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THE EDUCATION AND FORMATION OF DEACONS IN THE NORDIC CHURCHES AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

INTRODUCTION

This paper will focus on the education, training and formation of deacons, in the Nordic Churches and the Church of England. Among the Nordic Churches, as part of the Porvoo Communion, Iceland, Norway, Finland and Sweden will be considered. Where possible, comparisons will be made. The historical background will be covered briefly, and a description given of the present situation, with a short survey of structures and programmes. Lastly, some main principles and aspects will be addressed, including, for example, the question of the appropriate education, training and formation for deacons, in the light of current understanding of the nature of the deacon's ministry and its contemporary context.

The fundamental questions that concern the education of deacons appear only infrequently on the agenda in the different churches covered by this paper. One reason for this may be that education programmes have usually been an internal matter for the different Nordic institutions, and that the Church of Eng-

land has not yet set up a specific programme for deacons in its theological colleges and courses.¹ Another reason may be that the discussion about theological education in general, as found within the *Nätverk för teologisk utbildning i Norden* (Network for theological formation in the Nordic countries), has not fully considered deacons.²

In recent years, the situation has changed for many reasons. In general the Church's role in society has changed, and, with this new situation, the need to evaluate and rethink roles and working models has arisen. For example, very soon after World War II, the renewal process within the Church of Norway put the question of ordained ministry on the agenda. The deacon's ministry, which had been informally accepted by the Church of Norway for about a hundred years, underwent a gradual transformation towards a more formal status, and within this process questions were raised about training for the new role and its tasks. In the Church of England, there have also been developments: in just over ten years, it has changed from a centralised curriculum for the training of its ordained ministers to a

1. 11 residential theological colleges, grouped in eight centres in England plus one in Wales, and 12 regional courses in different parts of England currently receive recognition from the House of Bishops of the Church of England for the training of candidates for the ordained ministry. The Church of England pays centrally for candidates who attend these colleges and courses. In 1994, the Diaconal Formation Programme at the Bishop Otter Centre, University College, Chichester, was set up under a memorandum of agreement with the bishops of four dioceses in the region. Candidates on this programme are funded by their diocese, pending wider agreement in the Church of England to recognise or set up specific education programmes for deacons. For more details, see Hall, C., in Borgegård, G. and Hall, C., *The Ministry of the Deacon*, Uppsala 1999, p.221f, hereafter referred to as MOD1.

2. See *Den teologiske undervisningen och kyrkan. Rapport fra en konferanse i Nätverk för teologisk utbildning i Norden*, (Theological Training and the Church: Report from a conference held by the Network of theological formation in the Nordic countries.), Liselund, Denmark, Nov. 1998.

devolved curriculum system. This led to the various theological colleges and courses submitting their own course proposals for approval, within a central validation framework.³ In a more recent development, the document *Mission and Ministry: The Churches' Validation Framework for Theological Education*, published in 1999, provides for a renewed validation framework for theological education in general. It builds on the ACCM 22 policy paper, *Education for the Church's Ministry*, and recommends that the 'agreed expectations' for ordinands that it lists, should be 'used by institutions in drawing up their applications for validation and by the Ministry Division in scrutinizing these applications'.⁴ The 'agreed expectations' are generic in nature⁵ and do not include any differentiated expectations for deacons, or indeed for priests. Initial ministerial education in the Church of England is carried out ecumenically, in partnership with the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church (URC) and expectations must also be agreeable to them. There is a Methodist Diaconal Order, and, after a long period of discussion and reflection, Methodist deacons were recently re-

3. The centrally managed General Ministerial Examination (GME) was officially replaced in 1987 by a validation framework set out in *Education for the Church's Ministry* (ACCM Policy Paper No. 22). Individual colleges and courses were invited to draw up their own curricula, in line with this framework, which is commonly referred to as ACCM 22, and to submit them to Ministry Division (formerly Advisory Board of Ministry and before that Advisory Council for the Church's Ministry, hence the acronym ACCM).

4. *Mission and Ministry: The Churches' Validation Framework for Theological Education*, London 1999, pp.41 and 42.

5. There is not space to cite all the 'agreed expectations' in full here. They are seen as part of a 'process of growth and learning' that 'should be evident across the whole continuum of training for ministry' and are grouped into three sections: A, *Interpretation of the Christian tradition for today*, B, *Formation of Church Life* and C, *Addressing Situations in the World*. Reference, as given in note 4 above.

cognised by the Methodist Church as ordained ministers alongside presbyters. However, the URC has no order of deacons.

