

THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP LETTER

A Joint Publication of the African Wesleyan Fellowship and the Africa Area Office of Global Partners

Vol.2 No.4

February, 2014

COMPONENTS OF TRAINING MINISTERS IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

This article examines the components of training ministers in the African context. In the context of intellectual poverty and already made theology, the lack of critical thinking, critical reflection, analysis and synthesis in most African ministers, as Tite Tienou describes the context, what components should form the content and practical training of ministers of the gospel? Most ministers in the African context are not relevant to the socio-economic and political life of their nations because of the type of theological training they have gone through.

The prevailing approach of training ministers of the Gospel in Africa involves giving theory and practical experience for the ministry. Ministry training is offered in the local churches, Bible institutes, and Bible Colleges. However, most ministers are not competent theologians nor relevant to the religious socio-economic and political life of the nation. This article intends to outline the components of training ministers in Africa. In order to outline the components of training ministers in Africa, it is important to understand the terms used and the context of the training.

Definitions of Terms:

Components: This term means the parts that make up the training.

Training: The process of preparing ministers through exposure to the theory and practice of

the vocation of a minister of the Gospel of Christ. Training is the process of enabling the men and women who lead the Church with knowledge, affections, and skills for ministry.

Ministers: A minister is a spiritual leader or priest who gives help in spiritual matters in the church and society. It is the profession of being a church leader in the Church.

Africa: Africa is the continent where Africans are predominant and live in the continent of Africa. As for Tite Tienou, Africa is a continent where its people have been marginalized and are perceived according to the colour painted by the media e.g. a place of coups, starving refugees, mismanaged countries, a place where leaders are dictators and a place of misery and a place where its people need help in all facets of life (1997:93). Africans are people like any other people God has created in his image and likeness. People who need the gospel like any other people on the other continents. A place where God is calling men and women to carry out God's mission into the whole world.

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Historical Perspective

In the 18th century, the minister mastered the theological disciplines in the context of the unschooled membership. During the enlightenment, ministry was viewed as a profession and so the functionalist approach to ministry (clergy) emerged. This training focused on clerical tasks. The other approach to training that emerged for training clergy was the technical approach. In this training, the ministers were trained in specialised academic disciplines. By the end of the 19th century, ministers were trained to preach, to nurture the souls of members, and to provide leadership to the congregations. In the 20th century, the predominant approach to training ministers was the functionalist model where the focus was on the clerical tasks and competence to minister. The 20th century training focused on theory and practice for the ministry. Therefore, the approach that emerged was based on providing theological knowledge of God, self and the practice of that knowledge or theory for life and ministry (Cole 2001:3-4).

The reason for training was to glorify God, and the purpose of training and teaching of scriptures was aimed at transformation, love for God and others, and holy living.

According to Cole, the progression of training for the ministry encompassed the Christian life and existence, the practical life (monastics), pious learning (pietism), functionalism (clerical), the cognitive and practical aspects, specialised technical training (rationalism), and post- enlightenment professionalism. From the historical development of training for the ministry, we can see parts for training

emerging: And these are the academic study of ministry, the Christian life and existence, the need for ministry skills and the content of theology. According to Cole, theology has come to mean either the academic study of the Bible, Christianity and the Christian faith or the preparatory study of the Christian ministry. Therefore, theological education has emerged as the general term for preparatory studies for the Christian ministry and theology as the academic pursuit of the Bible, Christianity and the Christian faith (Cole: 10).

Jesus Christ and Paul

Jesus and Paul taught God's truth from the Holy Scriptures, and the deposit to be guarded through, words and deeds, and propositional truths (2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2: Acts 17:18-21), knowledge (2 Tim.3:10; 14), values, and practical ministry skills. We can see from the book of Mathew that Jesus had content to teach. Even the great commission reveals that that the trainees needed to cover some content (Matth.28:19-20; Acts 20:27). The whole book of Matthew gives us the content Jesus taught to his disciples. He also exposed the disciples to practical ministry to enhance their skills. For instance, Jesus was concerned with the being of the trainee, "follow me and I will make you....."He was also concerned with the ability for ministry, "...I will make you fishers of men and women."

Rationale

The reason for training was to glorify God, and the purpose of training and teaching of scriptures was aimed at transformation, love for God and others, and holy living. Christ also wanted the disciples or Apostles to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19). He appointed the twelve so that they might be with him and that he might send them to preach.

Trainees:

Cole Says that the trainees were those approved of God (2 Tim.2:15), those who had genuine and sincere faith (1 Tim.1:5), those equipped for ministry, gifted men and women (2 Tim.1:6). Those who were disciplined in the Christian faith (2 Tim.1:5; Acts 16:1; Philemon 10). Some trainees had some foundational education (Timothy had Greek education), and had church recognition and were called by God into the ministry. Some were ordinary people like fishermen, tax collectors, some were well connected, some were learned and others unlearned, both men and women were called, from all walks of life, and it involved those who had counted the cost and were ready to suffer for Christ and the gospel.

