

Contextualized Curriculum for Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education in Africa

John O. Enyinnaya

Abstract

This article explores the issues related to the concern of contextualising curriculum to suit a context and makes proposals for remediating perceived shortcomings in the curriculum content and delivery of theological schools in the African context. The article clarifies some key terms, then discusses the relationship of contextualization and curriculum as well as the role of curriculum in theological education. A section titled contextualized formal and non-formal theological education curriculum reports the outcome of a research which then forms the basis for the recommendations that are made for contextualizing theological education curriculum for the African context. Brief rehash of the historical perspective of this concern in theological education and then suggests some pillars that the author considers to be important in crafting a relevant curriculum that can help theological education fulfil its responsibility to the church in contemporary African context. Recommendations towards a Contextualized Theological Education Curriculum for the African Context begins first with a thorough needs assessment and once a needs assessment is done; second, the curriculum should then be crafted to respond to issues discovered. Third, the curriculum should properly integrate content with objectives and delivery methodologies. Fourth, what has been said about curriculum goes for both formal and non-formal theological education. The article concludes every theological institution carries out an intentional re-evaluation of its objectives to see to what extent they align with the contemporary needs and challenges of the African context which of necessity should include, not only the usual three areas of spiritual formation, academic formation

and professional formation but also formation for missions. Thereafter, each institution should evaluate its curriculum in the light of the revised objectives.

Introduction

A few years ago, I presented a lecture to a class at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS), Ogbomoso, southwest Nigeria. The lecture was on the meaning of salvation in the African context. At the end of the class, one of the students said the lecture made sense but that he could not say the same about many of the courses and assignments we were giving them. Naturally, we spent the rest of the hour discussing the relevance of the entire programme they were being offered. I came to discover two things from that discussion: first, the student's struggle lay in reconciling the fact that some of the pastors he knew whose congregations were growing and doing well did not attend any theological schools, while many graduates of theological institutions struggle to make impact in the ministry. And second, that this student was not alone in this struggle.

Whichever way one chooses to respond to the students' struggles, one cannot but notice the paradox in a person failing to excel in a task after three or four years of training, whereas another who did not have the privilege of training does the same task "better". The discussion with the students that day, as well as other similar experiences, has continued to make me reflect on the place of theological education in Christian ministry. That discussion also throws up the matter of curriculum relevance which is the burden of this conference. The title of this paper, "Contextualized curriculum for formal and non-formal theological education in Africa" requires that we explore the issues related to this concern and that we make proposals for remediating perceived shortcomings in the curriculum content and delivery of theological schools in the African context. The paper is divided into five major parts. It begins with clarification of key terms, then discusses the relationship of contextualization and curriculum as well as the role of curriculum in theological education. The section titled contextualized formal and non-formal theological education curriculum reports the outcome of a research which then forms the basis for the recommendations that are made for contextualizing theological education curriculum for the African context.

Defining Key Concepts

Six key concepts need to be clarified. These include formal education, non-formal education, informal education, explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum, and null curriculum.

According to a document produced by the European Council for Theological Education (ECTE) and approved in September 2022, **formal education** may be defined as education provided by a training institution which is “structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support and leading to certification” (ECTE, 2022, 3). The practical components of such an educational process, including field education and mentoring, are considered a part of the formal education curriculum.

According to the ECTE document, **non-formal education** refers to “learning that takes place through activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g., learner-teacher relationship) (ECTE, 2022, p. 4). Non-formal education is usually utilized to improve work skills, adult literacy or basic education. It might be in the form of in-service training that organizations use to advance the skills of their workers in specific areas such as ICT (Information Communications Technology), structured online learning, work-shops, and conferences. Both formal and non-formal education are structured and intentional learning, but the major difference between them is that the former takes place through the formal curriculum of an educational institution while the latter utilizes open educational resources.