As far as diaconal formation, education and training is concerned, the situation in the Church of England is unclear. It is likely to remain unclear until the working party that was set up in 1998 to consider the future of the diaconate actually completes its work and the Church of England decides which of its recommendations to accept. Unlike the Nordic practice, all priests in the Church of England are first ordained to the diaconate, and it may therefore be argued, and indeed is argued by some, that all theological colleges and courses prepare ordinands to be deacons. However, the vast majority of ordinands will become transitional deacons, who will be ordained to the priesthood, normally after one year as a deacon, and they quite clearly do not regard their diaconal identity in the same way as permanent deacons do. Official documents from the Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council, which is responsible for ministerial education, speak of 'training for ordained ministry' not about specific education and formation for deacons or priests. Ordinands for the permanent diaconate in the Church of England, who are placed in its theological colleges and courses (and those diaconal candidates whom the Methodist Church places on Church of England courses) follow by and large the same curriculum as candidates for the Church of England's priesthood. Ordinands for the permanent diaconate, who live in or near the Diocese of Chichester and who are placed by their sponsoring bishops on the Diaconal Formation Programme at the Bishop Otter Centre for Theology and Ministry at University

College Chichester, receive specific diaconal formation. Their formation is largely the responsibility of deacons who are on the Centre's teaching staff.⁶

There is at the moment no central Church of England body that has taken the responsibility for developing a curriculum for diaconal formation or ensuring that deacons are specifically and appropriately educated and trained as such. Deacons who are educated in the Church of England's theological colleges and courses are dependent for specific formation on there being someone on the staff of their training institution who is conversant with developments in the deacon's ministry and the theology related to that. Whilst some college and course staff are indeed very sympathetic to the development of the deacon's ministry, there are only two courses that are currently known to have deacons employed on their teaching staff.

By contrast, the deacons' organisations, which exist in the Nordic countries, have to some extent been co-partners in the process that has been developing there, although deacons, as a group, have had very little involvement in the education of other deacons. Meanwhile, different networks of contact between institutions of diaconal education have been established, and the European Conference of Deacons has for some years had conferences for the leaders of these institutions. However, the ministerial context is not identical in all the Nordic Churches, and that affects the type of questions that they can usefully discuss together.

6. See Hall, C., in MODI, p.221f.

Sociologists have established that there is always a relationship between education, training and professional identity. One basic criterion of professionalism is that the profession itself is responsible for the education and training of those who belong to it. In that sense it can hardly be claimed, at least in the present situation, that deacons represent more than a semi-profession, but the situation differs from church to church also within the Porvoo Communion.⁷

In addition to this general perspective, it is quite obvious that it is impossible to talk about the education of deacons, without talking about the ministry of the deacon as it is defined in the different churches. Other issues that must also be taken into consideration revolve around basic question about ministry and education in general, the structure of the church, the relationship between church and society, and, not least, the social conditions in each society and the way the educational system functions.

Lastly it must be mentioned as an introductory remark, that there is in fact very little written about the general principles that under-gird education programmes for deacons. Much of the available information about formation is usually to be found in curriculum planning and programme validation documents, information brochures or handbooks for individual modules of study, which are produced by the different seminaries, training institutions, colleges and courses. The capacity of

7. For a Norwegian contribution to the debate on professionalism, see Torgersen, Ulf, *Profesjonssosiologi* (Sociology of professions), Oslo 1972.

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the different churches determines the level at which they take part in the discussion and set up premises for the programmes that are delivered. Their involvement also depends on the view they have of the diaconate as a ministry. For example, the Church of Sweden has been fully engaged, in recent years, at a central level in the question of education for different ministerial groups. The Church of Norway has more or less delegated the responsibility to the diaconal training institutions themselves, and, in Iceland, a programme for training deacons was started, within the Faculty of Theology, at Reykjavik University in 1993. Between 1993 and 1997, 18 deacons completed their training. The total number of deacons in Iceland in 1997 was 11.⁸ The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has still not come to a common mind on whether its deacons and deaconesses are ordained. Formerly there were 6 training centres for deacons in Finland, but since 1992 there have been many changes. Since 1 August 2000, all diaconal education is taking place in the Diaconal Institute of Higher Education in Finland.⁹

It is noteworthy that the Roman Catholic Church has worked out and published *Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons*.¹⁰ These concentrate on basic questions and issues that could also be very profitably studied in the Anglo-Nordic context.

