

Contextualization of Theological Education Curriculum for Transformative Music Ministry

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Abstract

The curriculum is an integral aspect of an educational process that contributes to the formation of learners in a secular or theological context. It is one of the determinant factors of the relevancy of learner first to the immediate context and globally relevant if it aims to achieve its goal. For a curriculum to adequately prepare its product for effectiveness in the field, contextualizing its content is inevitable. In the context of theological education, which is an essential tool for preparing believers whom God calls into a full-time ministry, contextualization of the curriculum of training is needed for effective and impactful ministry in the Church and society. At the centre of the goals of theological education is the pursuit of making an individual who is being trained functional, practical and transformative minister in various ministry dimensions. The recent complaints from local churches of ineffective and incompetent trained ministers, especially in the area of music ministry in ministering through music (vocal or instrumental) to the congregation in such a way that the impact of the training received is justified, calls for the examination of the relevancy and the nature of the curriculum used. This work aimed at advocating for a curriculum of training that takes cognizance of the context in which those engaged in the music ministry are being trained and prepared for exploration of concepts such as contextualization, Theological Education, Curriculum, Music Ministry, and Transformative Music ministry were done. The need for transformative music ministry was articulated as well as the place of the

curriculum in the formation of a transformative music ministry being established. Furthermore, the importance of a contextualized curriculum in the training of ministers for transformative music ministry and the process of contextualization of the music ministry training curriculum are enunciated.

Introduction

Contextualization of Theological education in Africa has continually received attention in the contemporary time; the challenge of the changing world, which focus on the power of self-identity, is a pointer to the fact that the educational curriculum of any institution has to redirect its effort towards proffering answers to its environment and Theological education is not an exception from the move. In the context of theological education, which is an essential tool for preparing believers whom God calls into full-time ministry, contextualization of the curriculum of training is needed for effective and impactful ministry in the Church and society. Theological education is a reflection and product of its curriculum; among other things, and at the centre of the goals of theological education lies the pursuit of making an individual who is being trained functional, practical and transformative minister in various ministry dimensions.

This paper advocates for a curriculum of training that takes cognizance of the context in which those engaged in the music ministry are being trained and prepared. Exploration of contextualization, theological education, curriculum, music ministry, and transformative music ministry shall be done. The need for transformative music ministry shall be attempted. The place of the curriculum in the formation of a transformative music ministry shall be established, and the importance of a contextualized curriculum in the training of ministers for trans-formative music ministry and the process of contextualization of the music ministry training curriculum shall be explored.

Clarification of Concepts

Contextualization: Admittedly, many scholarly explanations and conceptualizations of contextualization relate to many concepts in Christianity. Stauffer (1996, p. 12) posited it as an insertion of new

value into an old heritage and worldview; this indicates that the newness brought to a context recognizes the cultural practice and heritage of the recipient community with a high possibility of making the cultural heritage better without losing out the originality. It is a typical example of inculturation that Stauffer (1996, p. 12) further explained as the assimilation of people's language, ritual and symbolic patterns so that people can claim and own worship core. Although the above notion was posited on the premise of worship, when applied to the curriculum context, it is an assimilation of the practice and culture of the immediate environment into the training content for viability and relevancy of the training purpose and impact. To buttress the above view, Fanning (nd, np) argued that contextualization is finding the points of contact within other people's contexts and removing things from one's context that might block communication in gaining a hearing for the gospel. Fanning's submission attempts to communicate the message of the person, work and will of Christ in a way that is faithful to God's revelation and meaningful to the respondent in their respective cultural and existential contexts in the context of theological training.

Furthermore, Perin (2011, p. 1) notes that contextualization in education is an approach that creates an explicit connection between teaching, reading and writing in a discipline area. It is a placement of something or an activity in a context. Johnson (2002, p. 24) outline the Parameters that constitute a curriculum's contextualization involving identity, location, time activities, constitution and environment. Finding a nexus in the curriculum that prepares ministers of the gospel in an African context and the standard practice of global theological training is crucial for relevance and globally recognized practice and culture of theological training in any discipline area. In ensuring such achievement, the identity of the students, the setting of African Churches where graduates will serve, the location, the reality of what is obtainable per time, cultural activities and the environment must be considered.