On the other hand, **informal education** refers to learning which occurs “from daily activities related to work, family and leisure which is not organized or structured in terms of objective, time or learning support” (ECTE, 2022, p. 4). Informal learning may occur through life and work experiences, travel, volunteer services, sports and cultural activities. In theological education, informal learning may happen in formal education through activities that are outside the formal curriculum (e.g., chapel services), but it may also take place outside of school activities, such as church experience, among others. Informal learning may be unintentional from the learner’s perspective and refers to “learning from everyday life, which may have a

formative effect, but is neither part of formal educational programme the student is enrolled in, nor part of a non-formal educational set up” (ECTE, 2022, p. 4).

The **explicit curriculum** refers to the “learning opportunities that are overtly taught and stated or printed in documents typically drawn from standards, policies, and related guidelines” (Milner, 2017). The **implicit curriculum** may be intended or unintended but is not stated or written down and can also be considered a hidden curriculum” (Milner, 2017). Co-curricular activities may be considered a type of implicit curriculum. The co-curriculum refers to “activities and learning experiences that take place in school alongside the academic curriculum” (St Georges, n.d.). These activities may be part of formal or non-formal education. They are organised and provided to enrich a student’s academic attainment in a training programme to make for a rounded education. These activities may cover a wide range of interests, such as sports, music, drama, debates, retreats, and excursions, among others. On the other hand, the **null curriculum** “refers to what students do not have the opportunity to learn. In this case, students are learning something based on the absence of certain experiences, interactions, and discourses in the classroom” (Milner, 2017). In other words, what is not included in the curriculum can be an active part of what students learn.

Contextualization and Curriculum

The issue of contextualization in curriculum invokes the idea of relevance and raises the question of the relevance of an educational programme in achieving the set goals and objectives within a given context. In the theological education context, the concern is to what extent the curriculum used is able to achieve the purpose of preparing ministers and leaders who are able to lead the church in fulfilling God’s mission in contemporary African context. So, there is the matter of the missional nature of theological education and there is also the issue of the contemporary challenges confronting African societies in which the church is called upon to live and serve. This concern is the very core of this paper. I shall attempt below a brief rehash of the historical perspective of this concern in theological

education and then suggest some pillars that I consider to be important in crafting a relevant curriculum that can help theological education fulfil its responsibility to the church in contemporary African context.

The Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches published a report titled 'Issues in Theological Education 1964-1965: Asia, Africa, Latin America', in which they noted the continued dependence of theological seminaries in these continents on curriculum developed in the West ("Issues", n.d. p. 32). This kind of situation makes them produce students who are not conversant with the nature of the church or dynamics of ministry at home. The report noted efforts made in the 1960's by theological schools across the continents to reform their programmes not just in the addition of new courses but in fundamental approach. One such example occurred in Chile where the theological community secured the services of a sociologist working with the World Council of Churches to research the nature of the evangelical church in Chile and the nature of its ministry in that context. Based on his findings curriculum was then developed to assist the church in the training of ministers who will be able to provide appropriate leadership and ministry for the churches ('Issues', n.d. p. 34). While commending this and other similar efforts going on at the time, the report observed that the review that was taking place concerned 'the reflective presence of the church than ... its unique witness' ("Issues", n.d., p. 43). In other words, not just the church's self-understanding but also its evangelistic mission needs to be taken into account in any meaningful curriculum reviews in order for the church to be able to have workers that will assist it in fulfilling its full mandate. While some progress may have been recorded in some parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America in some aspects mentioned above, there are no indications that reasonable advancement has been recorded in developing a context-based curriculum for theological education in Nigeria.

Within the Roman Catholic Church, concerns about the relevance of theological education being provided by the church was pivotally expressed in 1990 when a synod was held on the issue. The report of that synod was later published in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation with the title *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (On the Formation of

Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day), hereafter referred to as the PDV. According to John Paul II himself, the 1990 synod, was intended to be a reflection on and implementation of the Second Vatican Council's views on formation for the priesthood 25 years after (PDV, 1992, p. 6). The synod shifted attention 'from the question of the priest's identity to that connected with the process of formation for the priesthood and the quality of priestly life' (PDV, 1992, p. 8).

