# The World Council of Churches and 'ecumenical consciousness':

**How the constitutional responsibility of fostering 'ecumenical consciousness' has been reflected in the World Council of Churches' educational and formational activities from 1948-2006**.

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# Contents

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# Abstract

The thesis explores the manner and extent of World Council of Churches activities that reflect the obligation in its original constitution to develop ecumenical consciousness among the members of the churches. The study explores the possible original meaning of ecumenical consciousness and the implications of widening understandings of ecumenism and develops a working definition of ecumenical consciousness. That definition is seen as having particular significance not only for the structures and activities of the WCC but for the ecumenical movement as a whole.

Social movement analysis is used to seek to understand better the nature of the ecumenical movement and its relationship to the World Council. Whilst not completely identifying the ecumenical movement as a social movement, it is suggested that an understanding of participation, the framing of issues of contention and the purposes of social movement organisations can all contribute fruitfully to understanding the ecumenical movement. This perspective leads to questions about whose ecumenical consciousness needs to be addressed and about cognitive and emotional mobilisation.

These questions provide a framework for engaging with the stated understandings of the educational and formational activity of the World Council from its foundation to the Porto Alegre Assembly in 2006. From the Library and Archives of the World Council, the research draws on the official documents of Assemblies and Central Committee meetings and perhaps, more significantly, on reports of less high profile consultations and papers of staff discussions. Because of the way in which the World Council operates, this historical analysis is divided into the periods between Assemblies.

The conclusion reached is that periods of creative thinking about people's involvement and participation which might lead to the formation of ecumenical consciousness have alternated with reversions to more formal processes of teaching about the ecumenical movement. The expectations of the member churches of the World Council have been directed more towards being supported in their separateness than being challenged ecumenically. The demands of particular issues (ecclesiological and justice/peace) have led to a greater concentration on content rather than process. The value of ecumenical experience has been recognised but not always the necessity of learning through reflection on that experience. It is suggested that these and other tensions have resulted in the World Council being unable to benefit from the potential of an ecumenically conscientised constituency.

The thesis concludes with a chapter considering the implications of these conclusions for the future work of the World Council, arguing that, both for its own good and that of the ecumenical movement, it needs to work to develop an ecumenical consciousness in the people of its whole constituency as well as in the institutional churches and their leaders.

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# Acknowledgements

# 1 Introduction

*the ecumenical movement gets nowhere unless and until ordinary church people are involved in it, embrace it and carry the torch of ecumenism.*[1]

The purpose of this study is to assess how the constitutional requirement of growing or developing an ecumenical consciousness has influenced the World Council of Churches' understanding of its educational task and to indicate how a renewed interest in ecumenical consciousness could benefit both the World Council and the ecumenical movement as a whole. In this introduction I outline the field and scope of this study and my motivation for undertaking it. The introduction aims to provide sufficient background for the reader to be able to enter into the study and points forward to where matters are dealt with in detail. I outline the methodological approach and acknowledge its strengths and constraints.

**The World Council of Churches**

The World Council and the ecumenical movement that formed it, and which remains its raison d'etre, is the principal object of study. The World Council's website states that:

> The World Council of Churches is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity.[2]

It goes on to say that it sees itself as a unique space where the churches may interact to promote and enable visible unity, common witness and service towards justice and peace. This has been interpreted proactively in terms of undertaking programmes in these areas as well as bringing the churches or their representatives together to discuss them.

The World Council was formally inaugurated in 1948 having begun operation immediately before the Second World War. Initially the World Council brought together the early 20th century movements of Faith and Order, and Life and Work. In later years the World Council incorporated the global missionary and Christian education movements which were well established by the 19th century.[3] Constitutionally the World Council describes itself as:

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[1] Raiser, E, 'Inclusive Community' in Briggs J et al (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3, 1968-2000*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2004, p243

[2] http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we.html (accessed 07/07/09)

[3] An account of this is given in a three volume history of the ecumenical movement - Rouse R & Neill S C (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Vol I, 1517-1948,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 1954; Fey, HE (ed), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Vol II, 1948-1968,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 1970; Briggs, J, Oduyoye, M, Tsetsis, G (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Vol III, 1968-2000,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 2004. Only Volume III contains a substantial section on education.

a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[4]

The World Council publishes books and audio-visual material through its WCC Publications department which relate to its work and to the ecumenical movement in general. One of its journals is the quarterly *The Ecumenical Review* which began in 1949. The articles provide a useful commentary on the concerns of the World Council at different periods.

A great deal of research work has been undertaken into the development, thinking and activity of the World Council. The Library and Archives of the World Council in Geneva and the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey have a constant flow of students and researchers from many parts of the world.[5] However, their areas of concern have been almost exclusively those of Faith and Order, mission, inter-religious dialogue, the Churches Commission on International Affairs and programmes such as the Programme to Combat Racism. The educational area has received comparatively little attention apart from some small interest in the service of Paulo Freire with the World Council.

Whilst one can understand the interest in programmes of the World Council that appear to have an impact on the life of the world or the churches and the temptation to see processes of education or formation simply as instruments to achieve particular ends, I would want to argue that the being of the World Council and the ecumenical movement in general also demands attention. One aspect of that has to be to the element of collective and individual self-understanding and commitment on the part of all participants. It is out of that that the impetus for action towards unity and justice and peace emerges and is given energy. Thus processes of education and formation take on an importance beyond the pragmatic and, as this study will argue, the development of an ecumenical consciousness becomes significant.

This study is timely as it has been often observed in recent years, and much earlier as I discovered in the course of my research, that life and enthusiasm has gone out of the ecumenical movement[6], and that the World Council is little known and no longer regarded as a force for good. The former general secretary of the World Council, Samuel Kobia observed: 'some critics who love

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[4] Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches (as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006), Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2006, p1
[5] According to the *WCC Project Report 2007, P5 Education and Ecumenical Formation, P505 Library and Archives* there were 1,422 users in 2007. Also that the Library and Archives contains more than 130,000 volumes, 1,400 specialized periodicals and some 13,000 archive boxes relating to the ecumenical movement and the World Council.
[6] One representative example is: "It has been said that the churches are currently in an "Ecumenical Winter", and several reasons for that have been put forward, internal dissensions within churches which are dealt with by avoiding issues; problems that absorb so much time that ecumenism is lost sight of; pressures on staffing or on finance that make ecumenism and the search for unity too expensive. These pressures co exist with a resurgence of confessionalism which is in part a denial of the ecumenical vision, in part a symbol of frustration at the time scales that often seem to be involved, and in part a manifestation of a desire for a return to our roots and the certainties of traditional teaching." in *Built Together: The Present Vocation of United and Uniting Churches, Message from the 6th International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 1995,* Section X, Para 49

the WCC call it moribund and in danger of ossifying'.[7]  The existence of the World Council is only meaningful and valuable as an instrument of the ecumenical movement.  However, giving attention to ecumenical consciousness is not a matter of saving a failing institution.  A renewed concern for the development of an ecumenical consciousness among the churches and their members could reinvigorate the ecumenical movement and create or recreate appropriate instruments to serve it.

**The background to and motivation for this study**

Christian faith and education are the two broad fields that have dominated my academic studies and work - sometimes separately but more often intertwined.  These have been areas of passion as well as exploration.  I have been fortunate enough to have had, in various capacities, involvement with Christian education in congregations, lay training, theological education, primary and secondary schools and higher education.   This culminated in my appointment in 1996 as a member of staff of the World Council of Churches based in Geneva with an education brief.

In Geneva and on my travels for the World Council I encountered people who regarded the term education as being unhelpful, equating it narrowly with schooling.  This came as a surprise as I had always regarded education as being an open process which went beyond the confines of formal institutionalised learning.  I also encountered people who wanted to talk about formation which to me sounded like a process of shaping people according to a pre-determined plan.  I had to remember that just because a word is spelt more or less the same in different languages (for example the French *formation* or the Spanish *formación*) it may not have the same meaning or connotations as in English.  From its official inauguration in 1948, the World Council has spoken variously of ecumenical education, ecumenical learning and ecumenical formation.  The changes in wording represent both conceptual development and a continuing search for an adequate terminology in English, the primary language of discourse.  Although the word ecumenical has remained constant, its usage has varied across time and context from that which pertains narrowly to the unity of the church to an all-embracing meaning relating to the whole earth.  This study will explore these issues in Chapter 2.

However, the issues of terminology and underlying meaning were not the only areas of question that confronted me in working for the World Council.  The World Council is often conceived by its constituency in two different, perhaps ultimately incompatible, ways.  It is the global body with the responsibility of encouraging and enabling the ecumenical movement and of articulating and disseminating an ecumenical vision.  At the same time, it is the servant of its member churches.  In that capacity it has channelled support to churches to enable them to survive natural disasters and to emerge with self-confidence and self sufficiency from times of difficulty (for example, churches in post-colonial situations or the churches in post-communist eastern Europe).  Churches lacking financial and human resources have turned to the World Council for assistance.  It can be argued

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[7] Kobia, S, *Called to the One Hope*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2006, p124

that this has had the unintended effect of strengthening the churches in their existing divisions, many of which may be totemic rather than an essential response to the gospel in a particular context.   It becomes particularly difficult in the educational field as some churches have an expectation that the World Council should assist them in developing their own Christian education programmes and ministerial formation courses with a deliberately limited focus on their own tradition to the exclusion, or even denigration, of the rest of the Church.  From my own experience I know that churches are extremely resistant to the idea that accepting assistance from the World Council might also imply embracing an ecumenical approach.   As will be seen from the study, the World Council has not always been successful in combining the promotion of an ecumenical imperative with the support of its member churches.

Given that Paulo Freire served as a consultant to the World Council's Office of Education for nine years from 1970, it might be thought that the organisation would have been imbued with the spirit of his pedagogy.  Unfortunately, as will be seen, Freire has been honoured more in theory than in practice.  The World Council, in common with many institutions has a didactic or instructional default position.  The story of education in and through the World Council that I will outline is a series of cycles of the development of creative and liberative thinking and practice followed by a reversion to models of formal instruction.  Whilst the latter has its place, I will argue that on its own it is insufficient to produce the individual and communal transformation required.

When I began this research, I did so with the intention of making ecumenical formation the key concept.  In spite of the limitations of the term it had become the preferred descriptor used by the World Council and I had written and spoken extensively about it.  It was only later on in the research process that I realised that the idea of the development of an ecumenical consciousness which is present in both the original and current Constitution of the World Council[8] offered a neglected but essential perspective.  This consciousness is necessary in individuals, churches and other bodies if the ecumenical movement is to fulfil its objectives.  As I will argue, the notion of ecumenical consciousness takes us beyond knowing about ecumenism into becoming ecumenical in identity, relationship and activity.  The more I have reflected on the notion of ecumenical consciousness, the more I have come to understand that it offers one way through the issues I have outlined above.

In order to put to the development of an ecumenical consciousness into a wider perspective I have referred in Chapter 3 to work that has been done on social movements and social movement organisations.[9]  Social movements have to connect with the worldviews and practices of potential

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[8] Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches, op cit, p1
[9] In recent years social movements have been the subject of a considerable amount of academic study. They represent the way in which individuals and groups relate, often informally, around social and political issues to instigate or resist change.  There is now a large volume of literature on the subject, exemplified in primary form by Tarrow, S, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998 and in overview and analysis by Crossley N, *Making Sense of Social Movements*, Maidenhead, Open University Press, 2002.

and actual constituents in order to frame alternative understandings and interpretations which lead to action. Although the ecumenical movement would not strictly qualify as a social movement and therefore the World Council not as a social movement organisation, there appears to be sufficient commonality to draw on some of the conclusions about how they engage with, elicit the support of and enthuse their constituencies.

I will suggest that, although an ecumenical consciousness is developed primarily through participation, intentional processes, formal and informal, are required to fully realise that in the lives of individuals and communities. The totality of the work and life of the World Council and the ecumenical movement should nurture an ecumenical consciousness within its constituencies. Any kind of assessment of the efficacy of this would be a project beyond the scope of this PhD thesis. The purpose of this particular study is to assess how the constitutional requirement of growing or developing an ecumenical consciousness has influenced the World Council's stated understanding of its educational task and to indicate how a renewed interest in ecumenical consciousness could benefit both the World Council and the ecumenical movement as a whole.

**The process and methodology of the study**

As well as my general experience outlined above, I began this study having undertaken some relevant pieces of work. In 2000 I was asked to do a substantial revision of the draft of the chapter entitled 'Ecumenical Formation' for *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3, 1968-2000*[10], finally published in 2004. The nature and length of the chapter meant is that this could be done using readily available sources. In 2001 I wrote *Creative Ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another*[11] - an introduction to the theory and practice of learning ecumenically. Shortly after, I was a co-editor of and contributor to the *Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context*[12] which encourages a holistic approach to education in the churches and ecumenical movement. In 2005, I was guest editor of *The Ecumenical Review* for a special edition on ecumenical formation.[13] As well as giving me encouragement to pursue this study, these writing and editorial projects provided me with a deeper knowledge base.

I initially approached the study with the intention of undertaking a broader investigation of the understanding and practice of ecumenical formation in the modern ecumenical movement. In order to limit myself to that which was both doable and meaningful, I decided to concentrate this study on an analysis of the conceptual, policy and programmatic documentation of the World Council relating to the development of an ecumenical consciousness. I have taken the time period from that which led to the formation of the World Council through the assembly in 2006 in Porto Alegre. The documented outcomes of that assembly are firm enough for analysis and any other

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[10] Briggs, J, Oduyoue, M A & Tsetsis, G (eds), op cit
[11] Oxley, S, *Creative Ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002
[12] Schreiner, P, Banev, E & Oxley, S, *Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context*, Munster, Waxmann, 2005
[13] *The Ecumenical Review*, 2006, vol 57, no 1

endpoint other than an assembly would be arbitrary. My approach has been to review the material relating to the World Council's educational and formational activities in the Library and Archives, which is a unique repository of the documentation of the World Council.[14] I have drawn out that which could be seen to be supportive of the development of an ecumenical consciousness and that which has ignored, neglected or contradicted it.

The kind of material available to me to undertake this study falls into several categories. The World Council has operated in roughly seven year periods between each assembly. In the year leading up to each assembly, programme staff have been required to make preparation for the event a priority and thus reduce the activity of their particular projects. In the year following each assembly, staff time has often been taken up with establishing a new programmatic structure within the World Council. Although there is a clear line of continuity across Assemblies for some programmes, the theory has been that the assembly sets the priorities, and thus by implication if not in actuality, a new programme structure. This means that the highest level of programmatic activity occurs in five year periods. Although such a stop-start-stop way of being could be thought to be an ineffective way of running an organisation, it has the benefit for research from a historical perspective of clearly defined time periods. Activity in these periods is summarised, and sometimes detailed, in the book-length report of Central Committee to the assembly and in the papers and other documentation for the committees, sections and the like that meet as part of the assembly programme. A book-length report has been published on each assembly. Such material gives a useful overview of each period, flagging up the main issues which have occupied the attention of the World Council.

One of the tasks of each assembly is to elect a new Central Committee to serve until the next assembly. The Central Committee has had the practice of meeting every 12 to 18 months for between one and two weeks. It elects an Executive Committee which meets twice each year. These bodies are presented with policy issues, reports on the work of programmes and request to make public statements on current issues in the world or the life of the churches, as well as matters to do with the running of the World Council as an organisation. The minutes of both bodies are published in some detail, although some of the papers presented to them are only available in the archives.

There are several general histories and theological reflections on the ecumenical movement and the World Council. The larger World Council events, such as Faith and Order and World Mission conferences, have produced reports in book form. Published books and pamphlets have also emerged from programmatic activities. All the above are shelved in the World Council's Library at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva and at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey. I have also made reference to other published material relating to educational issues and social movements in order to put ecumenical consciousness into a broader conceptual context.

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[14] See footnote 5, p8

The archives of the World Council, housed in the Library at the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, contain documentation from the earliest days of the ecumenical movement to the present.  In 2003 the World Council benefited from a generous grant which enabled the cataloguing and indexing of part of the archives.  Some references to archival material in this study will, therefore, have a reference number which indicates the particular box and folder within it where the document may be found.  However, there is a very large volume of material which remains unindexed.  Some of these boxes are physically grouped together according to programme whereas others have been simply placed on shelves.  In such cases, it is a matter of serendipity whether one finds relevant material.  Many of the unindexed boxes appear to be simply the contents of a filing cabinet removed to the archive area at the termination of a project or the departure of a member of staff.  Although, I spent a considerable number of hours working through the archives while I was a member of staff of the World Council and the period from December 2008 to March 2009 almost full-time, I cannot claim to be certain that I have discovered all the relevant documentation.  I would, at least, claim that mine is the most comprehensive trawl through the archives relating to educational concerns that has so far been undertaken.  Not everything that I discovered in the archives is of relevance to the purpose of this study and I intend to produce some kind of broader historical account of the educational work of the World Council when this thesis is completed.

As stated above, I have limited this study to a consideration of the World Council's stated understandings of its educational task in relation to the development of an ecumenical consciousness.  I have taken this to include the products of staff discussions and of wider consultations and conferences as well as the more authoritative statements of Assemblies and the Central Committee.  Understandably, these have mostly originated in the educational sectors of the work of the World Council - from the formal provision of programmes by the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey to the enabling networking relating to, for example, theological education, youth and Christian nurture.  In order to give some context and coherence to the analysis of the stated understandings, I have followed the work of these different threads through each time period.

From 1996, when I became a member of staff of the World Council, most of the documentation passed through my hands even if I was not involved in preparing it.  This raises the issue that, for the final part of the historical compass of the study, it must be recognized that I was an actor rather than an observer.  However, as I have already indicated, I came late to the implications of ecumenical consciousness and must be properly critical of my own lack of awareness of it in my conceptual and programmatic work on ecumenical formation.

Although I might well have been able to write this thesis whilst continuing to work in Geneva as an employee of the World Council, I was concerned that this would inhibit my objectivity which arguably had already been somewhat compromised.  Having reached a point where I felt I had contributed all I could to the work of the World Council and not wishing to coast towards

retirement, I took the decision to resign. As has already been indicated, I spent four months part-time in Geneva to complete my searches of the Library and Archives and then returned permanently to Greater Manchester. To maintain my independence and for other reasons not germane to this study I did not wish to compromise myself by taking up the possibility of the World Council offering me a paid sabbatical.

This leads to a further significant observation. The documentation under consideration is the product of an institution, the World Council, and therefore is written or heavily influenced by its staff. Even the written products of consultations and conferences whose participants are widely representative of the global ecumenical movement are usually shaped at the time or subsequently edited by staff members. The World Council has an unfortunate institutional culture which makes it acceptable for staff to go beyond the kind of editing which tidies up presentation and language into changing meanings with no realistic opportunity for participants to challenge published documents.[15] This is not the place to discuss this kind of behaviour but to note it in terms of the provenance and ownership of the content of documentation.

However representative the World Council may be, or considers itself to be, the documentation under review cannot be taken as necessarily indicative of that which the ecumenical movement believes about or understands of the development of an ecumenical consciousness. The documentation is what it is, the product of an institution. It is written from the perspective of the provider. However, it does help us understand how an organisation which considers itself to be the global instrument of encouragement, engagement and support of the ecumenical movement has variously understood and valued the development of an ecumenical consciousness within its constituency.

My initial exploration of the documentation in the Library and Archives was undertaken with a view to identifying material broadly relating to education. It was whilst doing this that I came to the awareness of the value of taking ecumenical consciousness as the key concept for this thesis. The engagement with the source materials was, therefore, something of an iterative process as I had to return to what I had already identified to assess what would be relevant to ecumenical consciousness. The initial drafts of the chapters based on the outcome proved to be far too long and so a further process of refinement had to be undertaken to select that which was essential as a basis of the argument and to provide continuity to the account.

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[15] I first encountered this after the meeting of the Unit II Commission in December 2006 where I had been asked as a mother-tongue English speaking member of staff to work with two commissioners on preparing the minutes. The draft minutes agreed with them were returned to me by senior staff with substantive changes to the decisions taken by the Commission. It was explained to me that this was an accepted practice.

**The flow of the argument in the thesis**

After this Introduction, in Chapter 2 I discuss the evolving and multidimensional understanding of ecumenism and the background to and meaning of ecumenical consciousness. So much has already been written about ecumenism that, although it is necessary to map out the field, I cannot claim any great originality. However, I can find no evidence that the origins of ecumenical consciousness as a concept in the Constitution of the World Council has been systematically explored before. For the reasons presented above, Chapter 3 outlines current thinking on social movements and the organisations they create. This provides a conceptual framework through which the development of ecumenical consciousness may be understood and how ecumenical education/learning/formation might relate to that. These two chapters provide a basis on which the World Council's understandings of its responsibility for the growth of ecumenical consciousness can be assessed.

Chapter 4 and 5 tell the story of and try to analyse those understandings from the period leading to the formation of the World Council to the Porto Alegre Assembly in 2006. Because of the way the World Council operates, as described above, the chapters are sub-divided into the periods between assemblies. Certain aspects constantly reappear, such as the Ecumenical Institute and theological education. Other programmatic work might have continued but only occasionally produced reflection relevant to ecumenical consciousness. My selection of the material for these two chapters has been guided by its throwing light on ecumenical consciousness or by indicating missed opportunities. I draw some conclusions at the end of each of these chapters.

Chapter 6 offers an overall assessment, from my own acknowledged perspective, of the understanding of the World Council of the task of developing an ecumenical consciousness, particularly through its education work. This assessment is structured through a set of tensions that I have identified as emerging from the historical account. In Chapter 7, I offer some suggestions as to what the World Council might do institutionally and through its programmatic work to harvest the benefits of developing the ecumenical consciousness of both the churches and all people within the orbit of the ecumenical movement.

# 2 Ecumenism and ecumenical consciousness

The growth or development of an ecumenical consciousness in individuals and the churches is the primary focus of this study. As we have seen, ecumenical consciousness is a concept which was present in the functions of the World Council in its first constitution agreed by the inaugural assembly in Amsterdam in 1948. However, it is not terminology that would have been familiar earlier in the history of either movements or that of the International Missionary Council. Ecumenical consciousness disappeared as a constitutional concern of the World Council in a revision of the constitution at the Nairobi Assembly in 1975 and returned at the Harare Assembly in 1996. This chapter sets out the complexities of meaning and significance of both ecumenism and ecumenical consciousness.

**The evolving and multidimensional understanding of ecumenism**

Ecumenism – a difficult concept

The words ecumenical and ecumenism do not relate to an object that is easily definable. The ecumenical can be seen as a field but it is one whose boundaries and landscape change significantly according to the context. For some in the traditional churches of Europe, the boundary is drawn tightly around the unity of the church. For others in the rest of the world, it is widened to include the wholeness of the human community and natural order. For some it is about relating to and working with those who are different. For others it is a deep commitment to God that works towards the transformation of all that is.

Although I consider ecumenism to be a positive concept, this is far from the case for everyone. For some, ecumenism is a threat to or denial of true Christian faith. It may be seen as a (communist, Roman Catholic, masonic or similar[16]) plot to create one global church structure against people's will. Ecumenism, for them, is about being related to people whose faith is deficient or downright wrong. An internet search for ecumenical or ecumenism yields strongly antagonistic as well as positive websites.[17] In some places it is the word ecumenical which is contaminated rather than the underlying concepts.[18]

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[16] I witnessed outside the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, held in Athens in May 2005, traditionalist Greek Orthodox protestors whose banners, helpfully written in English, charged the World Council of Churches with being a masonic conspiracy among their more general claims of apostasy and heresy.

[17] A Google search on ecumenism on 22/07/09 yielded two antagonistic websites in the first 10 returned - one from an evangelical source: http://www.jeremiahproject.com/prophecy/ecumen01.html; the other from an Orthodox source: http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/. This seems to be representative return.

[18] For example, a World Council consultation in 2004 for theological and religious educators from Central and Eastern Europe on ecumenical formation was entitled 'Education for Unity and Unity in Education' because of sensitivities of participants attending an event labelled ecumenical.

Many Christians throughout the world are not involved ecumenically for reasons of antagonism, irrelevance or lack of interest. The ecumenical movement has hardly engaged with the fastest growing sectors of the church – evangelical and pentecostal churches and indigenous churches such as the African independent churches.[19] Those Christians who are members of local congregations of the mainstream denominations[20] which have traditionally made up the ecumenical movement may have a primary feeling of allegiance to that local Christian community than to the tradition of which it is a part. In a mobile society they may move from one congregation to another on the basis of personal satisfaction rather than on ecclesiology or denominational sentiment.[21] For such people, certain kinds of church-unity focussed ecumenism appear irrelevant.

Origins of the term

The origin of the English word ecumenical is the ancient Greek *oikoumene.* The root of this word is *oikos*, a house, and its original meaning relates to those who live together in a household. By a process of extension it came to refer to refer to the whole inhabited earth. This is a similar journey to that undertaken by another word coming from the root of *oikos,* economy, which began as the management of the household.

The New Testament uses the word *oikoumene,* in the sense of the whole inhabited earth, in several places. To give some well known examples:

> In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world [oikoumene] should be registered. (Luke 2.1 NRSV)
> Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world [oikoumene] (Luke 4.5 NRSV)
> And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world [oikoumene], as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come. (Matt 24.14 NRSV)

The word ecumenical acquired its ecclesiastical connotations through the name being applied to the early councils of the church from the Council of Nicea in 325. Although it can be argued that these councils contained a variety of practice and belief, the term ecumenical was applied because they brought together representatives of Christian communities from around the then known world. A council called by the Roman emperor was de facto an authoritative body. The word ecumenical when applied to Nicea and subsequent councils became associated with that which is authoritative and valid throughout the whole church. An ecumenical council became understood as a body which speaks on behalf of the whole church.[22]

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[19] See, for example, *Ecumenism in the 21st Century: Report of the Consultation Convened by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2005
[20] Churches which form the historic Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.
[21] As evidenced, for example, in Davie, G, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing without Belonging,* Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 1994
[22] See, for example Bouwen, F, 'Ecumenical Councils' in Lossky, N et al, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002, pp373-376

This brief account is not simply a matter of semantic interest for, as will be seen, the idea of the oikos, the household, and of the oikoumene, the whole inhabited earth, is taken up by more contemporary commentators on ecumenism. Much more could be said about ecumenical councils, the ecumenical theologians (Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom) and the sixth century dispute between Rome and Constantinople over the title Ecumenical Patriarch.[23] However that would not be germane to the concern of this section.

<u>The developing meaning in the modern ecumenical movement</u>

The authoritative and representative nature of the term ecumenical continued until the early part of the twentieth century. At the conference that constituted the Evangelical Alliance in 1846, several speakers used the word ecumenical in the sense of common belonging and attitude rather that in the traditional sense. The judgment of Ruth Rouse on the conference was that:

> despite all difficulties and obstacles, the reality of Christian Unity had at last found a corporate expression. The Evangelical Alliance … was the one and only definitively ecumenical organization (its founders, it should be noted seldom employed the term ecumenical).[24]

This is illustrated by one of the resolutions of the conference that the object of the Evangelical Alliance should be to manifest unity in response to Christ's call to love one another and the Johannine prayer that Jesus disciples might be one.[25] The use of ecumenical was from the floor with remarks such as 'Oecumenical as our Alliance is, I think it ought to guard the door'[26] in respect of being inclusive but not all-inclusive.

The 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference, from which the modern ecumenical movement is often dated, was preceded by two earlier world mission conferences which have not received the same attention. In the first, the Centenary Missionary Conference in London in 1888, the chair of one of the sessions claimed that:

> this was 'an Oecumenical Council' in the truest sense of the word because its participants were 'those engaged either in directing or carrying on Missionary enterprise throughout the world'.[27]

Ecumenical, in its modern spelling, was adopted as part of the title of the second world missionary conference in New York in 1900. This was:

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[23] See for example, Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church: Story of Emergent Christianity from the Apostolic Age to the Dividing of the Ways Between the Greek East and the Latin West*, London, Penguin, 2005
[24] Rouse, R, 'Voluntary Movements and the Changing Ecumenical Climate', Chapter 7 in Rouse, R & Meil S C (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948,* London, SPCK, p320
[25] *Evangelical Alliance: Report of the Proceedings of the Conference held at Freemasons' Hall, London from August 19th to September 2nd Inclusive, 1846,* London, Partridge and Oakley, 1847, p229
[26] ibid p172 Similar use of oecumenical can be found in around 10 other places.
[27] Stanley, B, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2009, p18

not because all portions of the Christian Church are to be represented in it by delegates [but] because the plan of campaign which it proposes covers the whole area of the inhabited globe.[28]

Brian Stanley, in describing the background to the 1910 Edinburgh conference, commented that:

ecumenical still implied global geographical reach, and not necessarily comprehensiveness of Christian affiliation or theological perspective.[29]

However, when it came to planning the Edinburgh conference, the working title of the Third Ecumenical Missionary Conference was amended to the World Missionary Conference, 1910. The ecumenical description was dropped because neither the Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches would be present and that it was a deliberative rather than legislative event. Stanley observed that:

By 1908 the term was acquiring something like its modern meaning, and open-minded Protestants were becoming more cautious than they had been in 1900 in claiming the title for their own assemblies.[30]

Stanley also noted the irony of the conference dropping the term ecumenical which would become associated with 'the very movement for church unity to which Edinburgh gave birth'.[31]

Henri Dunant was a remarkable man. He founded the Red Cross in 1863, was a pioneer of the YMCA and was involved with the Evangelical Alliance. From his YMCA office in Geneva he carried on a correspondence with YMCAs throughout the world, constantly stressing the need for an ecumenical spirit. He defined his use of ecumenical as:

that Christians of different denominations can and must unite in love, associate with each other, and work together in charity for the glory of God, while maintaining their individual liberty and even their right to defend, if necessary, but with tolerance and charity, their personal points of view and their particular religious convictions.[32]

This development of the concept of ecumenism began to take hold but did not really become dominant until the period between the two world wars.

The 1937 Oxford Conference of the Universal Council for Life and Work was on the theme of Church, State and Community. It took place at a significant time in world history and that of the ecumenical movement. In other languages the title of the organisation of the Life and Work movement had already changed from 'universal' to 'ecumenical' but not in English. At this time when the World Council of Churches was in formation, the French and German forms of its title had been adopted as Conseil oecuménique des Eglises and Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen.

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[28] *Ecumenical Missionary Conference New York, 1900*, London, Religious Tract Society, 1900, Vol I, p10.
[29] Stanley, op cit, p19
[30] ibid p36
[31] ibid p49
[32] Translated from Clarence Shedd, *Henri Dunant et les YMCA*, in *Bulletin, Société d'Histoire et d'Archéolgie de Genève,* 1949, p231

There may have been resistance to the use of Ecumenical as a title in English but the Oxford Conference gave the word a wide meaning in their actual discussion:

> the term ecumenical refers to the expression within history of the given unity of the church. The thought and action of the church are ecumenical, insofar as they attempt to realise the *Una Sancta*, the fellowship of Christians, who acknowledge the one Lord.[33]

The conference distinguished ecumenical from the term international which recognises the division of humanity.

Commenting on the Oxford Conference, Visser't Hooft, the first general secretary of the World Council, wrote:

> From that time on the term has been used in both the traditional sense of "concerning the church as a whole", and in the modern sense of "concerning the relationship of different churches" and "expressing the consciousness of the wholeness of the Church".[34]

The unity of the church has always been a primary factor in ecumenism. However, as the church exists for a purpose, that must also be reflected in an understanding of ecumenism. In reviewing the history of the ecumenical movement up to 1948, Stephen Neill commented on the false separation of mission and ecumenism:

> Throughout the world, ecumenical has been used to designate the efforts of Christians to seek and promote unity but it should now be plain to the reader that these efforts are not an end in themselves. The aim of Christian union is that the world may believe.[35]

In the light of this, in 1951, the Central Committee of the World Council formulated perhaps the most widely accepted definition of ecumenical:

> It is important to insist that this word which comes from the Greek word for the whole inhabited earth, is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole church to bring the Gospel to the whole world.[36]

Ecumenism, therefore, related to 'unity and mission in the context of the whole world'.[37]

The high point of the equation of ecumenism with the development of visible Christian unity probably came in 1961 with the statement of the New Dehli Assembly of the World Council:

> We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common

[33] Oldham, J H (ed), *The Churches survey their task*: Report of the conference at Oxford, July 1937, on Church, Community and State, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1937 p168

[34] Willem Visser't Hooft, Appendix 1, Rouse, R & Neill S C (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume I, 1517-1948,* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1965, p740

[35] Neill, S, 'Epilogue', in Rouse, R & Neill, S C (eds) *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume I, 1517-1948,* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1965, p730

[36] Central Committee minutes, 1951 p65

[37] ibid p65

prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.[38]

This statement held together the local and the universal dimensions of church unity. However, the early use of the phrase 'all in each place' meant that the New Delhi statement was often referred to as only being concerned with local unity. As was pointed out by many observers, the statement appears to presume the end of denominational distinctions, in other words full organic unity. It may be that New Delhi was over-optimistic about the possibility of overcoming the divisions between the churches. Those who are concerned about church unity today are more likely to use the language of reconciled diversity than of organic unity.

When general secretary of the World Council, Philip Potter went back to the image of the oikos in an address to the Central Committee in 1977:

> The whole burden of the ecumenical movement is to co-operate with God in making the oikoumene an oikos, a home, a family of men and women, of young and old, of varied gifts, cultures, possibilities, where openness, trust, love and justice reign.[39]

He returned to this theme in his report to the Vancouver Assembly in 1983, drawing on the image of living stones being built into a spiritual house in 1 Peter 2:

> the ecumenical movement is, therefore, the means by which the churches which form the house, the oikos of God are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the whole oikoumene may become the oikos of God through the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the life-giving spirit.[40]

He reflected on the nature of ecumenism as discovered through the experience of the World Council. The fellowship of this oikos was one of confessing, learning, participation, sharing, healing, reconciliation, unity and expectancy.

Assemblies of the World Council have often, by accident or design, recognised and formulated a widening understanding of ecumenism in their reports. The Vancouver Assembly in 1983, *Jesus Christ – the Life of the Word*, defined ecumenism by emphasising God's reconciling purpose as not being only for the church but the whole of humanity and the whole of creation. The Message of the assembly described the unity of God's people as 'a sign by which the world may be brought to faith, renewal and unity'.[41] Elsewhere it spoke of:

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[38] Visser't Hooft, W A (ed), *The New Dehli Report: The third assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961,* London, SCM Press, 1962, p118

[39] Philip Potter, One Obedience to the Whole Gospel, in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1977, vol 24, no 4, 1977 p303

[40] Philip Potter, 'A House of Living Stones', in *The Ecumenical Review* 1983, vol 35, no 4, pp352 & 354

[41] Gill, D (ed), *Gathered for Life: Official report of the VI Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, 1983,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 1983 p 2

our two profoundest ecumenical concerns, the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and destiny of the human community. Church unity is vital to the health of the church and the future of the human family.[42]

The next assembly, Canberra 1991, *Come, Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation*, was even more concerned that ecumenism should hold together an absolute commitment to the unity and renewal of the church and an absolute commitment to the reconciliation of God's world. They commented, 'We need to affirm the vision of an inhabited world (oikoumene) based on values which promote a life for all'.[43]

To the 1951 definition of ecumenical, 'the whole task of the whole church to bring the Gospel to the whole world' (see above), there had been added new emphases – God's intention for the whole human community revealed in Christ and the sustaining and renewing of all creation particularly through the work of the Holy Spirit. Writing in the *History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3*, Michael Kinnamon commented that an expansion of the definition of ecumenical was:

> inevitable given the shifting centre of world Christianity. The goal of uniting churches separated by patristic, medieval and Reformation-era disputes often appears restrictive to those whose histories are shaped less by Europe than by struggles for political and economic freedom in other parts of the world.[44]

Kinnamon referred to Gustavo Gutiérrez who argued that encounters between Christians from different traditions but similar political motivation:

> gave rise to ecumenical groups, often marginal to their ecclesiastical authorities, in which Christians shared their faith and struggled to create a more just society. The common struggle made the traditional ecumenical programmes obsolete ("a marriage between the senior citizens" as someone has said) and impelled them to look for new paths towards unity.[45]

However, it should also be said that there appears to be a resurgence of denominationalism in many parts of the world, especially Africa.[46] The acultural denominational differences imported by the missionaries which ought to have no abiding relevance seem to have become useful means of differentiation for other purposes. These may have more to do with power, influence and resources than theology or ecclesiology. The task of ecumenism in terms of church unity in such contexts becomes more complex.

In *To be the Church*, Konrad Raiser looked at the challenges that faced the churches at the dawn of a new millennium. In the concluding chapter he summarised his understanding of a renewed ecumenical vision:

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[42] ibid p43f

[43] Report of the Report Committee, WCC 7th Assembly, in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1991, vol 43, no 2, p268

[44] Michael Kinnamon, Assessing the Ecumenical Movement in Briggs, J et al (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3 1968-2000,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 2004 p53

[45] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,* New York, Orbis, 1973, p104

[46] Noted, for example, in Werner, D, *Challenges and Opportunities in Theological Education in the 21st Century: Pointers for a new international debate on theological education,* Geneva, Edinburgh 2010 - International study group on theological education, 2009, p8

the ecumenical vision is a vision of *wholeness* and of fullness of life, not only for human beings, but also for all creation …
the ecumenical vision is a vision of *shalom* and of right relationships in a sustainable human community …
the ecumenical vision is a vision of *reconciliation* …
the ecumenical vision is a vision of *sufficiency* …
the ecumenical vision is a vision of the *catholicity* of the church as the worldwide community of those who live by the promise of God's kingdom and celebrate the signs of its presence already now …[47]

A wider ecumenism

However, there were those who were challenging the sufficiency of even such a broad focus. In *Courage for Dialogue, Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious Relationships,* Stanley J Samartha wrote out of an Asian experience that:

the time has come to search for a new style of ecumenism encompassing the whole of humanity, but which recognises within itself the creative particularities of pluralism.[48]

Wesley Ariarajah, a former deputy general secretary of the World Council, argued that the problems of the world were not solely Christian problems requiring Christian answers. Issues of justice and the environment needed to be addressed across the boundaries of religions, nations and cultures. Human problems had to be addressed by humanity.

So the issue of how ecumenical "ecumenical" should be is no longer a question of semantics or inclusion. It is a theological question. It has to do with a reassessment of our understanding of God, of the scope of God's mission.[49]

Even if people in the churches of the West were content to keep ecumenism within a clearly defined to Christian circle, which many are not, the pressure on widening the understanding of ecumenism would continue to be felt from other parts of the world. In common parlance, even in churches, ecumenical is sometimes being used in place of what others would describe as inter-faith.[50] Indeed, by extension, anything that has to do with relationships or cooperation between people of different political beliefs may attract the term ecumenical.[51]

A wider understanding of ecumenism was at least hinted at in the Harare Assembly in 1998 when delegates reaffirmed their ecumenical vision. The statement, *Our Ecumenical Vision,* celebrated a common faith in Christ and expressed thanks for the fifty years of the World Council of Churches.

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[47] Raiser, K, *To be the Church,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, pp87f
[48] Samartha, S J, *Courage for Dialogue, Ecumenical Issues in Inter-religious relationships,* Geneva, WCC, 1981 p343
[49] Ariarajah, W, 'Wider Ecumenism: A Threat or Promise', in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1998, vol50, no3, p327
[50] For example, an article on a meeting where London mayoral candidates gave support to the social objectives of an inter-faith coalition was entitled *All very ecumenical.* Hill, D, 'All very ecumenical' in the *The Guardian*, 10 April 2008, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/apr/10/allveryecumenical accessed 22/07/09
[51] For example, Ken Livingstone's becoming leader of the then Greater London Council was been described as 'the outcome of a remarkably ecumenical alliance at County Hall' in Campbell, B, 'Back to the future?' in *The Guardian*, 24 May 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/may/24/backtothefuture accessed 22/07/09

It shared a vision of the church and offered a commitment to journey on together. One section summed up where a developing understanding of ecumenical had taken the ecumenical movement:

> We long for the visible oneness of the body of Christ,
> >  affirming the gifts of all,
> >  young and old, women and men, lay and ordained.
> We expect the healing of  human community,
> >  the wholeness of God's entire creation.
> We trust in the liberating power of forgiveness,
> >  transforming enmity into friendship
> >  and breaking the spiral of violence.
> We open ourselves for a culture of dialogue and solidarity,
> >  sharing life with strangers
> >  and seeking encounter with those of other faiths.[52]

As careful as this statement is, it does raise a question. When the assembly delegates said these words together in December 1998, were they expressing a genuine and accepted broadening of the concept of ecumenism or were they making a statement which was acceptable because it contained their understanding even though it also contained other people's understandings? This, of course, is one of the basic issues of ecumenism.

The questions raised by ecumenism

Another way of summing up an understanding of ecumenism at the start of the 21st century is to examine the tensions within the ecumenical movement. Michael Kinnamon is of assistance in listing seven key questions:

- Dialogue between conflicting perspectives or partisan renewal on behalf of the excluded and the oppressed?
- Churches adapting to different local contexts or holding a transcontextual consensus?
- Focussing on unity as a sign or participating in holistic mission?
- Doing what is possible in brokenness or holding up a vision of transformation?
- Pursuing justice as authentic Christian witness or explicit witness to Christ as the context of justice and service?
- Intra-Christian communion and cooperation or solidarity and struggle with people of other faiths? [53]

Kinnamon appears to me to have correctly identified the contemporary questions and the tensions around the concept of ecumenism. Each of these has a history and a current dynamic that are interesting to explore. However, the purpose here is to map the territory as a background of ecumenism against which the development of an ecumenical consciousness may be understood.

With the recognition and development of all these tensions, it is no longer possible to hold to one model or paradigm of ecumenism. Once, particularly when the concept of ecumenical consciousness was first introduced, it might have been taken for granted that those who met round

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[52] 'Our Ecumenical Vision' in *The Ecumenical Review* 1998, vol 50, no 3, p267
[53] Michael Kinnamon, Assessing the Ecumenical Movement, in Briggs, J et al (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3 1968-2000,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 2004 p79

the ecumenical table came as committed members of denominations who could articulate and discuss well defined doctrinal and ecclesiological positions and that the aim was agreement between them. Now, not one of those aspects can be assumed, nor be always considered important. It could be said that the ecumenical table has been extended and the items on the menu diversified. Or that the table of inter-denominational engagement towards church unity is only one of many in the ecumenical restaurant.

Perhaps what should be said is that underlying all the above is an ecumenical spirit. Although it is a less easily defined quality, it may be more significant than objective formulations. That may give us a clue as to why the development of an ecumenical consciousness is more significant than a process of education about ecumenism.

**The background to and meaning of ecumenical consciousness**

Consciousness in the context of the times

Before detailing the emergence of the notion of ecumenical consciousness in the process that led to the formation of the World Council, it is worth noting the significance of consciousness in the intellectual history of the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930's. What follows does not intend to be an exhaustive or all-encompassing account but illustrative and indicative.

The *Oxford Dictionary Online* has the use of consciousness going back to the seventeenth century with:

> Internal knowledge or conviction; knowledge as to which one has the testimony within oneself; esp. of one's own innocence, guilt, deficiencies, etc.
> …
> The state or faculty of being conscious, as a condition and concomitant of all thought, feeling, and volition
> …
> The totality of the impressions, thoughts, and feelings, which make up a person's conscious being. [54]

The latter definition had the possibility of being qualified by, for example, moral- or religious- from the mid-nineteenth century. From the 1960's, consciousness has also had the possibility of being qualified, as in consciousness–expanding and consciousness–raising. It seems clear from the above that the term consciousness has remained within a fairly limited area of meaning throughout the period of study.

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[54] *Oxford Dictionary Online*
http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50047727?query_type=word&queryword=consciousness&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=8UsG-26yPRY-2541&hilite=50047727  Accessed 14 July 2008

At the beginning of *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* Burrow noted that the collapse of the European revolutions and the conflicts between those who had supported them had brought disillusionment.  Another kind of project was the pursuit:

> with a renewed intensity and confidence, of the long-standing ambition to unify human thought by the extension to all phenomena, including those of human life and consciousness, other methods, the certainty and the objectivity of the natural sciences. … in an evolved humanity it would have produced a being capable of comprehending the conditions of its own existence. [55]

Likewise, in *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930* Hughes suggested that the period saw the end of one type of intellectual activity in the beginning of another. There was an interest in the problem of consciousness and the role of the unconscious as earlier assurances of rationalistic ideologies - liberal, democratic, or socialist - became inadequate. In his preliminary observations on the period 1890-1930 he commented that:

> A number of the major figures of his era – Freud, Croce, Pareto, to cite three very different ones – were builders of great inclusive systems. … In the shifting, transitional world of ideas in which they dwelt, the problem of consciousness early established itself as crucial.[56]

 He argued that:

> Rather suddenly a number of thinkers independently began to wonder whether emotional involvements, far from being merely extraneous, might not be the central element in the story. … They were led to discover the importance of subjective values in human behaviour.  Man as an actor in society, they came to see, was seldom decisively influenced by logical considerations: supra- or infra-rational values of one sort or another usually guided his conduct.[57]

Again, Bell writing on the 'The Metaphysics of Modernism' argued that:

> Marx had analysed the external realm of social and economic process and laid bare the 'false consciousness' by which the advantaged classes unwittingly rationalize their own condition. Freud investigated the inner realm of the psyche and showed how, through the process of 'sublimation', consciousness may itself act as a sophisticated barrier to recognizing the true nature of instinctual desire. … Nietzsche diagnosed the whole tradition of Western metaphysics from Socrates onwards as a subtle form of falsehood reflecting an inner suppression and outer domination.[58]

Human life was understood as a fundamentally hermeneutic activity.


In themselves, these quotations prove nothing.  A considerably more detailed study would have to be made to trace the influences of any particular tendency or writer on the principal actors in the founding of the World Council.  However, they do illustrate that consciousness was an essential aspect of the intellectual discourse of the period.

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[55] Burrow, J W, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914,* New Haven Ct, Yale University Press, 2000, pxii
[56] Hughes, H S, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930,* Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1979, p14f
[57] ibid p15f
[58] Bell, M, 'The Metaphysics of Modernism'  in Levenson, M (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p9f

It should also be mentioned that consciousness was also prominent within the theological sphere. Freidrich Schleiermacher was one of the most influential Protestant theologians in the nineteenth century. Even if they did not accept his theological approach all those involved in the formation of the World Council would have been aware of him. He is of interest in this context because of his understanding of consciousness. In his 1799 *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, Schleiermacher revealed that he had little use for theology as an intellectual discipline. He developed a theological position whereby the proper locus for religion was feeling. In his writing he tried to clarify the meaning of feeling and its relationship to knowledge and morality. The result was *The Christian Faith*, claimed by many to be the most influential theological work of the 19th century. Feeling was not a passing emotion but a profound awareness. Religious feeling, piety, is the:

> consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.[59]

Schleiermacher understood human consciousness as having three levels. The first was that of the animal with no distinction between the self and the world. The second is a consciousness of the distinction between the self and the world where there is a sense of freedom in the relationship to the world. The ability to affect the world increases.[60] Thirdly there is a consciousness that humans and the world are absolutely dependent on God. However, we are still called to activity relating to the world.

Commenting on *The Christian Faith*, Hans Kung wrote:

> Schleiermacher does not begin from the objective story of Jesus of Nazareth, but from our pious Christian 'consciousness', of redemption through the person of Jesus Christ.[61]

It is not necessary here to go in any greater depth into Schleiermacher's theology as his prominent use of the word consciousness and the kind of meaning he attributed to it are all that need to be noted here.

In 1910 Evelyn Underhill's spiritual classic, *Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, was published. She argued that spiritual consciousness was about perceiving:

> in every manifestation of life a sacramental meaning; a loveliness, a wonder, a heightened significance … On the other hand, the full mystic consciousness also attains to what is, I think, its really characteristic quality. It develops the power of apprehending the Absolute, Pure Being, the utterly Transcendent.[62]

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[59] Schleiermacher, F, *The Christian Faith,* 2nd edition, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1928, pp12
[60] cf comment in Gonzales, J L, *A History of Christian Thought Vol III: From the Protestant Reformation to the 20th Century,* Nashville, Abingdon, 1975, p323
[61] Kung, H, *Great Christian Thinkers*, London, SCM Press, 1994, p175
[62] Underhill, E, *Mysticism : The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, Oxford, One World, 1999, pp35f

Again, it is not necessary to go into any great detail of her work but merely to note the way in which she featured consciousness in a widely read book.

