



John Kwasi Fosu, Mary Fosu

Dynamics of Christian Education

Ghanaian Perspective

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The Reverend **John Kwasi Fosu** holds Doctor of Theology (Dr. theol.) from the University of Hamburg, Germany. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Ghana Baptist University College, Kumasi where he lectures New Testament studies, African Pentecostalism and other related theological subjects such as Foundation of Teaching and Theology of Development. Dr Fosu also serves as the Senior Pastor of Amazing Grace Baptist Church, Hamburg.

The Reverend **Mrs Mary Fosu** is a PhD in Religious Studies candidate at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi (KNUST) with a special research interest in Christian education, Ethics and Systematic Theology. She serves as the Senior Associate Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Amakom – Kumasi. Rev. Mrs Fosu also serves as the Chaplain and an adjunct lecturer at the Ghana Baptist University College, Kumasi.

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DEDICATION

To all our teachers. Thanks for nurturing us with all patience and love.

Your professions have shaped our lives.

To all our students and church members. Thanks for accepting our
teaching ministries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks be to God for the many indescribable gifts bestowed upon our lives: First, for the grace of salvation and for that matter calling us to be found in God's grace. Second, for the grace of discipleship and thus for the call to a lifetime of learning. Third, for the grace of love and unity bestowed upon our lives as married couples serving in God's vineyard. Fourth, for the grace of researching and teaching both in the Church and in the University. Last, for the grace to write this book. For all these, we give God the glory.

This book originates within the contexts of academic research and teaching. It partly combines aspects of the research finding from Mary Fosu's Master of Philosophy dissertation and John Kwasi Fosu's research material for lecturing the Christian Education course at the University. This book, therefore, brings the communities of teachers and learners together.

Special thanks to all our teachers, students, fellow ministers of the gospel ministry, and all whose suggestions and criticisms have shaped the thoughts in this book. Special recognition and thanks to Rev Kofi Owusu-Ansah, who accepted to proofread the manuscript. As a former lecturer of Christian Education at the University, your corrections, thoughts and suggestions have been very helpful in shaping the ideas in this book.

Special thanks to our children: Nyameama, Nyameye and Nyameadom. In our efforts in nurturing you, we have also been nurtured by you. Thank you for presenting yourselves to us as God's gifts. Your many questions help us to learn a lot.

FOREWORD

Christian education is of great importance and significance in any discussion on understanding the pursuit of credible and effective Christian Ministry. It is not just the prime factor for authentic Christian ministry. Christian Education is the Christian Ministry itself. Christ's words, "and teach them to obey all that I have taught you....", do not only constitute the heart of the Great Commission but stands also as the local Church's singular reason for being.

Christian education serves as both the foundation and the vehicle for the achievement of God's goal of human transformation in the world (Rom.12:1-2) in which the local Church has been called to pursue. Christian education, therefore, is the all-encom-passing element in Christian Ministry that ensures effectiveness in achieving credibility and fruitfulness where its true context, content, and expanse of influence are understood and properly engaged.

Generally, a proper appreciation of Christian Education and its practice is lacking in many Christian denominations around the world. Many equate it to just the Sunday morning Bible sessions held weekly at the Church premises. This lack is what many times underlies the local Church's lack of holistic approach to Ministry, Church members' sense of responsibility for civil and social services in the community. These and others including lack of continuing Church growth have become common symptoms of lack of proper appreciation of CE in local Churches.

It is in helping to fill this void in understanding the significance of Christian education for effective Christian ministry, especially in this part of our world (Ghana/Africa), that I see this book, "Dynamics of Christian Education: Ghanaian Perspectives," as very timely. The remarkably simple way the content of the book is structured to fully assemble its subject matter makes it easy to read not only as an exciting textbook but also as a useful handbook on Christian Education practice.

In this relatively short book, the co-authors, Rev. Dr. & Mrs Fosu, educate us in detail with appropriate references on the subject matter

of Christian Education. They do not just tell us about the importance and significance of Christian education for Christian ministry but also thoroughly educate us on its varied foundations- Biblical, theological, philosophical, sociological; as well as its implications for practical local Church ministries including auxiliary groups, spiritual growth, discipleship, leadership development, Church growth and many more.

Having tutored on these vital aspects of Christian Education's positive impacts on Christian Ministry which knowledge many contemporary Christian Ministries lack, they thankfully review with extraordinarily rich insights plus appropriate methodology for the traditional Christian Education of age groups practised in local Churches; not forgetting the central role of the CE teacher which is thoroughly dealt with.

Dynamics of Christian Education: Ghanaian Perspectives is rich in content on its subject matter and well written to meet every Christian Education need in Christian ministry. It is the first of its kind I have been privileged to come across in this part of our world (Ghana/Africa), as a CE practitioner myself since my CE graduate degree some thirty-six (36) years ago. This is Godsend. One may hardly find a better one.

Rev Dr Kojo Osei-Wusu
*Immediate Past President,
Ghana Baptist University College
&
Former President,
Ghana Baptist Convention*

ENDORSEMENT

In this timely book, Rev. Dr John Kwasi Fosu and Rev. Mary Fosu explore the Dynamics of Christian Education from a Ghanaian Perspective. They approach the subject matter biblically, culturally, ecumenically, theolo-gically and pedagogically. The result is an innovative contri-bution to the field that is highly relevant for a church and theology that have an interest in remaining both faithful to biblical traditions and meaningful to contemporary Christians - not only in Ghana but for West Africa as a whole.

The present book is also an exercise in postcolonial studies, freeing Christian education from superimposed colonial traditions and connecting it in meaningful ways to Ghanaian cultural values. In so doing, Mary and John Fosu neither condemn nor idealize some traditions from the past. Instead, they present a critical and balanced view on the subject matter, drawing on the best from a broad array of international writers and local experiences.

What intrigued me most in my reading of the book, is the orienta-tion to the role of Jesus in his teaching activity, i.e. as a *facilitator* of learning and insight into the truth of the Gospel. In this sense, Jesus serves as a role model for the Christian teacher. Such a teacher does not force knowledge onto others but invites them into a process of mutual learning to which also s/he as the more experienced and in certain areas more knowledgeable person is subject. This is implied in the NT designation of Jesus' early followers as *mathetai*, i.e. disciples or literally "students" or "learners". According to latest research on Mt 28:18-20, the uneducated followers of Jesus in their status of "learners" were encouraged "to extend the offer of becoming Jesus-learners" (*matheteusate*) to all peoples, i.e. not only the Jews. They are not regarded as experts who have all knowledge. They should win "co-learners", i.e. fellow disciples of Jesus on their way into the world. Unfortunately, this passage all too often in mission history has been misused for power claims by missionaries over those they felt obliged to subjugate in the name of Christ.

In the passage on Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4:4-42), we are given a beautiful example of how Jesus – as John understood him – carefully draws a woman into a conversation which develops in a spiral manner enabling the woman to come to the realisation of the truth by herself. This manner of facilitating insight and knowledge in dialogue is – to my understanding – part and parcel of the Gospel itself, as the Good News of God’s graceful extension of son- and daughtership to every person regardless of origin or status.

The Fosus remind all teachers in the service of Christ – including those of us who are deemed experts in theology – of the fact that Jesus is still our prime teacher and that our knowledge of things divine is never complete. This is also a call to humility. At the same time, John and Mary Fosu provide us with innovative insights and new methods of teaching and learning that are well informed and culturally sensitive and that therefore enable the communication of the Gospel in ways that promise to be most meaningful for Ghanaian audiences.

Prof. Dr Werner Kahl
Professor of New Testament Studies
Goethe University
Frankfurt am Main
&
Former Head of Study
Academy of Missions at the University of Hamburg
Germany

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this book is to explore the dynamics of Christian education with an emphasis on the African and for that matter Ghanaian ecclesial context. Worth observing in some contemporary Ghanaian churches is that the educational programmes do not go beyond the Sunday school ministry of the church. Irrespective of how important and effective this Sunday school ministry is designed, however, it is unable to accomplish everything in the limited time that it meets. This book, therefore, answers the quest for conscious Christian education that is relevant to the task of Christian Education: Children Ministry, Youth Fellowship, Vacation Bible School, Camping Experiences, Family Life, The Church Library, Training Classes, Missions, Bible Studies and Catechism. In terms of thematic context, this study is situated within local churches settings.

