

Theological Education Fit for Purpose: The Contours of Relevance in the Training of Ministers for Today's Church¹

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Abstract

A good amount of theological education literature is being generated on the relationship between training and usefulness to the church. For instance, Tim Dearborn (1995) published a study to determine the characteristics that are important for pastors to have in order to be successful in ministry and based on that to develop a theological education programme that will assist in developing those traits. Jaison Thomas, (2008) also studied the situation in Kerala, India, sampling theological educators, church leaders and theological students to unravel their perspective on what theological education should focus upon in order to be more useful to the church. The present study is similar to these previous efforts in methodology but different in focus. The attempt here is to try and determine a set of characteristics that could describe a good church in Nigeria today and then to establish a set of characteristics that could describe the kind of pastors that are likely to produce such a church. This should then assist theological institutions in Nigeria to decide how to focus their programmes towards the development of such ministers. To achieve this, different sections of the church is surveyed in line with contemporary viewpoints which prioritize the input of the community in the determination of educational programmes and their objectives. To give the study a concrete footing, the ministerial training programme of one institution is selected for evaluation based on the findings of the study. After the introduction, the paper discusses concerns being raised on the issue of relevance of theological education programmes. The findings from the study are then reported and salient issues highlighted and discussed. The paper concludes with a few recommendations that could further enhance the usefulness and relevance of theological education programmes for contemporary ministerial realities.

Keywords: Theological education in Nigeria, Spiritual Formation, Evangelism, Missions, Relevance in Theological Education

I. Introduction

Few years ago, I presented a lecture to a class at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS), Ogbomoso, south-west Nigeria. The lecture was on the meaning of salvation in African context. At the end of the class one of the students commented that the lecture made sense but that he could not say the same of much of the courses and assignments they were being made to do. 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, that the student's struggle lay in reconciling the fact that some of the pastors he knew whose congregations were growing and doing well were not products of formal theological education while many graduates of theological schools struggle to be relevant in the ministry. And second, that this student was not alone in this struggle. Several of his classmates shared the same sentiments.

Whichever way one chooses to respond to the students' struggles, it is unavoidable to see the paradox in a person failing to perform well 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. This study is a part of that process for me.

The article presents the report of a study carried out in 2015 on the kind of theological education curriculum that will birth the quality of ministers required by the church in Nigeria to carry out her mandate in the 21st century. The world has changed and still changing dramatically and the Nigerian society is no exception. Between the time Christianity first arrived the country and now so much has changed and yet the church continues to run her theological education as though things are still the same. In this study the survey method was used, both questionnaire and interview, to sample the views of Nigerian Christians on the characteristics of an ideal contemporary church and following that the characteristics of an ideal contemporary pastor who will produce such a church.

To give the study a concrete footing, the bachelors degree programme (B.Th) of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, (NBTS) Ogbomoso, is selected for evaluation. The NBTS was founded in 1898 by an American Baptist missionary, Charles Edwin Smith. The B.Th degree was first awarded in 1948 (SER, 1982, p.

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4); the year Nigeria's premier University (the University of Ibadan) was founded (www.ui.edu.ng), thus being arguably the oldest degree awarded by a Nigerian institution. Consequently, the survey focused Nigerian Baptists but the findings can be extrapolated to other church contexts since the social and religious variables are similar.

2. Methodology

The questionnaires used for this study were administered to pastors, theological educators and church members attending the 102nd annual convention of Nigerian Baptists which held April 18-23, 2015 at Owerri, Nigeria. This was to have access to people from across the country. Baptists were chosen because the researcher is familiar with this denomination. The focus group interviewees were selected from recent graduates of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary's bachelor of theology degree programme and their members. Since this study was carried out in 2015, the sampling was limited to recent graduates who had completed a minimum of one year at their places of service, that is, 2011-2013 graduates for whom other influences such as exposure, experience, and further studies have not corrupted the data.

The study utilized a qualitative research approach. Sonia Ospina (2013) distinguishes between qualitative and quantitative research approaches describing qualitative research as that which seeks to study phenomena from 'inside,' while the quantitative researcher seeks to study it from 'outside.' Ospina further describes qualitative research as involving 'case studies using participant observation, semi-structured interviewing and document analysis' (Ospina, 2013). In this essay, the qualitative approach was utilized since the aim was to investigate the habits and qualities of persons in relation to educational exposure. I recognize that the work does not reflect a full programme of qualitative research because the number of participants was small. The aim was to find out to what extent the programmes of study undertaken by the candidates at the seminary have equipped them for the work they have been called to do.

Cohen, et al, (2011, p. 226) observe that qualitative research usually utilized multiple methods for data collection. Two methods of data collection were used for this research. First, a simple and open questionnaire was administered to gather information which helped in developing characteristics of ministers needed in the Nigerian church today. This questionnaire followed a rank ordering or ordinal pattern (Cohen, et al, 2011, p. 383) and had three parts: first was a section on personal information. The second section requested respondents to select five characteristics from a list provided of their perceptions about the ideal church in contemporary Nigeria. They were requested to rank the characteristics in order of importance.