In both Schleiermacher and Underhill, consciousness was used as referring to more than a general sense of awareness. There is a sense of depth which relates to the whole being and a sense of consequence that is, or should be, a direct result of the consciousness.

The emergence of the concept of ecumenical consciousness

Turning to the process by which ecumenical consciousness emerged, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work and the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order had both planned conferences in 1937. There had been some feeling within the churches and within these movements and, to a lesser extent, the parallel International Missionary Council that these separate networks or organisations were unsustainable both theologically and practically. J H Oldham, one of the greatest of the pioneers of ecumenism in the twentieth century[63], recognized the two conferences coinciding in one year as an opportunity to re-examine the future of the ecumenical movement. He proposed the joint appointment of a committee to meet prior to the conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh in order to present a proposal to them. The so-called Committee of Thirty-five met at Westfield College, London in July 1937 and included representatives of the YMCA, YWCA, WSCF and International Missionary Council.

In preparation for the Westfield meeting an item of informal discussion on the problems faced by the Committee of Thirty Five was on the agenda of the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order that met in Clarens, Switzerland in October 1936. The full minutes of that meeting recorded that Oldham spoke about the need for the promotion of continuous study and thought in a possible new ecumenical configuration. There was a requirement for:

> progressive illumination and education of the mind through contact with other traditions and points of view.[64]

Later, a Memorandum on Ecumenical Education was produced in preparation for the 1938 Utrecht conference, see below, by H-L Henriod, who had served as general secretary of the World Student Christian Federation and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. This commented:

> An ecumenical outlook can only become an integral part of the thinking and daily life of the Churches when ecumenical education has permeated the whole Christian community. Without this it will remain a specialised interest limited to a few, without any real influence on the present generation.[65]

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[63] see Clements, C K, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J H Oldham,* Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1999
[64] Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Minutes of the meeting in October 1936, Clarens, Switzerland, WCC Archives box 301.003
[65] Proposed World Council of Churches, Utrecht Conference, May 1938, Memorandum No 7, p1, WCC Archives box 23.1.003

Although the language was not of ecumenical consciousness per se, we can see that thinking about 'progressive illumination and education of the mind' and an 'ecumenical outlook', which should become part of everyday thinking, was moving in that direction. This, then, was the background to the inclusion of ecumenical consciousness in the founding constitution of the World Council of Churches.

The agenda for the meeting of the Committee of Thirty Five in 1937 began with an exchange of information and a statement by the chairman. Then followed the item:

> 3. General discussion on some important aspects of ecumenical work eg
> a) cooperation and study
> b) Ecumenical Education
> c) corporate action … (by the churches)
> d) work among youth.[66]

The meeting concluded with looking at the practical implications and the recommendation to be brought to the Life & Work and the Faith & Order Conferences. This agenda is indicative of the principal concerns of those who were planning for a World Council of Churches.

Unfortunately, the records of this meeting are very thin. Visser't Hooft, who was to become the first general secretary of the World Council, commented that:

> We were so little aware of the fact that this meeting would become a turning point in ecumenical history that we did not even make arrangements for the keeping of minutes of the discussion.[67]

He also remarked that William Temple[68]:

> had a unique gift for drafting and was undoubtedly the main architect of the plan. But it is easy to detect in it also the hand of Oldham.[69]

The conference began with uncertainty but ended with a clear proposal.

Significantly, there is in the archives a document which is the first draft of the report of the Committee of Thirty Five which was brought to the meeting after an initial round of discussion. The significance is in the pencilled amendments by an unknown hand as much as the typewritten text. The draft as presented read:

> We regard as part of the responsibility of the new body or the Committees preparing for it:
> i to give effect to the findings and purpose of the two world conferences.
> ii to promote co-operation and study.
> iii to promote oecumenical education ….[70]

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[66] Agenda for the meeting for the Committee of Thirty Five, Westfield College, London, July1937. WCC Archives box 301.001
[67] Visser't Hooft, W A, *Memoirs*, London, SCM Press, 1973, p78
[68] Archbishop of York 1929-42 later Archbishop of Canterbury. Social theologian and ecumenical pioneer.
[69] op cit, p78
[70] Committee of Thirty Five, Westfield College, London 1937, the first draft of a report. WCC Archives box 301.001

This had been changed in pencil to read 'iii to promote the growth of oecumenical conscience …'[71]

So it was at this point that the concept of ecumenical consciousness began to be formalised. However, by the end of the meeting, there had been a further revision to 'ecumenical consciousness in the Churches'.

The Committee of Thirty had produced a constitution for a possible World Council of Churches which received the approval of the Life and Work and the Faith and Order conferences in Oxford and Edinburgh respectively  They also appointed a Committee of Fourteen to put the plan into action.  Although this committee had the power to act, it decided to appoint a consultative conference composed in the same way as the proposed Central Committee for the World Council of Churches.  This met in Utrecht in 1938.

A memorandum prepared by William Temple in preparation for the Utrecht meeting had an appendix which set out the Constitution of the World Council of Churches as proposed by the Committee of Thirty-five.  One of the functions was 'to promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the Churches'.[72]  This was amended at Utrecht to read: 'to promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all Churches'.[73]  Unfortunately, the papers in the archives give no clue as to why this significant addition was made.  The original proposal could have been taken to refer to work with the churches as organisations, with their national bodies and leaders.  However, the new wording, which was that adopted by the first assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, gave the World Council a remit to engage with the members of churches in encouraging the development of their ecumenical consciousness.

The Functions of the World Council were discussed by Committee I of the Amsterdam Assembly with one addition being proposed.[74]  However, promoting the growth of ecumenical consciousness obviously did not provoke any significant reaction. It seems to have been received from the preparatory committees without question. One of the Press Releases from Amsterdam included the comment that:

> The future of the World Council of Churches depends on how much the ecumenical idea gets rooted in the parishes to which the delegates return.[75]

This sentiment, which reflects the need for the growth of ecumenical consciousness, has probably been expressed following all subsequent assembles of the World Council.

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[71] ibid
[72] Appendix 1 to Memorandum No 1 prepared by William Temple for the 1938 Utrecht meeting on the formation of the World Council of Churches, p2, WCC Archives box 23.1.003
[73] Constitution for the World Council of Churches, as agreed in Utrecht, May 1938, WCC Archives box 23.1.003
[74] Visser 't Hooft, W A (ed), *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches,* London, SCM Press, 1949, pp108ff
[75] Press Release No 56, 2 September 1948 in a bound collection of Press Releases from the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948

In an attempt to discover the exact provenance of the phrase ecumenical consciousness, I contacted Keith Clements, the biographer of Oldham.[76]  He offered reasons for and against why it could have come from Oldham.  Clements suggested that Oldham was concerned to keep certain aspects of the emerging World Council as open as possible and therefore could have opted for a less precise term than education.  In addition, ecumenical education had not been on his own list of priorities which mainly focused on study of church and society issues.  Finally, in favour of Oldham:

> Education might have implied this as a major staff function of the WCC , and from the start he was dubious about too much being done centrally in Geneva.[77]

Against it being Oldham was that the term sounds more like a Faith and Order phrase rather than Life and Work. Clements suggested that Temple, as someone with a foot in both camps, might have been the originator.

It has been possible to find only one explicit commentary on the meaning of ecumenical consciousness from the period.  In amongst a collection of pamphlets from the USA in the 1930s and 40s in the World Council library there is one small booklet entitled *Ecumenical Consciousness* produced by the Commission for the Study of Christian Unity of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.[78]  There is no date on the booklet and the library records indicate '193?'  The booklet is explicit that it had been produced because of the task of the promotion of ecumenical consciousness had been stated in the constitution of the World Council of Churches. As the leadership of the Federal Council was part of the process to form the World Council, we can take their understanding to be reasonably representative. The booklet gave the following definition:

> Ecumenical consciousness is our inner recognition that we ourselves, and all Christians everywhere, are members of one family who share a common heritage and a common responsibility.[79]

It also remarked that the 'responsibility for the ecumenical consciousness of any church rests squarely upon the conscience of each member'.[80]

The New Delhi Assembly in 1961 saw the incorporation of the International Missionary Council within the World Council with a consequent amendment of the constitution. This meant the addition of 'missionary' in appropriate places. The relevant section of the Functions now read:

> (iv) To promote the growth of ecumenical and missionary consciousness in the members of all the churches.[81]

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[76] Clements, op cit
[77] Email from Revd Dr Keith Clements, 13/05/08
[78] Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, *Ecumenical Consciousness, a statement prepared for the Commission for the Study of Christian Unity,* New York, FCCCA, c1939, p2
[79] ibid
[80] ibid p6

This and other such changes appear to be symbolic rather than considered as it could have been be argued that an ecumenical consciousness included a missionary dimension.

Ernst Lange – prophet of ecumenical consciousness

Ernst Lange was a German theologian and former associate general secretary of the World Council. He served as Director of the Division of Ecumenical Action from 1968 to 1970 and as such was deeply involved in the World Council's engagement in ecumenical learning. Unfortunately, much of Lange's writing in German is not available in English translation. However, some of that which is available can serve to illustrate his concern for ecumenical consciousness. In an article in the *Ecumenical Review* in 1971, 'The Malaise in the Ecumenical Movement: Notes on the Present Situation', Lange addressed what he saw to be the problems of the movement that had known great success in a relatively short period of time. He saw the ecumenical movement as an:

> earnest, a utopian anticipation, of the radical renewal which is yet to take place at the grass-roots, namely, in the member churches and local congregations. … In the ordinary life of the churches there is a growing tension between anticipation and reality.[82]

This was in the context of churches finding that their traditional roles in cultures, societies, political systems and nations diminishing or becoming nonexistent.

> But it is clear that the churches cannot be liberated from their particularism merely by tacking on organisations to facilitate international and interchurch communication and cooperation. Ecumenical organisation unaccompanied by corresponding ecumenical awareness in the member churches is obviously an extremely dubious business.[83]

Religious language and discourse had failed to adjust to modern realities. The consequence was that 'Christians are still living with a parochial conscience in an age of universal history'.[84] This had caused, Lange argued, the churches and the ecumenical movement to deal with their psychological conflict by collectively regressing.

Lange suggested three steps that could be taken. First:

> We must discover forms in which the new experiences made at a world level can be expressed at a local level. ... It is ... the matter of the inseparable connection between local and worldwide threats to humanity. It is a question of the ecumenical dimensions of conscience.[85]

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[81] Visser't Hooft, W A (ed), *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961*, London, SCM Press, 1967, p426
[82] Lange, E, 'The Malaise in the Ecumenical Movement: Notes on the Present Situation' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1971, vol 23, no1, p2
[83] ibid
[84] ibid p4
[85] ibid p7

The second point was that the localisation of ecumenical experiences could only take place on the basis of a critical theology. Lange's final point was that education was:

> the process whereby people are enlightened and liberated from 'uncomprehended forces' by the exchange of experience between different generations and social roles, is certainly the process whereby consciences are redirected, prevailing attitudes in the church changed and the pressure thus generated not merely to modernise but to actually change structures.[86]

Education could not be left as a by-product of social processes that required serious investment. Lange's conclusion was that the:

> Christian conscience has to learn to adjust itself to the larger household to which it was from the very beginning called out and towards which it was from the very beginning directed, namely to the household of the whole inhabited earth. It has to be trained in a new sensibility, a new awareness of the world and time, or, rather in its own most original and basic sensibility.[87]

In a similar vein, Lange wrote a book reflecting on the experience of the Louvain Faith and Order conference in 1971. He commented that:

> all over the world, the awareness and conscience of ordinary church members, most of them at any rate, has not kept pace with the ecumenical movement. This presents the ecumenical movement with a vital question: How is it to set in motion the learning process, which is absolutely essential if the ecumenical possibility is to become the reality of Christendom?[88]

He again contrasted parochial conscience with an ecumenical conscience:

> Christians are living with a parochial conscience in a universal world. This is the ultimate problem for the ecumenical movement, a problem which it simply must solve if it is to become conclusive and decisive, and so to advance.[89]

and

> The ecumenical movement suffers because of the member churches. The member churches suffer because of the ecumenical movement. … Without the support of ordinary Christians, however, both levels are incompetent. They both stand or fall with the liberation of the parochial conscience.[90]

The World Council and its member churches should develop a joint strategy of educating the church membership. Writing at a time before reference to ecumenical consciousness was removed from the constitutional functions of the World Council, Lange placed a heavy emphasis on the development of the conscience and awareness that was necessary and people for the vision of the ecumenical movement to be fulfilled.

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[86] ibid p8
[87] ibid p8
[88] Lange, E, trans Robertson, E, *And Yet It Moves: Dream and reality of the ecumenical movement*, Christian Journals, Belfast, 1979, p138f
[89] ibid p140
[90] ibid p141

The disappearance of ecumenical consciousness from the Constitution

The 1968 Uppsala Assembly had set in train a radical revision of the constitution. The *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement* characterised the assembly as recognising that, in a world in turmoil, secular instruments of reconciliation and unity seemed more effective than the church. Consequently:

> churches need a new openness to the world and its aspirations, its achievements, its restlessness and its despair. All church structures, from local to world level, must be examined to see whether they enable the church and its members to be in mission.[91]

The re-examination of church structures included that of the World Council itself. Consequently, a Structure Committee[92] produced proposals for a revised Constitution with newly stated Aims and Purposes which did not include any reference to ecumenical consciousness.[93] After several rounds of discussion, the Central Committee accepted the revised Constitution in 1972 for sending to the churches so as to come to the next assembly for final ratification.[94] Ecumenical consciousness was still absent and there is no record of anyone speaking up for it.

The members of the Nairobi Assembly should have had no excuse for being unaware of the significance of consciousness. As a contribution to the assembly theme of *Jesus Christ Frees and Unites*, Freire had written a paper *Education, Liberation and the Church*.[95] He wrote about the need of those who had been ideologised into an elitist concept of existence to 'die as elitists so as to be resurrected on the side of the oppressed'.[96] This involved the renunciation of the myths of their superiority, that they save the poor, of their neutrality and of the absolute ignorance of the oppressed.

> This Easter, which results in the changing of consciousness, must be existentially experienced. … they will come to understand that consciousness is not changed by lessons, lectures and eloquent sermons but by the action of human beings on the world. Consciousness does not arbitrarily create reality.[97]

He concluded by saying:

> Education must be an instrument of transforming action, as a political praxis at the service of permanent human liberation. This, let us repeat, does not happen only in the consciousness of people, but presupposes a radical change of structures, in which process consciousness will itself be transformed.[98]

In an interview reproduced in *Risk*, Freire had suggested that there is no dichotomy between consciousness and the world. Consciousness was:

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[91] Lossky, N et al (eds), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002, p1234
[92] Central Committee minutes, 1968, p8
[93] *Report of the Structure Committee*, WCC Archive box 38.0015
[94] Central Committee minutes, 1972, p65
[95] Freire, P, Education, Liberation and the Church in *Study Encounter,* SE/38, Vol IX, No 1, 1973
[96] ibid p2
[97] ibid p2
[98] ibid p15

not something, some empty space, within man. Consciousness is intentionality towards the world.[99]

The Nairobi Assembly in 1975 approved the new section III of the Constitution which had no reference to ecumenical consciousness. There is no reference to any discussion or comment on this omission in the official account.[100] This absence is reinforced by what did attract attention. A personal report on the assembly written by Eugene Stockwell, a fraternal delegate from the National Council of Churches of Christ of the USA, noted that on 9 December:

> A significant scuffle concerns the retention [that is from the former Constitution], in the functions of the WCC, of the phrase "to support the churches in their worldwide missionary and evangelistic task".[101]

This was confirmed by Lesslie Newbigin, already a significant figure in missionary and ecumenical circles, in his own personal report on the assembly.[102] Stockwell remarked that Phillip Potter had argued unsuccessfully against the reintroduction of mission in spite of his previous staff involvement.[103] It would appear that Potter was intent on holding the line on a completely new formulation of the functions. In any case, it seems that no one was prepared to argue for the retention of ecumenical consciousness. However, in recognition that the World Council of Christian Education had recently merged with the World Council, there was a reference in the Functions in the Constitution to carrying forward their work.

This insistence of a radical reformulation of the functions, even to the extent of trying to remove the missionary reference, may be part of the background against which the notion of growing an ecumenical consciousness was so easily omitted from the revised Constitution. However, it is ironic that this was a time when, as we have seen, Paulo Freire was actively promoting his understanding of conscientisation and when Ernst Lange was writing powerfully and cogently about the dangers of parochial conscience in the members of churches and the need for the World Council to be instrumental with the churches in developing a global conscience. Perhaps that was not as obvious at the time as it appears now.

The return of ecumenical consciousness

The Harare Assembly in 1998 saw the restoration of ecumenical consciousness in the Constitution of the World Council. In the Purposes and Functions outlined, one item was:

> nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context.[104]

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[99] 'Education for Awareness: a talk with Paulo Freire' in *Risk*, Vol 6, No 4, 1970, p8
[100] Paton, D M (ed), *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, London , SPCK, 1976, pp188ff
[101] Personal report from Eugene Stockwell, WCC Archives box 35.24/2.4
[102] Personal report from Lesslie Newbigin, WCC Archives box 35.24/2.5
[103] Stockwell op cit
[104] Kessler, D (ed), *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1999, p364

However, one important element was missing from the Function in the 1948 Constitution – 'in the members of all the churches'. It was not now stated in whom ecumenical consciousness was to be nurtured, the churches or their members. One might imagine that in 1998 the churches would have objected to the possibility of the World Council being given the right to engage directly with their members.

The clause makes explicit the link between nurturing the growth of an ecumenical consciousness and educational processes. However, it is not clear whether the second part of the clause implies that a vision of life in community is another thing to be nurtured in addition to ecumenical consciousness or whether it joins with education in nurturing an ecumenical consciousness.

Papers in the archives suggest that the revision of the Purposes and Functions of the World Council in the Constitution approved in Harare were proposed to bring them in line with the *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches* document.[105] This had been in preparation for several years, had been adopted by the Central Committee in 1997, shared with churches and was presented to the assembly as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the World Council. As its name suggests, it offered a conceptual overview of the World Council and its place and relationships within the ecumenical movement. However, the phrase ecumenical consciousness does not actually appear in the *Common Understanding and Vision* document.[106] Although there are references to learning which could be taken to relate to nurturing ecumenical consciousness, they are hardly a reason for reintroducing it to the revised Functions.

As the archives did not contain any clear information as to why the phrase was reinstated, I contacted the general secretary of the time, Konrad Raiser, to enquire whether in his recollection the reinstatement of ecumenical consciousness was simply a return to the foundational language. His reply was that:

> If I had a hand in introducing the term into the draft of the revised Constitution then it was certainly not inspired by 'foundational language' of the WCC, but much rather by the profound influence Ernst Lange had on my thinking and writing .[107]

One can see why Konrad Raiser should cite Ernst Lange as an influence. It seems, therefore, that the explicit reinsertion of ecumenical consciousness in the Constitution of the World Council in 1998 was a considered decision rather than a reworking of the set of words previously used. Considered, that is, by the drafters rather than the delegates to the assembly who received the Constitution en bloc.

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[105] WCC Archives box 37.95.03
[106] *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches,* http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/common-understanding-and-vision-of-the-wcc-cuv.html  Accessed 13/05/2008
[107] e-mail from Prof. Dr Konrad Raiser, 14/05/08

Ecumenical consciousness as a concept and a constitutional requirement

This chapter has explored two inter-twined lines of enquiry. One is the emergence of the concept of ecumenical consciousness. The other is the presence and absence of ecumenical consciousness in the Constitution of the World Council. Ecumenical consciousness could be interpreted as no more than ecumenical awareness - something that could be simply developed by sharing information. However, as I have tried to demonstrate above, ecumenical consciousness can be considered as something that goes far deeper than the level of awareness in both individuals and churches. Developing an ecumenical consciousness should transform attitudes, behaviour and structures. Ernst Lange's passionate advocacy for liberation from a parochial conscience was directed towards changing the church and the world. Hans Kung has pushed this further, echoing the discussion above on a wider ecumenism:

> For the first time in the history of the world we seem to be witnessing the slow awakening of global ecumenical consciousness and the beginning of a serious religious dialogue ... Ecumenism should not be limited to the *community of Christian churches*; it must include the *community of the great religions.*[108]

Thus, for Kung, ecumenical consciousness now relates to the *oikoumene*, the whole inhabited world, of religions. However, this broadening has never been accepted by the World Council, even though it may be regarded with sympathy by some in its constituency.

Given the complexities of both 'ecumenical' and 'consciousness', it is perhaps over-simplistic to offer a brief working definition of ecumenical consciousness in the light of the above discussion. However, I propose the following:

*Ecumenical consciousness is an openness to Christ, to the world and to the consequent collective and individual transformation of attitudes, relationships and actions.*

Not withstanding the persuasive advocacy of many, including Kung, for a wider ecumenism encompassing the world of religions, the working definition makes specific reference to an openness to Christ for historical and theological reasons. As will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, throughout most of the period of the study and within the educational activities of the World Council the discourse has been Christian, even though there was a growing awareness of the necessity and desirability of engagement with other faiths. Equally significantly, the ecumenical movement is founded in the gospels' teaching about the kingdom of God. The 1996 *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches* statement suggested that:

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[108] Kung, H, *Christianity and the World Religions*, London, Fount, 1987, pxiv

> The ecumenical vision encompasses the renewal of church and world in the light of the gospel of God's kingdom. In the face of all threats to life it affirms the Christian hope of life for all.[109]

The vision of ecumenism is unashamedly the vision offered by Jesus. An openness to Christ implies that the churches cannot escape the challenge of ecumenism, even if they would prefer to. An openness to the world means that ecumenism must not be exclusively focussed on the churches but has to engage with the realities of other ways of believing, of the injustice and lack of peace that circumscribe or destroy people's lives and of the human behaviour that degrades the natural order.

The working definition emphasises that ecumenical conscientisation is a transformative process. The World Council's more recent discourses on unity and on justice, peace and creation have often obscured or ignored the primacy of renewal, an issue strongly argued by Michael Kinnamon.[110] The first general secretary, Visser't Hooft consistently argued that unity came through renewal.[111] Ernst Lange wrote that 'As the churches are radically renewed, they unite'.[112] The assembly themes such as those of Uppsala in 1968, 'Behold, I make all things new', and Porto Alegre in 2006, 'God, in your grace, transform the world', reinforce the point. The transformation that is envisaged in the working definition is that of the totality of persons, groups and institutions – attitudes, relationships and actions – and not simply some religious dimension of their being.

Taking openness seriously in the working definition has meant not using the traditional language of Christian unity or of justice, peace and creation so as not to confine ecumenical consciousness within such frames of understanding and practice. These are implied but not determinative. Ecumenical consciousness pushes us beyond the subordinate objectives of church unity or addressing particular issues, as essential as these are, to the bigger picture of the kingdom of God.[113]

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[109] http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/common-understanding-and-vision-of-the-wcc-cuv.html Accessed 15/03/10
The 1983 Vancouver Assembly saw reflection on peace and justice and on baptism, eucharist and ministry in terms of an ecumenical eucharistic vision. 'Christ - the life of the world - unites heaven and earth, God and world, spiritual and secular. His body and blood, given in the elements of bread and wine, integrate liturgy and diaconate, proclamation and acts of healing. … Our eucharistic vision thus encompasses the whole reality of Christian worship, life and witness'. Gill, D (ed.), *Gathered for Life. Official Report of the VI Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1983, 44f.
[110] Especially the chapter 'Unity and Renewal' of Kinnamon, M, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How it Has been Betrayed by its Friends',* St Louis, Chalice Press, 2003, pp23-36
[111] eg in Visser't Hooft, W A, *The Renewal of the Church*, London, SCM Press, 1956
[112] Lange, *And Yet it Moves*, op cit p107
[113] The Basis of the fellowship of churches in the World Council is: 'to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. Visible unity, sharing resources, service, justice etc are listed in the Purposes and Functions.
http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/institutional-issues/constitution-and-rules-as-adopted.html Accessed 15/03/10. The World Council suggests that the ecumenical movement 'seeks visible unity, not as an end in itself, but to give credible witness "so that the world may believe", and to serve the healing of the human community and the wholeness of God's entire creation'. http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/background.html Accessed 15/03/10

I have sketched the history of ecumenical consciousness in the Constitution of the World Council and adduced some of the factors for its presence and absence. However, the most significant question is whether the concept of ecumenical consciousness, included or excluded from the Constitution, made any difference to the stated understandings of the World Council of its educational task. This will be analysed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Before doing that, it is important to consider the role that ecumenical consciousness might play within a movement like the ecumenical movement and its global body, the World Council. This will be done in the next chapter in order to provide a basis on which the work of the World Council may be analysed.

# 3 The significance of social movement research for understanding ecumenical consciousness

A social movement is a way in which people collectively advocate for or resist change.  Some have focused on particular segment of life, eg the trade union movement or the anti-abortion movement.  Others have taken up a concern which touches on the whole of life, eg the women's movement or the green movement.  Some movements have emerged fairly spontaneously, sometimes in several places about the same time.  Others have developed under the inspiration of particular individuals.   Social movements have come under considerable sociological scrutiny and there is now a body of literature relating to that.  Of particular interest for this study is that which relates to the ways in which the commitment, understanding, behaviour and relationships of participants in social movements are developed in symbiosis with the principal concerns of ecumenism.

Whether the ecumenical movement can be unambiguously defined as a social movement is not at issue here.  This chapter merely seeks to demonstrate that the ecumenical movement falls somewhere within the broad field of such movements so that the work done on social movements may legitimately inform an understanding of the development of an ecumenical consciousness.  At the end of this chapter, I will draw together some of the most significant issues around the role and processes of ecumenical consciousness in the light of the literature on social movements and the previous chapter on our understanding of ecumenism.  These will be used to interrogate the statements and policies of the World Council in the subsequent chapters.

**Characteristics of movements**

Defining characteristics of social movements and the ecumenical movement

We begin by examining some of the characteristics of social movements. Tarrow defined social movements as:

> collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.[114]

Their four essential properties are collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity and sustained interaction. For Tarrow, particularly, there is an emphasis on a conflictual basis resulting in active protest - demonstrations and boycotts, and direct action - disruption and destruction.

The definition of social movements offered by Snow, Soule and Kreisi was:

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[114] Tarrow, S, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p4

collectivity acting with some degree of organisation and continuity outside of institutional or organisational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institution or culturally based, in the group, organisation, society, culture or world order of which they are a part.[115]

Instead of offering his own formulation, Crossley[116] highlighted some key phrases and issues in the course of examining four existing definitions of social movements. Social movements are collective enterprises, emerging out of a dissatisfaction with the way things are and hoping to establish something new. They are public spaces/spheres, creating identities, ideas and ideals. They enable sustained challenge to opponents and are based on shared beliefs and solidarity. He argued that:

social movements share a family resemblance, rather than a fixed essence, and their definition inevitably rests upon a fuzzy logic of ordinary language use.[117]

The ecumenical movement, although often spoken of as a single entity, is more of an amalgam or coalition of movements around a focal point of Christian unity. This unity is variously understood to concern the reconciliation of a divided church and Christian institutions and individuals working and learning together to react to the challenges they face locally and globally. Thus the ecumenical movement, or parts of it, acts in a social movement manner on issues such as climate change, racism, violence, international relations, interfaith dialogue, HIV/AIDS, and so on. Throughout the ecumenical movement, whether it be in the ecclesial or social sphere, there is a dissatisfaction with the way things are and a desire to establish something new (cf Crossley), understood in terms of the Christian gospel and the teaching of Jesus on the kingdom of God. There is also the creation and articulation of identities, ideas and ideals (cf Crossley). The ecumenical movement bears the marks of Tarrow's four essential properties - collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity and sustained interaction - and Snow, Soule and Kreisi's collectively challenging extant authority. Whether the ecumenical movement, or aspects of it, would survive a rigorous test of its credentials as a social movement is an open question. Suffice it to say that the ecumenical movement can be argued to be somewhere, even if at the periphery, of the field of social movements.

I have described the understanding and vision of ecumenism, which equates to the above discussion on common purposes, ideals and beliefs, in Chapter 2. However there has always been a question as to how far these have been accepted within the ecumenical movement. Early on Visser't Hooft, the first general secretary of the World Council, observed that:

the ecumenical movement itself is in danger as long as its deepest intentions are not understood by the great mass of churchmen.[118]

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[115] Snow, D A, Soule, S A and Kriesi H, 'Mapping the Terrain' in Snow, D A, Soule, S A and Kriesi, H (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p11
[116] Crossley N, *Making Sense of Social Movements*, Maidenhead, Open University Press, 2002, pp2-7
[117] ibid p7
[118] Visser't Hooft, W A, ' The Ground of our Unity' in Minear, P S (ed), *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, St Louis, Bethany Press, 1958, p121

Later, he regretted that:

> For my generation the ecumenical movement had all the attraction of something unexpected and extraordinary. For the present generation, it is simply part of the church's design.[119]

In other words, ecumenism had become accepted as an unconsidered given rather than owned as a specific ideal. Michael Kinnamon has recently gone further by arguing that the ecumenical movement has a coherent and compelling vision but, more than simply not being known or being misunderstood:

> this vision has been domesticated by the churches involved in the movement, impoverished by those others who are ostensibly its supporters.[120]

Thus, giving new life to the vision is more than re-expressing it in contemporary terms. This predicates the development of an ecumenical consciousness in all participants.

Participants and stakeholders

The issue of participation raises the question of who are the stakeholders in the ecumenical movement. A recent statement on this came from a 2004 consultation on Ecumenism in the 21st Century:

> The ecumenical movement today is carried out at different levels by churches acting through conciliar bodies (e.g. WCC, regional ecumenical organizations, sub-regional fellowships and national councils of churches), Christian world communions, ecumenical communities, mission agencies, theological colleges and associations, ecumenical academies and lay training centres as well as agencies/specialized ministries, international ecumenical organizations and many other ecumenical bodies. It is obvious that the ecumenical movement is far wider than any one institution and includes all those who yearn for unity and all those who dream of a common Christian voice on the burning issues of the day.[121]

The terminology of a movement being 'carried out' may simply be poor English rather than a significant indication of how the ecumenical movement is understood to work. Nevertheless, it is clear that the primary understanding of who the stakeholders are was that they are institutions of varying kinds, and not at the local level. The catch-all final sentence is not a confident affirmation that the ecumenical movement is a popular movement. However, when it came to aspirations, the consultation said:

> We hope that the ecumenical movement in the 21st century will be a special space:
> · where more and more Christians are involved in the work of Christian unity, and the fellowship among the churches is strengthened

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[119] Visser't Hooft, W A, *Has the Ecumenical Movement a Future?*, Belfast, Christian Journals, 1974, p40
[120] Kinnamon, M, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends*, St Louis, Chalice Press, 2003, p2. It should be noted that Kinnamon's critique comes from within the ecumenical movement as he is currently General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA and is the author/editor of several World Council publications.
[121] *Ecumenism in the 21st Century: Report of the Consultation Convened by the World Council of Churches Chavanne de Bogis, 30 November to 3 December 2004*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2005, p4

· where open and ecumenically-minded culture is fostered in the everyday lives of people in their own contexts and where ecumenical formation is a central focus at all levels of church life, from the local to the global
· where … Christians can pray together and can encourage each other to discern God's will for their lives.[122]

It went on to speak of a hope for the ecumenical movement being inclusive, respectful, hospitable, dialogical, reconciling and prophetic.  This paragraph reverses the earlier order, with an initial emphasis on popular participation.  This reflects one of the ambiguities of the ecumenical movement as institutional and popular.

In *Religion in Secular Society*[123] Bryan Wilson has argued that laypersons had always had a greater prominence in dissenting movements in Protestantism (the main ground in which the modern ecumenical movement grew) than they had in their own churches.   However, it was also the case, according to Wilson, that such movements were eventually brought under the control of church officials.  Eugene Carson Blake, the second general secretary of the World Council suggested that the ecumenical movement was an outcome of the 'concerns of ordinary church people who find their ecumenical aspirations limited by church structures'.[124]  Ernst Lange reflected on his own ecumenical experience which:

> was acquired ... with the laity and renewal movements, which originally invented the ecumenical movement in the nineteenth century but was then swallowed up and alienated by it as the church institutions took over.[125]

Michael Kinnamon also expressed strong feelings that the institutionalisation of the ecumenical movement:

> has had the effect of marginalising laity and muting the protest character of the movement's animating vision.  To put it bluntly, ecumenism has been, to a large extent, domesticated, brought under control, by the churches it was intended to reform.[126]

He drew attention to the tension between institutional ecumenism and activist popular ecumenism:

> There are plenty of lay-driven, Christian movements concerned with such things as protecting the environment, obtaining debt relief for poor countries, and promoting the rights of oppressed minorities in church and society.  But these often do not identify themselves in any way with concern for a renewed and united church. Meanwhile, church unity is increasingly left to those whose profession it is to worry about it.[127]

As we have seen in Chapter 2, one task of the World Council was to develop an ecumenical consciousness in the members of all the churches, which presupposed a popular ecumenical movement.   The ambiguity about who are the participants in the ecumenical movement raises the

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[122] ibid p6
[123] Wilson, B R, *Religion in Secular Society,* Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969
[124] Quoted in 'Eugene Carson Blake Dies' in *Ecumenical Press Service,* 85.08.12, 11-20 July 1985
[125] Lange, E, trans Robertson, E, *And Yet It Moves: dream and reality of the ecumenical movement*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1979, p66
[126] Kinnamon op cit p84
[127] ibid p85

question of whose or what's ecumenical consciousness should be developed - individuals, institutions or, perhaps, the leaders of institutions.

Movement for protest

The insistence of Tarrow, especially, on the conflictual nature of social movements might lead one to suppose that this debarred the ecumenical movement whose purpose might be described as healing conflicts and divisions.  However, there are strong voices arguing that the ecumenical movement is at heart a protest movement.  Ernst Lange, for example, called ecumenism:

> the most massive domestic Christian protest against the way Christianity, by its alliance with the powers that be, had been transformed into its exact opposite.[128]

In other words, the ecumenical movement is not simply a means for churches to reach an accommodation with one another and heal the divisions, as welcome as that might be.  It is more radical than that, being a movement which protests against what the churches have become, of which their division is a symptom.  Kinnamon also suggested that 'ecumenism, when true to its fundamental vision, is a protest movement'.[129]  Moreover:

> if the *protest* character of this *movement* is silenced, ecumenism will not just be impoverished - it will have lost its essence.[130]

Many social movements are clearly able to define that with which or whom they are in contention.  Having a common enemy who exploits, abuses or otherwise acts unjustly unites disparate individuals and groups who might otherwise have no community of interest.  The ecumenical movement has two problems in this regard.  The multi-dimensional nature of the ecumenical movement means that there is no one single enemy or class of enemy against which constituents can unite. Simply to say, for instance, that the ecumenical movement is against evil and injustice may reflect its Christian belief but lacks the specificity necessary for understanding it as a social movement.  The second problem is most clearly seen in the desire of the ecumenical movement to work for ecclesial unity.  If there is an enemy here, it is the institutional vested interests of the churches.  In general, the raison d'etre of different churches is their claim to hold truths and perform right practices that separate them from other churches.  The institutional protection of power, position and resources mean that they tend to resist anything that goes beyond symbolic expressions of ecclesial unity.  This is an issue because the churches regard themselves as constituents of the ecumenical movement and have placed themselves as primary stakeholders in many of the organisations that have emerged out of and in support of the ecumenical movement, principally the World Council.  In this case, the contention is within the movement rather than with external entities.  The development of an ecumenical consciousness, therefore, may imply a conflict with the development of a denominational consciousness, as narrowly defined.

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[128] Lange, op cit, p5
[129] Kinnamon, op cit, p75
[130] ibid p86

Movement as space

As we have seen above, Crossley characterised social movements as spaces which may create identities, ideas and ideals. Within the ecumenical movement a notion of ecumenical space has been developed. This relates to the opportunities that participants in the ecumenical movement have of dealing with divisive issues in a spirit of trust. It is not always clear in the discourse whether the ecumenical movement and the World Council as its global agent are by nature ecumenical spaces or whether one of their roles is to create ecumenical space. Alan Falconer, then Director of Faith and Order, wrote of a space that is:

> an inclusive community, a conciliarity where authentic self-expression is welcomed and respected, where diversity is celebrated, and difficult and conflictual issues are addressed in an atmosphere of trust and confidence within the framework of real but incomplete unity.[131]

Such an ecumenical space has sometimes been characterised as a safe space but it is hardly safe for those who do not want to leave their comfort zones or who are not open to change.

In a World Council publication Lewis S Mudge has argued:

> Churches can and should offer a sort of metaphorical space in the world for those, believers or otherwise, who believe that human society can overcome its violent origins, its continuing resentment and mistrust, and come to realize its true calling to become the beloved community envisioned in the biblical story. The churches exist to *hold open* a social space in which society's existing structures and practices can be seen for what they are and in which human community can be articulated in a new way, a space in which the metaphors of common life can be exposed to their transcendental ground.[132]

A committee at Louvain Faith and Order meeting in 1971 had explored the theme "Conciliarity and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement" which required the creation of space for participation:

> of the entire lay membership including as it should every segment of (hu)mankind. The church's unity must be of such a kind that there is ample space for diversity and for the mutual confrontation of different interests and convictions![133]

Over a quarter of a century later a Justice, Peace and Creation conference in Nairobi used the Swahili word *sokoni* for a style of ecumenical work. Sokoni describes the traditional Kenyan market which is significant as much for the exchange of information and the building of community as for buying and selling. For the ecumenical movement, this sokoni space:

> stimulates renewed vision, deeper analysis, and more creative cooperative methods ... Inclusiveness is prized; multiple entry points for analysis and advocacy are used; and the kind of participation that builds on the experience and energies of everyday life, that draws from traditions, and that crosses boundaries and barriers, is facilitated. This leads to richer reflection by way of multiple perspectives freely exchanged. ... The media may be

[131] Falconer, A D, 'Ecumenical Space' in *The Ecumenical Review*, 2004, vol 56, no 1, p86
[132] Mudge, L S, *The Church as Moral Community : ecclesiology and ethics in ecumenical debate*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1998, p112
[133] Lukas Vischer ed., *Faith and Order Louvain 1971: Study Reports and Documents,* Faith and Order Paper No. 59, Geneva, WCC, 1971, pp.226ff.

storytelling, personal witness, Bible study and worship, analysis and reflection, drama, songs, music, dance, exhibits or other forms.[134]

In his general secretary's report to the Harare Assembly Konrad Raiser said that the significance of the World Council as a fellowship of churches lay:

> in its opening the space where reconciliation and mutual accountability can take shape and where churches can learn together to walk on the way of a costly ecumenical commitment ... where such risky encounter can take place, where confidence and trust can be built and community can grow.[135]

Movement organisation and organisations

Tarrow suggested that we need to distinguish between three different aspects of movement organisation - formal hierarchical organisation; the organisation of collective action at the point of contact with opponents; connective structures.[136] The latter:

> link leaders and followers, centre and periphery, and different parts of a movement sector, permitting coordination and aggregation between movement organisations and allowing movements to persist, even when formal organisation is lacking.[137]

He argued that:

> the most effective forms of organisation are based on partly autonomous and contextually rooted local units linked by connective structures, and coordinated by formal organisations.[138]

This could be a description of the global ecumenical movement. Autonomous and collectively rooted local units could describe neighbourhood and local councils of churches and issue-based networks. Coordination by formal organisations could also be a description of national, regional (in the sense of Africa, Asia, Europe etc) and global ecumenical bodies. The question of the connective structures (without there being a hierarchy or chain of command) between all of these is one that continues to exercise the ecumenical movement.[139]

A dominant train of thought in social movement theories has been that organisation is a significant tool – 'the more organisation, the better the prospects for mobilisation and success'[140]. The institutional organisations into which some social movements have evolved tended to be only considered instrumentally. The analysis of Clemens and Minkoff was that:

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[134] *Report on Justice, Peace and Creation*, WCC 8th Assembly Preparatory Materials for the Hearing on Unit III: Justice, Peace and Creation, http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/hu3wb-e.html Accessed 10/08/09
[135] Raiser, K, 'Report of the General Secretary to the WCC's eighth assembly, Harare, 3-14 December 1998 in this *The Ecumenical Review,* 1999, vol 51, no 1, p86
[136] Tarrow op cit p123f
[137] ibid p124
[138] ibid p124
[139] In recent years the World Council has brokered the process, 'Ecumenism in the 21st Century', which brings together various stakeholders to consider this question.
[140] Clemens E S and Minkoff D C, 'Beyond the Iron Law: Rethinking the Place of Organisations in Social in Movement Research' in Snow, D A, Soule, S A and Kriesi, H (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p155

> The more widely we define the very object of inquiry (organisations as more or less permeable arenas for the development of practices and identities of activism; organisational practices as a component of strategic action and success; movement fields as sites of co-operation, competition, and created transformation) the better able we are to move away from the caricatures of organisations that have been at once productive and limiting for movement scholarship over the past three decades.[141]

Crossley drew attention to studies that included a separate concept of 'social movement organisations' - formal organisations within social movements (such as Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth in the environmental movement). These:

> emerge in response to demand, or perhaps in some cases to pump prime to create demand, which they then seek to satisfy.[142]

Further, it is possible to distinguish a 'social movement industry' around a particular issue which will include various social movement organisations competing for attention and resources and a 'social movement sector', inclusive of all social movement industries, which competes for resources with the public, private and voluntary sectors.

If the ecumenical movement can be located somewhere within the field of social movements then the World Council of Churches could be regarded as a social movement organisation. It can be seen as being created to respond to the demand for the integration and coordination of the different strands of the ecumenical movement globally and to have a function of helping to create a demand for the ideals and practice of ecumenism. At the same time it carries within it the danger of perpetuating something of what it was formed to end. In its early days the Anglican bishop Oliver Tomkins recognized this:

> By entering into this relationship with each other we have already willed the death of our denominations. ... The essence of denominationalism is to suppose the sufficiency of denominations; the essence of our covenant with each other is to deny that our denominations are enough. The peril of the World Council is that it might encourage the permanency of the units upon which it rests ... it has come into being only in order to die as a "Council of Denominations".[143]

It could be argued that, by its continuing membership structure[144], the World Council has legitimated the denominational divisions of its member churches. The World Council may also be seen to be a part of a social movement industry for ecumenism. At the global level, the World Council finds itself alongside and in competition with the bodies such as the World Evangelical Fellowship as well as those such as the World Student Christian Federation, the World YMCA and the World YWCA which all played a seminal role in the emergence of the ecumenical movement but never integrated into the World Council.

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[141] ibid p167

[142] Crossley op cit pp85f

[143] Tomkins, O S, 'Implications of the Ecumenical Movement' in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1952, vol 5, no 1, p20

[144] The Constitution of the World Council of Churches, op cit, restricts formal membership to churches which accept the Basis. The Rules, in summary, restrict membership to churches or formal associations of congregations, with a national characteristic and above a certain size.

On the analyses reported by Crossley, social movement organisations seek first to make people adherents, in the sense of believing in their aims, and then to make them constituents, in the sense of contributing resources. However, he takes issue with those who argue from the perspective of resource mobilisation that the reason constituents:

> are willing to put their resources into an SMO [social movement organisation] ... is that they stand to benefit directly from the activities of that SMO, or perhaps rather from the broad objectives of the movement itself.[145]

This would be the case for, say, a disabled person participating in a disability social movement organisation but not for those acting out of conscience on an issue that does not directly affect them personally, he gives the example of animal welfare. He feels that a benefit of an assuaged conscience or of group approval does not justify the argument.

> I do not mean to suggest by this that there are no personal rewards for those who partake ... or that their activities are pure and disinterested acts of self-sacrifice. What I would suggest, however, is that, at least in cases like those of direct action networks, we must look to the internal life of the group or network itself for the rewards and punishments which steer the actions of its members. We must seek to understand the symbolic reality which they have constructed for themselves.[146]

A telling critique of the World Council as the institution of a movement was offered by Ian Fraser, working on the WCC's Participation in Change programme, in a 1972 memo. He began by quoting from a contribution to a staff meeting:

> We get people excited about something - development, for example - and then the WCC has so many initiatives and structural duplications that the churches get little sense of direction from us. The sophistication of these programmes, perhaps an unavoidable curse, seems to contribute to an increase in unconscious elitism in the council. Is there a tendency is for us to think more and more of working with our specialised peers, often other bureaucrats, and to spend more and more time raising funds for specialised programs? Are we spending less time in contact with pastors and worshipping congregation; less time in communicating ideas that have meaning to the whole people of God?[147]

Representatives of churches on bodies such as the Central Committee represented their churches institutionally but might not be representative of the members of those churches. Consequently, the processing by staff and committees in Geneva of the feedback from studies could:

> squeeze out the living juices which characterise the plurality of contribution, and result in something abstract and desiccated.[148]

For Fraser, the danger was:

> that programmes make servants of the constituents. People are urged to pick them up and work on them so that something might be produced to the next committee which has to give it further clearance. Thus the programmes become programmes of some other body

[145] Crossley, op cit, pp87, 89f
[146] ibid p90
[147] Participation in Change: Change at the Ecumenical Centre. Draft Memo on WCC Studies prepared by Ian Fraser, 1972, p1. WCC Archives Box 42.54.45
[148] ibid p3

called the WCC. … people should be persuaded to have nothing to do with them unless their participation is crucial for themselves.[149]

There was an implicit understanding that studies and processes worked on the principle of filtering down their outcomes to the grass roots who are then expected to take action upon them.

> There are two obvious and damaging criticisms of this assumption. One is – it simply does not work, the filtering down does not take place. The other is, it should not work; the exciting and imaginative development in the life of the church is much less often at the level of the decision-maker and strategically placed person (so-called) and much more at a basic and local level.[150]

It was sometimes suggested that problems could be simply solved by better communication:

> It ought to be quite clear now - those who are not asked to participate in producing work are not going to buy a finished product manufactured elsewhere. Their concerns, priorities, discoveries need to be part of the process.[151]

Fraser highlighted the World Council's ability to dampen excitement by its own confusion of programmes and the tendency of those who collect and collate the products of other people's engagement to produce lifeless and nuanced reports which neither enthuse nor offend those who receive them. Fraser questioned how people could be expected to be passionate about ecumenism if they were simply used as agents of World Council programmes?

**Involvement of participants**

Framing

Within social movements and their organisations Tarrow suggested that:

> The coordination of collective action depends on the trust and cooperation that are generated among participants by shared understandings and identities - or, to use a broader category, on the collective action *frames* that justify, and dignify, and animate collective action.  ... movements do passionate "framing work": shaping grievances into broader and more resonant claims.[152]

He noted that states (and by analogy here we might say church authorities) are always in the process of framing issues both to gain popular support and to counteract the effects of social movements. However:

> Social movements do not depend on framing alone; they must bring people together in the field, shape coalitions, confront opponents, and assure their own future after the exhilaration of the peak of mobilisation has passed.[153]

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[149] ibid p3
[150] ibid p6
[151] ibid p4
[152] Tarrow op cit p22
[153] ibid p123

Considerable attention has been paid to the issue of framing. In his chapter on Framing Contention[154] Tarrow quoted Gamson, Fireman and Rytina in *Encounters with Unjust Authority* who say that social movements endeavour to substitute:

> a dominant belief system that legitimises the status quo with an alternative mobilising belief system that supports collective action for change.[155]

Tarrow noted a paradox between developing symbols that would create new identities and bring about change and using familiar symbols from people's own culture.

