, whereas the scholarship school do not. At a more advanced stage, the revelationists believe that they have freedom, but that scholars are bound in theology. Further down the track again as both head for excellence, the effect is arrogance on both sides – the one because they believe truth resides within them, the other because they presume that their academic studies can show them who God is. At the end however based on this model the revelationist will construct meaning for living from the biblical ideas that are revealed to them, but the scholar will find contradictions and ultimately lose their faith altogether. C says of this:

Humility to me is the key – it unlocks all the other graces of understanding and revelation.

Constructed as a model, the two schools of thought may progress in a somewhat opposite manner, according to C. Table 6.6 attempts to reflect this progress:

	Revelation	Scholarship
<b>Stage 1</b> understanding of biblical truth	We can understand God	They don't teach people how to know God
<b>Stage 2</b> thorough understanding of some way of God	Where the Spirit of the Lord is, is liberty	– I have found there are a lot of people bound in theology
<b>Stage 3</b> excellence of understanding	Spiritual arrogance – all truth resides in you	Exaggerated ability to know God – presumption
<b>Stage 4</b> Ideas are biblical but not relevant to the age in which you live.	Is it biblical, does it work?	Liberalism – people lose their faith

Table 6.6 The Scholarship versus Revelation Model (Peterson, 2002)

Once again there is a close resemblance to the view of E who when asked about a scholarly approach to theology asked whether scholars produced anything but hot air.

C was no exception. He agrees that a certain amount of what he teaches is contrary to mainstream Christian theology but this stems from his belief that theology is not like other academic subjects. His view of theological training is that when they finish their studies, people are simply filled up with all kinds of information. His students would not be like that, because in his opinion he does not merely provide information, he imparts revelation.

That has to be a basic assumption of all teachers – there has to be something that we are imparting and if that is the key – impartation – not information, being passed on.

(Interestingly enough, very similar language was used by E, when he talked about academics who merely increased “head knowledge” and there is “no spiritual impartation”.)

Both F and A acknowledged that their lack of expertise in New Testament Greek would be a shortfall in their education. It was surprising to find that despite not having studied either of the languages of the original biblical writers, F introduces his latest book by using language that suggests familiarity with Greek:

The sheer volume of Biblical material that contains the Greek word which has been translated 'tongue/s' should give us a wide variety of ways of coming at the word and therefore of arriving at a clear definition of what the Bible is referring to.

He admitted, however, that he would not be able to contribute to theological discussions in respect to the meaning of the original Biblical languages as he does not know either Greek or Hebrew. A's comment was:

For example, just taking Greek for instance ... The fact that you can get some guy to take a verse and weave a picture – he's unique – the rest of us are black notes played out on the white notes.

K is another for whom the lack of Greek or Hebrew knowledge will limit her ability to teach a range of subjects. However, N and J taught themselves New Testament Greek and N became a Greek scholar (in his own opinion).

The literature review has noted that adult education theorists lean towards a view that adults are inner-directed and that Stephen Brookfield (1986) believes that this is truer in open, democratic societies. The participants in this study do benefit from living in a democracy; however one of the characteristics that has been common is the involvement in mission, some of which has not been conducted in open, democratic societies. F revisits his devotion to the inner life of the spirit when asked about the strengths of self-directed learning:

For me it is more life related and more holistic because it arises out of and speaks to my whole of life commitment to Christ with its daily tasks in serving others in business.

In summary the responses given about the theologians' satisfaction with their learning can be grouped as follows.

*A preference for experiential learning*

The emphasis on experience as a defining feature of the self-education described by the theologians is central to the concept of andragogy that has come to describe adult education practices in many countries.

*A spirit of self-directedness*

By assuming responsibility for choices and judgements regarding what can be learned, how learning should happen and whose evaluative judgements concerning the effectiveness of their learning should be taken on board, the participants raise some issues about power and control in education. Theirs were not narcissistic pursuits of private goals with disregard to the consequences for others, but projects that acknowledged the importance of life changing theology for students.

*Known objectives*

The model of self-direction used here is the two-by-two matrix of learner and institution based on the locus of control for decision making about the objectives and means of learning (Mocker and Spear, 1982). Self-directed learning occurs when the learners, not the institution, control both the learning objectives and the means of learning. Statements such as "Because I can discover the importance of my own spiritual heritage" demonstrate the purposefulness of the learning that they engaged in.

*Dangers of the self-education model*

Some of the participants recognized that a lack of breadth could accompany a preference for self-education. Some self-directed learning takes place in comparative isolation in secluded private libraries. Other self-directed learners engage in more interpersonal communication (with experts and peers).

**Do non-traditional models of education (e.g. self-education) attract people from an older generation more than younger generations?**

From the analysis of the characteristics of the individuals studied, a profile begins to emerge of a self-educated theologian in the year 2002. They will be typically over fifty years old, probably male, more than likely with less than four years secondary education, and heavily dependent on the guidance and coaching of a mentor. Increasingly they will have attended at least a short course to support their theological studies.

Although the over-fifty-year-old self-taught person of today was young when they made the choice to be self-educated, it is unlikely that their present-day equivalent will make the same choices. Studies conducted by the Ministry of Education show that New Zealand now has one of the highest tertiary education participation rates in the OECD. Around two in five 18-24 year olds participated in tertiary education during 2001, compared to one in six 25-39 year olds, one in six 15-17 year olds and one in 20 people aged 40 or over. What is more, students aged 25 and over now make up over half of all students (54% in 2001).

A total of 393,209 students were enrolled at tertiary education providers during 2001, an increase of nearly 47,000 students or 13.5 percent over 2000. This growth follows an increase of 8.3 percent between 1999 and 2000.

