

## **Theological Education Curriculum for Transformative Leadership**

**Davis Akpome Oweh**

### **Abstract**

This paper aims at examining how a theological Education curriculum can bring about transformative leadership in the society. The method of this paper is purely descriptive research. It is no doubt that for effective teaching and learning to take place there must be a well-drawn curriculum. Curriculum is a vital instrument in the teaching and learning process. A well designed curriculum takes into consideration what needs to be taught and learned by learners that will lead to desired knowledge and social behaviour in the learners. There appears to be dearth in the theological education curriculum. This is due to poor behaviour observed among learners who have undergone theological education. There seem to be gaps in the curriculum and mode of delivery, which show a breach in the domains of learning. There is need to design a curriculum that will stretch beyond the institution to the field as that will be akin to the informal way learning and practice as is the case among indigenous people. The need by theological institutions to design what will suit our African context that will be more transformative. It is common place to see many theologically trained ministers who often do not follow the training they receive while in school. This buttresses the saying that there are theological bigots who pass through the theological institutions but fail to allow the institutions shape them. It is this observed negative trait that this paper seeks to address.

## **Introduction**

Education is a process which every man goes through in life, either formally or informally. In life one who ceases to learn ceases to exist. This paper “Theological Education Curriculum for Transformative Leadership” is a sub theme of the conference theme, “Towards a contextualized theological education curriculum for transformative ministry.” The need for this paper is based on the fact that a people’s context can have much impact on theological curriculum and life, because local peculiarities have a huge impact on the need and expectations of individuals and society at large. Ignoring the local context can have a detrimental effect on the development of ministerial formation. In course of this paper, key themes of the topic of this paper will be defined; which are “theological education, curriculum and transformative leadership.”

## **Theological Education**

Theological education is considered as the training of men and women to know and serve God. It has the potential to be the seed bed of renewal of churches, their ministries, mission, commitment to Christian unity and the changing world. Theological education is distinguished from Christian education in that it is usually done in preparation for special service or leadership in the Christian church or mission. Christian education is for all and takes place in most cases in the church (Ptokola, 2017). Attempts to define Theological Education has been influenced by the unity-in-diversity nature of Christian theology.

## **Curriculum**

Curriculum is usually influenced by a host of factors re-echoed by society. As orientations differ so is the way people understand and interpret curriculum Brubacher (1969) defines curriculum as a course of study and therefore describes the terrain over which both the teacher and learner traverse in order to arrive at predetermined set of goals or objectives. In line with this Hamack (1968) holds that curriculum is “all the teaching – learning experience influenced, guided and directed by the school. Furthermore, Smith *et al* (1975) assert that it is a sequence of potential experiences set up by the

school for the purpose of discipline of children and youth influenced in group ways of thinking or acting.

Indeed quite a number of curriculumists have presented concepts which are either not lucid enough or too broad to make sense of by the (not too schooled) on the subject of curriculum. However it must be stated that there are a number of definitions that demonstrate adequate comprehension of the concept of curriculum in all its ramifications. Such as the concept which presents curriculum as “the guideline of the chapter and academic content covered by an educational system while undergoing a particular course (Surbhi, 2017). Differences between syllabus and curriculum seem to limit the scope of curriculum to all about the learner leaving the teacher out which is a deviation from the earlier definitions by Brubacher (1969) and Smith *et al* (1975) which stress both the learner and teacher. It is this view of the nature of curriculum and leadership that this paper seeks to consider.

### **Transformative Leadership**

Transformative leadership draws extensively on the notion of transformational leadership developed by Burns and Bass (2006, 2004); it is a leadership which comes extensively on humanistic psychology mainly from Abraham Maslow (Burns, 2010). For Burns, leadership is a creative act; leaders are charismatic and build trust, act with integrity, encourage others, as well as innovative in thinking, coach and develop their people (Bass, 1985). One key difference between transformational and transformative leadership lies in the latter’s view of leadership as an “everyday, everyone, everywhere” relational process.