In the third part, respondents were requested to identify what in their opinions are five most important characteristics of the kind of minister that will develop or bring about the development of such an ideal church. The data from this questionnaire was analyzed using a simple percentage format. Sixty copies of the questionnaire were used; twenty each administered on each of the following groups of persons: theological educators, church pastors and church members. In distributing these questionnaires effort was made to achieve fair spread among males and females and among the various age groups.

The most important characteristics of the kind of ministers needed by the contemporary Nigerian church developed from this enquiry were then tested on three selected pastors and their churches. This second level of data collection involved visiting these pastors in their places of ministries, interviewing them individually and their members in focus groups in terms of the pastoral leadership they are experiencing in comparison with the characteristics of successful ministers in contemporary Nigeria earlier developed.

Cohen and others, (2011, pp. 436-437) present focus groups as a unique method of gathering information where the data emerges from the interaction among a group of persons usually ranging from four to twelve. The focus groups were made up of five persons at two churches and four at one, combining males, females, adults and youths. This was to provide a more balanced assessment of church life and of church situation than individual interview could. This interaction took place at three separate churches thereby providing data that can be compared on the issues.

3. Concerns about Relevance in Theological Education

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 being made in the 1960's by theological schools across the continents to reform their programmes not just in 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 held mainly on that 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, 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). Berlin, 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 analyzing the tendencies of particular theological education programmes. Considering the philosophy, objectives and focus of the NBTSS, Ogbomoso, it seems that the seminary tends 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, p. 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, p. 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 to 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 it 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%.

Some recent studies have focused the issue of relevance of theological education programmes to the development of effective pastoral leadership for the church. For instance, Tim Dearborn led a study in 1994 on the future of theological education in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. One component of the study was to survey lay persons, pastors and seminary professors on the qualities of a good pastor. The study discovered discrepancies in the perceptions of the different groups:

Especially interesting is the different priority placed on spirituality (first for lay persons, fourth for clergy, non-existent for professors); on theological knowledge (first for professors, and fifth for laity and clergy); that only lay persons esteemed relational skills among clergy; that clergy placed highest priority on their position as role models (a role that neither lay persons nor professors valued for pastors); and that pastors omitted placing a priority on their own character (Dearborn, 1995, p. 8).

The level of discrepancy in the perceptions of the various groups described above is indeed very disturbing. More disturbing is the fact that the perceptions of church members who receive the ministers after their training differed markedly from those of the ministers and those who train them. Dearborn saw this discrepancy as an illustration of the disconnect that exists between the theological institutions and the churches they are supposed to serve; a state of affairs responsible for the ill-equipped and out-of-touch ministers whom the schools produce for the churches. In response to this, a model of theological education was developed which was experimented by the Seattle Association, a joint venture between three academic institutions and over forty-five churches which sought to ‘unite the best of academia and the best of the parish in instructional partnerships’ (Dearborn, 1995, p. 8). The idea was to bring the church and the academia in closer collaboration in the task of preparing ministers who will meet the needs of the churches and provide the needed leadership to move the church forward. It would be interesting to know how this experiment worked out.

Jaison Thomas carried out a similar research in 2008 on ‘Church Ministry Formation in Protestant Theological Education: The Contemporary Debate in Kerala, India’. This research carried out as part of requirement for a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Queen’s University, Belfast, focused on ‘the increasing dissonance between churches and seminaries in the context of fulfilling the objectives of theological education [and] the effectiveness and impact of theological education on church ministry formation in Kerala, India’ (Thomas, 2008, p. 4). The study discovered that ‘while the training priority of seminary leadership is academic formation, church leaders look for spiritual formation of students. But students set ministry formation at the top of their priorities’ (Thomas, 2008, p. 191). Thomas concluded that this lack of agreement on what constitutes the

objectives of theological education is the main source of the dissonance that exists between the church and seminaries and by extension the main reason for the inadequacies of theological education in Kerala, India. Thus, Thomas's findings are in agreement with Dearborn's in the sense that such a discrepancy exists in the perception of what constitutes the key objectives of theological education among the stakeholders.

The present study follows a similar approach as Dearborn's and Thomas'. This relationship exists at two levels: first, we shall attempt to identify the perceptions of church pastors, theological educators and church members on what constitutes the characteristics of a successful minister in contemporary Nigeria. Second, the overall goal of the study is to attempt to point the way to a rethinking of theological education in Nigeria with an eye on contextual relevance.

What is apparent in the discussion above is that both curriculum and the educational purposes that generate it need to be sensitive to contemporary life and situations, and to the sentiments of the church: its members and leaders. If theological education is aimed at the equipping of both the clergy and the laity for service within the body of Christ (Farley, 1988, p. 177), then it is important that the church has a say in the formulation of goals, objectives and the curriculum that seeks to implement them. It is also important that the curriculum be reviewed on a regular basis to avoid 'obsoletism'.

