

## **Impact of Christian Education in Curbing the Attitude of 21st Century Pastoral Trainers Who Neglect Recognized Theological Training**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores the Impact of Christian Education in Curbing the Attitude of 21st Century Pastoral Trainers who Neglect Recognized Theological Training. The terminology Christian education may not have been used in the Bible, but it is the awareness behind all the teachings recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Hence, the paper asserts that theological training, an arm of education, is committed to building spiritual and cognitive capacity. The paper discusses an overview of Christian education, its biblical bases, reasons why some pastoral trainers shun recognized theological training, the impact of Christian education, and the benefits of Christian education. The paper postulates that Christian education objective is to win a total man for a total Christ. Christian education aims to help develop and build Christian values. Hence, any goal separated from the development of Christlike living and Christian character formation makes Christian education secular. The descriptive method is employed. In the discussion that follows, the paper claims that some pastoral trainers do not see learning as dynamic, hence the decision to neglect recognized theological education and hold on to traditions learned over the years within the church setting.

## **Introduction**

Education brings exposure and generally differentiates people in society. There are different spheres in education, including but not limited to the sciences, arts, philosophy, or theology. Christian education as an arm of education differs from other arms of education in that it is rooted in God's word and God, who is the giver of knowledge. It has become a discipline, thus demanding expatriates and specialists, which can further be seen in theological training. Unfortunately, some people who want to lead churches or teach others biblically are not interested in recognized theological training. Hence, Harris (2022, p. 8) avows that if ministerial staff must play the leadership responsibility of the church, they must be capable of meeting the needs of believers in their congregation.

Christian education is vital for a firm theological foundation. This will equip and prevent the pastoral trainer from misinforming the church membership on fundamental biblical truths necessary for living an exemplary Christian life. Although some of them feel that theological training is not important since they have the "anointing"; others think that the anointing they receive from Jesus or the Holy Spirit is the only teacher they need and therefore do not value recognize theological training as an arm of Christian education. This paper discusses an overview of Christian education, its biblical bases, reasons why some pastoral trainers shun recognized theological training, impact of Christian education, and finally looks at the benefits of Christian education.

## **An Overview of Christian Education**

It is pertinent to note that Christian education is one discipline in education that tilts toward Christian ideologies. Ozumba (2018, p. 79) defines Christian education as any education, teaching, a set of instructions, profession, coaching, and mentoring centred on Christian values; it patterns the life of Christ as its role model in teaching. That is to say, it narrows down to Christian or godly values. Those values are found in the Word of God; hence, it uses the word of God as its primary source for instruction (Reynolds, 2018, p. 135). The word of God is its primary textbook or manual of instructions. This does not mean that in Christian education, all that is done is read the Bible;

other books deal with it, but their significant ideologies do not negate or contradict God's word.

Aghawenu (2016) avers that its goal is to win a total man or woman for a total Christ (p. 106). That is to say, the goal of Christian education is primarily evangelistic or reconciliatory. The church, the body of Christ, is the agency through which this education thrives. Byrne (1973, p. 22) notes that because the church is the divinely appointed agency for the proclamation of the Gospel, looking to her genuine Christian education is paramount. It has become a recurrent theme that even when some denominations get involved in Christian education or higher education, as the case may be, what primarily motivates them is financial profit. The impact of the gospel, which should be the main thrust, sometimes comes secondary.

According to Astley (1994, p. 7), Christian education should denote the formative activities of the church in developing Christian beliefs, attitudes, and overt behaviours. McKean (1988, pp. 29-32) concurs and notes that it is supposed to deal with the process of development and freedom done in the character of Christ. When the character of Christ is not seen in those who supposedly are Christian educators or students of Christian education, its purpose has been compromised. Christian education is an expression of theology through which God can be known (Filson, 1944, p. 89). Akinsulire (2020, p. 66) avers that it should foster transformation, regeneration, and reformation of individuals, groups, and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, though education is taking place, there is a need to depend on the transforming power of the Holy Spirit; otherwise, it will only be like every other secular education.