Transformative leadership is “everyone, everywhere, every-day” leadership. Everyone can be a transformative leader; it does not involve a specific type of person (like a “born leader” or someone with specific characteristics) or require a specific position in any system. Additional incremental actions can be transformative (Jullien, 2011).

Transformative leadership is intended to orient in a time when people want to make a difference but find it necessary for them to reflect

deeply about what. In summary transformative leaders are adaptable, they can be both leaders and followers, they can embrace emergence and hierarchy (Stevenson, 2009) with shifting leadership roles based on competence and contextual appropriateness as well as participating in swarm, flash mob and other forms of collective action. Most of all, transformative leadership is about participation and collaborative creation. Transformative leadership involves a conscious choice to participate in a process of collaborative creation for mutual benefit.

### **The Need for a Contextualized Theological Curriculum**

It can be said without gainsaying that with the introduction of Western form of education into most parts of Africa and with the establishment of theological institutions, the curriculum has been of western ideology with Eurocentric theology. The curricula in most theological institutions, were majorly of western context neglecting the African context. From what is revealed, this type of curriculum has failed to achieve the expected objectives. This is so because the curriculum does not take into context the African world view and their challenges. It must be noted that before the advent of the European to Africa and the introduction of western form of education, Africans had their methods of transmitting knowledge to the younger generation to prepare them to adapt to social, economic, political and religious life.

### **Method of Teaching in Africa**

According to Murithi (2014):

In traditional African societies, teaching was primarily done through apprenticeship. People learn many lessons ranging from how to be of good neighbours, have good family relations, hunt and be a good carpenters. The older generation had a duty to pass down knowledge to the younger in their midst. Children were taught how to relate well with others in order to foster peace in the community. Apart from social life they also learned skills that would help them pursue trade or livelihood. During their teenage years, a young person would be linked to a professional blacksmith or a successful hunter where he was expected to learn through observing the mentor. In matters of religion and belief, religious leaders mentored

younger people and trained them on how to lead their communities to God. Upcoming mentees lived with the sitting priest or closely interacted with them to gain experience. In the priesthood, it was believed that by observing the life and actions of the senior priest, the young learner would be thoroughly informed and also equipped for the noble job ahead of him. Learning happened through living life together in community, Godly principles were taught while working, eating, playing and generally living life. As such education was more caught than taught. Although the religious leader held greater responsibility to teach the mentee, the whole community is involved thus there is no dichotomy between formal and informal teaching. It is a mould that all the domains of learning is manifested in the life of the individual with other elders in the society.

However it should be noted that this form of African teaching cannot apply in societies today, as elders in order to avoid being insulted by a learner would not want to give correction to a learner even when they are doing the wrong thing. This is so because no measure is put in place to discipline deviant learners. Contemporary laws in society that emphasize some freedoms have further weakened the African model of teaching.

In recent years, students with opportunities to theological institutions, have experienced a paradigm shift in that efforts are made to include spiritual formation in the theological education curriculum. According to Naidoo (2010), from the 1970s onwards there has been a great dissatisfaction in the manner in which theological education is conducted resulting in the search for a greater emphasis on the spiritual formation of students. Naidoo has proposed that spiritual formation should be a focal point in ministerial education. This is because those training for church ministry need spiritual maturity and aptitude for church leadership. Furthermore, Naidoo said that for theological institutions to achieve this, they have a responsibility to engage students in reflecting on spiritual life and provide students with that which is required for future church leaders. Deliberate efforts to develop students' spirituality will eventually lead to theological greater understanding of God and to the development of spiritual and moral leadership. It will also produce leaders who are

committed, competent and with high degree of integrity in the service of God and humanity, just as Christ did. It is a personal and relational formation which seeks to promote encounter and cooperation with God and society as a whole.