8. Helena Ewalds et al., *Over grenser: Diakonalt arbeid i Nordiske kirker*, (Crossing borders. Diaconal work in Nordic churches), Oslo 1999, p.27.

9. See Pohjolainen, Terttu, *The Deacon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland*, in MODI, p.167.

10. Congregation for Catholic Education/Congregation of clergy, *Basic Norms for formation of Permanent Deacons*, Vatican City 1998. Among other themes, this document addresses fundamental questions of the characteristics of candidates for the permanent diaconate, the paths of formation, and the dimensions of formation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is difficult to find common historical patterns in the education programmes for deacons in the Nordic Churches and the Church of England. In the perspective of the Porvoo communion, there seem to be two historical mainstreams.

On the one hand, there are the Porvoo Churches in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, which formally accept the historic threefold ministry, but where the education programme for priests and deacons is more or less the same. Some differentiation is beginning to occur in these churches, especially in places where there is a strong or growing sense of the importance of the renewal of the permanent diaconate. Deacons who work in these settings are likely to have a rather strong pastoral identity. They are likely to be fully integrated as members of staff in parishes, and their main role is as servant, as prophet and at the altar. As servant, they are concerned with all kinds of needs among people inside or outside the congregation. As prophet, they monitor the life conditions of different groups, call for justice and peace and act as agents of change. As servant at the altar, they bring the needs of those who are on the margins to the centre of the prayer and concern of the whole eucharistic community and they have defined tasks partly in common with priests and partly different.¹¹ However, despite the amount of research that has now been done into the deacon's ministry, it is not widely understood or consistently practised. This situa-

11. Bardwell, E., The Pastoral Role of the Deacon, in Hall, C. (ed.), *The Deacon's Ministry*, Leominster 1992.

tion leads deacons to continue to press for greater understanding and better recognition of their distinctive ministry.

In a work published in England in 1991, the point was made that deacons often compare themselves with priests who have an unbroken tradition of priestly spirituality to help them think and pray about what they do in liturgy and in pastoral ministry.¹² By comparison, deacons have no such tradition to support them, and even now, a decade later, not much has been written on diaconal spirituality, though it must be included in any education programme on which deacons are formed.

Side by side with the above, in the Porvoo Communion, are the churches, mainly the Lutherans, which, as far as the diaconate is concerned, are in the tradition that originates with Wichern. In this context, the education of deacons takes place quite separately, or partly separately, from that of other church professions/ministries, and is based on a professional formation in health, social studies or education, combined with theology and practical theology. The deacons' identity will mainly involve the role of the servant of all kinds of human needs, based on the prior professional formation that they have had. They may work in a parish or in a diaconal institution. What the deacons in this context ask for is often a stronger pastoral identity, or parish identity, and, in cases where there is not a strong parochial connection, they ask that their ministry be fully recognised as a ministry of the church.

12. Lynn, A., Finding Images, in Hall, C. (ed.), *The Deacon's Ministry*, Leominster 1992.

TWO EDUCATIONAL MODELS

For the purposes of this paper, the first of the two models proposed is entitled the Anglican model, and the second the Lutheran model. Though the definition of the Anglican model, in particular, is not straightforward, it could be said that these two models express some kind of complementarity. What seems lacking in one model is present in the other. However, there are probably major differences between the two ways of designing the role of the deacon, which can be traced back to the fundamental understanding of church and ministry. What is known is that 150 years ago there were contacts between churches in England and Germany that led to the establishing of diaconal education. The German theologian Theodor Fliedner visited England and picked up ideas, primarily about charity-work, which later gave inspiration to his own work and the education programme he established. However, it is difficult to see any major concrete influence in the opposite direction: the tradition of establishing deaconess houses did not take root in the Anglican context in the same way and to the same extent, as in Germany and the Nordic churches.¹³ The two models are rooted in two different historic traditions, and this makes it difficult to compare them. This difference has even influenced the language adopted. For example, the term diaconal work is not commonly used in an Anglican context, where concepts like social responsibility or charity work are more common and correspond better with the ecclesial reality.¹⁴ The matter is further

13. Olsen, E., *Diakoniens historie (History of Diakonia)*, Fredicia 1976.

14. See Hall, C., *The Diaconate: Language and Expectation*, paper delivered at St George's House, Windsor, 1999 and published in *Diaconate in Focus*, Chichester, 2000.

complicated by devolved curricula and the lack of specific norms for deacon's formation in the Church of England's colleges and courses. This makes it difficult to know what sort of diaconal formation, if any, is given to candidates for the permanent diaconate, particularly in view of the fact that, at the time of writing, only two courses were known to have deacons on their teaching staff.