> The major symbolic dilemma of social movements is to mediate between inherited symbols that are familiar, but lead to passivity, and new ones that are electrifying, but may be too unfamiliar to lead to action.[156]

In the construction of meaning, do movements form symbols by using existing cultural materials or ab initio? How are symbols read by actual and potential participants in a movement, as opposed to the intention of those who create or use them? When individuals tend to live with disjointed identities how do movements knit 'the unity and dynamism they need to construct fully integrated mass movements?'.[157] Snow and Benford described a collective action frame as an:

> interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment.[158]

Social movements name issues and connect them to other injustices or dysfunctionalities, thus constructing larger frames of meaning that will both sympathetically resonate with people and will convey a distinct message to those in power. Tarrow suggested that it is not possible for social movements to:

> simply adapt frames of meaning from traditional cultural symbols: if they did, they would be nothing more than reflections of their society's values and would be inhibited from challenging them.[159]

There is competition between powers and movements for cultural dominance and the status quo tends to have more powerful resources. If a movement adapts too well to its social context, it loses the power to initiate change. In order to break conventional attitudes of thought, significant cognitive mobilisation is required. The identification of injustice can arouse a righteous anger that can give emotional energy to a movement. However, if read differently, it may simply reinforce feelings of despair resignation and shame. Tarrow summarised the issue thus:

> The culture of collective action is built on frames and emotions oriented toward mobilising people out of their compliance and into action in conflictual settings. Symbols are taken

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[154] ibid pp106-122
[155] Gamson W, Fireman B and Rytina S, *Encounters with Unjust Authority*, Homewood Ill, Dorsey Press, 1982, p15
[156] Tarrow op cit pp106f
[157] ibid p107
[158] Snow, D E and Benford R, 'Master Frames and Cycles of Protest' in Morris A and Mueller C M (eds) *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992, p137
[159] Tarrow op cit p110

selectively by movement leaders from a cultural reservoir and combined with action-oriented beliefs in order to navigate strategically among a parallelogram of actors, ranging from states and social opponents to militants and target populations. Most important, they are given an emotional valence aimed at converting passivity into action.[160]

Both consensus formation and mobilisation are necessary. The former may produce a collective definition of a situation but does not necessarily promote collective action. This insight seems to me to be particularly significant for this study on the development of ecumenical consciousness. As we will see in later chapters, the World Council has been more successful in producing collective definitions of situations (ecclesiological, social, political, environmental and economic) than it has been in mobilising the members of the churches.

In his overview of framing, 'Framing Processes, Ideology and Discursive Fields'[161], Snow recognised that whereas the framing perspective on social movements focuses attention on the interpretive process,

> the collective action and master frames that are the product of these interpretive processes are central to understanding the course and character of social movements.[162]

His general conclusions were that framing processes have a particular relevance to understanding social movements in which the concept of master frames increases in significance as movements become global and involve wider coalitions. In particular:

> collective action frames are not only cognitive structures located in the minds of individuals, but they also are properties of organisations or collectivities and can be examined as such.[163]

Snow regarded frame transformation as a complex process as:

> meanings do not automatically naturally attach themselves to the objects, events, or experiences, we encounter, but often arise, instead, through interactively based interpretive processes.[164]

Collective action frames are the result of participants in social movements assigning meaning and interpreting:

> relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilise antagonists.[165]

We may compare this with Tarrow:

> The symbols of collective action take hold through two the main processes: over the long run, they enter people's consciousness through a capillary process of consensus

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[160] ibid p112
[161] Snow D A, 'Framing Processes, Ideology and Discursive Fields' in Snow D A, Soule, S A and Kriesi H (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp380-412
[162] ibid p404
[163] ibid p405
[164] ibid p384
[165] ibid p384

formation and mobilisation; and in the shorter run, they impress people through the transformations wrought by collective action itself.[166]

Frames have the function of both focusing attention on that which is felt to be most relevant to the exclusion of other factors, and of holding different objects or objectives in relationship.

> Collective action frames, not only perform an interpretive function in the sense of providing answers to the question "What is going on here?", but they also are decidedly more agentic and contentious in the sense of calling for action that problematises and challenges existing authoritative views and framings of reality.[167]

Master frames are considered as collective action frames that have taken on a scope and influence beyond a specific movement, for example feminism. Snow suggested that there are two different strands of frame transformation, which may occur at the level of the group or the individual:

> one that tends to be event-initiated or -based and that results in a modification or partial transformation of an extant frame; and one that tends to be agent-initiated or -based and that results in a more dramatic or radical transformation in the way in which the object of orientation is seen or regarded. ... Affecting changes in hearts and minds is, of course, the stuff of the more sweeping kind of frame transformation. [168]

For Crossley, understanding frames as a means of mobilising people around specific issues 'overlooks the extent to which frames may themselves constitute a stake in struggle'.[169] Instead of being the evolving products of interaction, frames are also sometimes described:

> as if they were self-contained and pre-given packages at the meaning or discrete and unchanging tools of interpretation. ... accounts of framing can appear to separate questions of meaning in symbolism from questions of power, ignoring the central role of forms of symbolic power in the process of struggle.[170]

Whilst agreeing with those who observe that social movement organisations have to build a bridge between their perspectives and those of prospective constituents, Crossley felt that 'they really only scratch the surface of the issues raised by that task'.[171] People have their own frames, which conformist or not, have been developed under dominant systems.

There is much about the discourse around frames that is relevant to an understanding of developing an ecumenical consciousness. The ecumenical movement, like social movements in general, is an interpretive, meaning-making process - not only in the sense of describing and interpreting realities but equally understanding and being motivated for appropriate action. The analyses of the framing processes above place them at the heart of the dynamic of social movements. They are not just one aspect of social movements but integral to them and occur

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[166] Tarrow, op cit, p112
[167] Snow, op cit, p385
[168] ibid p393
[169] Crossley, op cit p139
[170] ibid p140
[171] ibid p140

both as a natural part of processes and as an intentional act. The development of an ecumenical consciousness could be seen as, at least, an aspect of framing within the ecumenical movement.

Attention is drawn to the power of dominant frames emerging from a status quo that is under the control of those with power. Participation within the life of traditional Christian community and exposure to processes of Christian nurture under the control of institutional manifestations of the Church means that the frames developed by church members will be those sympathetic to and supportive of their church's self understanding and practice. Institutionally, it is in the interests of each church to impress on their members the rightness and uniqueness of their tradition. Konrad Raiser asked the question:

> Does the learning strategy of ecumenical renewal inevitably clash with the ecclesiastical strategies to maintain the status quo and to preserve continuity?[172]

The tension highlighted above between the need to develop new symbols and frames that will enable people to bring about change and the need to engage people with symbols and frames with which they are comfortable and familiar is one that is faced in processes of the ecumenical formation. It is recognized that an over emphasis on conventional symbols and frames may inhibit change. Frame transformation is necessary if participants in the ecumenical movement are to be agents of the changes implied by ecumenism.

There is also a tension between selling pre-packaged ideas regarded as authoritative which are the result of the process of framing in the past and active participation in the framing process out of experience in context. This takes us to the heart of one of the primary issues in ecumenical formation - whether the process is one of forming people according to that which has already been decided or whether it is a continuing process in which people, individually and collectively, are agents in their ongoing formation. It may be that movements are more creative in framing in their early days and then rely on encouraging people to buy into their frames in later stages of development of the movement. However, if that is the case, the frames will become no longer relevant situationally and temporally as contexts change or as people from new contexts join the movement. In the ecumenical movement there continues to be a discussion around what is termed reception.[173] In other words, constituents and adherents receiving and owning the historical and contemporary products of other people's (having specialist knowledge or position) work in framing. As will be seen later in this thesis, there is a strong, if not dominant, tendency to regard the task of ecumenical formation as enabling people to receive rather than be creative agents.

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[172] Raiser, K, *Ecumenism in Transition - A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1991, p23
[173] For example, the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches in its 2006-2013 phase has initiated a study process on *Reception* and *Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism.*

Instrumentality, identity and ideology

The development of an ecumenical consciousness is more than a process of framing. It has a collective dimension leading to solidarity and a sense of collective identity. In the concluding chapter of *Power in Movement* Tarrow commented:

> In the formation of a social movement, there is more than a "pull" toward particular forms of collective action; there must also be a "push" of solidarity in collective identity. Solidarity has much to do with interest, but it produces a sustained movement only when consensus is built around common meanings and identities. These meanings and identities are partly inherited and partly constructed in the act of confronting opponents. They are also constituted by the interactions within movements.[174]

In their review chapter on collective identity, Hunt and Benford[175] conceptualise it as:

> individual's identifications of, identifications with, and attachments to some collectivity in cognitive, emotional, and moral terms. Rooted in and shaped by particular sociocultural contexts, collective identities are produced and reproduced in ongoing interactions *.*[176]

Klandermans identified three basic reasons for movement participation :

> people may want to change their circumstances, they may want to act as members of their group, or they may want to give meaning to their world and express their views and feelings.[177]

He summarised these as instrumentality, identity and ideology. There is strong empirical evidence that:

> a strong identification with the group makes participation in collective political action on behalf of that group more likely.[178]

However, this is complicated by the fact that individuals have multiple identities, whereas a movement emphasises a collective identity which may create competing loyalties. There is, I suggest, a clearly identifiable set of identities associated with Christianity – Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal and do so on.[179] Whilst a person might say, 'I am a Methodist' or 'I am a Lutheran', it is highly unlikely that anyone would say, 'I am an Ecumenist' unless they were employed in a specific capacity. This raises the question of what kind of identity does participation in the ecumenical movement imply. If we take seriously the notion discussed above that the ecumenical movement is a protest movement against what Christianity and the church has become, then the basic identity form should be simply that of Christian. This challenges an unspoken assumption

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[174] Tarrow, op cit p201
[175] Hunt S A and Benford R D, 'Collective Identity, Solidarity, and Commitment' in Snow D A, Soule, S A and Kriesi H (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp433-457
[176] ibid p450
[177] Klandermans B, 'The Demand and Supply of Participation: Social-Psychological Correlates of Participation in Social Movements' in Snow D A, Soule, S A and Kriesi H (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p361.
[178] ibid p364
[179] This leaves on one side the increasingly pressing issue of whether people do, or will continue, to see such traditional denominational labels as indicators of personal identity.

that the divided church is the norm.  The development of an ecumenical consciousness would be to encourage a frame transformation that saw Christian as the norm and denominational identity as at worst an aberration or at best a subset.  However, a sense of collective identity in the ecumenical movement could be seen by the churches as antithetical to an identity defined by institutional belonging which has been consciously nurtured.

In respect of ideology, studies of social movements in the 1960s distinguished between instrumental and expressive movements:

> instrumental movements were seen as movements that aimed at some external goal ... Participation in expressive movements, on the other hand, was a goal in itself.[180]

In later years this distinction fell out of use.  However, recently:

> the idea that people might participate in movements to express their views has received new attention. ... These scholars put an emphasis on such aspects as the creative and cultural aspects of social movements, narratives, emotions, and moral indignation ...[181]

On the basis of such work, Klandermans suggested that although social movements may deliberately develop emotions of anger and indignation, people may be trying to make sense of their reality:

> They may look to others with similar experiences and a social movement may provide an environment to exchange experiences, to tell their stories and to express their feelings.[182]

The ecumenical movement can be seen as both instrumental and expressive; not only as a result of its multifaceted character but because of its very nature.  The notion of the ecumenical consciousness seems to carry within the possibilities of being cognitive and affective, active and reflective – a whole way of being.  At its best, the ecumenical movement has recognized the wholeness of individuals and communities as social, political, spiritual and economic entities.  It has seen concern for the unity of the church and that of humanity and creation as symbiotic rather than two sides of the same coin.

Continuing involvement

Klandermans also raised the question of why people disengage from movements, 'literature on why they exit is almost non-existent'.[183]  He suggested that insufficient gratification is one cause, but not only in the sense of a failure to achieve goals. A lack of synchrony between the ideology of a movement and individual beliefs may lead to factions and schisms. Also, a movement may be perceived to fail to deal with:

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[180] Klandermans, op cit, p365
[181] ibid p365
[182] ibid p365
[183] ibid p372

emotions, feelings, or passion, both in terms of the passion that spurs participation, and in terms of how they deal with emotion and affection inside the movement.[184]

Long-standing ecumenists often bemoan the lack of participation in the ecumenical movement. It is hard to assess the truth of this objectively, particularly as it is not clear that the ecumenical movement described in its official histories ever was an entirely popular movement. On the one hand, there does appear to be a distinct lack of interest in institutionalised ecumenism among members of churches. Christopher Asprey began his introductory chapter to *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st Century* by writing about the perception of being in an ecumenical winter:

> that after the apparent gains made by the Second Vatican Council, or the creation of the World Council of Churches, for example, very little has in fact been achieved. Where once there were worries that the flush of ecumenical enthusiasm might breed a culture of 'indifferentism' to ecclesial or doctrinal differences, there is now a sense of indifference about ecumenical projects.[185]

On the other hand, there are many examples of people coming together ecumenically around interests and issues both locally and internationally. My personal feeling is that disengagement with the institutional ecumenical movement has to do with Klandermans' final point. An arid and bureaucratic ecumenism does not engender the necessary passion to drive the movement forward. I have articulated this in a presentation to a 'Library Lunchtime Conversation' in November 2008 in the library of the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva entitled *Where's the passion? Why ecumenism needs the heart as well as the mind.*[186] This concluded with:

> Ecumenism, like the Gospel, requires us to change. Change requires the engagement of heart and mind. Meeting in the Library and Archives we are surrounded by the output of our cognitive processes. Where's the passion?[187]

The literature on social movements indicates that we can properly consider the ecumenical movement to have sufficient commonality with them to make observations and analyses of them relevant to our theme. The requirement of engaging with the worldviews and practices of potential and actual constituents in order to frame alternative understandings and interpretations which lead to action is equally applicable to the ecumenical movement.

**Emerging questions to interrogate the history**

It is possible to group together the issues raised in this and the preceding chapter about the development of an ecumenical consciousness. Out of this I will draw some questions which will be used to interrogate the historical account in the next chapters and to point to possible future actions by the World Council.

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[184] ibid p373
[185] Asprey, C, 'The Universal Church and the Ecumenical Movement' in Murphy, F A and Asprey, C (eds), *Ecumenism Today: The Universal Church in the 21st Century*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2008, p1
[186] http://library.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcclibrary/Wheres_the_passion.pdf   Accessed 14 May 2009
[187] ibid p7

<u>What is ecumenical consciousness?</u>

As we have seen in Chapter 2, there are various ways in which ecumenical consciousness can be defined depending on one's view of both ecumenism and consciousness.  Although recognizing the reality and necessity of a wider ecumenism of all the religions, pace Kung, this study will assume for ecumenism a starting point within Christianity, as that is the declared basis of the World Council.  However, it is not confined to movement towards the unity of the church but holds that together with the unity of humanity and the created order, with the consequent concerns for justice, peace and wholeness.  This involves relating to and dialogue with other faiths but not in the same sense as between Christian churches. Consciousness, in this context, is more than sentience or having knowledge and awareness.  It is, if you like, a state of being but one that results in action as a consequence of that which is known and experienced.  Developing ecumenical consciousness will involve changes in attitudes, behaviour and relationships.  Lange suggested that most people in the churches find themselves in the position of having a parochial conscience which needed to be liberated into an ecumenical conscience.  At the end of Chapter 2, I suggested a brief working definition that 'Ecumenical consciousness is an openness to Christ, to the world and to the consequent collective and individual transformation of attitudes, relationships and actions'.[188]

How, then, has the World Council understood ecumenical consciousness at different times in its history?  The question will have to be asked implicitly as well as explicitly as for much of the time the exact terminology of ecumenical consciousness has not figured in its discourse.  How far in each period has the World Council understood its role as the sharing of information about the ecumenical movement and the contemporaneous and contextual issues emerging from it to the detriment of a broad understanding of the development of ecumenical consciousness?

<u>Whose ecumenical consciousness?</u>

It is clear that the founders of the World Council believed that it had a role in the promotion of 'the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all Churches'.[189]  The discussion on social movements in this chapter gives support to a view that movements grow and are sustained through an informed and active awareness of the purposes of the movement.  However there is also an indication that such a consciousness needs to be developed within organisations and collectives as well as individuals.  In the case of the World Council, this would suggest the necessity of a role in the promotion of the growth of ecumenical consciousness within its member churches and associated ecumenical bodies.  How has the World Council understood its role

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[188] See p37
[189] See p30

concerning the growth of ecumenical consciousness towards individuals, groups and churches in the different periods of its existence?  What factors have led to this?

Cognitive and emotional mobilisation

The vast quantity of documentation in the library and archives of the World Council bears testimony to the desire of the ecumenical movement for intellectual respectability.  As remarked above and as will be seen, the World Council, with other bodies in the ecumenical movement, has tended to rely on the production of concepts, agreements and plans for action by the few to be received and acted upon by the many.  Social movement theory has pointed to the significance of participating in the framing process which we can understand to be part of the development of ecumenical consciousness.  We have to interpret what is happening and generate shared understandings, not have them given to us.  However, the ecumenical process of framing does not take place ab initio, the starting point is the frames we have already developed, particularly in the church (cf Lange's parochial conscience).  Frame transformation does not happen easily or by accident.  It implies the substitution of a dominant belief system that legitimises the status quo by an alternative mobilising belief system.

One of the keys to this appears to be participation.  Participation gives experience and engenders a sense of belonging and solidarity.  It enables an initial sense of interest to be transformed into a totality of well-informed and active commitment to ecumenism.  The generation of a sense of enthusiasm and passion, rather than worthiness, is a motivating factor for participation.  Whilst that may be easier to achieve in the early days of the life of a movement, it becomes more difficult once a movement and the institutions relating to it become well established.  This certainly appears to be the case with the ecumenical movement and the World Council.

The social movement discourse also implies that one role of a movement is to inculcate dissatisfaction with the status quo.  This is a motivation for participation and engagement with the cause of the dissatisfaction is often sufficient internal reward in itself to maintain participation.  This brings us back to the problematic issue at the heart of ecumenism that the churches have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo which makes them resistant to anything which would encourage the effective development of ecumenical consciousness.  The churches might want a primary sense of identity and belonging to remain invested in them rather than in the ecumenical movement.  However, the social movement discourse suggests that, for the ecumenical movement to be most effective, the primary identity should be reversed.

How, then, has the World Council understood at various times the development of ecumenical consciousness in terms of generating passion for ecumenism?  How has it acknowledged the need to engage the emotional and cognitive participation of people, individually and collectively, as subjects rather than objects, actors rather than audiences?  How has it expressed the necessity of

a sense of identity and belonging in the development of ecumenical consciousness?  What, in the light of our current knowledge, are the strengths and weaknesses of the various stated positions and policies through the history of the World Council?

# 4  Beginnings to the Nairobi Assembly (1975)

This chapter is the first of two which analyse the understanding of ecumenical consciousness and its development according to the issues set out in the concluding part of Chapter 3.  For the reasons set out in the Introduction, the periods delineated by the Assemblies of the World Council will be used as the basic historical framework.  It is important to emphasise again at this point that these two chapters do not purport to be a comprehensive account of the educational concerns or programmatic work of the World Council.  I have selected that material which offers statements of understanding or policy or that which can be interpreted as revealing attitudes towards the development of ecumenical consciousness.  I have also tried to describe the internal and external ecumenical context sufficient to make sense of the selected material.

Chapters in different volumes of *A History of the Ecumenical Movement* (Vol 1 1517-1948 and Vol 2 1948-1968), which cover most of the period of this chapter, draw remarkably similar conclusions. In the Epilogue to the period 1517-1948, Stephen Neill wrote:

> The movement is still too much an affair of leaders in the Church, of ministers rather than lay folk, and of those who can afford the time to go to conferences rather than those who must stay at home.  This again is doubtless inevitable at the start; ideas begin with the few, and a long time must be allowed for the dissemination of those ideas to the mass.[190]

In his overview chapter of the period 1948-68, W A Visser't Hooft concluded:

> The ecumenical movement is not sufficiently rooted in the life of the local congregations. In spite of all attempts made to educate church members for participation in the ecumenical enterprise, the movement is still too much an army with many generals and officers, but with too few soldiers.  It would seem that not enough has been done to show that the ecumenical concern is not to be conceived as one of the many concerns in which a local congregation may take interest, but as a concern which arises out of the very nature of the Church.[191]

These two statements bring home the uncomfortable truth, as we will see, that the ecumenical movement has from the beginning found it hard to make real its rhetoric of popular support and involvement, ie its quality of actually being a movement. In this a lack of attention to the growth or development of an ecumenical consciousness, as will be demonstrated, has played a significant role.  These statements also reveal particular attitudes towards education which might be considered inimical to the formation of ecumenical consciousness.   The diagnosis may have been correct that the people of the churches were not being ecumenically engaged and transformed. However, the response to this by a top-down dissemination-reception model of education requires further examination.

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[190] Rouse, R & Neill S C (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, Volume 1 1517-1948, SPCK, London and Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1954, p730
[191] Fey, H E (ed), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2 1948-1968,* SPCK, London and Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1970 p26

**Beginnings to Amsterdam (1945)**

The original development of the notion and necessity of the growth of ecumenical consciousness as a responsibility of the World Council has been described in Chapter 2 and so will not be repeated here.

Commentators on the history of the ecumenical movement and the World Council, past and present, often so concentrate on the Faith and Order, Life and Work and missionary movements that they forget the Sunday School movement which began in the late eighteenth century. This movement is of interest here not only because of its interdenominational and international character but because of its concern for the process by which people are formed in faith. Its national and international interdenominational networks predated many of those of the other movements which became the modern ecumenical movement. In his 1968 monograph, *Issues Facing Christian Educators*, C Ellis Nelson commented:

> the influence of the Sunday school movement in helping generations of lay church leaders to transcend their denominational ideology in order to evangelize and teach has seldom been noticed by the historians of the modern movement for church union.[192]

Philip Cliff made a similar observation that the encounter between people from different traditions in the World Sunday School Conventions:

> laid the foundations for meetings which later became starting points for the International Missionary Council, the Faith and Order Commission, the Life and Work Movement.[193]

If this demonstrates the practical consequences of the Sunday School movement for the ecumenical movement, there were also stirrings of the need for an ecumenical consciousness. Knoff quotes the chairman of the International Lesson Committee of the World Sunday School Association as saying in the 1890s the union of churches would not be brought about by resolutions or by working together:

> As we come to a better understanding of the great charter of our common faith [the Bible], our hearts will be knit together and our eyes will see alike.[194]

The process of Christian education could bring about an ecumenical change of heart and mind.

The later Student Christian Movement is a similar story. In his history of the Student Christian Movement (SCM), Robin Boyd argued that:

> It would be difficult to refute the claim that the SCM is the progenitor of the modern ecumenical movement.[195]

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[192] Nelson, C E, *Issues Facing Christian Educators,* Geneva, World Council of Christian Education, 1968, p6
[193] Cliff, P B, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England 1780-1980*, NCEC, Redhill, 1986
[194] Knoff, op cit, p40

and that it became 'the model for the World Council of Churches'.[196]  The experience of the SCM raised the ecumenical consciousness of students as, according to Ans van der Bent, it helped them:

> to understand and experience a quality of Christian discipleship and to grow in a profound awareness of the oikumene in Christ.[197]

There are two strands which run through Boyd's analysis – community and study. He argued that the experience of encountering and being with one another and of the common commitment to world mission was ecumenically formative, both interdenominationally and globally.  In respect of study, the SCM encouraged students to read the Bible together rigorously, prayerfully and devotionally.  The SCM model, Boyd argued, gave the ecumenical movement a process of study in small groups and larger conferences.  The SCM not only supplied leadership for the emerging ecumenical movement but, of equal significance, rooted it in the process of learning in community. However, Boyd failed to draw attention to the fact that the glory days of the SCM, in Britain at least, were in an era when only a very small proportion of the population went to university.  It is not surprising that members of SCM went on to exercise leadership in the churches and ecumenical movement just as their contemporaries went on to exercise leadership in other spheres of life. For all the democratic processes of study in small groups, the context in which they operated was elitist. As will be seen in this and the following chapter, there has been and remains a tendency in the World Council towards an elitist approach rather than a real engagement of people. Was this is an unintended consequence of the SCM roots of the ecumenical movement and the World Council?

Significant attention was paid to educational issues in early ecumenical conferences of the missionary, Life and Work, and Faith and Order movements.  The World Missionary Conference in 1910, often regarded as the starting point of the modern ecumenical movement, considered missionary education.[198] The conclusions of the report were dominated by an understanding of its aims as evangelistic, edificatory (the development of the Christian community through the enlightenment and training of its members) and leavening.[199]  Brian Stanley highlighted Charles Gore's speech to Commission III insisting on education as the key to catholicity:

> educational strategy should concentrate on the training of church leaders who could combine the spirit of Christ with the spirit of their own nation.[200]

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[195] Boyd, R, *The Witness of the Student Christian Movement: Church ahead of the church,* London, SPCK, 2007 p157

[196] ibid p1

[197] van der Bent*, A J, From Generation to Generation: The Story of Youth Work in the World Council of Churches*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1986 px

[198] See Gairdner, WH T, *Edinburgh 1910: an account and interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, Edinburg, Oliphant, Anderson & Frerrier, 1910; World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission III: Education in Relation to the Christianisation of National Life,* Edinburgh and London, Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1911; Stanley, B, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2009

[199] *Report of Commission III*, op cit  p369

[200] ibid p193

One priority recognised was that of ministerial training which was later to bear fruit in the formation of the Theological Education Fund, which became the Programme on Theological Education and then that on Ecumenical Theological Education.

The Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work held in Stockholm in 1925 was held with the understanding that 'the world is too strong for a divided church'[201] and that ecclesiological differences could be set aside in favour of united action. The Christian view of education was seen as 'the training of the entire personality for fellowship with God and service of man'.[202] Because 'knowledge of facts was not enough; there must be training in sympathy'.[203] One of the conclusions of the Conference was the:

> pressing need of education. The individual must be educated by the church, so that he may be able to exercise a Christian discernment in all things.[204]

Twenty five years later, Adolf Keller looked back to the Stockholm Conference:

> the ecumenical consciousness which had been sleeping such a long time had to be challenged. [But] Not all consciences have been challenged, not all forces mobilised.[205]

Keller did not believe that the resulting courses and seminars on ecumenism were sufficient.

> The ecumenical movement could not really grow and become deeply rooted in the Churches as long as it was a mere itinerant lecturing programme and a series of innumerable conferences.[206]

As Keller was writing from the vantage point of the Ecumenical Institute, it is not surprising that he saw the answer in a permanent teaching centre where 'future ministers could be introduced into ecumenical problems'.[207]

Education was one of the seven themes in the 'Church, Community and State' conference in Oxford in 1937. As a result, the Message from the conference emphasised the need for what it called Ecumenical Education:

> The future of the ecumenical movement depends largely on whether a generation of Christians can be formed who, while rooted in their own traditions, are willing by much patience, scrupulous fairness, and also by critical insight and complete frankness, to labour for deeper understanding between the churches.[208]

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[201] Bell, G K A (ed), *The Stockholm Conference 1925: Official Report*, London, Oxford University Press, 1926, p710
[202] ibid p563
[203] ibid p568
[204] ibid p713f
[205] Keller, A, 'Stockholm 1925 in the Light of 1950' in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1950, vol 2, no 4, p373
[206] ibid p 373
[207] ibid p373
[208] *The Message and Decisions of Oxford on Church, Community and State*, New York, Universal Christian Council, 1937, p87

A World Conference of Christian Youth was organised by a coalition of movements in Amsterdam in 1939.  For the purposes of this study, perhaps the most significant contribution  was a recognition of what they termed 'Education for Oecumenism'.

> ... Our education, we see clearly here, has emphasised the spectacular but accidental differences between peoples, whereas, in essence, we are truly one.  What the ecumenical movement can do is to foster such an outlook so that we may see our unity in the deepest Christian way, and not merely as citizens of the world.[209]

These conferences with their emphases on the development of catholicity, sympathy, discernment, critical insight and unity were touching on the nature of ecumenical consciousness.

In April 1947, in reporting a time of extraordinary expansion in the work of the emerging World Council, Visser't Hooft expressed the fear that the World Council's activities might 'grow faster than the degree of ecumenical awareness and understanding in the churches' and that consequently education was required that was not

> merely propaganda about the World Council's activities but the presentation of a new dynamic vision of the Church.[210]

It is not clear, however, whether he saw education as an instrument of bringing the ecumenical movement up to the pace of the World Council or as enlivening the ecumenical movement to drive the World Council and the other ecumenical instruments. As we will see, this was a dichotomy which keeps on emerging in relation to the World Council's perception of the role of education.

Amongst the new work mentioned was the founding of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey near Geneva.[211] The Ecumenical Institute was to become a specialist strand of the World Council's engagement in ecumenical education.  Visser't Hooft's vision for an Ecumenical Institute was shaped by a context where the church was being questioned for its over-emphasis on the clergy 'while keeping the laity in an appalling biblical and ethical illiteracy'.[212]  The model for the Institute was not only that of the lay institutes or evangelical academies in Germany but the international ecumenical seminars established by Adolf Keller, a leading light in the Life and Work movement and professor of practical theology at Geneva University.  Bossey welcomed its first students for a three-month course in 1947.  37 laypersons came from 14 European countries, with the experience of involvement in resistance movements, the army, and even of concentration camps.

The meeting of the Provisional Committee in 1946 had agreed a statement of the tasks and purposes of what was then referred to as the Ecumenical Training Centre.  It would have to offer the foundations of Christian faith and international understanding.

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[209]  ibid p114
[210] Minutes and Reports of the Provisional Committee, Buck Hill Falls, USA,  1947p47
[211] For a fuller account of the development of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey see: Weber, H-R, *A laboratory for ecumenical life : the story of Bossey, 1946-1996*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1996
[212] Nicole, J, 'The Ecumenical Institute of Bossey' and undated article by a former Director of the Institute with no information about publication in WCC Archives Box 42.54.56

> It will have to be thoroughly ecumenical, so that among the staff and students all Christian denominations which are members of the World Council are represented ...
> It will have to be a centre where the new insights and new life ... are transmitted from one Church to another. It will especially stand for the re-awakening of the Church through the spiritual mobilisation of the laity.[213]

The Centre should be open to both women and men and the only requirement was 'it can be expected that they will be able to profit by the courses given at the centre'.[214] Students would be chosen from (1) Christian laity who were engaged in various secular callings, (2) laity engaged in church work and (3) theological students and young pastors. At this time it was envisaged that there would be two or three terms, with the summer period set aside for conferences. One term each year, might have a more general curriculum, with specialist terms dealing with such issues as 'youth work, teaching, evangelism, social work, political life, journalism, international relations'.[215] In 1948 the Director, in reporting to the Bossey Board, said it aimed:

> to stimulate and coordinate the approach which is now being made in many places to mobilise Christian men [sic], so that they may think, live and act as Christians in their various secular callings.[216]

The Ecumenical Institute was to be a primary, and possibly pre-eminent, provider of ecumenical formation. It was to provide for those who did not have accessible opportunities for ecumenical formation and was to act as a supportive and coordinating agency for ecumenical formation in other places.


**Amsterdam (1948) to Evanston (1954)**


The World Council of Churches was constituted at its first assembly in August 1948 in Amsterdam. The invitation to the churches observed that "Our first and deepest need is not a new organisation but the renewal, or rather the rebirth of the actual churches".[217] Renewal may have become a dominant theme for the following years in the World Council of Churches but the role and methodologies of promoting the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all churches, as agreed in the Constitution (see Chapter 2), never seem to have been sufficiently recognised or explored.

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[213]Visser't Hooft, W (ed), *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation. Minutes and reports of the meeting of the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches held at Geneva from February 21-23, 1946.* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1946, p93

[214] ibid p94

[215] ibid p95

[216] Minutes of the Board of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 11 February 1948, p4

[217] quoted in Fey, H E (ed), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2 1948-1968,* SPCK, London and Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1970, p9

According to Visser't Hooft the unexpectedly long period of its interim existence had 'proved to be a formative process … We have learned much about the dimensions of our task'.[218] Apart from any implicit educational activities, engagement in the World Council was itself understood as a learning experience. Two of the reports were more explicit. That of the committee on "The Significance of the Laity in the Church" noted:

> The laity requires strengthening through biblical and theological study and discussion with special reference to bearing of Christian faith upon daily life.[219]

The Youth Delegation reported on 'Youth and the Assembly' that 'We need not so much ecumenical understanding as ecumenical obedience'.[220] Whilst recognising the need for appropriate education for the laity and young people, neither of these really picks up on the need to promote the growth of an ecumenical consciousness. It might be that this was so obvious in the heightened ecumenical awareness of the first assembly that it did not need stating explicitly.

In its interim period, the World Council had established a Department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid. Many churches had been isolated by the war and were also unable to maintain their institutions of theological education. The Scholarships programme began by enabling students to train for ministry in institutions outside their own countries. As conditions normalised there was a shift in emphasis to offering opportunities for supplementary theological education for ministers who could then share their experience of study abroad with their congregations. Some were placed in theological institutions of other denominations to add an ecumenical dimension to their learning experience. Whilst that would be presumed today, it was a significant development for the time.

The Ecumenical Institute

The original aim of two to three month courses for lay people had not been achieved as they were unable to leave their jobs for such a period.[221] Consequently there had been a shift towards shorter conferences of people belonging to the same profession (eg lawyers, artists, industrialists) to consider their Christian vocation together. Opportunities were created for dialogue between Christian leaders and sociologists, philosophers and experts in development. The Director of the Institute reported to the Central Committee that:

> students leave Bossey with a sense of having caught a new vision of the significance and essential oneness of the Church and with a deep conviction that the concrete contact with a centre of ecumenical thought and action has changed their whole outlook and conception of being a member of the Christian Church.[222]

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[218] Visser't Hooft, A, (ed) *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches,* Harper and Brother, New York, 1949 p28ff
[219] ibid p153ff
[220] ibid p185ff
[221] Minutes of the Board of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 14 February 1949
[222] Central Committee Minutes, 1950 p110

The Bossey Board agreed an experiment which would involve bringing together 20 theological students for a period of five months to work for an Ecumenical Diploma. The experiment became a Graduate Institute and then School. It was agreed by the Board that:

> ecumenical studies should be defined as studies having to do with the relationships of the churches to each other, with their common search for unity and with a common witness in and to the modern world.[223]

The earlier concept of 'ecumenical insight and vision' which could be understood to relate to the development of ecumenical consciousness had been replaced by a content related definition.

The Graduate School was started in 1952 with the purpose of helping participants to gain a knowledge of and insight into the ecumenical movement and to prepare them to become effective ecumenical workers in their own context. By its nature, the Graduate School was, and remains, an academic course. However, this was complemented by the experience of living and relating within an international ecumenical community. Hendrik Kramer called the first semester of the Graduate School a failure from which they learned:

> that the Graduate School should and could not be conceived on the lines of a theological faculty or seminary, but as a new type of education to be formed on the basis of experiment. [224]

The question was how to initiate a multi-cultural faculty and student body into the dynamic and meaning of ecumenism when they were all inclined to think in provincial terms. This helps us appreciate the experimental and experiential nature of the early days of the Ecumenical Institute, even in its formal academic courses. The life-cycle of any institution makes it difficult to recapture the excitement of the first phase of existence. However, I wonder whether the experimental and experiential together with an openness to learn from failure rather than be risk averse are not of the essence of the formation of ecumenical consciousness.

Study Department

A report on the work of the Study Department in *The Ecumenical Review* emphasized the relationship between learning and action. Study 'should be *oriented toward action*. … study should be primarily *of* action and *for* action'.[225] Ecumenical unity, it was suggested, would be achieved in wrestling with specific situations rather than by general principles. The Central Committee in 1953 was presented with the following analysis:

> Habits of mind and outlook, shaped over centuries and solidly entrenched in ecclesiastical traditions and practices, do not change overnight. The growth of an ecumenical mind among the Churches is, as we all know, set with immense difficulties ...[226]

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[223] Minutes of the Board of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 15 May 1951, p4
[224] Kraemer, H, ' The Significance of the Graduate School for the Whole Task of the Ecumenical Institute', in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1961, vol 15, no 1, p70
[225] Van Dusen, H P, Report of the Study Department: *The Ecumenical Review,* 1949, vol 2, no 1, p76
[226] Central Committee Minutes, 1953, p50

We can hear echoes of this in the framing discourse around social movements.

However, there was a limited response from the churches to the study material produced:

> it remains a constantly vexing problem how to make ecumenical perspectives and issues a living ferment within the *regular* activities and processes of the churches. The ecumenical "conversion" of the churches has not yet gone deep enough to make them ready to pool their forces in *concerted* attacks on confronting problems. Nor do they possess adequate machinery for effectively participating in ecumenical study, and for translating its eventual results into terms of new policies and programs.[227]

The problem appears to have been seen as that of the churches in their lack of motivation and mechanisms for serious involvement in ecumenical study ie engagement with the documentation produced through the agency of the World Council.  This kind of analysis is still evoked today to explain the lack of 'reception' by the churches of reports produced by the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies.[228]  This particular example is recorded to indicate that this emerged very early on in the history of the World Council.  The emphasis has been so heavily on the content and outcomes of studies that the process of engaging the churches and their members in them has been neglected.  They are expected to receive, which is only a very limited form of engagement.  Perhaps the 'ecumenical conversion' desired in the extract from the Central Committee minutes above would have been more probable with an active participation in processes rather than being given the end products.

Youth Department

As has been noted above, a concern for young people and young adults, both being encompassed by the term 'youth' in the World Council, had been present from the beginning.  The Youth Department had a responsibility to be a point of ecumenical inspiration and to enable collaboration and interaction.  The policy of the Youth Department was outlined at the 1948 Central Committee for encouraging participation and:

> developing the ecumenical concern of the younger members of the churches and for providing channels for united ecumenical action.[229]

At this point of time, we may probably take the development of ecumenical concern as being another way of talking about the development of an ecumenical consciousness.  However, as we will see, the major emphasis on participation has subsequently dominated youth work within the

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[227] Central Committee Minutes,  1951 pp97ff

[228] For example, the Standing Committee of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC discussed reception of the *Special Commission Report* in 2005 complaining: 'despite widespread discussion of the report, there was still a limited level of knowledge and understanding of some of these issues in the member churches'.  http://www.oikoumene.org/documentation/documents/comite-central/geneve-2005/rapports-et-documents/gen-10-report-of-the-steering-committee-of-the-special-commission-on-orthodox-participation-in-the-wcc.html.  Accessed 28/09/09

[229] Central Committee Minutes, 1948,  p41

World Council, without an equal concern for the processes that enable the experience to form an ecumenical consciousness.

In the context of a Europe which had been physically and psychologically damaged by war, groups of twenty to thirty young people from different nationalities were brought together to undertake clearance and reconstruction tasks. The work camp programme then expanded across three continents. The physical tasks were of benefit but perhaps more so was the ecumenical learning:

> The life of the camp itself, international and inter-confessional, involving work, worship, Bible-study, discussion and relations with the local community, is in itself a miniature ecumenical encounter. ... Young people who have taken part in such camps go back to their home communities with a new awareness of the task of the Church in the world, and the eagerness to translate it into local terms.[230]

Work camps were later renamed as World Youth Projects with the objective of ecumenical exchange for 'the strengthening of the ecumenical conscience and co-operative work of youth in the nations concerned'.[231]

The Ecumenical Review

An enduring initiative was started by the World Council in 1948 with the publication of the quarterly journal, *The Ecumenical Review*. Each issue has usually dealt with a theme of concern or interest in the ecumenical movement. Not only were the contents thoughtful and thought provoking, it was also a journal of record, containing documentation from the World Council's Central Committee meetings and Assemblies. The sub-text of each issue, whatever the theme, has been the development of an ecumenical consciousness in the reader. The Editorial of the first issue commented:

> It is an instrument to be used by the Churches in order to give substance in reality to the new relationship between them which are implied in their participation in the World Council of Churches.[232]

The ecumenical conversation that had begun at the Amsterdam Assembly implied a robust discourse where its readers were asked to enter 'a common spiritual adventure, leading to unexpected and surprising discoveries'.[233]

One of the barriers to reconciliation between parts of a divided church has frequently been described as mutual ignorance or misunderstanding of the beliefs and practices of other Christians. Oliver Tomkins, in his address to the Third World Conference on Faith and Order Conference in Lund in 1952, said:

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[230] World Council of Churches, *The First Six Years 1948-1954: a report of the Central Committee*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1954 p46
[231] ibid p51
[232] Visser't Hooft, W A, 'Editorial' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1948, vol 1, no 1, p1
[233] ibid p2

let us not suppose that we shall get any further by simply explaining about bishops or baptism all over again.  If we do, we shall be in danger of cataloguing dead issues instead of wrestling with living truth, and of giving the finality of a goal to that which was meant to be the starting-point for fresh understanding.[234]

There comes a point, Tomkins suggested, where learning about our differences instead of setting us free actually entrenches the divisions between us.  His point resonates with that made above that the ecumenical enterprise was more about discovering the new than the reconciling of old differences.  Visser't Hooft feared that churches' involvement in the organised ecumenical movement was to avoid having to unite rather than moving toward unity.  He made the point that many saw the relationship of the churches:

> as an end rather than as a beginning, as a solution of the problem of unity rather than as a first step on the road to unity.  The danger is that ... the World Council can thus become a narcotic rather than a stimulant.[235]

This tension remains with the ecumenical movement. Realism might suggest that there is still an immense task in reconciliation between the different traditions and denominations into which the church has split. However, this very approach may result in the enshrining and legitimation of these within ecumenical structures. As a result, the question that faces the development of an ecumenical conscience is whether we learn for rapprochement or learn the new that lies beyond the present fragmentation. Whatever the intentions and aspirations of those churches which formed the World Council in 1948, I observe little evidence that current member churches belong in order to be changed.

The Evanston Assembly

Representatives of the churches gathered in Evanston, USA for the second assembly of the World Council of Churches in August 1954 with the theme 'Christ - The Hope of the World'.  The Message of the Assembly noted participation in the World Council as a learning experience:

> We enter now upon a second stage.  To stay together is not enough.  We must go forward.  As we learn more of our unity in Christ, it becomes the more intolerable that we should be divided.[236]

The Assembly Work Book contained a proposal for the work of the World Council to be in three Divisions - Division of Studies; Division of Ecumenical Action; Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees.  The Division of Ecumenical Action, which included the Ecumenical Institute, the Youth Department, the Department on Work for the Laity and the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women in Church and Society, was given the proposed task of:

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[234] Tomkins, O, 'Implications of the Ecumenical Movement' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1952, vol 5, no 1, p20
[235] Tomkins, O (ed), *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order held at Lund, August 15-28, 1952,* London, SCM Press, 1953, p130
[236] World Council of Churches, *Evanston Speaks: Reports from the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches,* SCM Press, London for the World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1955 p10

building up ecumenical consciousness and understanding. It shall not be primarily concerned with making known the activities of the World Council, but with promoting activities within the churches which are ecumenical in character.[237]

The suggested aim was 'to serve the churches by promoting the growth of ecumenical consciousness among their members'.[238] The Ecumenical Institute was given the function of the 'development of ecumenical consciousness at every level'.[239] It is noteworthy that the language of ecumenical consciousness was not applied to the aims or functions of the other departments in the Division. However, the World Council was clearly understood to have a responsibility for encouraging the formation of ecumenical consciousness in the people of the churches and that this was a different task than informing them about the World Council.

This approach was affirmed by the Assembly Committee on the Division of Ecumenical Action.[240] They saw that ecumenical education concerned the life of the Church in all its activities, including those with children. Regional institutes modelled on Bossey should develop ecumenical consciousness, especially in the laity. For ministers, the Committee on the Division of Studies proposed a study on 'the furtherance of an ecumenical outlook in theological education'.[241] This recognition of the need to promote an ecumenical dimension to theological education was significant but was often subsequently sidelined by other issues concerning viability.

These comments may appear to be substantial and valuable. However, in the context of the *Evanston Report,* let alone the total activity of the assembly, they were heavily overshadowed by business which was given greater prominence and importance. It could be said that a movement ought to place great value and emphasis on process. However, it seems always to have been the case that the institution of the World Council of Churches preferred serious content.

**Evanston (1954) to New Delhi (1961)**

The World Council engaged in many areas of study but the understanding that new insights would be produced through the participation of the churches continued to be problematic. David Gaines observed:

> attempts at much-talked about 'grass-roots' education revealed, however, that it was a long way from Geneva to the local parishes, and that when this distance had been negotiated the problem of getting an informed response still remained unsolved.[242]

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[237] *Assembly Work Book: Prepared for The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA, August 15-31,1954*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1954, p21
[238] ibid p28
[239] ibid p29
[240] ibid pp226-233
[241] World Council of Churches, *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954,* SCM, London, 1955 p308
[242] David P Gaines, *The World Council of Churches – A Study of its Background and History,* Richard R Smith Co, New Hampshire, 1966 p733

The members of the churches remained largely unaware of the concerns and activities of the World Council. They were unable to engage with or relate to the information they did receive. The findings of studies were:

> mostly in learned treatises, which reached the eyes of few besides the scholars, and in minutes of meetings where they were reduced to sentences which, out of the context, were, to the uninitiated, often more confusing than enlightening.[243]

He suggested that it would have better to offer truly ecumenical education for the millions of church members. An article in *The Ecumenical Review* in 1956 from the United States argued that, for all that was done, 'the grassroots are often not reached by the reality of the ecumenical movement'.[244]

Visser't Hooft suggested that, even at that time, ecumenical development was being hindered by a lack of knowledge – 'the whole of theological education must be penetrated by the ecumenical vision'.[245] Ecumenical education was not a separate discipline, nor should it be conceived as:

> a purely intellectual process, but realizes that ecumenical insight is born when students confront the problems of theological difference and disunity in actual life.[246]

The laity also needed to be theologically and ecumenically aware in faithfully living out their daily lives. Kathleen Bliss commented on an objection that this was beyond the capacity of the laity:

> This is not true, for theology is not just expertise or knowledge of other people's theological activities. It is also *insight and practice*, i.e. the hard work of bringing both intelligence and religious experience to bear upon the facts of the secular world.[247]

This brief observation on the theological education of lay people surfaces another tension that would remain. Ecumenical consciousness could be presumed to be principally for ministers and clergy as those within the churches who are theologically literate and exercise leadership. However, the emphasis given by Bliss pointed to the capacity and significance of learning for all people.

Ecumenical education discussion 1956-61

Papers in the archives of the World Council relating to the Division of Ecumenical Action in the period reveal considerable debate on the nature of ecumenical education. In establishing the Division, the Evanston Assembly had decided that 'the Division will aim at building up ecumenical consciousness and understanding'.[248] With this expectation, the Division began an internal

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[243] op cit p979
[244] Dirks, J E, 'The Ecumenical Movement and the Local Parish in the United States' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1956, vol 8, no 3, p282
[245] Visser't Hooft, W A, 'Editorial' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1961, vol 14, no 1, p2p2
[246] ibid p2
[247] Bliss, K, 'The Ecumenical Movement and the Role of the Laity' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1958, vol 10, no 3, p254
[248] Visser't Hooft, W A (ed), *The Evanston Report: The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954,* New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1955, p190

discussion and external consultation on ecumenical education.  It first reported to the Executive Committee in 1957:

> In general there is a great deal of evidence of the need for far more effective ecumenical education at the local level in most churches, but it was not clear how the World Council could assist the member churches in this matter.[249]

In subsequent discussion, the staff of the Division reflected on ecumenical education under the headings of wholeness, unity, mission and renewal. It was recognized that it had to relate to life in the world as well as the unity of the churches:

> Ecumenical Education may, perhaps should, make people profoundly non-ecclesiastical in their thinking about the church's function.[250]

Another issue that came out was the task of ecumenical education to make people discontented.

> The ferment of the ecumenical church is to stimulate each church to work out its own methods, to make (as Bossey says it tries to do) the churches and the people 'terribly dissatisfied'.[251]

Also there was the need for the constant repetition of experience to involve those who had not had the experience, even though people might 'be discouraged with having to repeat it again and again with others'.[252]  This is a recognition of the necessity of primary experience as opposed to being told about the fruits of the experience of others.

One of the acknowledged and cited influences on the discussion within the Division was an article in the journal *Theology Today* by Hans Hermann Walz, who was responsible for the German Protestant kirchentag.[253]  He argued that the aim of ecumenical education could not be the achievement of the unity of the Church or even a better understanding of the existing unity in Christ:

> It is quite simply the 20th century Christian, the Christian who is a contemporary and the contemporary who is a Christian. ...  But ecumenical education must not be minimised or reduced to education for a special purpose or function.  It is basic education in Christianity.[254]

Christianity currently lacked an outlook beyond the concerns of religion, denomination, community of believers and nation.  However, Christians lived and bore responsibility in one world.  Consequently, Walz claimed that ecumenical education is the most urgent task and must

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[249] Executive Committee Minutes,  February 1957, p59

[250] Note on meetings on 30 October 1956 and 18 April 1957 taken by Helen B Turnbull, WCC Archive Box 423.009 p3

[251] ibid p5

[252] ibid p5

[253] The Deutsche Evangelische Kirchentag originated in 1949 as a lay movement drawing together 'Protestant Christians in Germany in order to strengthen them in their faith, to prepare them for responsibility in their churches; to encourage them in witnessing in the world; and to have solidarity with those in the world-wide community of Christendom'.  It has been a biennial event since 1954.  http://www.kirchentag.org.uk Accessed 24/03/10.