In its most valid form, Christian education transmits the Christian faith from one generation to another (Akinsulire, 2020, p. 66). By that same fact, the Bible has to be the primary source from where its principles are drawn. Fallaw (1950, p. 202) avows that if education is to be considered Christian, it ought to gather persons to follow Jesus Christ and emphasize that man's search for truth is supposed to or believed to inhere in the God who is in Christ. That is to say, the goal of Christian education remains Christian character formation. From the assertions of the various scholars discussed above, one thing is common in Christian education: the flavour of

Christ or Christian values in education. Any goal outside the formation of Christlike living, Christian character development, makes Christian education secular.

### **Biblical Foundations for Christian Education**

Christian education does not originate in a vacuum but arises from the fertile soil of the Bible. Similarly, Hoh (1947, p. 253) affirms that the words God spoke in the Bible make it the foundation for Christian education. If not, the Bible would have no right to be its basis. That is to say, what authenticates the Bible as the taproot of Christian education is because it is unerring and unfailing.

#### ***Christian Education in the Old Testament***

In this section, the paper shall look at the foundation of Christian education from the Old Testament. It is general knowledge that there was no Christianity in the Old Testament. Still, biblical scholars expect to cut across the Bible for any teaching to be biblically sound. Because the Old Testament is the foundation of the New Testament and the Christian faith is an offshoot of the Israelite religion, this discourse looks at Christian education from the Old Testament before delving into the New Testament. On that note, Hayes (1991, p. 31) asserts that the biblical revelation of God's dealings with his covenant people, Israel, and the example of Jesus and His apostles form the seedbed for what is known contemporarily as Christian Education. That is because the Israelite religion forms the foundation on which Christianity builds. The Old Testament is not only a religious document but is also a historical one; hence, it is non-exaggeration to affirm that the elements of the civilizations the world has seen have their roots in the knowledge of the teachings of the Bible (Peritz, 1932, p. 485).

According to Peritz (1932, p. 485), the Bible teaches Christian tenets and records early discoveries in civilization. For instance, the Bible in Genesis 4: 20-22 records Jubal as knowing to make musical instruments before people began to build modern ships. The roots of Christian education stem from Judaism since it is through it that Christianity also emerged. The Old Testament records that since the Hebrews were a covenant people, they taught their young ones how to

trust God. In dealing with education from the Old Testament, one passage stands out and is Deuteronomy 6:4-9 which is called the *Shema*. In it, the Israelites were supposed to love the Lord their God, for He is One, and to teach their children about Him. Hayes (1991, p. 34) posits that they were admonished to trust God and keep his commandments (Ps. 78:7). Bromiley (1998, pp. 469-470) expounds on the meaning of the *Shema* and avows that it means “hear” and is regarded in the Old Testament as a classic confession of the Hebrew Faith.

Wright (1953, p. 373) throws more light on the *Shema* as he asserts that it was a symbol of the faith to the Jews. He further notes that this was a bit to distinguish Yahweh from the Baals and other astral deities. In everyday parlance, it would take the place of a national anthem. An important point to note, as Merrill (1994, pp. 166-167) states, is that the father needed to teach the son who intended to teach the grandson, and then it continued such that the covenant features might never be forgotten. The teaching component was most important because it was passed on from generation to generation. Wright (1953, p. 373) added that its teaching was the rallying point for monotheism – for the Jews and all who were influenced by Judaism. Hence, to the Christians, the *Shema*’s intrinsic worth is vastly augmented by the fact that Jesus made it the supreme command to love God and one’s neighbour (Wright, 1953, p. 373). In other words, it is what the Hebrews held as a creed and the bedrock for contemporary Christianity.