What kinds of historic changes do we then find if we study the last hundred years?

The Lutheran model

In diaconal education programmes based on the Lutheran model there has been a progression from a largely vocationally based programme with a major element of practical training towards a more academic programme, where theory and practice is better integrated and the growing theoretical element is on a more academic level.

This education programme is now recognised and integrated into the college or university system. This means that, on the completion of their training, candidates are qualified to work in church diaconal posts or in secular professional posts, using at least part of their skills in other settings than the church setting for which they were primarily intended. German writers refer to 'double qualifications' to illustrate this particular standard of the deacon's education.

The third important factor is that there are more precise criteria on which the proper content of the education programme is based. This means that the subject of *diakonia*, and its different sub-disciplines is better defined, especially the practical areas, and there is a growing body of research in many churches on different topics related to *diakonia*. This new knowledge is based on the genuine experiences of deacons' work in different areas, and it is the result of reflection on the theological basis of *diakonia*. There is now an observable trend towards a growing distinction and differentiation between the deacons' contribution and the theologians'/priests' contribution to the reflection on praxis and on the premises for practical work.¹⁵

The Anglican Model

Respondents to the survey undertaken among deacons in the Church of England, between 1997 and 1998, highlighted the variable nature of the education programmes they had followed in the theological colleges and courses. They had usually been the only person, or one of very few, being educated for the permanent diaconate. They were very rarely taught by other deacons or able to work alongside deacons as role models. Some mentioned that they had researched the history and theology of the diaconate, but they had had to do this independently, as a personal piece of study, rather than as a required part of the education programme. The parish placements they had undertaken had not been structured to reflect the fact that they

15. Kjell Nordstokke has examined the situation in *Theoretical Framework of the Science of Diakonia*, *Svensk Pastoraltidsskrift* nr. 50, December 1998.

would be working in parishes specifically as deacons, not as priests.

By comparison, the ordinands who follow the Diaconal Formation Programme at the Bishop Otter Centre, Chichester, are taught by deacons. In the region around them, they have a number of different role models of deacon's ministry. They share 50% of their programme with other students, lay people, priests, and deacons already ordained and completing their studies to BA or MA levels. They learn how different ministries, ordained and lay, relate to each other and take modules in biblical studies, historical and systematic theology, ethics, church history, liturgy and the Christian spiritual tradition. The other 50% of their programme includes the following areas:

Order and Ministry

- a) History and theology of order and ministry
- b) Principles and Practice of the Deacon's Ministry (liturgy, canon law, diaconal identity)

Ministry in Context

a) Two parish placements

One comes early in the programme and one in the year immediately following ordination; they include emphasis on various forms of pastoral care (of the young, elderly, dying, bereaved, for example), preaching, mission and the management of time and parochial work.

b) A placement on the Church's ministry of health care and healing

This involves fieldwork in hospital and hospice chaplaincies.

In the Ministry in Context part of the programme, students are supported by a system of parochial mentors and by supervisors for the specialist ministries involved. The whole formation programme is underpinned by work with a personal tutor at the Bishop Otter Centre and by assessment of the student's growth and formation. Centre staff work together with the diocesan advisers for ordained ministry in the assessment process, through regular meetings of a Ministerial Formation Assessment Panel and in presentation of reports to sponsoring bishops. Students also participate in the drawing up of the reports.

The 'Anglican model' given below is constructed in a general way, which takes into account, it is hoped, the disparity of practice outlined briefly here. As we find it at Chichester, the model has undergone some changes, with more differentiated studies for candidates who want to be prepared for the permanent diaconate and special courses reflecting the deacon's ministry, liturgical tasks, parish-work and work for love and justice. Characteristic of this programme is the integration of theology and ministry. But as earlier mentioned the main feature or the major part of the education programme is the theological training, combined with a process of conforming the students to diaconal life. That will influence the way the deacons work in the Anglican parishes, and the tasks that are given priority.

