

Researching the outcomes of teaching the missional entrepreneurship modules.  
A report for the Common Awards Research Network.  
Revd Liz Clutterbuck, June 2019

*“Missional entrepreneurship practice and principles are two unusual modules in Common Awards, or at least more recent additions to curriculum training for mission and ministry. The modules are designed to enable practice and theory. The proposal is to research how students who have studied these modules have integrated the learning into their mission and ministry practice. This will look at what projects, and enterprises with social/missional transformation have begun or been enhanced as a result, and at the ways students have integrated thinking about theology and enterprise.”*

**HEADLINE SUMMARY:**

This report is divided into three sections:

- (i) An introduction to the purpose of the research and its methodology.
- (ii) An evaluation of how students have put their learning into practice by founding missional entrepreneurship projects.
- (iii) An examination of the relationship between mission and enterprise.

Within the detail of the 15 pages that follow are a number of headlines that are the key takeaways from this research:

- 75% of the students who have completed this module have started a project. (And a significant number have started more than one.)
- There is a distinct benefit to linking learning around missional entrepreneurship to a real project, as opposed to using a hypothetical one.
- For many students, thinking about and exploring the relationship between mission, theology and business is new. The module demonstrably helps students to integrate their thinking in these areas.
- The module helps students develop skills that are very useful for ministry and mission practice.
- Nearly 60% of students who completed the survey were lay students when they took this module, demonstrating that it has a particular appeal and use in lay ministry.
- There are barriers to getting missional entrepreneurship projects off the ground, the most significant of which are financial and institutional (as well as personal circumstances).
- Students face a lack of understanding regarding missional entrepreneurship when trying to work with others on projects.
- In spite of the significant impact this module has, it is not a module widely taught across TEIs.

The missional entrepreneurship module has had a widespread positive impact, but within this are a number of questions and recommendations that should be reflected upon. Key among these are:

- How can the obstacles to missional entrepreneurship identified by the research be overcome?
- What training is needed in the wider church in order to enable the flourishing of missional entrepreneurs?
- What value does the institutional church give to missional entrepreneurship within its wider understanding of mission?

## **PART ONE - INTRODUCTION:**

The purpose of this research project was twofold:

- (i) To gauge the number, range and type of projects begun or enhanced by students who have studied missional entrepreneurship principles and practice modules in Common Awards.
- (ii) To explore the relationship and integration between theology, mission, ministry and enterprise in students' learning and ongoing thinking.

There was a desire to explore this area of teaching within Common Awards because it is a relatively new subject area in the context of theological and mission education for ministry in the UK. The proposal for this project outlined that:

*“In mission circles business has been thought about but often either as a means to fund evangelistic endeavours or as a way to travel to places where Christian missionaries could not go as a Trojan horse for sharing the Christian faith. Missional entrepreneurship takes a different tack to these by opening up the possibility of business that is for good, that has transformational outcomes and impact in and of itself rather than as a means to another end. In other words it is missional in and of itself. We are also in an environment in which resources for new mission and pioneering ministry are challenged, so there is interest in developing a range of ways of resourcing mission. Having mission projects that generate income whilst engaging with the mission itself is a growing area of interest as part of a resourcing model.”*

Within Common Awards there are two level 5 10 credit modules relating to this topic - missional entrepreneurship principles and practice – which teach students about social and missional enterprise. The focus of these modules, particularly their practical components, is designed to encourage the setting up of new initiatives.

In the research proposal, a series of questions outlined how these purposes might be achieved:

- How have students who studied missional entrepreneurship principles and/or practice awards in Common Awards integrated the learning into their mission and ministry practice?
- What is the outcome by way of projects and enterprises with social/missional transformation that have begun, or been enhanced as a result?
- How are students making sense of the relationship between theology, mission, ministry and enterprise in their own thinking? How has this changed?
- What support beyond the teaching has helped students get projects started?
- Have those who have started projects generated means of measuring the impact of their ventures and if so is it available?

What follows is the result of trying to answer these questions to the best of the researcher's ability, with a limited time-frame and budget.

### *Missional Entrepreneurship within Common Awards:*

The first task of this project was to establish which TEI's were offering the modules relating to missional entrepreneurship to their students. A number of institutions have offered at least one of the modules, but without students taking them up. It emerged that three institutions have had a significant cohort of students undertaking these modules – CMS (within Ripon College TEI), Durham and St Hild college.

CMS founded a course in 2011 which was the forerunner for these modules, and has run it at least annually (sometimes twice a year) since then. It is formatted as a residential week. Whilst students in Common Awards complete one module – the principles one – the course does combine both principles and practice. St Hild College has run the Principles module since 2014, although within the schematic for the course is a provision for practical application of the principles learned. Staff at St Hild's observed that it is the least popular (in terms of student numbers) of all their mission modules available at Level 5. Numbers on the course appear to have been particularly impacted by the introduction of the GDip and GCert programmes (as have other Level 5 modules), with few students choosing it as part of the graduate pathway.

