

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: Theological education is a global enterprise that is gaining in both importance and complexity as Christianity expands South. The rapid expansion of Christianity calls for a parallel advancement in the equipping of leaders who can guide with wisdom in the coming decades. The essay investigates the meaning of theological education as *leadership development* from the backdrop of the Nigerian context, a country where theological education is moving toward maturity. The essay gives full attention to the discussion of a three-dimensional approach to leadership development that might offer the African church an ideological construct for the shaping of curriculum and educational experiences as a means of preparing leaders for the coming generation. Concluding questions invite theological educational leaders in Nigeria and beyond to engage in conversation about the nature of leadership development.

KEYWORDS: Theological Education, Leadership, Christianity in Africa

INTRODUCTION

My first personal encounter with theological education and leadership development came in September 1994 when I arrived on the campus of West Africa Theological Seminary (WATS), what was then called Wesley International Bible College in Owerri, Nigeria. My wife, daughter, and I had gone to WATS for a two-month ministry of helps and friendship. During that time, we computerized the student academic records in the Registrar's Office, engaged in curriculum review and revision with the Academic Affairs Office, conducted short-term seminars for area pastors, and explored the



possibility of the six-year-old school launching into graduate education.

I established friendships that have remained these twenty years and experienced joys that continue to stand as meaningful memories of my first African visit. As a token of gratitude for my work, the administration and faculty hosted a delightful farewell dinner for us. I treasure the moment that I opened the gift presented after dinner and held in my hands an original sculpture by a local artist depicting the ordination of a young Nigerian pastor. As I now study the prayerful face and dedicatory hands of the bishop, I think of the vision and passion of the Anglican and Methodist bishops and archbishops I have had the opportunity to meet. They carry the burden of finding, equipping, and shepherding men and women in the paths of Christian ministry.

The bare feet of the young ordinand suggests that he came from the village—maybe of Imo State or Plateau State—to follow God's call to Christian service. I can imagine that he has now finished his formal education and kneels in the presence of God as the bishop ordains him for pastoral care or mission evangelism. He could represent one of hundreds of men and women I have had the joy of seeing pass through the halls of theological education on their way to service somewhere in Nigeria, West Africa, or the world.

I wonder about the formal education he had—did it extend across three or four years? Was it post-secondary level? Did it have any significant level of orality included or was it strictly text-based? What about the thrust and purpose behind the experience—was it educational in that it shaped the whole person or was it simply training for a localized task? What is his community like?

Obviously, I can never answer these questions because they rise from my ruminations of the treasured sculpture that adorns my study shelf. However, I do have the opportunity to help address pressing questions that lie at the heart of Christian leadership development in Nigeria, West Africa, and other parts of the world. In this essay, I first explore very briefly the state of higher education in Nigeria and then focus on the meaning of theological education. The essay then turns to its central discussion of a three-dimensional construct of leadership development. The essay concludes with a brief list of qualities reflected by one who has been so equipped and then offers questions for further conversation.

As you join me in exploring this topic, we will break from the tradition motif of formal third-person language and engage in personal conversation—you and I as men and women called of God to be leaders in our contexts.

STATUS OF NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section is brief for two reasons: (1) it merely seeks to give a broad background to the more specific discussion of leadership development; and (2)

as an American educator, I have limited experience with, and understanding of, the national scope of higher education in Nigeria. However, our conversation needs to hear voices that speak as informed authorities.

In "Higher Education in Nigeria: A Status Report," William Saint and two colleagues present us with a statistical view of the Nigerian educational system's readiness to support national innovation and advancement:

For education, Nigeria spends an estimated 2.4% of its GNP while Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole spends 5.1%. In Nigeria, primary education enrolls 81% of the relevant age group and graduates 69%. Therefore, just over half of all children complete primary school. School dropout rates have been rising and educational standards have reportedly declined. Secondary education enrollments grew at roughly 10% yearly during the 1990s, but access remains constrained (less than half of secondary school age children attend school) and significant regional disparities in access are evident. Technical education is substantially neglected by policymakers and oriented to the teaching of traditional hand skills that are often divorced from labor market requirements. Higher education enrolls a very modest 4% of the relevant age cohort. This level compares poorly with economic competitors such as South Africa (17%), India (7%), Indonesia (11%), and Brazil (12%). The elements of a national innovation system are clearly not yet in place. In this, politics has played a part.¹

Tokunbo Simbowale Osinubi reported on the assessment that U. J. Ekaete had made of the health of the Nigerian educational system. Speaking at the Convocation of the University of Uyo, Ekaete "pointed out that a major decline [in Nigeria] is the nation's education system. Failure to achieve its basic objectives will obviously impact adversely on all other indices, he suggested. It will hinder the Nation's march towards prosperity, progress and stability."² Osinubi further reported:

"The civil war, the era of military rule and the general feeling of injustice and insecurity have been, literally, deeply demoralizing to society in general. The educational system is not immune to this. Moral decadence is the rule rather than the exemption. Adesola has commented on the presence of formal decadence in Nigerian society. Citing recent events in Nigeria, which revealed one former Head of State and his bodyguards engaged in removing large sums of public money while essential services, including education, were starved of basic funds, Adesola went further and suggested

¹ Saint, Hartnett, and Strassner, "Higher Education in Nigeria," 262-263.