Methodologically, this book takes a descriptive and explorative approach through a review of relevant literature encompassing different secondary sources such as books, journals, Theological dictionaries and Bible commentaries. These are public materials of experts' opinions covering the meaning and dynamics of Christian Education. It is significant to point out that, secondary documentation is not always as dependable as primary documentation. This is precisely so because secondary documentation represents either an interpretation or translation of original ideas and may not necessarily reflect original ideas or represent the views of the original author. The need for critically drawing from these was, therefore, not glossed over in this book.

The significance of this book cannot be overemphasized. In the first place, it answers the quest for relevant Christian Education in the Ghanaian ecclesial context. The document serves as a resource material for training Christian Education instructors, especially in the Church context. In this case, the book will serve as a guiding document for pastors, Christian educators, church leaders and all Christians who are involved in the teaching and learning ministry of the church.

Moreover, since it is obvious that almost all the churches in Ghana, one way or the other have Christian Education-related programmes, this material serves as a guiding and evaluative document for all the churches. In this case, the document will serve as an evaluative document on the dynamics of Christian Education that takes into consideration the African context irrespective of the varying backgrounds of the churches. Further, the book is relevant in that it would add to the existing body of knowledge thereby contributing to the issue of addressing matters relating to Christian Education and Christian theology. It will also serve as a guiding document to other students and researchers who would like to go into a similar study in the future.

The book is divided into seventeen chapters. The first fourteen chapters enable the reader to understand the dynamics of Christian Education. Here, explanation has been given to what Christian Education means; its Biblical and Theological foundations thereby looking at Jesus the master teacher and the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Education; the role of prayer in Christian Education; sociological, philosophical and psychological foundations of Christian Education; the goal and content of Christian Education; the basic teaching methods; teaching/learning materials; the role of the Christian educator; the task of Christian Education in the context of the local church and the cross-cultural perspective in Christian Education. The last three chapters examine some Ghanaian traditional patterns of learning. Forming an essential part of the conclusion of this book are a set of recommendations.

CHAPTER 1

DYNAMICS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

For this study, relevant materials relating to the topic have been reviewed. To begin with, Zuck presents Christian Education as a unique and essential discipline. He writes, “Christian Education is unique because of its subject matter – the Bible, God’s written revelation; because of its goal – spiritual transformation of lives; and because of its spiritual dynamics – the work of the Holy Spirit.”¹ Zuck’s point of view about the uniqueness of Christian Education is what this work has sought to project with recommendations for its improvement.

In establishing a biblical foundation of Christian Education, it is worth pointing that the basis for a Christian Education programme is given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 as making disciples, baptizing them and “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” C. R. Malcor observes that:

A noteworthy feature of the great commission is that it bids the Apostles and the Church of all ages to teach. Teaching is spoken of as their chief missionary task. They are to go to teach. Going is but a means to the end of teaching. And they are to baptize those who accept their teaching. But they must teach, whether or not men give heed. And, significantly, they are told not once, but twice, to teach.²

In Malcor’s work on *Christian Education in the Local Church*, he discusses the goal of a Christian Education programme as the growth

¹ R. B. Zuck, *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Teaching* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1988), 38.

² C. R. Malcor, *Christian Education in the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 245.

of the whole church into the image of Christ. As each member develops his particular gifts and abilities, the whole community of believers grows. The church is people; people changed by the grace of God from darkness into light, but people who still need to be changed throughout their Christian pilgrimage (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Pet. 3:18). Malcor further explains that the teacher equips his/her students by helping them through this growing process. To a large extent, this means helping them teach themselves.³ We agree with Malcor's submission on the issue in that what the learner contributes to the learning process is just as important as what the teacher contributes (Psalm 119: 99). However, the question that comes to mind is that with all probability, churches have had lots of "teaching" going on, but how much "training" has been provided to the people to help them live out what has been taught? Next, Malcor's presentation on the goal of Christian Education as the growth of the whole church into the image of Christ appears to be too simple. For since man's principal goal is to bring glory to God, then the goal of Christian Education ministry must glorify God by being relevant, transforming, flexible, varied and designed to change behaviour.

In an attempt to establish a theology of Education, Fuller follows Stephen Bayne's view that, God is the teacher. To him, therefore, the fundamental thought underlying nearly everything that we will want to say about the Christian idea of Education is that God is the teacher. It is He who establishes all truth; it is He who wills that men shall know the truth; He gives us curious and reflective minds to seek the truth and grasp it and use it; He even gives us the supreme privilege of helping Him in partnership both to teach and to learn.⁴

Similarly, Zuck points out that Christian Education is a cooperative process, a venture involving both the human and the divine.⁵ Human teachers communicate and exemplify truth: The Holy Spirit seeks to provide guidance, power, and illumination, insights to the teachers. It can however be said that since Zuck identifies the truth

³ Malcor, *Christian Education in the Local Church*, 245-246.

⁴ E. Fuller, ed., *The Christian Idea of Education* (Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1957), 255.

⁵ Zuck, *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Teaching*, 34.

that Christian Education is a cooperative venture involving human and divine, his submission on the role of the Holy Spirit excluded that of the Spirit's role in the lives of the learners.

On presenting Jesus as the Master Teacher, M. Friedman also has this to say: Perhaps the most powerful evidence for Jesus, as an educator is the entourage of disciples that accompanied Him.⁶ The disciples - literally 'Learners' - were a community of interested persons who saw in Jesus not only a speaker of memorable ability but also a model of righteous living. As a mentor, Jesus opened up to these people not only in his words but by his entire life.

Concerning levels of learning that are helpful to the Bible teacher. Lawrence O. Richards⁷ identifies five levels of learning. These are rote, recognition, restatement, relation and realization. Richards explains that the Bible can be learnt at all five levels, but at the levels of rote and recognition, the facts are stressed with little meaning. The teacher's role at those levels is to disseminate information. At the level of the restatement, relation and realisation, learning becomes increasingly meaningful and the teacher's role changes from that of a guard who involves students. What Richards presents here sounds convincing. This is because the goal of Christian Education is to move learning to the level of realization where a change in the learners' behaviour is more likely to occur.

M. Harris thinks that Education is lifelong for the church but it seems that there is some misunderstanding with the way education is perceived. For her, some people think education in the church is for children so much that any attempt to talk about education that is for the grown-up must be prefixed with "adult" before people can identify that it is adult education.⁸ This is very true even with some churches. It seems most people in such churches look at the Christian education board as the facilitators of children's Sunday school.

⁶ M. Friedman, *The Master Plan of Teaching* (Wheaton - Ill.: Victor Books, 1990), 15.

⁷ Lawrence O. Richards, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), 75.

⁸ M. Harris, *Fashion me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989), 38.

Harris (43, 44) further says that the church's educational ministry has been embodied and lived in five ecclesiastical forms, namely *Didache*, *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *Diakonia* and *leiturgia*. Should any of these be left out as full partners in the educational work of ministry or be downplayed or better still exalted above the others, there would not be a balanced education.⁹ Harris' argument is very reasonable because these are the pillars of the Christian faith so to downplay any of these is an attempt to alter the faith.

Graham contributes thought-provoking comparisons of two general philosophies of education. Graham's philosophy that "Christian teachers are called to teach redemptively" highlights areas of traditional educational philosophy that call for passive learning, and cognitive development that may or may not result in heart transformation.¹⁰ The purpose of the book is to "encourage and challenge Christian teachers . . . to teach redemptively" reaching the heart as well as the mind, by exploring the meaning of redemption in the light of the classic biblical themes (the creation, the fall, anthropology, and Christology). The weakness of this work stems from the fact that the philosophy explained is new or uncommon in educational circles. Those attempting to apply Graham's principles of "grace teaching and learning" in classrooms of any kind face the arduous task of implementing practical steps. The strength of this work is the exercise of critical thinking stimulated in those uncomfortable with present philosophies of education.

Concerning instructional content, quite often Christian Education is understood as a set of imparting biblical content, stories and creeds. It is used as a process of conditioning the mind, body and spirit of learners according to the popularly accepted norms and beliefs of the Church and society. But Christian Education is much more and very different from the above-mentioned proposition. H. Hoeffler succinctly remarks that the aim of Christian Education is much

⁹ Harris, *Fashion me a People*, 43, 45.