[254] Walz, H H, 'The Scope of Ecumenical Education' in *Theology Today*, Vol XIII, No 4, January 1957, p463

permeate all Christian education and worship for all ages.[255]  In his conclusion, Walz suggested that what was needed was not better informed Christians but:

> people who are less sure of themselves, and their doctrinal position, of their well-run organisations and their ecclesiastical possessions than they are sure of God's wholesome purpose with the universe and human race.[256]

If we follow Walz, this would predicate the formation of an ecumenical consciousness that was open and questioning.

From the admittedly limited response to the consultation process, Francis House, Director of the Division, produced two papers which gave an indication of the state of understanding of ecumenical education at that point. In a draft of an article entitled *Ecumenical Education*, House noted that there was a wide agreement that ecumenical education was needed:

> … the ecumenical movement has reached a point in its history where it must either gain widespread support in the churches or become merely the private interest of a few 'ecumeniacs'.[257]

However, there were equally wide differences in understanding what ecumenical education might be: from learning about the history of the ecumenical movement to the totality of Christian education; from renewal and unity in Christ to the wholeness of the world. House argued that these were not in opposition but aspects of the same ecumenical challenge and reflected in the different emphases of the various Divisions in the one World Council.  Ecumenical education could not just be left to the World Council or national councils of churches.  Young people should be encouraged to widen their horizons.

> We can fire their imagination by accounts of what our fellow-Christians ... are being inspired to do in witness and service in the name of Christ. … But all of this will go for nothing unless it leads to ecumenical action in the places where we live - to some expression of fellowship with Christians and other.[258]

A formal report, *The Responsibilities of the WCC for Ecumenical Education,* also written by House summarised the results of the discussion. Ecumenical education should not be limited:

> either to the history of attempts to reunite the churches or to the story of the organisation of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organisations.[259]

Referring to the article by Walz above, ecumenical education was basic education in Christianity, for all and utilising all educational channels. For most members of the churches:

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[255] ibid p465
[256] ibid p470
[257] Draft entitled Ecumenical Education written by Francis House, June 1957. WCC Archives Box 423.009, p1
[258] ibid p3f
[259] Report to the General Secretariat to the Committee of the Division of Ecumenical Action, *The Responsibilities of the WCC for Ecumenical Education* prepared by Francis House, Director of the Division of Ecumenical Action, June 1957, WCC Archives Box 423.009, p1

ecumenical education must consist in some form of participation in an ecumenical experience rather than in primarily intellectual apprehension of theological truth or historical fact. Therefore the whole educational process must include participation in ecumenical service, witness and worship as well as study groups, conferences, etc.[260]

Ecumenism should not become an additional subject but be a dimensional of all education. It was noted that there was no educational specialist on the staff of the Division. The report drew attention to the mandate of the Division to help the churches to promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness among their members.[261] However, this was the only time the phrase was used explicitly in the records of the whole discussion.

A briefer statement, *The Responsibilities of the World Council of Churches and Particularly of the Division of Ecumenical Action for 'Ecumenical Education'*, was prepared for the 1957 Central Committee. This reiterated the main thrust of the report and then raised two questions - What is ecumenical education? Who is responsible for ecumenical education? The Central Committee appears not to have engaged with the statement to any great depth but agreed to receive it on the understanding that there would be further discussion.[262]

The Work Book for the New Delhi Assembly contained proposals for the future functions of the Division of Ecumenical Action. The fourth one of these was:

> To help the churches to relate to ecumenical thinking to Christian concern of education in all its aspects.[263]

This encompassed three different kinds of concern. The first was the dissemination of information about the World Council, principally the responsibility of the Department of Information, and the third related to state education systems. However, the second concern was that of ecumenical education and the Work Book quoted the comment from the 1957 report that it could not be limited to the history or organisational manifestation of ecumenism. It also drew attention to the need for an ecumenical dimension to all aspects of the educational activities of the churches.

The assembly accepted the proposals from the committee that examined the work of the Division of Ecumenical Action. The assembly committee differentiated between:

> (i) *ecumenical education* ie information about the history and present expressions of the ecumenical movement and education for the personal participation in ecumenical responsibilities for witness, service and unity;
> (ii) *Christian education* ie the total work of the churches and congregations in teaching and training adults as well as children and youth to understand the Christian message and its implications for living;
> (iii) *education in general* ... [helping] people to become whole persons and to be responsible members of modern society. [264]

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[260] ibid p1
[261] ibid p3
[262] ibid p27  Statement is on pp105f
[263] *Work Book for the Assembly Committees prepared for the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, India, 18 November-6 December 1961,* Geneva, 1960, p106

The report went on to say:

> It is quite obvious that the major educational concern of the Division at present is with *ecumenical education* in the first sense of the word.[265]

Unfortunately the archive boxes for the New Delhi Assembly contain no notes on what happened in the committee to produce these proposals.

This quite breathtaking reversal of what was stated in the Work Book is difficult to understand, even if people had not followed the discussion that had taken place on ecumenical education in the preceding years. As ecumenical education was to be confined to learning about ecumenism and being prepared to participate in ecumenical activities, it seemed as if ecumenical consciousness was dead as a meaningful concept, even though the New Delhi Assembly retained it in the constitution.

Theological Education

Taking up a proposal from the Evanston Assembly, the 1957 Central Committee launched a five year study on 'Theological Education and the Training of the Ministry'.[266] There were to be three areas of consideration: the function of theological education and its relationship to the church and its mission; the basic elements of theological education and their inter-relationship; the significance of the ecumenical movement to theological education. This latter point was to include whether the theological education curriculum should include ecumenics as a distinct discipline or whether the ecumenism should provide an all-pervasive perspective - a discussion which still continues. By the time of the New Delhi Assembly in 1961, the Division of Studies had still not been able to commence the study through lack of funds.

In the same period, the 1958 meeting of the International Missionary Council established the Theological Education Fund (TEF). The 1959 *Report from the Theological Education Fund* stated that it hoped 'to stimulate creative theological thinking and to encourage indigenous theological education'.[267] In an article in the *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, John Pobee summarised the three hallmarks of TEF:

> *quality,* combining intellectual rigour, spiritual maturity and commitment; *authenticity*, involving critical encounter with each cultural context in the design, content and purpose of theological education; and *creativity*, leading to new approaches and deepening the churches' understanding and obedience in mission.[268]

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[264] Visser't Hooft, W A (ed), *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961,* London, SCM Press, 1962, p198f
[265] ibid p199
[266] Central Committee Minutes, 1957, pp96ff
[267] *Report from the Theological Education Fund 1959,* London, Theological Education Fund, 1959, p4
[268] Pobee S, *Education* in Lossky et al, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2002 p387

For all the admirable sentiments expressed, it remains a question whether theological education in many places of the world did become indigenised or remained under the control of a traditional western view of proper academic processes and quality. As we will see, the TEF and the successor programmes of the Programme for Theological Education and, to a lesser extent, Ecumenical Theological Education are examples of working together ecumenically rather than for the development of an ecumenical consciousness.

Youth

Against a trend towards confessional youth work in the churches[269], the Youth Department had continued to promote Ecumenical Youth Camps. From being originally based within Europe, many were held in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Rather than pass on information about the World Council, work camps raised ecumenical consciousness, offering:

> 'a mountaintop experience', with the vision and the determination to make the ecumenical movement a reality there where they live. [270]

Their effectiveness was recognised by the Committee of the Division of Ecumenical Action:

> WCC work camps have proved themselves to be one of the most effective forms of ecumenical training the youth and of ecumenical interpretation to the churches.[271]

Living, working, praying and discussing together across their confessional and cultural differences in a challenging situation had a powerful effect. The emphasis had shifted from a focus on what the camps could achieve for the situations they served to an equal regard for the ecumenical benefit for the participants. However, a different tone was set by the revised aims and functions of the Youth Department approved by the Central Committee in 1960:

> to interpret the aims and work of the ecumenical movement and especially of the World Council of churches to youth leaders and young people so as to challenge and encourage their full participation in ecumenical thought and work.[272]

From learning through experience the focus had switched to instruction to enable participation.

The Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

The Ecumenical Institute continued its programme of study groups, consultations for different professions and conferences on particular issues as well as the Graduate School. In this period, it took seriously its mission of creating space for learning through encounter and interaction, as is evidenced from its report to Central Committee. Its distinguishing character was as:

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[269] WCC, Work Book for the Third Assembly, WCC, Geneva, 1961, p118
[270] Internal paper entitled *Ecumenical Education* produced by the Youth Department in 1956. WCC Archives Box 423.009
[271] 'Ecumenical Work Camps - And Expression of the Permanent Obligation of the Churches to Inter-Church Aid and Ecumenical Action', in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1961, vol 9, no 1, p170
[272] Central Committee Minutes, 1960, p158

a continuing institution, where people live together in a fellowship, and in which the aspect of ecumenical education which derives from experience, rather than the acquisition of information, has a major place. This experience includes not only personal contact and intellectual exchange with people of other confessions and nationalities, but also the riches and tensions of ecumenical worship and an element of personal re-commitment and spiritual renewal.[273]

It was this aspect, rather than any formal teaching, which symbolised the distinctive contribution of the Ecumenical Institute. This was re-emphasised in the redrafting of its aims and functions approved by the Central Committee in 1960, which included 'the development of ecumenical consciousness at every level'.[274]

The New Delhi Assembly

For many the purpose of the Division of Ecumenical Action had been ambiguous. For some it was supposed to be about promoting ecumenical activities and fellowship among the member churches, for others about ecumenical education and yet others about the renewal of the churches and their mission. The assembly agreed a new Aim for the Division:

> to serve the churches by relating ecumenical knowledge and experience to all aspects of the life of the churches, and by stimulating the growth of ecumenical understanding and commitment through personal contact and other means.[275]

Ecumenical knowledge (ie that produced by studies, consultations etc) now came first and ecumenical understanding moved to a less prominent position. Given the way the assembly interpreted ecumenical education (see above) this appears to be the reassertion of a traditional understanding. It is not clear whether speaking of the growth of ecumenical understanding and commitment was simply another way of speaking about ecumenical consciousness. However, looking back it feels as though this was a diminution of the concept of ecumenical consciousness.

The Assembly Committee of the Youth Department agreed with the staff that:

> the work of ecumenical education of the members of our congregations is scarcely begun, and concur with the judgement that nothing is more urgent for the advancement of the whole ecumenical movement.[276]

It was recommended that all Christian education should have an ecumenical dimension so as to enable 'young people and adults to understand and appreciate the ecumenical movement and prepares them to share in it'.[277] The Youth Department was encouraged to help the churches develop catechetical and Christian education material which was relevant to young people and

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[273] Central Committee Minutes, 1955, p109
[274] Central Committee Minutes, 1960, p157
[275] Visser't Hooft, W A (ed), *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961,* London, SCM Press, 1962, p198
[276] Untitled and undated paper from the Committee on the Youth Department, New Delhi Assembly 1961, WCC Archives Box 423.028, p1
[277] *The New Delhi Report*, op cit, p199

encouraged ecumenical growth. The saga of the Study of Theological Education and the Training of the Ministry continued at the assembly. A watered down proposal was rejected in favour of a full study very much along the lines originally envisaged.[278] One vital question which was not raised in the Assembly Report was how the churches could develop theological education together which resulted in an ecumenically formed ministry and ecumenically minded churches. Such a possibility was already in the practice of the Scholarships programme. It is surprising, therefore, that it was not explicitly stated. An important item of advice was given to the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey. This concerned the addition of a three month period of relevant practical experience to the Graduate School.[279] In order to offer integrated ecumenical education, there should be a two week period where students brought the experiences of the course and the placement together. This was a significant educational insight.

More generally, the Policy Reference Committee stated:

> that perhaps the gravest problem facing the Council is that of familiarizing the general membership of our churches with the details and significance of its work.[280]

The assembly was dealing with a large theme, Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, it was reflecting on its own nature and revised its Basis, it was the point at which the International Missionary Council merged with the World Council of Churches and it had weighty issues on its agenda. There was much to celebrate about the World Council but yet again came the recognition of a disconnect between the World Council and the people who constituted its member churches. The World Council of Churches might have been in itself an educational and transformative experience but only for the comparatively few.

**New Delhi (1961) to Uppsala (1968)**

The basic pattern of working in the divisions and departments of the World Council continued after the New Delhi Assembly and much the same comments could be made. Attention will only be drawn to particular developments. By the end of this period, it is possible to detect some developments in thinking but many of the problems remained. Thus the Division of Ecumenical Action reported to the Uppsala Assembly in 1968:

> a measure of success in drawing larger and larger numbers of people into the ecumenical atmosphere and of fostering ecumenical attitudes among them. ... On the other hand, … the slow pace of ecumenical advance on the part of the organized churches today increasingly finds expression in movements that seek to bypass the structures of the Church or rail against them with outright calumny.[281]

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[278] ibid p256 and papers in WCC Archives Box 38.14
[279] ibid p219
[280] ibid p145
[281] WCC, New Delhi to Uppsala: Report of the Central Committee, WCC, Geneva, 1968 p81

For some, the initial enthusiasm for ecumenism had been lost or institutionalised. Others were busy in meetings 'which have little more than a torrential output of words to show for their labours'[282]. Even though the language of 'fostering ecumenical attitudes' and of 'ecumenical vision' was more prominent, as opposed to the transmission of knowledge from Geneva, there was recognition of a dispiriting reality.

## The Division of Ecumenical Action

The Director sought to give a theological rationale for the division which appeared to be a structural device for containing departments which did not fit into other divisions. He made use of the Pauline term *oikodome*[283] - building up the church - which seemed to encompass major aspects of the work.[284] However, although the Central Committee did not consider *oikodome* as 'an all-sufficient term'[285], it did agree to authorise a divisional study. A working paper, *Building Up The Church: the architecture of the New Temple*[286] , was published in 1963. It began by considering Ephesians 1.11-22 which in the last three verses uses *oikodome* to speak of being built upon foundations, structured and built together spiritually. Education could not be separated from the task of *oikodome.* There needed to be a better understanding or personal formation and the way in which cultural heritage is transmitted.[287] The use of *oikodome* as the controlling concept for the Division did not find favour and by the meeting of the Committee of the Division of Ecumenical Action in 1965, it was dead.

## World Council of Christian Education

For our purposes, one of the most significant events organised by the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) in this period was the World Institute on Christian Education held in Nairobi in 1967 under the theme *God's People in God's World: Living, Learning, Teaching.* As far as children and young people were concerned, Christian educators had a particular responsibility to form positive attitudes and open up a wider world of responsibility. Church educators could:

> plan activities that will reduce inter-faith tension, and can also help young people gain first-hand experience in work projects and social action projects that will develop attitudes of tolerance and understanding.[288]

Although the term ecumenical consciousness is not used, this aspiration contained many of the elements which would comprise its development. There could be cooperation in the production of common material for use in congregations and Sunday schools. Christian education material

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[282] ibid p81
[283] eg  Ephesians 2.21
[284] Central Committee Minutes, 1962, p 90
[285] ibid p39
[286] Division of Ecumenical Action, *Building Up The Church: the architecture of the New Temple,*  Geneva, WCC Division of Ecumenical Action, 1963
[287] ibid p36
[288] Nelson, C E, *Issues Facing Christian Educators,* Geneva: World Council of Christian Education, 1968, p13

tended to be narrowly church and culture focused so 'Why should not curriculum be 'ecumenical' in that it takes into consideration the whole inhabited world?'.[289]

The critical issue for the Institute was whether Christian education should transmit faith in 'often ingrown, narrow, churchly pietistic terms'[290] or should prepare people:

> at all ages for Christian understanding of the world, themselves, others, the acute human problems of society and the Christian life in terms of active worship, witness and service in community and world as committed members of God's One Whole World People. Nairobi chose the second orientation.[291]

The latter understanding was the heritage that the WCCE would bring to the World Council when they were integrated. If put into practice, Christian education would develop ecumenical consciousness. However, there are usually large gaps between the outcomes of such gatherings and actual practice in the churches at local level. So it proved to be here. It is arguable that Christian education is still seen in terms of Mould's 'traditional limited tracks of transmitting the faith' and, whatever the policy adopted by churches, practised in that way too. The radical alternative posed by Nairobi has been recognised by many but observed by few.

Laity

The 1963 Central Committee received a Statement on Study and Lay Training Centres which commented that laity were either content with the way things were or despairing of the institutional church.

> The awareness of God's purposes of the world and of the Church's responsibility in carrying out these purposes has only begun to penetrate the consciousness of clergy and laity alike.[292]

Although the local congregation was the primary location for the training of the laity, Study and Lay Training Centres and Course had a responsibility for breaking barriers between the church and the world and between denominations. They could provide 'a fresh opportunity for joint action for mission at the local level'.[293] The statement set out the objectives of lay training[294] which reflected the concerns of the ecumenical movement but with no specific challenge to develop an ecumenical consciousness through lay training. It is as if the ecumenical movement existed to do no more than to enable mutual help in developing the life of the churches as they were and informed collaboration between Christians on social issues. Further, it proposed an Institute of Advanced Ecumenical Studies, which might have a connection with the Bossy Graduate School. It is not clear why the Ecumenical Institute was not perceived to fulfil that function already. It may

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[289] ibid p22
[290] Mould, R N, Nairobi - Only a Beginning in *World Christian Education* 1967 Fourth Quarter, p85
[291] ibid p85
[292] Central Committee Minutes, 1963, p105
[293] ibid p107
[294] ibid p107

simply be that this is another example of the different facets of the work of the World Council operating on parallel tracks.

The Department on the Laity held an informal ecumenical consultation in 1965 in collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church on the *Formation of the Laity - Framework, Aims, Principles and Methods*. A statement on laity formation was submitted to the 1966 Central Committee where the ecumenical dimension was more explicit:

> We are convinced that Laity Formation should be developed in a genuinely ecumenical spirit; not only at the international and inter-confessional level, but also in the activities of local churches and in our daily lives.[295]

The Ecumenical Institute

The Board of the Ecumenical Institute in 1962 set out their current understanding of the primary function of Bossey as:

> to hold educational courses for a wide variety of individuals and groups within the churches with a view to the development of an ecumenical consciousness at every level.[296]

At a more personal level, Hans Heinrich Wolf reflected on 10 years experience of the Graduate School.[297] Three elements of the Graduate School were vital – communal life, worship and study.

> These create common ground upon which we can venture to tackle our studies soberly, without shirking the difficulties.[298]

Varying styles of worship were practised including daily intercessory prayer. This was established because the students had expressed a desire that Bossey should be more a place of prayer - for the building-up and unity of the Body of Christ and intercession for the world.[299]

Scholarships

This had been primarily for theological students but the report of the Division of Ecumenical Action in 1962 noted pressure for an expanded ecumenical scholarships programme. As the basic scholarship was for one year, the report made the observation that 'the primary aim was not added academic training but a year's ecumenical experience'.[300] This is interesting because in later years there developed an understanding that the early purpose of these theological scholarships had been for basic ministerial formation. That was to lead to resistance to the idea that the scholarships programme had a primarily ecumenical formation purpose. The addition of

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[295] Central Committee Minutes, 1966, p131
[296] Minutes of the Board of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 2-3 August 1962, Appendix, p10
[297] Wolf, H H, 'How the Graduate School Operates' in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1961, vol 19, no 1, pp50-58
[298] ibid p52
[299] ibid p53
[300] Central Committee Minutes, 1962, p119

scholarships for students other than theological - 50 scholarships over a five-year period was suggested.  From the Central Committee minutes of the discussion it seems that these were understood in terms of capacity building for the churches without any ecumenical formation dimension.[301]

Study on Patterns of Ministry and Theological Education

The long promised report was submitted to the Uppsala Assembly following a final consultation in London in 1967.  The study recognised that theological education was more than just training for the ordained ministry.[302]  There was no theological justification for distinguishing between Christian education, ministerial training and laity formation.  As opposed to a traditional understanding of theological education for ministers and pastors (academic education; practical training; spiritual formation) the report proposed three alternative strands:

> 1) The pursuit of truth with an enquiring mind and the honest facing of honest questions. ...
> 2) The apprehension of the meaning of the Gospel as it is experienced in the confessing communities ...
> 3) The vocational or functional formation ...[303]

Theology ought to be studied in dialogue with the contemporary world and there was no reason why ministers and laity should not learn in the same institutions.

Much recommended in the report was radical for its time eg thoroughly contextual; learning cooperatively. What was missing was any aspect of learning about ecumenism, let alone learning to be ecumenical.  There was only one paragraph in the report relating to ecumenical theological education.

> Ecumenical education, in which teachers and students of different church traditions join in the common task, is an instrument of great value in the actual processes of theological thinking and learning.[304]

Denominational schools and programmes should plan a co-ordinated or united theological education.

However, Stephen Mackie, who was full-time secretary for the Study, had something more positive to say in his book *Patterns of Ministry: Theological Education in a Changing World* written out of the process.  Theology 'is ecumenical; theological education must therefore be in an ecumenical context'.[305]  He emphasised that ecumenism can only be learned ecumenically.  Consequently, ecumenical theological institutions should be part of the accepted order and denominational schools seen as anomalous.  It is much to be regretted, yet probably inevitable that such a clear

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[301] ibid p119
[302] Work Book for Assembly Committees, WCC, Geneva, 1968, p129
[303] ibid p129
[304] ibid p130
[305] Mackie S, *Patterns of Ministry: Theological Education in a Changing World*, Collins, London, 1969, p75

and challenging statement did not appear in the Report as presented to the Uppsala Assembly. Perhaps it was only an individual who would dare to draw such conclusions from the Study.

Joint Study Commission on Education

In the same period, the World Council of Churches and the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) were conducting a study on education more generally - ecumenical reflection on education rather than reflection on ecumenical education.  Although this study and that on theological education and on ecumenical commitment (see below) all touch on some similar issues, it does not appear that there was any significant engagement between the three study processes.  They were conducted in different parts of the World Council and discussed in different committees at the assembly.

The Central Committee had agreed that the Study should address the question, 'Whom shall the educated person serve?'.[306]  The Joint Study Commission recognised the global explosion in education – in terms of the growth of knowledge, universalising of educational provision and lifelong education. The Report offered statements 'towards a Christian perspective on education'.[307]  As hope has been offered in Christ:

> education will be directed to enabling new generations to make their own contribution to an on-going human culture and to developing the capacity to live a personal life of self-criticism, flexibility of mind and continual learning in the midst of changing or unstable social patterns. [308]

Education would overcome the barriers between peoples and build new human relationships.

A handwritten note on discussion in the Commission entitled *Christian Nurture: Major Findings and Recommendations* put some issues more sharply than they appear in the final report.  The trend away from the transmission of factual knowledge towards preparation for life in the world needed strengthening.  Educational materials did not adequately reflect the best ecumenical thinking in the churches and 'antiquated teaching methods are still widely used in the churches'.[309]  Again, an early draft of the report contained the less nuanced comment that the churches:

> remained too full of religious illiterates.  This has to mean that the churches are inadequately educating their members, young and old.[310]

An obstacle to better education was that:

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[306] Central Committee Minutes, 1962, p40
[307] Joint Study Commission on Education , *The Final Report of the Joint Study Commission on Education, 1964-1968, as conceived carried out and approved by the World Council of Churches and the World Council on Christian Education*, Geneva, WCC- WCCE, 1968, pp10f
[308] ibid p11
[309] *Christian Nurture: Major Findings and Recommendations,* undated, WCC Archives Box 423.053, p2
[310] Joint Study Commission, *III The Churches' Education of Their Members* (draft)*, 25/5/67, WCC Archives Box, p1

Denominations firmly hold control on Christian education and are reluctant to move very far in the direction of inter-denominational pooling of insights and resources. ... denominational unilateralism seems to some educators an ill-afforded luxury.[311]

Even though the link was not made, this resonates with the conclusions of the WCCE conference in Nairobi and Stephen Mackie's comments on theological education.

To return to the final report, Christian education, even if it had been ineffective in the past, was still essential - both in the sense of being necessary and of being fundamental to the nature of the faith.

If Christian education be the equipment of Christians their life as agents of reconciliation in church and community, if it be concerned with the Christians maturation in faith and understanding and attitude, if it be instrumental in rescuing churches from elites and restoring them to God's whole company, then it is still in fact the essential, unavoidable activity of the church as it has been from the beginning.[312]

The only substantive comment on ecumenical education per se was:

Experiments in ecumenical education and in international education - which are two aspects of one enterprise - learning to appreciate differences, value variety, *and* to affirm the other in his difference - give enough promise already to demand new effort.[313]

Ecumenical Commitment and Christian Education 1965-1968

The third study process was on ecumenical commitment. Again, involving some of the same stakeholders, it was conducted in seeming isolation. Nor did it overtly pick up any relationship between ecumenical consciousness and ecumenical commitment . However, the process is implicitly informative about current understandings.

A concern of the assembly for passing on of the Christian heritage in an ecumenical context was reinforced by the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order in 1963. It was taken up by a consultation of educators and theologians in 1965 under the joint sponsorship of the Division of Studies, the Youth Department and the World Council of Christian Education. The report of the consultation and the papers presented at it were published in *Risk* in 1966 and a further consultation held in 1967 which reflected on the feedback and produced a final report.

The list of papers presented to the 1965 consultation is revealing in their balance.[314] There were five papers in a first group entitled 'Historical Studies' - an introduction to historical studies, two papers on the early church and one each on the age of the Reformation and the influence of pietism. The second group on 'Ecumenical Focus' contained only one paper on the understanding of unity and teaching on the church. The third group on 'Educational Concerns' had two papers;

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[311] ibid p2
[312] Joint Study Commission Report, op cit p21
[313] ibid p22
[314] Risk, Vol II, No 1, 1966, p2

one on a learning theory for ecumenical education and the other on prospects for an ecumenical and socially aware curriculum.

Although the issue of *Risk* is entitled 'Christian Education and Ecumenical Commitment', the report itself was actually headed 'Report on a Consultation on Christian Education in an Ecumenical Age'.[315]  It began by remarking that:

> All our current religious education materials and methods are called into question by the present ecumenical situation.[316]

The report noted that Christian education took place in the context of rapid social change which challenged the churches at the same time that the ecumenical movement was enabling the churches to challenge one another.

The first section of the report was entitled 'Tradition and Christian Education' in which Christian education was recognized as a crucial means of passing on tradition, both in the sense of the Gospel and of different forms of Christian expression.  However, 'the traditionary process cannot be understood merely in an intellectual sense'.[317]  The churches tended to speak only of themselves or to offer stereotypical accounts of other churches.  However they had:

> not only the opportunity but the obligation to communicate to their members the insights given to them in the ecumenical fellowship. … seldom is much attention given to ... the vision of unity to which they are committed.[318]

The recommendations on the first section[319] were that each church should analyse the content and processes of Christian education materials with the reciprocal involvement of other churches.  The second section of the report was entitled 'The History of Christian Education'.  It recommended that consideration be given to how the different theologies of Christian initiation influenced educational practice and vice versa. [320]

The third section of the report was on 'The Contemporary Ecumenical Situation'. This raised the question of ecumenical education, which was not something new or in opposition to Christian education, as:

> the obligation of churches to educate for life in the oikoumene - for life in the world and in the ecumenical situation which is a part of the life of all our churches today.[321]

In looking at the implications of this, the report affirmed the priority of experience:

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[315] *Report on a Consultation on Christian Education in an Ecumenical Age* in Risk, Vol II, No 1, 1966, p5
[316] ibid p5
[317] ibid p7
[318] ibid p11
[319] ibid p15
[320] ibid p19
[321] ibid p19

what is needed first is not the teaching of right answers, but the bringing of students repeatedly to the point where their questions need such answers. Experience needs formulation.[322]

The recommendations from this section seem particularly weak in the light of the issues raised: the development of short courses in how to relate learning to specific tasks and taking every opportunity for ecumenical co-operation in Christian education.[323]

The overall conclusion of the report was that educational programmes should reflect the churches' official commitment to the ecumenical movement and that 'the change from disputation to dialogue should be manifest in curricula and in the attitudes of teachers'.[324] The report may have betrayed an over-optimism in regard to the influence of official positions on ecumenism upon actual local behaviour. However, if not in the final conclusion, the report contained approaches which, although not making explicit reference to it, might have contributed towards the development of an ecumenical consciousness in members of the churches.

The report elicited a considerable number of detailed responses which were reproduced in a workbook[325] for the 1967 consultation. Most came from North America and Western Europe. Those that came from Africa were from the hands of English men. The discourse was clearly framed within a western academic culture. Although the title of the 1967 consultation was 'Christian Education and Ecumenical Commitment', the report which emerged to be shared with the sponsoring groups was entitled 'Ecumenical Commitment and Christian Education'.[326] The report was introduced with two comments:

> ecumenical education must be seen to be education for life in the oikoumene, the whole of the inhabited world. … Christian education is much more than imparting information. The passing on of tradition is a complex and dynamic process.[327]

Two working definitions were offered:

> ecumenical commitment involves their [churches'] participation in God's mission in the world, the oikoumene, that everyday reality of which all people are a part and which all live out their lives.
> Christian education happens when people are brought to a confrontation with God's ongoing work in history.[328]

The explicit reference to the ecumenical commitment being that of the churches rather than their members illustrated questions that were not entirely clarified by the end of the report. Is Christian education to strengthen the ecumenical commitment of the churches or does the ecumenical

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[322] ibid p21
[323] ibid p26
[324] ibid p26
[325] Workbook containing preparatory material for the consultation on Christian Education and Ecumenical Commitment, 6-11 March 1967, WCC Archive Box 431.13.099/13
[326] Ecumenical Commitment and Christian Education, a report to: The Commission on Faith and Order, The World Council of Christian Education, The Youth Department, 1967. WCC Archives Box 431.13.099/13
[327] ibid p4
[328] ibid p4f

commitment of the churches require Christian education to be undertaken in a particular way?  Is Christian education a means of developing the ecumenical commitment of the people of the churches or does a raised ecumenical consciousness in the people strengthen the ecumenical commitment of their churches?

The first section[329] was entitled 'Contemporary Social Reality: Varied and Mobile' and noted the need for education in and through groups at all levels and for different ages to counteract  biased perspectives and prejudice.[330]  The radical proposal at the end of second section[331], 'Transmission and Tradition', was that children and adults, clergy and laity should participate in similar ecumenical experiences so they can learn together.  The insights of faith:

> can be communicated adequately only when Christians from different traditions talk and work together to clarify their faith and to implement it by participation in God's mission.  … A decision to continue denominational education cannot help but put in question the churches' ecumenical commitment.[332]

This paragraph contains two issues that could be considered essential to the development of an ecumenical consciousness. Participation in the work of the kingdom together across the divisions of status, age and denomination is a powerful formative experience where it happens. As for the second, forty years on we are probably further away from the possibility of churches letting go of the self-preservational potential of denominational education than at the time the report was produced.

In the third section[333], 'Implications for Christian Education', the report suggested that the churches had three tasks. The first was a concern for secular education in terms of excellence and freedom from bias rather than the preservation of Christian interest.  The second was to co-operate with general education and the family to nurture people so that 'they become capable of living in the boundary situations in which they find themselves'.[334]  Finally, churches had the responsibility of education in the Christian faith which involved: (a) developing skills of biblical and historical interpretation to understand and respond to God speaking and acting in history; (b) formulating their own understanding of God's ongoing work; (c) becoming aware of the need for and participating in the continual renewal of the churches; (d) participating in the life of service and celebration.[335]  This could be described as implicitly ecumenical but is capable of interpretation from a purely denominational perspective.

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[329] ibid pp6ff
[330] ibid p13
[331] ibid pp14ff
[332] ibid p19
[333] ibid pp19ff
[334] ibid p19
[335] ibid p19

Anticipating the involvement of Freire, it was recognised that 'Every teacher is also a learner ... even though the teacher may be an adult and the pupil a child'.[336] The congregation provided a community of interpretation and meaning was created through critical reflection[337]:

> through the group activity ideas are criticised and tested, criteria of judgment and choice are developed, and the attempt to see truth more clearly is forwarded.[338]

The implications then had to be lived out in the world.

The overall conclusion of the report was that ecumenical commitment and Christian education were inextricably linked.

> Christian education which is not ecumenical is not truly Christian, for it lacks engagement with the world ... Ecumenical commitment is empty of content and void of power without continuing education in the Christian faith; it becomes a vague concern with the world and a sentimental affection for fellow Christians.[339]

This was complemented by a set of recommendations which included the common preparation, revision and use of educational materials and that theological education and teacher training should be undertaken ecumenically.[340] The most radical proposal was that:

> educational programmes be carried on ecumenically in local centres. This would make possible team teaching, a pooling of resources, and dialogue in which people of various traditions could speak for themselves. It would also demonstrate the extent of the unity of faith which Christians already have.[341]

In spite of earlier references to the power of informal learning, the report focused on formal Christian education. Creating more existential learning opportunities would have required a greater change in culture than amendments within formal structures, however radical they might have been. Even those that were tried in some places, for example the common production of materials, have proved difficult to maintain.

In response to the report, the Board of Managers of the WCCE produced a statement[342] in 1967 which alluded to some of the main educational themes of the report and yet refrained from explicitly mentioning ecumenical commitment. The Faith and Order Commission received the report at its meeting in Bristol in 1967. It was reviewed by a sectional group of the Commission which also had to consider other items which were part of its traditional agenda. It was not surprising that the report received little attention. The Commission minutes reveal that one Orthodox member voiced the insufficiency of time for detailed discussion and:

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[336] ibid p20
[337] ibid p21
[338] ibid p23
[339] ibid p24
[340] ibid pp25ff
[341] ibid p26
[342] Education for Ecumenical Commitment, brief paper containing the statement of the Board of Managers of the World Council of Christian Education, 1967. WCC Archives Box 431.13.099/13

He felt that it was theologically inadequate, but the discussion in the Section showed that there was disagreement about the document's precise theological presuppositions.[343]

It may be conjectured that the theological inadequacy that troubled this Orthodox, and presumably others, was to do with the understanding in the report that, in shorthand, Christian truth is developed and emerges rather than is received and interpreted. Such an understanding has profound implications for the way in which one approaches learning in the church and it is unfortunate that the Faith and Order Commission did not take this issue seriously. The Commission received the report but made it clear that it did not identify itself with the theology.[344] It described it as 'a provocative and stimulating contribution to the discussion about Christian education'[345] in commending it to the constituency.

An issue of 'World Christian Education' in 1968 featured the report.[346] An introductory article stated the case more clearly and succinctly than the report itself was able to do:

> That this report *presupposes* the concept of an ecumenical commitment is more daring and absorbing than it may seem at first sight. For ecumenical commitment demands 'l'engagement' and it is exactly this that the composers had in mind. Not a 'study about' Christian education with an ecumenical flavour, but the need for Christian education to be, or to become - for let us be realistic - ecumenically committed.[347]

## Uppsala (1968) to Nairobi (1975)

In *Ecumenism in Transition*, Konrad Raiser pointed to a 'qualitative leap forward at the Uppsala assembly towards a real universality'.[348] The new goal for the ecumenical movement was not limited to the unity of the church as an end in itself but to the unity of humankind. This task had to be understood:

> not least as an educational challenge. Christians in churches had to learn to break out of their provincialism and to 'think globally'.[349]

More specifically, Karl Ernst Nipkow commented:

> Step by step the insight had grown that not only is the traditional way of the WCC in itself a learning process, but that also the concrete questions of general, Christian and theological education demand considerate special attention within the ecumenical framework.[350]

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[343] *New Directions in Faith and Order, Bristol 1967, Reports – Minutes – Documents*, Faith and Order Paper No 50, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1968, p105
[344] ibid p105
[345] ibid p105
[346] World Christian Education, Vol XXIII, No 1, First Quarter 1968
[347] ibid p5
[348] Raiser, K, *Ecumenism in Transition - A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement* , Geneva, WCC Publications, 1991, p8
[349] ibid p20
[350] Nipkow, K.E. *Christian Education and Ecumenical Faith* in Education Newsletter No2 1983, WCC, Geneva 1983 p1

As we have seen in Chapter 2, this was also the period in which Ernst Lange was vigorously arguing for the development of an ecumenical conscience to replace the parochial conscience that dominated in the churches.

The Uppsala Assembly marked a point of transition in educational work of the World Council. With the formation of the Office of Education within the Division of Ecumenical Action in 1969, following the recommendations of the Joint Study Commission on Education, education now had a dedicated programmatic expression and an institutional location. Not long after, the World Council of Christian Education decided at their own assembly in Lima in 1971 to merge itself into the educational work of the World Council after ten years of conversations and negotiations.

This was also a time of ferment in educational thinking. Paulo Freire, who served as a consultant to the Office of Education between 1969 and 1980, published his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*[351] in 1968 and Ivan Illich his *Deschooling Society*[352] in 1971. For some readers, these works heralded a transformation of education. For others, such thinking was to be resisted at all costs. The general context of the time was one of widespread hope for change and transformation, especially for the poor, dispossessed, marginalised and powerless.

The Final Report of the Uppsala Assembly asserted that the Church had urgent responsibilities in three inter-related areas – the education explosion in general education; pressing issues in church educational institutions at all levels; the enormous challenge in the churches' nurture and training of their members of all ages in congregational life and in other ways. The report of Section VI stated:

> Education must play a constructive and at times radical part in the process of changing the world. This also holds true of ecumenical training. Experiments in sharing, serving and praying together are the best ways of deepening our ecumenical involvement.[353]

The churches were challenged to revise their educational resources in response to the ecumenical movement and a changing world.

The distinctive task of the Division of Ecumenical Action (also known as Unit III and variously entitled Education and Communication and Education and Renewal) in which the Office of Education was located, in the light of the theme of the Uppsala Assembly, *Behold, I make all things new,* was to:

> stir up and equip all of God's people of ecumenical understanding, active engagement in renewing the life of the churches, and participation in God's work in a changing world.[354]

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[351] First British edition: Freire, P, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972
[352] First British edition: Illich, I, *Deschooling Society*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973
[353] ibid p93f
[354] Johnson D (ed), *Uppsala to Nairobi: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly*, SPCK, London, 1975 p14

A sub-committee of the assembly had discussed how education should be handled within the institutional structure.[355] It placed the responsibility of the Office of Education as being a centre of technical expertise and knowledge of education at both theoretical and methodological levels. It required a continuing awareness of developing concepts and practices.[356] Ralph Mould, the general secretary of the WCCE, observed that concern for education had previously entered into the work of the World Council indirectly through other programmes but that this assembly was the occasion when education entered through the front door.[357] His view was that:

> The WCC's admirable insights and goals have too often remained remote from ordinary members in the churches ... this points to taking the total educational process and programmes of the WCC and of the churches with clearer dimensional grasp and specific urgency.[358]

Office of Education/Sub-Unit on Education

The Office of Education was intended to be oriented and receptive towards the constituency and 'conscientization had its own unique part to play'[359] in the task of education. The priorities of the staff were reflected in a proposal that the Office of Education should have two continuing expert seminars – one on general education and the other on church provided education, especially in and through the congregation.[360] It is not clear whether the aspect of the formation of ecumenical consciousness was missing or had been assumed.

In fact, the defining event for the Office of Education was the consultation 'The World Education Crisis and the Church's Contribution' held in Bergen in 1970. It can be argued that this event set the general direction and style of the work in education of the World Council for almost 20 years. Although the overall significance of the report *Seeing Education Whole*[361] should not be underestimated. Its content is only of tangential relevance to this particular study but its effect was to divert attention away from ecumenical consciousness.

Five basic objectives were set for the consultation by the staff – to see education whole; to learn about educational innovations and process of change; to get to know fellow educators around the world; to give the Office of Education a perspective for its work; to enquire together about alternatives to schooling.[362] There were no expected outcomes and an emphasis on the process of interaction rather than on the production of a report. Participants discussed their responses to a questionnaire on significant educational innovations in four broad areas – recasting the education

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[355] Hunter, D R, *The Purpose and Function of Education in the Bureaucratic Structure of the Churches*, World Council of Churches, Fourth Assembly, Uppsala, July 1968, Committee II, Sub- Committee (E), Document No 1, WCC Archives Box 34.5
[356] ibid p4
[357] Mould, R N, 'Educational Implications from Uppsala' in *World Christian Education*, 4th Quarter, 1968.
[358] ibid p127
[359] Minutes of the Programme Unit III, Education and Communication, Committee, Utrecht, Netherlands, August 5-11, 1972, WCC Archives Box 42.54.44, p8
[360] *Draft Plan for and Ecumenical Office of Education*, 1968, WCC Archives Box 423.06, p9
[361] Office of Education, *Seeing Education Whole,* Geneva, WCC, 1970
[362] ibid, p9

system; schools in rural areas; out of school education; new methods of teaching.[363]  This process was reckoned a surprisingly successful part of the agenda and enabled participants to think critically about education in its broadest sense.

In contrast to this participative approach, the crisis in world education was considered by circulating a book in advance: Philip Coombs' *The World Education Crisis*[364] and receiving a major address given by Raymond Poignant from UNESCO on 'Some Issues Concerning the Planning of Education in the Developing Countries'.  Coombs' approach was based on systems analysis of inputs and outputs.  Poignant was concerned with internal and external efficiency:

> The aim of any formal educational system is to transmit, in its successive periods of study, a certain amount of knowledge in order to develop the pupil's aptitudes and to impart to him the right moral and social attitudes.[365]

An education system should successfully fulfil this task in the minimum time and at optimum cost. This was met with a barrage of criticism. It was seen as naïve, utilitarian and conditioned by a western cultural context. It was fiercely attacked by almost all delegates for the failure to take seriously the post-colonial context of the third world and the perpetuation of oppression by means of this approach to education.[366]  The strong influence of Paulo Freire can be observed throughout this consultation.  He argued that as there was no such thing as neutral education, it was either for liberation or against liberation and therefore in favour of domination.  The task of the church was:

> to witness to a vision; to be involved in education for the wider good rather than self-interest; to innovate and then let go; to educate herself.[367]

The report laid out the principles of a new approach.[368] with critical analysis of schools as systems, the development of alternatives and a new priority for non-formal education.  Education should be a reflection-action process for conscientisation rather than indoctrination.  Educational decisions needed to be taken with people rather than for them.  The churches needed to understand the role of church education in liberating or domesticating people and renounce the use of religious education as a means of self-preservation.  Christian education should develop intercultural awareness and counter purely nationalist or confessionalist attitudes.  Leadership training should reflect the understanding of the church as the whole people of God.

When it is stated in summary form there is little here that could not be said to be of positive value in developing an ecumenical consciousness.  Concepts such as reflection-action for conscientisation and liberating rather than domesticating education point to essential processes. However, the world education crisis gave schooling a primacy and emphasised the role of the

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[363] ibid, pp45-73
[364] Coombs, P, *The World Education Crisis*, Oxford, OUP, 1969
[365] *Seeing Education Whole*, p24
[366] ibid, pp29 & 31
[367] ibid p72
[368] ibid p75-93

World Council as an agent of common action by the churches in distinction to that of support and promotion of the ecumenism.

Consequently, a staff meeting in 1971 agreed an overall goal that by 1975 the churches would be increasingly active in analysing structures, systems, policies and process of education in societies and the churches. This would enable them to challenge domesticating education and develop liberating education.[369] The Office of Education held a series of strategy workshops following up the publication of *Seeing Education Whole.* Paulo Freire was arguing for critical consciousness as it was society that shaped education rather than education shaping society:

> Every time I have time and space to act as an educator my main preoccupation is to develop, in different ways, critical consciousness.[370]

In a paper written for *Study Encounter* published the following year, Freire suggested:

> Conscientisation ... must be a critical attempt to reveal reality, not just alienating small-talk. It must, that is, be related to political involvement. There is no conscientisation if the result is not the conscious action of the oppressed as an exploited social class, struggling to liberation. What is more, no one conscientises anyone else. The educator and the people together conscientise themselves …[371]

Freire and Ernst Lange[372] only overlapped in Geneva for one or two years yet it is an interesting question why there seems to have been no interaction between them, or by anyone else, around conscientisation and the liberation of the parochial conscience.

Development education

The impact of Freire's thought can also be seen in development education within the World Council's Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD). Development was defined by the Commission as a process aiming at social justice, self-reliance and economic growth.[373] For those who believed in the intellectual neutrality of education, development education that was unashamedly partisan in favour of social justice was unacceptable. Development education also challenged the comfortable status quo of churches and societies in the North.

> Changes of attitudes are not to be achieved in a matter of years, not even of decades, especially if the total social environment militates against such a change.[374]

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[369] Minutes of Meeting of Sub-Unit on Education, Geneva, October 15-16, 1971, WCC Archives Box 42.54.45, p2
[370] Freire, P, *Transcript of Paulo Freire's speech to the Consultation at Cartigny, 28th October 1974,* Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p4
[371] Freire, P, Education, Liberation and the Church in *Study Encounter* SE/38, Vol IX, No 1, 1973, p4
[372] see Chapter 2
[373] Traitler R, *Leaping Over the Wall: an assessment of ten years development education,* WCC, Geneva 1982, p1
[374] Staff Working Group on Education, Paper entitled ' WCC Sub-Unit on Education', 12 November 1976, p24

Development education was part of an alternative education trend that was based on liberating experiences, involvement in actions that express solidarity with the poor and the search for alternatives in social organisation and life styles. The strong emphasis on non-formal approaches challenged traditional religious, Christian and theological education programmes in its approach to attitudinal change.

Ecumenical Institute

The Bossey Ecumenical Institute continued to offer 'an opportunity to live, study and worship together'.[375] An emphasis was given to specialised consultations which brought 'professionals' such as scientists, sociologists, politicians and ecologists together with theologians. The Graduate School was held each year from October to February with an increased use of seminar and group work in its academic process. There was an opportunity for students to spend a three month placement in a church setting different to their own or in an urban or industrial setting. However, this seems to have been regarded as an additional element rather than an integral aspect of ecumenical learning, as had been proposed by the New Delhi Assembly.

Although much had been achieved, questions were beginning to arise:

> voices critical of Bossey's work were also heard from progressive minorities among participants, especially from groups of students of the Graduate School 1971-72.[376]

The structures of the Institute, its style of life and leadership, its educational methods and its lack of direct political involvement came under question. A group established by the Board at the request of the Executive Committee identified some problem areas including the unclear and duplicative relationship with the World Council and a lack of documented research. They asked difficult questions about closing Bossey, making it independent of the World Council, decentralising it to the regions or closing part of its work. Their report was accepted by the Central Committee in 1973.[377] The proposed objectives spoke about understanding the necessity and urgency of Christian unity and of education for change rather than developing ecumenical consciousness.

In 1975 Kenneth Wolfe, the English church educator, produced a 36 page critique of the report received by the Central Committee.[378] It was written out of a sense of gratitude for his own experience of Bossey but was highly critical of the dominance of the ecumenical agenda (by that he seemed to mean specific issues rather than ecumenical consciousness) with little regard for its educational implications. He argued that courses at Bossey should be designed to meet the

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[375] Johnson D (ed), *Uppsala to Nairobi: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly*, SPCK, London, 1975 p56
[376] Report on the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey to the Central Committee 1972, WCC Archives Box 42.54.56, p3
[377] Central Committee Minutes, 1973, pp188f
[378] Wolfe, K M, *Bossey: Ecumenism, Education, Futures*, London, personal publication, 1975

needs of students and should be distinguishable from World Council consultations which were designed to address issues.  They should take account:

> of the procedures of teaching and learning commensurate with the experience of the students.  In recent years many courses have reflected more aspects of the workings of the ecumenical movement than were either intelligible or immediately animating to students with little experience in certain areas and even less time to engage at any depth in issues which appeared quite new. ..[379]

Although Bossey was rich in ecumenical resources it failed to recognize the difference in function between those who are resource persons and those who are teachers.[380]  It appeared to have been the case, and probably still is, that in appointments to the faculty of the Ecumenical Institute a high premium had been placed on academic qualification in particular subject areas with little regard to demonstrable knowledge and ability, let alone qualifications, as an ecumenical educator.