4. Presentation of Findings

This section presents the research findings. Two kinds of data gathered for the research will be presented: data from questionnaire and data from focus group interviews.

4.1 The Good Church

Table 1: Perceptions of Nigerian Baptists on the Characteristics of an Ideal Contemporary Church

Characteristics	Description	Pastors (20) 100%	Members (20) 100%	Theo. Ed. (20) 100%	Mean %	Males 43/60 71%	Females 17/60 28.3%	Age 18-30 2/60 3.3%	Age 31-40 9/60 15%	Age 41-50 26/60 43.3%	Above 50 23/60 38.3%
Evangelistic & Missionary	Ministry to the world	90%	90%	100%	93.3 (1st)	88.3%	94.1%	100%	100%	96.2%	82.6%
Team Spirit & Unity	Ministry to members	75%	80%	50%	68.3 (4th)	67.4	76.4	100	77.7	76.9	56.5
Robust preaching and teaching	Ministry to members	80%	80%	80%	80 (2nd)	81.3	76.4	50	55.5	84.6	91.3
Collective participation of members	Ministry to members	15%	25%	30%	23.3 (8th)	20.9	29.4	Nil	22.2	15.3	34.8
Ministry to the needy	Ministry to the world/members	70%	75%	65%	70 (3rd)	72.1	52.9	Nil	88.8	65.3	65.2
Generate adequate finances for Ministry	Ministry to the world/members	20%	15%	30%	21.6 (9th)	16.2	29.4	Nil	Nil	26.9	26
Community & societal involvement	Ministry to the world	45%	20%	25%	30 (7th)	25.5	29.4	50	Nil	26.9	30.4
Lively worship	Ministry to God	70%	40%	70%	60 (5th)	51.1	70.5	100	66.6	65.3	56.5
Prayer full atmosphere	Ministry to God	55%	75%	50%	60 (5th)	65.1	41.1	100	88.8	44.3	60.8

Table one above reflects the tabulation of the responses to section two of the questionnaire administered to find out the perception of Nigerian Christians on what should characterize a vibrant New Testament church in contemporary Nigeria. This is to help in developing a set of characteristics for the kind of pastor who is likely to produce such a church. There are twelve columns on the table. The first column lists the set of characteristics as it was presented on the questionnaire from which respondents were requested to select and identify the most important five. The second column describes each characteristic using the categories theologians usually use to describe the functions of the church.

Different theologians arrange the functions of the church in different ways. For instance, in the new edition of his *Christian Doctrine*, Millard Erickson follows a fourfold arrangement of evangelism, edification,

worship and social concern (Erickson, 2013, p. 972). On the other hand, Wayne Grudem uses a threefold category of ministry to God (worship), ministry to believers (nurture or edification) and ministry to the world (evangelism and mercy) subsuming under the last point what Erickson refers to as social concern (Grudem, 1994, p. 867-868). The description here follows Grudem's threefold category in describing the traits of the ideal church.

The next three columns present the responses of three key groups this research focused on namely serving pastors, church members and theological educators. There is the breakdown of responses according to gender and also according to age brackets.

The mean average was derived using the scores of responses from pastors, members and theological educators to assess the frequency of selection of a characteristic. The traits that received the highest scores are evangelism and missions focus (93.3%), robust preaching and teaching ministry (80%), ministry to the needy (70%), team spirit or unity (68.3%), lively worship (60%) and prayerful atmosphere (60%). Apart from receiving the highest straight scores, these characteristics also receive very high scores when considered by gender and across the different age groups.

When considered according to ranking done by the different groups, the majority of pastors (31%) identified evangelism and missions as the number one priority of the church. Twenty-one percent selected unity as the most important characteristic and the same number (i.e. 21%) prioritized worship. For the second most important, 26% selected ministry to the needy while 21% selected unity. For lay members, 55% ranked evangelism and missions as top most characteristic of the church followed by 15% that selected prayerful atmosphere as the number one trait. Thirty percent of church members ranked robust preaching and teaching ministry as second most important trait while 20% selected unity. For theological educators, 48% identified evangelism and missions as the church's number one priority followed by 36% that selected preaching and teaching as most important. Thirty-six percent gave preaching and teaching second most important place while 21% percent selected evangelism and missions for second place. The same number (i.e. 21%) chose unity.

It can be seen that the three groups are in agreement on the priority of evangelism and missions as characteristic of the contemporary church. Others traits that show up prominently are preaching and teaching, prayer, worship, ministry to the needy and surprisingly concerns about unity. These are incidentally the traits that receive the highest scores in the mean average. However, the results also show that the percentages for evangelism and missions falls comparatively with age while robust preaching percentage grows with age. Also, younger people are more interested in lively worship than are older people and older people are more interested in robust preaching and teaching than younger ones. Besides, members are much less fascinated by lively worship than pastors and theological educators and much more drawn to prayer than pastors and theological educators, whereas females emphasized lively worship more than males.