In Africa there is need to produce church leaders who are conversant with the culture of the people for whom they trained to serve. From a methodological perspective, therefore, African spirituality should be one of the disciplines that should be taught in order to create a form of Christian spirituality that can truly meet the spiritual needs of the African people. The rationale to anchor christian spirituality on African spirituality is based on the incarnational nature of the church as the concrete manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth which began when the Word came down from heaven, took human flesh became man and dwelt among us. The mission of the church throughout the ages has been one of bringing into actuality the historical incarnation of Christ- the Christ event as recorded in the gospel, with the peculiarities of a given place and people in terms of their traditional culture.

The inclusion of the study of African spirituality in the curriculum of theological education is in line with McCarthy's (2000) hypothesis that "when undertaking the study of spirituality, the nature and breath of the topic require the use of inter-disciplinary methods. It is impossible to understand a person's or group's spirituality apart from the total context. Psychological, historical, anthropological, sociological, philosophical, linguistic, environmental and ecological factors give shape and texture to one's spirituality in every bit as much as ... theological and religious attitudes do. In adopting this strategy, however, there is a need to be cautious in the manner in which contextualization takes place. This paper does not advocate contextualization that leads to uncritical accommodation of African spirituality into the curriculum but one which is "always prophetic and arising always out of genuine encounter between God's word and His world, and moves towards the purpose of challenging and changing the situation through the rootedness in commitment to a given historical moment."

McCarthy (2000) has intimated that in order to achieve this balance there is a need to use what she calls hermeneutics of suspicion and

hermeneutics of restoration. As regards the first, McCarthy has noted that “given our tendency as human beings to distort the truth and to select out of a tradition only those aspects which we like while ignoring other equally important aspects, we will need to employ a hermeneutic of suspicion in our study.” What this means is that in the study of African spirituality there is a need to adopt a critical stance that will enable the student to sift through the content of indigenous spirituality and identify elements that embrace genuine forms of authentic spirituality which are consonant with Christian spirituality. At the same time there is a need to employ hermeneutics of restoration which, according to McCarthy, will help students to find effective ways of putting their lives in dialogue with the tradition. In the words of McCarthy, hermeneutics of restoration “provides a means of retrieving those practices of the various spiritual traditions which have genuine transformative powers and doing so in a meaningful way which makes them viable today.”

### **The Nature of Educational Curriculum**

The scripture is emphatic on the issue of foundation. It states that for anything to be worthwhile or achieve success in the end, the foundation must be properly laid. Any edifice or institution not founded on a firm foundation will collapse in the end. The issue of our spirituality among our secular leaders therefore is better tackled from childhood. The right principles should be taught early in life. The Bible says “train up a child in the way he should go when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Since every denomination of the church has leadership training schools at their disposal, extra-curricular programmes could be developed by the theological institutions for learners and teachers to be tutored on what it takes to be good leaders and what God expects of people of leadership positions. Thus by the time their training is done and they go to the field, they would have been adequately fortified to handle effectively leadership challenges that they would be confronted with. The need, to plan curriculum that will reflect the African context should be given consideration. The persistent neglect of this factor in pastoral training curriculum has been responsible for the lack of transformative leaders. Some ways to go about this include:

**a. *Regular Leadership Courses in African Context***

Regular leadership courses could be developed in African context and added to the present curriculum of seminaries and bible colleges. This should move some steps further from addressing issues of leadership in the church into issues pertaining to secular leadership. In this regard, should any of the trained clergy find himself in any sphere of secular leadership, especially that of politics, he would have been adequately equipped to cope with the situation.

Below is an advert by Denver Seminary for persons who want to answer the call:

Is God calling you to lead? Our world is in desperate need of Christ. Perhaps God is calling you to be a light and to minister to this rapidly changing and deeply broken world. But where do you begin? How to respond to that call with the tool, knowledge and experiences required to be a competent leader? To be an effective leader in today's ever changing world, Christians must focus on fully comprehending the Bible, living a life of character and integrity and leading in an environment that is becoming more global.

