

Church Army Australia Training Program Development and Process

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This paper sets out the historical context and rationale for the design of the training program and process for Church Army Australia. It explains the various components of the new training system and briefly reports progress in implementation.

Historical Context – Losing Focus

When Church Army was founded in Australia in the 1930's, the dominant metaphor for the society's work was 'spearhead for the church'. Church Army evangelists travelled the length and breadth of the land, conducting old-style 'missions' and reaping a harvest of new believers into the local churches. Over the ensuing decades, the majority of CA evangelists became more static workers, serving local parishes or in chaplaincy-type roles. The original metaphor was replaced with the less warlike, more pastoral 'handmaiden of the church.' Meanwhile, a gap began to emerge between Australian secular society and the church. While the majority of society lived by ostensibly 'Christian' values in the 1940's and 1950's, society and church began to go their different ways from the 1960's onward.

CA provided training to its own evangelists through its own college, where candidates underwent up to two years residential training to become evangelists. The training was largely delivered in an academic mode of lectures and tutorials, but was slanted towards practical competence in evangelistic work. The course was not accredited and generally not well regarded in circles that valued academic rigor.

When the Church Army struck financial difficulties in the early 1990's, the college property in Belrose was sold and the training program reviewed. It was believed that Church Army evangelists would be more acceptable in local church positions if they had undergone accredited theological training, so candidates were required to enrol in an Australian College of Theology-auspiced Diploma of Theology in a college of their choice. Specialised supplementary training intensives conducted by Church Army provided more targeted training. In addition, candidates were required to attend a number of 'missions', where they joined a team that would visit a location to conduct evangelistic activities on behalf of or in partnership with the local churches in the area. While the training was more rigorous, it was less targeted to evangelism, and was based on a model of ministry that dated from the era when church and society were close together.

Commissioned candidates were generally placed with local churches in roles such as youth ministers, children's workers or parish evangelists. Church Army had effectively become an unofficial adjunct of the ACT, and its officers placed in roles similar to other ACT graduates.

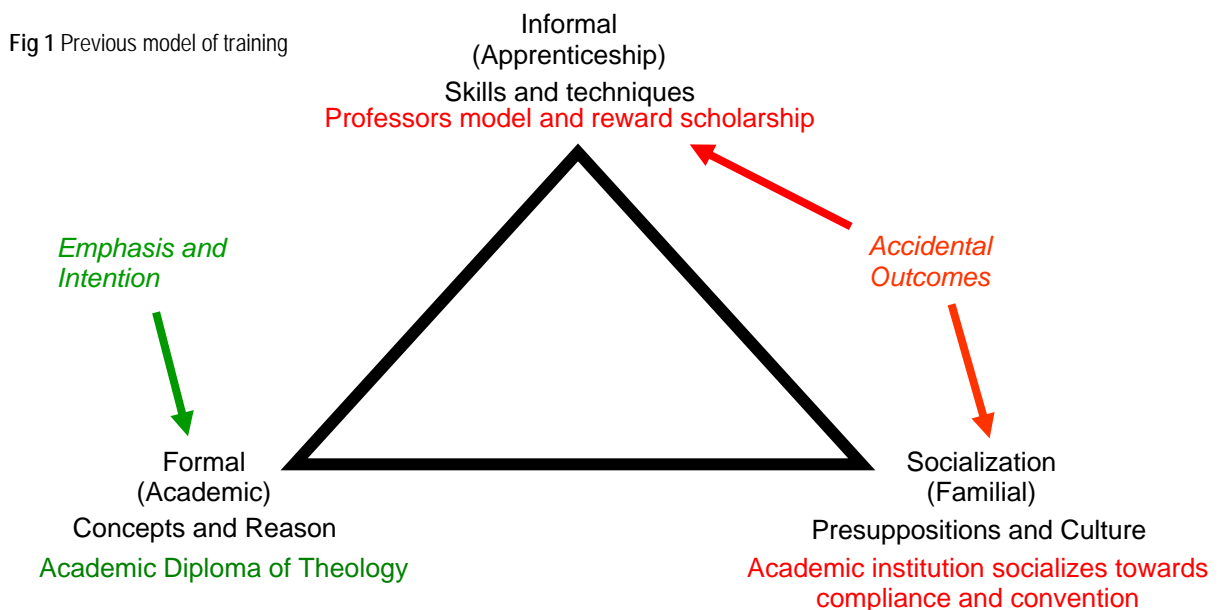
Church Army officers that showed some promise were identified by their bishops as potential clergy, and often underwent further academic training prior to ordination. Church Army had become to some degree an alternative route to the priesthood.