The synod and later the PDV moved away from the threefold objectives of theological education propounded by Vatican II (Cheesman, 1993, p. 11) to a fourfold objective, namely human formation, spiritual formation, intellectual formation and pastoral formation. The overriding concern of the bishops at the synod was the development of a programme of formation that will help intending priests 'come to know and follow Jesus ...,' (PDV, 1992, p. 9) in other words, to resemble Christ.

The 1990 synod reported in the PDV grew out of dissatisfaction with the existing emphases in the training of priests within the Catholic Church before then and sought to chart a different course that will bring about a more relevant ministerial training programme for the church.

Two influential publications which came out in the 1990s are David Kelsey's *Between Athens and Berlin* (1993) and Robert Banks' *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (1999). In *Between Athens and Berlin*, Kelsey organizes the different approaches to theological education into two prototypes: Athens and Berlin. The Athens model has its roots in *paideia*, the pattern of schooling prevalent among the Greeks, 'a process of culturing the soul' (Kelsey, 1993, p. 6). At first, the goal was the preparation of the individual for public service, but with the loss of self-governing powers by the Greek state, *paideia* began to tend to education in inward happiness in the midst of outer social and political oppression (Kelsey, 1993, p. 10). The Berlin model, on the other hand, has its roots in the inclusion of a faculty of theology at the University of Berlin. This approach has two legs: 'orderly, disciplined critical research on the one hand, and professional education for ministry on the other' (Kelsey, 1993, p.12). Kelsey argues that most approaches to theological education fall

under one or the other of these two categories. While there are common grounds between the two approaches to excellent schooling, the difference is in the major tendency of each: one to character or spiritual formation and the other to professional or ministerial formation. Kelsey's work provides a tool for analysing the tendencies of particular theological education programmes. Considering the philosophy, objectives and focus of most of the theological institutions of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, it seems that their curricula offerings tend to the Berlin vocational approach to theological education.

In *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, Banks examined different approaches to theological education, such as classical, vocational, dialectical and confessional approaches and offered what he described as missional approach as a way of unifying the different approaches. Reflecting on Kelsey's designation of two models of theological education as Athens and Berlin, Banks suggests a third model designated Jerusalem, claiming that his new model is more amenable to the rabbinical and biblical patterns of education (Banks, 1999, pp. 129-130). For him, the missional approach derives from the Jerusalem model and reflects a theological education informed by the situation in the field; it is a field-based approach that involves 'learning-in-ministry' rather than 'learning-for-ministry' or 'learning-alongside-ministry' (Banks, 1999, p. 226). The missional approach is oriented towards the development of ministers who will be able to minister effectively given the changing character of ministry today (Banks, 1999, p. 226). Banks differentiates his missional approach from what is traditionally known to be missionary or missiological education in that while the latter focuses on the learning of missiological concepts, which might then be applied at the end of the training, the former describes education for mission in the midst of mission practice (Banks, 1999, pp. 161-163).

Bernhard Ott (2001), and Andrew Kirk (2005), carry forward Banks' missional trend of thought. In *Beyond Fragmentation: Integrating Mission and Theological Education. A Critical Assessment of some Recent Developments in Evangelical Theological Education*, Ott delves into the fragmentation that has bedevilled theological education and offers missions as an integrating force for theological

education. According to him, this emphasis has been part of the evangelical theological tradition from the days of the Bible School movement (Ott, 2001, p. 47). This focus offers some promise for making theological education relevant to the aspirations of the church today. Making missions integral in the training of ministers in the Nigerian setting today makes a lot of sense in the light of the large portion of our population that is not yet evangelized.

On the other hand, Kirk called for a revising of the curriculum of theological education with greater attention to the mission of the church. Kirk saw missions as the legitimate goal of theological education going by biblical parameters. The principle he had in mind entails “a cumulative learning process that involves the whole person gaining understanding and acquiring skills in a community of other learners” (Kirk, 2005, p. 24). This kind of theological education is integrated, practical, community based, open to the entire people of God and anchored on the accomplishment of God’s mission in the world. In this way, Kirk follows in the long line of people like Banks, Ott, *et al*, who find in the church’s mission a controlling theme for theological education.