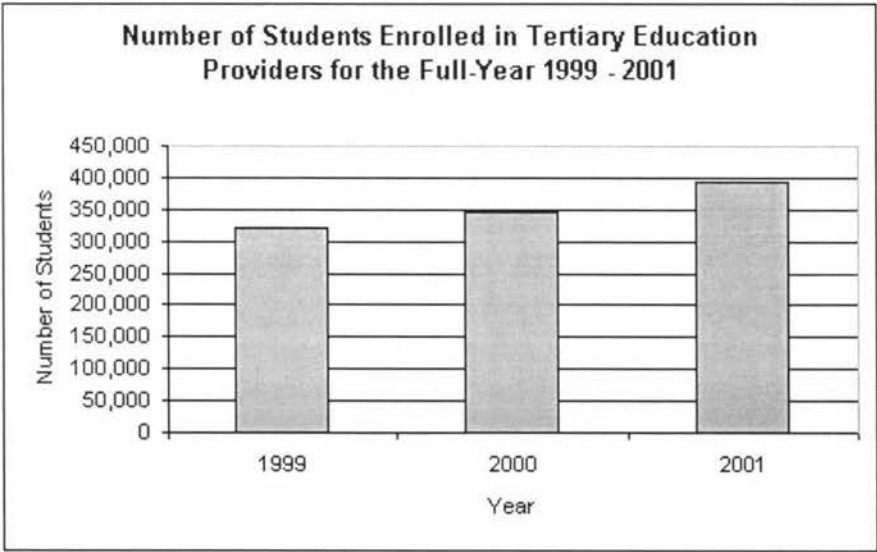


Fig. 6.4 Ministry of Education Statistics



Present-day students have a vast array of providers to choose from. At 31 December 2001, there were a total of 832 private training establishments registered in New Zealand, in addition to Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Universities and Wananga.

However, the modern day equivalent of yesterday's self-educated theologian may find that extramural study has appeal. The research conducted by the Ministry of Education showed that about one in five students (22%) studied extramurally in 2001. This proportion has remained about the same over recent years. The proportion in the study undertaken by this researcher (one in seven) is lower, though based on a much smaller sample.

**Does cost influence the decision to be self educated?**

Although one of the participants (A) felt that a lot of people don't get the opportunity to take up formal education because of their inability to pay the fees for education, the year 2000 Ministry of Education statistics show that rates of student participation in tertiary education have increased around 21% since 1999. The graph below illustrates the increase during the years 1994-2000:

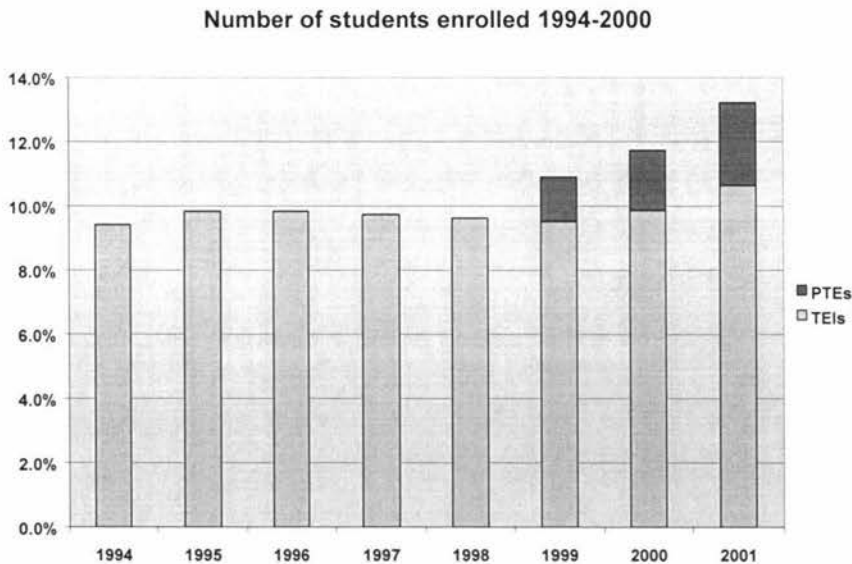


Fig 6.5 Ministry of Education Statistics

Of the fourteen people interviewed, six were not influenced by cost when choosing a mode of study. The four who specifically identified cost as a factor were all in the 60-70 age group. Of the remaining four, one said it was cheaper to study independently, a second said it would be a waste of money to study in a place which would cause you to lose your passion for Christianity, and two had no opinion on the matter.

**What general subject categories attract theologians?**

During 1982 the Churches Education Commission (*Learning opportunities for adults in NZ churches*) surveyed agencies in New Zealand to provide an index of courses related to Christian life and work. This survey revealed that a wide variety of courses was available, and that specifically religious studies are less common than those associated with human relationships. The agencies offering these courses ranged from the Diocesan Board of Christian Education and Teachers' Colleges to continuing education programmes in Universities, Polytechnics and High Schools and even Toastmasters and Radio New Zealand. Subjects taught included Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Social Policy, Women's Studies and Maori studies plus several others.

In the current study a comparison of topics was carried out to see whether the self-educated theologians followed the pattern of the courses provided by the agencies surveyed. The comparison showed that there were some inevitable similarities, given the nature of theology, but no strict correlation.