The implication of this notice is that the Denver Seminary recognizes the importance of using seminary education to raise credible leaders, not just for the church, but for the society at large. The notice is quite persuasive focusing on the point that success in any sphere of leadership stems from ones understanding of biblical principles. This is a reality which our seminaries in Africa would need to extend to leaders in virtually all areas of human endeavour. Most of our leaders fail because they have not encountered God. The Bible says “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10a). For leaders to excel there is the need for them to be close to God, for only a step ordered by God could go in the right direction. Leaders in Africa seem not to understand this fact. The responsibility of sensitizing them in this direction no doubt falls on the theological institutions because they are the ones equipped with the type of education that would make this possible.



**b. Leadership Training Programmes**

Leadership training programmes could be developed specifically for leaders in all aspects of life – politicians, economists, corporate managers, traditional rulers, members of the armed forces, police, customs, correctional workers and other public functionaries. This could be on short term basis of between three months to one year. It could be residential or a distance learning programme which could be accessed through the internet. The curriculum should be so broad so as to accommodate the various spheres represented by the functionaries described above. Within this context also, occasional seminars could be conducted which may last for just a few days or a week at most. This will be a form of on-the-job training seminar, the type which is conversant among cooperate bodies, as staff development strategy. It should be opened to everybody including the managers of corporate outfits such as the banks.

**Teachers' Role in Promoting Contextual Education**

In this aspect, two parties are crucial because the inefficiency of one affects the other in critical ways. This is in consideration of the fact that the teacher may desire to do an incarnational teaching, but then their efforts would be strangled by structural ineffectiveness, and vice versa.

The theological institutions have a God given mandate to provide direction in Christian teaching. These institutions can be figuratively referred to as factories where Christian leaders are made. Pastors, evangelists, missionaries and sometimes lay leaders pass through these institutions for at least three years to be prepared for the ministry. This should be a great task that should be taken with the seriousness it deserves. If these leaders are not relevantly prepared, they go to the field and do more damage than good. The community that is looking up to them as resource people end up being disappointed.

It would be improper to argue that the theological training in many African seminaries today is foreign and of no use at all. In fact western theology has shaped many African theologians in contemporary times. Most of Africa's celebrated theologians received their education in African schools that taught purely imported

theology by Western professors. Others benefited from scholarship funds from the West and even attended western institutions for their training. For this the African church is grateful in fact, this very education has changed the thinking of many theologians who are now leaders in many African churches. However, time is right for African theology to answer African questions, thus solving the problems that are deeply felt by the people it seeks to serve. The following are propositions of different ways through which the academy would offer contextual Christian theological education in Africa to ensure more vibrant Christ-like communities. For a teacher to facilitate the contextual education, he/she needs to listen to the theology that comes from the people on the ground. Contextual theology cannot be formulated from academics that are oblivious of the people at the grassroots. The teacher as a theological educator needs to learn from the people which issues concern them. As the saying goes it is the wearer of the shoe who knows where it pinches most.

### **The Incarnation as a Model for Contextualization**

God is the chief contextual teacher, because God has always sought to teach humanity about who He is. God's desire is that we may not only know Him, but also get the meaning of human life. God in Jesus Christ uses himself as a powerful teaching aid hanging on the cross while declaring undying love for humanity. Jesus came to the world to help humans understand divine things. The incarnation was the ultimate contextualization. Jesus came to encounter humanity as a particular person: a male Jew in Palestine, and at a particular time. Jesus used miracles, parables and simple stories to help people understand matters of the kingdom.

The Holy Spirit took the role of our teacher when Jesus left the earth physically. Jesus promised to leave his disciples with a helper who will teach them all things. At the time of Jesus' resurrection, Mary realizes who she had supposed to be the gardener was actually her Lord and friend, Jesus. She exclaims "Rabboni" (which is Aramaic for teacher). It is important to note that Jesus had been many things to Mary; He had delivered her from demons, been her friend and her Lord. Yet the title that comes to Mary's mind at a subconscious prompting is "teacher." This shows that Jesus was a very impactful

teacher. Mary remembered him for his teaching. He indeed was the “Chief teacher.”