Results from the focus group interviews conducted showed that the three churches studied reflect some of the traits highlighted above while failing to mirror others. Focus group interviews were conducted at three Baptist churches in the Port Harcourt area, south-south Nigeria. These were places I could find graduates from the NBTS BTh programme. The idea was to interview three graduates individually as well as few of their members in a group. The first church visited is located in a semi-urban environment about 45 minutes drive from Port Harcourt (hereafter referred to as church 'A'). The second is situated in the oil-rich city of Port Harcourt, a few blocks away from a University and the University's Teaching Hospital (referred to as church 'B'). The third church is located in a rural community about one hour drive from Port Harcourt (we will designate this church 'C'). This third community is a little strange because it remains very rural in spite of the fact that an oil company has been extracting oil there for over forty years. I interviewed five members from churches 'A' and 'B' and four from church 'C'. In each church males, females, young people and adults were represented.

The pastor in church A helped to start the church in 2001 before he went to Seminary. He graduated from Seminary June 2011 and resumed as pastor in March, 2012. The pastor of church B graduated June 2011 and started pastoring the church October of same year. The pastor of church C graduated June 2013 and resumed at the church January 2014. Thus, the least each of these pastors has spent at the church is one year and seven months.

The responses derived from the three churches studied at points agree and sometimes deviate from the perception of the ideal church earlier described in terms of characteristics and their order of importance viz; 1. Evangelism and missions, 2. Preaching and teaching, 3. Prayer, 4. Worship, and 5. Unity. The different groups were asked to list five characteristics that describe their churches, according to the degree of manifestation (they were not given options). The members at church A presented this order: 1. Prayer, 2. Evangelistic (asked to cite examples of this they mentioned hospital visitation), 3. Love and care, 4. Nurture, and 5. Ecumenical. Asked the same question, their pastor interestingly also placed prayer at number one. Others are teaching, social ministry, youth-oriented ministry (90% of the about 100 members are youths). He placed missions at number five. The pastor's description of the church agrees essentially with the members' except on the point of evangelism and missions. While the members placed it at number 2, the pastor placed it at number 5. When asked why, he said they are just now beginning to think of missions involvement.

At church B, the following characteristics were mentioned and ranked by the members: 1. Unity, 2. Bible believing, 3. Caring and accepting, 4. Collective involvement, and 5. Creative evangelism. When asked to explain what they meant by creative evangelism, they explained that with their proximity to a university they realized they needed unconventional ways to reach out to the people such as through career talks, skill acquisition, academic tutoring and special programmes in the week that Valentine’s day is observed. Asked the same question, their pastor mentioned the following: 1. Teaching, 2. Family orientation, 3. Prayer, 4. Equipping of members in career advancement, and 5. Creative evangelism. The strong agreements found in the responses of pastor and members is the strong family orientation of the church, teaching ministries, and efforts being made to reach the youths in a way that they can relate to. The pastor differed from the members in that he placed prayer third while the members did not mention it at all.

At church C, the members gave the following as characteristics of their church: 1. Denominational loyalty, 2. Social ministry, 3. Unity, 4. Involvement of different departments in the work of the church, and 5. Lack of forgiveness. Their pastor described the church as characterized by: 1. Love, 2. Teachableness, 3. Hatred, 4. Division, and 5. Inadequate growth. When asked to reconcile the presence of love and hatred, he said some members exhibit love while others do not. The pastor’s description of the church is quite divergent from that of the members. They do not use the same categories. However, we can relate social ministry with love and lack of forgiveness with division.

Some things are immediately noticeable in the descriptions above. The first two churches appeared to be satisfied with themselves in many areas of their work. They perceived themselves strong in the areas of teaching, love, unity, prayer (only the pastor at church B mentioned prayer), and family orientation. Both the pastor and members at church C did not appear to like the way the church was going. Both did express desire to see the church take a new turn. The three churches examined appear to be weak in evangelism and missions; churches A and B mention it only marginally and church C did not mention it at all.