In an article published in 2005, Brian Edgar, reviewed Kelsey’s Athens and Berlin models, on the one hand, and Banks’ Jerusalem model, on the other and added a fourth model, which he called the Geneva model. The Geneva or confessional model tends towards the maintenance of ecclesiastical tradition (Edgar, 2005, p. 4). According to Edgar, a confessional approach to theological education aims at the knowledge of God ‘through the use of the creeds and the confessions, the means of grace and the general traditions that are utilized by a particular faith community ... Formation occurs through *in-formation* about the tradition and *en-culturation* within it’ (Edgar, 2005, p. 5). Thus, in contrast to the other models, which tend to personal formation, professional formation and formation in missions, the confessional approach prioritizes formation within the framework of a faith community. To the extent that different theological education programmes around the world follow one or the other of these approaches or a combination of them, these models represent different perspectives on excellent theological education.

Andrew Wingate, published a book also in 1999 with the thought-provoking title, *Does Theological Education Make a Difference?* He theorized, following Sam Amirtham, that 25% of those who graduate from theological schools return home as they came, the other 25% grow to become leaders within the seminary and their various churches, while the remaining 50% could go either way (Wingate, 1999, p. 108). Wingate concludes that the success or otherwise of a theological education programme should be judged by the extent it is 'likely to produce ministers determined to mould their own future and force it to their liking, or to produce people open to where God may lead them, in whatever experiences and within whatever changing contexts they are placed' (Wingate, 1999, p. 114). In other words, has such a theological education been an education that moved them to not only good individual ministry but also to facilitating the ministries of church members so that the church can become the body of Christ in their context (Wingate, 1999, p.114)? Wingate may be understood as saying that the success or otherwise of a theological education programme is not determined by the top 25% of graduates who end up in useful ministries within and outside the church but by what happens with the remaining 75%.

Curriculum in Theological Education

We had earlier spoken about three types of curriculums, namely the explicit curriculum, implicit curriculum and the null curriculum. We had stated that the **explicit curriculum** refers to the learning activities that are printed in official documents of a school; that the **implicit curriculum** (may also be regarded as hidden curriculum or co-curriculum) is intended or unintended activities that are not stated or written down while the **null curriculum** refers to what students do not have the opportunity to learn, that is, what is excluded from their learning activities. These different senses of the curriculum are germane to our discussion here.

Every theological school has a published curriculum comprising activities students must successfully accomplish in order to be deemed qualified for graduation. There are also expectations or requirements not included in the published curriculum but howbeit, requirements students must meet to graduate. These published and

unpublished required learning activities reflect what an institution considers important for the achievement of their core objectives and their reason for existence. It is not only that an institution's self-understanding and perception of its mission are reflected in the explicit and implicit curriculum, but what is excluded from its requirements is also significant for gauging its priorities. An institution's requirements for graduation will be heavy on its priorities and light on subsidiary concerns. An institution whose curriculum does not prioritise the mission of the church, or which is heavy on in-reach rather than outreach is already making a statement about what is important to it.

Contextualized Formal and Non-Formal Theological Education Curriculum

We have earlier defined formal education as one provided by a training institution which is “structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support and leading to certification” (ECTE, 2022, p. 3). We also stated that practical components such as field experience, internships, and mentoring are to be considered part of formal education process since they form part of published requirements to be met for completion of the programme.

On the other hand, we explained **non-formal education** as “learning that takes place through activities (in terms of learning objectives, learning time) where some form of learning support is present (e.g., learner-teacher relationship) (ECTE, 2022, p. 4). This type of education is often used to improve work skills, adult literacy or basic education. It is the type of learning that happens through workshops and conferences. Thus, whereas both formal and non-formal education are structured and intentional learning, the major difference between them is that the former takes place through the formal curriculum of an educational institution while the latter utilizes open educational resources. We may state, therefore, that most theological institutions are engaged in formal education. This will include the educational processes that take place on campus and at their extension centres. However, they may also have non-formal educational opportunities such as conferences and workshops organized for the

benefit of their alumni, pastors on the field, church members or the general public. Since formal education processes represent the main work that these theological institutions engage in, our discussion here will give more attention to that and hope that the issues addressed will provide some help in also thinking through the non-formal education that the institutions are involved in.