Overall, the seminaries, colleges and courses for educating deacons, in the countries under discussion, are still small, but are mainly organised as separate units within larger college-systems. These seminaries are no longer the only academic centres working with the field of diaconal practice and theology. University institutes such as those in Heidelberg, Oslo, Lahti, Chichester and Stockholm are running courses for theology students and are doing research on the diaconate and *diakonia*. Deacons may also take a master's degree in *diakonia*, in Oslo or Lahti, and Chichester's MA in Theology includes modules that have been specifically constructed with the professional development of deacons and other clergy in mind.

The two models may be expressed in the following diagrammatic form:

	<i>Anglican model</i>	<i>Lutheran model</i>
<i>Deacon's Ministry</i>	The deacon is part of the threefold ministry. Equipped for a mainly parish-based role. Ordination, followed by licensing by the bishop, constitutes the deacon's authorisation for ministry.	The deacon is sometimes seen as part of the threefold ministry, sometimes not. The education programme is partly taken as further education related to social work, nursing etc or to a wider 'caritas', and leads to a more specific parish role, matching the deacon's particular professional qualification.
<i>Elements of the Education Programme</i>	Candidates may have a profession before starting their diaconal formation, but this is not prescribed. The education programme consists of a theological and a practical theological part, which may be integrated. Some part of it involves a consideration of diaconal matters, though the extent and nature of this may vary, depending on the training institution.	The education programme consists of three basic elements: 1. Professional qualification from the health, social or educational sector. This element is dominant in the Lutheran model. It may be taken at a diaconal or a non-diaconal college. The number of different courses available has been growing. 2. Basic Theology. There is a big variety of length and profile in the different schools, from some months to a full year of fulltime study. It may be taken as an integrated part of the total education programme or as a separate part in a non-diaconal college. 3. Practical theology. This element will more or less have the same subjects as in the programme for priests, but with specific subjects related to the deacon's work. There will also be more distinct diaconal subjects such as theology of <i>diakonia</i> and history of <i>diakonia</i> .
<i>Relation to the Church</i>	Programmes are usually recognised by the church, and the church gives financial support. Sponsorship by a bishop, following a national selection conference, is required for admission.	The church usually lays down the educational framework. The schools may have financial support from the church formally or informally. Candidates have sometimes been recognised by the church before entrance, sometimes not.

Structure and programmes

Education programmes run on the Lutheran model have, as mentioned, three basic elements which may be found more or less everywhere in the Nordic churches but with some differentiation. The first element is the health/social work or teacher education, which gives the candidates the qualifications and licence to work as nurses, social workers or teachers. The normal length of this part of the programme is 2 to 4 years depending on the practice in the different Nordic countries.

Traditionally, nurse education was predominantly the prior professional education of deacons or deaconesses, but Theodor Fliedner, the founder of the first nurse education programme in Germany also set up a programme for women teachers, and thought of both categories as deaconesses. This gave the German diaconal tradition a strong influence from educational thinking.

The main problem under discussion today arises from the fact that the caritative part of diaconal education (the first of the basic elements in the Lutheran model above) may be taken in a variety of schools or colleges. All of these provide training for nurses, social workers or teachers but some do not have a diaconal tradition. This means that this particular element of the deacon's formation is not necessarily contextualized in the deacon's ecclesial role and ministry. Is it then really possible in this Lutheran model to speak about a four or five year diaconal formation? Can the three years spent acquiring the prior professional qualification really be counted as part of a deacon's formation? The more fundamental question of the integration of

the different elements into a whole will be discussed below. At this point it is necessary to state that the tendency to build up even the deacons' education by means of a variety of choices of modules, may cause problems of principle as well as of practice, as the resulting programme may lack the necessary overall coherence. It also needs to be asked what kind of social or health education programmes can be accepted from among the great variety that exists in our modern society. Some of them have a rather 'technical' profile, and one may ask for criteria to shape the programme so that it may properly form part of deacons' education.

Lastly, some Nordic Churches, for example Finland and, in part, Sweden, have not accepted teacher education as a basis of the deacon's ministry. They usually consider *diakonia* as an intrinsically 'caring ministry', and view all kinds of pedagogic activities as belonging to the lector's ministry (Finland) or the parish pedagogue ministry (Sweden).

The second element of the deacon's formation according to the caritative model is the part that concentrates on theological subjects or disciplines. Programmes in the different schools and churches have more or less the same structure, but with different content and level of study. In some churches, the theological component is a half-year of full-time study; in others, like the Church of Norway, it is one full-time year. The common way to arrange such study-units is to make a selection from the different theological disciplines such as biblical studies, Christian doctrine, ethics, church history and world religions. One

part of the programme consists of a general introduction to each discipline, and the second part concentrates on the application of the content to the field of diaconal work.