4.2 The Good Pastor

Table 2: Perceptions of Nigerian Baptists on the Characteristics of an Ideal Contemporary Pastor

characteristics	Description	Pastors, (20) 100%	Members, (20) 100%	Theol. Ed. (20) 100%	Mean %	Males 43/60 71%	Females 17/60 28.3%	Age 18- 30 2/60 3.3%	Age 31- 40 9/60 15%	Age 41-50 26/60 43.3%	Above 50 23/60 38.3%
Knowledge of the Word	AF	85	95	85	88.3 (3 rd)	86	88.2	100	88.8	84.6	91.3
Knowledge of society	AF	25	25	25	25 (9 th)	23.2	29.4	-	33.3	26.9	21.7
Sense of call	SF	95	80	95	90 (2 nd)	88.4	88.2	100	88.8	88.4	91.3
Prayerful lifestyle	SF	85	100	90	91.6 (1 st)	90.6	88.2	100	100	80.7	100
Caring for members	MF	60	50	50	53 (4 th)	48.3	58.2	-	66.6	53.8	52.1
Preaching & Teaching skills	MF	45	30	45	40 (5 th)	44.1	35.2	50	22.2	50	39.1
Visionary leadership	MF	35	35	40	36.6 (7 th)	34.8	52.9	100	33.3	42.3	26
Managing humans & materials	MF	45	20	35	33.3 (8 th)	34.8	11.7	-	22.2	38.4	34.7
Leadership in missions	MF	25	55	40	40 (5 th)	37.2	47	50	22.2	42.3	43.4

Table two reflects the tabulation of the responses to section three of the questionnaire administered to find out the perception of Nigerian Christians on what should characterize a pastor that will be effective and relevant in contemporary Nigeria. The table is arranged similar to the first one. There are twelve columns on the table. The first column lists the set of characteristics as it was presented on the questionnaire from which respondents were requested to select and identify the most important five. The second column describes each characteristic in terms of the three core objectives of theological education: academic formation (AF), spiritual formation (SF) and practical ministry formation (MF) (Cheesman, 2012, p. 11).

As in the first table, the mean average was derived using the scores of responses from pastors, members and theological educators to assess the frequency of selection of a characteristic. From the table, the traits that received the highest selections are prayerful lifestyle (91.6%), sense of call (90%), knowledge of the word of God (88.3%), care for members (53%) and joint fifth for good preaching skills (40%) and leadership in missions (40%).

When viewed according to the perceptions of the various groups, the highest number of pastors (57%)

ranked sense of call as the number one characteristic of an ideal pastor, followed by 21% who ranked knowledge of the word of God as number one. A good number of pastors (36.8%) placed knowledge of the word at second most important while 21% chose sense of call and same number selected prayerfulness as second most important. For members, 50% selected knowledge of word of God as most important followed by 35% who chose sense of call as most important characteristic. Fifty-five percent of members ranked prayerful lifestyle as second most important while 15% ranked sense of call as second in importance. Majority of theological educators (57.8%) chose sense of call at number one followed by 31.5% who chose knowledge of the word. On the other hand, 31.5% placed knowledge of the word as second most important while 21% of theological educators went for prayerful lifestyle.

From the focus groups, members of the churches studied were asked to mention in order of priority five characteristics that best describe their pastors. They were not given any options. At church A, they mentioned: 1. Ability to communicate with everyone no matter their level, 2. Care and concern for people, 3. Creative and business oriented, 4. Commitment to excellence, and 5. Ability to rebuke people with love. When asked to name skills, knowledge and attitudes they would love their pastor to have which they do not think he has now, they mentioned anointing. Getting them to explain in clear terms what they meant by anointing was not easy. The closest they came was to describe it as power that draws people to the church. Asked to name areas they would have wished their pastor was exposed to in Seminary, they cited exposure to 'anointed men of God who could build him up spiritually'. In discussion with the pastor and in view of the fact that he was a lay leader before going to seminary having led the group that started the church, I was curious to ask him his perception of the difference seminary education made for him. In response, he mentioned three key areas: 1. Improvement in communication skills- his preaching is more articulate and better now; 2. Organization and administration- he now understands what structure means and is better able now to administer the church; 3. Continuing education- he sees the need now to continue reading and working to improve himself. When asked to name areas he would have wished seminary education prepared him in view of his present ministry, he mentioned only one: mentoring. He would have wished intentional mentoring was done by seminary faculty, not a situation where a seminary lecturer just saw their job as restricted to teaching courses.

At church B, the members described their pastor as 1. Good shepherd and counselor, 2. Knows the word of God (they almost said this in unison), 3. Good administrator, 4. Caring and concerned about people, and 5. Excellent teacher. Asked to name skills, knowledge and attitudes you would love for the pastor to have which they do not think he has, they did not find any to name. They appeared really very satisfied with their pastor's work or they did not want to say so. To the question of areas they would have wished seminary had exposed their pastor, they mentioned musical skills. They would love him to sing better or play an instrument. In my discussion with the pastor, he said seminary education gave depth to his teaching, exposed him to the doctrines of other denominations and religions which comes handy in his interaction with people in the university environment, and exposed him to the 'how' of pastoring a Baptist church. I was curious to know how he came by the youth-oriented approach to his ministry. He explained that he gained that from supervised ministry¹ serving with the pastor of a church that was located in a university environment. Asked to mention weaknesses in the seminary training he received in the light of the challenges now confronting him in practical ministry, he mentioned two: 1. Inadequacy of administration and leadership courses. He explained this as training in management, managing human and material resources; and 2. inadequate equipping for community or societal involvement. He would have wished for better preparation for engagement with society.