As affirmed by Lingenfelter (1998, p. 12), the essential goal of contextualization is to frame the gospel message in a language and communication forms appropriate and meaningful to the local culture and to focus the message upon crucial issues in the people's lives.

Contextualization aims at making the gospel accurate and relevant to its immediate context using different local artistic elements without necessarily undermining the tenacity of the gospel. Stauffer (1996, p. 12) submits, "Cultural elements can be adopted, adapted, transformed and reinterpreted for worship and necessary evangelization task". Regardless of the approaches mentioned above, contextualization allows the indigenous practices and customs of the target culture to come into place in her practice and expression of Christian faith that is effective and impactful to the immediate environment of the gospel of Christ.

Theological Education: This is a necessary form of Christian education that transforms the Church tradition from one generation to the other. It enhances the renewal and effectiveness of the Church ministry and leadership. Werner (2012, p. 6) argues that Theological education exists for the authentic and contextual mission of the Church in contemporary times, for interaction between the Church and society; where many issues demand a sharpened stand and position of Christianity, theological education is inevitable.

Theological Education is sacred for the holistic development of the person called by God for training in the practical ministry of the Church. Ishola-Esan (2015, p. 42) affirms that the essential function of Theological Education is developing leaders primarily for the work of missions and particularly leaders for the Church. To Noelliste (1995, p. 299), Theological Education is a formation of the people in the truth and wisdom of God for personal renewal and meaningful participation in fulfilling God's purpose in the Church and the world. Considering Ishola-Esan and Noelliste definitions, the essence of theological education is to prepare learners, regardless of the area of specialization, for the transformation of lives, the Church and society.

Curriculum: The first point of clarification is the submission of Mulenga (2018, p. 2), who sees curriculum as that which embodies the intentions of education that carries the belief, values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and all that education is. Print (1993, 32) states that it is the substance for school and schooling. The curriculum is all the selected, organized, integrated, innovative and evaluative educational experiences provided to learners consciously or unconsciously under school authority in order to achieve the designated learning outcomes,

which are achieved as a result of growth, maturation, and learning meant to be best utilized for life in a changing society (Mulenga, 2018, p. 20). In another vein, Silva (2009, p. 7) sees curriculum as an emphasis on what students can do with knowledge rather than the unit of knowledge they have in the essence of the 21st century. Application of knowledge gained in the classroom to the practical ministry is very germane in theological training; it is not enough for a graduate to own a certificate with a good grade, but the most important thing is what such an individual can contribute to the spiritual transformation and the growth of an individual congregant in the Church. Brown (2006, p. 3) views curriculum as all learners' school experience relating to improving skills and strategies in thinking critically and creatively, solving problems, working collaboratively with others, communicating well, writing more effectively, reading more analytically and conducting research to solve a problem.

Daniel and Laurel Tanner (1980, p. 25), in line with Brown's thought, argue that curriculum is a planned and guided learning experience and intended learning outcomes formulated through a dynamic and systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school for learners continuous and wilful growth in personal-social competence. From Brown and Tanners' notion, the curriculum is not only a set of what learners can interact with and reproduce. It is more of a transfer of creatively learning content in meeting and proffering solutions to a problem (in a theological sense, the pursuit of God). It is also the capacity to work together with people; Church ministry is people-oriented, and communicating and working well with and among people is necessary to impact and achieve a transformative result.

The components of the curriculum, as outlined by Ugbamadu (2006, p. 8), include goals and objectives (the curriculum intent), content (subject and subject matter), learning experience and evaluation. The focus of this paper shall be on the intent, content and learning experience that music students of theological education pass through in the preparation and formation that enable them to develop skills that transform music ministry, the worshippers and the local Church of their respective duty post.