¹⁰ D. L. Graham, *Teaching Redemptively: Bringing Grace and Truth into Your Classroom* (Colorado Springs, CO: Purposeful Design Publications, 2003), xiii.

more radical and dynamic.¹¹ The emphasis is not knowing but becoming. Christian Education is the process of relating God's people to the challenges and opportunities of their lives in His service. What this means is that Christian Education is a process in which the learner is facilitated to look at his or her faith in the light of Scripture, traditions of the Church as well as to the Ghanaian context and the life situations.

S. Little¹² posits that though the Bible occupies an important place in the practice of Christian education, it cannot be taken as the sole content to be dealt with. Explaining further she writes that "Content is not to be understood as subject matter, the living power of truth which imposes itself as such upon the subject matter and forms of Christian Education under its intrinsic authority."

Apart from the scriptures the content of Christian education must include a study of the environment, various religions in our area and the various burning issues of the times with which we are struggling. If we are really committed to Christian Education for Ghanaian churches, we cannot ignore the contextual issues like widespread poverty, the impact of the national economic policy, globalization, media explosion, plurality of religions, cultures, festivals, deepening fundamentalism, increasing tendency to violence and widening social imbalances. Therefore, the content of Christian Education cannot be limited to the Judeo-Christian heritage contained in the Bible and Christian tradition. We need to take the cultural heritage and socio-economic realities which are contained in Ghanaian oral literature, newspapers and also in the day-to-day life experiences of the learners.

Regarding methods of education in a multicultural context, Freire's pedagogical method of "dialogue" is worth looking at. Freire

¹¹ H. Hoefler, ed., *Debate on Missions* (Madras: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research, 1979), 448.

¹² S. Little, *Revelation, The Bible and Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 45.

writes of two concepts of education namely: The banking concept of education and the problem-solving concept.¹³

In the first concept, it is the teacher who is said to have a deposit of knowledge that he/she must impart to the ignorant student. The banking concept of education does not give any opportunity to the learner for dialogue. This appears very much against the gospel values of freedom and human dignity. The second model which Freire suggests is that of problem-solving education where the critical reflection of both the learner and the teacher brings the fruits of learning. It is mutual. Freire's new educational theory has been called "problem-posing education" which responds to the essence of consciousness-intentionality.¹⁴ In this model, the teacher and learner relationship is based on mutuality, free from fear and domination. Learning is non-repressive but actualizing.

On this issue of dialogue as a teaching method, Thomas Groome¹⁵ supports Paulo Freire's praxis approach by observing that the role of the pedagogue is to be "with" rather than "over" people, enabling them to name their world and through dialogue come to act creatively on their historical reality. In our opinion, this strategy of dialogue is not different from Jesus' strategy of teaching. Jesus in his teaching used the method of dialogue (John 3:1-20, 4:1-26). Jesus helped the learners to come to find the truth from the known to the unknown. Jesus was very positive about the method of dialogue and the importance of listening to others. Thus the teaching ministry of the church should be ready to enter into intercultural dialogue with eagerness to develop common grounds of understanding and cooperation. Instead of seeing cultural diversity today as a cause of division in society, the teaching ministry of the church should attempt to explore it as a source of mutual enrichment and mutual transformation.

¹³ P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herdes and Herdes, 1986), 66.

¹⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 66-67.

¹⁵ Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1980), 184.

Writing about the need to integrate the Christian educational approach to that of traditional patterns of learning it is interesting to look at Palmer's observation that "the Western Church has been firmly shaped by an anti-pluralist mentality, which it has passed on to those around it."¹⁶ The strength of this observation lies in the fact that concerning Christian Education and traditional culture, one of the problems with the educational ministry of the Church is that the cultural identity of the Ghanaian church is missing. On the one hand, it is the earlier missionary policy that forced the converts to give up all that belonged to the former faith and culture which has resulted in the cultural, religious and spiritual impoverishment of the Christians. Moreover, the Church in Ghana adopted the *modus operandi* of its mission and teaching ministry from the Western pattern.

According to Stanley J. Samartha,¹⁷ culture refers to the whole complex of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. It includes not only arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs. One cannot, therefore, overlook the tension between the Christian culture which has been promoted by the Jewish Christian tradition, and Christian community against the Ghanaian culture, which is of the learner's context. More often the theological and pedagogical pattern for Christian Education fosters a spirit of alienation from our cultural kinship in Ghana.

It can be argued that our failure to employ the indigenous methods in Christian Education, worship, singing and lifestyle, are a few pieces of evidence of our rigidity in blindly following the Judeo-Christian tradition and culture. Further, the influence of the media has already created a transition of the Ghanaian culture to the Western culture and world value system which has raised the question of

¹⁶ M. Palmer, *What Should We Teach?* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 54.

¹⁷ Stanley J. Samartha, "The Cross and the Rainbow: Christ a Multi-religious Culture," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, eds. John Hick and Paul Knitter (New York: Orbis Books, 1987).

whether the Church needs to stick to one culture or not. This explains the strength of Wisner's (1986:4) statement that, "Cultural identity seems to be on the defensive all over the world as most people live in more than one culture"

It is against this background of uncertainties that Christian Education in Ghana needs to grapple with the following questions in this book: To what extent can we rely solely on the inherited cultural heritage of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures? What is the place of Ghanaian traditional educational patterns in our Christian Education ministry of the Ghanaian Church? These questions challenge the Ghanaian church to re-examine the contemporary Judeo-Christian educational approaches to find an appropriate Ghanaian culturally sensitive approach. The rationale behind this effort is to find ways of taking back what Africans, and particularly Ghanaians have been deprived of because of the wrong missionary approach. In this regards, this effort argues that the Christian Education programmes in the Ghanaian churches are to be a reflection of our African traditional educational heritage.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Meaning and Definition of Christian Education

The word “education” is initially derived from the Latin *educare*, meaning “to educate” or “to train”. This Latin word in its turn is probably still more remotely derived from two other Latin words, *e* and *duco*. Taken together, these words mean: “I lead out of.” “Education,” therefore, means a “leading out” - leading something out of a person. It is, for this reason, the process of encouraging the development of God-given inherent gifts and the knowledge -- which God has given to each person, and especially to each person. However, the word “education” is often used today with an expanded meaning to cover the opposite process as well. For today, by “education” we not only mean what we draw out of someone. We also mean what we put into someone. The latter process could be called “induction” or induction, or indoctrination.¹⁸ Nevertheless, in this book, we will use the word education in the broad sense to cover both that which we take out of someone which God had previously put into them as well as that which we implant from God’s world into someone (something which was not in them before). So the word *education*, covers “induction” as well – namely that teaching process of encouraging the development of knowledge and virtues in a human being, by incorporating them into his personality from the outside-inwards. This has to do with nurturing. According to Joseph D. Ban, “Christian Education is that education which is Bible Based, Christ-centered,

¹⁸ J. S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 32.

Holy Spirit controlled, pupil related, socially applied with the Scriptures being the authority in all things.”¹⁹

To some extent, the phrase ‘Christian Education’ may appear to be a redundancy. This is because, from a traditional evangelical perspective, education is possible when it is anchored on the truth of biblical Christianity. In this light Christian education could be defined as the process by which an individual, a group of people or an institution propagates (passes along) the knowledge, interpretation and application of truth to people based on scriptural revelation.

Significance of Christian Education

Many reasons underscore the need to study and to academically reflect on the educational ministry of the Church:

Education forms an essential part of the creation story as recorded in Genesis 1-3

Contrary to modern perspectives on human origins, Anthony²⁰ has pointed out that the history of Christian Education is the history of humankind in that, at the beginning God created the heavens and earth (Gen. 1:1) of which the story of Adam and Eve serves as a significant part of that act. To Anthony, the first direct interaction between God and humankind in Genesis 2 was an educational event. From this perspective, therefore, the existence of humanity depended upon a philosophy of education that required man and woman to listen, to learn and to act upon knowledge acquired through divine revelation.

Humankind, as created in the “image of God “are dependent on their creator – God, if they are to learn anything.

¹⁹ Joseph D. Ban, ed., *The Christological Foundation for Contemporary Theological Education* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1988), 18.

²⁰ J. M. Anthony ed., *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education for a New Generation* (Grand Rapid: Baker Books, 1998), 37, 44.