At church C, the members described their pastor as friendly, humble, diligent, accommodating and caring. On the skills, knowledge and attitudes they would wish their pastor had which he did not seem to have at the moment, they mentioned two: musical skills (similar to members at church B) and ability to relate with community members outside of their membership. They cited a former pastor who saw himself as pastor for the whole community. The pastor at church B had also mentioned his desire for more equipping in skills needed for community involvement. The members at church C wish seminary education had exposed their pastor to music and entrepreneurial skills. The pastor at church C said seminary helped him to gain exposure and boldness. He wishes his training had equipped him more in the area of spirituality.

5. Lessons from the Findings

5.1 The Good Church and the Good Pastor

According to the perceptions of those sampled, an ideal church is one characterized by the following (in the order of priority) evangelistic and missions focus (MW)², robust preaching and teaching ministries (MM), ministry to the needy within and outside the church (MM), team spirit and unity (MM), inspiring worship (MG),

¹ Supervised Ministry Experience (SME) is a programme by which every seminary student is given a ministry placement alongside their studies.

² Abbreviations used as follows: MW- Ministry to the world, MM- Ministry to members, MG- Ministry to God.

and a prayerful atmosphere that involves majority of its members (MG). 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). One would have expected that with the strong emphasis respondents placed on missions and evangelism in the characteristics of a church there would have been an equally strong emphasis on leadership in missions in the characteristics of a good pastor. This was not the case. Rather, evangelism and missions ranked first as character of the church and leadership in missions ranked fifth in character of a good pastor.

The traits that ranked very highly in the description of a good 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 traits. Thus, the findings are in tandem with the results of previous studies, especially those of Dearborn and Thomas cited earlier. In his study conducted in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, Dearborn had discovered a strong emphasis on the spirituality of the pastor, especially by church members (Dearborn, 1995, p. 8). Dearborn's results differ from the present one in that whereas clergy and professors ranked pastors' spirituality low or not at all, in the present study all three categories rank spirituality as number one consideration for the pastor. In the case of Thomas, his study of seminary leaders, church leaders and students, in Kerala, India, showed church leaders scoring spirituality higher than students and seminary leaders (Thomas, 2008, p. 191). The present study shows pastors, lay persons and theological educators all scoring spiritual formation as the most important trait of a good pastor, followed by academic formation and then practical formation.

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, the seminary's objectives and curriculum seem fairly adequate in the light of these except trait number one, evangelism and missions. The graduates and churches studied in focus groups appear to be doing quite well in many of these. Preaching and teaching was corroborated both by pastors and members at churches A and B. It was not very strong at church C. Social ministry, family orientation, prayer and worship were also deemed to be strong emphases of the churches. Interacting with the pastors and their members actually made me feel proud of being a part of the system that produced them. One finds that the seminary's objectives and curriculum are geared towards producing just such kind of leadership for the churches. But there are a few points of disconnect that the present study throws up and they are worth calling attention to at this point. I have chosen just two of the key issues of disconnection, spiritual formation and evangelism and missions.

5.2 Spiritual Formation

We have already noted the clear agreement of respondents on evangelism and missions as an important characteristic of a good church. Among the traits of a good 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 this scenario.

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 saw in the literature review that the general theory of theological education and its more recent history supports this strong emphasis on the spirituality of the minister.

Both the institutional objectives of the NBTS (Catalogue, 2011-2015, p. 9) and the objectives of the BTh programme (Catalogue, 2011-2015, p. 205) are heavy on knowledge and skills leaving spirituality in the background. The institutional objectives leaves a person to read spirituality between the lines and the programme objectives are totally silent about it. The curriculum has one course by the title spiritual formation (Catalogue, 2011-2015, p. 207), but spiritual formation is not achieved that way, not least by a one hour course in a four-year programme. As the saying goes, 'some things are better caught than taught', and spirituality is one of them. It will be recalled that when asked what they wish the seminary did for them which was not done, two of the three graduates interviewed mentioned spirituality and mentoring (the members of the pastor who cited mentoring had wished their pastor had more anointing or had been exposed to anointed men of God while in training). Emphasis on spirituality has to permeate every aspect of the seminary's programme, not just the course on spiritual formation but every course, the relationships, impact teachers have on students and the best place to

begin that process is with the objectives of the institution and the programmes.

To state the above is not to imply that the NBTS does not talk about spiritual formation or make efforts to reflect it in their programmes.¹ But if the testimonies of the graduates I interviewed are anything to go by, then more work needs to be done beginning with the institutional and programme objectives.