**Survey courses**

- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Church tradition
- Theology
- Social Policy
- Women's Studies
- Religion
- Political studies
- Management
- Christian Education
- Personal Development

**Topics studied - self-educated Theologians**

- Old Testament
- New Testament
- Church History
- Systematic Theology
- Social Justice
- Role of women in the church
- Eschatology
- God and Government
- The church and its functions
- Creation versus Evolution
- Biblical Sexuality

Group Development	Biblical Law
Corporate Worship	The Holy Spirit, Tongues and Divine Healing
Devotion and Helping Skills	Righteousness, Faith
Communication Skills	Leadership
Family Life	The Family, Dealing with Grief
Maori	Reconciliation and Treaty
	Cultural Literacy
	Evangelism
	Jesus and teaching methods

Though some subjects seem to have a "used-by" date others are static and continue to be studied twenty years after the survey was carried out. Issues surrounding culture have come to the fore more recently, and the developments in scientific research which have raised new questions about creation and evolution have brought this topic into popularity once again.

**Did they educate themselves with or without the assistance of a mentor?**

Stories of early pioneering days in New Zealand show that it was usual for Maori to study theology mentored by a missionary from CMS. Similarly in the current study it was usual for the participants to identify at least one person who they described as mentor.

Out of the fourteen people, only one appeared to have had no mentoring. The other thirteen identified mentors as significant in some areas. Some mentors were guides for direction, others not for theological ideas but more for wisdom on Christian matters. Some were strong leaders of the theologians, others trainers. Still others helped them to stretch their thinking, or to enable them to bounce ideas around. Some were mentors for a specific purpose (such as coaching on Greek); others led them in a conversational dance to help them to evolve their own thinking.

**Has a lack of credentials impeded their progress?**

Responses to this question fell into two categories. On the one hand an acknowledgement that a qualification may have provided more opportunities because

society has become very credentials-oriented and opportunities are no longer available for amateurs and on the other hand a denial that it is an issue at all.

The acceptance that a qualification may open doors tended to be explained by the fact that society has become very credentials-oriented and that because of the way human beings are a person without a qualification may be overlooked.

Those who justified their decision to proceed unlettered were either of the opinion that it wasn't an issue, or that they were actually better off without formal education: For those who felt it wasn't an issue, the reasons were that they worked in areas where credentials were not highly significant, or because they could hold their own in an argument irrespective of qualifications. For those people who believe they are actually better off without a formal education, the argument is either that they are not interested in making a career out of their Christianity, or that they believe taking an academic approach will cause them to lose their passion for their faith.

---

## Chapter 7 Conclusions and Implications

---

### ***Motivators for self-education***

The theologians in the study rejected formal education because lectures were unsatisfying, and they had a desire to focus on certain subject areas. They also wanted their learning to have an impact on the lives of their students and by staying in the real world they could make sense of their studies.

### ***Impact of personal characteristics on motivators***

The true self-educated theologian is rare in 2002. Availability of courses and flexible options for delivery have made formal education more attractive to people whose preference is to study on their own without attending lectures.

Tertiary participation has increased among people wanting to study theology. A self-educated theologian in the year 2002 is likely to be male, over 50, who has had less than four years of secondary education

### ***Satisfaction with learning experiences***

While there are limitations with self-education, self-education provides the individual theologian with the freedom to explore areas of passion and prepare themselves for the specialised roles they are going to take. A fear of secularisation makes the theologians sceptical of theological institutions.

### ***Non-traditional models of education***

People over the age of 50 were more likely to participate in non-traditional models of education due to a lack of suitable options for studying theology when they were younger.

The study was based around the lives of eleven men and three women which made it difficult to establish any gender differences accurately. However there was a tendency for people under the age of 50 to have participated in some form of tertiary education pertaining to theology.

### ***Financial factors in self-education***

Formal education costs more than self-education, but finance for education is more available today. Self-directed learning is still cheaper than formal education, but with the availability of student loans and more disposable cash cost was not identified as a major factor in the choice of education model.

### ***Subject categories that attract theologians***

The debated area of creation and evolution is more popular than twenty years ago.

Many of the subjects studied by the participants were paralleled by a survey carried out in 1982 by the Churches Education Commission; however some political and social impact can be seen in such subjects as Reconciliation and Treaty issues, Cultural Literacy, Social Justice and the Role of Women.

### ***Mentors***

Mentoring is a significant aspect in self-directed learning.

Learning on one's own does not necessarily mean learning alone. Adults often use other people as helpers and resources in their self-directed learning activities. Locating resources is a key aspect of self-directed learning.

Almost all of the subjects could identify people they would describe as a mentor. For most of them mentoring was significant. In a few cases the mentoring guidance had not been suited to their own goals.

### ***Impact of credentialism***

Restrictions do exist for unqualified theologians if ambitious for academic recognition or opportunities.

The subjects could see both sides of the credentials debate. While they were limited in their ability to teach theology in an accredited institution without a qualification, most had no desire to teach full-time in such a place.

### ***Implications for polytechnics***

For several years now, polytechnics have been aware of the pressures to make access to education more flexible. The knowledge society needs more graduates, and those graduates will keep returning to study as lifelong learning takes its place. Some people question the benefits of tertiary education, especially considering the cost in time and money.

A paradigm shift needs to take place from the traditional paradigm emphasising the delivery of content to the contemporary paradigm stressing powerful learning opportunities. A way forward has been suggested by the research carried out at the University of Technology Sydney: In a paper entitled *Assuring Quality for Online Learning* Professor Geoff Scott<sup>9</sup> asks "What is it that not only attracts students to learning programs but inspires and retains them?" The research conducted by Scott and others at UTS found that it is the responsiveness of the total learning environment that determines students' perceptions of quality. The possibility to take electives from across or beyond the

---

<sup>9</sup> Dr Geoff Scott is Professor of Education at the University of Technology, Sydney Australia and its Director of Quality Development.



institution, to get credit for current capability or to negotiate learning contracts are examples of more flexible pathways for learning in order to respond to students' needs.