Christian Education serves as a means of providing doctrinal instructions in the Church

In the early years of the Church, Christian Education aimed to provide doctrinal instruction and to provide training in godly behaviour after the model of Jesus Christ. This task, therefore, presents two challenges to the church namely evangelism and edification. As a basic work of the Church, edification is the building up or maturing of Christians based on the following premises:

a. The local church must be the primary means of teaching Christians.

b. Believers must be provided with a basic knowledge of the scriptural truth (“Word of God”).

c. This basic knowledge must be expanded to provide believers with an in-depth knowledge of Scripture.

d. Believers must be provided with opportunities to develop capacities for ministry and service.

e. Believers must be taught to understand and apply the Word of God in relationships with God and with one another.

f. All believers must be equipped for Christian service.

g. Believers must be helped to develop a quality family life.

h. The local church must develop the structure to teach its people.

In the Jewish culture, giving Scriptural instructions serves as the means of creating a godly nation.

It is against this background that the significance of Christian Education in the life of the Christian and the church as a body cannot be overemphasized. To Howard Hendricks:

Christian Education is not an option, it is an order; it is not a luxury, it is a life, it is not something nice to have, it is something necessary to have. It is not a part of the work of the

church, it is the work of the church, it is not extraneous, it is essential. It is our obligation, not merely an option.²¹

It serves as a means of fulfilling our discipleship mandate

The phrase, 'don't just keep the faith – give it away' probably captures the essence of what Christians are commissioned to do by the Lord Jesus in the Church as a loving community.²² In this case, in the process of becoming Christ's true disciples, we are to teach the revealed scriptural truth to persons of all ages and stages of life.

The New Testament goal for believers is to grow into mature and effective Christians. To accomplish this goal, it is of utmost importance that pastors, teachers, and other leaders in the church equip themselves with adequate knowledge of how scriptural truths could be brought to bear upon every aspect of daily living.

Implications of Christian Education to the African context

Drawing inspiration from the Western contexts, many African Churches relate the meaning of Christian Education to the individual members in the Churches. This perspective on the meaning of Christian Education focuses on the growing needs of the members of their local congregations. It appears that such a perspective does not take into consideration both the outreach needs of its community as well as the growing needs of its local congregation. They only emphasize that of the growth needs of which in most cases they stress on the needs of the members. It can be argued, however, that for a holistic understanding of Christian Education, the various church programmes of music, missions, evangelism, discipleship, Bible study,

²¹ Cited in Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat, eds. *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 11.

²² Clarke, Johnson and Sloat, eds. *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, 11.

prayer force, the welfare system and various forms of the church's ministry must all be taken into consideration.

The church must be both culturally relevant and socially sensitive. It should base its ministries on evident needs and find a balance between both evangelism and education. Thus, social, geographical and cultural issues must be taken into consideration if contemporary church ministries in sub-Sahara Africa are going to be relevant and meaningful.

In this light, the meaning and scope of Christian Education should take into consideration the African, and for that matter the Ghanaian existential context. To Kenneth O. Gangel, Christian Education is "an education distinctly based upon theological propositions derived from the text of scripture."²³ It means that an African theology of Christian Education must be founded on Bible-based theological propositions in African perspective. Therefore, it is the Christian Education ministries of the local churches in Africa that would be the means of communicating such a theology or biblical truths.

It is when teaching and learning take place that people can be said to have understood the truth. In Ghana, this requires that the Ghanaian worldview, rooted in African culture, be taken into consideration in communicating the teaching and learning process. It can be pointed out that Christianity, by its unique and universal message, stands the best chance of fulfilling that, which is implied, in the Ghanaian concepts of God. What this means is that there is a good reason for Africans to have a unique and different understanding of the biblical message because of "their cultural, geographical, spiritual, social and temperamental background. We are inclined to argue that because theology is an expression of an experience of the Divinity at work, the difference in environment means different experiences of God at work.

²³ Kenneth O. Gangel, "What Christian Education is," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 14.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian Education and Church Schools

The Church in Africa over the years has been very much concerned about the religious education of school children. Many if not all of the church schools emphasised religious instructions because the schools belonged to the Churches. Attending a mission school, therefore, meant attending the mission's church. For instance, a pupil of a Methodist School was expected to attend the Methodist Church Sunday School on Sunday and give a brief overview of what took place on Sunday especially with regards to Bible quotations and recitals. Failure to attend church service on Sunday attracted a punishment of some lashes the next day at school. The school and the church became intertwined.

According to L. E. Megill,²⁴ the schools introduce children to the Bible and gave them religious knowledge. Sometime later the quality of Christian Education in the schools began to decrease. It turned up to be religious knowledge giving by academically qualified teachers, which did not fulfil the purpose of Christian Education. One other important thing, which put a restriction on the teaching of religion in the schools, was when the government took responsibility for the

²⁴ L. E. Megill, *Education in the African Church* (Accra: Trinity College Publications, 1976), 186.

support and control of all mission schools. As the changes happened, the church began to re-examine its approach in education so it can accomplish its task of helping its members (both young and old) discover who they are in Christ and what their lives ought to be.

Christian Education in the Context of the Local Church

It is significant to point out that every local Church has its unique style of conducting its educational ministries and so bringing to light how each local church conducts theirs is vital for improvement. For instance, the church in Antioch was significantly different from the church in Jerusalem. Their ministry reflected its cultural and geographical context. These Antioch believers had a different concept of ministry due to their diverse heritage. Their ministry reflected their social, geographical and cultural backgrounds.

It is essential to point out that Christian Education goes beyond teaching Christians. It is not just limited to one kind of organization or ministry in that it is found outside the church in many different venues. This is to say that Christian Education takes place outside the walls of the church through Christian schools, Bible studies, camps, Para-church organizations and other kinds of varied ministries. Given this back-ground and writing from the African perspective, Megill²⁵ points out that Christian Education is a process of holistic growth with others and with Christ involving leadership development and theological education at each and all levels of life which takes one's culture and context seriously. However, in this book, the context is the local church from an African perspective. This is against the background that, as pointed out by Williams, the primary setting for Christian Education is the church.²⁶

²⁵ Megill, *Education in the African Church*, 3.

²⁶ E. D. Williams, "Christian Education" in *The Portable Seminary*, ed. David Horton (Michigan: Bethany House, 2006), 642.

In the context of the church, Christian Education is designed to bring people to faith, to develop people in their faith and to lead people to serve through the ministry of the church. According to Williams, with which we agree, "Christian Education includes pre-conversion, conversion and post-conversion learning experiences."²⁷ People come to faith in Christ through the faithful teaching of God's Word and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. After conversion, the learner moves into a discipleship stage and is to develop and grow as a believer. In our opinion, we believe Christian Education is not a one-time learning experience but a lifetime dedicated to learning more about God and his Word. It includes the application of God's truth in the life of the learner so that it can be passed on to others in service and ministry.

The ministries in the church can become a confusing schedule of unrelated activities as they are put to use in many local churches. Some churches, however, have learned to coordinate their educational programmes through a Christian Education board. This is because the educational ministry of the church calls for organisation, administration and a clear statement policy. Creating and maintaining a board of Christian Education is a practical way to accomplish these tasks and that failure to adequately provide for coordination can weaken the entire church ministry. The general purpose of the board should be to establish and clarify educational goals, to unify the educational programme, to evaluate and improve educational outcomes and to extend the church's educational ministry so that it will vitalise its spiritual impact.

Christian Education and Church Growth

A church that seriously considers the importance of its educational ministry is a growing church. In the first place, Christian Education in its entirety encompasses the message of the gospel which brings to bear a 'Christian' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason being that

²⁷ Williams, "Christian Education," 641.

the salvation message constitutes the core of Christian Education. This is underpinned by the biblical expectation that Christ must be taught and preached (Acts 5:42). Thus, Christ is the centrality of the salvation message in Christian Education in the Church. Besides, Christian Education helps church members to grow spiritually. This is because the central concern of Christian Education is the spiritual growth of the believer: whether child, youth or adult.

Christian Education also serves as an essential tool for leadership development in the local church. Similarly, Christian Education imbues in the membership of a Church a desire to preserve and conserve the rich heritage of God at work in the lives of men and women. Another essential role of church education is that it equips the Christian with the requisite reasons for the church's beliefs and to always explain and defend the principle behind their faith as believers.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Old Testament Foundation

The Bible serves as the foundation of Christian Education. Understanding the origins of Christian Education requires an examination of Jewish education because Christian Education is, in many ways, an extension of Jewish education. The history of the Jews is a record of their relationship with God as expressed in the covenant. Their educational system arose as an instrument to pass on that relationship to subsequent generations. It also was an act of obedience to God's command within the covenant. According to E. J. Reed, and R. Prevost, the Jews believed that as God had chosen them, God was concerned with how they should educate and be educated.²⁸

Many historical events shaped the covenant people. The Babylonian exile modified and shifted expressions of the covenant relationship between God and His people. The covenant people were generally called "Hebrews" before the exile, but they were known as "Jews" after the exile. Thus, we shall briefly consider Hebrew Education and Jewish Education.

