

## **Theological Education for Transformative Leadership in Pastoral Ministry**

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### **Abstract**

Theological education is a formidable force that is gaining more grounds in the world today. The rapid moral decadence experienced daily in the society calls for a parallel advancement in the equipping of leaders who will be able to bring about godly transformation. This paper focuses on the importance of theological education as the bedrock for positive transformation in churches, ministries, and the changing world through well trained transformative leaders (pastors) who are the agents of change for the future of the world. It highlights the benefits of theological education and presents some biblical characters that are examples of transformative leaders through training such as Moses and Jesus our Master. It also discusses the four factors of transformative leadership which are intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation and idealized influence. The characteristics of the transformative leader such as openness to new thinking, talents for broadening minds, commitment to active listening, tolerance for intelligent risk, willingness to accept responsibility, trust in team members, and ability to inspire participation are considered. It enunciates some strategic theological educational skills for transformative leadership. Conclusively, the paper avers that theological education is one of the tools for transformative leadership and pastors should not forget or ignore the training they obtained during their years in the theological institution.

## **Introduction**

Education is a tool for national development and is the most important instrument of change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society. For many, the purpose of education is simply to prepare a person for a career. But that is not the case with theological education. Theological education, which unlike Christian education is not for all, is usually training of Christians preparing men and women for special service and leadership in churches and ministries. Theological education which takes place in Bible colleges, seminaries, and ministries' training colleges specializes in training pastors to instruct their congregation faithfully in the ways of God, to study and understand the Bible for themselves and to display God's glory in their lives and ministries individually. For families, churches and the societies to be healthy, theological education is a necessity for training transformative leaders as agents of positive change in the moral, social, physical, emotional and spiritual life of the people. The essence of theological education is to raise pastors as transformative leaders in character, wisdom and learning. In order to achieve the task of this paper, some terminologies will be clarified. It will establish the biblical basis for theological education and state some benefits of theological education. The paper will also highlight some biblical characters that are examples of transformative leaders through training as well as discuss the four factors of transformative leadership. Moreover, the paper will itemize the characteristics of the transformative leader and enunciate some strategic theological educational skills for transformative leadership.

## **Clarification of Key Terms**

For a better understanding of the subject of discourse in this paper, the following terms are clarified:

### ***Theological Education***

According to Graham Cheesman (2016), "This is the training of men and women to know and serve God". He distinguishes it from Christian education in that its specific objective is the training of individuals for Christian service and leadership. It may be defined as the discipline that aims at an appropriate understanding, interpretation, defense, and application of the Christian faith in the world".

According to Igbari (2001) theological education is defined as the “systematic study of the Word of God and how it relates to man and his environment”. Bello (2019) also defined theological education as the “enlightenment of the souls and minds of individuals about God and His activities. It is a process, which leads outmen from the bondage of ignorance to knowledge”. It can be deduced from the above definitions that theological education can be seen as the effort at developing people for leadership within the church. This training equips pastors to instruct their congregation faithfully in the ways of God, to study and understand the Bible for themselves and to display God’s glory in their lives and ministries individually.

### ***Transformative Leadership***

This is the leadership approach that causes change in the individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change in the followers with the end goal of developing followers into leaders. Transformational leadership is the type of leadership used to grow and transform a community. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership is a process in which “leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation”. It’s a process where leaders can connect and interact with their followers and transform their lives by increasing their level of morality and motivation. Enacted in its authentic form, transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These includes connecting the followers’ sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers to inspire them; challenging followers to take greater ownership of their work, and understanding the strength and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance.

### ***Pastoral Ministry***

This is the all-inclusive spiritual care and guidance given by trained ministers of God to meet the needs of individuals within the church and community spiritually, emotionally and physically. It is a shepherd-like care (Sanders, 2002).

### **Biblical Basis for Theological Education**

Theological Institutions should ensure that those in training are not just “saved” as Christians but are “called”. Though God can use anyone, the scripture instructs us to seek those who are excellent in word and deed and are filled with faith and spirit (Acts 6:3). Thus, it is expedient that those admitted for theological education should be certified as worthy in character and are excellent in word, filled with faith and the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, God Himself was the source, guide and instructor of spiritual life and wisdom for the Israelites. As Israel developed as a nation, God began to use more intermediaries which included parents. Moses charged the Israelites to diligently teach their children God’s laws (Exodus 12:26-27; Deut. 4:9; 6:7, 20-25).