As theological educators, we are to join Christ in this noble ministry and help people to find meaning in life through our teaching. God is our mentor in contextual teaching. He is leading in this path, as he knows it is the way by which we will form a community of disciples. He has set the example on how we need to teach, and we are to diligently follow him in his mission. The theological educator is therefore a channel through which God forms the student. God, the great contextual teacher became incarnate to fit a particular context. This is what enabled regular fishermen to be formed into the likeness of Christ. When people develop a heart for Jesus they will not rest until the whole community can say “thy kingdom come.”

### **Teachers’ Role in Contextualization for Transformative Leadership**

The following ways will achieve much to engender transformative leadership in prospective pastoral students.

#### **a. *Communal Education through Engaging the Masses***

For a teacher to facilitate contextual education, he/she needs the theology that comes from people in the community. Contextual theology cannot be formulated from academics that are oblivious of the people at the grassroots. The teacher needs to engage the community in helping to shape theology. For example, students should intern HIV support group centres where they can deal with their flawed theologies and prejudices before moving out of the community. In addition to gathering relevant grassroots theology that is needed for the teacher to know how to formulate his/her content, the teacher becomes aware of what is happening in the community and how God is working in a particular situation.

However, not all grassroots theologies are valid and theological educators are responsible for offering direction in such areas. Although, they cannot pretend to pay deaf ear to the voices of the masses. Additionally, engaging the hermeneutical community that listens to African teachers and offers feedback from global cultures is

inevitable as advocated by the great 20th century missiologist, Hiebert (1983).

**b. *Relevant Curriculum***

The theological educator should develop a curriculum that includes theory and praxis. To achieve this, the teaching space does not need to be confined to the classroom on campus. Supervised ministry that is supposed to offer this contact should not be treated as a separate experience but happens as classes are done. It is the sitting pastor who determines the learning. Teachers need to challenge students to be critical thinkers who participate in solving problems that African societies wrestle with.

Secondly, theological educators should seek to design and teach courses according to need. For example, why should students study language for six semesters when that is not their specialization. The idea is not to eradicate biblical languages or traditional courses that have always been offered in seminaries, but that other courses, especially that are directly addressing the needs of the African context should be given more time.

**c. *Role Modelling***

The teacher should see him/herself as a role model of Christian formation. He/she should be aware of his/her partnership with God in creating an alternative community in the world. As such, the teacher invites students to his/her life in the same attitude that Paul had when he said, “imitate me even as I imitate Christ.” Students should learn what the *mission dei* entails by looking at the teacher’s life. The realization by the teacher that they are being imitated as role models of faith will help them to be authentic imitators of Christ.

**d. *Use of African Arts***

Theological educators need to recognize that people are spiritually formed when they pray in their heart languages. Heart language means the language of praise, the body language of dance and communal language of laughter. It is disservice when the rich culture of the people is not incorporated into the peoples worship.

Traditionally, worship for the African is not of silent prayer of the soul; it is a worship incorporating the whole body. Thus it is not strange to see dancing, clapping, jumping in laughter and tears with emotion and passion, all constituting a worship event. Le Marquand (2004) points out that “In many ways, African culture and African experience can help the church around the world to understand the Bible.

Contextual education therefore, is not going to be achieved through the teacher adding a little piece of our African heritage here and there. Rather the teacher will fashion the course in such a way that the very DNA of its essence is true to its culture. This will in turn ensure that the people own the faith as authentically relevant to them. There is a deeper connection in worshipping God using the heart language, in ways that are traditionally accepted as a means of reaching the divine as long as they are not portraying dangerous theology. That is what true Christian formation in Africa entails (Murithi, 2014).

**e. *Hear the African Voices***

Theological educators in Africa need to develop a theology hewed from the African soil. In addition to listening to grassroots theology, they also need to hear African scholars. The great minds of Africa have something important to contribute to both African and world Christianity, because without them the whole story is not complete (Murothi, 2014). Global Christianity needs to hear African voices, but even more so, African Christianity needs to hear her own voices. Theological training in Africa or for ministry in Africa that does not feature African scholars is simply incomplete and consequently does not enable positive formation.