Methodology of training

Some of the methods used by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul were:

- The training was conducted in the context of ministry.
- The training was done by word of mouth and practical demonstration.
- There was both cognitive training through precepts, lifestyle, and virtues were taught.
- There were practical demonstrations, and mentoring.
- There was communication of one life to another in a holistic manner.
- Teaching was conducted by saying, living and doing.
- Training was done by patient instruction (2 Tim. 4:2).
- The training involved the cognitive, affective and psychomotor.
- The trainees were encouraged to imitate the trainer's way of life, purpose for ministry, philosophy of life, and faith in God.
- The virtues of love, faith and hope in God were emphasised.

- Apprenticeship was used to train ministers (2 Tim.3:10-14).

Context of Training

The Apostle Paul says to Timothy who was a local Church pastor "And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men and women, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). While Timothy was in the local Church, he was called to train and equip men and women for God's mission on earth. Therefore, pastoral training is to involve those in the pastoral ministries of the church and in the context of the church.

The major components

The training of ministers for the African context should involve the following components:

1. Discipleship: The men and women who are trained should be well disciplined in the local Churches. Which means that the local church should identify trainees who are disciplined and then begin to train for ministry before they go to Theological Colleges.
2. Spiritual formation that is Trinitarian in theology. The trainees should men and women who have an experience with the Triune God in prayer, fasting and are guided by the Scriptures (Mathew 3-4).
3. Biblical and Theological Competence: The graduates should be competent in biblical languages & studies, history of Christianity, systematic theology, African theology, philosophy, hermeneutics, and practical theology. Missions should permeate all these disciplines.
3. Socio-economic and Political Sciences: The curriculum should produce ministers of the

gospel who are able to provide relevant leadership amidst the challenges (poverty, suffering, lack of means of power, gender inequalities and undemocratic tendencies) facing the Africans on the continent.

4. The curriculum should be holistic: The curriculum should be able to produce graduates who are critical thinkers, who are able to reflect, analyse, synthesis and evaluate. Most African ministers suffer from what Tite Tienou calls “already made thought”. They cannot operate outside the western theology or contextualise their theology. Since the training of ministers shapes the thought and practice of Christianity and life of the church, the training should encompass the religious, socio-economic and political life of the continent. The training should encompass the head, the heart and the feet and should also engage the socio-economic and political life of the minister, the Church and the community.

Conclusion

Training for the ministry in the African context will require that the leaders invest in

theological training which is relevant to the continent. The trainers and trainees need to know the triune God and should be called by God. These men and women should be aware of both the local and the global contexts. These men and women need to be well disciplined, competent theologians, with God’s mission at heart and should be exposed to social and human Sciences.

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# EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES FOR MINISTERIAL FORMATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL WESLEYAN CHURCH

## **Holistic**

The normal meaning of this word is that it includes all parts or aspects of the minister as a person: mind, spirit, body. We also want to emphasize that a good minister is not just educated and trained, but also formed holistically in a process that goes beyond the classroom. Ministerial formation should focus on training in theoretical knowledge and practical skills, but it should also include the formation of the minister as an integrated person: spiritually, psychologically, mentally, socially, professionally, theologically, etc.

## **Outcome Based**

Starting from the end, we must know what the end product should look like, and then work backwards from there to design programs that will produce a truly successful Wesleyan minister. Traditional academics and grading systems are not always good indicators that we are producing competent ministers. Tools like “What is a Wesleyan Pastor?” can help us both define the desired end and evaluate our progress towards that end. They give us a “Churchward” orientation to meet the felt needs of the Christian community we seek to serve, and a built-in means of continuous assessment.

## **Wesleyan Core**

As a denomination with doctrinal distinctions and a unique historical identity, we must teach our ministers about our identity and what we believe, especially in what makes us unique. The minister must learn how evaluate contemporary doctrinal and application trends with a Wesleyan-Armenian framework. We also have a defined church structure that recognizes the rite (or “sacrament”) of ordination as the basic definition of a minister. Our programs must lead

to ordination and meet the minimum requirements as set forth in our defined structure (The Discipline).

## **Biblical and Theistic Grounding**

It’s not enough to impart Biblical knowledge and Christian theological systems and doctrines (which must be done). The candidate must also be taught how to think critically (and theologically) and how to recognize elements of world views and systems that are at odds with the theistic worldview presented in the Bible. We must effectively model and inculcate a pattern of thought that is openly centered on Biblical truth as the integrating core of reality. And we must teach the minister how to study, interpret, apply and teach (preach) Biblical truth, as this is the pastor/teacher’s main function as a minister.