² Osinubi, "System Performance and Sustainability of Higher Education in Nigeria," 301.

that government had been hijacked by armed robbers. Recent disclosures about the level of corruption in government and society are indeed astounding. Little wonder that students and staff in our higher educational institutions are involved in examination malpractice and other acts of moral dubiousness. Higher education, as the apex of the education system in its entirety, must, however, accept some responsibility. Indeed, most of those 'playing the system' are products of higher education."³

These assessments occurred just over one decade ago. Meanwhile, in the past decade, the federal government has taken steps to reorganize and establish policies that address this anemic condition of higher education.⁴ I leave it to the Nigerian educational leaders to debate the causes and identify the solutions to these conditions. My challenge here calls for the leaders of theological educational institutions to recognize the beckoning opportunity to lead the way in establishing excellent and effective institutions of theological education in the country. To that end, we need to more fully understand what *theological education* is.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION DEFINED

What is theological education? How does it differ from Christian education, or ministerial formation, or lay formation? Are these one and the same?

Olusola Igbari defined theological education as the "systematic study of the word of God and of how it relates to man and his environment."⁵ In *A Hand Book on Theological Education in Nigeria*, he continued his definition of theological education by listing fourteen disciplines that would fall under the overarching umbrella, some of which are biblical studies, church history, liturgies, moral theory, pastoral theology, and Christian education.⁶ Igbari sees theological education more fully as the effort at developing people for leadership within the church.

In the American theological community, three terms have been used to describe the theological education: *Paideia*, *Theologia*, and *Habitus Paideiais* "a process of 'culturing' the soul, schooling as 'character formation.' It is the oldest picture of education to be found in Christianity."⁷

Theologia is a "reflective understanding, shared by members of a Christian community regarding who they are and what they are do to [sic], given their

³ Ibid, 306-307.

⁴ Saint, *et al*, provides a helpful summary of these recent policy developments.

⁵ Igbari, *Hand Book on Theological Education in Nigeria*, 4.

⁶ Ibid. 6.

⁷ Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 6.

concrete world-historical situation.”⁸ *Theologia* is “a disposition and knowledge which resembled wisdom, and as such had no clerical restriction. It was simply the sapiential [from sapient, “discerning, wise”] knowledge which attended Christian life.”⁹ The concern was on the character and wisdom of the trained minister, not on what skills and competencies he had for doing ministry. It was a focus on being rather than doing.

Habitus is “the habit of making judgments about life, death, and community that are grounded in a fundamental understanding of what it is to be a Christian here and now. That is the meaning of sapiential wisdom.”¹⁰

Historically, theological education has followed one of four paths: (1) the “life wisdom” or “habitus” model that was best exemplified in the monasteries where the monks sought to educate their souls in the presence of God; (2) the “scientific” model that surfaced in Europe as the Enlightenment whetted the appetite for intellectual exploration; (3) the “university” model that emerged in Europe as theological faculty clustered within the halls of the young universities to lead students in the study of theology, the ‘crown of science;’ and (4) the “professional training” model of the past two centuries that rose as the Christian community sought regularity in the formation of ministers (Farley, 1983). The Edinburgh Study Group discussed the differences between these important terms: Christian education, theological education, ministerial formation, lay formation, and theological education by extension (Werner, 2009, 18-19).

Within the American theological education community of the past thirty years, seven books¹¹ have debated the nuances of the meaning and nature of theological education. Institutions and educators must arrive at their own understanding of this complex and important subject. Van der Water suggests that the Christian church faces significant challenges in understanding and practicing theological education:

Theological education and ministerial formation were in a state of flux and uncertainty globally for a number of years in the latter part of the 20th century. Some would go further to suggest that this area of the church's life and witness has been in crisis for some time now. Whether in crisis or merely in painful transition, the fact is that many if not most, churches, Christian groupings and theological institutions are engaging in a radical

⁸ Hough and Cobb, “*Christian Identity and Theological Education*,” 3.

⁹ Farley, *Theologia*, 130.

¹⁰ Hough, “Introduction,” 7.

¹¹ The seven works include (1) Stackhouse, Max L., (1988), *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; (2) The Mud Flower Collective, (1985), *God's Fierce Whimsy*, New York, New York: The Pilgrim Press; (3)

review of their theological education and ministerial formation programmes.¹²

Being very aware of the voluminous conversations of the past quarter century on this very question, I offer this statement to help us focus on the meaning of theological education. I believe that:

Theological education is the process of enabling the practice of theological and biblical wisdom in leadership events so that contemporary faith communities fulfill their mission to be salt and light to our world and maintain the repository of truth for the next generation.