For learning and teaching models to be innovative and effective some changes need to occur. Teachers need to think outside the square. Diana Laurillard (2002) suggests a generic learning activity model:

- a) a list needs to be constructed of areas which may have to change
- b) there must be an analytical investigation into digitised resources
- c) an online discussion needs to be set up which includes the full text of an article and topics for discussion
- d) an interactive simulation should be put online with structured topics for discussion, and
- e) a web page should be copied into the online environment for class members to share as a group. The lecturer can then specify the form the group takes, the task and the visuals.

At least ten years ago educators began to use terminology such as "classrooms without walls" and to suggest that teachers would become learning managers or facilitators of learning. The knowledge age demands a change in the way education "happens" but issues of power and control continue to block progress. The terms distance education and distance learning don't describe very well the types of courses that are now available (Hurst, 2001). Rather than providing options that force students to choose between traditional courses and distance learning courses, innovative teachers have developed courses that blend the classroom and the computer, taking into account learning preferences and time or location restrictions. Technologies contribute to the mix of tools and methods that can be used to support learning, both on and off campus. It will be important to keep such adult learning principles in mind as this one expressed by Zemke (1984): new knowledge has to be integrated with previous knowledge, that means active learner participation.

Professor Andrew Gonczi (2002) believes that the new model of professional and vocational education will be one in which teaching, learning and research have close ties with the world of practice. Areas which may have to change include the relationships

between formal educational institutions and professional associations and workplaces, changes to funding and to the organisation of educational institutions. Like the self-educated theologians in this study, Gonczi maintains that learning is developed through doing and acting in the world. The challenge according to Gonczi, is to move the focus from training the mind, to the social settings in which the individual practices.

The world of the theologians interviewed no longer exists. Everything is changing. Actually, rapid change is a fact of life for people all over the world. Most people today are under pressure to learn new things and the shelf life of learning is short. Throughout the world barriers to information are breaking down as access becomes more available. The technology of the internet, and especially online education, has the potential to transform how we work and learn. People can participate when they want and integrate their learning into their lifestyle. The changes will be uncomfortable for many educators, but will provide challenges that will reinvigorate teaching and learning.

---

## References

---

- Alcorn, N. (1992). Creating a learning society: continuing education and lifelong learning: *The New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning*, Vol.19, p.4.
- Anderson, G. (1998). *Fundamentals of Educational Research* (2nd ed.). UK: The Falmer Press.
- A People's History*. (1940). Illustrated biographies from *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol 1. Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs.
- Autodidactic Profiles*, Autodidactic Press. Retrieved May 8, 2001 from <http://www.autodidactic.com/profiles.htm>
- Bell, J. (1986). *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press.
- Bell, J. (1993). *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*: (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bell, J. (1999). *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Best, S. & Kellner, D. (1997). *The Postmodern Turn: Paradigm shifts in theory, culture and science*. New York and London: Guilford Press and Routledge.
- Bittel, B. (1989). *Make your own tomorrow: adult learning and you*. South Australia: Underdale.

- Blatt, B. (1987). *The conquest of mental retardation*. Texas, USA: Pro-ed.
- Boud, D. (1989). Some competing traditions in experiential learning. In S.W. Weil and Isobel McGill (Eds), *Making sense of experiential learning*, Milton Keynes: SRHE/Open University Press.
- Boud, D, Keogh, R, and Walker, D. (1985). *Reflection Turning experience into learning*, Kogan Page: London.
- Boud, D. and Walker, D. (1991) *Experience and learning: reflection at work*. Geelong, Vic.: Deakin University Press.
- Bouma, G.D. (1996). *The Research Process*. Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Bramwell-Booth, C. (1986). *Letters*. Tring: Lion.
- Brockett, R G. & Hiemstra, R. (1991). *Self-direction in adult learning: Perspectives on theory, research, and practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1980). *Independent Adult Learning*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Leicester: Department of Adult Education, University of Leicester.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1984). The contribution of Eduard Lindeman to the development of theory and philosophy in adult education, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 34 (4), 185-96.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1985). Self-directed learning from theory to practice. *New Directions for Continuing Education*, No. 25. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1986). *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning: a comprehensive analysis of principles and effective practices*. Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1987). *Conceptual, methodological and practical ambiguities in self-directed learning*. In H.B. Long and R.M. Smith (Eds.), *Self-directed learning*

*application and theory*. Athens, Ga: Department of Adult Education, University of Georgia.

Brookfield, S. D. (1989). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S.D. (1992). Developing criteria for formal theory building in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 42 (2), 79-93

Brookfield, S.D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Brookfield, S.D. (1995). Adult learning: an overview. In A. Tuijnman (Ed.). *International Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Brown, J.S., Collins, A. & Duguid, P. (1988). *Situated Cognition and the culture of learning*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Institute for Research on Learning.

Burns, R.B. (1998). *Introduction to Research Methods*: (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Melbourne: Longman.

Candy, P.C. (1991). *Self-direction for Lifelong Learning: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Carryer, B. (1991). *Schools in New Zealand*. Hamilton: Waikato Education Centre.

Charles, C.M. (1995). *Introduction to Educational Research*: (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Longman.

Clark, J. (1997). *Educational Research: Philosophy, politics, ethics*. Palmerston North: ERDC Press.

Clark, M. C & Wilson, A. L. (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41 (2), 75-91.