The task of this paper therefore is to explore the nature of theological education curriculum that can qualify to be called contextualized and which will be useful to produce transformative Christian ministry in the contemporary time. To pose the problem somewhat differently, what kind of theological education curriculum will be useful for producing the kind of ministers needed today to grow the church in the African continent and to assist the church in fulfilling her mission in the world?

In a recent research, I grappled with similar issues (Enyinnaya, 2015). The research conducted between 2014 and 2015, had the title “The Correlation between Curriculum and Graduate Output: A Critical Assessment of the Basic Degree programme of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS), Ogbomoso”. The research was part of the requirements for a Master of Arts degree of the London School of Theology and the University of Middlesex, London. The study set out to assess the fitness of the curriculum offered in the Bachelor of Theology¹ degree programme of the NBTS to see its usefulness for producing the kind of ministers the church needs today. There were two stages of this study.

The first stage was to set out through primary research the kind of church the contemporary Nigerian church needs to be in the light of contemporary realities of its context and then to identify the characteristics of the kind of ministers that will help to produce such a church. Put another way, the question was “what should the church

¹ The Bachelor of Theology (B.TH) of the NBTS is now known as Bachelor of Arts in Theology (B.A.Th.). I stayed with the use of B.Th since that was the nomenclature when the study was conducted. However, I have updated my references to the Catalogue to the current one used by the Seminary (i.e., 2020-2025). It is noticed that the aspects of the Catalogue referred to has remained the same with the older version used for the study.

look like in the contemporary Nigerian context if it would be the true church of God able to fulfil her God-given mandate in the world? Then to enquire into the kind of ministers needed to bring that about. To achieve this, the study sampled three groups of people namely, church pastors, theological educators and leading church members. The context of the work was the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

The second stage was to assess the ministerial performance of selected NBTS graduates to see how relevant their ministries were when compared with the real needs of the Nigerian church today and the role the curriculum they trained with played in that process. The idea was to set the NBTS B.Th. curriculum against the performance of the graduates trained by it in the light of the ideal contemporary church and contemporary minister set out in stage one of the research. To achieve this second aspect, three graduates of the NBTS B.Th. programme were identified and interviewed as well as members of their churches (5 persons from each church) comprising men, women and young people. The plan was to assess the curriculum used in their training in the light of their ministerial performances. The combination of these approaches assisted in the process of judging: first, if there is a correlation between the curriculum and the performance of the graduates; and second, to see whether such a curriculum is adequate for producing the kind of ministers discovered in stage one.

The major highlights of the findings are presented below to show the directions a contextualized and transformative theological education curriculum should follow in the African context. First, I present the characteristics of the ideal church and the ideal pastor that emerged from the research and then proceed to identify gaps noticed in the B.Th. curriculum of the NBTS which indicate important elements the desired theological education curriculum ought to have.

The Ideal Church and the Ideal Pastor

According to the perceptions of those sampled, an ideal church in the 21st century Nigerian context (presented in the order of priority), is one characterized by evangelistic and missions focus (MW), robust preaching and teaching ministries (MM), ministry to the needy within

and outside the church (MM), team spirit and unity (MM), inspiring worship (MG), and a prayerful atmosphere that involves majority of its members (MG).² On the other hand, the ideal pastor is reflected as one characterized by a prayerful lifestyle (SF), sense of call (SF), knowledge of the word of God (AF), care for members (MF), good preaching and teaching skills (MF) and strong leadership in missions and innovative ministries (MF).

The traits that ranked very highly in the description of an ideal pastor were a prayerful lifestyle (ranked one) and a sense of call (ranked second). It is worthy of note that these two qualities are spiritual formation traits.