Theological education is the kerugma of Christian leadership development. Leadership development seeks to enable men and women to become “Transformative Practitioners” of the Word of God in a broken and hurting world. The fruitfulness comes as leaders expand their ability for theological reflection, practice their community engagement within the context of God’s calling, and give attention to personal formation by the Holy Spirit. Theological education should help engender a growing practice of wisdom that is the ability and practice of using experience, knowledge, and good judgment to find and implement solutions for present and future issues.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Having briefly scanned the horizon of higher educational practice in Nigeria and considered the meaning of theological education, I turn now to a discussion of the primary duty of theological schools and colleges, i.e., leadership development for the church and para-church ministries, specifically, and the leaders of society, generally.

Wood, Charles M., (1985), *Vision and Discernment*, Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press; (4) Farley, Edward, (1983), *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, Philadelphia, PA., Fortress Press; (5) Farley, Edward, (1988), *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church & the University*, Philadelphia, PA., Fortress Press; (6) Hough, Joseph C., and John B. Cobb, Jr., (1985), *Christian Identity and Theological Education*, Atlanta Georgia, Scholars Press; and (7) Kelsey, David H. (1993). *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, Grand Rapids, MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Company.

These writings have been excellently summarized by Kelsey, David and Wheeler, Barbara. (1994). "The ATS Basic Issues Research Project: Thinking about Theological Education," *Theological Education*, Vol. XXX, Number 2, 71-80.

¹²Van der Water, “Transforming Theological Education and Ministerial Formation,” 205.

Formal leadership development occurs in a professional school, the earliest of which were the law school, the medical school, and the theological school. According to Foster, professional schools are hybrid institutions:

They are part of the tradition of cognitive rationality at which the academy excels. They are also part of the world of practice, emphasizing the craft know-how that marks expert practitioners of the domain. And they operate with the inescapably normative knowledge contained in the identity of being a particular kind of professional.¹³

As a result of extensive research on the nature of educating clergy for their practice, Foster concluded that professional schools have three apprenticeships: (1) Cognitive and intellectual apprenticeship in which the classroom is the appropriate location for education; (2) the practical apprenticeship of skill in which practical skills are best learned by living transmission--through a pedagogy of modeling and coaching; and (3) the apprenticeship of identity formation which is the formation of dispositions and character as well as ways of thinking.¹⁴ While conducting an assessment of theological education in Nigeria, Olusola Igbari contended that theological institutions should be seeking to develop three qualities within their students: knowledge, spiritual growth, and leadership.¹⁵

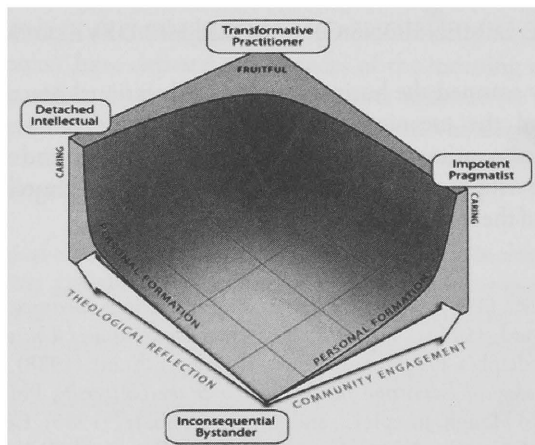


Figure 1. Three Dimensions of Leadership Development¹⁶

¹³Foster, *et al*, *Educating Clergy*, 5.

¹⁴Ibid. Foster's treatment of these three apprenticeships is extensive and thought-provoking.

¹⁵Igbari, *Hand Book on Theological Education in Nigeria*, 14-15.

¹⁶I acknowledge the able assistance of Dr. Bryan Easley in producing this graphic and

These apprenticeships or qualities are mirrored in Figure 1 with what I call (1) Theological Reflection, (2) Community Engagement, and (3) Personal Formation. The three dimensions need attention if we hope to move from being an Inconsequential Bystander to living life fully as a Transformational Practitioner. These three dimensions must be integrated in the process of leadership development.

Theological Reflection. I call the first dimension of leadership development “theo-logical reflection” (see Figure 1) which deals with the head or mind. Theological reflection begins with the mastery of academic content, and moves to an application of the wisdom gained from such knowledge. It is the ability to see present realities in the light of biblical truth and theological constructs. Our ability at theological reflection progresses from the beginning stages of understanding Scripture until we give constant evidence of thinking theologically. Howard Stone underscores the importance of theological reflection when he claimed that:

... the task of theological reflection is a key component of the Christian life. To be a Christian is to be a theologian and to make judgments based on that theology. Those judgments lead to action and to how we live the Christian life.¹⁷