Durham taught both the Principles and Practice modules during the academic years 2014-15 and 2015-16. Over those two years, a total of 21 students undertook the Principles module, and 11 the Practice module; 10 students took both. Unfortunately, due to a change in staffing at Durham and GDPR constraints, it was impossible for this project to make contact with these students.

This research project began in 2018 and as the focus was upon the impact that the modules have had, it was originally decided to only cover students who had studied the course up to the end of the 2017 calendar year. Over this time period, this equated to 121 students on the CMS course. However, when the survey was sent out to St Hild's students, it was distributed to those who had undertaken the module in autumn 2018, which gives them a total of 53 students since 2014.

#### *Methodology:*

Research was conducted via an online survey sent to students, and a number of case study interviews conducted by phone. The original proposal suggested using focus groups, however the financial and time costs of this approach were significant, and it was therefore decided to instead hold phone interviews as a way of maximising the number and depth of conversations that could take place. The case studies were identified by course leaders, facilitators and by an option within the survey to volunteer to participate.

Additionally, the team responsible for the CMS module analysed the list of past students in order to establish who had been supported in some way since the course and which projects they were aware of having been established.

Participants were made aware of the purpose and origins of this research project, and were assured that any quotes used in this report would be kept anonymous.

#### *Survey - CMS*

An attempt was made to send the survey to all past students on the CMS module, but ultimately only 108 of the 121 were contactable (had active email addresses etc). The maximum number of responses was therefore 108 and the final tally of responses was 59 – a response rate of 54.6%.

About the respondents:

- 55.2% female. 44.8% male.
- 89.7% identify as white British
- 42.4% took the course as part of a wider programme of study with CMS
- 57.6% took the course as a standalone module

- 64.4% were lay students when they took the course; 15.3% were ordained; 20.3% training for ordination.

#### *Survey – St Hild*

St Hild college distributed the survey to as many students as they had available contact details for. The survey was open for over a month, but only elicited 11 responses – 21% of students.

Of these:

- 2 respondents were male; 9 female.
- All identified as white British.
- All took the module as part of a wider degree programme.
- Ordinands accounted for 7 of the respondents; 1 was already ordained; and 3 students were lay.

#### *Case Studies - CMS*

In total, 15 interviews were conducted (averaging 40 minutes in length). All but two interviewees had also completed the survey. The case studies were made up of:

- 5 male; 10 female
- 10 were lay; 4 ordained; & 1 training for ordination (at the time they took the course)
- 10 undertook the course as a standalone module; 5 were part of a wider programme of study with CMS.
- There was a spread of ages (from 25-49) represented, as well as a range of geographical contexts.

Although the case studies were partly self-selecting and partly suggested by those involved in the course, the range of feedback received indicated that they were not chosen on the basis of (or in the hope for) exclusively positive feedback, and that this is a good sample of course participants.

#### *Case Studies – St Hild*

Only four interviews were conducted with St Hild – more students were put forward/offered in the survey to be case studies, but did not respond to requests to be interviewed. All four were ordinands and undertook the module as part of their degree programme.

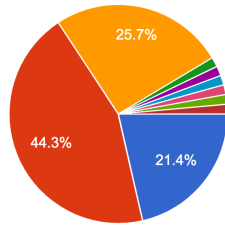
### **PART TWO – PROJECTS:**

The first aim of this research project was to ‘gauge the number, range and type of projects begun or enhanced by students who have studied missional entrepreneurship principles and practice modules in Common Awards.’

The starting point for students differed – some came on the module with a project that had already begun; others created an initiative for the course. The survey responses indicated that the majority (44.3%) came on the course with an idea that they sought to get off the ground. Only 23.7% already had a project up and running, while 25.7% came on the course because they felt that it would be helpful in starting a project in the future.

When you came on the course, did you:

70 responses



44.3% "have an idea of a project that you wanted to get off the ground."

25.7% "think that the module would be helpful, but did not have a specific project in mind."

21.4% "already have a project running that you were looking to develop."

8.6% (6 people) cited another response that they wrote in.

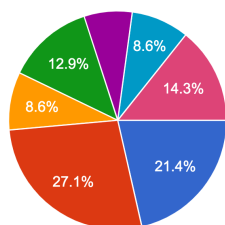
Fig.1 – Status of projects at start of module.