The root of Christian Education runs deep into Judaism. According to Barclay,²⁹ it should not seem strange that the church claims a Judaic heritage – the New Testament church was founded by Jews, the New Testament was written by Jews (except Luke) and the

²⁸ E. J. Reed, and R. Prevost, *A History of Christian Education* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Press, 1993), 45.

²⁹ W. Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959), 11-40.

Bible of the early church was the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament.

In Genesis, God is quoted about God's covenant with Abraham: "For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Genesis 18:19). Abraham and the other Hebrew patriarchs were nomadic. Their lifestyle precluded the founding of permanent schools. Education was natural and informal, including all aspects of life. The children were taught by example. They also learned vocational skills by watching and following the parents as they saw to their duties. Children learned about their particular cultic and covenant responsibilities to God as the parents built altars and led in rituals such as sacrifices and circumcision.

After the patriarchal era, the Hebrews received, in the Mosaic law, not only a system of laws by which to conduct their individual and corporate lives, but also a plan by which to teach the laws and their way of life. The family was the primary educational institution of the Hebrews. The Shema, (hearing) which was foundational to all Hebrews is found in Deuteronomy and speaks not only to the nature of God but to the importance and place of education:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hand and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and your gates (Deut. 6:4-9).

It was the pivot around which every Israelite was to be instructed in the Law of God. These commandments were to be taught and impressed upon their children. The mother was to teach the children while performing her household duties. Hebrew fathers had a task: to teach their children and they executed this task with all diligence. Much attention was given to memorizing the Mosaic Law and oral

traditions of the people. Knowledge of these matters was the ability to repeat them unerringly. Hebrew family education also placed demands upon the children to hearken unto what they are taught.

The priestly tribe of Levi also shared the responsibility of educating the people; because of their priestly status, they were the nation's educators. Barclay³⁰ points out that the educational role of the priests was expressed in two ways. First, they were to train the people how to follow in the ritual observance as stipulated by the law. Second, they were to train the people in the law, especially concerning worship, sacrifices, festivals and other religious duties. They also had to teach the people communal life. They gave advice and interpreted God's will for the people in practical terms, particularly concerning ethical and civil duties. Hebrew educational methods were primarily memo-rization and repetition.

Reed and R. Prevost explain that the Babylonian exile followed the collapse of the Southern Hebrew Kingdom of Judah around 586 BCE.³¹ During this period most Jews remained in Judah, though some migrated to Egypt and others were taken to Babylon. This was an era of rapid change. Judaism, which evolved from the Hebrew religion, took shape during these years. New liturgical forms were introduced, new traditions began, the synagogue developed and education took on a different meaning and purpose. Through the bitter years of Exile, Judaism survived because of ingrained respect for education. The Jews emphasised religious education. They developed a system of schools led by teachers of the Law. This new development gave Judaism a strong organizational and institutional basis. The impetus for these meeting places appears to have been Jeremiah's urging the captives to pray for the city of their captivity (Jeremiah 29:7).

The primary purpose of the synagogue was instructional and it aimed at studying the law. The synagogue did not operate in competi-

³⁰ Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World*, 21.

³¹ Reed, and R. Prevost, *A History of Christian Education*, 46.

tion with the Jewish temple. Jewish education retained many of the components of pre-exilic education.³²

New Testament Foundation

In the New Testament, Christianity takes its educational cue from a cluster of sources. The example and teaching of Jesus, the apostolic preaching and writings, and the embryonic style revealed in the biblical record of early Christian worship and fellowship primarily form the base of New Testament education. According to E. L. Hayes,³³ Christian teaching finds its impetus in the etymological context of Greek words loaded with meaning (such as *didasko*, *oikodomeo*) that articulate the teaching function. In several dominant words that recur frequently, we can infer the content, a style and a context in which education is to take place.

Furthermore, the nature of the church, in terms of its mission and ministry in the world as revealed in the Scriptures provides a framework for educational action. In this case, the church is a teaching agency. From its beginning, the New Testament communicated knowledge of the God of the Bible and the principles God gave mankind to follow. Jesus told his disciples to 'teach all nations,' a pattern to be continued until he returned. The early churches prepared people for faithful discipleship as they meet the needs of others and also await the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. One other means of nurturing was through house fellowship or community worship. Through the house fellowship, they engaged in *Koinonia* (fellowship), *Diakonia* (service), *Leiturgia* (worship), *Kerygma* (preaching) and *Didache* (teaching) as recorded in Acts 2:42-47. The educational facilitators were the apostles and other church

³² Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World*, 46.

³³ E. L. Hayes, "Establishing Biblical Foundations," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 35.

leaders. Over the past two thousand years, education has played a significant role in the ministry of the church.

Educational Principles in the Bible

The nature, significance and content of the Bible are important concerns of Christian Education. Following Sayes³⁴ the Scripture provides Christian education with the foundation for its philosophy, principles and content of its curriculum. The Bible provides hints to educational methodology and activity. It is therefore important to explore certain principles and practices in education from the Old and New Testaments.

1. The purpose of Christian Education in the Bible is to teach biblical truth

The purpose of Christian education from a biblical perspective is to communicate biblical truth (2 Tim 3:14). This presupposes that the Bible truth is to be taught and learned. The Scriptures can therefore be regarded as the centre of Christian teaching as well as the heart of the curriculum of Christian education.

2. The command to teach is rooted in the Bible

In the Scriptures, we are commanded to teach. This ministry is plainly stated out in both the Old and New Testaments:

⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV).

³⁴ J. Ottis Sayes, "The Biblical Basis for Christian Education," in *Exploring Christian Education*, eds. A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 35.

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20, NIV).

3. Teaching is God's action

God is presented in the Bible as a teacher. In the words of Job, God is exalted in his power. Who is a teacher like him? (Job 36:22, NIV). Presenting God as being active in the teaching task, Exodus 35:34 describes God's activity of putting into Bezaleel's heart the wisdom to perform his task in building the Tabernacle.

4. The Bible gives certain principles of learning

Many principles of learning can be identified in the Bible. Some of these principles are the following:

a. Early training

The Hebrews were early advocates of the principle that: *we are profoundly impressed by those things which we learn early in life*. The psychology of education has also emphasised this principle. In the words of Solomon: *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it. The rich rules over the poor* (Proverbs 22:6, NKJV). Jesus endorsed this concept when he blessed the children (Mark 10:13-16). To Paul, this principle of early teaching had positively impacted Timothy's life (2 Tim 3:15).

b. Teaching and learning are to be done in a free atmosphere

Psalm 32:9 suggests that both teaching and learning should be uncoerced. The Psalmist's admonishing of Israel not to be "as the

horse or the mule which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle” implies that the pupil/student learns best when he/she is ready and the environment is favourable. On the other hand, the Psalmist teaches responsibility on the part of the learner so as not to take the attitude of the stubborn mule.

Similarly, to Paul, having the mind of Christ is necessary for grasping spiritual truth (1 Cor 2:9-16).

c. Biblical methods and means of education

Among other things, biblical methods and means of education include repetition, warning, using object lessons, systematising or organizing blocks of information and reciting and reading with interpretation (Isaiah 28:10; Deut 6:12; Judges 8:16; Eccl 12:9; and Neh 8:8).

d. The medium of instruction is through understandable language

Jesus used Parables to teach. Paul used clear and understandable language in his teaching rather than ecstatic and high resounding rhetoric. This implied the need for clear and effective communication in education.

5. Qualified personnel

The personnel of religious education, from the biblical perspective, included parents, priests, wisdom of the matured or the elderly. In the New Testament, the teaching ministry is listed among the other leadership roles of apostles, prophets and teachers (1 Cor 12:28).