Investigation of Scripture. Theological reflection begins with an investigation of the content of Scripture. The Old and New Testaments reveal God's redemptive plan and purpose for all of humanity. His revelation provides the foundation that helps us understand why we exist, what we are to be about in this world, and how we interact with his redemptive purposes. Leadership development must include a study of this sacred text. We need to understand the principles of interpretation. We embrace the guiding principles that the Bible, as it has been historically preserved, is the divinely inspired and complete record of God's revelation to men. The text of the canon has been determined. Matters of biblical introduction (authorship, date, purpose, etc.) are viewed in light of traditional research. Christ is the central theme of the Scripture. The Holy Spirit is the Ultimate Interpreter. We approach the study of Scripture with an expression of faith and desire for illumination. We stand under the umbrella of truth, an analogy of faith; one theology, not many; Scripture interprets Scripture. All essential doctrines are sufficiently revealed in the Scripture. The New Testament is unfolded in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament is unfolded in the New Testament. As

the conceptualization it represents.

¹⁷Stone and Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, 2.

we embrace these principles, we are moving toward a deeper practice of theological reflection—we are establishing a biblical basis upon which to reflect and interact.

Exploration of Theology. As we investigate Scripture, our understanding of God deepens. We begin to build a theological framework that informs our worldview. The exploration of theology must include a journey through the basic tenets of orthodox Christianity: the nature of God and his revelation to humanity, the nature and fallenness of humanity, the incarnation and atonement of Christ, the plan of salvation and restoration from sin, the meaning and nature of the Church, and God's plan for us eternally. The Bible gives us a “metanarrative” that unifies all the stories of both Old and New Testaments. This metanarrative informs our theology. The narrative inspires our faith.

Kimberly Shumate gave witness to the power of the metanarrative that winds its way through the whole of Scripture. Reared in a pagan American home, Kimberly had followed the New Age ways of her mother but eventually found life totally empty of meaning and purpose. She found herself meeting with a Friday evening Bible study group led by Scott. Here's a portion of her story:

As Lisa drove me home, my mind ached as I replayed Scott's words. All the Old Testament and New Testament verses had one oddly familiar voice — one tone, one heart. I wondered, *How could a book written by so many different people over the course of hundreds of years fit together perfectly as if one amazing storyteller has written the whole thing?* The Holy Spirit began melting my vanity and arrogance with a power stronger than any hex, incantation, or spell I'd ever used. Suddenly, the blindfold I'd worn for almost 30 years was stripped away, and instantly I knew what I'd been searching for: Jesus!¹⁸

The Truth of Scripture serves as a solid foundation for all of life. Christian leaders fulfill their responsibilities most effectively when established on this biblically-informed theological foundation.

Historical Awareness. Our ability at theological reflection takes on richness as we integrate biblical and theological understandings with a sense of knowing who we are and what our historical roots are. A study of church history, national and world history, and personal family history gives an awareness of progress, timing, and responsibility. The study of Scripture gives us a grasp of redemptive history that is necessary for faithfulness to the redemptive

¹⁸Burroughs and Alupoice, *Generation Hex*, 88-89.

metanarrative. As we gain awareness of who we are and where we have been, our ability to relate the metanarratives of Truth to our context increases.

This intentional and persistent exploration of Scripture, theology, and historical context enables what I am calling theological reflection—thinking theologically—making decisions that are influenced by theological and biblical understanding. With a biblical-framed worldview, we can analyze current issues from a theological perspective. We can ask the right questions that will lead to correct solutions. We can sort through the myriad of options to determine the best course of action. We engage in theological reflection when we do formal research and writing; when we debate the philosophical nuances of pressing problems or questions.

The Detached Intellectual. There is a danger is just living in the “ivory tower.” If we only attend to this first dimension of leadership development, we run the risk of becoming “Detached Intellectuals” (see Figures 1 and 2) who only have interest in the things of the mind. The Detached Intellectual is not concerned about the outside world, about other's problems and concerns, about finding real solutions to present vexations. The Detached Intellectual lives in the world of ideas and concepts and does not venture into the real world with the intention of making improvements.

In many sectors of Christendom, high priority is placed on formal education. Some denominations require a master's degree for ordination. Men and women who have the highest of educational achievements find themselves enjoying the more prestigious ministry appointments. Taken to the extreme, inordinate emphasis on theology, research, and academics leads to detached intellectualism. Intellectualism is the “ivory tower,” a mentality that causes the dwellers of the ivory tower to take great pride in their intellectual prowess, to demonstrate confidence in their ability to think through any problem they may confront, and a disdain for anyone who is not in or climbing the ivory tower to join them.

A sad reality of extreme intellectualism might be seen in the current circumstances in Europe. Europe gave the world Christianity. Europe also gave Christianity its theological scholarship. Yet, Europeans have lived much too long in the ivory tower. In the early 1990s, the European Union debated the exclusion of any references to God and their Christian heritage in the new European Union Constitution. Life in the ivory tower worshipping the god of intellectualism can lead to the abandonment of a cultural heritage like this.