Survey respondents revealed that the vast majority (75.7%) had founded at least one project since completing the module. Nearly a fifth (18.3%) had established two or more projects. Nearly a quarter had not launched anything. Based solely upon survey data, a minimum of 79 projects were founded across the 70 respondents to this question. When the CMS team looked at their past students, they estimated that 49% had launched their project/made progress with an existing project since the course. It is worth noting that if just the CMS survey data is examined, the percentage of students who have started projects increases – for example, 25% of their respondents had started 2-3 projects.

Exploring when these projects launched, over a quarter (27.1%) did so within 6 months of the student completing the module. Only 7.1% reported that the project which they worked on during the module failed to launch.

Thinking about the project/initiative you worked on during the course, when did it launch?

70 responses



- It was already underway at the point that I went on the course
- Within 6 months of the course
- 6 months - 1 year after the course
- More than a year after the course
- Project failed to launch
- I did not work on a specific initiative during the course - but launched so...
- I have not launched any projects since completing the course

Fig. 2 When projects launched

### *Types of project launched:*

The survey and analysis of past participants of the CMS course indicates that a wide-range of projects have been encouraged and undertaken as a result of these modules. Although the survey did not ask respondents to categorise their project, they seem to fall broadly (although it can be difficult to tell if just the name of the project is given) into the following categories:

- Church-based or related activity.  
This would include projects such as an after-school club based at a church; provision of free breakfasts during school holidays; and Fresh Expressions of Church.

A number of students founded cafes based in churches – however, the majority of these were also forms of social enterprise, and were not necessarily directly related to the church in which they are based.

- Ethical business.

While not necessarily a social enterprise, these projects were businesses with a focus upon a specific ethical/social issue, and a mission-minded origin. Examples include the cleaning company Clean for Good, and GLOW (knitwear for cyclists).

- Spiritual/emotional development.

A number of projects related to retreats and coaching – either within an existing Christian context, or in a non-religious space. These included photography retreats; a nail bar and mentoring project; and marriage/relationship counselling.

- Social enterprise.

This category overlaps with other themes, but for a significant number of participants learning how to set up a social enterprise was a crucial element of the learning derived from the module.

- Social justice project.

Several projects related to specific social justice issues in some way – again overlapping with other categories at times. For example, a church-based singing café for people with dementia; a project teaching asylum seekers to drive and another instigating a befriending initiative; and a project focused upon period poverty.

- Community project.

Some projects focused on a particular need within the participants' local community (again, this overlaps with other categories above). One student founded an Arts Festival; another instigated a community choir. Others used their project to create new communities that focused upon their locality – such as the Impact Guild co-working and community space.

#### *Impact of the module upon projects:*

Based upon the case study data, it is clear that for the majority of students the module had an immediate impact upon their project. (The survey asked a general question about impact, whereas the interviews asked specifically about immediate and longer-term impact.)

Amongst the CMS case studies, nine indicated that completing the module had an immediate and catalytic impact upon their project. Several remarked that it gave them the impetus to move forward which would not have been the case without the course. One student reflected that they “*felt uplifted and inspired*”, as well as “*renewed and energised*” for what she needed to do. Another received an email offering a space for their project just before the module ended – this student felt that if they had not had the input from the course, they may well not have taken up this offer, but as a result of the course they felt equipped to do so. One participant returned from the module and shared their experience with someone who it turned out shared the same passion, so they were able to get to work on the project immediately. It therefore seems evident that even without reference to specific skills or learning, the act of going on the course and completing the module acts as a means of empowerment for the students, increasing their confidence in launching their projects.

For students training for ordination, a theme that emerged particularly in the St Hild data was that the module had an immediate impact upon ministry, even if it did not closely result in projects being established. For one student, an immediate practical application

was the ability to pass on a project they had founded on to someone else within their church. She reflected that prior to the course, she might have found passing it on hard; but the module taught her that *“you can be a pioneer ‘starter’ and then pass it on rather than doing the long-haul.”* For another ordinand, the module helped act as a catalyst for establishing a new Fresh Expression in their parish context. Another ordinand observed that although they weren’t able to practically apply their learning in their ministry, it provided him with a more *“entrepreneurial attitude”*. *“Spotting opportunities where wouldn’t have seen them before. Potential entrepreneurial opportunities.”* It was clear that the module had a significant impact upon the students, but that the nature of their context-based training did not necessarily provide an ideal location to put their learning into practice. Several respondents mentioned that they could see ways in which it would be beneficial once they were in full-time ministry or in a more senior appointment. It is worth noting that there were fewer respondents from St Hilds who had a distance of two or more years from the year in which they had undertaken the module, and this may have had an impact on this question.