Of the characteristics of a good church outlined in this study namely evangelism and missions, preaching and teaching, ministry to the needy, unity, worship and prayer, an examination of the Seminary's objectives and curriculum show that they are fairly adequate on these except trait number one, evangelism and missions. The graduates and the churches studied appear to be doing quite well in the areas listed above except evangelism and missions, which ranked number one in the opinion of each of the three groups sampled (namely theological educators, church pastors and leading church members). Thus, in the characteristics of an ideal church, evangelism and missions ranked number one, and in the characteristics of an ideal pastor spiritual formation issues ranked number one. Incidentally, the NBTS B.Th curriculum ranked abysmally low on these two core issues.³ Let us examine these issues more closely.

Spiritual Formation

We have already noted the clear agreement of respondents in the study reported above on evangelism and missions as the number one characteristic of the ideal contemporary church in today's Nigerian

² Abbreviations are used as follows: MW- Ministry to the world, MM- Ministry to members, MG- Ministry to God. SF – spiritual formation, AF – academic formation, and MF – ministry formation.

³ It is important to note that the NBTS has since escalated its emphasis on spiritual formation but the situation on missions and evangelism has remained unchanged.

setting. Among the traits of an ideal pastor, leadership in missions was also identified. It is revealing that ability to provide leadership in missions made a good showing among other possible traits that were listed, howbeit, not as strongly recommended as total reliance on God's Spirit exemplified in a prayerful lifestyle and sense of call and commitment to the Lord and the ministry. As striking as this is, there seems to be an inner logic to it.

Spirituality has to do with who a pastor is, academics with what a pastor knows and practical ministry with what he/she does. Could it be that who a pastor is, his or her character, disposition, or the state of their walk with God, determine how well they discharge the functions of ministry? The lesson the study reveals seems to be the importance of God's role in the making of a successful ministry. Skills and knowledge, as important as they are, fail when God's Spirit is not in charge. Jonathan Chao made a similar point when he described the entire work of ministerial formation as 'shepherd formation' – learning to be like Christ, think like Christ, and serve like Christ (Chow, 1995, p. 224). Through spiritual formation the minister continues the journey towards Christ-likeness. He/she learns to be the person that God will use and to do things in ways expected of Christ's disciples thus becoming an example for the people of God. We see in the current literature that the general theory of theological education and its more recent history supports this strong emphasis on the spirituality of the minister.

Evangelism and Missions

The emphasis placed on evangelism and missions as number one characteristic of the church is also noteworthy. Over the years, there has been the charge that theological education needs to align itself with the demands of the church's Great Commission. We have already seen that Banks, Ott, and Kirk are among those who have made this call. Banks sought to make theological education missional (Banks, 1999, pp. 129-130), Ott called for the integration of theological education with the mission of the church (Ott, 2001, p. 47) while Kirk would have theological education curriculum revised with greater attention to the mission of the church (Kirk, 2005, p. 24). The NBTS institutional objectives states, among other things, that the

seminary seeks to 'equip people to fulfil the total mission of God for the world today' (NBTS Catalogue, 2020-2025, p. 6). Similarly, the programme objectives of the B.Th states inter alia, graduates being able to lead the church in outreach ministries (NBTS Catalogue, 2020-2025, p. 240). These do not go far enough. Besides, the B.Th curriculum does not include much that can equip students to perform as desired in leading churches in evangelism and missions. Out of 120 hours of courses designated as required and core, there is just one course (of two hours) on evangelism (NBTS Catalogue, 2020-2025, p. 243).