Critics point to the impotency of theological meanderings to produce any good for the kingdom. Unfortunately, theological educational in some contexts may have stayed too long in the ivory tower producing Detached Intellectuals and consequently deserve the criticism reported by Manfred Kohl:

John Vawter describes a meeting of several hundred pastors and Christian leaders at which ministry in the nineties was being discussed. "When the discussion turned to seminary education," he says, the room was electric when one panel member said, with great fervor and emotion, "Seminary education in general has only four things wrong with it: it is taught by the wrong people in the wrong place with the wrong curriculum and has the wrong oversight."¹⁹

Russell Chandler, Religion Editor of the Los Angeles Times, quoted Jim Dethmer, teaching pastor at Willow Creek Church, in his criticism of American seminary education. Sounds like he was talking about the Detached Intellectual:

The seminaries have largely outgrown their capabilities to train leaders for the next century. Most seminaries are dysfunctional in training life-changing leaders. Life-change, through the Holy Spirit, doesn't usually mean you need to know Greek, exegesis, et cetera. This stymies people who want impact in their lives. Today's typical seminarian will become absolutely irrelevant. He's become ghettoized. He needs to know the needs of modern man.²⁰

We need leaders who engage in theological reflection but refuse to be Detached Intellectuals. These leaders will give attention to a second dimension of leadership development: community engagement.

Community Engagement. Figuratively, this second dimension of leadership development focuses on the leader's hands whereas theological reflection deals with the head. Leaders are more than intellectuals; they lead a community toward desired goals. These leaders engage the community in problem solving, in goal achievement, in world changing. The Christian leader seeks to bring about the peaceful and restorative kingdom of God in today's world.

Using the subject of HIV/AIDS as a spring board, Sarojini Nadar challenges leaders to community engagement that is transformational:

I want to argue, along with one of the leading African theologians of our times, Tinyiko Maluleke, that the new *kairos* moment for theological education in Africa is the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Although our theological institutions have been "cognizant" of this grave issue, in terms described by Maluleke and borrowed from John Mbiti, we have also been

¹⁹Kohl, "Crisis of Credibility in Leadership Formation Changes Needed In Theological Education," 1.

²⁰Chandler, *Racing Toward 2001*, 210.

rendered 'theologically impotent'. I would argue that this situation has arisen because, while we have become well trained in Western forms of theologizing, when people are dying all around us these theologies which we have inherited and learned so well are epistemologically inadequate to respond critically to the crisis. We know how to be scholars of theology and to apply abstract theoretical principles that sometimes even allow us to be cognizant of our context, but we do not know how to do theology, because doing requires that we go beyond being aware of, to being committed to, our context. It is only when our theologies allow us this commitment that we will be able adequately to respond not just to the HIV and AIDS crisis, but to acts of genocide, racism, sexism and other such evils that dehumanize people created in the image of God. It is only out of this commitment to context that our institutions can be transformed in their theologizing, particularly in the kinds of theologies that we teach.²¹

Community engagement moves us from the ivory tower to the dirty and dangerous streets in response to the call of Christ to be salt of the earth and light of the world (Matt 5.13-14). In past centuries, with the burgeoning national expansion in America and its attendant social vices and degradations on the one hand and the liberalization of seminary theological education on the other, sections of the church became restless with Christian leadership development. Dwight L. Moody and A. J. Gordon led the movement to establish a new form of theological education—one that focused not so much on the theological musings of technical research. Rather, the movement began as a program to give young and energetic men and women a quick and intense exposure to the Bible, to basic Christian doctrines, to methods of evangelism, and a passion to go save the lost for Jesus.²² Moody and Gordon knew the importance of community engagement. They equipped missionaries, evangelists, preachers, and musicians who could carry the Gospel to the unreached and needy.

Vision. Community engagement is answering the Lord's call to "follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt 4.19). Seeing a needy world, Christ sought to engage the disciples in redemptive activities. As they caught a vision of that need, the disciples became effective change agents. They joined Christ as he was "moved with compassion" when he saw the crowds as sheep without a shepherd (Matt 9.36). Catching a vision of the needs in our world lies at the heart of our ability for effective community engagement.

We see the needs. We hear the cries. We feel the anguish. We taste the bitterness of sorrow and defeat. We know the possibilities and the

²¹Nadar, "Contextual Theological Education in Africa and the Challenge of Globalization," 238-239.

²²Mostert, *The AABC Story*.

opportunities. We have hope that life can be better; that our communities can be changed by the grace of God and the hard work of his people. We have vision.

Competencies. Human needs can most effectively be met through the skilled touch of a professional. Our community engagement must include the acquisition of skill in reading, analyzing, and diagnosing. These skills have close connections to the ability of theological reflection that suggests that community engagement can appropriately flow out of theological reflection.

Community engagement also calls for competency in written and spoken communication. Teaching, preaching, singing, and writing enable us to make meaningful connections with those in need. Communication identifies those actions that God has taken in restoring our broken world. It points to the solutions that can set the captive free, make the broken whole and the sick well. Communication becomes incarnational as we step alongside those in need and give them a helping hand. Our communication takes on the form of pastoral care, shepherding, and guiding.