6. Involvement of the whole person

Christian Education from the biblical perspective must involve the whole person. This perspective to education probably gave the Hebrews an integrated approach to life. For there was no separation

of the sacred from the secular. According to Sayes,³⁵ all truth is to be regarded as God's truth. The biblical teaching of creation, for instance, provided a careful balance between transcendence and immanence. Most probably, this perspective delivered Israel from both fetishism and pantheism. The realm of nature and the realm of the mind were not viewed as alien to each other. Truth revealed and learned by human-kind is God's self-disclosure through a general revelation. In the observation of Sayes:

The Bible does not recognize a compartmentalized life. One cannot send his mind to school, his soul to church, and his body to the gym. It is the whole spirit, soul, and body that are to be sanctified and preserved blameless (1 Thess 5:23).³⁶

³⁵ Sayes, "The Biblical Basis for Christian Education," 36.

³⁶ Sayes, "The Biblical Basis for Christian Education," 48.

CHAPTER 5

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Role of Biblical Theology in Christian Education

J. M. Anthony has observed that contemporary thoughts on Christian Education, like its secular education counterpart, are often expressed in behavioural science terms regarding the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Philosophical categories like epistemology, metaphysics and axiology are the basis for presentations of educational theory. Such constitutes the language of education.³⁷

Given these differences in terminology, theological concepts are not easy to fit into educational discussions. In this case, it appears that there is not much of a relationship between theology and behavioural objectives. As a result, in Christian Education, theology is usually related only to the content of instruction. It is occasionally employed as a guide for Christian Education theory and practice. In our opinion, this should not be so because theology is significantly related to what Christian Education has been, is, and should be.

It can therefore be said that theology that is based upon accurate interpretation of the scripture is a valuable aid to Christian thought and is the content of much instruction in Christian Education. However, theology is not ultimate in that the interaction with behavioural science research and theory is necessary. Epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology govern educational theory and practice. In Christian Education, this significant knowledge, perspective and overt

³⁷ J. M. Anthony, ed., *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education for a New Generation* (Grand Rapid: Baker Books, 1998), 24.

behaviour constructs must be guided by an active allegiance to an accurate inter-pretation of scriptures. This commitment must be to the truth that produces faith, hope and love in the development of a biblical foundation for Christian Education. This provides valuable insight and creative thinking. For Anthony, one needs to develop a theology that is built upon extensive knowledge of the truth of God's word.³⁸

Jesus the Master Teacher

Jesus Christ remains one person who all Christians and even all teachers are to emulate. Perhaps C. B. Eavey³⁹ has observed that Christian Education had its beginning with Jesus. This is not to ignore the past but Jesus brought unique freshness to the teaching task. He came from God and brought unique freshness to the teaching task. Perhaps C. B. Eavey states it better by noting that to Jesus, "Teaching was His Chief business. He was often a healer, sometimes a worker of miracles, frequently a preacher, but always a teacher."⁴⁰

What this suggests is that Christians are to modulate their ministries after Him. Jesus is the standard of reflective evaluation. His teaching ministry cannot be separated from the larger context of His life. He always builds into people's lives principles that will endure and transcends the existential moments.⁴¹ Those who walk with Him become a community of learners. He is the teacher whose teaching principle would never be outdated. Some teaching principles that can be deduced from the life of Jesus as the Master teacher are:⁴²

³⁸ Anthony, ed., *Foundations of Ministry*, 33.

³⁹ C. B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 36.

⁴⁰ Eavey, *History of Christian Education* 78.

⁴¹ Warren S. Benson, "Christ the Master Teacher," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 87.

⁴² John Kwasi Fosu, *Christology: Rediscovering Christ's Life and Teachings* (Kumasi: Shalom Press, 2013), 130-131.

- Jesus knew how to adapt to the level of understanding of his learners.
- He used the familiar to explain the profound.
- He modelled the truth in an ultimate sense.
- Jesus never lost touch with those He was teaching despite the loftiness of His content or the holiness of His character.
- He used His teaching/learning strategy within the existing social, economic, political and educational and religiously combined context.

Principle #5 stated above can be described as the principle of contextualization in Christian Education. According to Pazmino⁴³ “Contextualization”, as a popular term in current theological discussions, refers to the application and adaptation of truth to specific contexts or situations and the emergence of truth from specific contexts. Jesus’ teaching was adapted to his audience and often emerged from questions posed by his audience. He personalised his teaching by establishing points of contact with various persons and groups and by gaining their involvement. Jesus placed himself at the point of his hearers and started from there. He was sensitive to what they were able to receive. What this means is that Jesus sought to be understood and communicated effectively by contextualizing his teaching. An example in this regard is Jesus’ teaching of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). Jesus’ point of contact is the water available at the well and the experience of thirst. Jesus progressively responds to the woman and reveals her spiritual needs. The concluding truth Jesus offers is his very person as Messiah. Jesus tailored his teaching to address this woman’s needs in those areas where she needed instruction and, ultimately transformation.

Indeed, Jesus is our example of a master teacher. “And Jesus went about all Galilee *teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people*” (Matthew 4:23). Again in Matthew 5:2, then

⁴³ W. R. Pazmino, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 131.

He opened His mouth and **taught** them saying..." Who is called 'rabbi' or teacher in the New Testament?

Jesus indeed knows how to gain the attention of his hearers. For this reason, words such as "hear, hearken, behold, listen" are often seen in the gospels. A teacher must gain the attention of his students if he is to communicate and if teaching is to take place. Sometimes students willingly give their attention. Other times students are tired, sleepy, or simply not interested. Some people listened to Jesus hoping to trap Him.

Jesus used the position of a teacher in his culture at times to get attention. This means He sat to gain attention! Sometimes Jesus sent messengers ahead to prepare things for Him. He used concrete, a pictorial language that captures attention today just as it did then. He used the familiar to explain the unfamiliar. An example of this is given in Mark 2:19-22 as He explained why He and His disciples did not fast. He used everyday examples in His illustrations. He spoke about a farmer, the birth of a baby, children, wind, water, goat skins. At least once He went quickly from illustration to illustration, thus the attention of the people did not wane. An example of this fast pace is found in Luke 15 where Jesus is making one point: the need for salvation because man is lost. First He illustrates with a lost sheep, goes to a lost coin, and ends up with a lost son. Three parables, but one point.

Jesus paid attention to others. He was God, yet He had time to listen to men, women and even children. He was warm and friendly, interested in what others said, what they did and what they needed. Jesus walked from village to village on public roads. As He walked He taught his disciples openly. Strangers could listen in if they desired to do so. Of course, the fact that He claimed to be the Messiah attracted attention, as did His miracles and His message.

Jesus was not bound (shackled) by culture. He operated within His culture; yet, He veered at certain times from the normal way of behaviour. For example, Jesus treated all persons as worthwhile and valuable. He did not treat the wealthy better than the homeless leper, nor men better than women. He spent time with despised sinners and

with hated tax collectors, like Zaccheus and Matthew. He openly told a prostitute how to find eternal life. In short, Jesus counted each individual as important and was as comfortable with one as with another.

The implication is that Christian teachers (especially those in the African context) must contextualize their teaching to address the needs and understandings of those with whom they seek to communicate. This presents the challenge of getting to know their context by addressing the issues and problems with which the students are grappling for effective teaching.

The Unique Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Education

C. F. Dickason in his submission on the Holy Spirit in education points out that the often-neglected person in the teaching/learning process is the most important.⁴⁴ The Holy Spirit is the sovereign, most wise and ultimate teacher of spiritual truth. He makes God's truth relevant to the persons involved and enables application that causes life and growth. Thus, teaching and learning efforts are in vain unless there is a corporation with the Spirit.

R. B. Zuck identifies one Scriptural principle by which the Spirit operates in the teaching role.⁴⁵ This is the principle of personal cooperation whereby the Holy Spirit seeks to teach through Christian teachers. Christian teachers are therefore called upon to be under the full employment of the Spirit as clean and capable instruments. What this means is that it is not they who teach but the Spirit. As instruments of the divine teacher, they teach what the Spirit of God has revealed in His Word. The Holy Spirit is a person who enables the

⁴⁴ C.F. Dickason, "The Holy Spirit in Education," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 121.

⁴⁵ R. B. Zuck, *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Teaching* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1988),

person of the learner and the person of the teacher to interact for corporate growth.

Similarly, E. D. Williams⁴⁶ identifies the role of the Holy Spirit as a major factor in determining the difference between Christian Education and secular education. Through the Spirit's illumination, believers are shown the truth of God's Word, and this is not present in secular education. Secular and Christian educators may use similar metho-dologies, but this does not make them the same. In this regard, one cannot agree more with Williams that "Christian Education is Christian when teachers and learners are dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in the learning environment."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ E. D. Williams, "Christian Education" in *The Portable Seminary*, ed. David Horton (Michigan: Bethany House, 2006), 641.