Theological Education Fund

The work of the Theological Education Fund (TEF) in supporting theological education projects was mainly focussed on Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific.  An ongoing concern was the viability and appropriateness of theological education in these regions.  They had inherited a-contextual and expensive patterns of theological education from the West, whose churches themselves would have to face the question not many years later.  The report of a two year study programme emphasised contextualization[381] with the result that:

> a much greater emphasis has come to be placed upon projects for programmes growing out of local attempts to deal with theological education in a "grass-roots" context.[382]

The 1973 the TEF published *Learning in Context: the search for innovative patterns in theological education.*[383]  Theological education should prepare people for a ministry for liberation and development in the fullest sense, as demanded by the gospel and be about learning 'to discern God's involvement in the world today'.[384]  However, seminaries were usually staffed by theological specialists who had little educational knowledge or skills and who had a primary concern for 'the development of fragmented and conceptual interests'.[385]  Theological education should prepare for ministries in congregations where community focussed on God develops, a plurality of spiritual styles can flourish, ecumenical relations be formed and from which pioneering mission may emanate. The role of theological education was more than the acquisition of theological knowledge and pastoral skills but a radical sensitisation and

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[379] ibid pp6&8
[380] ibid p10
[381] Theological Education Fund, *Ministry in Context,* TEF, Bromley, Kent, 1972
[382] Johnson D (ed), *Uppsala to Nairobi: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly*, SPCK, London, 1975 p92f
[383] Theological Education Fund, *Learning in Context: the search for innovative patterns in theological education,* Bromley, Theological Education Fund, 1973
[384] ibid p147
[385] ibid p151

conversion of attitudes and motivation in Jesus Christ. Learning was in relationships. What happens in the seminary must also ensure:

> that life-long growing and maturing can take place. An awakened and self-developing ministry is essential for the Church, if it is to move forward as God's agent for mission.[386]

As a governor of Northern Baptist College, Manchester from the mid-1970's, I experienced the difficulties of the Principal, Michael Taylor (who was involved in the work of the TEF), in putting the approach represented in *Learning in Context* into practice. There was opposition from many students, ministers and churches for whom the traditional style of theological education was the right and only way. In 2003 the Church of England report, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church*[387], was raising similar issues. These significant developments in thinking, therefore, did not usher in a new age for theological education. The traditional pattern of theological education held the churches in such a powerful grip that, in spite of the issues of appropriateness and viability, it remained the norm. We must also note that the concern of TEF as represented in both *Ministry in Context* and *Learning in Context* was not essentially that of the development of an ecumenical consciousness, even though the approach to theological education was appropriate to that end. There was a passing recognition of the importance of ecumenical relationships but no recognition of the role of theological education in ecumenical formation as well as ministerial formation.

Scholarships

The Unit III Committee discussed Scholarships at its 1972 meeting and, in the light of a multiplicity of scholarship providers, commented that assistance should be offered where:

> ecumenical collaboration is able to open new perspectives for the development of authenticity [and that] when the training is abroad, the experience of living in a different culture from his own becomes, for the candidate, a creative experience which will bear fruit also after he returns home.[388]

In his contribution to an International Scholarship Strategy Consultation organised by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1973, William B Kennedy of the Office of Education began with an assumption that:

> The Church in the future will be and ought to be more ecumenical, and will need to train its leaders accordingly.[389]

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[386] ibid p151
[387] Archbishop's Council, *Formation for Ministry within a Learning Church,* London, Church House Publishing, 2003.
[388] Minutes of the Programme Unit III, Education and Communication, Committee, Utrecht, Netherlands, August 5-11, 1972, Appendix V, WCC Archives Box 42.54.44, p5
[389] Kennedy, W B, Ecumenical Leadership Training Challenged Today, address to LWF International Scholarship Strategy Consultation, 1973, WCC Archives Box 42.54.45, p1

He identified the problem of fragmented and uncoordinated opportunities across the churches and within the World Council. The future role of the World Council should be that of coordination and information sharing. Its direct scholarship activity should:

> focus on pilot experimental programmes … The WCC programme needs to continue to emphasise a radical ecumenical character …[390]

Laity

Reflection after Uppsala focussed on lay formation in terms of equipping the laity for their discipleship in every area of life. At the end of this period a consultation in Assisi[391] was organised jointly by the World Council and the Laity Council of the Holy See. It was hoped that a collaborative network would be established as a result of the consultation. Although significant in terms of an understanding of lay formation, the ecumenical dimension was limited:

> We are convinced that Laity Formation should be developed in a genuinely ecumenical spirit; not only at the international and inter-confessional level, but also on the activities of local churches and in our daily lives.[392]

For the lay centres and academies this was a period of developing regional relationships. They enabled courses for staff and exchanges and the development of new models. The Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia and the Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa were formed to join the long standing Association of Directors of Academies and Lay Centres in Europe. In 1972, these joined together to form a World Collaboration Committee. This period also saw the development of Courses for Leaders of Lay Training in Europe which, as we will see in Chapter 5, became a powerful model of ecumenical learning globally.

Integration of WCCE and WCC

As part of the integration process, an Education Renewal Fund was set up jointly by the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) and the World Council. The aim of the Fund was to:

> help the churches to mobilise and channel ecumenical efforts of educational renewal and reform in the churches and in society.[393]

Churches were to be enabled to develop new processes, curricula and resources for Christian education, including youth work and adult education. The lifetime of the fund was to be three years and the programme was envisaged as falling into two parts – new ventures and experimental projects; renewal in ongoing educational work. One suggestion from staff for a project to be supported by the Education Renewal Fund was for 'regional, interdisciplinary

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[390] ibid p7
[391] Laity Desk, *World Consultation on New Trends in Laity Formation (Roman Catholic Council on the Laity and WCC Laity) Assisi, Italy,* WCC, Geneva, 1974
[392] ibid p103
[393] Central Committee Minutes, 1972, p178

studies ... of conscience and conscience formation by church and general educators'.[394]
Looking at lists of projects actually approved for funding[395], it is not easy to discern how these
were strategically experimental or renewing rather than supporting ongoing work.  At the end of
the three years the Fund was discontinued as not being able to achieve its objectives.

In December 1968 a meeting of representatives of the World Council and the WCCE was held to
consider the possibility of the integration of the two bodies as proposed by the Joint Study
Commission on Education.[396]   However, some in the WCCE expressed reservations about the
World Council.  There was:

> the fear that the evangelical, a missionary outreach which has tended to characterise
> the work of the WCCE may disappear in a more austere, intellectual and theologically
> radical form of ecumenism.  ...
> a fear that the WCC espouses a radical, political orientation which is believed to be
> biblically questionable and socially undesirable.[397]

The WCCE concluded its existence on a high note in 1971.  Almost 400 participants came
together in Huampani near Lima, Peru following participation in one of the 'encuentros' (a Spanish
word signifying 'the deep involvement of participants with each other in an encounter or
meeting'[398]) in 17 Latin American cities.  The participants had discovered that:

> … to educate is not so much to teach as it is to become committed to a reality in and with
> the people; it is to learn to live, to encourage creativity in ourselves and in others; and,
> under God and His power, to liberate mankind from the bonds that prevent the
> development of God's image.  This will necessarily require radical change in the
> objectives, contents and methods of our educational task.[399]

In the conference they were challenged by Miguel Bonino to consider that theology should be
done in people's own contexts: "Theology is not a purely intellectual exercise, but a stance and a
commitment."[400]  This combined with Paulo Freire's understanding of conscientisation made a
profound impression.

The principal decision taken by the assembly was to agree the integration of the WCCE with the
World Council.  However, some concerns were expressed:

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[394] WCC staff paper, *Tentative Idea as for Education Renewal Fund Projects, October 1969*, Unindexed WCC
Archives Box, p1
[395] Unindexed collection of WCC Archive Boxes for the Education Renewal Fund
[396] WCCE Committee on WCC Relations, Paper IV, *Reasons and Justification for Integration*, 1968, WCC
Archives Box 423.054
[397] WCCE  Committee on WCC Relations, Paper V, *Issues and Problems Involved in Proposed Integration of
WCC and WCCE*, 1968, WCC Archives Box 423.054, p1
[398] Kennedy, W B, Ecuentros: a New Ecumenical Learning Experience, in Study Encounter, SE/24, Vol VIII,
No 2, 1972, p3
[399] WCCE, *Message to the Churches* in *Encuentro Vol 26, Nos 3-4, 1971,* WCCE, Geneva, 1971, p132
[400] Miguez-Bonino, J, *New Theological Perspectives,* in *Encuentro Vol 26, Nos 3-4, 1971,* WCCE, Geneva,
1971, p143

> …whether the traditional concerns of WCCE – especially parish education, Sunday schools, children's work, as well as youth and adult Christian education – would get lost or be cared for in the new arrangements.[401]

In a sense these fears have proved to be only too realistic as the World Council cannot today claim to deal with any of these seriously, if at all. However, even if it had survived to the present, the WCCE would have been subject to the same financial constraints which has caused the World Council to reduce the scope of its educational involvement.

One consequence of the assembly was a consultation on Evaluating the Sunday School Contribution to Church Education in Europe in 1973. Some delegates believed that it was not worth discussing education programmes until the nature of church communities was radically changed:

> … the day of the Sunday school is coming to an end. Theological, sociological, educational and psychological insights lead to the integration of children in church life. There is, therefore, no need for a separate institution. What is needed are new ways of thinking about the local church and of planning its corporate life.[402]

The traditionalists need not have been worried about the future of the Sunday school. That form of educational institution, like forms of theological education as remarked above, has shown a remarkable persistence.

It was recognised that children should be nurtured into the faith rather than taught about it. Children being a natural part of the Christian community threw up questions about inter-generational learning and about children's participation in Holy Communion. In a personal reflection on the consultation, Marie Assad, deputy general secretary, remarked on dissatisfaction with Sunday schools with their emphasis on teaching rather than experiencing the faith. This resulted in 'a greater tendency to sectarian approach rather than ecumenical'.[403] The challenge was to involve the young in the total life of the church:

> to guarantee that our children are rooted in their churches, faithful to its teaching and yet open to the broader community, with tolerant respect for the people of other faiths and ideologies.[404]

Coming from her position, this is a disappointing statement. Its implication is that the role of the ecumenical movement, and the World Council within it, is simply to promote mutual tolerance and respect whilst leaving people otherwise unchanged within their tradition. As much as toleration and mutual respect are necessary, an ecumenical consciousness is far more radical.

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[401] Mold R N, *The Challenge of the Vote on Integration,* in *Encuentro Vol 26, Nos 3-4, 1971,* WCCE, Geneva, 1971, p222
[402] Sutcliffe J M, *Learning Community,* Denholm House Press, Nutfield, 1974 pp41f
[403] Assaad, M B, What I have learned from Evian, 1973, loose paper, WCC Archives Box 42.5.078, pp1f
[404] ibid p2

<u>Critical Consciousness 1974-75</u>

In preparation for the Nairobi Assembly, a consultation organised by the Office of Education identified critical consciousness as a major priority for future work.[405]  A brief report circulated to the Office of Education's constituency stated that critical consciousness involved being able to:

> identify and analyse … contradictions and oppressive forces in structures, in groups, in individuals, and in one-self which restrict or inhibit human freedom to shape and transform the world.
> identify and develop a strategy for entering those specific situations where action can be effective in achieving a greater degree of justice, freedom and wholeness.
> identify and mobilise sufficient power to begin to bring about the desired changes
> and to
> reflect on the total experience identifying and analysing and the resulting new situation the oppressive forces and contradictions.[406]

Such a process was open and participative and should result in individual and collective action for change.[407]  However, the discussion of critical consciousness in the consultation seems to have focused almost entirely on development and popular education and not on the churches' processes of nurture and theological education.

A report to the meeting of the Executive Committee in 1975, admitted that critical consciousness had provoked 'much misunderstanding and some critical reactions from member churches'.[408] However, respondents had recognized the implications of critical consciousness for education in the churches which:

> cannot safely or wisely continue to do their educational business as usual. Critical consciousness thus emerges as a central factor in many kinds of church educational efforts… theological education, church nurture or Christian education for discipleship, lay training.[409]

The full notes of the Executive Committee reveal that the work on education for critical consciousness was reported but no discussion took place.[410] In mitigation it could be said that the Executive Committee had to discuss such weighty items as the Programme to Combat Racism and the forthcoming Nairobi Assembly. However, it is a reflection of the compartmentalised nature of the World Council that education for critical consciousness was not seen as integral to these.

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[405] Ecumenical Press Service, WCC Consultation Says Educations Goal is "Critical Consciousness", No 32/41st Year, 21 November 1974, WCC Archives Box 42.54.48, p2
[406]  Office of Education, Critical Consciousness, Consultation on WCC Work in Education, Switzerland, October/November 1974, WCC Archives Box 42.54.48 p1
[407] ibid p1
[408] Report of the Sub-Unit on Education, Report on Unit III, World Council of Churches Executive Committee, Geneva, Switzerland, April 1975, Document No 3, WCC Archives Box 42.54.48, p3
[409] ibid p4
[410]  WCC Archives Box 38.0019

Preparing for the Nairobi Assembly

In a report presented to the Unit III Committee in 1974 on the period from Uppsala, one emerging issue identified was the ecumenical education of the people of God. Concentration on the local context tended to exclude wider realities:

> As a result Christian consciousness and conscience are conditioned parochially. ... How, in such a world, can the church provide ecumenically educating experiences for its members, and thus contribute to the unity of human kind in practice?[411]

Here we can see the influence of Ernst Lange. Reviewing the period between Uppsala and Nairobi, Philip Potter, the general secretary, wrote of the influence of the Office of Education on the ecumenical movement:

> by focusing attention on education as a process of "conscientization" ... the ways in which people's consciousness is awakened to their true nature as subjects rather than objects, and so become enabled to be active participants in mastering their environment and altering the structures of society for a fuller life in justice and community.[412]

This points to the influence of Freire but it does not quite connect with that of Lange.

In preparing for Section IV of the assembly, Education for Liberation and Community, the staff produced a paper outlining possible topics - analysis of schooling; process of socialisation; Christian nurture; the role of private schools; specialised ministries; education for justice and peace; popular education; how people learn.[413] The paper questioned whether the churches were able to break the vicious circle of domestication into the prevailing values of society. This was particularly the case in respect of church schools where many were 'just serving an elite ... [and] diploma-oriented'.[414] Some churches regarded their schools as untouchable because they gave them prestige. The issues raised in the section on Christian nurture were principally methodological because it was recognized that:

> Christian nurture has not been contextualised ... just a fixed hour for the transmission of biblical facts and stories without any connection to everyday life.[415]

What was missing was any understanding that the strictures applied to schooling might equally be applied to the churches' educational activities and that domestication into the prevailing actual values of the churches might not be good either for the moral integrity of the Church or the development of an ecumenical consciousness. Although some issues were raised about the training needed for the different ministries of the Church[416], there was a complete absence of any

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[411] World Council of Churches Programme Unit III Committee, West Berlin, August 7-9, 1974, Report from Uppsala to Jakarta, p29
[412] Johnson D (ed), *Uppsala to Nairobi: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly,* SPCK, London, 1975 p15
[413] Suggestions for an Annotated Agenda, *Education for Liberation and Community*, undated staff paper probably 1974, WCC Archives Box 42.54.49,
[414] ibid p6
[415] ibid p4
[416] ibid p9

advocacy for such training to be undertaken ecumenically or, more significantly, for the raising of ecumenical awareness and commitment in all who undertake such training for ministry.  The staff paper concluded with a section on how people learn, arguing that people should 'become conscious of being not depositories of information, but co-investigators in dialogue'.[417]  It was recognized that authoritarianism in the church was problematical in this respect.  However, people learned wherever they were involved as 'learning does not take place in isolation, but in concrete situations where we struggle every day'.[418]  The local congregation must become a learning community.  The final question was what needed to be changed in teachers and leaders and in educational plans and programmes 'to let learning take place'.[419]

The report to the assembly, *Education for Liberation and Community*[420], spoke of a commitment to conscientisation.  This was emphasised in a memo from William B Kennedy to the general secretary. A future specific programme emphasis should be:

> conscientization, development of critical consciousness, social awareness as a goal and method of all Christian education and as a guideline for evaluating church and other education work.[421]

*Education for Liberation and Community* included specific reference to ecumenical education.  As a natural learning community, learning should be at the heart of life of the church.  This learning must not be parochial. Rather, it must always seek to be ecumenical enabling people through encounter, developing a new consciousness and outward looking community building.  The report ended with two definitions of education offered as prophetic for the church's work in education:

> to develop and liberate the God-given potential for full human development in service to a just and open society.
> to keep alive the hope and to experience the reality of human maturity and caring so that society may become more just and open and people more free.[422]

The insights offered by Paulo Freire had enabled the awakening of

> … the consciousness of people to situations in which their own silence and submissiveness contributed to their continued bondage[423]

Karl-Ernst Nipkow summed up the period between Uppsala and Nairobi as:

> … a phase of critical analysis and liberating renewal.  The most famous and most often used word was Paulo Freire's idea of conscientization as a reflection-action process. ... Education was seen as an awareness developing process directed to critical consciousness.[424]

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[417] ibid p14
[418] ibid p14
[419] ibid p15
[420] Central Committee Minutes, 1973, p46
[421] Memorandum from William B Kennedy, 14 May 1975, WCC Archives Box 42.54.48, p1
[422] op cit  p50
[423] Johnson D (ed), *Uppsala to Nairobi: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly*, SPCK, London, 1975, p184
[424] Nipkow, K.E. *Christian Education and Ecumenical Faith* in Education Newsletter No2 1983, WCC, Geneva 1983 p3

**Conclusion - ecumenical consciousness in the period up to Nairobi**

In this section I will relate the evidence from the period to the issues raised at the end of Chapter 3.  Chapter 5 will repeat the exercise for the period from Nairobi to Porto Alegre.  In Chapter 6, I will analyse the outcomes of the reflection on the whole historical period.  As was described in Chapter 2, the growth of ecumenical consciousness was a constitutional requirement and responsibility of the World Council for the whole of this period.  It was only at the Nairobi Assembly that the terminology was removed

<u>Whose ecumenical consciousness?</u>

The constitutional answer to the question was the members of all Churches.  In reality, it is difficult to point to statements and proposals that do relate to engagement with members of churches.  Certainly it was not adopted as a conscious strategy by the World Council.  Various commentators from the early days drew attention to the advance of the ecumenical movement being inhibited by the lack of awareness of the people in the churches.[425]   So there was a recognition of the issue but it is not clear whether the failure to act was a lack of will or of means.

As early as 1957 the Division of Ecumenical Action acknowledged the programmatic need but confessed that 'it was not clear how the World Council could assist the member churches in this matter'.[426]   The work of the World Council, together with that of the WCCE whilst it existed, did provide some opportunities of engagement with the people of the churches.   Several reports suggested that Christian nurture in the congregation could become ecumenical in content and spirit.[427]  Although good in intent, it is not clear whether these had any impact on the World Council or, more importantly, on the member churches.  The Study Department tried to encourage engagement but found that the churches did not have either the commitment or the mechanisms to enable discussion and reflection in congregations.[428]  There was also a criticism that the studies themselves were not accessible to non-experts.[429]   The same might have been said of *The Ecumenical Review* whose style and reach was to the reasonably well educated.[430]  The work on the laity tended to be more concerned with their role in the church and their participation as Christians in the life of the world than with their growth in ecumenical consciousness[431] The Ecumenical Institute had been established to provide opportunities for ecumenical reflection for lay people, albeit from the professions.  However, over this period its work increasingly focussed on

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[425] See eg pp60, 71
[426] See p73
[427] See eg pp75, 78, 89, 91, 103
[428] See p67f
[429] See eg p72
[430] See pp69f
[431] See eg pp66, 72, 81, 98

academic ecumenical courses for actual or aspiring church leaders.[432]  The work camps organised through the Youth Department were recognised as opportunities for the growth of ecumenical consciousness in participants.[433]  However, the main thrust of the work shifted to enabling the full participation of youth in the activities and structures of the churches and the ecumenical movement and away from how that participation might develop ecumenical consciousness.[434]

This is not to say that these programmatic activities of the World Council did not have any effect on the members of churches.  For those they touched, they were probably consciousness transforming experiences.  The majority of the members of the churches, though, remained within their parochial consciousness and even unaware of the ecumenical movement and the World Council in any significant way.

Cognitive and emotional mobilisation

In this period the World Council had within its grasp many insights that were relevant, if not necessary, for the formation of ecumenical consciousness.   As has been noted, the ecumenical movement and the emerging and developing World Council of Churches were seen as a learning experience by their very nature.[435]  However that presumes that experience in itself is formational.  Something has to happen in order for the experience to make a lasting difference to the consciousness of individuals and communities.

Early on in its work, the Study Department had recognized that there needed to be a link between learning and action[436].  Lange had noted the necessity of parochial conscience being transformed into an ecumenical conscience. [437]  Before Freire, it had been acknowledged that meaning was created through critical thinking.[438]  His presence in Geneva made his understanding and practice of critical consciousness[439] and conscientisation[440] prominent, at least in theory.  After Freire, critical consciousness was seen as necessary to lead to action for justice and wholeness.[441]

The World Council had inherited the possibility of a participatory and common ownership style from the very effective breeding grounds for ecumenical activists of movements such as the SCM.[442]  The experience of participation in a common life of living, working, praying, worshipping

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[432] See pp66f, 95f
[433] See pp69, 77f
[434] See p78f
[435] See p66
[436] See p67f
[437] See 32f
[438] See p89
[439] See p94
[440] See p94
[441] See p102
[442] See p61

and studying was valued in the Ecumenical Institute[443] and the youth work camps.[444]  The necessity of participation in ecumenical experience locally was emphasised.[445]  Work on theological education had stressed the need for formation to be contextual.[446]  Educational process were understood to be about changing attitudes as well as receiving new information.[447]  An ecumenical consciousness was not limited to a concern for relationships between Christians but Christians' relationship with and living in the world.[448]  The justice element was particularly prominent in ecumenical development education.[449]

Following Walz, the formation of an ecumenical consciousness was simply the formation of a Christian consciousness.[450]  An ecumenical consciousness was not one aspect of Christian consciousness alongside denominational consciousness.[451]  It was the other way around.  If the World Council, at least on paper, was aware of all this, what stood in the way of taking seriously the mandate for growing an ecumenical consciousness?

Part of the answer, I suggest, lies in the anomalous nature of the relationship between the World Council and the ecumenical movement.  As a kind of social movement organisation, the World Council could be seen to have a responsibility for enthusing and sustaining the ecumenical movement.  However, as noted in Chapter 3, the institutional stakeholders are the churches who may have some commitment to the ecumenical movement but a stronger commitment to their own self-interest.  The World Council was warned early on that it could end up by institutionalising and legitimising a divided church rather than transforming the churches.[452]  The formation of an ecumenical consciousness in the members of the churches could be seen as unhelpful to the development of denominational commitment.

The World Council seems to have interpreted its role more as a service agency to assist the churches in their separateness.  It promoted good practice and challenged them to collaborate on issues, not unworthy things in themselves but not sufficiently radical in intention and effect.  In the context of this study, the work on theological education is a good example.[453]  It promoted a much needed quality, authenticity and creativity and doing theological education in ecumenical collaboration.[454]  However, in this period, it did not prioritise an ecumenical consciousness per se.

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[443] See pp77f, 82
[444] See p69
[445] See p74
[446] See pp76f, 83, 96f
[447] See pp67f, 97
[448] See pp73f, 86, 91
[449] See p94f
[450] See p73f
[451] See p86f
[452] See p70
[453] See pp76f, 83,96
[454] See p76f

The World Council as an institution demonstrated its serious intent by its concern for what it perceived to be heavyweight issues of the life of the churches.  It would not be possible to deny the significance of, for example, the Programme to Combat Racism.  But all too often it relied on statements and reports which we often impenetrable and incapable of engendering enthusiastic commitment to the cause.  It had a tendency to privilege content over process – a mistaken view if we take seriously the understanding of movements in Chapter 3. We have seen how discussions on weighty matters meant that little attention was paid to processes relating to ecumenical consciousness and ecumenical education.[455]

Where there was a concern for process it always seemed to result in the reassertion of traditional instructional models centring on the transmission of the ecumenical products of the few to the many, who were then expected to put them into action.  There was a preoccupation with schools and schooling, inside and outside the churches.[456]  Ecumenism was too easily co-opted into the curriculum as a separate subject, betraying a misunderstanding of its nature.[457] Ecumenical consciousness raising could also be confused with learning about the ecumenical movement and the work of the World Council.[458]

We will return to this discussion in Chapter 6.

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[455] See p79
[456] See p92f
[457] See p73f
[458] See pp70f, 74f

# 5  Nairobi (1975) to the Porto Alegre Assembly (2006)

This chapter follows the same pattern as Chapter 4 and most of the same preliminary remarks apply.  The period under review saw the change in educational discourse from the language of ecumenical education to that of ecumenical learning.  Towards the end, the notion of ecumenical formation became increasingly prominent.  In the earlier part of the period there was an increasing hotchpotch of programmes, very often overlapping yet unrelated.[459]  The attitude seems to have been 'to let a thousand flowers bloom'.  This means that it has been very difficult to present a coherent picture for the reader.  In the latter part of the period, a decreasing income[460] and the pressure from donors for a greater accountability caused the World Council to address this.

I must also make clear that at the very end of the period Canberra to Harare my status changed from being an observer to that of an actor.  I joined the staff of the World Council in May 1996 as Secretary for Education replacing someone who had left almost a year before.  This meant that I had no live programme responsibility when I began.  Although I attended some consultations and Working Groups, most of my time was taken, as with other colleagues, on preparations for the Harare Assembly.  The only area where I had significant input was the planning for a new Education and Ecumenical Formation team.  However, in the period following Harare I had significant input to the conceptualising, planning and execution and reporting of the work of the World Council in education.  This means that my perspective inevitably becomes different however hard I try to be objective.  I have discussed this in the Introduction.[461]

I must also admit my own lack of awareness.  When I joined the staff my knowledge and experience of education in the British, particularly church, context meant that I could understand the idea of ecumenical education.  Ecumenical learning, as understood by the World Council, took some grasping and ecumenical formation was more difficult still.  However, it was only in the course of my research that I discovered the idea of ecumenical consciousness and the constitutional responsibility for its development.  I was, therefore, unaware of its reintroduction at Harare, even though I was present.  Throughout the period to Porto Alegre, neither the constitutional requirement nor even the concept of ecumenical consciousness figured largely, if at all, in my thinking.   My book, *Creative Ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another*[462] could be seen as groping towards the encouragement of the growth of ecumenical consciousness and the people of the churches.  If I wrote that book today it would be called something like *Creating Ecumenical Consciousness* and, in my judgement, be better for having that perspective.  I say this

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[459] See p112
[460] Principally a decline in total income from CHF117 million in 1991 to CHF60 million in 1997 (General Secretary's Report to Central Committee, 1997, para 26) and then to a budget of CHF39 million for 2007 (Report of the Finance Committee, Central Committee 2006, para 5)
[461] See p9
[462] Oxley, S, *Creative Ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002

because I want to make it clear that the criticism I direct at the World Council for not taking seriously either the concept of ecumenical consciousness or the constitutional responsibility for nurturing its growth is also self-criticism.

**Nairobi 1975 to Vancouver 1983**

<u>The Nairobi Assembly</u>

The Nairobi Assembly in 1975 under the theme 'Jesus Christ Frees and Unites' was probably the most significant for the development of ecumenical education. Yet at the same time the assembly adopted new functions in the Constitution omitting any mention of ecumenical consciousness. In his general secretary's address, Philip Potter quoted the new functions and purposes contained in the revised Constitution which the assembly would discuss.[463] There was a complete absence of anything that could be interpreted as a specific concern for ecumenical consciousness. However, he did describe the World Council as a community of learning which challenged all our traditional assumptions and attitudes.[464] Learning was still felt to be essential to the ecumenical task but not constitutionally required and seemingly only at the level of the churches rather than the raising of ecumenical consciousness in the members of the churches. I can find no evidence[465] that it was a considered decision to drop ecumenical consciousness from the wording of the Constitution. It was probably just the way the rewording worked out. No one from the floor of the assembly felt passionately enough about it to protest at its disappearance.

Section IV of the assembly, 'Education for Liberation and Community', built on an understanding that ecumenism was as much about the world as about the church. The annotated agenda for the section raised the question as to what faith in the one who frees and unites implied for a fresh approach to education in general and for the church's formation of its own members and leadership. It also asked whether education in society and in the churches liberated or domesticated and whether it worked for or against the formation of human community in society and the church.[466] Of equal importance to the content was the style of engagement in group work. A participative style for consultations had been developed which encouraged people to:

> tell their own stories and, together, to discover how to move on from the understanding such experiences revealed.[467]

[463] Paton, D M (ed), *Breaking Barriers Nairobi 1975*, London, SPCK, 1976, p255
[464] ibid p256
[465] See Chapter 2
[466] Annotated Agenda for Section IV, Education for Liberation and Community, WCC Assembly, Nairobi 1975 reproduced in *Education Newsletter*, Vol IV, No 1, March 1975, p1
[467] Johnson D (ed), WCC, *Uppsala to Nairobi: Report of the Central Committee to the Fifth Assembly*, SPCK, London, 1975, p185

The way in which this was described made it sound like a derogation from a proper Western academic style of discourse rather than a legitimate alternative. However, for most participants the small groups were 'probably the most satisfying item in their experience of the assembly'.[468]

Addressing the churches, the report of Section IV commented that:

> The entire life of the Christian community is educative, and the quality of its worship and work as a whole determines the quality of the nurture of its members. [469]

Churches should always guard against their educational programmes becoming 'ingrown and self-serving'.[470] The report was critical of dominant Western styles of theology and theological education and preferred to speak of doing theology rather than of teaching or learning theology. Theological education should create opportunities for experiences of and reflection on encounter with other cultures and faiths. The final section of the report called for the development of the lifestyles of local congregations which are authentic to their contexts and reflect the Kingdom of God.

The Hearing on Unit III, Education and Renewal, addressed the World Council itself. Several issues were identified up in the Annotated Agenda[471], including the outcomes of the reflection on critical consciousness in the previous period. Delegates were encouraged to consider how this understanding of critical consciousness could inform both general education and that which takes place in parishes and congregations. In respect of youth, concern was expressed that 'there seems to be an erosion of ecumenical youth work within the churches'[472] and youth activities in churches and congregations lacked an ecumenical perspective.

The Hearing on Unit III was aided by a paper, *Educational themes on the agenda of the Ecumenical Movement*[473], prepared by Karl Ernst Nipkow. After reviewing the work of the World Council in relation to education, Nipkow commented that it:

> represented an attempt (a) to help to disclose structures of educational oppression and, in their place, (b) to promote a liberating learning process in which the learner will become aware of himself in the midst of the life-restricting and life-promoting conditions of the world around him - this is the meaning of the concept of 'conscientization' - so that (c) those growing up and adults may become capable of serving a loving rather than a depriving community.[474]

Many educationalists now understood that:

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[468] Paton, D M (ed), *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: the Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC, 23 November-10 December 1975*, London, SPCK, 1976, p26
[469] Report of Section IV, Education for Liberation and Community, World Council of Churches, Fifth Assembly, 1975, Plenary Documents P.D. 36, WCC Archives Box 35.3, p5
[470] ibid p5
[471] Annotated Agendas for Hearings, World Council of Churches Fifth Assembly, Nairobi 1975, WCC Archives Box 35.21
[472] ibid p106
[473] Nipkow, K E, *Educational themes on the agenda of the Ecumenical Movement*, World Council of Churches Fifth Assembly, Nairobi, 1975, Hearing on Unit III, Document No SH(A) 1, WCC Archives Box 35.5
[474] ibid p7

People learn by taking part in the processes of new experience through participation, sympathy, fellow-feeling.  The experience of faith is likewise conveyed in his living way, in the context of lived faith.[475]

Nipkow argued that the preparatory papers for Section IV only gave prominence to socio-political and ethical formation whereas there were further educational tasks which needed to be considered:

an elementary theological formation of the children and adults is required, in contact with Biblical tradition and church doctrinal tradition.[476]

The report on the Hearing urged the Sub-unit on Education to remain committed to the powerless, voiceless, dispossessed and disadvantaged and to recognise the need to prevent children from becoming objects of indoctrination and injustices.[477]  It should work with the churches to revise their educational programmes to:

promote an education for ecumenism, in particular on the local level.  Education in a true ecumenical spirit includes both the courage to criticise and be criticised and the solidarity and conciliar fellowship of Christians.[478]

The insights of Paulo Freire should be put into operation in Christian education:

It is further necessary to show more concretely how the new concept of a dialogue-oriented learning and 'conscientization' is actually to be put into practice in Sunday schools, religious instruction in schools, confirmation classes and adult education.[479]

From the Hearing, then, came a call for the ecumenical conscientisation of the people, of all ages, of the churches.


Programme Unit III: Education and Renewal and Sub-unit on Education


The staff of Unit III saw its orientation being towards the ecumenical movement which should be 'a movement of people: seeking to witness to the truly ecumenical fellowship'.[480]  However, the mandate of the Unit given by Central Committee was not so explicitly ecumenical:

to assist churches, councils of churches and renewal movements through processes of education and communication, to enable persons, communities and institutions to participate as fully as possible in the changes that faith God in Christ calls for in them, in the renewal of the churches and in the transformation of society.[481]

Throughout the period there were changes in the structure of the Unit.  Most significantly, the Programme on Theological Education was added in 1981.  By the end of the period, the Unit

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[475] ibid p10
[476] ibid p14
[477] *Assembly Reports and Proposals Concerning WCC Programmes*, Geneva, WCC, 1976, Report of the Hearing on Unit III p4
[478] ibid p5
[479] ibid p4
[480] Concerns for Persons in Community, *Education Newsletter* Vol V, No 3, 1976, Geneva, WCC, p1
[481] Central Committee  Minutes,1977, p47

appeared to be weighed down with programmes rather than driven by a vision. In spite of the desire to work together:

> the various programs recommended by the Nairobi Assembly and by successive Central Committee meetings have tended to create quasi-independent entities.[482]

In addition, the Unit had 'attracted little attention [funding] from the churches'[483] Ans Van der Bent, in *Vital Ecumenical Concerns,* which reflected on the period up to the Vancouver Assembly, concluded that:

> Unit III has remained to a large extent a separate pursuit, blessed but left alone by the much older and experienced movements of Faith and Order, World Mission and Evangelism, Church and Society, Inter-Church Aid. They have felt competent to deal with the proclamation of the apostolic Faith, the fostering of growth before the Christian unity and the facing of the brokenness of the human situation without being disturbed by the self-evidence of educational implications. As long as there is no deep inter-penetration of ecumenical learning and unity, witness, dialogue and service, Unit III will remain a sectarian enterprise.[484]

Although the Unit appeared to have grasped some of the essentials of ecumenical consciousness, it was made ineffective by an internal lack of integration, insufficient relationship with and funding from the churches and an institutional culture which encouraged Units to disregard anything other than their own concerns.

Ecumenical education

The importance of the participation in ecumenical education by all the member churches had been underlined by the report of the Programme Guidelines Committee at the Nairobi Assembly.[485] Consequently, programmatic work on education for ecumenism was discussed at a meeting of all the Core Groups of Unit III in 1976. It was recognized that:

> education for ecumenism involves not only understanding of churchly [*sic*] unity but experience of the forces making for unity, justice, liberation and community for all people.[486]

Their initial strategy would be to locate and share examples and models of effective ecumenical education.[487]

The archives of Unit II contain detailed notes on a discussion that took place between staff of different sub-units in 1977 on the nature of education for ecumenism.[488] The questions and issues

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[482] *Nairobi to Vancouver: 1975-1983, Report of the Central Committee to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 1983, p181f
[483] ibid p179
[484] Van der Bent, A, *Vital Ecumenical Concerns*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1986, p328
[485] Paton (ed) op cit p297
[486] Report of the Meeting of the Core Groups of Unit III, Education and Renewal May 1976, WCC Archives Box 42.54.49, p21
[487] ibid p21
[488] Education for Ecumenism: notes from the minutes of the joint meeting between the Sub-unit on Education and the Sub-Unit on Renewal and Congregational Life, Geneva, 22 July 1977, Unindexed WCC Archives Box

do not differ greatly from those still live at the start of the 21st century.[489]  In summary, the flow of the conversation went as follows: Education for ecumenism was not limited to church unity but was concerned to develop participation in the whole ecumenical movement. Education for ecumenism could not be confined to the local congregation – people interact and learn outside and across congregations. For many, neither curricula nor worship took them beyond denominational horizons. Education for ecumenism promoted greater mutual understanding and should help people to get away from the dominance of ecumenical professionals. In order to survive, churches needed a preservation of identity whereas education for ecumenism required an openness to change. Education for Ecumenism involved repentance for people not being what they were called to be, reciprocal criticism, becoming agents of change, respecting the human person, becoming communities that are signs of hope, reconciliation and liberation, engaging in intercultural exchange and serving the powerless, the underprivileged and the oppressed.

Following this in-house discussion and some regional consultations, the staff of the programme contributed an article on Ecumenical Education to the *Education Newsletter*.  One of the issues was, as it continues to be, the evolving meaning of ecumenical:

> Therefore ecumenical education cannot any longer be limited to the history of attempts to reunite churches or the growth of ecumenical organisations.  Ecumenical education essentially means fostering understanding of, commitment to and informed participation in this whole ecumenical process.[490]

The ecumenical movement could only move forward when there was a far wider participation in ecumenical education.  However. the article also expressed a concern that a critical examination of church loyalties would result in 'ecumeniacs' outside the churches rather than ecumenically committed people within the churches.[491]

In 1982, *The Ecumenical Review* published a substantial article by Werner Simpfendörfer entitled *Ecumenical and Ecological Education: Becoming at home in the wider household of the inhabited earth*.  It began by noting the interconnection between our lives at the smaller, oikos, level and at the larger, oikoumene, level.  He argued that:

> Ecumenical education took place and still takes place ... by a direct encounter in confrontation with situations in the world horizon, with all their shocking and frustrating accompaniments.[492]

However, such opportunities were only available for a small number of people and the challenge remained as to how this could be extended:

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[489] See my discussion on these in Oxley, S, *Creative Ecumenical Education,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002.
[490] Ecumenical Education in *Education Newsletter,* Vol VII, No 1, 1978, Geneva, WCC, p1
[491] ibid p2
[492] Simpfendörfer, W, 'Ecumenical and Ecological Education: Becoming at home in the wider household of the inhabited earth' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1982, vol 34, no1, p54

> The qualitative leap required to the public conscience even in the churches ... could only be achieved if the majority of church members became capable of educating themselves ecumenically.[493]

We should note the emphasis on people educating themselves ecumenically rather than being educated, ie people should be the agents of the development of their own ecumenical consciousness. Simpfendörfer found the answer to this in development-related educational work. His evaluation of 10 years of such work suggested the significance of participative learning processes for which people themselves were responsible. These should lead to questioning and confrontation and action.[494] From this, he offered five dimensions of ecumenical education.[495] Primary experiences, rather than information, were part of the basic equipment for ecumenical learning. However, this was a challenge for the second dimension of educating the majorities which remained an open question. The third dimension was that of language – the use of music, symbol, liturgy and dance as well as challenging the dominance of English. The fourth dimension was the connection between local congregations and the global community. The final dimension was that of identity. Ecumenical encounter offered the risk of the destabilization of identity but it was neither a question of abandoning an existing identity nor of adopting multiple identities.

A consultation was held in 1982 on 'Education for Effective Ecumenism'.[496] Although the term education was used in the title, there was a philosophical and pedagogical preference for ecumenical learning.[497] The workshop was designed for the maximum encounter between participants. The first two days were spent in regional groups looking at their context and reflecting on theological education, Faith and Order, mission and justice, and specific educational concerns. The next five days were spent in mixed groups around these four issues. The final two days were devoted to working intensively on key concerns which had emerged. Participants were supplied with reports of activities from each region and a paper entitled *Ecumenical Education[498]* where Ulrich Becker, who directed the sub-unit, remarked on what was common to all the discussions about ecumenical education since 1957:

> the call for a wider participation of all church members in all the different ways in which the churches are becoming the one, missionary church in process of renewal.[499]

How, he asked, could an ecumenical consciousness be developed? How could people who are rooted in a specific culture and context relate to others, be local and global? He suggested that 'people learn much less through the communication of ideas than through their concrete involvement on a local level'.[500] A pedagogy was required that would enable ecumenical reflection on experience.

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[493] ibid p54
[494] ibid p56
[495] ibid pp54ff
[496] *Education for Effective Education: A report on a workshop held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey from 20-29 June 1982*, Geneva, Sub-unit on Education, WCC and Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 1983 p5
[497] ibid p5
[498] ibid pp76-85
[499] ibid p81
[500] ibid p81

Unfortunately, the paper prepared by Ulrich Becker presented a more coherent and comprehensive view of education for ecumenism or ecumenical learning than the individual and collective outputs of the participants.[501] The report contained more comments and proposals on other issues than ecumenical learning. It seems that the least effective part of the workshop was not the interactive and participative process but a focussed reflection on that process. As far as ecumenical learning is concerned, the initial input from World Council staff was affirmed, but little new was learned. Although they were talking about ecumenical education, both Simpfendörfer and Becker were raising important issues for the who and how of developing an ecumenical consciousness.

A new dimension of ecumenical education began to emerge in this period with the recognition of the challenges of religious diversity. Many member churches had lived with religious plurality for centuries, others were finding themselves newly in that situation. The Sub-unit on Education and the Sub-unit on Dialogue with peoples of living faiths and ideologies collaborated in a consultation on 'Christian Participation in Education in a Multi-faith Environment' in 1981. The consultation stressed 'an awareness that faith must be studied in the framework of critical openness'.[502] Recognizing that education involves the whole person, students should have opportunities to:

> meet members of different faith communities, visit places of worship and begin to understand something of the beliefs and culture of communities other than their own.[503]

It had to be recognised that 'Faith in such a context is always a risk which Christian educators cannot avoid'[504] but there was the hope that in open and critical sharing 'the faith of each can be deepened'.[505] This demonstrated, without actually saying so, that an ecumenical conscious cannot but relate to a world of different faiths even though it may be rooted in Christian faith.

The International Year of the Child 1979 and the celebration of the bicentennial of the Sunday School Movement in 1980 encouraged the World Council to reaffirm the child as a continuing priority.[506] Hans-Ruedi Weber contributed *Jesus and the children: Biblical resources for study and preaching*[507] which considered the status and role of the child in the Bible. A consultation on 'Eucharist with Children' in 1980 resulted in a strong call for the participation of children in the eucharistic life of the local church.[508] A report was presented to Central Committee in 1981 entitled *Learning Together to be Partners in Life* which recognised some of the outcomes of the

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[501] ibid p44f
[502] *Christians and Education in a Multi-Faith World: Considerations on Christian Participation in Education in a Multi-Faith Environment*, Geneva, World Council of Churches Sub-unit on Education and Sub-unit on Dialogue, 1982, pp18
[503] ibid p21
[504] ibid p34
[505] ibid p31
[506] Central Committee Minutes, 1977, p47
[507] Weber, H-R, *Jesus and the children : Biblical resources for study and preaching*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1979
[508] Muller-Fahrenholtz, G (ed), *And Do Not Hinder Them: an ecumenical plea for the admission of children to the Eucharist*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1982.

reflection stimulated by the International Year. It recognised that the insight that adults could learn from children and of the significance of children's admission to the eucharist challenged traditional patterns.

> The notion of the "learning community" pointed to an understanding of inter-generational learning in family and congregation which, if taken seriously, could lead to renewal of both the family and the congregation.[509]

As significant as these insights were, there was no recognition of the importance of children developing an ecumenical consciousness.

Analysing the situation of youth in 1978, the Working Group of the Sub-unit on Youth found that, although many young people wanted to see a link between faith and action, few had any vision or experience of the ecumenical movement. At the same time many were turning their backs on the institutional church.

> Much of our programme can best be described as 'ecumenical education' because it is our experience that many of our constituents are 'ecumenically illiterate'.[510]

Here the insights of Paulo Freire might have been seen to be relevant: that illiteracy required not a response of better teaching but a process of conscientisation.

Ernst Lange, a former director of the Division of Ecumenical Action (see Chapter 4), argued in this period that a strategy for education for ecumenism should begin in the congregation. As a parochial outlook began to develop from an early age, Christian education needed to be radically changed. His answer was for the training of ecumenical multipliers to work at the local level:

> in sufficient quality and in sufficient numbers to produce the needed 'forward leap' in public opinion in the member churches, would itself presuppose that 'forward leap!'[511]

The whole people of God and local communities needed to be able to participate in the ecumenical experience.

His proposal for ecumenical multipliers had been partly anticipated in the first Course for Leaders of Lay Training (CLLT) held at the global level in 1976, although I can discover no evidence of the link being made. Participants spent nine days in groups of six at different centres in order to build relationships and awareness of diverse cultural settings and then seven weeks all together. This was planned to avoid the perceived problems with many ecumenical conferences that they were too short for real engagement and were isolated from any real context.[512] The CLLT report concluded:

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[509] Central Committee Minutes, 1981, p33
[510] Report of the Working Group of the Sub-unit on Youth, Unit III, World Council of Churches, Stony Point, New York, August 29-September 5, 1978. Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p1
[511] E. Lange... *and yet it moves, dream and reality of the ecumenical movement,* Geneva, WCC, 1979, p.110
[512] *Becoming Dynamic Agents of Social Change: a report of the First World Course for Leaders of Lay Training, Bangalore, January-March 1976,* WCC Archives Box 42.54.51, pp1f

> Ecumenical education basically means learning by living encounter.  It is through sharing of real life that ecumenical reality is authentically experienced.  ... centre on concrete experiences which the participants made together and that this sharing should then be reflected together.[513]

Although the CLLTs appear to have been effective in raising the ecumenical consciousness of the participants, there seems to have been little consideration as to how they would be enabled to do this within their own constituencies.


Development education


Although Development Education was narrowly focussed, it raised issues for the development of ecumenical consciousness as suggested by Simpfendörfer above.  A Development Education Desk served both the Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD) and the sub-unit on Education.  Taking the side of social justice brought development education into conflict with those who believed in neutrality in education.  There was also an enormous underestimation of the scale of the task of education in processes of social change.  Nevertheless, the desk for development education pioneered a kind of alternative education based on liberating experiences, involvement in actions that express solidarity with the poor and the search for alternatives in social organisation and life styles.[514]  This new type of alternative education grew rapidly in churches and in networks of the ecumenical movement.  With its strong emphasis on non-formal education, it influenced the educational policy of donor and inter-church aid agencies and challenged traditional religious and theological education programmes.


A paper on *Development Education - Reviews and Perspectives* was prepared by staff for the meeting of the Committee of the Sub-Unit on Education in Cyprus in 1980.  Important pedagogical criteria had emerged:

> learning has taken place in context, by gaining experience, by involvement in action (learning by doing).  It has been participative, group oriented learning and had a strong element of anticipating a different, changed future and it was definitely linked to a process of reflection and analysis (action-reflection process).[515]

The paper reminded its readers that development education was not information sharing but about changing the 'perceptions/attitudes/lifestyle/political behaviour of the learner'.[516]  The great challenge, as given by Ernst Lange, was the need to go beyond the small numbers intensively involved in the debate and action.[517]

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[513] ibid p9
[514] R. Traitler ed., *Leaping over the* Wall, An Assessment of Ten Years' Development Education, Geneva, WCC, Geneva, 1982
[515] *Development Education - Reviews and perspectives*, a paper for the meeting of the Sub-unit on Education, Ayia Napa, April 1980, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p12
[516] ibid p13
[517] ibid p13

Ecumenical scholarships

The Nairobi Assembly had recommended the reinforcement and extension of the programme. However, in 1978 financial problems for the whole World Council led to a review and evaluation.[518] It was recognised that the rationale for the Scholarships Programme lay in its responsibility for the growth of the ecumenical movement through developing ecumenical leadership. In the 1977 Aim of the programme it is noteworthy that there was now an emphasis on the training being for the benefit of the collective rather than only the individual and the introduction of the idea of ecumenical encounter and education.[519] Therefore, all studies should be ecumenical studies or studies in an ecumenical setting. A paper in preparation for the report to the Vancouver Assembly, noted that the principal objectives of the programme were:

- provision of intercultural and ecumenical experience;
- education for participation in the quest for truth, justice, reconciliation and peace;
- training of trainers and community workers;
- strengthening of relationships between sending and host countries.[520]

The weakness of the position, and a continuing issue for the Scholarships programme, was that many churches and even ecumenical bodies looked to the World Council to equip people for their work rather than have to them become ecumenically minded.


Programme on Theological Education

A task force proposed that new programmatic work should pay attention to: the relationship between the universal and the local in contextualised learning; the need for both deductive and inductive approaches to learning; the dynamic between critical evaluation of the past and the articulation of future hope.[521] Theological education needed to become an act of liberation, challenging confessional isolation, specialisation and professionalism, the class captivity of the leadership of the church and the cultural imprisonment of the faith. However, the report did not explicitly recognize a role for the World Council in promoting theological education that was ecumenically formative. Consequently the Central Committee approved a proposal for the Programme on Theological Education which should focus attention on ministerial formation with three inter-related areas of concern:

a) growth in the knowledge of Christian faith and in the ability to express it in languages and stances which are meaningful and responsible to the human condition ...