Israel also enjoyed the teachings of elders, national leaders such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel and other prophets, priest, judges and kings who instructed the people in God’s ways. Concerning the training of leaders, there was a mentoring relationship between some of the prominent leaders. For example, Joshua served Moses from his youth (Num. 11:28), a period of at least forty years (Exo. 17:8-16). Eli mentored Samuel for the prophetic and priestly ministry (1 Sam. 2:11). Elijah trained Elisha for the ministry. These mentoring-training helped those mentored to become transformative leaders that transformed their society positively.

In the New Testament, Priscilla and Aquila invited Apollos, an accomplished public speaker who was preaching a rudimentary form of the Christian gospel based around the John’s baptism to their home and taught him the more accurate gospel as recorded in Acts 18:24-26. According to Lewis, their invitation to him to come into their home reveals that the extent to which they were able to influence such a sharp mind indicates a mentoring relationship of some depth (Lewis, 2009). In Acts 9:27 Barnabas brought Paul to the Apostles for acceptance after he mentored Paul for the gospel ministry. Paul trained Timothy to become a transformative leader. Apostle Paul by study gave powerful arguments in support to explain our relation to the law and freedom in the Spirit in his writings of the books of Galatians, Romans and Colossians. The leading of the spirit does not neglect right theological thinking, explanation and clarification.

Studying theology is essential in order to rightly divide the word of truth and be a skilled worker of Christ approved by God.

Jesus also equipped the twelve Disciples with theological education that helped them impact the world the way they did. Jesus not only gathered Disciples into relationship with himself but he deliberately built them into an independent community. Jesus makes it clear that the process in which he wants them to engage with new believers is not merely a matter of teaching knowledge that leads to an inner transformation or enlightenment but He is looking for disciples who are immersed and drenched in the Holy Spirit, who live out their new inner identity in the practical obedience of everyday life, doing the things he has commanded them to do.

### **Benefits of Theological Education**

According to Hill (2021), the following are benefits of theological education:

1. **Equip ministers for ministry and service:** Theological education equips ministers to learn how to lead and serve effectively, gives guidance on how to form and equip others for ministry with integrity, helps ministers to lead change and transition, teaches to manage and resolve conflict. It also exposes them to the skills of servant leadership, church planting, pioneering new initiatives and revitalizing established churches.
2. **Empower ministers for witness and mission in a changing world:** This involves applying principles that will promote mission and growth, lead others to a personal relationship with God. It also involves helping people move towards a commitment to Christ, practicing hospitality and welcoming strangers, relating to people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Theological education inspires and equips you for local and global missions.
3. **Help build up and release ministers and their gifts for service:** Ministers are inspired to grow in Christlikeness and integrity, that is, to show conducts consistent with Christian teaching and values, observing willingly ministerial values and

professional ethics, maintaining unity of the church and show the fruit of the Spirit.

4. **Stretches the minister's thinking and understanding:** Theological institutions help to expand and challenge her students' thinking and understanding. It helps to expose them to a wide range of literature on the Holy Scriptures, missions, theology, ethics, social sciences, philosophy and history.
5. **Study, understand and apply the Bible:** Theological training enables ministers to interpret, communicate and apply scriptural truth to life in the context of ministry.
6. **Inspire a deep love for Jesus:** The theological institute gives the minister an environment in which his love for Jesus can thrive because of the presence of many others who love and cherish Jesus just like themselves. They are also introduced to practices that help them to spend more time in prayer and reflection.
7. **Motivates a life-long learning lifestyle:** It encourages the minister to develop a lifestyle of studying and, discovering new ideas. After the theological education, learning continues by attending seminars and conferences, etc.
8. **Make and multiply disciples:** This is about following Jesus as their Lord and carrying out his mission in the world. Through discipleship, the ministers are equipped to make more disciples as the scripture states in 2 Tim. 2:2 "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

### **Biblical Characters that Are Examples of Transformative Leaders through Training**

Below are some biblical characters that exemplify transformative leadership:

1. **Moses demonstrated humility and willingness to serve** (Exodus 3:11, 4:10), he led Israel out of slavery and to establish a covenant relationship with God (Exodus 12-24). As a leader,

he empowered others to lead and delegated responsibilities (Exodus 18:13-27, Numbers 11:16-25) and displayed transformative leadership qualities such as vision (Exodus 3:7-10), courage (Exodus 14:13-14), and empathy (Numbers 11:10-15). He also trained Joshua to succeed him as leader (Numbers 27:18-23), Joshua in turn demonstrated the leadership skills he learnt from Moses (Jos. 1:6-9).