Some of the immediate impact identified in the case studies fits into broader categories of impact that others identified in the survey or as longer-term effects in the interviews. For a couple of interviewees, the immediate impact of the course was a desire to work on how they would measure their project’s impact. Within the CMS module, teaching on measurement uses the Transformational Index (TI) as an example of how impact can be measured in a way that is specific to its context.<sup>1</sup> For many CMS students, this part of the module had a significant impact upon their projects and their development. One student reported that her first action upon completing the module was to use the TI in her context in order to set up a measurement framework from the project’s outset. Another reflected that: *“The way I now develop ideas and think about sustainability, measurement and impact. Before proposing an idea I tend to mentally go through this process - it’s made my work better!”* This feeling was echoed in another survey response: *“[I] Embedded TI into work and re-founded whole organisation.”* Teaching on measurement was also something that participants mentioned returning to, even years after they had completed the module – either because they had set up a framework early on which could be revisited; or because they had the concepts and put them to use in later projects.

Defining vision and values was another key area that had a long-term impact upon students. The teaching of practical principles for shaping vision as well as a framework in which to make such decisions had an immediate impact in some cases, but for others it was something that they were able to put into practice once they had shaped their project idea further – or started a fresh initiative. One case study commented that this part of the course had made a *“big impact”* – the *“circular approach taught is a cycle that has been useful in my work, developing the project and showing other people how it would benefit them.”* Another highlighted that one of their key takeaways from the module was how they could frame *“longer-term vision casting”*. Others interviewed spoke of how this teaching was still at work in their project, in spite of the time that had passed since the module. For example (four years later), *“the values and content of the course is still at play within the project. It laid great foundations and the vision is embedded.”* Similarly, a survey respondent stated that: *“The foundation of a ‘ring’ or ‘cycle’ as a method for developing a ‘big idea’ and pursuing it from the idea stage to finally breaking ground has followed me into so many different areas. It is useful to have this framework in so many ways and is a significant element of the projects I have undertaken since this course.”* This work on process, vision and values seemed also seemed to contribute to projects’ sustainability, because the students had a framework to return to whenever it appeared to be drifting. One student mentioned that they still have a diagram they created

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thetransformationalindex.org/>

on the course upon their office wall so that it was a constant reminder of where they were going.

Sustainability was also achieved by students who benefitted from the practical business aspects of the module, such as making grant applications; founding social enterprises; and other information and guidance relating to this side of running a project. One case study mentioned that the immediate impact of the module was a decision to use a social enterprise model instead of a charity – *“it affected where I looked for funding...keen to make sure we set ourselves up with a turnover and income.”* Others highlighted the impact that advice and teaching from experts in this area had, such as a session on income completely changing how one student saw their project working. As this teaching was practical, it was an area that many students identified as being easy to put into practice – for example, writing funding applications. One survey respondent concluded: *“New projects I begin have sustainability thought about at the beginning not at the end of funding.”*

The final area of impact upon projects was the emphasis within the module upon the need for collaboration and community. The element within the CMS module on the importance of working with stakeholders and not being a ‘lone ranger’ was identified by a number of participants. One interviewee thought about the advice he would give to others looking to launch projects: *“Collaborate and cocreate with others. We can think we’re the only people God is speaking to about that particular thing, but being open with ideas and resources is healthy and helpful.”* He went on to reflect that he had previously been more of a *“lone ranger within my team, but now all about collaborating with people.”* For others, this area of teaching fostered a desire to build a support network of like-minded and similarly gifted people. Meeting others on the course began this, with a number of respondents commenting that the module helped them to realise that they were not alone, *“there were other people who could be called on.”* Another shared in their survey response that: *“The connections made during the week, and further ones made after the course as a result of these connections, have helped massively.”* An important negative point raised by some respondents is that they felt that the course promised more in terms of a long-term network than it delivered, although the development of such a network was not a component of the modules. There were some responses that indicated that a network of missional entrepreneurs would be a valuable community for them.

### Barriers to launching projects:

Significantly, 67.1% of survey respondents stated that they had encountered barriers to launching their project.

Have you encountered barriers to launching your project(s)?

70 responses

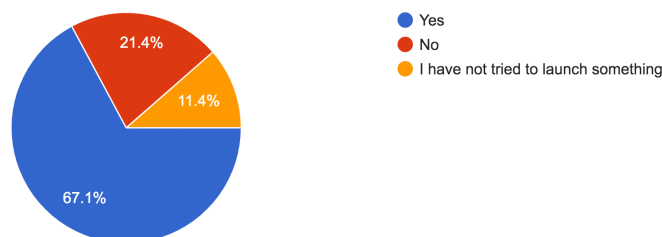


Fig. 3 Have you encountered barriers to launching?



Survey respondents were asked to identify any barriers that they had encountered in trying to launch their projects. By far the biggest issue (identified by 53.1%) was a lack of funding. Personal circumstances were also an issue (but as this varies deeply depending upon individuals, this has not been explored in depth). A lack of allies and church opposition were the next highest barriers identified within the survey.