Locating Training - an Academic Question?

While academic qualifications make Church Army candidates more employable in local church settings, the demand and delivery style of academic training tends to de-select mavericks and activists. Unfortunately, these temperaments tend to correlate with those most suited to pioneering mission among those beyond the reach of the traditional church.

Further, academic training tends to isolate the trainee from the mission context, and focuses on ability to work with concepts and propositions in the artificial atmosphere of the classroom. This socializes students towards the conceptual and away from the practical - rewarding scholarly, introverted, compliant behaviour. This may lead to the graduate carrying their college behaviour of studying and presenting theological verbatim into parish life.

The net result of Church Army's move towards academia was to socialize students towards the behaviours and values of the established institutional church and its clergy, thus preparing them for ministry within the church walls. The situation is represented in the diagram at Figure 1.



Current Model of Training

In 2003 Church Army Australia embarked on a journey to rediscover its founding charism, ie to return to its original calling, translated into 21st century terms. The leadership of Church Army came to recognize the society had become somewhat domesticated, and was frequently providing quasi-clergy for churches that could not attract a regular ordained minister.

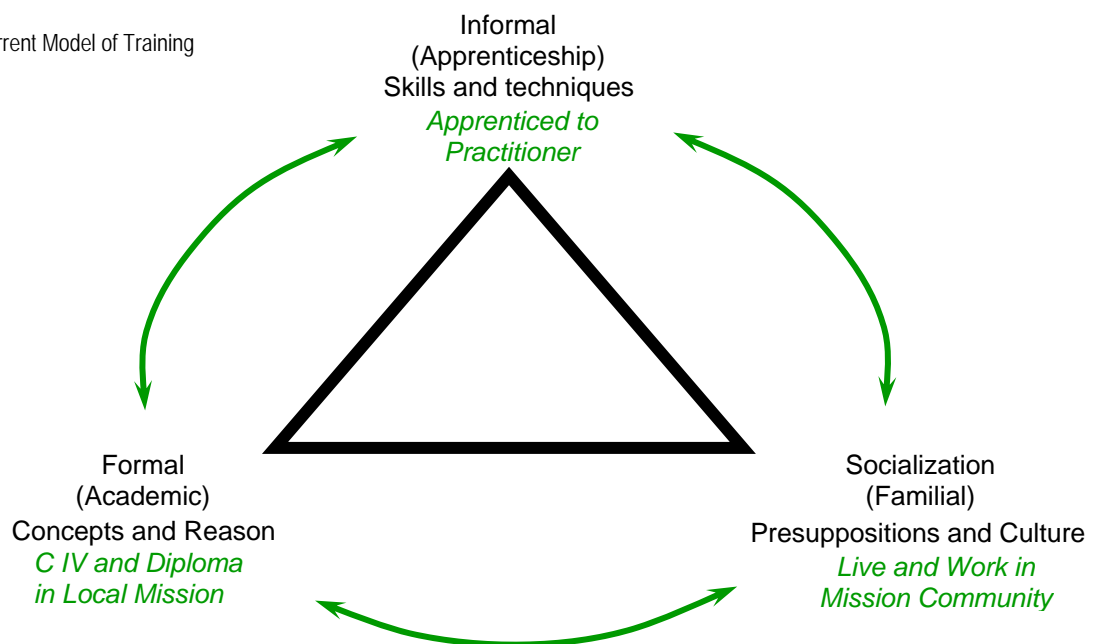
Recovering the founding charism meant returning to the task of reaching the poor, the marginalized and the isolated in society. Realising that these people would find it increasingly difficult to fit into the existing church, it became clear that a primary function of Church Army in Australia must be church planting.

When it came to training, Church Army recognised that the current training was perfectly designed to achieve the results it was getting – but poorly designed to attract and equip pioneer missionaries.

In 2006 the task of redesigning the societies’ training program began. Research and consultation in Australia, the UK and the US converged to point towards ‘on the job’ training, based on life transformation and practical mission skills. The research suggested that effective training of church planters generally looked more like an apprenticeship than professional education.

From 2007 Church Army abandoned academic education as a model for training and embraced more practical and outcome-driven competency-based training. The new program (illustrated below) required trainees to be apprenticed to a competent local mission practitioner, while engaging in structured training.

Fig 2 Current Model of Training



Integrated Approach

In line with a changed emphasis from a focus on evangelism towards local mission, Church Army’s training has de-emphasised equipping evangelists and more strongly focused on developing local missionaries. The training is delivered in two ‘strands’ of ‘competence’ and ‘strategy’.