Community engagement requires that we show skill in interpersonal relationships and organizational concepts. We serve a community—whether a local church, a civic or social group, a state, or nation—comprised of men and women who have varying personalities and qualities. We must develop competency in interacting with people by building strong relationships of mutual understanding and trust. We must deepen our practice of situational exegesis in which we discern trends, undercurrents, and forces at play within our community. We must know how to ask the right questions, how to relate to people commensurate with their personalities, and how to resolve conflict in the midst of change.

Transformation. The goal of community engagement is transformation of that which is broken. Jesus explained that he came to “seek and save those who were lost” (Luke 19.10). Change, restoration, improvement within the kingdom of God should be our goal as we engage the community. We should be striving to bring about peace and reconciliation where there has been conflict and chaos. We must reject the erroneous theology that God will snatch the Christians out of this mess and let the rest of the world destroy itself. Jesus challenged the disciples to keep working until the evening, faithfully bringing about the kingdom in its full glory and power.

The Impotent Pragmatist. If one extreme of leadership development takes us in the direction of intellectualism, the other extreme is in the absence of any education whatsoever. The Impotent Pragmatist represents that person who moves vigorously into Christian ministry without the benefit of adequate theological and biblical study. The Impotent Pragmatist is out of balance just as

the Detached Intellectual. Figure 2 illustrates what might happen if two of these dimensions, theological reflection and community engagement, are out of balance. In some cases, both of these dimensions will be absent, producing the “Inconsequential Bystander.” In other cases, leaders will be interested in practicing theological reflection but have no community engagement. This is the Detached Intellectual that we have already discussed. In a third case, one might be fully engaged in ministry but lack theological depth and commitments—here we have the Impotent Pragmatist.

George Whitefield is said to have compared the fruits of his ministry with those of John Wesley, who enrolled converts into discipleship classes and thus preserved their faith. Whitefield confessed that his failure to do this produced people who were a “rope of sand.” Whitefield’s phrase, “rope of sand,” offers an excellent metaphor for describing the reactionary dismissal of any theological education or formation as important, resulting in the Impotent Pragmatist. ‘Ropes of sand’ will be produced through the intentional abandonment or unintentional neglect of proper and appropriate theological education. John Wesley saw the sadness in his friend, George Whitefield, when he discovered the results of failing to provide theological education, or in the case of Whitefield, discipleship:

After “the last journey he made [to America], he acknowledged to some of his friends, that he had much sorrow and heaviness in his heart, on account of multitudes who for a time ran well, but afterwards ‘drew back unto perdition.’ Indeed, in a few years, the far greater part of those who had once ‘received the word with joy,’ yea, had ‘escaped the corruption that is in the world,’ were ‘entangled again and overcome.’”²³

When we look at two realities in Nigeria today, I wonder if we see something of the Impotent Pragmatist at work. The first reality is national corruption. Transparency International reports that in 2013 Nigeria ranked 144 out of 177 nations as the most corrupt nation in the world. Only sixteen percent of the nations were more corrupt than Nigeria.²⁴ Numerous indices report similar ranking for this largest country on the African continent.

The second reality is the intense prayer ministry taking place in the country. In a recent *Christian Post* article, Anugrah Kumar reported that the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Lagos is constructing a new pavilion covering three and one-half square miles in which to house its monthly all-night prayer and miracle services. Kumar explains:

²³Wesley, “The Late Work of God in North America.”

²⁴See <http://www.transparency.org/country#NGA>.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria's most populous city of Lagos currently holds its all-night prayer meetings in a covered pavilion that can seat about a million people. It's the size of 87 football fields, and yet not big enough. . . . One of the well-known programs of the church is the Holy Ghost Service, an "all-night miracle service" held on the first Friday of every month with the average attendance of about 500,000 people, according to the church's website. But the number of participants is growing.²⁵

Full Reflection Theological None	Equipped but not Engaged "The Detached Intellectual" <i>Intellectualism. Leaders who are enamored with the joy of theological study and research. They have little concern for practical application or integration into their life and that of the church or society.</i>	Equipped and Engaged "The Transformative Practitioner" <i>A leader with a full head, a warm heart, and a ready hand. One who is fully formed, informed, and committed to transformation of society.</i>
	Neither Engaged nor equipped "The Inconsequential Bystander" <i>Leaders who have neither vision, inspiration, nor motivation to either understand the truths about God nor to make an impact on the society around.</i>	Engaged but not Equipped "The Impotent Pragmatist" <i>Leaders who jump quickly into ministry and community activism without any substantial theological training and vigorously move the church forward on the basis of their own opinions and patterns they have observed.</i>
	NoneCommunity	EngagementFull

Figure 2. The Intersection of Theological Reflection and Community Engagement

In light of these two realities, this inevitable question haunts us: "How could a nation be corrupt if one million of its citizens gathered monthly in one place to intercede?" I wonder if part of the reason might lie in the shallowness of the Christian leadership training and character development in the country. If I overstate or misjudge the Nigerian situation, I do not overstate the caution that a lack of theologically informed leaders will result in an anemic and short-lived

²⁵Kumar, "Nigeria's Upcoming 3½ Sq. Mile Worship Pavilion."

church. Impotent Pragmatists are like “ropes of sand” that do not last long, especially in stormy weather!