A long-form response box was provided in the survey, and this question was also asked in the case study interviews. The responses were categorised between: institutional; financial; personal; practical and ideological barriers. (Again, personal issues were discounted from the analysis.)

If you have encountered barriers, what form have they taken? (Please tick all that apply)

49 responses

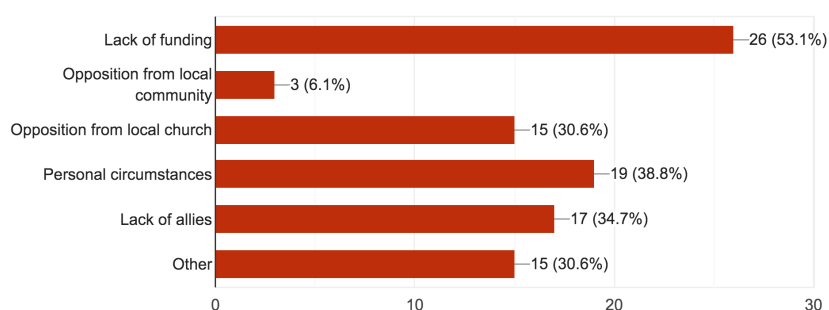


Fig.4 Barriers encountered following course.

(i) Institutional barriers:

The majority of institutional barriers to missional entrepreneurship related to church structures. Course participants had experienced these structures limiting what could emerge, particularly if their initiative looked significantly different to what was considered “the norm” by the church. A number of case studies mentioned the importance of identifying who the “permission givers” within their church structures were, and for the need to have these individuals at every level of the institution. For example, in an Anglican context this might include: local parish priest; archdeacon; bishop; and diocesan officials. Another example a respondent gave was the issue of boundaries – parish and deanery. They commented that: *“If you’re an established church you can cross boundaries & no one bats an eyelid – it’s harder for new initiatives.”*

The status of the participant within their church institution was also problematic. Lay people generally felt that they had little power to effect change; ordained clergy felt a need to conform to traditional expectations; and pioneers were often misunderstood or forced to take on traditional priestly responsibilities in addition to their pioneering initiatives. But there was also evidence that gaining the title of “pioneer” overcame some institutional barriers – one participant reflected that it was their ordained pioneer status that enabled them to take their ideas forward.

When the institution did not understand missional entrepreneurship it was a major barrier to getting new projects off the ground. On the one hand, it was a new aspect of missiology to many that course participants encountered; while social enterprise and

business was also not widely understood. Little missional value was given to missional entrepreneurship as a result. In a related vein, one respondent identified that the panic around the church's decline is also a barrier to missional entrepreneurship. They reflected that it's *"all about bums on seats – and that's not it – it's about joining in with God's work. Getting everyone to be prayerful. A PCC and a church that prays & searches after God's heart; and then trusts God for the resources to make it happen."*

Similarly, when missional entrepreneurship did not look obviously "Christian", the church was sceptical of the impact it could have in a missional sense. This showed a lack of understanding both of mission and the post-Christendom contexts in which most pioneers operate. Conversely, there was also concern in wider society as to why a religious group/activity might want to be involved in a secular context. One interviewee remarked: *"Christianity itself can be an issue, but we can be obvious Christians and not be under-handed about it."* Another respondent highlighted the negative reputation the Church of England has relating to issues such as safeguarding and sexuality – how could mission overcome society's negative perception of the church?

(ii) Ideological Barriers:

This barrier overlaps somewhat with institutional issues relating to the church, especially with regard to the theological shift required in order to fully appreciate the importance and role of missional entrepreneurship. People and institutions need to understand that it has a significant eschatological purpose! Participants reported on how valuable learning new missional language had been on the course, but then needed those with whom they worked and related to also need to learn and understand this language. One case study reflected: *"[It] feels like you're saying the same things that they're expecting to hear, but the words mean something different."*

Related to the shift in missional understanding is a barrier identified – primarily by St Hild students – related to an understanding of entrepreneurship. One commented that *"using word 'entrepreneurial' is instant barrier to some."* They explained that in their church context, using the word might turn their congregation off the idea of missional entrepreneurship, even though he considers them a very mission-minded community. This student argued that the public image of entrepreneurship is to blame for this – *"for most people, seeing 'entrepreneur' put into practice, it's been lots of money poured into big ideas...it leaves a trail of hurt people in the process."* This respondent's conclusion was that the word 'entrepreneur' needed to be reclaimed. Another student concurred with this view, seeing a misunderstanding of the term within the church, that proved to be a significant barrier.