2. **David demonstrated faith and trust in God** (1 Samuel 17:37, Psalm 23), he united Israel's tribes and established Jerusalem as capital (2 Samuel 5:1-12), developed leaders and empowered them to serve (2 Samuel 23:8-39). He also displayed transformative leadership qualities like integrity (1 Samuel 24:1-22), compassion (2 Samuel 9:1-13), and accountability (2 Samuel 12:1-15).
3. **Nehemiah demonstrated vision in the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls** (Nehemiah 3-6), and fostered spiritual renewal and reformation (Nehemiah 8-10). He displayed transformative leadership qualities such as perseverance (Nehemiah 4:1-23), collaboration (Nehemiah 3:1-32) and spiritual leadership (Nehemiah 8:1-18).
4. **Jesus Christ modeled servant leadership** (Matthew 20:26-28, John 13:1-17), he empowered disciples to lead and serve through teaching and exemplary lifestyle (Matthew 10:1-15, Mark 3:13-19). Jesus displayed transformative leadership qualities like humility (Philippians 2:5-11), empathy (Matthew 9:36) and sacrificial love (John 15:13).
5. **Paul demonstrated perseverance and resilience** (2 Corinthians 11:16-33), established and nurtured churches (Acts 13-14, 16-19). He empowered leaders amongst whom was Timothy and encouraged teamwork (1 Corinthians 3:5-9, 2 Timothy 2:1-7). Paul displayed transformative leadership qualities such as passion (Romans 9:1-3), adaptability (1 Corinthians 9:19-23), and spiritual guidance (Galatians 5:16-26).

### **The Four Factors of Transformative Leadership**

According to Farnsworth, Clark, Hall, Johnson, Wysocki and Kepner (2019), the focus of transformative leaders is to empower others and

inspire change by instilling a sense of ownership and participation in their followers utilizing these factors which are also referred to as the four I's of transformative leadership.

1. **Intellectual Stimulation (Innovation):** Leaders encourage innovative thinking by emphasizing new experiences and growth opportunities. In the opinion of Paul & Elder (2006), leaders stimulate the mind of the followers by encouraging critical thinking. They foster creativity and encourage experimentation. Leaders lead by example. The one who rules should be like the one who serves (Luke 22: 25-26). Jesus our master in transformative leadership encouraged critical thinking as seen in Matthew 22:15-22 where he was asked to give His opinion on whether to pay tax to Caesar or not. Jesus knowing their evil intent of trying to trap Him, asked them a question that requires critical thinking. He asked them, whose portrait and inscription is on the coin and told them “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”
2. **Individual Consideration (Interpersonal):** Leaders build positive relationships by mentoring followers and helping each person understand their value and potentials. They value people (Heward-Mills, 2012). It involves giving personal attention and support to followers, foster open communication and active listening, demonstrating empathy and understanding. They identify, develop and nurture future leaders (Adetunji, 2010).
3. **Inspirational Motivation (Influence):** This involves leaders motivating and inspiring followers to accomplish a shared vision. Leaders model a vision for the team or ministry so members can emulate and make their own. They achieve shared vision by developing a clear-inspiring vision, communicating effectively, demonstrating passion and enthusiasm, recognizing and rewarding achievement (Kouzes and Posner, 2017).
4. **Idealized Influence (Inspiration):** This is an important component of transformative leadership. Leaders model expectations and actions for followers, earning their trust and respect. They inspire and motivate followers by being visionaries – providing clear and compelling vision for the



future; communicating vision in an inspiring way to followers, selflessly prioritizing the interest of the body or team above their own, and demonstrating integrity with high moral standards. Also, they have faith in the followers which is key to motivating followers to reach their potential (Maxwell, 1997). This helps followers believe that they have what it takes to succeed. People are the heart and spirit of all that counts in transformative leadership. Transformative leadership is about people not files (Adetunji, 2010). The people are the key to success.