## **Strategic Flexibility**

Our programs and delivery methods must be contextualized to the candidate’s cultural, financial, educational, technological and life situation. Traditional methods and unaltered, imported programs can no longer be the normal or only means of ministerial formation. We must become flexible and creative in using delivery methods and programs that fit the cultural context and make the best use of available technology and other opportunities. Online and other distance learning programs must become viable options, if not the preferred methodology of the future.

## **Mentoring and Continuing Formation**

It’s time to recognize that the models and mentors found in purely academic settings are often not the best for real life. Both during the academic process and after graduation, ministerial candidates must be exposed to real-

life models of healthy churches lead by exemplary (successful) pastors. In fact, much of the learning and formation process is just beginning after graduation in the experience that only comes through practice. Practical experience guided by a competent mentor must become both part of the academic program and continue after graduation and ministerial placement.

### **Partnering and Cooperation**

We must pursue contact and collaboration with other like-minded programs and institutions for

mutual support, edification and even “cross-pollination”. Recognizing we are only a part of God’s Kingdom on earth, we need not duplicate and reinvent exclusive programs when we can share and partner with sister denominations and other evangelical institutions. We should not be afraid to partner with nearby evangelical schools to provide some of our ministerial training, which we can augment with Wesleyan coursework and mentoring programs in order to maintain our Wesleyan distinctions.



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DEALING WITH LEADERSHIP DISCOURAGEMENT

Most if not all leaders will frequently face battles with disappointment and discouragement. Leaders by their very nature are future-oriented and goal-driven. They have dreams, hopes, and expectations that certain things will happen within a given time. However, more often than not, their dreams are higher than reality, and so the results fall short of what they expected. Author Jeff Iorg calls this the “expectation gap”.

It is important to realize that such disappointment and discouragement is the result of unmet expectations rather than as a measurement of actual results. For example, if we plan a pastoral leadership training event expecting 50 pastors to attend but only 30 show up, rather than rejoicing at the great benefits that 30 pastors received from the training, as leaders we tend to get discouraged because of our failure to realize our goal of 50 participants.

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Leaders work with both projects and people. Either can be a source of discouragement when our hopes and dreams for them are either unfulfilled or only partially fulfilled. One of the greatest heartaches for a leader must be those times when we have invested time and effort to encourage and mentor a promising up and coming younger leader, only to have the younger leader fail dismally. Yet it's a common experience for leaders. A times it feels like those who disappoint us far outnumber those who

meet or exceed our expectations. The reality is that our tendency to fixate on the failures causes us to be unable to recognize and rejoice at the successes that have been achieved in projects and with people.

Sometimes the failure to achieve our desired results is due to our failure as leaders to lead effectively. However, there are other times when we have done our utmost best with the best of motives and yet we still do not accomplish that which we hope to accomplish. In fact, some of the most conscientious and hardworking leaders are often those most frequently beset by feelings of discouragement in their leadership.

When our disappointment and discouragement is due to our failures as leaders, then we need to learn from our mistakes, repent where necessary, and resolve to not repeat those same errors. But what do we do when we have done our best, but things still do not succeed? How do we handle the feelings of disappointment and discouragement at times like that? Hans Finzell offers the following three suggestions:

1. Find Confidants Who Are Not Colleagues. Because one of the roles of a leader is to give hope and to inspire those that he/she is leading, frequently it is inappropriate for the leader to share the frustrations, disappointment and discouragement that he/she is facing with those that he/she is working with. Leaving those negative feelings bottled up without an opportunity to express them just allows them to fester and become even more destructive. A true friend who is outside of our work/ministry circle can provide the emotional support and objectivity that we need when we are at our lowest.

2. Confide in Those Above You – Only Gripe Upstream. All of us in leadership are also under leadership – to those above us in the organizational structure, to overseeing boards, and ultimately to God. While it is inappropriate for us to “gripe” about discouragements to those we are leading, it is usually helpful to share those things with those who are over us. They may be able to provide assistance or advice to turn things around. Frequently, because of their vantage point, they can provide perspective to our situation that enables us to see things in a different light. At the very least, they can provide emotional and moral support to us in our struggles.

3. Take Courage From Those Who Believe in You. None of us develop into leaders without the influence of people who have encouraged us along the way. They believe that God has called and gifted us to serve Him effectively where He has placed us. Certainly our lives are filled with enough naysayers and cynics who will happily blow on the embers of our discouragement, but how much better to reflect on the mentors and encouragers who have seen God’s hand on our

lives and use that to enable us to rise from the ashes of our unmet expectations.

Discouragement is an occupational hazard for leaders as we live in between the ideal God-given vision that we are pursuing and the realities of ministry in a sinful world. On days like that remember: a) we are not alone in experiencing the expectation gap; b) God is at work in all circumstances, including those that look like failure; c) in our disappointments we share in the sufferings of Christ; d) our disappointments help us to better encourage others; and e) our disappointments can lead us to a brighter tomorrow as they cause us to explore fresh alternatives.

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