**f. *Proactive Development of Healthy Theology***

Theological educators need to be on the forefront in creating orthodox theology rather than waiting until a wrong one is displayed and then start fighting it. For example, the prosperity gospel. Many teachers of Christian education encountered it in its early stages but did not think it would get very far. Teachers have a calling to correct heresy and guide society in the correct theology. People need to know that our hope in God is coupled with responsibility; it is a hope that fosters’

resilience and it is a hope of obedience. When the prosperity proclaims nothing but material wealth and health as the full gospel, it needs to be named as the lie it is. The church and the theological institutions should be “consciously cultivating a desire for God as more authentic than our desire for things which is a kind of idolatry of brands, commercial domination, and material hopes and dreams that too often dominate the hearts and minds of the people, including God’s people (Elliot-Hart, 2013). The African church should remember her calling to be an alternative community exemplifying kingdom values of love for God and neighbour.

Theological educators are called upon to challenge the prevailing falsehood in half-truths that is disastrous for the Christian faith. Unfortunately, some of these false prophets know no other gospel. They are either not trained or poorly trained and immature in faith. The teacher will remind his/her students specifically and society in general, that true discipleship bids us follow not only Jesus the saviour but also Jesus the Lord. In the prosperity gospel arena, people are following the saviour, healer, provider and not the Master, Lord and God of the universe.

### **Conclusion**

This paper on the theological education curriculum for transformative leadership has x-rayed what and how theological education curriculum should be designed to be impactful and lead to transformative leadership. From the presentation it shows the way forward in how this can be done. It is imperative to contextualize the curriculum in our theological institutions. This calls for a review of the present curriculum in theological institutions and present one that takes the African context into consideration. However, the task of achieving this requires a collaboration of the theological institutions and educators for synergy to produce a contextualized curriculum which will address the African spirituality and other challenges which the faith needs provide answers in line with the faith and the Bible. In all of these the role of the theological educator is pivotal in ensuring that the curriculum is delivered contextually, in a way that will bring about authentic transformed leaders. Teachers should take up the role of mentorship of learner within the theological institutions and outside for the desired Christian formation to be achieved in the lives

of the learner. Society of believers also will not be left out as the goal is to create an alternative community of God's people.

## References

- Amanza, J. N. (2011). "Contextuality: African Spirituality as a Catalyst for Spiritual Formation" In *Theological Formation in Africa*. Ogbomoso, NBTS OJOT, Vol. 16 (2) 2011.
- Asaju, S. O. (2011). "The Three Faces of Theological Education: Scholarship, Spiritual Formation and Service." Ogbomoso: NBTS OJOT. Vol. 16(2) 2011.
- Bediako, K. (1995). *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books.
- Brubacher, J. (1969). *Modern Philosophies of Education*, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Elliott-Hart, T. (2013). "Challenges to Discipleship in the Context of Contemporary Consumer Culture." In *Reaching for the New Jerusalem: A Biblical and Theological Framework for the City*. By Seong Hyun Park et al. Eugene, Oregon Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- English, A. (2010). "Transformation and Education: The Voice of the Learner in Peters Concept of Teaching." *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 43(1).
- Hamack, G. (1968). *The Teacher: Decision Maker and Curriculum Planner*, Scranton, Pennsylvania, International Books.
- Hiebert, P. (1983). The Category "Christian" in the Mission Task" *International Review Mission*, 72(87).
- LeMarquand, G. (2014). "Learning to Read the Bible in Limuru in Theological Education" In *Theological Education in Contemporary Africa*, by Grant LeMarquand and Joseph D. Galgalo eds Eldoret: Zapf Chancery.
- Murithi, S. (2014). "Contextual Theological Education in Africa as a Model for Missional Formation." *The Asbury Journal*, 69(2).
- Njoroge, N. (2004). Ecumenism and Theological Education in Africa" In *Theological Education in Contemporary Africa* by LeMarquand.
- Smith, K. (1957). *Fundamentals of Curriculum Development*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc.
- Surbhi, G. (2017). Difference Between Syllabus and Curriculum.