- Cocklin, B. & Battersby, D. (1987). Gender, the hidden agenda: a case study in educational decision making. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 22(1), 59-69.
- Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1994). *Research Methods in Education* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Collard, S. & Law, M. (1989). The limits of perspective transformation: a critique of Mezirow's theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 39 (2), 99-107.
- Collins, M. (1988). *Self-directed learning or an emancipatory practice of adult education: Re-thinking the role of the adult educator*. Proceedings of the 29th Annual Adult Education Research Conference, Faculty of Continuing Education, University of Calgary.
- Conti, G. (1978). *Principles of adult learning scale: An instrument for measuring teacher behavior related to the collaborative teaching- learning mode*. Columbus: Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 179 713).
- Conti, G. (1982). The principles of adult learning scale. *Adult Literacy and Basic Education*, 6, 135-150
- Court, S. (1999). Glory Fits, Temperamental rigidity and punctiliousness. *Journal Of Aggressive Christianity*, Issue 2, (August/September 1999), p.49
- Cross, K.P. (1981). *Adults as learners: Increasing participation and facilitating learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, (1998). 1921-1940. Maori Selections. Vol. 4. Akarana: Auckland University Press.
- Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, No. 50. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

- Ekpenyong, L. E. (1990). Studying adult learning through the history of knowledge. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 9 (3), 161-178.
- Elias, J.L. & Merriam, S. (1980). *Philosophical foundations of adult education*. Huntington, NY: Robert K. Kreiger Publishing.
- European Conference on Lifelong Learning. (1999). *Report on Section 7: Self-directed lifelong learning*. Retrieved July 27, 2001, from [http://www.erill.unibremen.de/lios/sections/s7\\_report.html](http://www.erill.unibremen.de/lios/sections/s7_report.html)
- Finger, M. & Asun, J.M. (2001). *Adult Education at the Crossroads: learning our way out*. London: Zed.
- Fisher, R.K. (1988). *Library services for adult continuing education and independent learning: a guide*. Pamphlet No. 40. London: Library Association.
- Forman, C.W. (1982). *The Island Churches of the South Pacific: emergence in the twentieth century*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Franke-Ruta, G. (2000, July 28). Losing their religion. *Washington City Paper*. Retrieved June 11, 2001, from <http://disciplinedminds.tripod.com/city-paper>
- Freire, P. (1970). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum Books.
- Freire, P. (1971). To the Coordinator of a Culture Circle. *Convergence* 4 (1), 61-2.
- Gay, L.R. (1992). *Educational Research: competencies for analysis and application*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Gonczi, A. (2002, Mar 6-12). Reshaping the learning curve for the future. *Campus Review*, p. 7.



- Grow, G. (1991). Teaching learners to be self-directed. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41, 125-149.
- Grow, G. (1994). In defense of the staged self-directed learning model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44, 109-114.
- Gunson, N. (1978). *Messengers of Grace – evangelical missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, C.W. (1933). In Norton, J. (1999) The doctrine of sanctification in the Salvation Army. *Journal Of Aggressive Christianity*, Issue 2, p.18, 1999.
- Hayes, C.D. (1998). *Beyond the American dream: lifelong learning and the search for meaning in a postmodern world*. U.S.A.: Ingram Book Company and Baker & Taylor.
- Hayes, C.D. (2001). Autodidactic Profiles: self-educated people who've made a difference. *Autodidactic Press*. Retrieved May 8, 2001 from <http://www.autodidactic.com/profiles.htm>
- Hiemstra, R. (1988). Translating personal values and philosophy into practical action. In R.G. Brockett (Ed.), *Ethical issues in adult education*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Hiemstra, R. (Ed.). (1991). Creating environments for effective adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, No. 50. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Hurst, F. (2001). The Death of Distance Learning? *Educause Quarterly*, 3, 58-60.
- Jaeger, R.M. (Ed.). (1997). *Methods for research in education*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Washington: American Educational Research Association.
- Jarvis, P. (1987). *Adult learning in the social context*. London: Croom Helm

- Jarvis, P. (2001). *Twentieth century thinkers in adult and continuing education*. London: Kogan Page.
- King, M. (1997). *God's Farthest Outpost; a history of Catholics in New Zealand*. Auckland, NZ: Penguin Books.
- Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed Learning*. New York: Association Press.
- Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of Adult Education: from Pedagogy to Andragogy*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Cambridge Books.
- Knox, B. H. (2000). The examination of possible outcomes resulting from the proliferation of New Zealand's theological providers: Provider alliances. In *Flexible Learning for a Flexible Society*, Proceedings of ASET-HERDSA 2000 Conference. Toowoomba, Qld, 2-5 July. ASET and HERDSA. Retrieved November 17, 2001, from <http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/gen/aset/confs/aset-herdsa2000/abstracts/knox-abs.html>
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall.
- Laurillard, D. (2002, January/February). Rethinking Teaching for the Knowledge Society. *Educause Review*, Vol. 37, No.1.
- Learning Opportunities for Adults in New Zealand Churches: Results of a survey*. Wellington: Churches Education Commission.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lyotard, J. (1984). *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- McCausland, G.J. & Hall, C.G.W. (1985). The accuracy of teachers' predictions of pupils' marks in School Certificate (a quantitatively based case study). *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 20(1), 82-92.
- Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study approaches in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S.B. & Caffarella, R.S. (1991). *Learning in adulthood: a comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Middleton, S. (1985). In Codd, J., Harker, R. and Nash, R. (Eds). Family strategies of cultural reproduction: case studies in the schooling of Girls. *Political Issues in New Zealand Education*. Palmerston North: Dunmore.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ministry of Education (2001). *New Zealand's Tertiary Education Sector Report - Profile & Trends 2001*, Retrieved August 1, 2002 from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/>
- Mocker, D.W. & Spear, G.E. (1992). Lifelong learning: formal, nonformal, informal and self-directed. In Lowry, C.M. (1989). *Supporting and facilitating self-directed learning*. ERC Digest No. 93. Retrieved October 9, 2001 from [http://www.ed.gov./databases/ERIC\\_Digests/ed312457.html](http://www.ed.gov./databases/ERIC_Digests/ed312457.html)
- Norton, J. (1999). The doctrine of sanctification in the Salvation Army. *Journal Of Aggressive Christianity*, Issue 2, (August/September 1999), p.18.
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (1992).. *Tikipunga experiment: a case study in modular learning: developing a qualifications framework in New Zealand*. Wellington: NZQA.