5.3 Evangelism and Missions

The emphasis placed on evangelism and missions as 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. As has already been highlighted, Banks, Ott, and Kirk are among those who have made this call. Banks sought to make theological education missional (Banks, 1999, p. 129-130), Ott called for its integration 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' (Catalogue, 2011-2015, p. 9). Similarly, the programme objectives of the BTh states inter alia, graduates being able to lead the church in outreach ministries (Catalogue, 2011-2015, p. 205). These do not go far enough. Besides, the BTh curriculum does not include much that can equip students to perform as desired in leading churches in evangelism and missions. Out of 128 hours of courses designated as required and core, there is just one course (of two hours) on evangelism.

This leaves the BTh programme open to the charge of producing maintenance ministers. When the programme started around 1945, there was a dearth of workers. The need was to develop church leaders who would provide seasoned 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 focus group interviews 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 our findings.²

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 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 is 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 to the effect that curriculum is never finished and done with. There is regular need for a 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.

The overwhelming stress respondents placed on evangelism and missions as a characteristic of the ideal church in Nigeria throws up the huge missions challenge confronting the church here. I wonder if that was what informed such a response. The Christian world is celebrating the growth of Christianity in the global south. In fact, Philip Jenkins, in his book, *The Next Christendom*, argues that the southern hemisphere is replacing the north as the centre of Christianity. According to him, with population projections for the world by 2050 vast populations of people and most of Christians will be living in the southern hemisphere than the north thus bringing about a situation where southern Christianity becomes dominant (Jenkins, 2002). This is indeed true and worthy of celebration. But a huge task and challenge faces the church in Nigeria.

Let us put it this way. Nigeria's population is almost evenly divided between Islam and Christianity. Some claim that Christians outnumber Muslims (50-40%). Others reverse the figure in favour of Muslims. Some say Nigeria's population is equally divided between the two major religions (45-45%); others claim 50- 48% in favour of Islam. We may never know the real situation in Nigeria given that Nigeria has removed the religious variable from its demographic exercises since 1963. However, reliable estimates of the country's religious population put Christians at 50%, Muslims about 40%, while the remaining is shared by adherents of indigenous religion and others (www.pewforum.org).³

¹ I am aware that the seminary has been making discipleship programmes compulsory for all students for some time now. The effectiveness of these discipleship programmes need to be ascertained as some students display attitudes suggesting they regard them like courses that need to be done.

² The maintenance approach observed in the seminary's BTh programme does not tally with the mantra of the current President of the Nigerian Baptist convention, Dr Samson Ayokunle, on Moving Forward and Breaking New Frontiers.

³ Globally, there are more Christians in the world today than Muslims. However, one Muslim website projects that by 2016

Most of Nigeria's Christian population lives in the south with a good representation in the north central. On the other hand, majority of the Muslim population reside in the north, with a good number in the southwest. The south east of Nigeria is arguably dominated by Christians. There are indications that the vast majority of Christians in the southeast are nominal or simply church goers. This is because contrary to other religions that grow by procreation e.g. Islam, Christianity grows by conversion and one wonders how much of this is going on at the moment. The major indicator for determining the future of any community or people is growth rate. It is doubtful whether the growth rate of Christianity in Nigeria, even in those parts where Christians are in dominance is favourable or not. There are indications that much of what goes on in terms of church growth in Nigeria today is simply migration, people moving from one church to the other. New churches spring up regularly but hardly do they reflect new additions to the kingdom in terms of new converts. Add to this the relentless Muslim agenda and strategizing to dominate the country and what you have is a precarious situation.

There is urgent need therefore for theological education in Nigeria to wake up to this reality. The NBTS is regarded by many as the largest evangelical theological institution in the country. It is also the oldest and the only one that has full accreditation of the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) at the moment. The NBTS can lead the way in developing a theological education programme that takes seriously the mission of the church. This is the only way to develop mission conscious pastors and evangelistic and missionary churches in every section of the nation.

6. Conclusion

The characteristics of a good church that came out of the responses received, presented in the order of importance to respondents were evangelistic and missions focus (rated as number one and very highly by all groups sampled), robust preaching and teaching ministries, ministry to the needy within and outside the church, team spirit and unity, inspiring worship, and a prayerful atmosphere that involves majority of its members. On the other hand, the characteristics of a good pastor discovered, presented in order of importance were: a total reliance on God's Spirit exemplified in a prayerful lifestyle, sense of call and commitment to the Lord and the ministry (both representing emphasis on the pastor's spirituality rated very highly by respondents), knowledge of the word of God, concern for members, good preaching and teaching skills and strong leadership in missions and innovative ministries. It is noteworthy that the pastor's spirituality was a paramount concern for those sampled.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Necessity for Regular Needs Assessment and Review of Programmes

There is, therefore, the need for theological institutions in Nigeria to do regular needs assessment with a view to keeping their programmes relevant to the ever-changing environments in which graduates have to function. Such an assessment done in consultation with all stakeholders- church members, denominational leaders, graduates and students, will assist the institutions in the regular review of objectives, curriculum and programmes to make them as fit for purpose as possible.