Personal Formation. Leadership calls for more than theological reflection and community engagement that deal with the head and hands, respectively. As important as these dimensions are, we must attend to a third dimension that focuses on the heart—personal formation. Personal formation might also be called “spiritual formation,” “spirituality,” or “personal character.” Personal formation could be equated to the *theologia* discussed by Farley²⁶ or the *Paideia* described by Kelsey.²⁷ It has to do with our ability to think theologically about the circumstances we face on a personal level. It is the culturing of our soul for facing the realities of today’s world. It is the sanctification of our spirit by the Holy Spirit. It is the commitment to live a Christ-like life in relationships, behaviors, and possessions.

This personal formation actually has its roots in theological reflection—the exercise of biblical study and theological investigation. Warren points to personal formation when he explains that:

Theological reflection is a self-conscious, intentional act in which one seeks to know God and be known by God so that one can love God and others as God loves. Theological reflection, however, is not simply about becoming more adept at theological analysis or gaining a better understanding of Christian history and theology—although it necessarily involves analysis and knowledge of tradition. Unlike theological analysis, in which the parts of a theological argument are taken apart, its sources identified, and its philosophical or ethical implications spelled out, theological reflection goes beyond analysis, leading the practitioner into a different relationship with God because of the new configuration between them that arises.²⁸

Speaking at the Joint Conference of Academic Societies in the Fields of Religion and Theology, Gatwa observed that “several thousands of new members may be joining the [African] church each single day, still this contribution argues under present circumstances Christianity in many contexts of the South is a giant standing on clay legs.”²⁹ Those clay legs become legs of steel and strength as we corporately and individually embrace deepening levels of personal formation.

Personal formation begins with our commitment to Christ as our Savior

²⁶ Farley, *Theologia*.

²⁷ Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*.

²⁸ Warren, Murray, and Best, “The Discipline and Habit of Theological Reflection,” 324.

²⁹ Gatwa, “Transcultural global mission.”

from personal and inherited sin. We choose to maintain a consistent walk of obedience to the Spirit as he unfolds God's purposes for our lives. This walk shapes our character and enables us to embrace values that reflect God's divine character. Leadership development as it focuses on personal formation:

... has to do on the one hand with the infusing of life with morals and values, thus moulding a just, moral and peaceful society' such as is envisaged in God's *telos* for his world, and on the other, providing knowledge and skills to people to enable them to serve the church, together with the wider society where the church lives.³⁰

In the early days of American history, the goal of theological education was to prepare the ministerial candidate to be a wise and knowledgeable leader in the village, town, or city. The student received an education in divinity. "Divinity named not just an objective science but a personal knowledge of God and the things of God in the context of salvation. Hence, the study of divinity (theology) was an exercise in piety, a dimension of the life of faith."³¹ This is personal formation—an essential dimension of leadership development.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTITIONER AND WISDOM LEADERSHIP: THE END RESULT

When we have thoughtfully and accurately integrated these three dimensions of leadership development—theological reflection, community engagement, and personal formation, we should begin seeing a *Transformative Practitioner* emerge who exercises *wisdom* in leading (see Figures 1 and 2). Wisdom leadership will be the end result of integrated leadership development.

The leader who is fully engaged in ministry while practicing full and meaningful theological reflection will be the Transformative Practitioner, known by Hough and Cobb as a "Theological Practitioner".³² This is the leader who will be best fitted to guide the church through the cultural and ideological clashes and opportunities we face today.

The qualitative depth of one's ministry and theological reflection is determined by the extent of personal formation one has achieved. The more deeply formed a person is, the more caring they are, as seen in Figure 1. Intersect the caring of a deeply formed intellectual and a pragmatist and the results is the fruitfulness of a Transformative Practitioner who can bring about change that produces peace and stability in our world.

³⁰ Nyende, "Ethnic Studies," 135-136.

³¹ Farley, *Theologia*, 7.

³² See Hough and Cobb, *Christian Identity and Theological Education*.