Akinsulire (2020, p. 68) opines that *Shema* was a declaration of faith, a pledge of allegiance to one God, a framework for forming Israel's faith. The importance of the Old Testament as a foundation for Christian education can be seen in the Old Testament in texts like Proverbs 22:6, which talks about training children in the way they should go. Hayes notes that the word *hanak* in Hebrew, which means “to train,” comes from the root word meaning to “dedicate” or “consecrate”. (Hayes, 1991, p. 35). This presupposes that among the Israelites, education was a task of consecration and or dedication. Another word that is of paramount importance is the word *lamath* which means “to stimulate” or “to exercise in” It brings to bare the idea of an animal being placed on a yoke for learning (Hayes, 1991,

p. 35). Education in the Old Testament centred on God was perceived to be holy; it was practical in that it was learning by doing as parents taught their children (Saves, 1978, p. 37). It centred on the home; symbols were used to teach (Ex. 20:4), and dramatic ceremonies were teaching aids such as family rites (bar mitzvah) or community rites (Saves, 1978, p. 39). In Israel, priests, wise men, and prophets also served as teachers.

### ***Christian Education in the New Testament***

In the New Testament, Christian education is even more seen through the synagogues, which were instead for teaching and learning the Torah than a modern church (Hayes, 1991, p. 34). The examples and teachings of Jesus, the apostolic preaching, and writings revealed biblical records of early Christian worship and fellowship primarily from the base of New Testament education (Hayes, 1991, p. 34). Gangel (1993, p. 14) posits that Jesus, the teaching model, exemplifies Christian education in the New Testament. He affirms that Jesus is referred to as “Teacher” in the New Testament 41 times. If he is depicted this number of times in the New Testament, it is because teaching (education) had a primordial role in his ministry. The idea of Jesus being a teacher par excellence can be proven by his teaching methods; he assembled around him a group of disciples to teach. Most times, when asked direct questions, Jesus will reply indirectly, as in Luke 7:18-23 when asked by disciples who was the greatest among them.

He taught by visual aids, as seen in the case of the woman caught in adultery (Matt. 18:1-19) (Gangel, 1993, p. 17). It is not revealed for a fact what Jesus wrote on the ground. However, according to Gangel (1993, p. 17), whatever he wrote on the ground had a bearing relating to the situation. He was strategic in teaching, as seen in Luke 9:1-6 where he made the disciples answer for themselves after teaching. He taught with active examples and enormous flexibility as he displayed sensitivity to the situation. In a nutshell, the fact that the teaching ministry of Jesus is more spoken about than His preaching ministry and that the New Testament delineates his teaching sessions is a bedrock for Christian education. Through the Great Commission, the disciples were persistent in making converts whom they steadfastly taught (Acts 2:42, 5:42). Hayes (1991, p. 37) avows that the word

*koinonia* was because of the persistent behaviour of Christians as they continued in the teachings of the apostles.

The letters of Timothy include the directives to teach by Paul (I Tim. 4:14). Guthrie (1990, p. 109) avers that Paul saddled Timothy specifically with the responsibility of devoting time to the public reading of the Scriptures and teaching them. A special place was reserved for teaching (*didaskalia*), which consisted of instructions on the great truths of the Christian faith. Instructions or the preservation of the Christian heritage were passed down over the years through teaching; hence, the importance of Christian education cannot be overemphasized. Ayandokun (2018, p. 33) posits that in the Scriptures, those to whom God assigned tasks usually received instructions and guidance on accomplishing them (1 and 2 Timothy). Thus, though God gave instructions, He, through his guidance, would allow the one who has been instructed to be the one to do it, and that is important in education.

Sayes (1978, p. 43) notes that Paul's life and ministry strongly support Christian education; he used discussion, argumentation, and persuasion in Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus (Acts 17:2, 17, 18:4; 19:18). A look at Pauline letters attests to his teaching prowess. Hayes opines that teaching is essential for the proper handling of the inspired word (2 Tim. 2:14-15, 3:16-17); it is necessary for soundness in the faith (1 Tim. 4:6, 11, 16, 6: 3-5; 2 Tim. 4:3), it is a requirement of pastors and other spiritual leaders (1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:24) and is an essential corollary to Bible reading, exhortation, and preaching (1 Tim. 4:13, 2 Tim. 4:2). In buttressing how the early church took teaching (education) seriously, it was one of the requirements of choosing elders.