A very important question is to what extent a course like this will give each candidate sufficient training and knowledge for their future as a deacon. Are the candidates equipped for new theological challenges, or will they very soon give up in a theological dialogue with other staff members or in parish groups? Do the deacons have a theological identity after attending a course like this? Where the deacon has a theological identity, should that identity be a part of the deacon's own identity? The preliminary answer must surely be that it should. It is important to equip deacons with these tools in order to integrate them in the important dialogue/discourse about their own situation in the church, but also because in their daily work they are making 'new theology' in practising the gospel in different areas. If they do not have a solid theological base, they always have to lean on other people and authorities when they wish to interpret their own practice. It is of course impossible to give deacons double qualifications, both as social worker and theologian, but it is worth discussing the balance that should exist between the two categories.

By contrast, Anglican deacons, who normally complete initial ministerial education in three or four years part-time, at Higher Education Diploma or BA level, will probably have a stronger theological component in their programme. They will perhaps mainly have a theological identity, and not experience the con-

flict between two scientific traditions. However, it is likely that they will lack sufficient tools and skills for dealing with physical, social and human problems as we find them in our modern society. Perhaps the ideal model would be that in which priest and deacon together undertake the whole ministry. In respect of quantity and quality, they could together complementarily fulfil the mission of the church.

Under the umbrella of practical theology the Lutheran model includes disciplines such as pastoral care, homiletics, theology of *diakonia*, history of *diakonia* and diaconal work. There are also one or two periods of internship, either in parishes or in different institutions. This internship is of a different kind from the internship that is included in the social work or nursing education part of the programme. The work of the parish deacon will be in focus, his or her tasks, working models and generally the way the deacon acts as staff-member in co-operation with the parish priest, the catechist, the cantor and other personnel.

The theological and practical theology components of the programme are more or less integrated. In the Norwegian model, they are however now separated out and organised as the fourth and fifth year. The advantage of this is that these subjects are now given more time, but it is also possible to develop the different subjects in a diaconal perspective. This means that the deacons as teachers are important. They will bring knowledge that comes out of their own practice and will also be role models to the candidates. Diaconal work as an area of know-

ledge, or a 'subject' becomes important in this perspective. What characterises this area is the combination of empirical and theological knowledge, brought together and integrated in the deacon's daily work.

The Anglican model we are using as a comparison will also need to develop more to give attention to the specific areas of the deacon's ministry that we are talking about here. At the same time, it also presupposes more similarities between the priest's and the deacon's ministry and therefore not so much stress on a specific application. It may however be argued that in the future, and perhaps already, it is important to discuss the balance between what is common and what should be specific in the practical theology of the different ministries. We can already see a process towards more integration. As an example we can mention the newly started education centre for church ministries at the University of Tromsø, Norway. This centre will provide a common education programme for different groups, with a common part and a specific part. The advantage of this model may be that the students are in contact with each other for a whole year, during which they must co-operate and learn each other's way of working. The result could lead to the prevention of tension and conflict in the future. The disadvantage may be that the roles become indistinct and uncertain. By comparison, the Bishop Otter Centre for Theology and Ministry, Chichester, has set up a BA degree in Theology and Ministry, through which there are a number of coherent pathways that may be taken by different students, depending on their study aim. The Centre is part of an Anglican foundation,

though its students are drawn from a variety of churches. It has a strong commitment to the education and formation of the whole people of God, the majority of its students are lay people and its academic staff consists of a more or less even number of deacons, priests and laity. Whichever pathway students take they will have a number of modules of study in common with others. Additionally, there are specific modules for candidates for the diaconate and for deacons, priests and other ministers, at the level of both initial ministerial education and further professional development. Students study at different rates, part-time and full-time, and they are therefore together for three years or more. The programme has a strong ecclesial focus, which is designed to avoid confusion and uncertainty about the way different ministries relate to each other.