Music Ministry: Music ministry, as defined by Miller (1992, p. 29), is a comprehensive, Church-wide ministry (service) for Christ, for all organizations and services of the Church involving all ages and levels of appreciation and ability, and for all members and participants of the Church. Music ministry is one of the church ministries that cut across every sphere of the Church's lives and ages; by this, it has an opportunity to reach many congregants and feature more prominently in church life.

Transformative Music Ministry: A transformative music ministry takes an existing ministry of music in a context to an improved level of understanding, performance and participation through the excellent input of its leadership. Music ministry is said to be transformative when its activities enhance the transformation of lives and the Church.

The Place of Curriculum Contextualization in the Transformative Music Ministry

The curriculum is an integral aspect of an educational process that contributes to the formation of learners in a secular or theological context. It is one of the determinant factors of the relevancy of the learner first to the immediate context and globally relevant if it aims to achieve its goal, Lunenberg (2011, p. 4). For a curriculum to adequately prepare its product for effectiveness in the field, contextualizing its content is inevitable. A contextualized curriculum aims at helping students learn skills using the authentic context in which learners must use those skills in the real world. Contextualized Curriculum has a crucial role to play in any transformative ministry; when the content of learning is not presented in abstract and in isolation from the realities of the immediate context, it quickly penetrates the conscious and the unconscious faculties of learners, and the goal of such training is easily achieved.

Hendriks (2012, p. 1) argued that curriculum is more than simply the syllabus or content of the teaching at a theological school; it is a culture of education and discipleship that believers are called to minister, which traditionally takes place at the seminaries. At the centre of the goals of theological education is the pursuit of making an individual who is being trained functional, practical and

transformative minister in various ministry dimensions. Music ministry cannot be said to be functional if it is not transformative; a contextualized curriculum furnishes the learner with the skill needed to make the music ministry of a local church functional not only in singing and playing musical instruments but also in reaching out spiritually to an individual worshiper and the Church at large through the activities of the music ministry.

A contextualized curriculum helps the graduate and prepare students in training to match-up with the existing challenge(s) that is peculiar to the context of their ministry environment or catchment; therefore, for effective delivery and discharge of ministerial duties in Africa, a curriculum of study has to be redefined to that which is enshrined with the unique identity of African Christianity and expression in the educational training content. Reaching out to an individual in a way that a meaningful impact is made requires the curriculum for the training of individuals that will, in turn, serve in the Church either as a theologian, educator, music and other related church ministries in the message, song, teaching, and preaching must be contextualized.

Need and Importance of a Contextualized Curriculum in the Training for Transformative Music Ministry

Onwochei (2006, p. xiii) affirms that every honest, godly observer will not find it challenging to notice decay in music ministry today; concerning the above notion, Osbeck (1961, p. 34) advocates for the qualification of a music minister in three main areas which are the spiritual, the personal and the musical. There is a need for a curriculum of training for music ministry to involve not only the artistic aspect of music ministry but the ethic, and the spirituality of it must be enshrined in the content of learning because it takes a transformed music minister to lead a music ministry that will be transformative. Interestingly, one of the aims of training people for the music ministry of the Church, as outlined in The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomoso Catalogue (2020, p. 6); is to train effective ministers for Churches in Africa, to apply Christian Faith and practice in its comprehensive and integrative nature for the transformation of individual and community. If ministers of the Baptist Seminary are training for Africans, then contextualization of

the manual, material and means of training is unavoidable. The training must balance the head (knowledge) of the subject matter, the context of ministry, the expectation of the recipients, the useful tools in the environment, the hand (skills) in musical instruments peculiar to different settings in the African context, musical performance (vocal and instrumental) music peculiar to African and the heart (the spirituality) of an individual learner.