- Openshaw, R. (1984). Decision at Waihi: New Zealand's flag-saluting case of 1941 and its present-day significance (a historical case study). *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* 19(2), 143-151.
- Packwood, A. & Sikes, P. (1996). Adopting a postmodern approach to research. *Qualitative Studies in Education*. 9(3), 335-345.
- Palmeri, F. (2001). *Other than Postmodern? Foucault, Pynchon, Hybridity, Ethics*. Retrieved December 31, 2001, from <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/pmc/current.issue/12.1palmeri.html>
- Punch, K.F. (1998). *Introduction to Social Research, Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: SAGE.
- Schon, D.A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action*, New York: Basic Books.
- Schon, D.A. (1991). *The Reflective Turn: Case studies in and on educational practice*. London and New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sire, J. & Groothuis, D. (Eds). (2001). What Are Some Pitfalls Inherent in the Postmodern Outlook? *Mars Hill Forum*. :USA: InterVarsity Press.
- Stake, R.E. (1978). The Case study method in social inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 7(2), 5-8.
- Stake, R.E. (1995). *The Art of Case study Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tennant, M. (1988). *Psychology and Adult Learning*. London: Routledge.
- Tennant, M. (1992). The staged self-directed learning model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 42, 164-166.

- Thomas, R.M. (1998). *Conducting Educational Research: a comparative view*. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey.
- Tobias, R. (1992)..Defining non formal and community education. *NZ Journal of Adult Learning*, Vol. 20(1), 77–92.
- Tough, A. (1979). *The adult's learning projects: A fresh approach to theory and practice in adult learning* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Trew, G. (Ed). (1996). *Looking Back, Forging Ahead: 100 years of Brethren Missionary Endeavour*. Palmerston North: Missionary Services of New Zealand.
- Turner, P. ( ) *A. History of Theological Education in New Zealand*,
- Usher, R. Bryant, I. & Johnston, R. (1997). *Adult education and the postmodern challenge: Learning beyond the limits.*: London and New York: Routledge.
- Yancey, P. (2001). *Soul Survivor*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Yin, R. K. (1993). *Applications of Case study Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zemke, R. & Zemke, S. (1984). 30 things we know for sure about adult learning. *Innovation Abstracts*. Vol. vi (8).

---

# Appendices

---

# Appendix 1



6 August 2001

Ruth Peterson  
C/O Dr Peter Lineham  
Social and Cultural Studies  
Massey University  
Albany

Office of the Principal  
Massey University  
Albany Campus  
Private Bag 102 904,  
North Shore MSC,  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Principal: 64 9 443 9700 ext 9517  
Campus Registrar: 64 9 443 9700  
ext 9516  
Facsimile: 64 9 414 0814

Dear Ruth

**HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUAHEC 01/029**  
**SELF-EDUCATED ACHIEVERS - IMPLICATIONS FOR POLYTECHNICS IN NEW ZEALAND**

Thank you for your amended Application details, which we have recently received and placed on our files.

The amendments you have made now meet the requirements of the Massey University, Albany Campus, Human Ethics Committee and the ethics of your application, therefore, are approved.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Mike O'Brien'.

Dr Mike O'Brien  
**CHAIRPERSON,**  
**MASSEY UNIVERSITY, ALBANY CAMPUS**  
**HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE**

cc. Dr Peter Lineham - School of Health Sciences

Te Kōwhiri ki Pūrehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey





## Appendix 2



School of Social and Cultural Studies  
Albany Campus  
PB 102-904  
North Shore  
Auckland  
Tel. 09-443 9700 ext 9061, fax 441 8162 Cell phone 025-279 4461

19 Mary Street  
Mt Eden  
AUCKLAND 1003

14 August, 2001

Name  
Address  
CITY

Dear

Thanks very much for getting in touch today regarding my proposed research. I am really looking forward to talking with you.

I am enclosing the Consent Form and Information Sheet that I mentioned during our telephone conversation. I can collect the Consent Form from you when we meet.

In a few days time I'll contact you again to sort out a day and time that would be convenient. I have compiled a questionnaire to gather a few facts prior to the interview and this is also enclosed.

Once again, thank you for being prepared to take part in this study. I hope there will be gains for both of us as a result.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Peterson

## Appendix 3



School of Social and Cultural Studies  
Albany Campus  
PB 102-904  
North Shore  
Auckland

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Project Title:** Self-educated achievers - implications for polytechnics in New Zealand

**Researcher:** Ruth Peterson

I have read the Information Sheet and have had details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

*(The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from the research project).*

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio-taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio-tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signed:**

**Name:**

**Date:**

## SELF-EDUCATED ACHIEVERS IN A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY - IMPLICATIONS FOR POLYTECHNICS IN NEW ZEALAND

## NAME \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

**1** Age range: (please tick)

- ## 2 Education

- b Highest educational qualification

- ### 3 Work Experience

- a Number of years in employment \_\_\_\_\_
- b Type of post-school employment \_\_\_\_\_

- c Number of years teaching theology \_\_\_\_\_

- d Type of teaching role \_\_\_\_\_

## PART B

Please answer the following **SEVEN** questions:

- 1      What do you see as the main differences in someone educating themselves as against being educated in a formal dependent setting?
  