In further expatiating, Ngewa (2009, p. 126) said that Christian education is rooted in the New Testament, and added that elders who could teach deserved tremendous honour. Lea and Griffin Jr (1992, p. 286) concur with Ngewa on elders' teaching role and note that these elders were to refute those who oppose the truth in teaching. The Greek verb employed in Titus 1:9 *elegchein* suggests an educative dimension in confronting false teachers who contradict the gospel message (Lea and Griffin Jr 1992, p. 286). 2 Timothy 3:16 points out that the Scriptures are meant to be taught. It has been established from

the Old and New Testaments that Christian education has its roots in the Bible. The terminology Christian education may not have been used in the Bible, but it is the idea behind all the teachings recorded in the Old and New Testaments.

Having established the biblical foundations for Christian education, the following section discusses theological education as an arm of Christian education. Ayandokun (2018, p. 32) defines theological education as training men and women for kingdom tasks. The Kingdom tasks refer to God's assignment to win others through the Gospel. Ajibade (2018, p. 49) opines that it is the intellectual, experiential, and spiritual preparation for serving and providing leadership to a church or community of faith. According to Ajibade (2018, p. 49), theological training is a process or follows a procedure that involves the spiritual facet as well as the cognitive, but the main thrust of it is propagating godly values. However, it has been noticed that some pastoral trainers neglect recognized theological training; some reasons are discussed below.

### **Reasons for the Neglect of Recognized Theological Training**

People give several reasons for the disregard of recognized theological training. Some of these reasons will be discussed in this section. Poor economic conditions and the high cost of living have made theological education expensive. According to Duncan (2018), there are many threats facing theological education today; the escalating debt crisis by students owing to the high cost of attending theological institutions hinders individuals from attending. This has prevented those who would benefit from it personally and in their public ministry. Another excuse for refusal to obtain theological education is the decline in the value of theological education in some quarters. As a result, people do not have high regard for graduates of theological education (Duncan, 2018).

There is, of course, continuously the recurrent problem of unbelief being spread in theological institutions that are not devoted to the inerrancy of the Bible and not dedicated to classic Christian orthodox theology or are not devoted to the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ (Duncan, 2018). Some individuals believe they can be adequately equipped for lifetime gospel ministry with good



knowledge of English grammar and expressions and without theological education, so attention is given to secular degrees (Duncan, 2018). When theological education is spoken of before now, one would suppose that those there for training have little knowledge of the Bible.

In the United States, for example, many fundamentalists began founding theological institutions because they considered being educated equal to being theologically liberal (Scott, 2011, pp. 3-46). Having this understanding in mind, formal theological education is seen as an enemy of Christianity since it represents a kind of liberal theology that brings fundamental Christian theology postulates under the microscope (Scott, 2011, pp. 3-46). That is to say, there is no reason to engage in recognized theological training to become an enemy of Christianity. Some pastoral trainers do not see learning as dynamic; hence the decision to keep their traditions learned over the years in the church.

They are not willing to examine their tradition, practice, and beliefs as well as ask uncomfortable questions; avoidance of examination and lack of willingness to ask awkward questions bring about a danger for such individuals and churches to become rooted in incorrect theology and practice and thus make it a custom which is not subject to interrogation since such a thing would signify an apostasy (Carson, 1984, p. 14). This is one of the reasons individuals excuse themselves from theological education. There are some pastoral trainers who also see theological education or training as a means to critique existing conditions, constitution, and activity of the church as well as an attack on the church community (Davies, 2008, pp. 73-79).

Hence, Davies (2008) argues that the critical dimension of theology is necessary, though it can also be distressing (pp. 73-79). This paper agrees with the above argument that individuals and churches rejecting theological education or training fall into an apology for their existing condition. Mainly when used to defend false beliefs or wrong ways of church life and activity. Since theological training is part of Christian education, the following section discusses its impact.