⁴⁷ Williams, "Christian Education," 641-642.

CHAPTER 6

SOCIOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Sociological Foundation of Christian Education

Humankind is a social being. Therefore, to understand one's behaviour, one must consider the individual living in one's societal environment. In the view of Franklyn Wise, Christian Education cannot escape the influence of these forces in human development because Christian education is both a product of change and an agent for change in any human institution.⁴⁸ Some of the institutions which provide a social base for Christian Education are the family, the church and Christian public schools or theological seminaries. From the Scriptures, the family is the first and basic religious educational agent. This is very evident in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. The family has the first and most influential contact with the child. The family provides the care, security and nurture for the child all the years of their childhood.

Dobson amply points out that not only does the family provide for the physical well-being of the child, but it also fashions their concepts.⁴⁹ However, the church as another sociological entity for Christian Education also extends the Christian teaching of the family by providing small, special interest groups according to age or life function. Within these groups, there are opportunities for the learning

⁴⁸ Franklyn Wise, "The Sociological Bases of Christian Education," in *Exploring Christian Education*, eds. A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 148.

⁴⁹ James C. Dobson, "Strategies for Esteem," *Hide or Seek* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1974), 47.

norms, morals and values for social behaviour that cannot be found in non-Christian social groups. The church helps the family in its Christian Education task by providing for the nurture of parents especially. Sermons on family life help the home to function well so that the children would have a good example to emulate.

Philosophical Foundation of Christian Education

The word philosophy means the love of wisdom. It has been described as an unusual persistent effort to think clearly. In the opinion of Edgar Sheffield Brightman, philosophy may be defined as the attempt to make humans experience intelligible.⁵⁰ Therefore, any person who attempts to know the truth is being philosophical. To be able to examine life or existence from all perspectives, one cannot do away with philosophy. The good Christian educator, therefore, uses every school of philosophy to arrive at the truth of God's Word. According to Sanner and Harper, the philosophical aspects of education are seen in naturalism, idealism, pragmatism and existentialism.⁵¹

Naturalism

Naturalism is a philosophy that separates nature from God. It places *spirit* below *matter* and sets up unchangeable laws in nature as supreme. Naturalism is also referred to as materialism. This doctrine regards the basis of the world to be matter. Mind is also seen as a form of matter or an element of matter or a combination of both.

⁵⁰ Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1940), 4.

⁵¹ A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper, "The Theological and Philosophical Bases of Christian Educationin," in *Exploring Christian Education*, eds. A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 90.

For Sanner and Harper, naturalism is metaphysics. It accepts the viewpoint that the world of physical nature is all there is to reality.⁵² The ancient Greek Philosophers sought the ultimate substance of the universe in the earth, air, fire and water. Today, naturalists find the ultimate source of life and the final meaning of human existence in the physical world with its laws of action and reaction. This points one to God, and also provides a curriculum for Christian Education. This system is of the view that everything outside of the natural does not exist. It is only what is real, thus that which one can see, feel and touch exists and to rely on truth, it must be verifiable.

In the context of education, Naturalism describes human development according to its inherent nature. From the perspective of naturalism, the external laws of nature should correspond and cooperate with the internal nature of humankind for full natural development.

It could be argued that naturalistic philosophy promotes one-sided and unsatisfying aims of education. In this case, the child will become unsocial with no feeling for social service or social good. Next, naturalist educational philosophy emphasises the solution of present needs and problems of an individual. It dismisses concerns for spiritual values and the remote future. Moreover, naturalism emphasizes that education should be based on the activities and life experiences of the learner. Naturalism further places more importance on scientific subjects in the curriculum. In this philosophy, the teacher is assigned the role of a mere guide and observer.

Idealism

Idealism is the philosophical doctrine that stems from the category of thought associated with ideas. It is etymologically derived from the Greek word 'idein' which means 'to see'. Idealism is based on the

⁵² Sanner and Harper, "The Theological and Philosophical Bases of Christian Education," 90.

notion that the reality of everything lies in ideas, thought and mind not in material things.

Idealism is the exact opposite of naturalism in that whilst naturalism finds its ultimate explanations of the reality of knowledge and value in the natural world, idealism finds these explanations in the mind or ideas. Hence it is termed idealism. The mind is what makes humankind a higher being than animals. For humans, improving their ideas is basic to making them better people. Sanner and Harper posit that committing one's life to Christ means committing oneself to the shaping of your ideas through the Word of God.⁵³ This points to the fact that it is only through Christ that one can become a better-refined person.

As a philosophical theory of education, idealism has some merits as well as demerits. Regarding the merits, idealistic philosophy promotes universal education. By that, it emphasizes the inculcation of the highest values such as truth, beauty and goodness. In this regard, since Christian Education partly aims at developing the moral character of the learner, idealism is very important. Moreover, the teacher is assigned a very important role in the teaching and learning atmosphere in idealistic education.

On the other hand, one major criticism regarding idealism is that it is an abstract and vague doctrine. It is often argued that idealism avoids the realities because it is concerned with the ultimate end of life. Idealism places much emphasis on thinking and mental activities and so seeks to avoid the real problems in day-to-day living. It is also often criticised to be overemphasising intellectualism. Moreover, in education, the philosophy of idealism places much emphasis on the teacher rather than the child.

⁵³ Sanner and Harper, "The Theological and Philosophical Bases of Christian Education," 91.

Pragmatism

The philosophy of pragmatism derives its origin from a Greek word meaning to do, to make, to accomplish. Thus, words such as 'action' or 'practice' or 'activity' are commonly used to describe this philosophy. The action here takes precedence over thought. Experience is at the ultimate centre of the universe. Experience tests everyone. According to this theory, beliefs and ideas are true if they are workable and profitable. If they are not workable, then they are false.

Sanner and Harper⁵⁴ write that pragmatism is the way to test the truth of ideas to see how they work out in practical experience; what works out is true and what fails to work is false. As a way of testing procedures in Christian Education, pragmatism is very important because the Christian educator needs to evaluate the contents of the materials and the methods employed. The whole issue of educational testing is a pragmatic approach that seeks to find out if the educational effort is bringing results. It helps in evaluating the methods and materials to measure the results.

Pragmatism also enables the learner to solve problems about his/her natural life because of his/her involvement in activities. Next, pragmatic education emphasises the learner and the learner's efforts and activities rather than ideas. In this regard, pragmatic education employs the teaching method of learning by doing. Similarly, pragmatism induces a spirit of freedom, initiative, equality and also a sense of responsibility in relation to the rights and duties of a citizen or a member of a community.

On the other hand, pragmatism has some demerits. In the first place, pragmatism poses the challenge of not accepting truth to be permanent and objective. For the pragmatist, truth is relative to time and space. This makes utility to become the final criterion of truth. Next, since pragmatism was born out of reaction to idealism, it manifests a materialistic bias.

⁵⁴ Sanner and Harper, "The Theological and Philosophical Bases of Christian Education," 91.

Moreover, the philosophy of pragmatism seems to project an absence of any aim of education. To this educational philosophy, life itself and so it is not possible to identify any goal for its progressive change in the pattern of living. Learners seem to be given excess freedom and importance to exercises. Last but not the least, pragmatism places excessive emphasis upon individual differences.

Existentialism

Existentialism is a modern philosophy that emerged from the 19th century. It emphasises the analysis of existence and of the way humans find themselves existing in the world. The assumption is that humans exist first and then everyone spends a lifetime changing their essence or nature. This philosophy attained its high point in Europe following the disillusionments of the Second World War. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish minister and philosopher, is deemed to be the founder of existentialism. Other Philosophers whose works have existentialist themes are Friedrich Nietzsche, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre and Karl Jaspers.

Existentialism is a mood than a system of philosophy. Sanner and Harper write that it emphasises the importance of the present, the existential movement.⁵⁵ The Christian faith does not deny the importance of our presence in the light of God's care in past experiences and views of his promises for the future. It helps to provide curriculum, methodology and also to find teachers. It can therefore be deduced that existentialism forms the basis for Christian Education.

