

## **Educational Philosophy of the PTC**

The educational philosophy of the PTC is intricately linked to the Centre's mission of *"developing leaders who understand, communicate and live out the Scriptures in order to serve God's people"*. This educational philosophy is formulated to encourage the best possible practices in teaching and in learning, and through these practices, the advancement of the mission of the Centre. The PTC is committed to the effective management of its educational philosophy, always measured against its understanding of its mission.

The PTC's commitment to education is consistent with its Calvinist Reformation heritage that emphasises both the authority of Scripture and the responsibility of every Christian to read and to interpret Scripture. The PTC acknowledges the Lordship of Christ over every area of life and thought, and encourages its students to foster an approach to teaching and learning that places Christ at the centre of all knowledge. The PTC also accepts that through God's common grace, an understanding of the world owes much to observation, analysis and deduction of God's General Revelation, although all such understanding is to be judged in the light of Scripture.

An understanding of the Scriptures, as outlined in the mission statement, cannot be divorced from the knowledge of God. Such knowledge will always be multifaceted and incorporate cognitive, performative, and behavioural functions. To this end the PTC is committed to the development of a student's knowledge of God as revealed in the Scriptures, of a student's ability to communicate this knowledge, and of a student's personal qualities and attitudes that will reflect this revealed knowledge. The gaining of such knowledge demands various modes of education.

The development of cognitive knowledge is facilitated by encouraging a student to comprehend, assess, synthesise, analyse and critique existing knowledge or by experimentation with new areas of knowledge. To this end the PTC offers lectures, sets, supervises and marks assignments, develops a library and encourages inter-personal relationships with other learners and with teachers. The mixture of modes will depend on the desired outcomes for an area of knowledge. Questions concerning the appropriate mode of education could include: Can the knowledge be assimilated effectively if presented in a short amount of time (e.g. in an intensive) or is there a requirement for greater reflection between formal classes? Does the knowledge require a student to relate to other students? If so, does this need to be done face to face?

The development of performative knowledge is best achieved through an apprenticeship model, where the student learns by doing. This may involve a mature practitioner modeling the skill(s) required. Such performative knowledge includes the gaining of skills in preaching, in learning Biblical languages and in learning the skill of exegesis. This apprenticeship model is facilitated, in partnership with church leaders and congregations, by various modes including modeling, workshops, field experience, and by receiving critique and feedback.

The development of a student's behavioural knowledge is evidenced in personal qualities and attitudes; it is more concerned with "being" than with "doing". The ultimate model for this sort of knowledge is God himself, and it is the desire of the PTC that all students mature in their Christian character and in their dependence upon God. The modes whereby a student will grow in this regard are in the appropriation of the means of grace. This will include prayer, meditation upon the Scriptures and meeting together with other Christians. Much of this will be done through non-formal education.

Insofar as the PTC is concerned with the development of future and present leaders, the PTC desires that these leaders be adequately equipped for the challenges they will face in an unknown future. In order to do this, the PTC believes it is more important to teach students how to think theologically than to tell them what to think. In order to facilitate this, the PTC is committed to giving its students a firm foundation in several disciplines, including Biblical studies, exegetical skills, historical theology, systematic theology, church history, ethics and practical ministry. The PTC believes that a well-rounded education in these disciplines requires both depth and breadth, and that such study will give future leaders the bases from which to make better decisions and provide stronger leadership.

The PTC recognises that many Christian leaders are married, and that a spouse has a significant effect upon any ministry. The education of spouses is therefore highly valued at the PTC, and the creation of an environment in which spouses can learn and develop is to be pursued. This education may involve formal enrolment, either for course-credit or by audit, and should involve non-formal education e.g. seminars, social functions and support networks.

The PTC recognises that training for ministry is a life-long pursuit. Some knowledge is best attained prior to college (e.g. the student's initial knowledge of God in a relationship based on repentance, faith and obedience), some knowledge is best attained after college (e.g. the development of many performative skills and "in-service training") and other knowledge is best attained while at college (e.g. knowledge that requires a high level of time and concentration). All knowledge should feed on prior knowledge and should stimulate a deepening and expanding understanding. The PTC recognises that it is a part of a wider context of learning.

The PTC is committed to flexibility in order to give more students the possibility of study and to maintain diversity within different learning environments. The input of part-time students who are in the full-time workforce adds a positive dimension to full-time students who have severed their links with the workforce, and vice versa. The PTC believes that there are various forms of ministry, and that this diversity should be catered for and reflected in its educational modes.

Although the PTC is committed to flexibility in educational modes, it also believes that there should be an overall coherence in a course of training. A course for full-time professional ministry should not be so protracted that the student only gains cognitive knowledge and does not benefit in aspects of the non-formal training provided in an

educational community. It is also recognised that a course that is done primarily by distance and/or by intensive modes, denies students the access to many facets of a learning environment and community.

The PTC is committed to the value of both formal and non-formal education, and will continue to implement modes of learning that help it achieve its mission.