## **Impact of Christian Education**

### ***It Builds Professionalism***

Pastoral trainers who neglect recognized theological training have rejected the call to prepare the church for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12) since you cannot give what you lack. Seeking professionalism in ministry improves the individual calling of God by craving excellence through recognized theological training. Embracing recognized theological training prepares individuals for competent ministry and builds professionalism in pastoral ministry. Rejecting the features of professional life as established codes of conduct will only stop the trust upon which competent ministry rests (Gula, 2010, p. 51). Christian education impacts individuals who embrace theological training professionally in pastoral ministry and aids them in preparing the church more efficiently, having contact with a pool of specific information and practices (Ponniah, n.d.). The paper opines that individuals or structures that compete against professionalism of ministry are cheating themselves of being led and directed by ministers who have access to information and training offered to them through recognized theological education, guidance, and accountability that originates from the quest for professionalism.

### ***It Balances Theological Preaching***

Christian education enables pastoral trainers who engage in theological training to grow spiritually, intellectually, physically, and socially. Through Christian education, pastoral trainers can preach a balanced theological message that helps distinguish between good and evil by imparting wisdom. It also allows them to proclaim the message and recognize people despite their social, religious, cultural, and academic diversities. Christian education aims to impart spiritual knowledge through trust in a divinely arranged universe as essential avenues of understanding self and individuals' place in proclaiming a balanced theological message to the world (Bogonko, 1977; Groome, 1991). A well-equipped pastoral trainer through theological education is impacted by the ability to preach a balanced gospel message.

### ***It Helps Reduce Mediocrity***

Christian education helps each person to discover self, meaning, and drive in life through acquaintance with the community of people, the world, and spiritual ideals such as kindness and harmony (Job, 2019). It aims to call out from individuals an intrinsic respect for life and a fervent love for learning through direct interaction with the environment (Job, 2019). This reduces mediocrity by helping people foster a sense of wonder and aid them in feeling part of the world's fullness.

### ***It Helps Grow Sound Individuals/Congregations***

Christian education impacts individuals and congregations such that it creates consciousness, making them know they bear the image of God, which begins in relationship to God, self, and creation to be prepared for profitable involvement in society. It also leads individual(s) to eager submission to God and the authority of His word, reassuring a concern and reverence for government and others. This, of course, supports individuals to create a yearning to give themselves to trustworthiness and integrity and help themselves find the joy and harmony of a Christian commitment required to admonish others.

### **Benefits of Christian Education**

Christian education has existed since creation, when the Lord taught Adam and Eve. It is also one of the prerogative assignments given by God to parents and should not be short changed by excuses or other alternatives. The Scripture sees education as training (instructing) the child in path that they can never forget as they mature. The idea of the Scripture implies that all commands must be disciplined by guiding the child to do the right thing (Maitanmi, 2019). Education is Christian when it guides the child as a spiritual being to the maker (De Beer and Jaarsma, 2000). Education has its foundation in God. Education is the means whereby the community seeks to support the students in assimilating, reacting to, integrating, and using the knowledge called "heritage." Heritage includes a group's greatest cherished and useful knowledge (Maitanmi, 2019).

Christian education is how people are confronted with and controlled by the Christian gospel. It involves the Christian community's efforts to guide young and adult people to an ever-richer ownership of the Christian fellowship (Vieth, 1947, p. 52). This paper sees Christian education as both individual and social. Christian education is also concerned with the past. After all, it seeks to introduce persons to their religious heritage with the present. It also aims to make religion an important force in each response to life with the future because it nurtures inventive experiences, resulting in growth in wisdom and stature and favour with God and man (Vieth, 1947, p. 52).

Maitanmi (2019) identifies some benefits of Christian education as seeking to foster a growing person's mindfulness of God as a certainty in human involvement and to promote a sense of personal relationship with Him; Christian education is important and seeks to develop an understanding and thankfulness of the personality, life, and education of Jesus to guide them to better personal experiences; It seeks to develop a progressive and continuous Christian character in growing persons. As such, they can lead better lives that glorify God. McKinney (2003, pp. 1-16) adds that Christian Education is beneficial in the following ways:

#### ***Commitment to Biblical Training***

An in-depth knowledge of the Bible has continuously been central to Christian education goals. Profound commitment to the word of God as the authority for all life, concerning how people think and live, has always been a hallmark.