- 2      Why did you choose to study theology by yourself, rather than attending a university, theological college or polytechnic?
  
- 3      How do you think your learning will be different as a self-educated person compared with:
  - a      Your experience as a secondary school student?
  
  - b      Courses at a polytechnic/theological college/university?
  
- 4      What differences would you expect to see in the higher order thinking skills of self-educated people?
  
- 5      How might a self-educated person develop these skills?
  
- 6      What do you feel the demands are likely to be for you by your students?

7      What do you expect to have gained as a result of your self-education?

Thank you for your co-operation in participating in the research.

Ruth Peterson



## Appendix 5



School of Social and Cultural Studies  
Albany Campus  
PB 102-904  
North Shore  
Auckland

### INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: SELF-EDUCATED ACHIEVERS - IMPLICATIONS FOR  
POLYTECHNICS IN NEW ZEALAND

Information required for part completion of Master of Educational Administration  
degree (Massey University)

My name is Ruth Peterson. I am embarking on this study with the assistance of my  
supervisor, Dr Peter Lineham. If you need to contact either one of us, our addresses  
are as follows:

Ruth Peterson Curriculum Adviser Centre for Educational Development Manukau Institute of Technology Private Bag 94006 Manukau City AUCKLAND	Telephone (09) 274 6009 ext 7969 Facsimile (09) 273 0791 Mobile 025 549 941 Home (09) 631 7088 email: <a href="mailto:ruth.peterson@manukau.ac.nz">ruth.peterson@manukau.ac.nz</a>
Dr Lineham's contact details are:	
Dr. Peter J. Lineham History Programme School of Social and Cultural Studies Massey University at Albany PB 102-904, North Shore MSC AUCKLAND	Telephone (09) 443 9700 ext 9061 Facsimile (09) 441 8162 Mobile 25-279 4461 Home (09) 360 5595 email: <a href="mailto:P.Lineham@massey.ac.nz">P.Lineham@massey.ac.nz</a>

1 The purpose of this research project is to explore the effectiveness of self-education as opposed to formal education, in the context of teachers of theology in New Zealand religious institutions in the period from 1980 to the present. The results of the project will give substance and relevance to the development of flexible and on-line courses in theology in secular and religious tertiary settings. The data will also add to the few studies which have evolved in the field of self-education in New Zealand academic institutions.

The first objective of this research is to determine whether a pattern exists for the motivations of self-educated theologians in New Zealand who have made a significant contribution to teaching and literature, similar to those shown in the literature reviewed.

The second objective is to examine the relevance of current adult educational theory and practice in the context of a New Zealand polytechnic operating in a rapidly evolving

knowledge economy.

2 A semi structured questionnaire will be used as the basis for the interviews, which will last up to one hour. A tape-recorder will be used during the interviews to ensure that the information collected is accurate. The tapes will be transcribed and returned to the participants for proofing and modifying where necessary. Extra time will be required to read through and approve the transcriptions.

3 For the purpose of the exploration, my focus will be on teachers of theology in New Zealand over the past twenty years. I do not intend to exclude people on the basis of age or gender. However, because this is a New Zealand study, I will include only those people with NZ citizenship. The participants have been selected from personal knowledge or with the assistance of Dr Lineham.

4 The information collected in the course of the research will eventually be analysed and used in a final report to be handed to Massey University as an M.Ed(Admin) thesis. Extracts from the report may be presented to educators at conferences and published in educational literature.

5 Questionnaires will be used to gather data from a number of participants so that facts can be gathered, inferences drawn from attitudes and opinions, and preferences identified. In addition, the technique of in-depth interviews will be used so that the subjects of the research will be free to talk about what is important to them; free to tell their stories, their perceptions, their feelings. Interviews will be conducted by myself either in the respondents' place of work or at another agreed meeting place. The interviews will take place during normal working hours during the week. Extra time will be required to read through and approve the transcriptions.

6 Statements normally confidential to the researcher and yourself will be recorded on audio-tape. I will undertake to keep the questionnaires, notes and tapes in a locked cabinet and no other person will have access to them.

Language used in the research report will be gender neutral and you will remain anonymous, ie there will be no way of connecting you to the information.

7 On completion of the project the data gathered and the consent forms will be retained for at least six years and will be stored separately. The consent forms will be held by the researcher. The data collected will be accessed by both the researcher and the supervisor. However, any identifiable components will have been removed before the supervisor sees the data.

8 Participation in the research is voluntary and if you want to opt out at any point during the research, you may do so without giving reasons and without penalty of any kind. You will be given feedback throughout the process and nothing will be done that has not been negotiated with you. If you withdraw, you may withdraw information you have provided at any time prior to completion of data collection - except where data are held anonymously and cannot be traced to be withdrawn.

In addition you have the right

- to refuse to answer any particular questions;



- to ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- to provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- to be given access to a summary of the findings of the study when it is concluded.

I recognise that it is not possible to give an *absolute* guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality where information is being recorded. I can only give an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity to the extent allowed by law. A confidentiality agreement will be obtained from any person transcribing tapes related to this research.

The benefits of the research to the theologians themselves are increased understanding of their own motivations for self-education.

The benefits to those respondents who have agreed to participate for the purpose of relating their experiences of people they have known through the course of their work or leisure time who have not been educated in a formal or informal dependent setting, are increased understanding of their own motivations for learning in a variety of settings.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If you have queries about the research or any ethical concerns, but do not wish to contact me personally, you may contact Dr Lineham.