In the definition of music ministry, Miller (1992, p. 29) emphasizes that music ministry is more than having choirs; it is a ministry that involves congregational, choir, instrumental, training and promotional activities; the above call to mind the necessity of such encompasses ministry not just for performance but to be one whose function and activities are ever-changing into Christ-likeness. For music ministry to be functional, its contents (vocal and instrumental) and other related actions must contribute to transforming individuals and the Church. Onwochei (2006, p. 6) corroborates this as he noted that God desires to see every ministry contribute to the building up, strengthening and general healthy growth of members of the body. Considering Miller's notion (1992, p. 29), music ministry exists for talented and untalented persons of all age categories, which cuts across teaching, training, evangelism, stewardship and other church life. The above is a pointer to the truth that music ministry covers a wide range of people of different background, need and status; this gives it a possible chance to possess the potential to reach out to many at a time and is a helpful tool for the transformation of lives in the Church and the society. God's intention for every ministry of the Church is to transform lives; music ministry is not exempt from this expectation, mainly because it tends to involve more people and win the interest of many. It is not enough to perform a melodious song that fails to touch and transform lives into Christ-likeness.

Murthi (2014, p. 54) raises concern that many African Seminaries forced western theology in shaping the function of African Theologians and advocates that it is time for African theology to answer questions and solve problems deeply felt by the people it seeks to serve. The admonition above is not limited to theological studies and education alone; it is also applicable to Church Music as well; some questions confront church musicians on the need to fill

noticeable gaps in African worship, especially in the area of musical language, style, performance as well as a scholarly contribution to the development of African Church Music. Steuernagel (2003, p. 100), in line with the above, submitted that “European oriented or structured curriculum does not help make seminary graduates fit for purpose in the reality of African context”. Building on the above thought, Murthi (2014, p. 52) further cautions that Theological education in Africa must recognize its discontinuity with an education that does not respond to her needs because it does not provide the functionality needed.

Utilizing a curriculum whose content is foreign to the context of learning and performance of the graduate of church music will not only incapacitate the input of learners in solving or combating challenges in the immediate environment of ministry but also put a question mark on the existence and purpose of the learning institution, and the academic competence and integrity of the educators. Hendriks (2012, p. 2) advocated the need for Seminaries with contextualized curricula and responsive training that stay in touch with what is happening in the Church and the realities of society. He further maintains that responsive training and curriculum is a spiritual discernment exercise and a walk with good practice.

Building upon the above view, Moreau (2012, pp. 18-19) noted that without contextualization, people would not connect to Christ in a way that moves their hearts, and faith would feel foreign. Contextualized curriculum helps learners learn authentic skills that enable effective and impactful ministration in music ministry. Marsh (1997, p. 18), citing Sigg, emphasizes that the critical factor for considering a curriculum's authenticity is its tenacity to build up its product such that they are found useful in the field. Every institution that must make a relevant impact on its immediate society through its product must put into perspective the contextual relevance of its curriculum content and strive to enshrine into the learning process the cultural elements and values that enhance the contextualization of learning materials. Taking a clue from Moreau (2006, p. 284), contextualization must be comprehensive; both the text and the context are crucial, and adequate contextualization must encompass a complete transformation of the individual and their context.

A functional curriculum based on the immediate contexts needs, problems, challenges, and feedback helps its product to be functional in the society Oliva (1997, p. 15); in the case of theological education for music ministry, a functional curriculum is the one that helps and prepares the learners to function effectively as a minister of music using music to contribute to the transformative process of people and the Church. Any deviation from this may continually pose the threat of incompetency, irrelevancy, and lack of expected aptitude on the product and shameful feedback to the training institution – for a product is a reflection of the learning process, content and also the academic integrity of an educational institution which theological institution is not an exception. Murthi (2014, p. 54) affirms that when Church leaders are not relevantly prepared, they do more damage than good in the field, and since the community looks up to them as a resource; people are disappointed. Training for the local Church music ministry should be more concerned about the outcome and not only the output of the product to be effectual; there is a need to understand students' context and design curriculum accordingly for the effectiveness of the theological institution can be measured by the competency of its graduates. The content of the curriculum had to be intentionally connected to the learner's milieu and the Church's reality.