#### ***Commitment to the Great Commission***

The gospel's spread has been a primary desired outcome for Christian education programmes. It aims to produce world changers and prepare students with a passion for winning the world for Christ.

#### ***Commitment to Holy Living***

It helps deal with character, lifestyle, integrity, and godliness problems. Belief and behaviour, correct thinking, and right living are paramount.

### ***Commitment to Ministry Formation***

It is toward equipping students for meaningful church-related ministries. Most, if not all, of Christian education's characteristics are associated with International Council for Evangelical Education (ICETE) (McKinney 2003, 1-16).

In the opinion of Morris (2018), Christian education is also beneficial in In-Person instruction, mentoring, and discipleship. In-person, in-classroom provides personalized mentoring, feedback, and guidance tailored to the student's curiosity. It is a gift to be taught in the classroom, in the doctrines of the Christian faith, and to have the same functional to the health of one's soul as one is shepherded, mentored, and cared for by the same pastor cohort. It is advantageous to learn together in the classroom daily, living as next-door neighbours on campus, interning in churches, and growing in knowledge, grace, and piety together during some formative years. The value of learning with a fellow cohort of flesh-and-blood cannot be overstated because of its ability to form relationships and friendships, create opportunity for growth – Theological study or education serves every Christian well because individuals can make theological distinctions and formulate doctrinal sensibilities.

Opportunity for growth – The opportunity to distil and communicate the content of a subject matter has deepened my understanding of historical theology, church history, and systematic theology over time. This opportunity can help the pastor or instructor become a better reader, student, aspiring scholar, communicator, and ideal teacher of truth. Of course, it can help serve the congregation's life as well. The paper agrees with the argument that theological education benefits the individual and the church for healthy spiritual formation, balanced theological teachings, unreserved commitment to the great commission, and not to be tossed around by fake prophets and teachings of our generation.

In the opinion of Elwood and Harper (1978, p. 23), Christian education is relevant and beneficial to contemporary ministry because: (1) Christian education exists to aid persons to become conscious of the seeking love of God as exemplified in Jesus Christ and responding in faith to this love in ways that will help them to

grow as children of God. This means that it helps people engage in it to live following the will of God and sustain a vital relationship with the Christian community. (2) It helps persons establish and maintain Christian relationships with their families, churches, and other individuals and groups, resuming responsible roles in society and seeing in every human being an object of the love of God. (3) It aids persons in receiving a better understanding and consciousness of the natural world as God's creation and accepting the responsibility for conserving its values and using them to serve God and humanity. (4) It helps individuals to an increasing understanding and thankfulness of the Bible, whereby they may receive and obey the word of God; that helps appreciate and use effectively other elements in the historic Christian heritage. (5) Christian education helps persons discover and fulfill responsible roles in the Christian fellowship through faithful participation in the church's local and world mission.

Christian education helps learners to seek the Lord in a personal experience of salvation and strengthen and sustain the new life through Christian nurture (Kalas, 1950, p. 79). It encourages a progressive and continuous development of Christlike character, attitudes, and habits. Christian education transmits the Christian heritage of faith and morals in relevant terms. It helps individuals incorporate into the Church's life and become rooted in the Christian community. Christian education builds individuals to live with a sense of responsibility as stewards who are expected to minister to their fellowmen's material and spiritual needs worldwide (Sanner and Harper, 1978, pp. 28-33). The Scriptures emphasize this by noting that followers of Jesus are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-14). This paper opines that Christian Education builds individuals and makes them valuable to family, the Christian community, and the world.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to consider an overview of Christian education, its biblical bases, reasons for neglecting recognized theological training, impact of Christian education, and the benefits of Christian education. It has also unfolded that theological education meaningfully impacts the church, serves believers and the Christian

community, and encourages pastoral trainers not to neglect recognized training that will help them serve the church authentically, especially as it relates to certain doctrinal issues. The understanding received from this paper will prompt interest and acceptance of recognized theological training as an arm of Christian education because it remains the backbone of the Church and gives hope to future generations.

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