As mentioned above, both institution and pioneers needed to understand that mission does not have to look traditionally Christian – all need to appreciate what post-Christendom means for mission. Participants also needed to have an ideological shift as a result of the course, focusing upon their passion and vision, and being prepared to take risks in order to start something new. One participant concluded: *"You have to be a bit nuts to start things like this – you don't know what's going to work and need to take risks!"*

(iii) Financial Barriers:

As reported by survey respondents, financial issues were a significant barrier to many of the course's participants. Again, this is connected to an ideological shift regarding the financial value of mission; but largely relates to issues in achieving financial sustainability. Several of those interviewed mentioned that they were only able to succeed with their

projects because they had external income streams that enabled them to not need their initiatives to become financially viable.

While participants felt that they had learnt a significant amount regarding applying for grant funding, some found it difficult to put this into practice. Others found that their area of work was an area in which past projects had often failed and therefore funders were reluctant to back them. The current financial climate also posed a problem for some participants as there is not an appetite for taking financial risks.

This again overlapped with institutional barriers, as some churches did not understand missional entrepreneurship. Some participants faced opposition from churches when trying to launch projects that would involve a financial cost; others simply refused to work with projects that had chosen to become social enterprises and/or CICs. One participant was accused of “*trying to profit off the church*”, and their initiative was completely misunderstood by the church.

Ordained pioneers also faced institutional financial barriers relating to stipend, housing and finance for new initiatives. This varies between dioceses (and across denomination), but was both a financial issue and a sense that pioneering entrepreneurship was not valued by the church.

(iv) Practical Barriers:

Excluding financial issues, there were a number of other practical barriers identified in both the survey and interviews. A common theme related to property and/or venues for projects to be located in – which also connected with finance.

As with ministry generally, the importance of maintaining good boundaries (particularly work/life balance) and measuring one’s own capacity was highlighted. There was also simply a difficulty in being able to translate vision into practical outcomes and reality.

Relating to institution, some participants found that the need to leave their local church or wider church institution in order to get their project off the ground meant that they suffered a loss of community. Missional entrepreneurship was recognised as a “*lonely and isolating path*”, meaning that pioneers need to find community, especially amongst other entrepreneurs. One respondent reflected that it was important to find the people who would work with you on a project, because of the risk involved in starting something new.

*The relationship between principles and practice:*

Durham taught the principles and practice modules but we were not able to get data from students there. But it is worth reflecting on the relationship between principles and practice at the other two TEIs in terms of impact.

Despite its name, the Principles module still includes an element of practical application, in a similar format to that found within the combined module. One of the subject skills identified within the module guide is: “*Create a strategy for starting and growing a project or social enterprise, including identifying the risks and opportunities at the different stages of establishing a new project.*”

In both TEIs evidence that students have acquired this skill is gathered via an assessment that requires students to prepare a pitch to introduce their project with a written reflection

or commentary on it. CMS students work on an actual project they intend to launch and are asked to bring that with them to work on. In contrast, students at St Hild were able to complete this assessment using a hypothetical project. The linking to that real project shows up as a major difference (as identified from students' responses) between CMS and St Hild. One criticism of the CMS course that cropped up a number of times was the difficulty this element of the module posed for those students who were following a wider programme of study, as opposed to taking it as a stand-alone course. These students did not necessarily have a project in mind, or had time to work on one in the run up to and following on from taking the module.

As mentioned above, numbers on the St Hild's module have dropped since the introduction of the graduate programme – there is now a significant number of students for whom this module is no longer compulsory. Yet a number of respondents commented on how valuable their learning was for the wider context of ministry. Amongst the CMS respondents, 58% had undertaken the course as a standalone module, suggesting that it has significant relevance to those outside the wider degree programme.

Whilst for those working on a specific initiative the benefit is immediately obvious, the learning of theology, practical skills and application is also beneficial for later on in ministry. As one respondent reflected: *"I will probably use this module more than any other in future ministry. Unless you go into a really established context, it's a missional context – it needs entrepreneurship."*

### **PART THREE – RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISSION AND ENTERPRISE:**

The second aim of this research project was to 'explore the relationship and integration between theology, mission, ministry and enterprise in students' learning and ongoing thinking.'

One of the main objectives of the missional entrepreneurship module is for students to increase their understanding of how mission and enterprise relate to one another; and to come away with a new sense of the role that enterprise can play within the missional sphere.

When asked about the impact of the course, survey respondents showed that to an extent, this objective was achieved – 85.7% stated that the course had *"helped them to think about entrepreneurship in new ways"*; while 51.4% felt that the course had reframed their understanding of business.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, only 11.4% of respondents felt that the course significantly changed/developed their understanding of mission. (Versus 35.7% who felt it had changed in a small way and 44.3% in a moderate way.)

Therefore, in order to assess the extent to which this objective was fulfilled, the qualitative data needed to be explored in order to uncover the contexts in which these survey results are based.