Peter Nyende contends that properly structured theological education (TE) will lead to a moral, just, and peaceful society:

Theology, and thus the subject matter of TE, is about God and his created order. For that reason TE is intrinsically characterized by the intersection of issues about God—his words and actions, agency, nature, character etc. and his world—human beings, nature and environment, societies/communities etc. In consequence, TE is distinguished by the fact that although it has professional, civic and intellectual purposes, it is, on the basis of its transcendent subject, essentially moral and value-laden. And so, in concrete terms, TE invariably offers inquiry, instruction, knowledge and practice which, in relation to humans' perceptions and experiences of the transcendent, draw from both the moral and value-orientated domains. As such it can influence most other human endeavours, whether scientific, artistic, social or political, for good or ill. What is more, seen in this perspective, the contribution of TE is distinct and necessary in any pursuit of a just, moral and peaceful society, vital elements in the viability of any society and, for Christians, germane to God's *telos* (purpose) for his world - a new heaven and earth.³³

A moral, just, and peaceful society will not come about automatically, just by itself. We come to that quality of social living through the persistent efforts of men and women who practice wisdom leadership. These are men and women who have been shaped for theological reflection, community engagement, and personal formation.

Let's consider for a brief moment what these wise leaders look like:

Biblically Obedient. Wise leaders demonstrate obedience to biblical authority. They shape their worldview and all subsequent actions and behaviors on biblical truths. They have a humble and genuine respect for the Word of God. They embrace the statement of King Solomon: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9.10). This biblical obedience takes on the character of a deep personal piety and godly character that reflects the image of Christ, where as the Apostle Paul says, “. . . you prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world. . .” (Phil 2.15, EST).

Transformationally Focused. Wise leaders become world-changers. They live contentedly in the presence of brokenness, conflict, and chaos. They

³³ Nyende, “Ethnic Studies,” 133.

possibilities. They understand the power of truth that grows from their theological reflection and engage in change-producing actions.

Cross-contextually Adaptable. Wise leaders have the ability to assess new situations diagnostically and devise strategies for change. While their initial training gave them skills and understandings in one specific area, they have developed the ability to transfer insights to other contexts and make meaningful contributions in new areas. They are cross-contextually adaptable.

Relationally Engaged. Leadership is intricately intertwined with relationships. We cannot have effective leadership without meaningful relationships. Wise leaders understand the importance of wholesome and sustained relationships to the point that they devote significant emotional and spiritual energy to developing and maintaining those relationships.

Intellectually Curious. Wise leaders know that they do not know everything. Throughout life, they remain alert for additional knowledge. The volume of knowledge continues to expand at mind-numbing rates. The world-renown futurist, Jim Carroll, asserts that “the volume of medical knowledge is doubling every eight years, and similar changes are occurring in other trades and professions.”³⁴ Wise leaders stay intellectually curious by practicing a commitment to life-long learning.

Situationally Aware. The US military uses this term in training officers and enlistees to stay alert to that is happening all around. “Situational Awareness is the ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical elements of information about what is happening to the team with regards to the mission. More simply, it's knowing what is going on around you.”³⁵ Wise leaders develop the ability to diagnosis their environment and know the critical elements with which they are dealing. They are situationally aware.

Courageously Gifted. Wise leaders take wise risks. They have courage to step out into the unknown and untested with a confidence that their understanding of Truth and faith in God will guide their decisions and actions. They take to heart Joshua's instructions to the Hebrews: “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh 1.9). They take comfort in the promise that God gave Moses at the base of Mt. Sinai: “My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest” (Ex. 33.14). They embrace the confidence of Isaiah: “Fear not; for I am with you; be

³⁴ Carroll, “Trend: The Future of Knowledge.”

³⁵USCG, Team Coordination Training Student Guide, 5-1

not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa. 41.10). Wise leaders are courageously gifted.

CONCLUSION: QUESTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

Our world needs wise leaders who have been developed to think theologically, to engage the communities of faith and society as a result of their own continual and personal formation. The three-dimensional construct offered in this essay can serve as a framework for the evaluation and shaping of the curriculum and practices in our theological institutions.

I close the essay with these questions on my mind. I would encourage leaders within the theological education community to explore them:

1. To what extent is this three-dimensional construct present and practical within the Nigerian educational context?
2. What re-formulation of the construct would make it more meaningful for leadership development in the Nigerian church and society?
3. What resources and instructional methodologies will best support a curriculum that is three-dimensional?
4. What personnel are needed to model and mentor theological reflection, community engagement, and personal formation?
5. What measurements will help verify the success in equipping along these three dimensions?
6. What stories, poems, songs, and dramas can be used in an orality society for the sake of leadership development?

Christianity in the South is experiencing explosive growth.³⁶ The need for educating wise, capable leaders has never been greater. Igbari referenced the work of Pauline Webb when he challenged Christian leaders with these words: “Theological education has a vital role in the fulfillment of God's purpose for man, a role that both theologians and educationalists neglect at their peril and all Christian teachers to their infinite shame.”³⁷

By God's grace, we will rise to the challenge! Join me in the effort to establish world-class programs of leadership development that will shape men and women for wise leadership in the 21st Century. We have been called to the Kingdom for such a time as this. Let's not fail our generation!

³⁴ MacDonald, “Study: Christianity grows exponentially in Africa.”

³⁵ Igbari, *A Hand Book on Theological Education in Nigeria*, 23.

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