

MISSIONS INTERLINK

HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSITION TRAINING

In 1991 John Tanner, the Director of Australian Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission (AEAMC) shared his ideas of developing a national training program for missionaries with the newly appointed member to the AEAMC Executive Committee, Brian Massey who was the Training Coordinator for Asia Pacific Christian Mission.

John's ideas were to provide training accessible to all missions, especially those who were not able to engage trainers within their organizations, to encourage missions to share their training resources and to develop a course that would be flexible enough to be suitable for a range of agencies. Brian was able to be the catalyst that saw these concepts come to reality.

Within the World Evangelical Alliance Missions Commission (WEAMC) several key meetings had been held in Cordoba (South America) in 1991, India in 1992 and Nigeria in 1992, where the characteristics of missionaries had been described in terms of competencies. Here in Australia there had been similar thinking and developments so a decision was made to make the training outcome focused, or what was currently known as Competency Based Training.

In 1992 Bill Taylor, Director of WEAMC came to Forum early in 1992 in Canberra and encouraged further development of the training initiatives under consideration. Bill returned to Melbourne in July and facilitated a meeting for Mission Agencies, Bible Colleges and Churches to discuss these new initiatives in missionary training. At Forum '93 Brian Massey was invited to become the Training Consultant for Missions Interlink and attended the Missionary Training Consultation in Pasadena in February, 1994. At this conference Brian met with Jonathan Lewis who is the training consultant with the WEAMC and invited him to attend a meeting with key mission personnel in Melbourne in April, 1994, in order to develop a generic missionary training program.

For some time representatives of several mission agencies had been considering how they could pool their expertise and resources and work together to more adequately prepare missionaries for a transition experience. On the 27th April, 1994, a 'Pre-Field Orientation Planning Seminar' convened by Brian Massey of APCM was held at St Andrew's Hall in Melbourne. Present at the Seminar was Jonathan Lewis to facilitate the discussion towards the development of a training program. The consultative committee formed from those present on that occasion consisted of:

Brian Massey.....Training Officer, APCM
Ros Gooden.....Training and Personnel Officer, ABMS
David Turnbull.....Missionary Candidate, Action Partners
Jillian Quartell... ..Secretary, AZTEM
Gaye Mercier.....Dean of St Andrew's Hall, CMS
Colin Reed.....Principal St Andrew's Hall, CMS
Harold Taylor.....Senior Lecturer, BCV
Ron Kingsley.....Personnel and Training Officer, MAF
Gavin Bunker.....Training Consultant, International Training Associates Melbourne

The Committee met frequently over the next six months to work on developing initial competencies and continuums which would form the basis of a three week intensive, residential program for missionary candidates.

Attention was concentrated on the content, context and methodology of training cross-cultural servants. The emphasis was placed on outcomes and competencies rather than programs and structures in a non-formal, hands-on, action/reflection approach to learning.

Some of the initial criteria that was decided on were:

- Families would train together, this would require the provision of child care facilities for day time sessions.
- The program would be under the auspices of Missions Interlink and would be open to candidates of any Mission. International candidates would be welcome also.
- An important goal was to provide adequate accommodation and food while keeping costs to a minimum. Facilitators would not be paid for their service although accommodation and food would be provided for them.
- Facilitators would be drawn from as many Missions as possible. Facilitators would have had at least two years living in another culture.
- Those involved in the selection and training of missionaries, as well as those in administrative positions in Mission, would also be encouraged to do the course.
- The program would be generic in nature. Mission Agencies would need to provide their own field, language and Mission specifics.
- The intention was not to duplicate missiological input provided by theological colleges and also not to involve Bible College lecturers as facilitators.

Materials were prepared which were based around the Competencies grouped in five clusters:

- Transition skills,
- Situational Sensitivity,
- Cross Cultural skills,
- Servanthood,
- Growth Strategies.

Candidates are required to formulate their own Learning Contract based on these Competencies in the first few days of the course.

The aims of the program are:

- (i) To encourage the formation of appropriate attitudes
- (ii) To develop foundational skills for continued learning and growth
- (iii) To identify resources for this process

This concept is firmly based on the principle of both Adult Education and Competency Based Education where the Learner is the focus and is responsible for the learning. Hence the decision to allow the participants to set their own Learning Objectives for the course curriculum elements. The course also aimed at recognizing prior learning of the candidates.