Across the case studies and long-answer survey questions, it becomes clear that those who felt their understanding of mission had changed little, were generally those who were studying the module in the context of a wider programme of study. The number of respondents in this category was also higher for CMS than for St Hild. It is possible that these students felt that the missiological content of this module was not at the same level

---

<sup>2</sup> See: 'Fig.4 Barriers encountered following course.'

of others which they had studied.<sup>3</sup> In comparison, a number of those undertaking the course as a standalone module specifically mentioned the significant impact that it had had upon their understanding of mission. For example: one student referred to the module providing her with a “*missional DNA*” that could shape and underpin her future work.

What is clear is that the relationship between mission and business is an area which had a significant impact upon the majority of students. One student reflected that they had pondered whether “*there was a modern day way of doing Paul that’s sustainable*” – and concluded that the module had shown him a model that answered his question positively. For some students, this was the first time they had seen business as being a part of “*God’s bigger picture*”, or how one could “*take social enterprise one step further into kingdom building*”. One case study saw this idea embodied in CMS own descriptor for the module – ‘*Make Good*’. He commented that “*it’s not just about addressing social issues, but we’re becoming involved in what God is doing. It’s what business looks like; mission looks like; the church’s role in it. It’s not just about entrepreneurship, but about making good.*” Ultimately, the course provides participants with an eschatological framing of business, which is missional – even if it is not always recognised as such. Theologically, the course content also provided a challenge to students. One case study found the teaching on scarcity versus abundance particularly helpful, they reflected that it was “*scary how often this mindset comes into play*”, and how it is a question that has to be answered over and over again as a project develops.

On a practical level, the course provided students with a business model that was applicable to missional ideas. One respondent reflected that what pioneering and entrepreneurship have in common is that they both have to start with the community - neither will work without a good understanding of context. Another made the connection between the need for an entrepreneurial spirit in pioneers, which made missional entrepreneurship a natural context for church pioneers to explore. One survey respondent stated that they: “*found a greater appreciation for entrepreneurship as part of the pioneer spectrum.*” There was also recognition of the practical application of the theological and economic ideas, in how the course content could enable pioneers to fund their projects. One survey respondent indicated that the course “*dramatically changed how I viewed the link between mission and generating income*”.

In terms of course content, the most frequently mentioned aspect of the curriculum was the practical advice given regarding finance and structures for social enterprises. Some respondents praised the use of working social enterprise examples, including those that were not run by Christians. The basic teaching around business models, as well as the detail regarding setting up social enterprises and companies were also appreciated and was referenced by a number of students in terms of the long-term usefulness of the course. Others appreciated the fact that the course brought together those interested or involved in business, which enabled them to build a network that provided subsequent support and advice. Institutionally, the practical business course content provided some students with a route out of the church – no longer having to rely upon the church for funding, or finding it freeing to go their own way, without having to conform to what their church might want them to do. One case study commented that it provided their project with a structure for the business to use in order to emerge from the church. This element was reflected far more amongst CMS responses than those from St Hild.

---

<sup>3</sup> Two case studies in this category specifically mentioned other modules within PMLT (CMS) that could be better connected with the missional entrepreneurship module in order to make the theological side of the module more rigorous.

That is not to say that all the feedback relating to business and mission was positive. A small number of respondents questioned the emphasis placed by the course upon the “*desire to make money*”, and suggested that social enterprise was something of a “*golden goose*” for pioneers to chase. Another wondered whether more should be included regarding the ethics of combining business and mission, expressing a sense of discomfort at bringing the two concepts together in this way. But these voices were very much in the minority of respondents.

## Conclusions:

It is clear that the introduction of the Mission Entrepreneurial modules is part of a wave of new thinking and practice relating to mission and business. The design process of Common Awards meant there was an opportunity for CMS to share more widely what they had developed as a module in Oxford Brookes. Since its inception, the missional entrepreneurship module has been responsible for helping to launch multiple projects within the Church of England and beyond.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of these modules, students have developed a new understanding of the theology of both mission and entrepreneurship; and seen a place for this in practice in the mission of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In turn, this learning has been shared in their ministry contexts, transforming the understanding of worshipping communities and secular society, as well as individuals.

The lack of negative feedback, and the number of respondents who indicated that they had passed on their learning and/or recommended the module to others would suggest that it is a module that is highly regarded by those who have completed it, and one that meets a need within the church. The benefit provided to those in ministry suggest that there would be significant benefit in more people undertaking this training – either within training for authorised ministry; or for those already in ministry. This is supported by the number of students who undertook a standalone module in order to support a vocation they had already identified.