Competence

The personal competence strand focuses on the individual's development as a local missionary. Rather than locating the training within the higher education sector where most theological qualifications reside, the new program is located in the vocational education and training sector. Training in this sector is 'competency based', meaning all training must be assessed against industry-validated, tangible outcomes. Solely knowledge-based outcomes are not permitted in this sector.

Competency-based training is non-academic, meaning there is scope for students with limited education and literacy to complete the course with assessments tailored to their literacy level. While to many this may appear to be a 'dumbing down' it is in actuality a shifting of emphasis from 'knowing about' to being 'able'. Early indicators have shown that students with extraordinary prior academic performance have found the course as challenging as those that struggled at secondary school.

Church Army has developed a Certificate IV and Diploma in Local Mission with an emphasis on life transformation and skills for successful participation in the mission community. The C IV is designed to equip a competent local mission team member, working under the supervision of a local mission leader. The Diploma is designed to

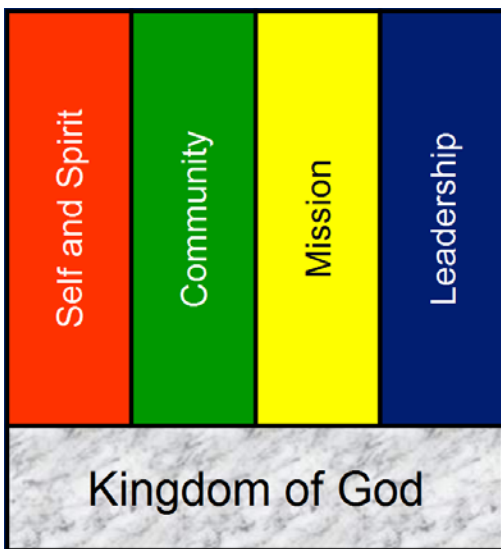


Fig 3 Framework for Local Mission courses

equip a local mission team leader, working with a high degree of autonomy. The framework for the course is set out at figure 3.

Both the courses are founded on a theology of the Kingdom of God, upon which 'pillars' of competence are built. The CIV does not include the leadership stream. The Diploma addresses each area from a leadership perspective. Studying part time, students will generally complete the CIV in two years, and the diploma in three. Global Gap Year students may complete the CIV in one year. The Diploma will not be offered on a full-time basis.

The qualifications in local mission form part of a leadership 'farm' system being developed by Church Army Australia, designed to produce a steady stream of competent, committed workers for the harvest. The farm system is illustrated in Figure 4

Competency-based training is currently delivered in two forms. The first is the Global Gap Year program, where the majority of the C IV courseware is delivered in an intensive 13-week period, prior to placement in a local mission base, usually overseas. The second is by intensives, where each of the eight core units are delivered in 4-day residential intensives over a period of two years. The Diploma is yet to commence.

Stage	Stage 1 'Friend'	Stage 2 'Partner'	First Discernment	Stage 3 'Apprentice Pioneer'	Second Discernment	Stage 4 'Practicing Pioneer'
<i>Entrance Points</i>	Subversive LMB member CA Networks	GAP enrolment LMB team involvement; Referral	C IV Graduate RPL Referrals	Those who have been through Discernment Stage A	Diploma Graduate RPL Referral	Formally Recognised Pioneer
<i>Purpose:</i>	Identify potential local missionaries.	To raise up & equip people to be effective members of an LMB team or other missional expression	To discern whether a person may be suitable for the role of Pioneer Missionary	To develop and equip someone to become a recognised CA Practicing Pioneer Missionary	To discern whether a person is suitable to be formally recognised by CA as a Practicing Pioneer	To provide formal recognition by CA of someone actively involved in some form of Pioneering Mission Work for a period of time. The recognition is linked to a mission context.
<i>Program s</i>	Re-discover; Subversive; Targetted programs	Cert IV in Local Mission delivered as: GAP or Intensives	CIV assessments Reports from Mission Team Leader	Diploma in Local Mission	Reports from Mission Team Leader Diploma assessments Behavioural Interview	Travel Plan Base Jumping Coaching LMB leaders forum
<i>Time Frame</i>		1-3 years		2-3 Years		For the duration of project

Fig 4 Leadership Farm System Diagram

Strategy

The curriculum for strategy strand in non-accredited in itself, but provides context for completion of assessment tasks from the accredited qualifications. This strand focuses on the local mission team's development as a fresh expression of church. The training begins with individual consultation with the mission team leader prior to deployment, and comes into full swing once a small team has been formed. 'Base Jumping' training takes the team through planning and implementing over three stages of development. Base Jumping is adapted from the CRM 'Launchpad' modules which have proven successful throughout Australia, the UK and Europe. The modules and their sequence combines the principles of Schwarz's Natural Church Development applied to stages of church plant growth. The stages and sequence of Base Jumping training is illustrated at Figure 5.