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[518] Report of the Consultant to the WCC Scholarships Office 1979, Unindexed WCC Archives Box.
[519] Aims and Functions of the WCC Scholarships Programme, Unit III, Scholarships Committee, 1977, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p1
[520] Scholarship and Leadership Development Programme, 16.7.82, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p1
[521] Report of the Theological Education Task Force appointed by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism as presented to the Central Committee 1976, WCC Archives Box 42.54.52,

b) the training of practitioners of Christian ministry for contemporary life situations ... c) the heightening of the theological awareness of Christian congregations for mature discipleship and effective witness in their place and circumstances.[522]

The programme was to promote an ecumenical vision in search of the unity of the church and the unity of mankind.

Four major international consultations were held to discuss the problems and potential of theological education in each region and test evolving principles and programmes. Samuel Armirtham identified some aspects of the outcomes of these consultations.[523] Ministry belonged to the whole people of God and not just to a few people within the church. Ministry was seen as the service of the whole church in the whole world. The purpose of theological education was to enable all people, men and women, ordained and lay, to perform their varied ministries individually and collectively. Learning should be based in the life and context of the students. Ministerial formation should take place through the total life of the church and its institutions, not just through the academic curriculum. The theological education process should combine learning and life, knowledge and commitment. Academic learning should be accompanied by appropriate lifestyle with a consistency between what is taught what is experienced. The mission of the Church required theology and theological education to be contextual. Any specific sense of the need for the development of an ecumenical consciousness appears to have been absent. However, ecumenism was on the mind of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council when it commented the role of theological education in ecumenical sensitisation. However:

> In some seminaries homage is paid to ecumenical ideals, while there is an absence of any formal teaching about the ecumenical movement or its history and its theological, spiritual and pastoral significance.[524]

Ecumenical Institute

A financial crisis, caused by the withdrawal of the annual grant for its work, had the Bossey Board pleading for the future of the Institute. They argued that it had been able to contribute to the formation of future generations of ecumenical leadership, provide for intercultural and interconfessional theological encounter and train ecumenical multipliers through communal ecumenical experience.[525] A meeting was organised to explore ways of strengthening the work of the Ecumenical Institute. It was felt that, with the emergence of other ecumenical institutes around the world, the purpose of Bossey was no longer clear.[526] The proposed aim of the Ecumenical

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[522] Central Committee Minutes, 1977, p99
[523] Amirtham, S, 'Learnings from PTE's Consultations', *Ministerial Formation*, No 20, October 1982, Geneva, WCC Programme on Theological Education., pp11-16
[524] Fifth Report of the Joint Working Group, Geneva, WCC, 1983, Section 4, p2
[525] Attachment to Minutes of the Core Board of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 6 August 1976
[526] *The Future of the Ecumenical Institute*, Meeting at Bossey, September 29, 1976. WCC Archives Box 42.54.56,

Institute emerging from this round of discussion took up the above themes, emphasising the building of a community.[527]

Although the annual Graduate School was seen as the primary activity of Bossey, there was a new constituency of visiting groups who wished to learn more about ecumenism. This encouraged a more conscious and critical reflection on the understanding and methodology of education for ecumenism. The outcome was an explicit statement on the nature of education for ecumenism which was presented to the meeting of the Executive Group of Bossey in 1981:

> Ecumenical learning encourages persons to work at theological tasks in cooperation with other members of the community of believers in order that beyond the superficial agreement of linguistic formulations they may come to know one another as members of the same community, under the same Lord. … Ecumenical education ... is an exercise in comprehension not in concentration, … depends increasingly on dialogue, not as a substitute for the lecture room, but as a necessary adjunct to it. ... But Bossey can do more to nurture the process, to prod students away from complacent satisfaction with superficial and polite agreement, to encourage full engagement and involvement with one another.[528]

Perhaps the most telling comment in relation to the formation of ecumenical consciousness is the need to encourage people to go beyond the comfortable agreement of accepting one another's differences to more fundamental personal change.

Towards Vancouver

Among the eight issues formulated for discussion by the churches in preparation for the Vancouver Assembly was 'Learning in Community'. The preparatory paper[529] was reproduced in both the *Education Newsletter* and *Ministerial Formation* to engage the educational constituencies. It represented a snapshot of where the World Council's thinking and experience had reached in 1982. The paper contained a process as well as content, representing an attempt to practice ecumenical learning in the local church community. Each part of the paper began with some brief stories and experiences. Then there was a short commentary followed by some concrete questions to encourage participants to reflect on their own situations. The introduction, 'Stating the Problem', raised the questions at issue:

> What has the rediscovery of the educative nature of the Christian community meant for the total educational work of the churches? What have we learned about intergenerational learning in community-based learning processes, about the ways the community teaches? What have we learned about the concept of community, about unity and conflict, about discipleship?[530]

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[527] By-Laws for the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, June 1977, WCC Archives Box 42.54.52, p1
[528] Minutes of the Executive Group of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 16-17 October 1981, Statement on the Graduate School, p4
[529] *Issues: discussion papers on issues arising out of the life and work of the World Council of Churches in preparation for its sixth assembly*, Geneva, WCC, 1982: Issue Paper VII, Learning in Community
[530] ibid p5

The paper talked about the people of God becoming a learning, teaching and liberating community. It suggested that, although we have known in theory that our lived context is a decisive educative factor, our practice has been dominated by an emphasis on schooling. Learning in community required mutual acceptance and critical distance but could foster common values such as participation, co-operation and solidarity rather than individualism and personal gain. It always began where people are, becoming aware of their own oikos, but recognised the difficulty of moving to the whole oikoumene. Learning in action required taking risks and an action-reflection process produced conscientisation.

> It begins with a concrete situation of people, it helps them to reflect critically on the situation, and it frees them to go beyond that situation through transforming action.[531]

The whole community had to be brought into the learning process. Theological reflection was a lifelong process for everyone and:

> is done by the people and with the people, not for them. It should also promote global justice and ecumenical commitment.[532]

Here again we see an emphasis on people being the agents of their own ecumenical conscientisation.

## Vancouver 1983 to Canberra 1991

One of the most significant contributions to the Vancouver Assembly was the report of the general secretary, Philip Potter, where he reflected on the image of living stones being built into the oikos of God, as we have seen in Chapter 2. In a section on the World Council as a fellowship of learning, Potter argued from the biblical witness that 'learning involves the global consciousness of God's will, and way'.[533] Much about the World Council, could be seen as ecumenical learning. However:

> this perception of learning has not been sufficiently built into the programmes of the World Council, and that the churches themselves have not sufficiently appropriated the insights and perspectives receive through this process of ecumenical learning. And in so far as we failed to take such learning seriously, we fail to become a house of living stones.[534]

The notion of consciousness kept reappearing in the rhetoric of individuals and official statements yet somehow failed to become a controlling concept for the work of the World Council. In commenting on Potter's address, Ulrich Becker stressed that ecumenical learning should penetrate all Christian education activities:

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[531] ibid p14
[532] ibid p16
[533] Gill, D (ed), *Gathered for Life: Official Report, VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July - 10 August 1983*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1983, p200
[534] ibid p201

> it is part of each lesson in the Sunday School, each discussion in the youth group, part of the living and learning together in a faith community.[535]

In place of the Sections of former Assemblies, Vancouver had eight Issue Groups, one being on the theme 'Learning in Community'. Given a congregation based on the gospel, committed to the kingdom, grounded in tradition, sustained by worship, living out the faith, being built up into the body of Christ and rooted in solidarity with the least of God's children 'congregational learning becomes ecumenical learning'.[536] The Issue Group offered the churches some practical recommendations that should:

> help all members of congregations, young and old, to develop together a new life-style based on the demands of the Gospel and a new spirituality grounded in worship, prayer and active commitment.[537]

However, the note of ecumenical vision and praxis was not sounded.

The report of the Programme Guidelines Committee emphasised the need for inter-unit cooperation within the World Council on education for ecumenism. The main point was:

> The strength and vitality of the ecumenical movement depends on increasing an ecumenical perspective among laity and clergy throughout the member churches.[538]

Reviewing the outcomes of the assembly for the *Education Newsletter,* Ulrich Becker commented that:

> Vancouver's impetus to involve the <u>whole</u> people of God ... has to be continued with regard to regions, churches, congregations. The ecumenical agenda has to become more and more the agenda of the local congregations.[539]

This implied working out a coherent concept of ecumenical learning in response to such questions as:

> How can people, while remaining critically rooted in a specific denominational, cultural, historical and socio-political context, become ecumenically committed and share the experiences of others? How can they become both local and universal, so that they think globally and act locally?[540]

Unit III Education and Renewal

The five Sub-units of Unit III (Renewal and Congregational Life, Youth, Women in Church and Society, Education and Theological Education) had the responsibility for promoting ecumenical learning which was:

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[535] Becker, U, 'The WCC and the Concept of Ecumenical Learning' in *Education Newsletter*, No1, 1985, p5
[536] Gill, op cit, p97
[537] ibid p100
[538] ibid p256
[539] Becker, U, 'Vancouver Assembly: Insights on Ecumenical Learning' in *Education Newsletter*, No 3 1983, p2
[540] ibid p3

not the mere communication of facts, history, background, structures and functions the ecumenical movement, but it is a comprehensive task of equipping Christians and delivers a liberating and reconciling community in a divided world.[541]

A paper prepared by staff described the two major thrusts of Unit III as ecumenical learning and the participation of the whole people of God.[542]   One of the proposals was for a new programme on Ecumenical Leadership Formation.  The aim of this was to:

> enable people to see the relationship between global and local concerns, to emphasise the importance of being well-rooted in one's own church and culture and at the same time to be concerned with the common responsibility of Christians in the world.[543]

However, the Central Committee decided to change the name of the programme to Learning for Ecumenical Participation, as they discerned that, as well as training ecumenical leaders, it should:

> develop the ecumenical learning of ordinary church members beginning at as early an age as possible so they can have an influence on the people around them like leaven in a lump of dough.[544]

In order to implement this programme, a staff paper was produced which reflected on the differences between ecumenical learning and learning for ecumenical participation. The programme should concentrate on working with church leadership to be aware of an ecumenical dimension to everything.  It was to:

> open the eyes and minds of people to the global vision so they can be concerned with the church teaching, preaching, diaconal activities and in the confirmation class.[545]

The paper made it explicit that the leaders in question included those who worked with women's, men's, youth and children's activities in the local congregation as well as such as bishops and moderators.  The presumption was that they would animate the ordinary church members referred to by the Central Committee decision. However, a greater concern turned out to be the kind of church leadership represented in the Central Committee as evidenced by the reported thoughts of Hans-Ruedi Weber:

> we do not help them to see the Ecumenical Movement, to see the whole.  For, them the Ecumenical Movement is committees and projects, the Ecumenical Movement is the WCC, something out there.  We certainly have a not done enough of training for letting them see that the ecumenical movement is a call from God, it is the demand of the Spirit. ... We call them to act according to the vision we have not given them, or which they have not received.[546]

Weber noted that in former times such leaders would have developed an ecumenical vision by involvement in the Student Christian Movement.

[541] Central Committee Minutes, 1984, p162
[542] Unit III Draft Report, Week of Meetings, October 1983, Unindexed WCC Archives Box,
[543] Central Committee Minutes, 1984,  p61
[544] ibid p61
[545] Tevi, L, 'Learning for Ecumenical Participation', 1985, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p4
[546] ibid p5

A briefing paper for a meeting of the Unit III Commission in Mexico in 1985 described the current work of the Sub-unit on Education. As the whole of life was a learning experience it was not surprising that its work had a tendency to proliferate and that it became:

> only an administrative link for the various old and new educational programmes which all can claim to be priorities.[547]

It called for a clear focus on the idea of ecumenical learning as advocated by the Central Committee. The nearest the paper came to speaking of the formation of ecumenical consciousness was that people:

> must also be helped to discover what this faith implies for personal and social-ethical attitudes and decisions. Through worship and continuous learning they must be motivated and sustained for such converted and costly attitudes and decisions in their daily life.[548]

This implied the integration of learning for justice, peace and the integrity of creation within all the Christian education activities of the churches. However, at the end of period, the report of the Central Committee to the Canberra Assembly reflected the reality of the interest of the member churches:

> One of the greatest problems has been the lack of direct support from the churches for the issues and concerns of the Unit. ... the churches' 'domestic needs' of education and congregational renewal – which touched directly the people who make up the membership statistics presented to the Council – remain areas which 'do not need' special attention.[549]

Reflection on ecumenical learning

In order to define ecumenical learning and identify its essential elements, a consultation was organised by the Working Group on Education in 1986.[550] A workbook for all participants was prepared which encouraged them to describe and reflect on their own ecumenical journey and experience of ecumenical learning. The suggested definition of ecumenical learning was:

> Learning which enables people, while remaining rooted in one tradition of the church, to become open and responsive to the richness and perspective of other churches, so that they become more active in seeking unity, openness and collaboration between churches. Learning which enables people of one country, language, ethnic group, class or political and economic system, to become sensitive and responsive to those of other countries, ethnic groups and political and economic situations, so that they become active participants in action for a more just world.[551]

Although the reports from individuals and the work in groups were documented, there was no synthesis or summary report. However, it is clear from what was reported that there were certain common affirmations. My own summary of what was documented is that ecumenical learning was

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[547] *Education in the Ecumenical Movement*, paper for the Unit III Commission Meeting, Mexico, 18-26 April 1985, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p4
[548] ibid p5
[549] Best, T, *Vancouver to Canberra 1983-1990: Report of the Central Committee to the Seventh Assembly of the world Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990, p203
[550] WCC sub-unit on Education, *Experiences, Findings and Action Proposals, Consultation on Ecumenical Learning 24 June-1 July 1986*, Geneva, 1986 p1
[551] ibid p10

seen as a dynamic and creative process which leads to individual and collective liberation. It involved being open and becoming vulnerable so as to learn from one another's experiences, learning from situations of conflict and crises, common action, intentional processes of reflection and participation by all (including children). There was disagreement on the definition of ecumenical learning and between ecumenical learning as intentionally programmed and ecumenical learning through the experience of life. The proposals which emerged seem to concentrate more on curriculum and instructional materials than applying some of the basic principles which had been adduced. They were also stronger on processes of activity than processes of reflection on the activity. In spite of the clear objective of the consultation to develop a definition of ecumenical learning, no such was offered in the various reports. It is not clear whether this implies an acceptance of the working definition given in advance or whether participants believed their proposals implicitly defined ecumenical learning.

This consultation, together with other meetings, resulted in the publication of a small book - *Alive Together! A practical guide to ecumenical learning.* This offered three definitions of ecumenical learning, the first of which was identical to that given above. The other two were:

> (2) Ecumenical learning is what happens when diverse persons, rooted in their own faith traditions and complex experiences of culture, gender, nationality, race, class, etc., become open and responsive to the richness of perspectives and the struggles of others, together seeking to know God and be faithful to God's intention for them in their world.
> (3) Ecumenical learning is a process by which:
> - diverse groups and individuals
> - well-rooted in their own faith, traditions, cultures and contexts
> - are enabled to risk honest encounters with one another before God
> - as they study and struggle together in community
> - with personally relevant issues
> - in light of the scriptures, the traditions of their faith, worship and global realities
> - resulting in communal action in faithfulness to God's intention to the unity of the church and humankind, and for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.[552]

In the earlier discussion on ecumenical consciousness, I spoke of it in terms of commitment, attitudes, behaviour and relationships and in terms of the individual and the community. These definitions are clearly oriented in that direction. Yet, to my mind, worthy as they are, lack an element of liveliness.

*Alive Together!* described ecumenical learning as a cycle – starting with our own identity and story and sharing these; discernment through Bible study and prayer; identification and analysis of problems, planning actions and carrying them out: responding; reflecting and evaluating. In a second section[553], the guide set out some principles concerning the practice of ecumenical learning. Groups needed to be made up of diverse individuals. They needed to be well rooted in their own faith traditions cultures in context. The group process must enable them to risk honest encounters with one another before God. They had to study and struggle together and to deal

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[552] *Alive Together: a practical guide to ecumenical learning,* Geneva, Sub-Unit on Education, World Council of Churches, 1989, p7f
[553] ibid pp12-20

with personally relevant issues. They had to focus on the Scriptures and the traditions of their faith but also relate to global realities. They had to engage in communal action towards unity and justice peace in the integrity of creation. All this seems to imply that ecumenical learning is a formal and specific process and also to be for the few rather than for the many. It did not touch on how such learning might become part of the everyday life of individuals and congregations.

At the same time, yet unrelated, a workshop on Partnership in Ecumenical Leadership Formation had been organised by PTE, the sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life and the Ecumenical Institute. In his welcoming address, Cyris Moon of the Ecumenical Institute admitted that the World Council had been relatively unsuccessful in training ecumenical leadership.[554] Participants discussed the marks of creative ecumenical leadership, how it could be formed and what theological vision could encourage it.[555] There was little reflection on the nature of ecumenical leadership especially in its collective aspect. There was also some confusion around the issue of training existing and potential church leaders in ecumenism or raising leaders who offered a counter cultural challenge to the churches towards unity.

In order to explore options for the World Council's educational work in the post-Canberra period, the sub-unit on Education organised a process to discuss what significant educational issues would be faced by the churches by the year 2000 and the role of the World Council in addressing them. From 1989, a series of regional workshops involving member churches, the regional ecumenical organisations and educational groups were organised. This culminated in a Global Workshop on Education 2000 in 1990. It was felt that six areas would be critical: making Christian education contextual, transforming liberating and empowering; reformulating the theological bases of Christian education; giving justice, peace and the integrity of creation a clear educational focus; the family; the rights of children; popular education.[556] The need for ecumenical education was merely noted.[557] The Working Group for Education met immediately after the workshop and added items to the list to produce 11 proposed areas of concern, including ecumenical learning for the sub-unit following the Canberra Assembly.[558] They were not to know that the sub-unit would not exist in the new structure. In any case, it was a highly aspirational set of proposals that seemed to take no account of the institutional capacity of the World Council, let alone any need for integration and focus on the ecumenical dimension.

There had been the hope that the programme on Education for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation would:

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[554] Moon, Cyris H (compiler), *Partnership in Ecumenical Leadership Formation: Workshop held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 10-19 September 1989*, Geneva, WCC Programme for Theological Education, Sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life, Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 1989, p3
[555] ibid p41
[556] WCC sub-unit on Education, *Education 2000: a report from the Global Workshop,* published in WCC Education News letter, No2, 1990, Geneva, WCC, p2-4
[557] ibid p17
[558] ibid p17f

play a vital part in the area of ecumenical learning as it would serve as an action-oriented model of ecumenical learning in community.[559]

However, an evaluation in 1990[560] recognised that although they had brought together educators from the institutional churches and Christian action groups around the same table, the process had had minimal impact on the day to day life of the churches and congregations.

In terms of lay training, a world Course for Leadership in Lay Training (CLLT) was organised in 1985 in an attempt to redress the trend towards the clericalisation and institutionalisation in the ecumenical movement. Evelyn Appiah identified three emerging issues which were vital to the future of the ecumenical movement:

> without lay training ... lay people will more and more disappear from the ecumenical scene. This will result in a decrease of lay leadership in ecumenical gatherings.
> without leadership formation ecumenically committed new generations will only come up by chance.
> without ecumenical learning ... the sense of belonging will decrease, the priorities will become diffuse, solidarity will be weakened.[561]

Programme on Theological Education (PTE)

A joint consultation in 1985 between PTE and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) on ecumenical formation, the preferred term of the RCC, noted that the 'persistence of a mentality of separatedness'[562] was a major difficulty. The official policy of the RCC was that the study of ecumenism was 'obligatory for both seminaries and faculties of theology'[563] but it was not fully implemented. The report recognised that ecumenical formation often occurred through informal but intentional encounter. However, it also noted that integrated programmes seemed more effective in ecumenical formation than optional courses from various traditions.[564]

PTE, as one of its priorities, produced a report *Theology by the People: Reflections on Doing Theology in Community* which commented:

> Theology by the people ... seeks new ways of doing theology in community. It seeks also to see that an active commitment to justice and peace becomes an integral concern of the theological enterprise.[565]

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[559] Central Committee Minutes, 1984, p64 and Best, T, op cit, p207
[560] Notes of meeting to evaluate the Learning for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation workshops and seminars, Geneva, World Council of Churches, September 1990.
[561] Appiah, E, 'The Role of the Laity in the Ecumenical Movement' in Appiah, E and Ruppell, G (eds), *Empowering Lay Leadership,* Geneva, Education and Ecumenical Formation, WCC, 2000, p10
[562] Report of the Consultation on Ecumenical Formation and Clergy Training, 1985, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p1
[563] ibid p1
[564] ibid p2
[565] Amirtham, S and Pobee, J (eds), *Theology by the People: Reflections one Doing Theology in Community,* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1986, px

Instead of being consumers of the theological expertise of others or being the objects of theologising:

> The small word 'by' restores the people to their legitimate place as subjects of doing theology and to their dignity as children of God who not only obey their God and enjoy fellowship with God, but also reflect on that experience.[566]

This stood in contrast to the traditional Faith and Order approach to theology that began with the givens of Christian and denominational tradition and could be considered as more congenial to the development of an ecumenical consciousness. As the second of its priorities, PTE pursued the rehabilitation of spirituality in programmes of theological education, producing *Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education.* It set out a renewed concern for spirituality as 'a search for meaning, a longing for depth and transcendence and for wholeness and community'.[567] Spiritual formation was:

> an open-ended process of being formed in the image of God and Jesus Christ in the midst of the life of this world. ... an intentional process by which the marks of an authentic Christian spirituality are being formed and integrated ever anew.[568]

It was the quality of community in which a person participated that was essential for spiritual formation. The document pointed to an ecumenical dimension in:

> widening the horizon for the understanding of the spirituality one's neighbour and being introduced into some of the rich diversity of spiritualities within the Universal Church. One needs to go beyond one's own cultural and professional boundaries in order to look beyond and to see oneself with the eyes of the other.[569]

While spiritual formation could be pursued in some specific courses, 'it is important to see it as a crucial dimensional theological education as a whole'.[570] Seeing one's self through the eyes of another is a significant dimension of ecumenical consciousness.

Coming from a completely different direction, an issue of *The Ecumenical Review* in 1987 dealt with the theme of The Teaching of Ecumenics. Emilio Castro's Editorial commented that there were two complementary ways of teaching ecumenics.[571] One dealt with the divisions of the church and the attempts to overcome them. The other brought an ecumenical perspective to the whole curriculum. He concluded by saying that an ecumenical consciousness could:

> never be acquired solely through the discipline of study. It has to be lived and experienced, shared and celebrated. It calls for participation in ecumenical discussion and action. Students and teachers are not spectators in the ecumenical drama; they must themselves be involved as actors.[572]

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[566] Amirtham, S, 'Ecumenical Learning: some questions that cannot be ignored in Theological Education in Europe' 1985, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, p11
[567] Amirtham, S and Pryor, R, *Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education*, Geneva, World Council of Churches Programme on Theological Education, 1991, p148
[568] ibid p157
[569] ibid p161
[570] ibid p162
[571] Castro, E, 'Editorial' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1987, vol 39, no4, p374f
[572] ibid p375

Castro recognised that there is no automatic connection between the teaching of ecumenics and an ecumenical consciousness, just as there is no automatic connection between ecumenical activism and ecumenical consciousness.

Ecumenical Institute, Bossey

The Graduate School of Ecumenical Studies remained the most substantial aspect of the Institute in this period. The first part of each semester consisted of academic reflection on the theme of the School.  The second part considered regional perspectives for the renewal of church and society and enabling students to act on the theme on their return home.  The report of Central Committee to the Canberra Assembly emphasised the point that:

> Graduate School participants are not considered primarily as students coming to learn, but rather as resource persons who can best interpret their own context, in which they must live ecumenism.[573]

An evaluation by the tutors of the 1983-84 Graduate School suggested that there should always be an introductory course in ecumenism.  This implies that ecumenism per se was not always a primary concern.

In 1989, the general secretary, Emilio Castro, set out his proposal for the merger of PTE and Bossey in the context of wider structural changes.[574]   In noting that the two had already been collaborating, he stated that his proposal 'presupposes the creation of something new and not simply a growth in cooperation'.[575]  An initial response from PTE appeared to resist the spirit of creating something new.

> We are convinced that these distinctive elements [of PTE and Bossey] must be maintained as vital contributions to renew theological education and ecumenical learning.[576]

However, on reflection, the PTE Commission felt that:

> The merging of Bossey and PTE must not be simply or literally be that: it must be the creation of a new ecumenical agency/sub-unit mandated to meet old and new challenges, in constructive ways consistent with evolving understandings, new opportunities and available resources.[577]

The new sub-unit would make possible:

> new opportunities to stimulate theological reflection and research across the WCC recognizing always that ecumenical learning and theological reflection must be both contextual and world-wide, universal and local.[578]

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[573] Best, T, op cit, p24
[574] Memorandum from Emilio Castro, 29 November 1988, WCC Archives Box 42.54.56
[575] ibid p1
[576] Memorandum to Emilio Castro, 26 January 1989, WCC Archives Box 42.54.56, p1
[577] 'Towards a New Sub-unit Embracing PTE and Bossey', Appendix to the Minutes of the Commission Meeting of the Programme on Theological Education, Indonesia, June 1989,  p40
[578] ibid p41

The Central Committee in 1989 agreed to move towards a merger between the Ecumenical Institute and PTE.[579]  The anticipated benefits were that it would give Bossey improved contacts with the regions and give PTE new possibilities for experimentation in ecumenical learning.  The increased staff capacity would strengthen both Bossey and PTE in the task of ecumenical theological education and leadership formation.  As we will see in the post-Canberra period, this arrangement was only of short duration.

**Canberra 1991 to Harare 1998**

The seventh assembly of the World council took place in 1991 in Canberra , Australia under the theme: Come, Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation. There was an educational programme for visitors to the assembly which might have been better offered to the delegates. In his personal overview and introduction to the official report *Signs of the Spirit,* Michael Kinnamon highlighted 'a shortage of experienced leadership, the dearth of ecumenical memory'.[580]  This feeling was echoed by Paul Crow writing in *Mid-Stream*, an ecumenical journal of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), USA, that delegates:

> brought little or no memory of the ecumenical vision of the WCC, or of the common commitments previously made by the member churches.[581]

The picture was painted of delegates who might be able to represent their church but who were not ecumenically engaged themselves.  The comments above seem to me to be a good illustration of the need of the World Council and the ecumenical movement as a whole for a constituency with a well-developed ecumenical consciousness.

As none of the assembly sections had a specific responsibility for considering ecumenical learning or even education, there were passing references of varying degrees of relevance throughout the reports. Indeed, with a plethora of sub-sections, it is hard to see how any coherent and strategic direction for the World Council could have emerged.  Following the assembly, an article in *Ministerial Formation* commented that, of the many resolutions, only two mentioned theological education:

> and these primarily seek to enlist seminaries in the struggles against racism and sexism. One lesson from Canberra is surely the need to rediscover a more central place for theological education in the life and thought of the ecumenical movement.[582]

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[579] Central Committee Minutes, 1989, p62.
[580] ibid p24
[581] Crow, P A, 'Canberra as Hope and Struggle' in *Mid-Stream* Vol XXX, No 3, July 1991, p182
[582] Kinnamon, M & Nicole, J, The Challenge of Canberra for Theological Education in *Ministerial Formation,* No 54, July 1991, p7

Although speaking specifically about theological education rather than more generally, the thrust of the argument that formative processes were seen as tools for other ends rather than as of the essence of the ecumenical process is revealing.

<u>The post-Canberra structure</u>

A new structure of the work of the World Council involved the creation of four new Units. Although Unit II contained a programme entitled Education for All God's People, education activities were spread out across all the Units. The philosophy of this approach was that all the work of the World Council includes an educational aspect or element. As we have seen, even with the inclusion of a critical mass of educational programmes in one Unit, integration and a strategic approach were difficult to implement. In its first meeting in 1992 the Unit II Commission[583] described its role as stimulating an education process so as to assist the renewal of the churches in their calling in mission and healing. The guidelines for programmes gave priority to churches in need and to regions and people not adequately served before, therefore:

> WCC staff should develop programmes which:
> - help churches to discover their own identity and heritage,
> - build self-direction, and multiply leadership locally.[584]

These guidelines placed the World Council as a service provider rather than an ecumenical driver.

The impression is given of a unit responding to a set of demands rather than adopting a proactive ecumenical agenda. The programme 'Education for All God's People' was given the mandate:

> identifying ... analysing and sharing, the theological and pedagogical issues at the cutting edge of Christian education today;
> promoting a holistic approach to Christian nurture and growth ...
> accompanying the churches in their work of Christian education for the whole people of God.[585]

This was to equip local congregations for common witness and to foster an ecumenical understanding of Christian education for laity and clergy. It could have been interpreted to cover almost anything educational and probably represents an amalgam of the concerns of the members of the Commission rather than an attempt to produce an ecumenical strategy.

A Mandated Working Group on Education (MWGE) was established to bring together representatives of the Commissions of the four programme units and the staff who had educational responsibilities within them. At its first meeting in 1993 it was addressed by the new general secretary, Konrad Raiser who challenged to MWGE to ensure that the dispersal of

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[583] Minutes of the World Council of Churches Commission for Programme Unit II, Mission, Education and Witness, Evian, France, May 1992
[584] ibid pp69f
[585] Minutes of Unit II Commission 1992, op cit, p73

education programmes did not weaken the World Council's commitment to education.[586]  He told the members that they represented the different facets which make a commitment to education a permanent ecumenical task.

> It is imperative to find ways of handling on tradition, of drawing into the movement young people ... The concern for ecumenical learning should be seen not simply as instruction in ecumenical history but as an opening up towards new horizons.[587]

The MWGE agreed a Statement of Vision for the work of the World Council on education:

> the educational task of the World Council of Churches is to build up the body of Christ as community/koinonia.  The building of koinonia embraces themes of communion, community and participation for the common good and demonstrates justice, peace and the integrity of creation as signs of the kingdom. It includes strengthening churches as a reconciled and renewed community, equipping them for life, faith and witness.  It finds expression as a sign and instrument of reconciliation and renewal in the world.[588]

It could have been interpreted as a licence to strengthen the churches as they were.  This kind of attitude may explain why much energy was invested in doing that.

Such an example was Christian Religious Education in Central and East and Europe.  A consultation was held in Moscow in 1992 bringing together representatives from 15 churches:

> for the purpose of reflecting on the challenge of Christian religious education, and ways and means of contributing to its development today, as they seek to rediscover their ecclesial identity, witness, and mission after many decades under socialist and totalitarian regimes.[589]

In the initial stage of the programme, priority was given to serving the Orthodox Churches in setting up their religious education activities in parishes and Sunday Schools.  The problem was that many Orthodox Christians rejected ecumenism as irrelevant and even heretical or feared it as political propaganda or a form of proselytism.[590]  Expertise in educational principles and curriculum design and resources were made available by churches and Christian education groups in the West. A month long exposure programme was hosted in the USA.  Although many educational issues were raised by participants in evaluating this ecumenical exposure, that of an ecumenical dimension to Christian education in their home context did not emerge.[591]  However, the ecumenical failure was not all on one side.  The rush of many churches and Christian groups to enter Eastern Europe to promote their own style of faith was 'producing anti-ecumenical feelings

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[586] ibid p2
[587] ibid p2
[588] ibid p9
[589] 'Report of a WCC Consultation on Christian Religious Education in Central and Eastern Europe' in *Education Newsletter*, No2, 1992, p1
[590] Pirri-Simonian, T, *Canberra to Harare: on the trails of education work in the World Council of Churches: a personal assessment*, Geneva, Unit II WCC, 1998, p26
[591] Christian Education Training Programme: Evaluation of training for Christian Religious Educators in Central and Eastern Europe, June/July 1994, Unindexed WCC Archives Box, pp1f

and distorting ecumenical learning'.[592]  A personal assessment by staff member Teny Pirri-Simonian was that:

> From the standpoint of the Orthodox Churches the programme is a success. ... Sadly, neither the Unit Commission nor the staff owned the programme. ...  The programme remained the responsibility of the Orthodox colleagues in the house.[593]

Reflection on ecumenical learning and formation

In 1993 the Joint Working Group (JWG) between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council, whose discussions appear to have had no links to what was happening elsewhere in the World Council, produced a study document, *Ecumenical Formation: ecumenical reflections and suggestions.* The document began by giving a brief summary of the ecumenical imperative and commented that:

> ecumenical formation is a matter of urgency because it is part of the struggle to overcome the divisions of Christians which are sinful and scandalous and challenge the credibility of the church and her mission.[594]

The JWG defined ecumenical formation as a pilgrimage towards unity which:

> enables mutual sharing and mutual critique through which we grow.  Such an approach to unity thus involves at once rootedness in Christ and in one's tradition, while endeavouring to discover and participate in the richness of other Christian and human traditions.[595]

Ecumenical formation was a process of learning which involved:

> the experience, knowledge, skills, talents and the religious memory of the Christian community for mutual enrichment and reconciliation.[596]

and

> the growth into an ecumenical mind and heart is essential for each and for all, and the introduction of, and careful, ecumenical formation are absolutely necessary that every level of the church community.[597]

It could take place through formal courses or be integrated into the curriculum at all levels.  It was more than acquiring a body of knowledge as it was learning to live ecumenically. Ecumenical formation also took place in the daily life of people and the church.  There should be a special priority given to the ecumenical formation of those who exercise ministry and leadership in the church.  Ecumenical formation was an expression of an ecumenical spirituality open to the prayer of Jesus for unity and the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit.[598]

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[592] Minutes of the World Council of Churches Working Group on Education for All God's People, Indonesia, 31 May-3 June 1996, p5
[593] Pirri-Simonian, T, *Seven Years Evaluation Report,* June 1997, p21
[594] Joint Working Group, *Ecumenical Formation: ecumenical reflections and suggestions*, Rome & Geneva, Roman Catholic Church & WCC, 1993, p4
[595] ibid p6
[596] ibid p6
[597] ibid p9
[598] ibid p7f

The JWG argued that communities as well as individuals required ecumenical formation as they learned, prayed and worked together. This did not imply denying the specifics of different ecclesial traditions but might require a common re-reading of histories, particularly in regard to divisive events. The document also called for an openness to other religions.[599] However, there was a warning against confusing inter-religious dialogue with ecumenical dialogue amongst Christians. The JWG concluded by stating:

> Ecumenism is not an option for the churches … The ecumenical imperative must be heard and responded to everywhere. This response necessarily requires ecumenical formation which will help the people of God to render a common witness to all humankind by pointing to the vision of the new heaven and a new earth.[600]

Although many references were subsequently made to the thinking in the report, the JWG's free standing status meant that it's work had no direct influence on the relevant departments of either the World Council or the Vatican.

Gideon Goosen, who taught ecumenism in Australia, proposed a distinction in 1993 between education about ecumenism, education in ecumenism and education for ecumenism.[601] He argued that education about ecumenism focused on knowledge of the content of ecumenism, principally the Christian movement towards church unity. Education in ecumenism meant:

> education in the spirit of ecumenism, that is, in the feelings and attitudes necessary to promote and foster ecumenism. It is theoretically possible to know all about ecumenism without promoting it or even being convinced of its importance.[602]

He summed up his approach by talking about:

> three perspectives, namely the cognitive, affective and conative. ... Talking about issues needs to be complemented with action. And both thinking and doing need personal feeling to make them fully human.[603]

In an article in *The Ecumenical Review* on moral formation in 1995, Larry Rasmussen described the nature of human beings as moral beings. He suggested that we are:

> aware of 'moral agency' – the capacity to imagine and choose a different world and, in varying degrees, to act upon that choice.[604]

He suggested some means of moral formation which seem particularly relevant to the ecumenical consciousness .[605] Repeating communal activities renew focal actions - intrinsic to a shared way of life which centre, sustain and order that way of life. Carrying out roles and responsibilities or

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[599] ibid p10
[600] ibid p10
[601] Goosen, G, 'Education about, in and for Ecumenism' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1993, vol 45, no3, p350ff
[602] ibid p351
[603] ibid p352
[604] Rasmussen, L, 'Moral Community and Moral Formation' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1995, vol 47, no2, p181
[605] ibid p183ff

imitate that example. The community's moral vision is learned through stories, songs, statements and actions. An issue of *The Ecumenical Review* in 1997 contained the papers from a consultation around the theme of ecclesiology and ethics. John De Gruchy described the struggle against apartheid in terms of moral formation. Many churches:

> did not morally prepare their constituencies to discern the evil of apartheid or oppose it as they should have. Often, in fact, quite the reverse.[606]

Responding to this paper, Margot Kässmann observed that Christianity rather than being a source of unification was a factor in division and a legitimization of it. Citing, inter alia, the former Yugoslavia she commented on the lack of moral formation and of ecumenical encounter:

> Had there been ecumenical formation, the knowledge and conviction that Christian denominations are in koinonia with one another might have provided them the strength to resist the temptation of being used for political causes.[607]

In considering the relationship between liturgy and moral formation, Duncan Forrester concluded:

> In worship we receive a new identity, we are formed morally. By encountering God we learn how to be disciples. We learn to love by being loved; we learn to forgive by being forgiven; we learn generosity by being treated generously.[608]

However he also recognised that the understanding and the practice of liturgy can be distorted thus making moral formation 'thin and fragile'.[609] This would suggest that the formation of an ecumenical consciousness cannot depend on worship that is limited by denominational horizons and less than generous in its understanding of God.

Laity

An issue of *The Ecumenical Review* in 1993 was devoted to the laity. Konrad Raiser remarked that the disappearance of the laity from ecumenical discussion was:

> all the more striking because laity was an ecumenical keyword only a generation ago. Since then the passionate enthusiasm in the early ecumenical movement - which in several important respects saw itself as a lay movement - has somewhat abated.[610]

He proposed that lay people should be identified as the agents of ecumenical learning processes. Raiser outlined the difference between discursive learning and conciliar learning. Discourse enabled us to relate everyday pragmatic wisdom to the knowledge of experts and specialists in order that one may correct the other. Conciliar learning, however:

> aims constantly to link the biblical knowledge of faith and hope afresh with human empirical knowledge. … Conciliar learning describes the process of projecting the all-

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[606] De Grouchy, J W, 'Church Unity and Democratic Transformation' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1997, vol 49, no3, p361
[607] Kässmann, M, 'Moral Formation and Everyday Issues' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1997, vol 49, no3, p367
[608] Forrester, D B, 'Moral Formation and Liturgy' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1997, vol 49, no3, p383
[609] ibid, p379f
[610] Raiser, K, 'Laity in the Ecumenical Movement' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1993, vol 45, no4, p375

embracing vision of justice, peace and the integrity of creation onto everyday reality. ... This can also be described as a process of literacy training, in other words, discerning and spelling out the signs of the times, in order to open up afresh the forces of hope contained in the tradition of faith.[611]

In Raiser's view discursive and conciliar learning belonged together as 'two-dimensions of the one reality'.[612]

Considering intercultural learning, Werner Simpfendörfer commented that ecumenical learning can be seen as a transition from a parochial conscience to a global conscience:

becoming aware of my cultural limits is both a painful and liberating process. ... Intercultural living and ecumenical learning do not aim at an intercultural melting pot dissolving cultural differences into one way of life. Rather they start out from the awareness and acceptance of my own identity, exposing it to the eyes of the other.[613]

The challenge was to turn barriers of firmly held cultural heritages into bridges. From the perspective of the lay academies and centres of the European Ecumenical Association, Fritz Erich Anhelm suggested that laity formation was meant to create a sense of ecumenical solidarity – 'ecumenical solidarity means the formation of awareness'.[614] Because ecumenical ideals are not automatically handed down, leadership training should generate ecumenical commitment so that 'others are caught by their enthusiasm'.[615]

A Central Committee plenary on the laity[616] led to work on the clarification of terminologies - lay, laity, people of God - which culminated in a consultation on Towards a Common Understanding of the Theological Concepts of Laity/Laos: the People of God in 1997. A report was shared with the Central Committee and a book produced for the Harare Assembly.[617] The consultation observed the increasing dominance of clergy in ecumenical meetings even though:

laypersons are a major source of pressure towards the unity of the church. In their relations across denominational lines, the pain sometimes experienced by those in mixed marriages, their participation in common parishes, and their refusal to accept the continuing divisions of the Churches, the laos challenge the churches to overcome their divisions. [618]

The report noted that the need for the spiritual formation of the people of God.[619] However, in common with the plenary discussion at the Central Committee, no emphasis was placed on the need for the ecumenical conscientisation of the laity.

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[611] ibid p382

[612] ibid p382

[613] Simpfendörfer, W, 'Intercultural Living, Ecumenical Learning' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1993, vol 45, no4, p397f

[614] Anhelm, F E,'The Lay Movement, the Centres and Ecumenical Learning' in *Ministerial Formation*, No57, April 1992, p8

[615] ibid p7

[616] Central Committee Minutes, 1994, p33f

[617] Apostola, N (ed), *A letter from Christ to the world : an exploration of the role of the laity in the Church today,* Geneva , WCC, 1998

[618] 'Laos Consultation, Geneva, May 1997: Towards a Common Understanding of the Theological Concepts of Laity/Laos: the People of God' in *Ministerial Formation,* No79*,* October 1997, p44

[619] Central Committee Minutes, 1997, p185

By 1998 there had been around 400 participants in major global and inter-regional Courses for Leadership in Lay Training (CLLT). [620] Many of these can be identified as going on to play a major role in their local and regional ecumenical structures and in the World Council itself. In this period, Courses in Lay Leadership Training (CLLTs) had reached their most refined form. However, the financial and time commitment required also led to their demise. The basic format was a four-week programme consisting of one week of exposure followed by three weeks of reflection and interaction. Learning took place in and through four kinds of community - the community of the exposure visit, the community of the institution where the residential component took place, the community of the small group in which each participant shares the exposure visit, the community of all the participants in the residential component. The learning process was built on encounter with people and contexts, some radically different and disturbing. The test of each CLLT was not only how individuals had been changed but how their practice of ecumenical formation had been transformed.

Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE)

Initially Ecumenical Theological Education comprised both the former Programme for Theological Education (PTE) and the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey. One of the programme's priorities was:

> conscientizing people in ecumenism not only by offering learning opportunities with regard to ecumenism, but also by encouraging people to draw from various cultures, church traditions and religions for holistic encounters. [621]

Although the 1992 meeting of Central Committee had agreed priorities which integrated the work, by the time of the meeting of the Executive Committee in September 1993 it had been recognized that this was problematical. A Review Group had been established to examine the relationship and their report was presented to the meeting of the Central Committee in January 1994. They noted that:

> in spite of the willingness of staff to make it work, practical and personal limitations and obstacles have emerged, leaving many feeling that the idea whilst perhaps beautiful, is unrealistic. [622]

The staff had already reorganised themselves into two work groups – ETE Regional (PTE) and ETE Residential (Bossey). The main thrust of the report was that these two dimensions should be organisationally separated. This, with the other recommendations of the report, was accepted by the Central Committee.

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[620] Augustine, M G, *History and Hopes of CLLTs*, Geneva, Education and Ecumenical Formation, World Council of Churches, 1999
[621] Minutes of the Commission Meeting, Unit I, May 1992, Appendix 2, p1
[622] Final Report of the Bossey Review Group, Paper A.8 for the World Council of Churches Central Committee, January 1994, p2

The Ecumenical Theological Education programme was left to concentrate on the concerns inherited from PTE. This led to a specific focus on the viability of theological education and ministerial formation, given the limited success of efforts to encourage genuinely ecumenical theological education.[623] A process of reflection was launched in 1993 to renew the vision of efficient and relevant ministerial and theological formation. The hallmarks were 'quality, authenticity and creativity'.[624] From 1994 a series of articles was published in *Ministerial Formation*. It was made clear that the term viability was not understood to be limited to the maintenance of institutions but the capacity of theological education to be life-giving.[625] The same article continued:

> That ecumenism is a Gospel imperative obliges ministerial formation programmes to take on board ecumenism ... in the face of a current trend towards preferring denominational formation to the ecumenical and inter-denominational programmes.
> We stake a claim that theology should foster ecumenism ... because truth in its fullness is discovered only in dialogue with others.[626]

An Editorial in 1995 emphasised the ecumenical focus of the study – 'The ecumenical perspective is not an option, it is of the essence of the Christian vocation'.[627] It was recognized that inter-denominational colleges and federations were not a guarantee of ecumenical perspective and that some denominational institutions were very ecumenical in style.

The study was brought to a focus in a global consultation in 1996. Papers included reflection on the formation of the laity as well as ministerial formation and there was an emphasis on spirituality. Viability was not only seen as maintaining institutions with an appropriate level of financial and human resources, although the consultation did pay a great deal of attention to this, but was equally about renewing, giving life and transforming Christian communities. The ecumenical movement, churches and theological institutions had to respond to their global and local contexts as much as to the ecclesiastical agenda. The Message of the Oslo consultation said there was consensus:

> on the holistic character of theological education and ministerial formation, which is grounded in worship, and combines and inter-relates spirituality, academic excellence, mission and evangelism, justice and peace, pastoral sensitivity and confidence, and the formation of character.[628]

A general lack of resources for theological education and a denominational prioritisation called into question the viability of ecumenical institutions and federations. A concern for unity needed to be kept alive not only through an ecumenical dimension to all parts of the curriculum, but the

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[623] VanElderen, M (ed), *From Canberra to Harare: An Illustrated Account of the Life of the World Council of Churches 1991-1998*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1998, p17
[624] 'Process on Viability of Ministerial Formation in Today's World', paper presented to the Ecumenical Theological Education Working Group 1993, in *Ministerial Formation.* No63, July 1993, p41
[625] Pobee, J, 'The First Gospel of Viability of Ministerial Formation' in *Ministerial Formation*, No64, January 1994, p5
[626] ibid p9
[627] Editorial in *Ministerial Formation*, No68, January 1995, p2
[628] Pobee, J (ed), *Towards Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical Imperative, Catalyst of Renewal*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, p1

ecumenical sharing of resources, human and institutional.[629]  The importance of appointing theological educators who were themselves committed to ecumenism was also underlined.  The conference affirmed the ETE programme in the World Council 'in order to transmit its ecumenical vision to the future generations of leadership in the churches'[630] and to connect with the global network of theological education institutions.

The Ecumenical Institute

The Review Group had described two particular characteristics of Bossey which made the kind of integration with PTE, as originally envisaged, difficult if not impossible – its nature as a residential community for ecumenical reflection and encounter; its participative methodology requiring constant collaboration and full-time involvement.[631] The Review Group went on to make some proposals for the basic annual programme for Bossey. As well as the Graduate School for Ecumenical Studies there should be a one month Ecumenical School for Leadership Training. Seminars should be organised to explore contemporary ecumenical themes, ecumenical formation should be offered for visiting groups and there should be a resident research programme.

The 50th anniversary of the Institute was celebrated in 1996.  In a special issue of *The Ecumenical Review*, the Editorial commented that:

> Bossey's jubilee comes a time when ecumenical apathy seems to be growing.  Concern about ecumenical ignorance is a long way down the line of preoccupation in most churches.[632]

Referring back to the early description of Bossey as a laboratory, the Editorial went on to describe the Institute as a place of experiential learning where the experience of living together was as educative as the formal lectures. However, the challenge was:

> to find ways to convey the learning experience of Bossey (and every other personal international ecumenical involvement) beyond those fortunate individuals who encounter it at first-hand.[633]

Hans-Reudi Weber in an article of the same name as his book to commemorate the 50th anniversary – *A Laboratory for Ecumenical Life*[634] – identified some major concerns which have remained constant throughout the life of the Institute.  Bossey had been called:

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[629] ibid  p3

[630] Towards a New Mandate and Structural Framework of ETE/WCC: suggestions by the Conference on the Viability of Theological Education in Oslo, August 1996 reproduced in *Ministerial Formation,* No 78, July 1997, p28

[631] Final Report of the Bossey Review Group, op cit, p2. As a postscript, the programme structure of the World Council after Porto Alegre merged the work on education and ecumenical formation with that of Bossey.  In 2009, the decision was taken to move ETE away from Bossey for similar reasons.