What is also clear from the demographics of students who have taken these modules is how missional entrepreneurship transcends traditional ministry boundaries within the church. 58.6% of respondents were lay students not training for ordained ministry who saw their vocation as lying within the sphere of missional entrepreneurship. In the context of Setting God’s People Free (SGPF), this is a significant contribution to the lay ministry of the Church of England.<sup>5</sup> Lay people engaging in missional entrepreneurship are fulfilling a number of the SGPF proposals, including: looking beyond and outside Church structures to the whole people of God at work in communities and wider society; and embodying a fuller vision of calling within the all-encompassing scope of the Gospel.

---

<sup>4</sup> Data from the survey respondents suggests a minimum of 79 projects across 70 individuals. It is certainly more (because of multiple people ticking the “2-3 projects launched” option), and there are of course more students who have taken these modules than those who completed the survey.

<sup>5</sup> “Setting God’s People Free” A report to General Synod, 2017.  
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GS%20Misc%202056%20Setting%20God%27s%20People%20Free.pdf>

The evidence gathered by this project also clearly demonstrates that these modules have acted as a crucial catalyst for the founding of new missional projects. The CMS module, in providing a space for students to work on a distinct idea, enables its students not just to apply the theory to their specific context but also gave them an opportunity to pitch for funding and build a potential support network. These two latter resources have been identified by respondents as two areas which, if not resourced sufficiently, can be a major barrier to the launching of a project. There is still some work to be done in exploring the longevity and long-term impact of those projects that have launched as a result of the modules. The fact that some respondents had undertaken the module as early as 2011 would suggest that there is a significant long term impact at work.

However, what is clear in the responses received by this project is that there are many obstacles that prevent missional entrepreneurship initiatives from getting off the ground, and the learning derived from these modules being applied. It is possible that some of these barriers (particularly those institutional ones identified within the Church of England) could be overcome if the modules and their teaching were adopted more widely. It is not sufficient to teach these ideas to ordinands on specific pathways at certain TEIs and interested lay people, without also providing training for those with whom these students will have to work in order to launch their projects. Not everyone in the church needs to be able to undertake the practice of missional entrepreneurship, but the breadth of the institution needs to understand the impact it can have upon the mission of the church. Given the relevance of entrepreneurship to ministry in general, it seems as though these are modules that have great relevance to all TEIs, especially those engaged with context-based training. It is worth asking whether the lack of adoption of these modules across TEIs is indicative of a lack of both understanding and appreciation of missional entrepreneurship?

There has been a variety of projects launched as a result of these modules, from those that would fulfil most Fresh Expressions of Church criteria; to initiatives that might not immediately be seen as even relating to church. This embodies the modules' theology that mission is diverse in its forms – but is not necessarily an ideology shared by others within the church. This may have an impact upon another key area identified by respondents – how projects are resourced. With the recent emphasis upon Resource Churches and church planting by the Church Commissioners in terms of their financial funding of dioceses, there is a question as to whether missional entrepreneurial projects look sufficiently like 'church' to garner this kind of funding? It is also worth asking whether they should have to? Certainly, if the institutional church is to be seen to value this type of mission, it would be helpful to see some resources directed towards it.

Ultimately, missional entrepreneurship is a rich seam in the mission of the church that, in addition to already having had a significant impact in a limited area, has the potential to have a much greater impact with a wider roll-out and intentional resourcing.

## **APPENDIX – LIST OF PROJECTS BEGUN BY STUDENTS**

This list includes names of projects mentioned by students responding to the survey/interviews, as well as those identified by members of the CMS module delivery team.

Families Outside (connecting schools and justice system to support children affected by imprisonment)

Paradise co-operative

Pop-up bakery

Illustrated Oxford coffee shop guide

Orts

Church Café in Norwich

Bfriend - for asylum seekers/refugees

Clean for Good

Home Café

Twigloo

Co-working space for creative entrepreneurs

One Retreat

Out of The Box Cards

Candid

Restorative Justice/forensic mental health

Coffee 'shop' on bike

Sedbury Space

Café in a Church

Homemade

Town centre project

Bike maintenance project

Cherish: Nail bar and mentoring based on Esther

Soft play

Football tournament

Brother Surf

Shine wrap-around school club

Café at cathedral for meeting needs

CMS gift shop

Food for Fun

Melange hair salon

Space to Breathe

English for Life Language School

Journey On

Christian community on new housing development

Walkie Talkies

St Matthew's Parish Centre

East Somerset Climbing Centre

Glow (ethical reflective knitwear)

Hope English School

Accept

Fast Break kids

Alibi Room

Good Shepherd Boxing Club

Rest for Life

The Story Arc



Junction café Project  
Phil's Place  
After school club  
Free school holiday breakfasts  
Photography retreats  
Café with debt advice, evolving into fxC  
Turning church into community centre  
Scrap Store