BASIC QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Ministry and Education

What are the basic questions related to the relationship between ministry and education in our time? They may differ from church to church but some of the questions arise from the more organisational point of view, others are related to content, interface between different parts of the curriculum and how to combine knowledge, attitudes and skills. The characteristic of theological education in general is that it usually occurs between the divine call to service, experienced in faith, and the ordination and sending from the church to the congregation. Both aspects

influence the process of training in different ways. It is not only a question of acquiring knowledge, but of spiritual growth and reflection and training in specific skills for future ministry. It is what Christoffersen calls, following Luther, a question of *oratio*, *meditatio* and *tentatio*, prayer, meditation and temptation.¹⁶

The ACCM 22 report mentioned above, 'argued that a rationale for theological education needed to be made explicit'. And any rationale for theological education for the Church's ordained ministry must itself be a theological rationale. Ministry manifests the nature of the Church: therefore the Church must explicitly train its ministry accordingly. That means that any expectations about qualities and competencies for ministry, including the ministry of the deacon, must follow from an understanding of the Church, which in turn follows from God's creative and redemptive activity in the world.¹⁷

Training of deacons in accordance with the nature of the deacon's ministry.

As mentioned above, there is always a connection between education and profession/ministry. One main question in the Lutheran/Nordic context, is to what extent it can be said that the deacon's ministry is a 'caring' or a 'caritative' ministry. The answer to this question will have fundamental consequences for the design of the diaconal education programme in both models.

16. Christoffersen, S.A., *Hvordan er eller skal en teologisk lærer være?* in *Den teologiske undervisningen och Kyrkan*, p.6.

17. *Mission and Ministry*, p.18.

In the 'caritative' model, the question is what kind of role the caring sciences should play as part of the formation as a whole. In the Anglican model, the question is how it should be expressed in a formation programme mainly based on a common pastoral education. Whichever model is considered, the next question will be, how distinctive is the deacon's ministry and service described, what are his/her tasks and daily work? That is also important in programme design. What professional needs should the programme fulfil? To what extent is there a connection between the professional situation and what is focused in the educational process?

The Church of Norway has been involved in educating deacons for more than a hundred years but until recently the schools themselves were largely responsible for defining the content of the education programme. Its Qualification Requirements and Service Arrangements for deacons defines more distinctly the framework and content of the deacon's ministry, and it is very welcome as a guide in developing the curriculum. Such signals are even more important in situations where the schools or colleges are quite separate from the church organisation.

On the other hand, the more distinctly the role of the parish deacon is described, the more problems the schools may have in applying the programme to other diaconal roles, for example the deacon's work in diaconal institutions of different kinds. That means that there can be strong tensions between educating to diaconal work in general and to the deacon's ministry, in a particular setting. The solution to these multi-goal problems

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may be to offer a choice between alternatives in part of the education programme. Some of these problems could also be solved, in continuing ministerial education and professional development, in a programme for life-long learning and specialisation after initial education.

The general question relating to what extent an education programme aims to equip the candidates to fulfil their role affects also the education of deacons. Is it too theoretical? Is it sufficiently up-to-date? Is it holistic in its approach to problem solving? Do deacons have a central role in the delivery of the curriculum, as models and in fashioning the pedagogic process as a whole? And lastly, do the candidates take on the role and identity of the deacon, or do they end up with a mixture of different identities?

A holistic or a partial approach

As already mentioned, it is possible, in the Lutheran model, for candidates to accumulate study-units from different schools, and there is a danger that the holistic perspective, the integration and the professional identity can become too loose or even be lost altogether. From time to time it is said either that deacons reflect primarily as nurses and social workers or that they act like priests. This is bound to happen if, in the whole formation programme of four or five years there is no integrating instance to focus the holistic perspective, and if each element of the curriculum is presented purely on its own terms and not

applied to the deacon's ministry. There is also a question of how to define the relationship between the different elements and its different subject and scientific traditions, for example, the relationship between the empirically-based knowledge which is used to describe a person's situation or the living conditions in a local society, and on the other hand the knowledge about humankind and reality as it is revealed in the Gospel. How far can the practice of diaconal work reflect both perspectives? The whole question of integration seems to be very central both as an educational and as a professional matter. Research in this field has shown that there are different solutions to this problem. It depends on how the relationship between the different kinds of knowledge is understood in a theological perspective, and more exactly, how empirical and philosophical knowledge as a part of the general revelation of natural law is understood in relation to the special revelation of the Gospel.¹⁸

One model may group everything under a soteriological, spiritual umbrella. The whole situation is then seen in a sin/grace perspective. What people need is salvation. In a perspective like this a professional reflection, or a scientifically based supervision or support therapy, will be in vain. Another model may group everything under a human based secular umbrella. The reality is too complicated to expect any answers from the Bible. The real Christian care is what can be given on a solid professional or scientific basis, and this basis is neutral, in religious terms.