[632] VanElderen, M, 'Editorial' in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1996, vol 48, no 4, p433

[633] ibid p434

[634] Weber, H-R, *A Laboratory for Ecumenical Life: the story of Bossey, 1946-1996*, Geneva, WCC, 1996

the breeding ground of an "ecumenical conspiracy", a common spirit, vision and commitment. ... which leads to a holy *impatience.* It struggles against divided and self-sufficient church life.[635]

Weber suggested that Bossey created a more experimental and spontaneous ecumenism than formal processes with official representatives who produce agreed statements. The genius of Bossey lay in the repeated creation of a residential learning community composed of people from widely diverse denominational, cultural, linguistic and political contexts. This made it 'a dangerous place'.[636] Weber also noted that, although the World Council had undertaken much reflection on ecumenical education and learning, Bossey itself:

> has made only a few contributions to such theoretical reflection, but for 50 years it has been involved in the praxis of this educational process. Its laboratory experience may therefore have relevance of planning the future of the ecumenical movement.[637]

His statement was not quite true but also contains an uncomfortable truth. The impression was given that the educational staff of the World Council were simply theoreticians. They would have probably wanted to claim that the concepts or theories of ecumenical formation produced emerged out of their own experience and that of those in the global ecumenical movement who were actively practicing ecumenical formation. The uncomfortable truth was that Bossey had not been much involved in developing or setting out the concepts of ecumenical formation. This makes his use of the word praxis, repeated in a later section heading in the article, somewhat difficult. It would be more understandable if the word practice had been used instead of praxis. There is no question but that Bossey has enabled ecumenical formation to take place but there is a question as to if or how far the Ecumenical Institute has reflected on and learned from its own experience in order to improve its own understanding and practice and to enable others to put it into practice elsewhere.

Konrad Raiser placed Bossey in the wider context of the story of ecumenical formation over the previous 50 years. He noted the developing use of the term formation in discussions on ministerial formation, moral formation and ecumenical formation. Ecumenical formation was to be seen as an essential element of the building of community in the one household of God. Therefore it had to be 'rooted in an ecumenical spirituality and in praxis of learning in community'.[638] Its concern was for freedom, human rights, justice and peace, contributing to a renewed movement towards human solidarity. Such an understanding of ecumenical formation was the purpose and orientation of the Institute. Although Bossey had begun with a concern for formation of lay people, the focus had moved to the ecumenical formation of church leadership. The pioneering role of Bossey in lay formation had been taken on by other institutions across the world and 'the process of ecumenical

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[635] Weber, H-R, 'A Laboratory for Ecumenical Life' in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1996, vol 48, no 4, p438f
[636] ibid p437
[637] ibid p436
[638] Raiser, K, 'Fifty Years of Ecumenical Formation' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1996, vol 48, no4, p441

renewal became more and more to be understood as a process of lifelong learning for the whole people of God'.[639]

The background against which Raiser looked to the future of the Ecumenical Institute was a 'general failure of the ecumenical movement in the area of leadership formation'[640]. The ecumenical structures for youth work had almost disappeared so that emerging church leaders lacked ecumenical formation and exposure.

> This is particularly true for the male leadership of the churches, whereas the expanding ecumenical women's movement has in fact become one of the main promoters of ecumenical formation in the present generation.[641]

Feminist Pedagogy

There were significant differences in style between the Festival to mark the end of the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women[642] and the Harare Assembly which immediately followed it in 1998. These were an indication that it was not only the location of ecumenical formation in women's groups which was significant but the manner in which women learn. An attempt to explore this was undertaken by the World Council, culminating in a global consultation Towards a Feminist Pedagogy in 1997. The resulting book, *In Search of a Theory: Towards a Feminist Pedagogy*, commented that:

> the quest for a new paradigm in education will remain incomplete if the perspectives of women – and the way they act as women –are not taken into account.[643]

The consultation broke away from the tradition of a rigid timetable with formal presentations and responses. In doing so, it encouraged others to subsequently adopt more creative approaches to consultations and workshops. The elements of a feminist pedagogy that emerged from the workshop are set out in the book:

> The search for an understanding of what constitutes a feminist pedagogy is grounded on the lived experience of women and the processes leading to new insights and learning in their lives, and which in turn lead to greater awareness and empowerment.[644]

The account of the workshop[645] drew attention to the importance of dealing with subjectivities and thus to increase women's agency, self-determination and empowerment. For women, learning happened in community and results from working with others, creating links, forging relationships, developing common strategies towards a better life everyone. Women engage with others in supportive and symbolic ways and for them healing is a critical part of the learning process. This

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[639] ibid p446f
[640] ibid p448
[641] ibid p448f
[642] *Your story is my story, your story is our story : the decade festival, Harare, November 1998 / Ecumenical Decade : Churches in Solidarity with Women,* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 1999
[643] Orteza, E (ed), *In Search of a Theory: Towards a Feminist Pedagogy*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, Unit III: Justice, Peace and Creation, 1998 p7
[644] ibid p25
[645] ibid especially pp25-31

short summary hardly does justice to the richness of the whole workshop which offered a power counter-witness for both women and men to established and dominant styles of learning in the World Council and the ecumenical movement.

Preparing the ground for ecumenical formation after the Harare Assembly

As early as 1995 concern was expressed by the Staff Consultative Group on Education about the failure of the World Council to produce a coherent approach to education - staff were working independently across the different Units and there also needed to be a reflection on current trends and methodologies in education. Accordingly, a consultant was appointed and identified the types of education programmes in the World Council: awareness-building activities; capacity-building programmes; ecumenical learning and ecumenical formation programmes; support for formal education studies; specialised skills training.[646]  From this analysis, the consultant concluded that the World Council should:

> use as a focal/directing theme what we might call "ecumenical education for life in community" and then to build and strengthen the global ecumenical constituency.  By this I mean basically more stress/focus on ecumenism in all the programmes.[647]

However, in 1996 when the Mandated Working Group on Education drew up a proposal for a Churches Decade on Ecumenical Education for Life their concern was 'to affirm, promote and revitalise education in the life of the churches'[648] rather than an ecumenical focus.  The proposal was not accepted by the Central Committee.

In 1997, what was now the Staff Coordination Team on Education produced a paper entitled 'Quo Vadis Education?'. This advocated an identifiable unit or team within a revised staff structure that would be established following the assembly. Education, it argued, 'relates to whole persons in the community'[649] - children, youth and adults; women and men; and lay and ordained; individuals families and communities.  Education was seen to involve:

> nurturing the understanding and practice of Christian faith in the life of the church, the local community and the world towards unity;
> formation of persons, Christian disciples and those called to lay and ordained ministers in the church, with particular attention to the development of ecumenical leadership; [650]

The list was all inclusive rather than focused and strategic, probably necessary to gain the assent of all the staff involved. This does raise the question as to whether staff who have great commitment to particular pieces of work can agree to them being set aside for the sake of attaining a strategic priority when there is an organisational culture which encourages programmatic and

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[646] Final Report on the Survey on Educational Programmes and Activities in the World Council of Churches, February 1996, p8f
[647] ibid p12
[648] Minutes of the Mandated Working Group on Education, Indonesia, May 1996, Appendix 5, p1
[649] Staff Coordination Team on Education, *Quo Vadis Education? Education in the World Council of Churches - Policy Paper*, June 1997, p1
[650] ibid p1

personal individualism.  Certainly, there was no thought of the priority of the development of ecumenical consciousness.  The World Council decided to adopt a team-based staff structure after the Harare Assembly, including a team on Education and Ecumenical Formation which reunited educational programmes with the exception of the Ecumenical Institute and youth.

Following that decision, a consultation involving representative of the various constituencies was organised in 1998. This was the first attempt for many years by the World Council to reflect on education right across the different kinds of education activity undertaken by or in relation to the churches. In an introductory address, Konrad Raiser suggested that the experience of the Canberra to Harare period with education spread across the four Units 'has been ambiguous'.[651]  A new orientation with interrelation between the different areas work was needed.  This was made urgent, as he had stated earlier[652], by the failure to ecumenically engage new generations of church leaders.  Raiser drew attention to the document on ecumenical formation produced by the Joint Working Group, Philip Potter's address to the Vancouver Assembly in 1983 and the writings of Werner Simpfendorfer and Ernst Lange (all detailed above).  He suggested that ecumenical learning and ecumenical formation represent complimentary understandings of the purpose the ecumenical movement - formation relating to the unity of the church and learning beyond that to the unity of the human community and the whole creation.[653] He went on to emphasise that ecumenical learning was 'not primarily a matter of information but of experience'.[654]

After that input, the consultation worked by drawing on the experience and knowledge of the participants.  Although some were uneasy at first about the wide differences in context, situation and education activity, the participants engaged in some significant exchange and reflection.  There was agreement that ecumenical formation, understood to include ecumenical learning in Raiser's categorisation, should be taken up as the priority by the new staff team.  Recognising that educational processes had become fragmented or compartmentalised, there should be a study process on Holistic Education.[655]   The staff team should also analysis and reflection on new learning styles and methodologies.[656]

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[651] Raiser, K, *Why Learning is Integral to the Christian Faith*: *Presentation in the context of the WCC Consultation on Education and Ecumenical Formation, June, 1998*, 1998, pp3f
[652] 'Fifty Years of Ecumenical Formation' op cit
[653] ibid p7
[654] ibid p8
[655] *Setting Sails for New Learning,* in *EEF-NET* No 1, 1998, p17
[656] ibid p18

**Harare 1998 to Porto Alegre 2006**

<u>The Harare Assembly</u>

The eighth assembly under the theme 'Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope' was significant for the marking of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the World Council. A restatement of its self-understanding, *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches,* was shared with the assembly in a plenary session. As has been noted above, the document only made a passing indirect reference to the formation of ecumenical consciousness – 'promoting processes of education which enable Christians to think and act ecumenically.[657] Neither in the Assembly Message[658] nor in an act of affirmation in the recommitment service, *Our Ecumenical Vision*[659] was there any overt reference to the significance of learning together and from one another or of ecumenical consciousness. This was a far cry from the message of the first assembly in Amsterdam where engagement in the World Council was in itself understood to be a learning experience.[660] The concentration seemed to be on the stating of the vision rather than its being developed and lived out in the lives of the churches and their members. It was as though the act of stating it would cause it to take root and grow.[661]

However, the Report of the Moderator promoted the issues of education and ecumenical formation:

> one of the principal unfinished tasks of the ecumenical movement is, in fact, *ecumenical education* at all levels. … Maybe the time has come to encourage the churches to do an audit on their degree of knowledge of and commitment to the principles and guidelines they subscribe to in the ecumenical fellowship.[662]

He went on to ask how the churches could live out reconciliation and inclusiveness in the context of pluralistic societies and overcome the fears and prejudices that lead to the exclusion of strangers.

> The churches must develop people-oriented educational methodologies by which the local congregation is engaged in a learning process in its contextual setting.[663]

In the general secretary's Report, Raiser expressed the significance of ecumenical space[664] and the need for it to be created by the World Council as a dynamic counterforce to those which were driving the churches back behind their traditional boundaries.[665]

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[657] *Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 1997, §3.12.4

[658] The Assembly Message, Harare 1998, http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/fmesc-e.html Accessed 10/11/09

[659] op cit pp 113f

[660] Visser't Hooft, A, (ed) *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches,* Harper and Brother, New York, 1949, p10

[661] The content of this paragraph is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 2

[662] Kessler, D (ed), *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches,* Geneva, WCC Publications, 1999 p 48

[663] ibid p 48

[664] See p46

[665] op cit pp 92f

At the end of the assembly, the Programme Guidelines Committee advised that education in general should continue to be a concern of the World Council, especially in respect of the pluralistic context in which the churches found themselves. Work with young people, however, needed to be significantly strengthened with an emphasis on ecumenical formation, particularly greater with participation in decision-making bodies.[666] The ecumenical movement would be strengthened and renewed by the development of ecumenically educated clergy and lay people. They commended 'the model of contextual education, using action and reflection for learning'.[667] There was a sense in which the Harare Assembly Programme Guidelines Committee's advice was not essential. The future programme structure of the World Council had already been determined and the mandates for each staff team broadly agreed.

The most noteworthy decision of the assembly in relation to this study was that to reintroduce the concept of ecumenical consciousness to the Constitution:

> nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context.[668]

However, this was agreed without any explanation, let alone discussion, of the meaning or significance of ecumenical consciousness.

Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation

The newly established Commission was the first time the World Council had such a body to advise Central Committee, alongside the traditional and heavyweight commissions on Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism and International Affairs. Its newness meant that there was no established way of working, which in the case of the other commissions was based on the presentation and discussion of documents. This gave an opportunity to see the meetings of the Commission as learning opportunities rather than business meetings. The starting point was the participants' own knowledge and experience of ecumenical formation and the processes were participative and interactive rather than bureaucratic. In other words, an attempt to practice the ecumenical and educational values we espoused. The first meeting of the Commission reported:

> We worship together, share our stories and values, offer our gifts, open some spaces, dialogue with each other and in the process appreciate and respect our differences and value our connectedness and commonalties.[669]

Although some members were hesitant at first, being more comfortable in business meetings, at the end of the period the Commission gave a very positive evaluation of this approach.[670] The

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[666] ibid p 134
[667] ibid p 140
[668] See Chapter 2
[669] Report of the First Meeting of Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation of the World Council of Churches, Stony Point Center, 4-9 March 2000, p 1

mandate of the Commission was given in the By-Laws approved by the Central Committee in 1999. The first responsibility was to collaborate with churches and networks to 'foster the understanding and practice of ecumenical learning'.[671] In particular this was to focus on personal discipleship, families, lay and ordained leadership and theological education for all by relating to institutions and networks.

In a first discussion of methodologies, the commissioners drew attention to the significance of creating space for learning, contextualisation and experiential learning.[672] The second meeting of the Commission, in the immediate aftermath of the events of 11 September 2002, was very conscious of a need for education and ecumenical formation that enabled people to deal creatively with difference and diversity.[673] It also affirmed the priority of the Scholarships and Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) programmes using their grant making power to insist on an ecumenical dimension to the studies and projects supported.[674] In 2003, the Core Group of the Commission, in the face of the financial problems of the World Council which eventually meant that the initial six programme staff was reduced to three, restated the importance of ecumenical formation:

> The continued increase in denominationalism and the fact that ecumenism is no longer a passionate concern of people in the churches means that ecumenical formation becomes increasing important.[675]

At final meeting of the period, in reflecting where they had got to, the commissioners suggested that:

> Ecumenical formation is ... about making people different people, agents of social change. It is also about making churches different churches. When we enable people to be transformed or to transform themselves this will also change the churches and communities where they are part of and committed to. ...[676]

This is the closest the Commission came to articulating an understanding of the formation of ecumenical consciousness. The issue was how to transform experiences into learning. It was not enough to provide a space for having or exchanging experiences, a process was needed for learning to take place. Consequently there was a need for people trained for creative ecumenical

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[670] Report of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation, 24-29 November 2004, Seminario Evangèlico de Teologia, Matanzas, Cuba, p 12

[671] World Council of Churches, Central Committee, Minutes of the Fiftieth Meeting, Geneva, 26 August-3 September 1999 p 144

[672] Report of the First Meeting, op cit, p 6

[673] Report of the Second Meeting of the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation of the World Council of Churches, Cartigny, Switzerland, 18-22 September 2001, p 2

[674] Summary Report for the Programme Committee of Central Committee on the Second Meeting of the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation of the World Council of Churches, Cartigny, Switzerland, 18-22 September 2001, p 2

[675] Report of the Meeting of the Core Group of the Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, 20-22 June 2003, p 1

[676] Report on the Meeting of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation, 24-29 November 2004, Seminario Evangèlico de Teologia, Matanzas, Cuba, pp 8f

formation.[677]  It was noted that, even in ecumenical institutions, faculty were more often appointed for their academic or issue specialism than for their ecumenical and educational knowledge.[678]

Ecumenical formation processes

The study process which emerged at the end of the previous period recognised that there was a significant relationship between holistic education and ecumenical formation in both concepts and practice. It was also an integrative concern of all areas of ecumenical education, formal and informal. The working group for the study process produced eight principles, including that holistic education was to do with:

> education for transformation.
> development of the whole person in community.
> the uniqueness and creativity of persons and communities on the basis of their interconnectedness.
> active participation in the world community.
> spirituality as being at the core of life and, hence, central to education.
> a new praxis (reflection and action) of knowing, of teaching and of learning.[679]

The Foreword to the resulting publication, *Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context*[680] commented:

> There are no easy ways of becoming whole people in whole communities in a whole world. Holistic education is more a set of values and methodologies that enable individuals and communities to learn in integrated ways that relate to their context.[681]

Had I been actively aware of the significance of ecumenical consciousness when I drafted that Foreword for the general secretary to sign, I would have wanted to make the point that the formation of an ecumenical consciousness has to be a holistic process because the essence of ecumenical consciousness is holistic, much more than a collection of different consciousnesses.

Whilst the World Council and other ecumenical bodies were once staffed by ecumenical enthusiasts, the move towards more professional recruitment and the decline in ecumenical interest among many churches meant that staff members might have expertise and commitment to particular fields but little awareness of the bigger ecumenical picture.[682] The activities[683] undertaken by the staff in the period to offer opportunities for ecumenical formation for such people, were I now recognize, exercises in developing ecumenical consciousness.  Likewise

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[677] ibid p 10
[678] Summary Report for the Programme Committee of Central Committee on the Meeting of the WCC Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation, 24-29 November 2004, Seminario Evangèlico de Teologia, Matanzas, Cuba,  p 2
[679] Final Report of the Holistic Education Study Process 1999-2001, Geneva, 2001, pp3f
[680] Schreiner, P, Banev, E & Oxley, S (eds), *Holistic Education Resource Book: Learning and Teaching in an Ecumenical Context,* Munster, Waxmann, 2005
[681] ibid p 9
[682] See analysis in *Ecumenism in the 21st Century : Report of the Consultation Convened by the World Council of Churches, Chavannes-de-Bogis, Switzerland, 30 November-3 December 2004,* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2005
[683] eg WCC Core Programmes Report 2005, CP10 The Challenge of Ecumenical Formation, p1

reflection on peace education[684], the production of popular study material in the context of the Decade to Overcome Violence[685], the publication of *Creative Ecumenical Education*[686] and other resources could be seen in that light. However, all of this work would have been made more focussed had there been an understanding of the significance of ecumenical consciousness.

A themed issue of *The Ecumenical Review* on ecumenical formation was published in 2005. As guest editor, I wrote that academic courses:

> may be valuable in learning *about* ecumenism and the ecumenical movement. This knowledge is necessary but not sufficient. Other kinds of learning need to take place in order for people to *become* ecumenical. An ecumenical formation should always value learning ecumenical attitudes, behaviour and ways of relating. [687]

The Editorial went on to suggest that to miss out reflection on experience would be to miss 'the moment when experience and information are transformed into ecumenical living'.[688] Phyllis Anderson wrote explicitly about the formation of an ecumenical consciousness. For her, this meant developing an openness to and acceptance of differences in the churches and working towards greater understanding and co-operation:

> ecumenical consciousness includes both a compelling vision of the unity of the church as gift and also a commitment to the task of making that unity even more visible, more functional, more real.[689]

Ecumenical consciousness came, she suggested, 'through the alchemy of human experience that is informed by revelation'.[690] It was Anderson who first raised my awareness of ecumenical consciousness as I had merely requested her for an article on ecumenical formation from her experience as a theological educator in the US. From a Latin American perspective, Elsa Tamez commented that whereas courses on ecumenism might raise awareness, 'true ecumenism' came from 'practical experience in daily life.'[691] Hope Antone argued that in Asia ecumenical formation needed to broaden the understanding of ecumenism beyond co-operation among the churches to dialogue with other religious communities.[692]

The World Council organised a series of consultations on interfaith education, the reports of which were published in collaboration with the Comenius Institute, Germany, under the title *Shared Learning in a Plural Word: Ecumenical Approaches to Inter-Religious Education.*[693] Although most of this work is not directly relevant to this study, it could be seen to demonstrate that the formation

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[684] Journeying Together on a Path to Peace, EEF-NET No8, 2001, pp10ff

[685] Mavunduse, D & Oxley, S, *Why Violence ? Why not Peace?*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2002

[686] Oxley, S, *Creative Ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002

[687] Oxley, S, 'Editorial', in *The Ecumenical Review,* 2005, vol.57, no1, p2

[688] ibid p2

[689] Anderson, P, 'Formation of an Ecumenical Consciousness' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 2005, vol 57, no1, p4

[690] ibid p10f

[691] Tamez, E, 'Living Ecumenically : An Absolute Necessity' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 2005, vol 57, no1, p13

[692] Antone, H, 'Doing Ecumenical Formation in Asia' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 2005, vol 57, no1, p27ff

[693] Rüppell, G & Schreiner, P, *Shared learning in a plural world: ecumenical approaches to inter-religious education,* Münster, Lit-Verlag, 2003

of an ecumenical consciousness had to take into account the world's religious plurality. Moreover, to see that as a positive resource rather than a threat to be overcome:

> our religious education and learning would never be complete unless we have found ways to understand and make sense of one another's spiritual traditions as part of our own spiritual journeys and adventures of faith.[694]

Ecumenical Theological Education and Scholarships

From the beginning of the period there was an emphasis on the ecumenical dimension of both programmes:

> Our involvement always carries the price tag of "ecumenical" and of learning which is open and participatory. We are not ashamed of using our resources as leverage towards those ends.[695]

Throughout there was strong regional strategy in ETE. In support of Orthodox theological education, there was a determination to avoid the loss of an ecumenical focus as had happened with Christian education in the previous period.[696] The World Council organised a pan-Orthodox conference on theological education in 2000. The conference concluded that:

> members emphasized the importance of phrasing the "ecumenical message" in terms that will speak to and inspire Orthodox Christians. … Closely related is the pressing need to articulate a common "ecumenical vision."[697]

In relation to Africa, an attempt was made to integrate the work of the World Council staff and the various ecumenical educational stakeholders in the content in a conference the Journey of Hope in Africa Continued: A Critical Evaluation of Theological Education and Ecumenical Formation in 2002. The resulting Action Plan emphasised particularly pressing issues for the continent rather than any more general understanding of the need for ecumenical consciousness. ETE in African concentrated on the related issues of HIV/AIDS[698] and violence against women and children[699] believing that all church education programmes had to include these as a matter of the utmost urgency.

In order to help those awarded a World Council Scholarship, around 100 each year, make the fullest use of the ecumenical formation opportunity, a workbook was produced with advice on how to learn from the experience of a different culture and other churches. This reminded recipients that the World Council had given a scholarship:

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[694] ibid p 71
[695] WCC Activity Report 2001, Education and Ecumenical Formation Team Report, p2
[696] See p132
[697] Report of the Consultation on Orthodox Theological Education and Ecumenical Themes in *Ministerial Formation*, No 89, April 2000, p 58
[698] Dube, M, *HIV & AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institutions in Africa*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2001.
[699] Tamar Campaign in Africa, in *EEF-NET 16,* April 2005, p 6

so that your requesting body can benefit from your whole experience of living and learning in another country and culture. ... Your study place and the town and country where it is situated are a rich resource for your learning. Take the opportunity to encounter the people, their life, their culture and their faith.[700]

The workbook went on to suggest some ways of doing this and how the experience and what had been learned from it could be shared on the student's return home.

The Ecumenical Institute

In an article in the issue of *The Ecumenical Review* on ecumenical formation, the director, Ioan Sauca, rehearsed many of the familiar strengths of Bossey, describing it as embodying a 'holistic and inclusive model of academic study and research, life in community and shared spirituality'.[701] Looking at new challenges, he highlighted the greater variety of students accepted on the graduate school especially those from evangelical, pentecostal and charismatic groups beyond the membership of the World Council. This had produced new opportunities but also difficulties and frustrations. The experience had also been broadened by the inclusion of inter-faith components in the curriculum, involving scholars from different faith communities. Sauca emphasised the integration of theology as an academic science and experiential participation, especially in the liturgy.

> The Bossey academic model of ecumenical formation is particularly important today as it reaffirms the holistic nature of theology, re-articulates its intrinsic link with worship and spirituality and re-integrates it within the wider reality of the church as a whole and that of the world in which it lives.[702]

However, some saw this holistic approach as antithetical to academic theology. He recalled a meeting with some European theologians some of whom questioned whether the inclusion of worship and a common life denied the validity of Bossey as an academic institution.[703]

Youth

Between Harare and Porto Alegre the youth work of the World Council, located in the Justice, Peace and Creation staff team, changed from a multi-faceted approach with many different kinds of activities to a focus on strengthening the voices, participation and leadership of youth both for the future of the ecumenical movement and 'to bring an intergenerational rich discourse and practice'[704] into World Council programmes. The involvement of young people in the ecumenical movement was recognised as becoming increasing problematic. The level of participation was very low and the youth activities of the churches were denominationally focussed.

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[700] WCC Scholarships Programme, *Those having torches …*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2004, p 5
[701] Sauca, I, 'Ecumenical Formation in Bossey' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 2005, vol 57, no1, p66
[702] ibid p72
[703] ibid p73
[704] WCC Activity Report 2006, CP1102 Being church: strengthening the voices of youth, p 1

Among the areas that need urgent attention is leadership development of young people; development of ecumenical leadership training resources for young people, the churches and other ecumenical organisations.[705]

In response to this concern, the World Council, in collaboration with the Vesper Society of the USA, hosted a project undertaken by young people called Young Leaders On-Line. This was not simply an investigation of the possibilities of offering leadership development on-line but of actually creating virtual community.[706] The social aspect of community was as important as the technological aspect. The project developed a tool-kit that detailed the characteristics of online community and the processes necessary to maintain and develop it through various stages of its life-cycle. Unfortunately, the initial enthusiasm for the project was not maintained and it was not owned by the World Council. The website set up to promote online leadership and community is no longer extant. Another attempt to develop online community was a group of young ecumenists brought together by the Scholarships programme to participate in the Porto Alegre Assembly in preparing for and reflecting on their experience.

The World Council's Internship Programme provided a unique opportunity for a few young people to have an exposure to global ecumenism by working for a year in Geneva and participating in the events that took place. The most fortunate were those whose internship included an assembly. Although the World Council benefited by the input of the specific skills, visions and energy of the young people into the work, the principal purpose was ecumenical formation. To this end, the internship programme developed over the period to become more intentional in offering regular spaces for reflection on the experience of working at the Ecumenical Centre and a carefully planned series of Bible studies and seminars to discuss ecumenism, together with exposure visits. In the same way, even though the involvement was for a shorter period, the World Council's Stewards Programme[707] at Central Committee meetings, major conferences and Assemblies developed and deepened young people's ecumenical consciousness. Many former stewards have gone on to exercise leadership in their churches and ecumenical bodies. Again an intention programme of discussion and reflection was developed. In both activities, participants were encouraged to plan an ecumenical project which they could undertake once they returned home.

Ecumenism in the 21st Century

The emergence since the founding of the World Council of a plethora of ecumenical organisations at the national, regional and global levels raised issues of responsibility for activities, relationships and financial sustainability. In response, the World Council convened a consultation in 2003 to explore the question of the reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement. Recognising that framing the issue in this way placed too much emphasis on reforming the current structures of ecumenism

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[705] WCC Activity Report 2001, T4/17 Internship Programme, p 1
[706] Reported in EEF-NET, No11, December 2002, pp 9f
[707] WCC Activity Report 2002, T4/18.02, The Stewards Programme, p 2

rather than on creative possibilities for the future, a process emerged entitled Ecumenism in the 21st Century.

One of the conclusions of a mapping exercise at the start of the process was the need to:

> place greater emphasis on ecumenical formation so that people are able to see beyond the mandate and programmes of their own organisation to the wider vision and work of the ecumenical movement. [708]

The conclusion of later discussion was that ecumenical formation is about the renewal of a person – 'a change of heart that makes us share in Christ's desire for the Church to be one'.[709] Institutions also needed ecumenical formation. The question was raised, 'how to carry forward to many the ecumenical enthusiasm and experience shared by few?'.[710] Not having been part of that discussion, I wonder if anyone raised the counter argument that the ecumenical conscience of the many might result in the few being changed. The final statement hoped that the ecumenical movement would become a space:

> where open and ecumenically-minded culture is fostered in the everyday lives of people in their own contexts and where ecumenical formation is a central focus at all levels of church life, from the local to the global.[711]

<u>Porto Alegre Assembly</u>

The assembly met under the theme, *God, in your grace, transform the world* - a theme that was particularly apt for the formation of an ecumenical consciousness. The proposition that it implies individual and collective transformation – knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, relationships, faith – resonates with that prayer. The Mutirão was the space surrounding the official programme of the assembly that was joyfully filled with celebration, encounter and learning. Mutirão is a Brazilian Portuguese word meaning 'coming together to make a difference'. The aim was that participants should move beyond simply learning about the ecumenical movement to becoming ecumenical or having that vision and commitment deepened. The workshops covered almost every area of concern to the ecumenical movement. The philosophy was to offer spaces for workshops and let the organisers do them in their own way, providing the methodology was participative. Other aspects of the Mutirão were Bible study, intentional ecumenical formation sessions, drama, music, a theological café and a series of conversations between well known ecumenists and young adults, together with a large exhibition area.

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[708] Hawkey, J, 'Mapping the Oikoumene : A Study of Current Ecumenical Structures and Relationships', in *Ecumenism in the 21st Century : Report of the Consultation Convened by the World Council of Churches, Chavannes-de-Bogis, Switzerland, 30 November-3 December 2004,* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2005, p77
[709] Summary of Consultation Proceedings, op cit p 28
[710] ibid p 29
[711] op cit pp 5f

Having been given responsibility for planning and delivering the Mutirão, I analysed the evaluation forms and drew some conclusions which were published in *The Ecumenical Review:*

> The Mutirão demonstrated the potential of creating space for people to experience, relate and learn together. The space does not need to be controlled but it does need to be structured so that it is open and creative. [712]

The Mutirão demonstrated the power of commitment, vitality and engagement in the ecumenical movement which was not always reflected in World Council.  Young adults were able to exercise enabling skills and offer leadership to all generations and not just their own. It demonstrated that collaboration and creativity could overcome the constraints of  limited resources.  The Mutirâo would have benefitted from a greater participation by churches alongside the networks and other related groups.  Perhaps that relative absence was revealing of where energy and commitment to ecumenism were lacking.  The major self-criticism was that:

> participants went away from the Mutirão with many undifferentiated experiences, ideas and challenges - each one interesting and exciting but all jumbled together.  … We should not arrogate to ourselves the work of the Holy Spirit but we should use the wisdom we have to create the right spaces for transformation to take place.[713]

In the formal programme of the assembly, the Moderator's Report considered the ecumenical formation of youth.

> The quality and quantity of persons interested in ecumenical life, both in the WCC and elsewhere, is declining. The survival of the ecumenical movement is largely conditioned on the active and responsible involvement of youth. A vision requires visionaries to dream and struggle for its realisation.[714]

A similar note was sounded in the Report of the General Secretary:

> In many member churches, a new generation of leadership – though committed to ecumenical principles – seems not to be fully informed about the rich legacy and experience of the modern ecumenical movement. [715]

He continued by saying that the assembly should be an experience where young and old learned from one another:

> Young people need opportunities to experience the joy of working and praying with others from different traditions and different contexts.[716]

Ecumenical formation, he said, needed to be taken seriously not only in principle but also in resourcing.[717]

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[712] Oxley, S, 'What can we learn from the Mutirão?' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 2006, vol 58, no 1&2, p 26f
[713] ibid p27
[714] Rivera-Pagan, L, (ed), *God, in your grace: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2007,* p 133
[715] ibid p 155
[716] ibid pp 139f
[717] ibid p 155

Twenty two Ecumenical Conversations, which took place in three morning sessions on consecutive days, gave delegates and youth participants an opportunity to reflect on the common challenges facing the churches today. The expectation was that from sharing different experiences and actions, joys, frustrations, achievements and failures, Christians from different parts of the world would learn from one another. One of these Conversations was on ecumenical formation and each session had a different and progressing focus - Our Ecumenical Formation; Ecumenical Formation Today; Ecumenical Formation in the 21st Century.  The Report of the Conversation recognised the need for paradigm shifts– competition to cooperation; isolation to collaboration; disintegration to integrity; condemnation to dialogue; disconnected theology to contextual theology. There was a need for leadership development.[718]  However, some felt that the identity of their churches was threatened by drawing closer or merging with others.  In the final session, the participants identified three needs: dialogue with pentecostals; integration of youth expectations; developing a holistic approach in doing theological education; provision of expertise to help churches deal with the pluralist contexts in which they have to form the new generations.[719] This exercise did not seem to develop participants' or the World Council's understanding of ecumenical formation, per se.

The Programme Guidelines Committee proposed four major areas of engagement for the work of the Council in the next period: Unity, Spirituality and Mission; Ecumenical Formation; Global Justice; Public Voice and Prophetic Witness to the World.[720] Their concern was for the for ecumenical formation of 'students, young adults, laity and women in our churches as they increasingly take on leadership roles in the ecumenical movement for the 21st century'.[721]  The Ecumenical Institute was affirmed as a model for ecumenical formation in the involvement of evangelicals and pentecostals in its courses, providing inter-religious encounter and engaging those working on challenges of science and technology.  The World Council had a role in 'creating "safe spaces" for cross-cultural and cross-theological encounter as to engage in honest encounter around issues that divide our churches and our communities'.[722]  The assembly passed a resolution affirming the four areas of engagement and subsequently agreed to encourage 'churches on local, national, regional and global levels to commit themselves to the task of continuing ecumenical formation for all'.[723]

More significantly for this study, the Report of the Programme Guidelines Committee identified five goals for the World Council.  The third of which was to 'nurture the growth of an ecumenical

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[718] WCC 9th Assembly, *Report on the Ecumenical Conversations, 10 Memories and Renewed Quest for Ecumenical Formation,* p2
[719] ibid p 3
[720] ibid  pp 266ff  It is indicative of the way the World Council tends to function that the four major areas of engagement agreed by the Assembly were later interpreted by the staff into six programme areas which accommodated all the existing activities.  From 2009, financial pressure rather than principle has caused the World Council to reassess its programme priorities and structure.
[721] ibid p 267
[722] ibid p267
[723] ibid p 269

consciousness'.[724]   However, it was not made clear what was understood by ecumenical consciousness, whose was to be nurtured and what the role of the World Council should be. Perhaps it was assumed that the comments on ecumenical formation, reported above, covered that ground.

The Message of the Assembly was written in the form of a prayer, taking up the prayer-like nature of the assembly theme – *God, in your grace, transform the world*.  It contained a sentiment which went to the heart of the growth of an ecumenical consciousness:

> Transform us in the offering of ourselves so that we may be your partners in transformation.[725]

The whole assembly begged the question as to whether the churches and their members were actually seeking to be transformed and underlined a fundamental question about ecumenical consciousness – if it does imply being transformed do we really want it?

## Conclusion - ecumenical consciousness from Nairobi to Porto Alegre

As in Chapter 4, I will relate the evidence from the period to the issues raised at the end of Chapter 3.  The Nairobi Assembly was the point where explicit reference to ecumenical consciousness disappeared from the Constitution.  I think that disappeared is a better description than removed as I do not think that it was a deliberate act.[726]  Neither is it clear why it reappeared in the Constitution in the revised version approved at Harare.  There was no mention of ecumenical consciousness in the period immediately before Harare.[727]  The *Common Understanding and Vision* and the *Our Ecumenical Vision* statements contained no explicit reference.[728]  Konrad Raiser's suggestion[729] that it was the influence of Ernst Lange's thought explains the significance but not the timing of the reintroduction.  Ecumenical consciousness was reaffirmed by the Porto Alegre Assembly.[730]  However, as we have established, it was not simply being a constitutional requirement that gave the development of an ecumenical consciousness its significance.

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[724] WCC 9th Assembly, Report of the Programme Committee, http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/institutional-issues/report-of-the-programme-guidelines-committee/report-as-adopted.html , Accessed 3/11/09
[725] WCC 9th Assembly, Message, http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/christian-unity-and-message-to-the-churches/message-as-adopted.html,  Accessed 3/11/09
[726] See p109
[727] See pp142f
[728] See pp144 and discussion in Chapter 2
[729] See Chapter 2
[730] See p154f

Whose ecumenical consciousness?

A recognition of the need for all those involved in the ecumenical movement, either directly out of interest or commitment or indirectly through their church membership, to be ecumenically conscientised continued to be expressed.  At the beginning of the period, the staff of Unit III spoke of the ecumenical movement being a movement of people and its role in supporting that.[731]  In 1984 the Central Committee called for church members to be involved in ecumenical learning from an early age so they might act as leaven in the world.[732]  The education segment of Unit II in the Canberra to Harare period was entitled Education for All God's People, though this was limited to an ecumenical understanding of education.[733]  The phrase 'the whole people of God' was one emphasised by the Vancouver Assembly.[734]  It could be taken to mean the members of churches or the whole of humanity.  Perhaps like much language in the ecumenical movement its capacity for different interpretations was its value.  However, in terms of directing the attention of the World Council to a responsibility, it lacked the directness of the call to raise the ecumenical consciousness of the members of all the churches.[735]

Whether the development of an ecumenical consciousness was for the few, church leaders and ecumenical experts, or the many, people in congregations, remained an issue - whether it began from the top and worked its way down or began in the grass roots and worked up. At the Nairobi Assembly many of the ecumenically committed delegates, commission members and staff had received their ecumenical vision through experiences in the World Student Christian Federation or in the ecumenical work camps rather than in the churches.  By the time of the Canberra Assembly the complaint was that delegates had no ecumenical understanding or experience.[736]  Would the development of an ecumenical consciousness remain the privilege of a few ecumenical insiders?

There was much discussion of the significance of learning in community and the churches or, more particularly, congregations being communities of learning.[737]  There was little recognition of the tendency for communities, particularly churches, to shape people in their own image to ensure the preservation and continuity of the community.  Whilst we might be able to take the emphasis on learning in community as an encouragement to see it for the many rather than the few, in terms of the development of an ecumenical consciousness it pointed to the need for communities with broader horizons than many churches and congregations.

The ecumenical movement and those earlier movements that fed into it had a significant degree of lay participation and leadership.  However, this was felt to be in decline, with lay people almost

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[731] See p111f
[732] See p123
[733] See p131
[734] See p122
[735] See Chapter 2
[736] See p130
[737] See pp110, 116, 121f, 131, 142

disappearing from the ecumenical scene.[738]  No matter what the ecclesiology of the churches in membership with the World Council, there was a trend to clericalisation.[739]  Although programmes like PTE and the Ecumenical Institute described their work as being equally for the laity as for ordinands and the ordained, in practice their attention was directed towards the latter.[740]

There was a strong presumption that raising the ecumenical awareness of leaders would affect the churches and the ecumenical movement. Therefore in the Scholarships programme, laity work with CLLTs, PTE, the Ecumenical Institute and even in education for JPIC there was a preoccupation with leadership training.[741]  The exception to this in PTE was the work on theology by the people whereby they became those who did theology rather than received it.[742]  Only once does the question seem to have been raised whether ecumenical leadership should be developed that was counter cultural to the holding of office in church structures ie ecumenical leadership that had no vested interest in maintaining the status quo.[743]  Lange had proposed the training of ecumenical multipliers, not be confused with leadership training, to work in raising an ecumenical consciousness in congregations.[744]  The Education and Ecumenical Formation Commission later recognised the need for people trained for creative ecumenical formation.[745]

In contrast to the approach of engaging the few for the ultimate benefit of the many, both Simpfendörfer and Becker argued that people's ecumenical participation on a local level was essential.[746]  The communication of ideas could not replace concrete involvement.  Simpfendörfer recognised that ecumenical opportunities were only available for a small number and that a qualitative leap was required to develop the public conscience even in the churches.[747]  Becker repeatedly raised the questions as to how people who are rooted in a specific culture and context could relate to others locally and globally and how relevant experiences could be made to happen.[748]  He also advocated an ecumenical dimension to all educational activity in the churches to involve everyone.[749]  The discussions on Ecumenism in the 21st Century concluded that an ecumenically-minded culture should be fostered in everyone.[750]  This gives a disappointing symmetry to the study as it ends on the same note on which Chapter 4 began – a recognition of the need for an ecumenical consciousness in all participants in the life of the churches yet an inability or unwillingness to act on that.

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[738] See pp135
[739] See p136
[740] See p119, 138, 140
[741] See pp116f, 123, 137
[742] See pp127f
[743] See p126
[744] See p116
[745] See pp145f
[746] See p114
[747] See p113
[748] See p114
[749] See pp121f
[750] See pp151f

<u>Cognitive and emotional mobilisation</u>

In a period where ecumenical apathy seemed to be growing[751], there were few references to the ecumenical vision. This appears to me to be symptomatic of an organisational culture that believed that the production of information and statements would elicit people's support and participation.[752] Even those employed within the instruments of the ecumenical movement were not always fully ecumenically aware and committed.[753] However, there was some recognition that people needed to be engaged in their wholeness, particularly with the outcomes of the Holistic Education Study process.[754] There were references to the development of an ecumenical spirit, participation in sympathy and fellow feeling, a sense of belonging, ecumenical sensitisation and spirituality.[755] People should be able to deal creatively with difference and diversity.[756] There should also be a sense of impatience with disunity.[757] It implied a change of attitude and commitment together with a willingness to take costly decisions.[758] It was the opening up of new horizons and a global conscience.[759] Little attention appears to have been paid to the question of identity, other than suggesting that people should grow ecumenically within their tradition rather than outside it.[760] Another dimension had opened up more clearly by the end of the period – that of other faiths.[761] It seemed clear that relationship with and sympathetic understanding of other faiths was essential but should an ecumenical consciousness embrace other faiths in addition to Christianity?

Over the period it became increasingly recognised that ecumenical learning was more than the communication of information about the ecumenical movement. It was seen to be about the task of equipping Christians to live as a liberating and reconciling community in a divided world.[762] Not just church unity but liberation and justice[763] which implied, at least implicitly, a process of conscientisation.[764] The process was one of fostering understanding of, commitment to and informed participation in the whole ecumenical process.[765]

The tension continued between those who saw ecumenism as an academic field to be taught in a traditional style and those who saw ecumenical learning as an experienced and reflective process that changed individuals, communities and contexts. Some felt strongly that ecumenical

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[751] See pp116, 139
[752] See p144
[753] See p147
[754] See p147
[755] See pp111, 119, 128, 133
[756] See p115
[757] See p140
[758] See p124
[759] See pp113, 128, 136
[760] See p113f
[761] See p148f
[762] See pp110, 120f
[763] See p112
[764] See pp120f
[765] See p113

understanding and attitudes could only come through practical experience.[766] It was recognised that it was possible to know all about ecumenism without being committed to it.[767] It there was to be formal education, it should be participative, problem posing education which developed critical analysis and thinking.[768] There should be an ecumenical dimension to all parts of the curriculum in the whole of the educational provision of the churches.[769] As with Bossey, students should be involved as resources not merely recipients.[770]

The Ecumenical Institute, Scholarships and Youth and programmes all tried to offer intercultural and interconfessional experiences as the basis of learning ecumenically.[771] Living encounters and the sharing of life were felt to be the best context of conscientisation – either by intentionally creating community as at Bossey or in a CLLT[772], by learning in the Christian community[773] or by learning in real community as the discussion on ecumenical learning and feminist pedagogy.[774] The World Council was strong on advocating for, and even offering experience or opening space. However, it neglected the focussed reflection that would result in the development of ecumenical consciousness.[775]

The World Council has found it hard to maintain focused reflection on ecumenical learning, ecumenical formation or ecumenical consciousness. I interpret the evidence of this period to indicate that, partly, content was more appealing to the World Council than process and also processes like the formation of an ecumenical consciousness were regarded as beneficial to rather than of the essence of ecumenism. Participants in consultations and workshops and the staff of the World Council had a high level of interest in and commitment to particular issues and were more inclined to want to engage in discussion on them rather than on something like ecumenical consciousness which could appear to be an irrelevance.[776]

The main dilemma faced by the World Council was whether its role was to support nurture or formation within its member churches that would sustain their separateness. Or should the World Council use its resources and moral influence to promote an ecumenical consciousness? This not only applied to Eastern Europe[777] but everywhere denominational identity was being reasserted. Many educational institutions and programmes:

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[766] See p148
[767] See p134
[768] See p111, 115, 120f
[769] See p122, 128, 135, 138
[770] See p136
[771] See pp118f,140, 151
[772] See pp116f, 139, 149f
[773] See pp123, 144
[774] See pp124f, 141f
[775] See p125, 145
[776] See p125
[777] See p132

including interdenominational or united colleges and federations of theological institutions, have experienced the effects of an increase in denominationalism, which has drawn them away from serious ecumenical engagement.[778]

If the World Council simply existed to serve its membership, as appears to be the understanding of some of its member churches, then its efforts could go into supporting the development of a denominational consciousness. The World Council has not always been focussed enough on the ecumenical priority to either refuse requests or make an ecumenical dimension a non-negotiable aspect of assistance. At the end of the period there was an intentional priority for the use of the World Council's resources to promote ecumenism.[779] Konrad Raiser asked the question:

> Does the learning strategy of ecumenical renewal inevitably clash with the ecclesiastical strategies to maintain the status quo and to preserve continuity?[780]

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[778] http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education.html. Accessed 22/10/09
[779] See pp146, 149
[780] Raiser, K, *Ecumenism in Transition - A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1991, p23

# 6  How has the World Council understood the task of developing an ecumenical consciousness?

This chapter will offer an overall assessment of the understanding of the World Council of the task of developing an ecumenical consciousness, particularly through its education work, as explored in the previous two chapters.  In Chapter 2, I offered a working definition that 'Ecumenical consciousness is an openness to Christ, to the world and to the consequent collective and individual transformation of attitudes, relationships and actions'.[781]  In the historical account, I have followed, as dispassionately as possible, various programmatic threads which had been relevant to the study in terms of their reflections and statements in the periods defined by the assemblies of the World Council.  However, I am not a disinterested observer of the ecumenical movement and the World Council.  As I remarked in the Introduction, the areas of ecumenism and education and their interface have become matters of passion as well as professional interest and involvement.[782]  As well as being involved in local and national ecumenism throughout my working life, I served as a member of staff of the World Council for over 12 years.

The World Council as an international organisation brings together many cultures as well as Christian traditions.  As well as offering a potential richness to its being and its work, this mix adds to the complexity to that of any organisation of comparable size existing in a more homogeneous context.  The situation is somewhat mitigated by the fact that the majority of the staff from the South have been educated in systems heavily influenced by the West and that many of the member churches have inherited their understandings and practices from missionaries from the USA and Western Europe.  However, it has to be recognised that my analysis, especially in this chapter, is undertaken out of my own particular set of experience and understanding.  However benign I try to be, I come from a colonial power.  However much I am sympathetic to Christian feminism, I am a male in a faith that remains highly patriarchal.  However much I believe in the priesthood of all believers, I am ordained.  I am mother-tongue English-speaking in an international discourse that for pragmatic reasons is increasingly dominated by English.  Not only are non-mother-tongue English speakers disadvantaged in the World Council, the discourse is limited to the conceptualisation promoted by the language.[783]  My predilection for the ecumenical conscientisation of the people of the churches rather than just their leaders is clearly influenced by my own experience as a Baptist who understands that the responsibility for discerning the mind of

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[781] See p37
[782] See p9
[783] At the Porto Alegre Assembly, the Korean theologian Namsoon Kang reflected that 'The choice of language is absolutely the issue of power. Language is not just a means of communication. It is about standardization of thinking, worldview, value-system, culture and even one's attitude to other people around. The choice of language is about power: power of decision-making, power of knowledge-production, power to express oneself. Language is power to express who one is, power to persuade; it is power to convey one's values and opinion.'  Kang, N 'Thoughts and Reflections on the Theme' in Rivera-Pagan, L (ed), *God in your grace ...: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2007, p95

Christ lies with the local gathered community of Christians rather than authoritative individuals or councils.[784] My preference for participatory and contextual styles of learning and doing theology come negatively in reaction to some experiences and positively to the excitement generated by those who opened up creative possibilities for me.