The first course was in Melbourne in January of 1995 with 31 adults and 18 children

After nine months of planning and preparation the initial Transition Training Course was held at St Andrew's Hall and Ridley College in Melbourne from Jan 2 – 20 1995 on behalf of Missions Interlink with Brian Massey as the course coordinator. In spite of it being the first one and the facilitators themselves were learning it was a good experience for all the 31 adults and 18 children participating.

Following this initial course Ros Gooden became the Coordinator of Transition Training and due to her expertise and commitment the course developed and grew.

Over the year participants have come from all Australian States and New Zealand as well as Canada and the USA, many European and Asian countries. The diversity of their background and experience has given an added richness to the dynamics of personal and cross cultural relationships. The desire to develop a learner attitude and initiate an ongoing thirst for learning and personal development has been the philosophy of the facilitating team. Continuing reflection and evaluation of each course has led to the continual development and refining of the course content while remaining true to the underlying philosophy. This process led to the redefining of the competencies as:

- Learning to leave
- Living in another Culture
- Growth Strategies
- Working Together
- Context Awareness

Two courses were held each year in Melbourne in '95 and 96 and in 97 numbers of applicants necessitated the addition of a third course per year. These were all held in Melbourne until July '98 when the first one was held at the Sydney Missionary & Bible College. Gordon Griffiths and Jeanette Boyd had been able to put together a team of facilitators although Ros Gooden and Brian Massey participated in the Sydney courses to ensure continuity and consistency with the goals and program.

During 1996 the Committee met almost monthly to revise the wording of the competencies and plan the next courses. That committee consisted of Ros Gooden, Brian Massey, Colin Reed, Gaye Mercier, Jillian Quartell, Jim Sterrey, Bruce Turner and Berys McElvie. The Competency Manual has been fully revised and reprinted twice since it was first put together.

After the first few years the Child Care program has been developed to include appropriate cross cultural preparation for children of primary and secondary age. Suitable competencies for them have been described and the facilitating team supervise when necessary those working with the children.

The plan to evaluate the course from participants was dropped due to low response levels from them. However there is much anecdotal evidence and feed back from both course participants and mission agencies to indicate that the course is highly valued, and is making a real contribution to the quality and durability of missionary service.

In 1998 Gaye Mercier became the Course Coordinator and handed over this responsibility to Karen Newnham towards the end of 2004.

The main agencies which have used the course for the preparation of their partners are:
MAF, ABMS, INTERSERVE, PIONEERS, SALVATION ARMY, CMS, SIM, CAMPUS
CRUSADE FOR CHRIST, MISSIONARY VENTURES, MMM, APWM, INTERNATIONAL
TEAMS, ASIAN OUTREACH, AMT, CHURCHES OF CHRIST, TEAR, COME, WORLD
TEAM.

For more information about Transition Training, please contact

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The following list of statistics shows how the numbers of participants has fluctuated:

YEAR	DATE	ADULTS	CHILDREN	PLACE
1995	JANUARY	31	18	Melbourne
	SEPTEMBER	15	5	Melbourne
1996	JANUARY	23 +4 P/T	6	Melbourne
	JULY	16	7	Melbourne
1997	JANUARY	45	13	Melbourne
	JULY	21	4	Melbourne
	DECEMBER	19	2 +A baby arrived	Melbourne
1998	JANUARY	38	27	Melbourne
	JUNE/JULY	32	21	Sydney
	DECEMBER	27	8	Melbourne
1999	JANUARY	22`	14	Melbourne
	JULY	33	20	Sydney
	DECEMBER	22	6	Melbourne
2000	JANUARY	17	13	Sydney
	JULY	20	3	Melbourne
	DECEMBER	17	3	Melbourne
2001	JANUARY	41	21	Sydney
	JULY	19	16	Melbourne
	DECEMBER	19	5	Sydney
2002	JANUARY	26	15	Melbourne
	JULY	29	7	Wye, NSW
	DECEMBER	22	5	Sydney
2003	JANUARY	30 + 1 teen	20	Melbourne
	JULY	26	12	Wye, NSW
	DECEMBER	15	6	Melbourne
2004	JANUARY	18	8	Melbourne
	JULY	27	15	Wye, NSW
2005	JANUARY	35	24	Melbourne (BCV)

	JULY	
2006	JANUARY	29
	JULY	37
2007	JANUARY	33