

Mission Training Review

Piecing together the puzzle

Phase 1 - Finding the pieces

“initial insights into mission training in the UK”

February 2006

Executive Summary Only





What are some of the pieces?

Finding the different pieces of the puzzle

Mission focus

“Go to a place where you live in an international student body- you learn so much from each other out of lectures as well and it plays a vital part in lectures if there are different cultures represented.”

More collaboration

“...Cooperation is important and there may need to be some 'consolidation' within the mission training sector.”

Financial concerns

“The mounting debts of all our Colleges will push us to radical re-alignment soon or later.”

Importance of training

“Do it! It is essential. It opens your eyes to such a diversity of issues that are vital if we are to be effective in our mission.”

Out-of-date Approach

“The growth of 'short-term mission' and the increasingly cross-cultural environment of the UK tend to make this concept [pre-field training] anachronistic.”

Validation

“Validation has advantages and disadvantages. It makes the teaching more rigorous, and forces the faculty to think carefully about educational issues”

Developments

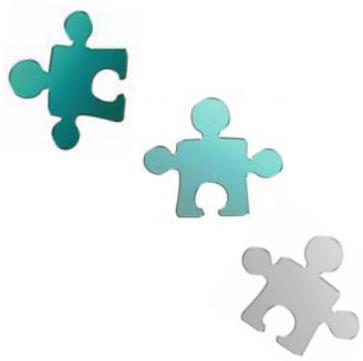
“...More opportunity for interchange of staff and students between majority world and UK institutions [is needed]”

Decreasing demand

“The number of candidates willing to commit to long-term assignments is decreasing”

Not just for missionaries

“An understanding of culture is paramount to ALL Christian ministry to avoid a superficial Western ideology being unwittingly imposed.”



Executive Summary



Phase 1: Finding the pieces

- **Background**

- Initiated by Redcliffe College as part of their strategy review and Global Connections following their 2004 conference, this review started from a position of trying to understand what we do and do not know about mission training in the UK today.
- The primary concern of this review is to provide enough information to inform the rumbling discussions on mission training and put together a framework for a new Global Connections Training Forum who will take these discussions forward.
- As the scope of the project is wide, the depth of the findings is understandably shallow. However, important insights have been highlighted and a more robust framework for the current comments provided.

- **Methodology**

- The survey responses were collected using an online facility which in itself provides great opportunities (in increased response and reduced costs) albeit with some limitations (accessibility for overseas workers).
- The groups included in the surveys were: UK training institutions, UK mission organisations, college students, mission workers, college bursars and church leaders. Whilst the review also sought information from Europe via EEMA leaders, no information was forthcoming.

- **Understanding the findings**

- For ease of understanding, the findings of this review have been split into four sections:
 - Current demand for mission training
 - Current supply of mission training
 - Perceptions of trends and developments within mission training
 - Views on quality of mission training
- The key findings for each of these have been provided on the next slide. It is important to note that this data consists of the views and perceptions of the different groups surveyed. No attempt has been made to validate any of the assumptions or figures provided by respondents.
- It is also important to read the data carefully – some of the sections have very small bases of respondents and so the findings may be skewed by a few of these respondents. The bases have been noted for each section to help with understanding the scope of the findings.



Executive summary – Key Findings (1)

Key findings – demand for mission training

- Decreased demand:
 - The emphasis on the need for training from mission agencies has decreased alongside a decrease in the number of candidates interested in long-term mission service.
- Value of mission focused colleges:
 - The importance of mission focused colleges and courses has been highlighted by students and mission workers who value training provision where there is an explicit focus on cross-cultural mission, an international community and lecturers with mission experience.
- Mission training in ministerial colleges:
 - Demand for cross-cultural mission training is coming from ministerial colleges who would like to see this integrated with their current training.
- Importance of flexibility:
 - The need for flexibility in all areas of training (length, subject areas, method etc) has been raised by mission organisations.

Key findings – supply of mission training

- Financial sustainability:
 - Mission colleges are finding financial concerns an increasing burden, which may lead to a consolidation of colleges offering mission training.
- A change of approach:
 - The value of the current approach of pre-field / ongoing training has been questioned by mission organisation personnel.



Executive summary – Key Findings (2)

Key findings – foreseen trends, developments and threats

- Collaboration:
 - The need for more collaboration has been highlighted (especially amongst mission training colleges; between mission colleges and ministerial colleges and between mission colleges and mission organisations).
- Greater input from overseas:
 - This has been highlighted in terms of non-western teaching staff, students from overseas and potentially moving mission training to the Global South.
- Political and social threats:
 - Increasing censorship and the rise of political correctness is seen as a potential threat to mission training in the UK. This has been highlighted alongside comments about the declining UK Church.
- Financial threats:
 - The financial issues faced by students and colleges is likely to prompt a more radical alignment of UK mission training.

Key findings – perceived quality

- Positive feedback:
 - The findings were generally positive, particularly from mission workers and current mission students, who have found their training to be helpful (some have even commented 'essential').
- The whole package:
 - The perceived quality of mission training is often wider than the content of the lectures. An international student body and lecturers with mission experience were highlighted as key, whereas mission workers generally discouraged attending colleges that do not specifically focus on mission training.
- Balance of mission and theology:
 - Getting the balance right between theology and mission elements is important. There are differences of opinion amongst mission organisations as to which of these elements training institutions are doing well.



Executive summary – Questions raised

For colleges with mission courses

- Is it time to re-think the current training structure?
- Is there enough room for all the colleges – is consolidation needed?
- As Christian colleges, what is your kingdom responsibility in terms of duplicating courses?
- Is the role of the UK Christian college as a mission training provider declining?
- Are training institutions meeting the demands of modern day candidates and mission organisations - should they?
- Why are mission organisations choosing to provide the training themselves?

For ministerial and other theological colleges

- How can cross-cultural mission be incorporated as an integral part of courses?

For Churches

- Are churches doing enough to promote and support mission training?
- How can church leaders be encouraged in the value of mission training?
- Do churches have a financial responsibility to those they encourage to train?

For mission organisations

- What are mission organisations' responsibilities in encouraging mission training?
- How can mission personnel be used to develop the courses provided by training institutions?
- Is there a need to re-think current recommendations for mission training particularly in the light of advice given by mission workers and current students?
- If the receivers of training rate the cross-cultural experience of college so highly, why are mission organisations encouraging short courses and distance learning?
- Are mission personnel up-to-date with current mission training programmes?
- How is the quality of internal programmes assessed?

For the Global Connections network

- Who should be working together? / How can this be achieved?
- How can the profile of mission training be raised within the different network groups?
- As a network, what is our responsibility to retain credible, affordable mission training in the UK?



Executive summary – recommendations

Recommended next steps

1. Mission Training day conference

- It is recommended that Global Connections hold a day conference to discuss the findings of this survey, along with other relevant information, and seek to address the questions raised.

2. Mission Training forum

- As a result of the day conference it is suggested that a Mission Training Forum should be created to provide a framework for continued discussion in these areas and development of new initiatives and collaborations.
- This needs to include representatives from mission and ministerial training institutions, church leaders and mission organisations.
- The questions thrown up by this review should be discussed by this forum and further research work undertaken in specific areas to gain a better understanding of the current and future potential for training.