This leaves the B.Th programme open to the charge of producing maintenance ministers. When the programme started around 1945, there was a dearth of church pastors. The need at that time was to train church pastors who would provide leadership for the young mission churches. By and large that objective has been fulfilled. The situation is now different. It is not, therefore, surprising that of the three churches used for the study all of them seem to be doing quite well in nurture, teaching, administration and related ministries. None showed signs of being the evangelistic and missionary church so forcefully portrayed by the findings of the research.⁴

The point being made here requires not merely the removal or addition of courses to the curriculum but a thorough review of the programme that produces most of the pastors of Baptist churches in Nigeria and pastors of other denominations, in Nigeria and around the West African sub-region. There is need for a thorough review of both the curriculum and objectives. In their book, *Developing a Curriculum*, Audrey and Howard Nicholls, make the vital point that 'curriculum development is not an activity that is undertaken once in a school and then is finished. Rather, it a continuous process ... with knowledge and insights derived from assessment being fed back and providing a fresh starting-point for further development' (Nicholls and Nicholls, 1978, p.21-22). The argument is a valid one and supports the mainstream of ideas already highlighted in this paper that

⁴ The maintenance approach observed in the seminary's B.Th programme does not tally with the vision of the Nigerian Baptist Convention to move forward the work of the Great Commission.

curriculum is not a once and for all document. It is necessary to do a regular needs assessment, a critical assessment of the situation and challenges of the church in Nigeria today fed by interaction with church members, pastors on the field, denominational leaders, and other stakeholders. This kind of review should be field-based reflecting Banks' 'learning-in-ministry' approach rather than the 'learning-for-ministry' or the 'learning-alongside ministry' pattern (Banks, 1999, p. 226). This would then lead to the development of objectives and curriculum that will assist in the pursuit of the identified goals.

Recommendations towards a Contextualized Theological Education Curriculum for the African Context

The following recommendations emerge from the foregoing:

First, the making of a contextualized theological education curriculum begins with a thorough needs assessment. This is true both for formal and non-formal theological education. A needs assessment is carried out to understand the context in which the graduates from a theological education programme are expected to function and the challenges which their training should target to equip them to fulfil. Such an assessment should be carried out in consultation with all the stakeholders including the churches, who receive the ministry of the graduates.

Second, once a needs assessment is done, the curriculum should then be crafted to respond to issues discovered. The curriculum should be carefully planned to focus on and to achieve the core objectives of spiritual formation, academic formation, professional/practical formation and formation for missions. My 2015 research on the graduates of the NBTS B.Th programme cited above confirmed that there is indeed a correlation between curriculum and graduate output. The NBTS graduates were found to be very strong in the areas where the curriculum was strong and weak in areas where the curriculum was weak (Enyinnaya, 2016, pp. 36-37). This shows that the issue of curriculum is something institutions should carefully and diligently work on to help them achieve their obligations to provide the church with well-equipped pastors and workers for today's challenges.

Third, a curriculum that will be effective in getting the work done is one that properly integrates content with objectives and delivery methodologies. The curriculum needs to be integrated with the institution's purpose and objectives. The delivery of the curriculum is also critical because therein lies the actualisation of the vision which the curriculum represents.

Fourth, what has been said about curriculum goes for both formal and non-formal theological education. While most theological institutions focus on formal education (with a few also having non-formal education programmes), there are organisations that specialise in non-formal theological education. Whether formal or non-formal, curriculum should be planned in a way to achieve relevance and to fit the task the products of such a curriculum are expected to perform upon graduation.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on a contextualised theological education curriculum for the contemporary African setting. In other words, what kind of curriculum will be effective for producing ministers who will assist the church to fulfil her mission in the present context of the African church. The paper discussed the relationship of contextualisation and curriculum and the role of curriculum in theological education. It then presented and drew insights from empirical research that was carried out on the nature and character of a relevant theological education curriculum for the contemporary Nigerian church situation.

I suggest that every theological institution carries out an intentional re-evaluation of its objectives to see to what extent they align with the contemporary needs and challenges of the African context which of necessity should include, not only the usual three areas of spiritual formation, academic formation and professional formation but also formation for missions. Thereafter, each institution should evaluate its curriculum in light of the revised objectives. This is the way we can realize the goal of a contextualized curriculum for theological education in the African context and also a curriculum that will assist the institutions to fulfil their obligation to serve the church's mission in today's world.

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