### **Characteristics of Transformative Leaders**

Theological Educators as agents of developing transformative leaders, should provide theological education that inputs qualities for transformative leadership in seminarians. Bello (2019) opined that transformative leaders should have the following seven qualities:

1. **Openness to New Thinking:** Transformative leaders are constantly open to innovation wherever the need arises. They always look for opportunities to do things differently and are open to new ideas, no matter where these ideas may present themselves.
2. **Talents for Broadening Minds:** Transformative leadership often involves shifting people's views on how things should work. To do so, it is necessary to understand the rationale behind people's current mindset and how to shift their thinking. The transformative leader needs to understand where people are coming from and convince them to step outside of their comfort zone. These require two separate skills: empathy and ability to inspire confidence.
3. **Commitment to Active Listening:** It is not enough for transformative leaders to request or even inspire ideas. They also need to make their colleagues and team members feel bold enough to share those ideas. Thus, they hear ideas with an open mind and respond without judgment or finality. They are committed to employing active listening techniques so that their team members feel seen, understood and respected.

4. **Tolerance for Intelligent Risk:** No transformation happens without some risk or failure. A transformative leader needs to be willing to consider those risks and what they might mean for the future of the organization. If the benefit of an idea outweighs the risk, the leader must be willing to pursue it further if it seems feasible. The leader also has to recognize when the risk is too great, and a different approach is needed.
5. **Willingness to Accept Responsibility:** No leader inspires confidence if they demand that others take the fall when an idea fails. Transformative leaders must assume responsibilities for each of their decisions.
6. **Trust in team members:** People need autonomy to develop and shape new ideas. The transformative leader understands this and trusts team members to define their own steps to success.
7. **Ability to Inspire Participation:** For innovation to happen, it needs to be part of a team's culture. A transformative leader needs to expect creativity from everyone – not just one or two “ideal people”. The leader's job is to model universal creativity and innovation. Transformative leaders create transformational teams where everyone is an idea person (Bello, 2019).

### **Strategic Theological Educational Skills for Transformative Leadership**

Some theological educational skills for transformative leadership are enumerated below:

1. One of the basic theological educational skills is the possession of good Biblical Foundations that include exegetical preaching and teaching ability (2 Timothy 2:15). This aligns with Carson's opinion in his book *Exegetical Fallacies* (Carson, 1996, pp. 15-30). A good knowledge of Systematic theology is also required because of its application to life (Grudem, 1994, p. 23) and a biblical worldview development that enhances transformative leadership.
2. Another skill is leadership and management. Transformative leadership requires strategic planning, setting goal and vision

(Proverbs 29:18), Maxwell also attest to this in his book “The 21 Irrefutable laws of leadership” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 15). A transformative leader also requires an effective communication and conflict resolution skills for impactful leadership (Gallagher, 2019, p. 100).

3. Spiritual Formation and Discipleship is an inevitable theological educational skill that enhances personal spiritual growth and accountability (1 Timothy 4:16). In Foster’s view, spiritual growth and accountability requires discipline (Foster, 2002, pp. 15-50). This gives the leader spiritual direction and guidance (Psalm 23:3-4).
4. Collaborative and Team-Based Leadership. The greatest untapped resource in any organization, and the most expensive, is its people (Tracy and Chee, 2013, p. 123). Paul emphasized this truth in 1 Corinthians 12:4-31. This skill helps to raise leaders through effective collaboration with the team (Maxwell, 2002, pp. 15-50) and empowering them through delegation as Jesus did Matthew 10:1-15.

### **Conclusion**

Theological education is inevitable for raising transformative leaders that can bring about positive change and development in the Church and society. It is therefore necessary for the theological seminaries that engage in theological education to develop an effective curriculum and method of teaching that will be adequate for training transformative leaders today. Also, theological educators should portray qualities of transformative leaders as they are seen as mentors to seminarians. People are more valuable than anything else in transformative leadership.

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