To get the above done, adopting the two methods proposed by Chupungo (1996, pp. 79-81) involving: “Creative Assimilation” and “Dynamic Equivalence” is very crucial. Creative assimilation reinterprets cultural elements of people's rites and symbols in the context of biblical personages and events. Integrating the above approach into Theological Education for music ministry training, the institution needs to use familiar musical repertoires, idioms, styles, instruments and performance methods from learners' environments which will help fit in for the reality of the future place of ministry assignment. The dynamic equivalence is more concerned with existing elements and how cultural elements can further enhance translation, bringing it to the curriculum context. This foreign element is found useful and may not necessarily be thrown away but can be localized using predominantly cultural elements to garnish it for the benefit and usage of a cultural setting.

Dynamic Equivalence expresses elements with something that has similar meaning and value in the culture of the people to transmit the intended message to the targeted people. In the context of training curriculum, the above calls for the insertion of cultural elements into the content of training that prepares each music minister for relevance and effective music ministry that will not just be performance oriented but that which transform lives and transform the local assembly of an individual's ministry post. In contrast, creative assimilation focuses on what culture can offer and adds to the training of a local church's would-be leader(s) of the music ministry. A creative assimilation method is a helpful tool for Theological education planners in framing and developing curriculum content that is culturally conscious and makes ministry to the immediate context effective since music is one of the significant elements that uphold, project and maintain a cultural identity. From the two methods above, the common aim of contextualization is making the gospel relevant to its context using different ways to share it without necessarily watering-down God's word's tenacity.

Process of Contextualization of Curriculum for Transformative Music Ministry

Contextualization of the curriculum is not a one-time attempt; it is a process that comes to reality and comprehensiveness through systematic identification and inculcation of key elements that makes the graduate functional and relevant. The submission of Jeeny (2008, p. 7) that to contextualize a curriculum, teachers use authentic materials, activities, interests, issues and needs from learners' lives to develop classroom instruction provides a guide to the contextualization for transformative Music Ministry as follows:

Inculcation of learning the skill of playing local instruments of the immediate context by the learner into the curriculum of study is one of the ways by which contextual elements of the immediate environment of ministry can be used in the preparation of would-be leaders of local church music ministry. Through the skill gained, students will have acclimatized with and developed the skill of using such instruments in worship and be able to grow others in the place of ministry assignment. Writing indigenous music for training context and taking learners

through an active and effective performance of music in the geographical zones of the learning context is another dimension of curriculum contextualization needed for the effective and transformative ministry of music.

The performance of more indigenous and localized music, for vocal and instrumental music featuring the peculiarity of African expression of faith, is also a reasonable effort in domesticating the content of the training curriculum for transformation. Incultation of accompaniment of indigenous choral anthems and African rhythmic-oriented praise songs, not only hymns and western rhythmic praises or anthems in the training content, can help in the formation of learners an impactful ministry of music in the Church. Activities geared towards developing skills that enable the learner to handle local and untrained choir through practicum effectively and re-introducing the African Choral Ensemble are needed in the curriculum content to pass the gospel message that transforms lives and enhances meaningful expression of faith via music.

The curriculum's content could also involve engaging learners in standardizing African Church Choral music and helping local Churches professionally to collect, re-arrange, score or notate indigenous choral music. There is a need to introduce courses that task students to research local church choral and congregational music of the training context for artistic input and theological gatekeeping.

Conclusion

This work has examined the place, need, importance and process of contextualizing theological education, especially in transformative music ministry. The contextually relevant curriculum is inevitable for Theological education to make the desired impact in its mission engagement both within and outside the Church. Theological educators would do well to avoid over-dependence on the western-oriented curriculum of music ministry in African settings to avoid alienating students and graduates of Church music, causing a resented attitude that hinders the acceptance of the seminary-trained music graduates.

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