Undoubtedly, were this chapter to have been written by someone who had a more positive commitment, for example, to the authority of hierarchies and of traditional statements, the outcome may have been significantly different. What I offer in this chapter is my considered judgement of what I have discovered in the course of my research, shaped by own experience and prior learning. It is a contribution to a wider discussion of the formation of ecumenical consciousness which needs to take place. It has no other authority than how it resonates – in that it is no different to statements of the World Council itself.[785]

I have always held, and continue to hold, the World Council in high regard for its potential to bring Christians and churches together globally for mutual encouragement to live and act in unity in Christ and to respond to God's demand for justice and peace. I cannot fully express my feelings of excitement and privilege at having been given the opportunity of serving as a member of staff of the World Council. Yet, at the same time, working in Geneva was the most frustrating experience of my working life. This was partly because the World Council appointed its senior staff for reasons other than any understanding of how organisations work and how staff could be enabled to contribute collectively to the World Council's objectives. There was ineffective mutual staff accountability for personal probity or for contributing to the World Council's overall priorities rather than sectional or programmatic interests. However, that is not the subject of this thesis. What is relevant is my own reflection that the World Council has developed a sense of entitlement . That, instead of being one actor among many of different kinds with a common Christian purpose and sharing resources, it feels that it deserves its priorities to be resourced and to be adopted by its constituency. This is probably a tendency for all social movement organisations. I heard many former colleagues complain that churches and other funding partners were not prepared to support or buy into activities, without any recognition that the World Council might have done more to engage them rather than simply instruct or inform. This sense of entitlement has developed a defensive attitude towards bodies and individuals with ecumenical commitment but having questions about the workings of the World Council. In my time as a staff member I had several conversations with colleagues, including two General Secretaries, about the need for the World Council to value rather than distrust critical friends. The sense of entitlement could be described as an instrumentalisation of the constituency. If so, then another kind of behaviour I observed was

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[784] A typical description of the Baptist understanding of the local congregation as a covenanted community of believers is: 'Baptists assert that each congregation has, under the lordship of Christ, the liberty to interpret his laws'. Haymes, B, 'Baptist thought' in Hastings, A et al (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p61

[785] The dictum of William Temple – 'Any authority the  Council will have consists in the weight which it carries with the churches by its own wisdom'. Quoted in Stransky, T, 'World Council of Churches' in Lossky, N et al (eds), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002, p1225

all of one piece.  Staff often used working groups attached to their programme or their interpretation of a particular constituency (often networks of former associates) to justify pieces of work, even if they were not in line with strategic decisions that had been properly made.

Perhaps my greatest disappointment on joining the staff of the World Council was the lack of intellectual curiosity, particularly outside the sphere of ecumenism.  As an observer of the World Council, I had assumed that it Geneva would be a-buzz with ideas.  Instead, I experienced a reliance on received wisdom and established practices which did not welcome questions or inputs from outside, whether it was from local ecumenical experience or from other disciplines.  The emphasis was on activity with little value attached to any attempt to develop the conceptual basis on which they were undertaken.  The lack of a staff development policy, apart from some practical training for the use of computers, meant that staff were basically reliant on the knowledge and skills they had already acquired.

These are not unique organisational failures and should not be taken to suggest that the World Council is exceptionally corrupt or deficient.  However, it should not be unreasonable to expect that the World Council would attempt to put the ethical and relational values it espouses into practice within its own institutional life.  What I observed to be a failure to 'practice what you preach', or even to recognise that this was important, was the most frustrating aspect of my experience as a staff member of the World Council.  This needs to be recognised as part of the background against which I draw conclusions in the final part of this study.

In order to integrate the threads and periods identified in the earlier chapters, I will approach the assessment through discussing a set of tensions which I see as having emerged.  Given the complexities of the ecumenical movement and the World Council itself, it is not to be expected that the poles of these tensions are right-wrong or good-bad.   However, where the World Council has placed itself or been placed by its stakeholders on these continuums is revealing.  I have grouped the tensions under three headings which explore the nature of the World Council as an organisation relating to the ecumenical movement, whose ecumenical consciousness is it intended to develop and what cognitive and emotional mobilisation implies in terms of process and content.

**The World Council as a movement organisation**

The World Council has often been spoken of or has spoken about itself as a privileged instrument of the ecumenical movement.[786]  To describe the World Council as an instrument of the ecumenical movement is probably quite unexceptional.  However, using the term privileged

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[786] eg the document 'Called to be the One Church' adopted by the 2006 Porto Alegre Assembly states 'Throughout its history the World Council of Churches has been a privileged instrument ...' (V.12) http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/christian-unity-and-message-to-the-churches/called-to-be-the-one-church-as-adopted.html Accessed 15/09/09

makes the phrase ambiguous. It is never clear whether it implies that the ecumenical movement has chosen or created the World Council as an instrument (it has been given the privilege of serving) or that the World Council has been given, or taken to itself, some rights, responsibilities or authority (it has privileges).[787] How the World Council understands itself and is understood by the ecumenical movement is significant for this study. A detailed analysis of this is a whole area of research in itself but there is enough in the foregoing chapters to indicate two tensions - between the institutional self-interest of the World Council and the interest of the ecumenical movement; between being a service agency for the churches and an enabler of the ecumenical movement.

<u>Whose interest - the organisation or the movement?</u>

As we have seen in Chapter 3, movements become more organised as they develop and in many cases give rise to one or more organisations to serve their cause. It would be hard to see, after an initial wave of enthusiasm around a particular issue where things may just happen, how this is anything but inevitable. The problem is that, whilst an organisation may grow out of a movement and have as its raison d'etre the maintenance and development of that movement, it may come to see itself as its primary concern rather than the cause it serves. Organisations have an instinct for self-preservation which may even lead them to seek new purposes when their original rationale is no longer relevant.

In the case of the World Council, it has stayed focused on ecumenism (although it has to be admitted that this could encompass many things[788]). However, I have illustrated a tendency to promote through education its own activities rather than a wider ecumenical vision. One example would be the discussion on the ecumenical education 1956-61[789] where the realisation of the significance of, for example, firing the imagination was replaced by the sharing of information about activities. It is not always clear whether the World Council has seen itself as serving the ecumenical movement or as encompassing it.

Any organisation, and the World Council is no different in this respect, will want to make its constituency aware of its virtues and utility. However that assumes that such a constituency exists or can be developed. Perhaps by virtue of its formal membership being the churches, the World Council has assumed that it automatically carries thereby the broader constituency of church

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[787] The *Oxford Compact Dictionary* defines privilege as '**1** a special right, advantage, or immunity for a particular person or group. **2** an opportunity to do something regarded as a special honour' - http://www.askoxford.com/concise_oed/privilege?view=uk accessed 2/12/09. I am grateful to Dr Stephen Brown of Ecumenical News International, Geneva for proposing that the first officially recorded use of the phrase was in the report of the of Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church in January 1968 'Le Conseil oecuménique des Eglises est un instrument privilegié du mouvement oecumenique' (para 5, p95) which was wrongly translated in the English version as 'the unique instrument'. The term privilegié (privileged) was used to avoid the Roman Catholic Church giving any definition or ecclesiastical significance to the World Council. However, its later use has tended to be in the first sense of the dictionary definition.
[788] See Chapter 2
[789] See pp72ff

members.[790]  The organisation and work of the World Council has been, and continues to be, financially supported in any significant way by a minority of its member churches.[791]  Whilst many churches by reason of their own poverty are only able to make token contributions, others have felt able to contribute minimally or to reduce their contribution because they know that there is no groundswell of enthusiasm amongst their own members for the ecumenical movement.  This suggests that, even on the basis of an argument of self-interest, there is good reason for the World Council to pay attention to the development of an ecumenical consciousness amongst the members of the churches.

Service agency or ecumenical enabler

The discourse around social movement organisations recognizes that people join such an organisation because of what they get out of it.[792]  This may be in terms of services or of affective rewards.  Although the formal members of the World Council are churches, something similar applies.  The World Council has been seen by many of its member churches as a source of funding and other support.  Individual programmes and the offices that support them have had significant funds which could be used to support church projects.[793]  Perhaps this was one attraction, together with the cloak of respectability and legitimacy, for newly independent or emerging churches in the South to join the World Council.

Whilst there is much to be said in favour of the global sharing of resources for the work of the churches, the question that has emerged in the two previous chapters is whether this should support or challenge the churches in their separateness.  The World Council has not always taken advantage of the leverage that the availability of resources gives to promote ecumenism.  Perhaps the prime example that runs through the historical account is that of theological education.   As we have seen, the Theological Education Fund and its successors the Programme for Theological Education and Ecumenical Theological Education had a primary concern for the quality and authenticity of theological education.  I would neither doubt the reality of this concern nor question the need to replace sterile inherited patterns with a more participative and contextual approach.   It was noteworthy that an understanding was developed that doing theology was for all.  Ecumenical associations of theological schools and seminaries were encouraged, which resulted in the

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[790] For example, the self-description of the World Council on its website states 'The WCC brings together 349 churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 560 million Christians.'  http://www.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we.html  Accessed 16/02/10

[791] By the 2006 Porto Alegre Assembly, membership contributions made up only 13% of WCC total income with only 75% of member churches giving at least a minimum contribution.  Programme funding from churches and agencies (65% of WCC total income) had 20 providing approximately 90%, with 5 of these giving almost 60%.  http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/institutional-issues/report-of-the-finance-committee/report-as-adopted.html Accessed 15/12/09

[792] See p54

[793] For example, the Report of Central Committee to the 1990 Canberra Assembly indicated that USD523million had been handled 1981-1989 in support of projects in addition to an annual WCC organisational and programme budget of between CHF30.5million to 38million in the same period.  Best, T (ed), *Vancouver to Canberra*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990, pp53ff

formation of some significant ecumenical theological institutions and federations. Much of all that could be seen as interdenominational co-operation for the purposes of efficiency and effectiveness. However, the formation of an ecumenical consciousness amongst those who would, through their ordination, be influential in shaping the understandings and attitudes of whole churches and individual congregations did not seem to be given priority.

Another example is the response to the end of communist domination of Eastern Europe.[794] There can be no doubt but that the process of Christian nurture in the life of congregations was in need of renewal. However, the question still remains as to whether the efforts of the ecumenical movement have merely served to reinforce the separateness of different traditions in that area rather than to sow the seeds of ecumenical consciousness.

Just as we can see a conflict of interest between the World Council as an organisation and the ecumenical movement, so we can see a conflict of interest between the World Council as an ecumenical enabler and its member churches. The self-interest of the churches as organisations is that of prioritising a denominational consciousness among their members which is understood as a strong and unique allegiance. If the World Council understands itself to be primarily a service provider to the churches, supporting the development of such a denominational consciousness is not problematical. However, the World Council was formed to be a fellowship that was committed to unity in Christ with its attendant relational and ethical consequences rather than an interdenominational association of churches. To strengthen churches in their separateness is counterproductive to the greater purpose of the World Council.

**Whose ecumenical consciousness?**

It was clear from the Constitution of the World Council agreed at the 1948 Amsterdam Assembly that the intention was to promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all churches.[795] However, whether in the periods that this appeared in the Constitution or the period it was absent, the question of how the World Council might act in order to promote this in church members does not seem to have been directly addressed in any consistent way. Perhaps, although this was never explicitly stated, it was thought that, as the World Council was in itself understood to be a learning experience, people's participation would automatically develop ecumenical consciousness. Certainly, when ecumenical education, ecumenical learning and ecumenical formation were discussed, there was a variety of answers to the question about for whom it was designed. This variety might have been entirely appropriate if educational activities were to be contextual. However, for various reasons which I will indicate, the educational activities, and therefore the ecumenical consciousness raising, appear to have been skewed to the few rather than to the many.

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[794] See p132f
[795] See p30

The programmatic work on theological education and on the laity all drew attention at various times to the increasing dominance of the clergy in the ecumenical movement.[796] The various movements (Faith & Order, Life and Work, Mission and Christian Education) which flowed together into the ecumenical movement had all had significant lay leadership and participation. The movements which prepared the ground in which ecumenism grew (Student Christian Movement, Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association) were essentially lay movements. Against this background one can see why an increasing dominance of the clergy would be noticeable. However, it also has to be recognized that it was the churches which took primary responsibility for the World Council. The majority of churches are constitutionally dominated by clergy. The early lay leadership of the ecumenical movement was hardly representative of ordinary church members either. The Student Christian Movement, the breeding ground of ecumenical leadership, drew its membership from a very small segment of society.[797] It is not surprising given the social and ecclesiological reality, therefore, that educational activities, especially those involving theological and critical thinking, should be considered the preserve of the few rather than the many.

An experience of my own as a member of staff of the World Council is revealing. One of the initiatives agreed by the Harare Assembly in 1998 was the establishment of a Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace 2001-2010. In the cross-programme staff group set up to support this there was naturally discussion of what resource material should be developed to encourage participation in the Decade. The overwhelming feeling was that the World Council should indicate its serious intent by publishing an academic theological study on violence with questions for reflection at the end of each chapter. It was recognised that this would have a strictly limited appeal. The idea of a popular resource was resisted on the grounds that its content would not be weighty and that it was not the role of the World Council to engage ordinary people in the churches. Reacting against this, I took a personal initiative in drafting a simple study guide for use in congregations designed to encourage people to reflect on their own experience in the light of their faith and draw them into action. With the help of a colleague this was developed into a booklet and the staff group somewhat reluctantly allocated funding for a few hundred copies to be printed in English[798], with French, German and Spanish translations. Although I had thought it was worth doing, I was greatly surprised by the level of response. In all language editions it had to be reprinted several times in its first year and further reprints have been regularly required through to the present. It has been downloaded from the Decade website in large numbers and national groups have translated it into a dozen other languages. I have produced a great deal of such material over the years and this was neither my best nor worst work. I conclude that it was not particularly the quality of the material but the

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[796] See pp64, 136
[797] For example, the Access to Higher Education Project suggests a participation rate for England and Wales in 1948 of 4%. http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000000350.htm Accessed 2/12/09
[798] Mavunduse, D & Oxley, S, *Why Violence ? Why not Peace?*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2002

accessibility that resulted in the take-up – that people wanted to be helped to reflect ecumenically. I take this as indicative of the opportunity the World Council still has of engaging the people as well as the institutions of the churches. This leads me to seriously question whether an understanding that the World Council can *only* engage the few in order that these may engage the many is correct.

The discussion in the earlier chapters leads me to identify three tensions for further discussion. The first two are whether ecumenical consciousness should be developed in leaders or the people, or in churches or individuals. The third is of a rather different kind - between academic specialists and ecumenical enablers.

Leaders or people

It would have been interesting to see the reaction of the churches after the Amsterdam Assembly had the World Council announced a programme of ecumenical consciousness raising targeted at their members. As I have suggested earlier in this chapter, the question would never have arisen because there appears to have been an assumption that the early enthusiasm that led to the foundation of the World Council would carry the ecumenical movement forward. We should also remember that the World Council finally came into being at the same time as the United Nations. Just as there was a recognition that it was not the role of an international organisation to interfere in the internal affairs of any nation, so it was probably assumed that the World Council had no right to involve itself directly with the members of the member churches.[799] It raises the question as to whether implications of the constitutional responsibility for the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all the churches were considered by those churches when they approved the constitution. In spite of the constitutional mandate, it may appear that neither the World Council itself nor its member churches had a will for church members to be engaged directly.

However, is this a sufficient explanation for the preoccupation of the World Council with the ecumenical education or training of leaders? By leaders I do not just mean those who hold the most senior appointed positions within churches nationally and internationally but also those whose position within the churches or personal moral authority gives them influence if not authority over others. My research inclines me to say no for two reasons. The first is hard to justify

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[799] The Charter of the United Nations, signed on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco, states in Chapter 1, Article 2.7: 'Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state'.
http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml. Accessed 11/03/10
The World Council dealt with the issue of its authority at the founding Amsterdam Assembly in 1948 and confirmed and developed it in the 'Toronto Statement' agreed by the Central Committee in 1950: 'But the Council is far from desiring to usurp any of the functions which already belong to its constituent churches, or to control them, or to legislate for them' http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/toronto-1950/toronto-statement.html Accessed 11/03/10

because it is based on an impression of what I have read and experienced rather than on any harder evidence. There appears to be a strand of thought throughout the World Council in terms of both history and issues that ecumenism really is only for the few rather than the many. There are those who lead who need to have an ecumenical consciousness and those who follow. There are those who reach agreements and plan action and those who accept and implement. A symptom of this is the recurring complaint that some piece of ecumenical work has not been received by the constituency.[800] It is also reflected in an article in *The Ecumenical Review* by Trond Bakkevig (one of the two nominees considered by the Central Committee for the position of general secretary in 2003) who argued unapologetically for the intentional rather than accidental elitism of the World Council.

> It is church elites that meet in the WCC. Those who participate in WCC activities either belong to the church elite, or will by their very participation become part of the elite.[801]

I recognise that in arguing for a popular ecumenism and for the movement quality of ecumenical association, I am going against the hierarchical nature of much of formalised Christianity. Even in my own Baptist tradition there has been a move away from authority residing in the community of believers to that of leadership, individual or team, to the diminution of the significance of the church meeting.[802] However, Freire's paper *Education, Liberation and the Church* written for the Nairobi Assembly pulled no punches in arguing that elites needed to die as elitists in order to be reborn on the side of the oppressed.[803] I come to the conclusion, perhaps in a rather optimistic way, that an ecumenical conscientisation of a mass of church members is more likely to change the churches and the injustices of the world than resolutions passed by the Central Committee or assembly of the World Council.

The second reason I suggest for the preoccupation with the ecumenical education or training of leaders is the belief that they will act as intermediaries for the ecumenical conscientisation of the people of the churches. The Ecumenical Institute believes that many of the alumni of the Graduate School have returned to their own contexts and raised ecumenical awareness.[804] It has been part of the Stewards Programme for Central Committee meetings and Assemblies run by the Youth Desk to include the planning of an ecumenical project to be undertaken by the participants once they return home after the experience.[805] However, it is also the case over the years that it has been felt that many of the members of the Central Committee have not accepted a responsibility of promoting the World Council, let alone the principle of ecumenism, in their own contexts. Attempts have been made to raise the ecumenical consciousness of members of

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[800] For example the Programme Guidelines Committee of the1998 Harare Assembly drew attention to the problem of reception of the work of Faith and Order. http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/fpgc-e.html
[801] Bakkevig, T, 'Transformation in another key: reconfiguring the World Council of Churches' in *The Ecumenical Review* Vol 56, No 3, July 2004, p349
[802] Two Baptist college principals allude to the development of authoritarian practices of church leadership to the detriment of the church meeting in Wright, N, 'Inclusive Representation' in *Baptist Quarterly*, 2001, 39 (4) and Fiddes, P, *Tracks and traces: Baptist identity in church and theology*, Carlisle, Paternoster, 2003
[803] See p34f
[804] See p129
[805] See p151

Central Committee but not necessarily to equip them as consciousness raisers.[806]  That the ecumenical consciousness of leaders should be developed by the World Council seems to me to be self-evident.  The missing element appears to be enabling leaders to do the same in their own context rather than simply reporting back on their ecumenical experience.  This study is not able to demonstrate that the World Council's engagements with leaders have been fruitful in raising the ecumenical consciousness of the members of the churches or whether they have been exercises in privileging the privileged.

Individuals or the collective

As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the predominant discourse has been around developing the ecumenical consciousness of individuals, be they leaders or church members, ordained or lay. Little attention has been paid to the ecumenical consciousness of collectives - churches, organisations, groups, networks.  There are many reasons for them to locate themselves within the ecumenical movement.  However such a location does not imply a developed ecumenical consciousness, even for councils of churches.  If such a body sees itself as a service agency, see above, it may feel that it has no need for engagement with the bigger picture of ecumenism.

The culture of an organisation is not the sum total or average of the cultures of the individual participants.  Collectives have cultures of their own and they are not necessarily changed simply by changing the culture of individuals within them.  Nor, of course, is the changing collective culture result in a change of the cultures of all the individuals.  It is a complex process which is not the subject of this study.  However, it is important to note that this is not a tension that can be resolved by an emphasis on one pole or the other.  To that on the individual needs to be added a new engagement with the development of an ecumenical consciousness of churches and other bodies.

Academic specialists or ecumenical enablers

There is a sense in which this tension anticipates a discussion on formal or informal learning processes in the next section.  In Chapters 4 and 5 I have noted the emphasis placed by some on the formal teaching of ecumenism, especially in the World Council's programmes on theological education and the Ecumenical Institute.  There has been a recognition that, if courses on ecumenism are to be taught or if there is to be an ecumenical dimension to the whole theological education curriculum, there need to be those who are academically equipped to teach – both in the sense of having the necessary knowledge and ecumenically educative skills.[807]  Therefore attention has been paid to offering or supporting the ecumenical education and training of such people.  At the same time, following Lange, there has been a recognition that for the development

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[806] For example, I had staff responsibility for such a session with the newly appointed Central Committee at their first full meeting in 2006.
[807] See p147

of an ecumenical consciousness in the wider constituency the training of ecumenical multipliers would be desirable.[808] Probably because ecumenical multipliers do not relate to or operate within easily defined institutional structures, as with ecumenical academic specialists, less attention was paid both in theory or practice to these. Whilst again this is not an either/or choice, the discussion below will give reasons for my personal conclusion that, whilst not diminishing the significance of educating ecumenical academic specialists, more attention should have be paid to the development of a multitude of ecumenical multipliers.

**Cognitive and emotional mobilisation**

This subheading describes an area of interest, therefore the use of 'and', but it could also have been expressed as a tension. A tension between the cognitive and the affective is found within the World Council and its member churches. In educational terms[809], the cognitive domain refers to the holding of data or information in the memory, understanding meaning and significance, analysing, synthesising, evaluating and applying. The affective domain includes awareness, listening, responding, valuing and internalising. Between and within churches we can often see the tension between knowing and understanding the tenets of the faith and being, relating and acting in the spirit of the faith. In the history of the World Council we can see that there have been those who insist on the primacy of knowing about ecumenism - its history and activity - and those who insist that becoming ecumenical in breadth of vision, relationship and action is more significant.

This tension underlies much of the subsequent discussion in this section. I want to draw out four broad areas of tension from the discussion in the two previous chapters. The first three can be expressed in terms of their poles - receiving given frames or participating in the framing process; formal education or informal learning; collaboration and coexistence or transformation. The fourth concerns tensions around belonging and identity.

<u>Receiving given frames or participating in the framing process</u>

In Chapter 3 I described how movements frame, with commitment and passion, shared understandings and identities for action as alternatives to the dominant belief systems that support the status quo. The development of these is not necessarily a theoretical process but one that arises out of interaction and participation. Initial feelings that lead to action are refined into clearer understandings and commitment through reflection on the action.

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[808] See p116
[809] The classic description of the cognitive and affective domains is found in Bloom B S, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain.* New York, David McKay Co Inc, 1956 and Krathwohl D R, Bloom B S, & Masia B B, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, the Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook II: Affective Domain,* New York, David McKay Co Inc, 1973.

One of the basic tensions in an understanding of ecumenical formation has sometimes been stated as whether we move from theory to practice or practice to theory; whether we move from the historical experience and concepts of ecumenism to its practice and understanding or whether our actual experience and practice shapes our ecumenical understanding and future practice. This may be resolved in a way by using variations of the hermeneutical circle or pastoral cycle. A cyclical model of learning or formation could mean that the question posed does not have to be answered – both are part of a more complex process. However, this would be to fail to recognise some strong predispositions about where the process starts and what are the ultimately controlling concepts. The issue goes far deeper than a question of educational style – transmitting a set of knowledge or building on learners' experience and knowledge – as has sometimes been presented. It goes to the heart of how we do theology. I will use insights from those concerned about pastoral or practical theology whose approaches I find sympathetic to reflect on this.

A useful analysis of five types of relationship between theory and praxis is given by Matthew Lamb in *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation.*[810] The first and second give primacy to theory and praxis respectively. Theory is applied but not changed by the context. A primacy of praxis attributes no normative value to formulations of Christian faith. The third model values neither theory or praxis for themselves but sees God in Christ as pre-eminent – 'the primacy of faith-love'.[811] Attitudes and knowledge are appropriated by grace. The fourth maintains a theoretical correlation between theory and praxis. Both are seen as essential to but neither is identical with God's self-disclosure in history. The fifth model is 'critical praxis correlation'. Lamb states:

> praxis is not only the goal but also the foundation of theory. This applies to any theorising, including theology.[812]

The difference between these latter two is that the fourth is essentially theoretical in outcome, whereas the fifth is has practice related outcomes.

In 1983 Edward Farley made an important contribution to the discussion in *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education.*[813] Farley's basic thesis was that 'theologia', which could be described as a unified understanding of theology that leads to a Christian way of life, has been replaced by a disconnected and fragmented conception of theology as a set of disciplines. Theology consists of both a disposition of soul and the science of mind. When theology, he suggested, was 'a habitus, a sapiential knowledge, practice was built into theology by definition'.[814] The meaning of the Christian tradition has to be interpreted in the context of historical reality.

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[810] Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity with Victims: Toward a Theology of Social Transformation,* New York, Crossroad, 1982. Particularly pp 68-86
[811] ibid p 68
[812] ibid p86
[813] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education,* Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1983
[814] ibid p132

Farley described four necessary movements to form people in the 'habitus of theologia'. The first is people analysing their situation – 'there is simply no way of conducting theology above the grid of life itself'.[815]   The second is that the faith tradition raises consciousness at the individual and social levels by bringing a hermeneutic of suspicion to the situation. The third reverses that process so that the expression of the faith tradition is brought under the hermeneutic of suspicion. This identifies those things in the tradition which support oppression and the legitimisation of privilege.  The fourth movement enables people to discern 'the persisting imagery, symbols and doctrines … which express enduring truth'.[816]

In the context of this study, it can be said that Lamb and Farley raise questions about how we frame Christian faith as a lived and believed reality.  If ecumenism is merely tangential or parallel to the faith of the churches, the discussion is a matter of interest.  If, however, ecumenism is of the essence of Christianity, then the framing question becomes crucial.  What is framed is not merely an interpretation and articulation of an issue.  It faces us with the issue of whether the ecumenical movement should attempt an accommodation between the different theological understandings of the churches or do theology together.  The *Message from the younger theologians* at the 2004 Faith & Order Plenary Commission raised the issue of the established ecumenical style of doing theology and called for a more constructive approach.

> there remains the tension between theory and practice that haunts the work of Faith and Order and of the wider ecumenical movement. What we find missing is an interweaving of theological formulations and ethical implications in the documents. If this connection is more clearly visible, we believe that the theology will be more relevant and truly in dialogue with the life of the local communities.[817]

Thomas H Groome, reflecting on the gap in theological education between learning theology theoretically and the need to put theology into practice in exercising the ministries of the church, suggests that 'a "from theory-to-practice" mind-set is itself part of the problem'.[818]  Groome proposes five pedagogical movements which can be done in many different ways - 1 expressing/naming present praxis; 2 using the hermeneutics of suspicion for a critical reflection on present praxis; 3 an encounter with the Christian story and vision; 4 a dialectical hermeneutic between praxis and story/vision; 5 an invitation to a new or renewed praxis. [819]

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[815] ibid p165
[816] ibid p168
[817] *Message from the younger theologians,* Faith & Order Plenary Commission, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2004.  http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/faith/kuala-docs17-youngertheologians.html  Accessed 25/01/10
[818] Thomas H Groome, 'Theology on our Feet: A Revisionist Pedagogy for Healing the Gap between Academia and Ecclesia' in ed Lewis S Mudge and James N Poling, *Formation and Reflection: the Promise of Practical Theology,* Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1987 p55
[819] ibid p69

In *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty*[820] Elaine Graham wrote about identifying the type of 'practical wisdom' that ecclesial communities need to adapt and transform themselves. Practical theology as transforming practice can come about when it is reconceived as the articulation and 'excavation of sources and norms of Christian practice'.[821] Attention should be paid to customs and behaviour of churches to identify what they actually value and espouse. For Graham, the purpose of practical theology is to enable churches to practice what they preach. When praxis and context are seen as hermeneutically primary, Christian experience becomes repositioned as the origin of theological formulation and not as only under the control of theology. Practical wisdom breaks through the typical theory-practice or abstract-applied dichotomy. Graham concluded that theology becomes:

> a performative discipline ... the means by which Christians purposefully inhabit the world, and the vehicle through which the community itself is formed and ordered'.[822]

The discussion on a renewed praxis of theology and theology becoming a performative discipline resonates strongly with the discussion of framing and of how an ecumenical consciousness may be formed. As I have described in chapters 4 and 5, there have been strong arguments both for a top-down approach whereby a people receive and accept ecumenical concepts and the ecumenical vision and for a participative approach whereby these are developed from people's own experience. The tension has also been posed in terms of knowing about ecumenism or of becoming ecumenical.[823] However, what does not seem to have been discussed is the relationship between styles of learning and doing theology and how doing theology ecumenically relates to that done by the churches within their traditions. The approaches discussed above may be said to take seriously both tradition and context but can they ever satisfy those who believe that the tradition must control interpretation of experience and practice?

Another potentially contentious issue related to this discussion is that of worship, as central to the life of the Christian community. There are many references in Chapters 4 and 5 to the formative nature of worship – denominational and ecumenical.[824] A constant theme of the Ecumenical Institute has been the significance of worshipping together in its common life.[825] The services at assemblies and conferences of the World Council have been, for many participants, powerful experiences of unity and commitment to justice and peace. However, the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC raised questions about the legitimacy of worship in ecumenical settings, preferring to talk about common prayer.[826] This has created some nervousness in planning ecumenical worship.

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[820] Graham, E, *Transforming Practice Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock, 2002
[821] ibid p204
[822] ibid p 204
[823] See p10
[824] See pp69,110, 122, 135
[825] See pp78, 82, 150
[826] http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wccassembly/documents/english/pb-03-specialcommission.pdf

<u>Formal education or informal learning</u>

The preoccupation of the World Council (and of the churches in general) with formal education and suspicion of informal learning may stem from the culture and educational experience of those in positions of influence, even when they were ecumenically formed through participation rather than instruction.  Formal education is also attractive because it gives institutions the impression of being in control of what is learned.  I would be denying my own experience and academic studies to deny the value of formal education.  However, it also has to be recognized, that formal courses are not the answer to every issue, particularly where building up a body of knowledge is emphasised to the detriment to the development of critical thinking.  Knowing the history of the ecumenical movement and about the programmes of the World Council will only be ecumenically effective if that knowledge relates to the way in which we behave, relate and act.  I have noted at several points, to take one example, that although the Ecumenical Institute emphasises its academic nature, it is also, if not principally, the informal interaction of living and praying together that is effective in ecumenical conscientisation.[827]

There has been ongoing discussion whether, if there is to be formal ecumenical education, it should be undertaken in dedicated, specialist courses or become part of the total curriculum offered through various forms of church education.[828]  There seems to be no principled reason to prefer one to the other, with the best form of course determined by the context.

If informal learning is more significant than has been recognized, it is equally true that it is insufficient simply to assume that people's experience which happens in the course of daily life or in planned encounters and activities will in and of itself produce an ecumenical consciousness.[829]  The step that has so often been missed is that of creating space for reflection on that experience - see the discussion on praxis above.   People by nature are meaning-makers.  We constantly try to makes sense of our experience of life, perhaps trying to reconcile it to our understanding of faith.  Such a reflection process is, therefore, not something unnatural.  Participation in the ecumenical movement gives people an opportunity of framing their understanding of faith, themselves in the world together with people who may not share their background or entry points.

The tension in this section could also be characterised as content or process.  As I have shown in Chapters 4 and 5, the World Council has been prolific in producing reports out of workshops, consultations, meetings and assemblies.  It has often seemed, as was my personal observation, that more attention has been paid to preparing such reports than the process of either the event itself or what would happen after it.  Events have all too often relied on the cognitive through the presentation and discussion of papers, rather than a holistic engagement which includes the affective.  I have drawn attention to the perceived problem of reception following the events and

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[827] See pp77f, 139f, 150
[828] See p127
[829] See pp115, 121

studies.[830]  Content is appealing because it appears to be substantive whereas process may seem to be ephemeral.  However, the ecumenical movement cannot be anything else but process.

Collaboration and coexistence or transformation

The theme of the Porto Alegre Assembly in 2006, *God, in your grace, transform the world*, raised a question that no one seemed to want to answer.  Was the ecumenical movement concerned for the effective collaboration and coexistence of the churches for their own good and for the good of the world or was it ultimately concerned for the transformation of both church and world?  There is every reason to strive for good relationships between churches that have been divided, often bitterly.  There is much to be gained through learning from one another's experience and ways of celebrating God's love in Jesus Christ in worship, fellowship and mission.  In England it is easy to forget how recent it is that Baptists, Pentecostals, Roman Catholics and Salvationists can meet locally to pray together without giving it a second thought.[831]  There has been productive collaboration between churches at the local, national and international levels on justice, peace and creation issues.  For all this, we should be thankful but in doing so not fail to recognize that this may not be enough.  The impetus of the founders of the ecumenical movement and the World Council was to a more total transformation.[832]  If the fears expressed by Visser't Hooft that the involvement of the churches in the organised ecumenical movement was to avoid having to unite rather than moving toward unity and that the World Council would be a narcotic rather than a stimulant[833], have become real it is because, at least in part, insufficient attention has been paid to the development of the ecumenical consciousness of both the churches and their members.

Belonging and identity

The discussion on social movements in Chapter 3 indicated that a sense of belonging was generated through participation.  Movements and social movement organisations generate a sense of solidarity based on common interest, meanings and identities.  To continue or develop they need to generate an emotional attachment as well as a common ideology.  In general terms, a sense of belonging or identity is far more complex than being in possession of a membership card or a passport.

Belonging and identity are points of tension between the ecumenical movement and the churches.  Both in areas where churches are in decline and where churches are rapidly expanding, there is a denominational interest in promoting their own identity.  Retention and recruitment of members requires churches to emphasise and to encourage people, to use the language of the market, to buy into their unique selling points.  If the ecumenical movement is proclaiming a message that we

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[830] See p68
[831] I remember visiting an elderly woman in Dukinfield, Greater Manchester in c1971 who described her memory of the Baptist Whit Walk being ambushed by local Anglicans throwing bricks.
[832] See p65
[833] See p70

are all one in Jesus Christ and that the demands of the kingdom of God require the transformation of the churches and the world, unambiguous denominational identity comes under question. It remains an open question as to whether churches really do belong to the ecumenical movement and the World Council with the express intention of being changed.

Perhaps it is in respect of belonging and identity that the World Council has most significantly failed in the development of ecumenical consciousness. By focusing on the cognitive dimension to the detriment of the affective, it has failed to promote significant emotional attachment to either the ecumenical movement as a whole or to the World Council. Moments of excitement and enthusiasm have been generated, particularly around assemblies, but they have not been subsequently built on to develop ecumenical consciousness.

<u>In conclusion</u>

Ecumenical consciousness is a hidden treasure in the Constitution of the World Council. Its value and potential has been recognised, more often implicitly than explicitly, at intervals throughout the history of the World Council. Unfortunately, moments of insight have been followed by an institutional reversion by churches and the World Council itself. The working definition adduced at the beginning of this thesis - ecumenical consciousness is an openness to Christ, to the world and to the consequent collective and individual transformation of attitudes, relationships and actions[834] - offers the World Council a concept to conjure with for the renewal of the ecumenical movement. A legalistic argument might say that it should be taken seriously because it is a constitutional requirement but I hope that the foregoing chapters have illustrated its value in and of itself.

The final chapter will go beyond the research findings to consider how the Word Council might engage with these insights on ecumenical consciousness.

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# 7  What might the World Council do to address the formation of ecumenical consciousness?

Diarmaid MacCulloch's recent *A History of Christianity*[835] puts the World Council in perspective with only a handful of references in its 1161 pages.  It is a salutary reminder of how young the modern ecumenical movement is and how brief its existence in the story of Christianity.  The churches have had centuries, if not millennia, to develop and reinforce their separate cultures.  Change has more often taken place through division, sometimes contained internally but frequently leading to separation, than through unity.  Against such an established background and pattern of behaviour, it is not surprising that the ecumenical movement has not proved to be a magic bullet to solve the problems of a divided church and an unjust world.  Faith cultures and patterns of behaviour are not so easily changed.  Promoting Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world requires the work of the Holy Spirit and considerable human perseverance.

Ecumenism is an act of faith that the call of Jesus for unity and the demands of God for justice will be fulfilled.  It may go against the contemporary grain of measurable results being the only justification for almost any activity but we are called to committed and creative participation, whether we happen to see tangible results or not.  It is with that understanding that I make some suggestions from this research as to what the World Council might do in respect of ecumenical consciousness.  They fall into two broad categories – self-understanding and action with the constituency.

**Self-understanding of the World Council with respect to ecumenical consciousness**

The World Council has a constitutional responsibility to 'nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness'.[836]  The Constitution suggests that this should be done through processes of education.  However, I will not immediately move to possible learning activities as some more fundamental reflection is required.  From the beginning, the World Council has been described as a learning experience.[837]  The being of the World Council is, or should be, educational, not just its activities.

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[835] MacCulloch, D, *A History of Christianity*, London, Allen Lane, 2009
[836] Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches (as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006) http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/institutional-issues/constitution-and-rules-as-adopted.html  Accessed 26/01/10
[837] See p66

MacCulloch makes a telling observation that the achievements of the ecumenical movement have not matched the early aspirations of its founders:

> results have been low-key, local, pragmatic. Perhaps the problem lay in the very institutions which ... [they] excelled in creating: committees, movements with secretariats, carefully drafted and re-drafted agreed statements.[838]

He contrasts this with the vivacious growth of pentecostalism. Whilst one may question the comparability of the ecumenical movement and the pentecostal movement, there is often not much to get excited about if ecumenism presents itself as preoccupied with organisations and bureaucracy, and labouring over statements everyone can sign.

In the process that led to the preparation of the statement on the *Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches*[839] and that on 'Ecumenism in the 21st Century[840], the World Council has tried to articulate its relationship to the ecumenical movement. I have remarked on the description of the World Council being the privileged instrument of the ecumenical movement.[841] The analysis that has been undertaken on the relationship between the World Council and the ecumenical movement has been principally on tasks and responsibilities within a shared commitment to ecumenism. This research leads me to conclude that a wider and deeper analysis is required.

In Chapter 3 I drew attention to some of the thinking on social movement organisations. Movements exist not merely to connect the actors or to provide logistical support but to engender participation in and commitment to the cause. Although, to repeat the earlier caveat, the ecumenical movement does not exactly correspond to a social movement, there is now a large volume of literature on how social movements and social movement organisations function. The World Council would benefit from engaging with that literature on the conceptual level. At the practical level, the World Council could see if there is anything to be learned from how particular social movement organisations structure themselves to fulfil their objectives as well as how they go about raising consciousness. To give an example, not necessarily a proposal, how does Greenpeace organise itself and do its consciousness raising (not just specific campaigns) in the environmental/ecological sphere?

The World Council as an organisation should have a greater intellectual curiosity outside its own sphere. One area it could profitably explore in relation to developing ecumenical consciousness is how people's behaviour is affected by participation in social networks. Theoretical and experimental research into human cooperation has increasingly taken an interest in the role of

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[838] MacCulloch, op cit, p959
[839] See p144
[840] See pp151f
[841] See pp163f

social networks in structuring human interactions.[842]  The experimental research of Fowler and Christakis suggests, for example, that in a social network 'cooperative and uncooperative behaviour spreads from person to person to person'.[843]   In other words, even those not directly participating in initial interactions are influenced up to three degrees of separation.  This is not the place to discuss this research but it does illustrate the potential of the World Council taking a wider interest in such theoretical and experimental research if it really is to be an effective servant of the ecumenical movement.

The World Council should develop a better balance between the cognitive and the affective.  The World Council has been prolific in producing reports.   Some have been demonstrably effective, such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* in laying the foundations for agreements between churches.[844]  In this case, there was a well defined group of stakeholders who wanted the work to be done and were able to utilise it.   However, in other cases the World Council has quite properly, through processes resulting in reports, raised issues which were relatively new to its constituency but without the necessary affective engagement which would allow the contents of such reports to excite and to change attitudes and behaviour.  Even if reports get read by anyone other than those who produced them, understanding an issue does not automatically result to mobilisation for change.  The World Council might place a moratorium on the language of reception and concentrate on that of engagement.

The World Council has given me the impression of having adopted, even unintentionally, a didactic default position of producing answers to questions of which its constituency were not aware or through processes in which they did not participate.  This is not the subject of this research but if there is any truth in this perception it has a bearing on the growth of ecumenical consciousness.  The whole style of the World Council has to be the engagement of hearts and minds, not a system of command and control.  People do not become ecumenically conscientised by being told what to think and how to act.  The World Council constantly needs to be aware of how it embodies the ecumenical values it espouses and promotes.

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[842] Fowler, J H & Christakis, N A, 'Cooperative Behavior Cascades in Human Social Networks' Research paper v2 15 December 2009.  http://arxiv1.library.cornell.edu/ftp/arxiv/papers/0908/0908.3497.pdf  Accessed 28/01/10  This lists papers in academic journals and their own experimental research.
[843] ibid p2
[844] See, for example, Tanner, M, 'A view from the past', address to the Faith & Order Plenary Commission, Crete, 2009, p4   http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/x-other-documents-from-conferences-and-meetings/plenary-commission-meeting-crete-2009/a-view-from-the-past.html.  Accessed 27/01/10

**Action with the constituency**

The World Council should adopt a general strategy that all its activity with its constituency and those beyond should be designed to encourage and promote ecumenism and the ecumenical vision. This might seem obvious but the World Council has sometimes used its resources to support and develop the life and mission of churches in their separateness.[845] There should be no doubt in anyone's mind but that involvement with the World Council means being challenged by a movement that works for unity and justice. The ecumenical priority should allow for no sectional interests with in the programmatic work or the constituency. The Constitution of the World Council remains unequivocal that the purpose of the fellowship of churches is:

> to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.[846]

This is to be undertaken in 'a spirit of mutual accountability'.[847] The World Council may have an institutional interest in maintaining the goodwill of its existing members and attracting new members. This ought not to be at the price of downplaying the radical demands of the ecumenical vision.

What follows will be mainly focussed on nurturing the ecumenical consciousness of individuals or groups of people. At the same time, the World Council should also recognise the importance of raising the ecumenical consciousness of its member churches as bodies or institutions, and even of national and regional council of churches. The ecumenical consciousness of the members of the churches is a factor in this. However, the difference between institutional or communal attitudes and those of their members was illustrated by the 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism' project of the Irish School of Ecumenics. This concluded that 'a sectarian system can be maintained by people who, individually, do not have a sectarian bone in their body'.[848] Nurturing the ecumenical consciousness of church members is necessary but not sufficient. The World Council should use the large volume of literature that exists on organisational culture and learning organisations, and its knowledge of the particularities of the cultures of its member churches to consider ways in which it might work with them to nurture an institutional ecumenical consciousness.

This prioritising of the ecumenical should be especially the case with the World Council's work on education. I have drawn attention, for example, to the tendency for engagement with theological education to be interdenominational rather than thoroughly ecumenical.[849] Associations and confederations may make for efficient use of resources but may simply improve or make viable

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[845] See p106
[846] Constitution, op cit
[847] ibid
[848] Liechty J & Clegg C, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism*, Dublin, The Columba Press, 2001, p9, Similar observations were made about institutional racism in *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny*, London, The Stationery Office, 1999
[849] See p160

theological education confined within church traditions. Whatever influence the World Council has through resources or persuasion should be directed at developing an ecumenical spirit, process and content in theological education.

Ernst Lange argued persuasively for the training of ecumenical multipliers.[850] Processes such as the growth of ecumenical consciousness require skilled and sensitive facilitation even, perhaps especially, when they take place in the context of people's daily life and experience. The World Council needs to take action so that there are those throughout the churches and ecumenical networks who are not only evangelists for ecumenism but are equipped to enable ecumenical consciousness to be formed. It would be unrealistic to propose the setting up of special opportunities for this to happen. There is also a strong argument for this to be done in the context of other ecumenical activity in order to integrate all aspects.

The World Council should build in opportunities to form ecumenical multipliers at occasions where people are already participating. That is not to say that everyone would make an effective ecumenical enabler but it would, at least, give an awareness of the significance of such a role. I will give some examples as an illustration. Central Committee members should have space where their own ecumenical consciousness can be nurtured and articulated but they should also be helped to be ecumenical enablers. The Ecumenical Institute develops an ecumenical consciousness in the students participating in the Graduate School and the Master's Programme. There should be a more intentional effort to form them as ecumenical enablers. The occasional meeting of the ecumenical officers of the churches that the World Council calls would seem to be an ideal opportunity to work on the formation of ecumenical enablers. The Youth programme builds the planning of an ecumenical project to be undertaken on return home into the programme of stewards for Assemblies and Central Committee meetings. In some ways this is already a form of training ecumenical multipliers and it would be possible to include more general aspects of enabling into the process. These are but the most obvious examples. Creative thinking could identify many more opportunities.

There could not be a one-size-fits-all programme to form ecumenical multipliers. However, the World Council could agree out some general principles. I would suggest that the principal emphasis should be on process – the ways in which people can be helped to relate, engage and reflect together whether in international gatherings or local communities. There should be exploration of how people frame their own ecumenical vision and action in relation to their own situation and the global movement.

As well as developing the human resource of ecumenical multipliers, the World Council should give greater attention to the production of learning material for use in local congregations and neighbourhoods groups. I recounted my own experience with the Decade to Overcome

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[850] See p116

Violence.[851]  One should never build too much on a single instance but it does seem to indicate a readiness to receive material that is both relevant and accessible.  Expert processes and reports have their value but ecumenism, like Christianity, has to be in and of the people of the churches. Whether material is in text or electronic format, it should be interactive, encouraging people to relate to their own experience and do their own reflection and not just buy into what someone else has said.  It should lead to collaborative action.  In my experience, across many denominations and different cultural contexts, Bible study offers a familiar way into explorations that might otherwise be resisted. In particular, Bible study and other participative material relating to assembly themes and scheduled issues should be prepared in a style accessible to church members and early enough to be used in local congregations.  Learning material may be issue focussed but should always create opportunities for widening horizons and integrating faith and action.  There should be opportunities for feedback and interaction with others so participants feel they are part of a wider ecumenical community of learning.  The internet makes this more possible than ever it was before.

The World Council has recently become more aware of the potential of the internet and has improved its website[852] and uses social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.  These are user-friendly, providing one has access, and allow users to feel more involved than simply being the passive recipients of information.  However, the main purpose of the use of the internet and social networking is dissemination.  The World Council has yet to make creative use of the interactive, community building and action generating potential.  It needs to learn from the work it has done and the experience it already has.[853]  Like all media, social networking sites can be misused to denigrate and misinform but many movements now spring up by using them and existing movements use them to engage people.  Individuals find that they maintain, if not develop, relationships with others across continents as well as closer to hand.  There is something basically human about face-to-face contact that cannot be replaced by electronic communication.  However, confining global ecumenical encounter to meetings, conferences or even assemblies will always limit it to the few, especially with current economic realities and the environmental implications of travel.

In all of this the purpose of the World Council should be to encourage and enable the people of the churches to engage in their own reflection and action.  In so doing an ecumenical consciousness may be developed.  The work of framing is that of the people of the churches. That might not always be to the perceived benefit of the institutional churches or, indeed, to the benefit of the institutional World Council of Churches.  We have seen that the World Council has on occasion dared to recognise that ecumenical involvement should make people discontented with the status quo, even that of the churches. In the end, the churches, the World Council and the ecumenical movement only have meaning in so far as they serve the purposes of God.  Thus it seems right to

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[851] See pp167f
[852] http://www.oikoumene.org/
[853] The Young Leaders Online project and, for example, the Young Ecumenists, see p151

continue to propose that 'ecumenical consciousness is an openness to Christ, to the world and to the consequent collective and individual transformation of attitudes, relationships and actions'.[854]

As Ernst Lange put it:

> Ecumenical organisation unaccompanied by corresponding ecumenical awareness in the member churches is obviously an extremely dubious business.[855]

and

> Christians are living with a parochial conscience in a universal world. This is the ultimate problem for the ecumenical movement, a problem which it simply must solve if it is to become conclusive and decisive, and so to advance.[856]

In the words of Elisabeth Raiser quoted at the start of this thesis, 'the ecumenical movement gets nowhere unless and until ordinary church people are involved in it, embrace it and carry the torch of ecumenism'.[857]

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[854] See p37
[855] Lange, E, 'The Malaise in the Ecumenical Movement: Notes on the Present Situation' in *The Ecumenical Review,* 1971, vol 23, no1, p2
[856] Lange, E, trans Robertson, E, *And Yet It Moves: Dream and reality of the ecumenical movement,* Christian Journals, Belfast, 1979, p140
[857] Raiser, E, 'Inclusive Community' in Briggs J et al (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 3, 1968-2000,* Geneva, World Council of Churches, 2004, p243

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