7.2 Emphasis on Evangelism and Missions

In any review of theological education curriculum in Nigeria today emphasis needs be placed on evangelism and missions. The need to carry on with the work of the Great Commission and the ongoing challenge posed by Islam makes this focus imperative.

7.3 Increasing Spiritual Formation Emphasis of the Programme

In view of the importance of spiritual formation established by this study, there is need for theological institutions to review this aspect of their work with a view to increasing work being done in that area. Such a review should pay attention to ways that mentoring and relationships can be harnessed to assist students grow in the ways desired.

8. For Further Study

1. There is need to study Baptist churches and other churches in Nigeria to ascertain their growth rate and growth patterns. This will help determine to what extent these churches are experiencing biological growth, migration growth and conversion growth.
2. There is also need to study the spiritual formation components of theological education programmes, including the existing discipleship programmes, in order to determine their effectiveness and possible improvement.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire on the Characteristics of Pastors needed in the Contemporary Nigerian Church

Dear Sir/Madam,

This questionnaire is geared towards gathering information on the type of pastors needed by the contemporary Nigerian church. It is the assumption here that the situation of both the church and the Nigerian society has changed dramatically over the last fifty years. In the light of these changes, the researcher is seeking to find out what Nigerian Christians think should characterize the pastoral leadership needed to move the church forward in contemporary Nigeria.

This study is part of a research being carried out on the topic: **The Correlation Between Curriculum and Graduate Output: A Critical Assessment of the Basic Degree Programme of the NBTS, Ogbomoso**, in partial fulfilment of a Masters degree course at the London School of Theology.

Please be assured that your responses will be treated with confidentiality. You do not have to fill out this questionnaire and can stop at any time or not put in your completed questionnaire. No-one will be able to match up any answers in the questionnaire to the person completing it. The data will be stored securely, completely anonymously, and destroyed after five years. No-one under 18 years of age will be asked to complete this questionnaire.

Thanks for your kind assistance.

John Enyinnaya

Section One:

Personal Information

- 1) Sex: (a)Female (b) Male
- 2) Age: (a) 18 - 24 (b) 25 - 30 (c) 31 –35
- (d) 36 - 40 (e) 41 – 45 (f) 46 – 50
- (g) 50 & above
- 3) **Category** : Theological educator Church pastor Church member

Section Two:

Below are some characteristics of an ideal church in the Nigeria of today (i.e. a church that will meet the New Testament descriptions of a vibrant, relevant and true church of Jesus Christ in contemporary Nigeria). Please select only five out of the list and put them in order of importance 1 to 5.

- Evangelistic and missions focus characterized by deliberate effort to reach non-Christians within and outside the community
- Team spirit, unity
- Robust preaching and teaching ministries that provide foundation for Christian discipleship and stewardship
- Involvement of a greater percentage of the members in active ministry beyond the traditional 20% that carry out the work of a church
- Ministering to the needs of the poor and needy both within and outside the church
- Ability to generate adequate financial resources for its ministries
- Involvement in the life of its community and society
- Lively and vibrant worship i.e. worship that inspires
- Prayerful atmosphere that involves majority of its membership

Section Three:

Below are some characteristics of an ideal Christian minister in the Nigeria of today (i.e. the kind of minister that will bring about the ideal church identified in section 2 above). Please select only five and put them in order of importance 1 to 5.

- Knowledgeable about the word of God
- Knowledgeable about contemporary society
- Sense of call and commitment to the Lord and the ministry
- Total reliance on God's Spirit exemplified in a prayerful lifestyle
- A loving and caring attitude toward the members through visitation and kind attention
- Good preaching and teaching skills
- Visionary leadership that results in creative thinking
- Creative management skill that produces adequate harnessing of available human and material resources
- Strong leadership in missions and in innovative ministries

Appendix 2
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Sir/Madam,

This study is part of a research being carried out on the topic: **The Correlation Between Curriculum and Graduate Output: A Critical Assessment of the Basic Degree Programme of the NBTS, Ogbomoso**, in partial fulfillment of a Masters degree course at the London School of Theology.

Please be assured that your responses will be treated with confidentiality. No-one will be able to match up any answers in the questionnaire to the person completing it. The data will be stored securely, completely anonymously, and destroyed after five years.

Thanks for your kind assistance.

John Enyinnaya

Interview Guide (to be used in focus groups to assess the work graduates are doing and how their theological education has prepared them for their work)

Both pastors and members:

1. What are the five characteristics you think describe your church the most?

Members only:

2. What are the five characteristics that you think describe your pastor the most?
3. What are the skills, knowledge and attitudes you would love for your pastor to have, which you do not think he has now?
4. What are the areas you would have wished that your pastor was exposed to while in Seminary?

Pastors only:

5. To what extent do you think your seminary education prepared you for what you are doing now?
6. In what other areas would you have wished that seminary education prepared you for your present ministry