The intention of Church Army Australia is to decentralise reproduction as far as possible. Thus, Local Mission bases are expected to reproduce leaders, multiply mission and to plant other local mission bases. Once the new church is viable and independent, training for church reproduction is planned using the 'Churches Planting Churches' material, also adapted from CRM. Figure 6 provides a schematic diagram illustrating the development track for local mission bases.



Figure 5 Base jumping training schematic adapted from the Natural Church Planting program by Phil Alessi.

Training for planting teams is delivered on a ‘Just-In-Time’ basis, so that the team receives the training they need for each developmental stage as they enter the stage. Entering a new stage is determined by successful implementation of plans from the previous stage.

Training is usually delivered on-site, as it is easier to fly a trainer to the team than to fly the team to the trainer. Where the trainer is not the team’s coach, the coach will participate in training as a team member.

Between training sessions, the team leader is coached through implementation of team plans and general mission leadership by a Church Army-designated coach. CA Australia is in the process of rolling out the CoachNet training process which was developed by church planting specialist Bob Logan. This will enable CA to greatly increase coaching capacity, both for pioneer leaders, trainees and existing officers.

	Phase 1 <i>Recruitment & Orientation of Church Planter</i>	Phase 2 <i>Church Planter Placement</i>	Phase 3 <i>Seeding</i>	Phase 4 <i>Germinating</i>	Phase 5 <i>Ground-burst</i>	Phase 6 <i>Independence</i>	Phase 7 <i>Reproduction</i>
Training and development activity	<i>Behavioural interview or 2nd Discernment process, Orientation provided informally</i>	<i>Establish coaching relationship</i>	<i>Base Jumping Module 1</i>	<i>Base Jumping Module 2</i>	<i>Base Jumping Module 3</i>	<i>Clarify leader's role and calling</i>	<i>Churches Planting Churches Module</i>
Development Priorities & Indicators	Location, oversight and funding arrangements finalised. Initial proposal developed	Pioneer deployed in location. Conducts mission 'survey', begins response activities, forms relationships in community, recruits team	Develop passionate spirituality and loving relationships in team. Team engages in missional habits.	Implement need-based evangelism initiatives, multiply holistic small groups, begin leadership development	Develop gifts based ministry approach, launch worship service or equivalent, formalise leadership structures	Achievement of financial and developmental self-sustainability, formalise financial and governance mechanisms, formalise episcopal allegiance	Begin process of identifying and deploying a pioneer missionary (overlaps Phase 1)

Figure 6 Local Mission Base Development Stages

Commonalities

All of the CA training courseware is designed using McCarthy's 4MAT system of learning design, applying principles of adult learning. This means training is generally workshop format, with lots of small group interaction, practical exercises and reflection. Traditional instruction methods such as thick textbooks and lectures are not a feature of the course delivery.

Implementation

The CIV in local mission has been in use as the courseware for the Global Gap Year for three years now. In 2008 a series of intensives were offered for LMB members to pilot the C IV in this format. Eight CIV intensives are being delivered over 2009 at Church Army's head office at Kihilla. There is keen interest in the CIV being offered both in other centres as capacity allows. The Diploma is slated to commence in 2010, depending upon interest.

Base Jumping training has been in use for three years, and has proven to be effective in helping teams to develop an implement core ideology and strategic plans.

What are we learning?

Training is less about education and more about life transformation, and life transformation is effected by a number of contributing factors working in unison. Outside the training room, practical assignments, personal reflection and 1:1 mentoring are all essential to the development of the local missionary. High impact requires high contact. This makes the training very labour-intensive, with as much time invested in students by training personnel outside the classroom as in. This dynamic in turn means large classes facilitated by a single trainer are less effective. Church Army is seeking to expand training to multiple locations once a large enough pool of training facilitators and field supervisors has been developed.

Going forward

C IV in Local Mission graduates and participants are currently serving in local mission projects on three continents. Where students have actively engaged the program (and not all students do) there has been consistent development in character, depth of personal spirituality, ability to work as part of team, and ability to embody and communicate the good news of Jesus to a given receptor culture.

While we're delighted with the early results, we're keen to improve consistency in field supervision, expand our pool of coaches and fine-tune the C IV courseware.

The launching of the Diploma at Kihilla and expanding C IV delivery to other locations across Australia are goals we'll pursue in 2010.