# Appendix 6

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS TO BE HELD WITH THE PRIMARY SOURCES (RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN EDUCATED IN A FORMAL OR INFORMAL DEPENDENT SETTING)

Each leading question will be followed by supplementary questions depending on the initial response.

Participants will be sent the transcripts to make additions or deletions as necessary. Letters will be sent to the participants indicating the general thrust of the questions.

- 1      What did you hope to achieve from your theological studies?
- 2      What communication channels do you have with other self-educated people in your field?
- 3      What areas have you been able to contribute to most?
- 4      What areas have you been unable to contribute to?
- 5      How do you expect to be received if you apply to a teaching position in a theological institution?
- 6      How are you treated by qualified professors of theology?
- 7      What experiences have you had of professional theologians?
- 8      How does your audience regard you as a teacher of theology?
- 9      What primarily motivates you to educate yourself?
- 10     Is cost a factor?

- 11 What about distance or curriculum constraints?
- 12 Do you critically reflect on your learning?
- 13 How would you describe an autonomous learner?
- 14 What strengths does self-education have over formal education in your view?
- 15 How do you understand the term learning? Is it behavioural change or cognitive development? Are you looking at learning systems or an educational programme?
- 16 How you learn about your emotional self? (how is making meaning experienced)
- 17 Are there any interconnections between spiritual and personal learning?
- 18 How do you learn from the inside?
- 19 Are there any weaknesses?
- 20 What would convince you to take a course in a polytechnic or university?
- 21 To what extent are you satisfied with your learning experience?
- 22 What general subject categories appeal to you to study?
- 23 Did anybody guide you in your process of self-education?
- 24 Has a lack of credentials impeded your progress in this career?
- 25 What sort of training would have helped you do a better job?
- 26 What do you think of the idea of flexible learning?

## Appendix 7

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS TO BE HELD WITH THE SECONDARY SOURCES (RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE COME INTO CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN EDUCATED IN A FORMAL OR INFORMAL DEPENDENT SETTING)

- 1     What is your opinion of the ability of X to teach theology?
- 2     How effective is X in carrying out this role?
- 3     In what areas do you feel X can make a valuable contribution?
- 4     Are there any areas in which you feel they cannot make a contribution?  
      Why?
- 5     Were there occasions when you felt X should not have been teaching  
      theology?     Why?

## Appendix 8



School of Social and Cultural Studies  
Albany Campus  
PB 102-904  
North Shore  
Auckland

Name  
Address  
CITY

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to transcribe the tapes containing the interview material for my research. As discussed, you will need to sign the confidentiality agreement below and return it to me.

### CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I understand that the information contained in the tapes to be transcribed is confidential and should be handled in a way which protects the confidentiality of the participant and ensures the safe custody of the data.

I agree to take care to protect the legitimate privacy of the individuals involved in this research.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

Yours sincerely

Ruth Peterson



## Appendix 9 Summary of theologians' responses

	Allan	Bob	Chris	Don	Eric	Frank	Maxine	Nigel	Sandy
<b>Reasons for self-education</b>	Lectures lacked substance	Need to resolve conflicts	Innate self-directed learner/needs Flexibility	Lost motivation/ wanted to explore field of knowledge	Circumstances - inconvenient location	To further understanding - commitment to God	Change in mission policy - desire to acquire new knowledge	Preferred method	Denominational politics
<b>Satisfaction with experience</b>	Think outside the square	Increases motivation	Answer to own standards	Likes studying	Better fitted for job	Far richer	Riveting	Exhilarating	Narrow view
<b>Subject categories</b>	Nature of God/ Faith/ Ephesians/ Post-evangelism/ Cultural Literacy/ Righteousness/ Creation vs Evolution	Apologetics/ Evolution/ Biblical Sexuality/ Dealing with Grief	Nature of God/ Genesis to Revelation	Systematic Theology	Leadership/ Evangelism	Apologetics/ Science issues/ Biblical law/ God vs Government	Evangelism/ Social justice/ Church History	Death of Christ/ Holy Spirit/ Eschatology/ Prophecy	Holy Spirit/ Feasts of Israel/ Tabernacle/ Eschatology
<b>Influenced by cost</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Assisted by mentor</b>	Definitely	Definitely	Need accountability structures	Definitely	Definitely	Not formally	Yes	No only authors	Definitely
<b>Progress impeded by lack of credentials</b>	If ambitious, can't climb the tree	Once known, don't need degree	Hon. Doctorate opens doors	Not a career theologian	Not a career theologian	Cannot gain recognition	Would have given confidence	Could have gone further	Accused of narrow teaching

# Appendix 10 Summary of respondents' responses

	Gavin	Wiremu	Isobel	John	Katherine
Reasons for self-education	Indepth understanding of doctrines	To be an evangelist	Deep abiding faith, need for a worthwhile life	Entry to ministry, challenging personal situations	Cope with transition from marriage to separation New Job
Satisfaction with experience	Successful cognitive thinker	Wide acclaim, accurate prophetic writing	Successful communicator	Likes studying	Welcome diversion from problems
Subject categories	Passover/ Bible leaders/ Atonement/ Levitical Feasts/ Holy Spirit/ Gospel/ Women/ High Priest/ Baptism/ Elders	Revival topics/ Future of Israel/ Reconciliation	Evangelism/ Gospels	Tongues/ Divine healing/ Eschatology	Teaching methods of Jesus
Influenced by cost	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Assisted by mentor	Definitely	Definitely	Not formally	Definitely	Definitely
Progress impeded by lack of credentials	Not university oriented in the country Didn't seek fame	Powerful orator	Cannot gain recognition from clergy	Not a career theologian	Limited subject range