18. Angell, O.H., *Misjon eller terapi i rusmiddelomsorga (Mission or therapy to drug addicts.)*, Oslo 1994. Angell gives an analysis of diaconal reflection in three different institutions for drug-abusers and alcoholics.

The challenge for the training of deacons is to provide an education programme based on a holistic approach that represents a unity between faith and science, built together and interpreted as a whole.

An education programme that reflects the deacon's situation

As mentioned above, the diaconal education programme in the Lutheran model consists of a part which is common for deacons and other church ministries and other professionals, and a part which is more specific, where the deacon's spirituality and tasks are reflected upon. One of the main problems related to the question of identity, is the lack of deacons and deacons' experiences in the delivery of the curriculum. The question is to what extent the deacons actually 'own' the education process. It is not only a question of having a person as role model in the classroom, but more basically, of who establishes the premises for the programme and the pedagogic principles. Where is the point of integration located and how is it managed? What kind of knowledge is relevant, what kind of attitudes should be focused on during the educational process, and with what kinds of skills should the candidates be equipped?

It may be a good idea then, to start in a very practical way and focus on the deacon's *proprium*, the deacon as servant in the congregation and for the whole church. In our last curriculum work at Diakonhjemmet College, we described what we think

should be the content and structure of the subject Diaconal Work.¹⁹ The main structure is the following:

1. Canon law and the organisation of the church

The basic parameters include the Ordinal, the Diaconal programme for the Church of Norway.

2. Focus on the different diaconal contexts.

The deacon's work in parishes, in different church institutions and in international relief work. Focus on the individual work of nurse/social worker/teacher in a secular situation.

3. The deacon's identity.

Focus on vocation, spiritual guidance and ordination.

Education and professional identity.

Spirituality and the student's own history of faith.

Gifts of grace.

The process of setting limits, which means the ability to structure and organize the working situation.

4. The central function of the deacon.

Liturgical functions

Caritative functions

Leadership functions

¹⁹ *Studieplan for Studium i diakoni* (module plan for *diakonia* studies), *Diakonhjemmets høskolesenter*, Oslo 1997.

5. The work within *koinonia*.

Working with groups

Networking

Co-operation with volunteers

The deacon as parish staff member, co-operation with other staff-members

Solving conflicts

6. Target groups and situations.

Children and youth in the risk-zone.

Work with families.

Marriage.

Lonely and isolated people.

Elderly and widows.

Abused people.

People with psychological problems, and people with mental or physical handicap.

People with a trans-cultural background and people who feel that they are marginalized by society.

7. Basic questions on faith and professional care.

Christian anthropology as a challenge in professional care

Being a Christian in public health and social work

Faith and psychiatry

Faith challenged by suffering

The problem of theodicy

8. Methods/working-models and intervention in diaconal work.

The problem solving process in diaconal work

Casework and group-work

Community work, milieu work

Liberation theological intervention

Cross cultural work and religious dialogue

Actions and empowerment activities

Preventive work

Exchanging knowledge and experiences.

In addition to this relatively concretely described 'subject' there are other subjects such as the theology of the diaconate, homiletics and pastoral care. They will partly set up premises for the more practical field, comment on it and complement it with new knowledge.

Education and spiritual formation

Finally it is necessary to say something about the aspect of spiritual formation. Educating deacons, as is also the case for other ministries, is not only an intellectual process, but has also an important component of spiritual formation. It is important to integrate elements of self-reflection, personal growth and spiritual growth on different levels in the educational process.

Students must have the opportunity to attend retreats, to be part of a tutorial system, to attend groups where spiritual experiences can be shared. The churches have different traditions on these matters, and in some places the church and the

school/training institution share these responsibilities. The deacon as teacher has an important role to play here. The periods of internship will also be important as a learning context if they are well planned and structured.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored some of the basic questions concerning the deacon's education in the Nordic Churches and in the Church of England. The conclusion may be that in spite of the fact that the two educational models have their basis in different 'diaconal mainstreams', there are many important questions of common interest. One of these is the connection between the actual role of the deacon with his or her tasks, and the designing of a proper programme, which takes into account the question of identity and the point of integration. Another question is the deacon's own role in the educational process.

Certainly the churches in the Porvoo Communion have different experiences in this field, which are worth exchanging. A network between schools and colleges could be a good instrument to promote dialogue, exchange good practice and further development.

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