Existentialist philosophy appeals to Christian education in that it is optimistic and emphasises the concept of freedom, responsibility, and choice. Attention is directed to the 'man' – and the genuine or authentic self, his choices made with an awareness of the responsibility of consequences, and freedom. It defines and diagnoses human weaknesses, limitations and conflicts.

⁵⁵ Sanner and Harper, "The Theological and Philosophical Bases of Christian Education," 93.

In simple terms, existentialism is an attitude and outlook that emphasizes human existence. It stresses the qualities of individual persons rather than humankind in abstract nature and the world in general. Education, therefore, must edify and enrich the mind of the learner so that it may be respectable in his/her own eyes and the eyes of others. To be educated is to be made human.

CHAPTER 7

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Role of Psychology in Christian Education

Psychology is commonly defined as the study of the behaviour of living organisms. In simple terms, it is described as the science of behaviour. Psychology studies humans objectively, primarily from the perspective of his/her interaction with the environment. Among other things, psychology aims to observe, understand, and influence behaviour. Used in this book, the term is restricted to human behaviour.

The findings of developmental and learning psychology are very important in Christian Education. For people have many psychological needs to which Christian educators must pay close attention. Among others, these include the need to be loved, to love someone else, to belong to a group, to engage in meaningful activity and to learn. In the observation of Ronald F. Gray, “honest attempts to meet these needs relieve the burdens of the less fortunate, fill Sunday school classrooms, and increase church membership.”⁵⁶ The strength of Gray’s observation lies in the fact that, as he amply put it, “emotional needs influence human behaviour, tears of joy and sorrow flow, shouts of glee erupt, groans of anguish rack the body, and words of love soothe the crying child.”

⁵⁶ Ronald F. Gray, “The Psychological Bases of Christian Education,” in *Exploring Christian Education*, eds. A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1978), 113.

Important topics to be considered in this section include the nature of humankind, theories and processes of learning, the role of the learner in Christian Education and learning styles.

Human Nature within Educational Psychology

Within educational scholarship, the topic usually discussed concerning human nature relates to whether humans are products of the environment, heredity or both.⁵⁷ Hereditary influences are considered to be internal in humankind and environmental influences are said to be external to the person. In other words, the question usually asked is: are humans products of their parents, environment or both? This question is usually answered by using descriptive words to denote whether a person is active, passive or interactive. Describing humankind as active, on one hand, is describing the dominance of the internal and for that matter hereditary forces over the external or environmental influences. On the other hand, when the environmental forces dominate the hereditary factors, humankind is regarded as passive.

Some scholars also describe the nature of humankind as a product of the interplay between hereditary and environmental forces. A person is born with hereditary factors that shape his/her intelligence, physical appearance, and temperament. A person's physical and social environment is a strong factor that moulds his or her behaviour and view of the world. Both factors provide limitations and opportunities for the person to grow and develop as they interact in life. During the prenatal stage, hereditary forces seem to be the only factors that shape a person thereby providing the setting and limitation. As a person grows, develops and matures, the environment becomes more important. The ability to change persons by structuring their environment makes formal education possible. According to Gray, the rigidity of one's environmental situation decreases as a

⁵⁷ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 117.

person grows and develops.⁵⁸ Older children are better able to change their environment and control their interaction with it. As they grow and learn, they acquire skills to interact with the environment. People's freedom to choose provides Christian Education with its greatest opportunity.

Theories of Learning

Within educational psychology, many theories of learning have been developed and applied. A brief overview of these theories are hereby briefly surveyed:

Mental Discipline and Natural Unfoldment Theories

Two major theories of learning that emanated before the 20th century that continue to shape education today are Mental Discipline and Natural Unfoldment. In the observation of Gray, both views are in line with the active role of humans in relation to the environment.⁵⁹

Mental Discipline psychology sees learning as training the mind through rigorous exercise. Here, mental powers such as reason, imagination, memory, will and thought are similarly cultivated. In this theory, an emphasis is placed on the inherent powers within humankind and self-discipline rather than on any specific external learning materials.

Despite diverse criticisms that have been levelled against this theory of learning, it still influences current education in general and Christian Education in particular. For instance, memorising Bible verses, without doubt, has some value.

The Natural Unfoldment theory views learning as the active growth and development of the learner without external aid. This theory favours the natural environment for learning over the structured one.

⁵⁸ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 123.

⁵⁹ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 126-128.

In this regard, the interest of the learner should decide the content and sequence of learning experiences.

Association Theories

Contrary to the above learning theories that place emphasis on the mental faculty, association theories emphasise the physical. In this theory, learning focuses on establishing connections within the person/learner. The learner in this case becomes passive with respect to his external environment. According to Gray, this concept has its historical foundation in the *tabula rasa theory* of John Locke.⁶⁰ At birth, a person is likened to a blank slate to be written on by external forces.

One of the learning theories in this category is J. F. Herbart's Apperception.⁶¹ This theory highlights the association of ideas. By apperception is meant the attentive consciousness that the learner grasps the meaning of a situation. Another prominent association theory of learning is E. L. Thorndike's connectionism.⁶² Thorndike's connectionism focuses on the establishment of neural connections based on stimulus-response patterns. A further important theory of learning is B. F. Skinner's Operant Conditioning. Skinner's operant conditioning stresses the stimulus that follows a reinforced (rewarded) response.⁶³

Cognitive and Field Theories of Learning

Cognitive and Field theories of learning have their foundation in *gestalt* psychology, developed and stated first in Germany. As a German word, *Gestalt* generally carries the idea of an organized

⁶⁰ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 128-129.

⁶¹ J. F. Herbart's Appreciation Theory is discussed extensively by Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 128-129.

⁶² This theory is discussed by Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 129

⁶³ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 129.

pattern or configuration. Challenging an existing theory, *gestalt* psychology modified Thorndike's *connectionism* theory. The foundation of the cognitive-field theory is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.⁶⁴

The major emphasis of the cognitive theory is the perception of the organised whole in learning. In other words, the perception of reality appears to be more important to learning than the reality itself. Thus, cognitive theories define truth as the degree to which the perception agrees with the thing seen. In this respect, cognitive theories are identified with relativism. Cognitive theories look at subjective psychological reality, rather than attempting to discover the objective reality. In this light, what is experienced by the individual becomes real and important to him/her.

Eclecticism

Within educational psychology, attempts have been made to highlight and apply the essential elements embedded in the theories of learning previously presented. One theory is not usually presented as a favourable view over the other. This process of borrowing from various viewpoints is referred to as eclecticism. Following Gray, an eclectic methodology usually overrides theoretical differences and emphasises practical applications.⁶⁵

The Learning Process in Christian Education

The fact remains that learning cannot be imposed on the learner. Learning must evolve out of the nature of the learner and the material to be learned. For that matter, the teaching-learning experience becomes effective to the learner to the extent that the educator understands the learning process and can design the experience following sound principles. It is important to emphasise here that

⁶⁴ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 129.

⁶⁵ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 131.

Christian educators cannot afford to do away with sound psychological principles, neither can they depend entirely on psychology. In this regard, the pivotal role of the Holy Spirit in the teaching-learning experience cannot be ignored. For Christian Education involves the human spirit as well, which is fully accessible only to the Holy Spirit. In this case, when Christian educators exhaust their skills and understanding, they have the assurance that the Holy Spirit's work continues. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth.

Lee J. Cronbach⁶⁶ describes seven essential aspects of learning that are worth incorporating by teachers in Christian Education. In the opinion of Gray these aspects of learning aid the efforts of the learners. These seven aspects include:⁶⁷

1. Goal: The goal of the learner is the consequence that the learner wishes to attain.
2. Readiness: A person's readiness consists of the sum-total of response patterns and abilities that the learner possesses at any given time.
3. Situation: The situation entails all objects, persons, and symbols in the learner's environment.
4. Interpretation: Interpretation is a process of directing attention to parts of a situation, relating them to past experiences, and predicting what can be expected to happen if various responses are made.
5. Response: A response is an action or some internal change that prepares the person for action.
6. Consequence, Confirmation or contradiction. Some events that follow the response are regarded by the learner as the consequences of the response.

⁶⁶ Lee J. Cronbach, *Educational Psychology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954), 49-51.

⁶⁷ Gray, "The Psychological Bases of Christian Education," 134.

7. Reaction to thwarting: Thwarting occurs when the person fails to attain set goals. If the learner's first try is not confirmed, he/she may make a new interpretation and adapt his/her response.

Following Cronbach's conclusion, once the teacher is fully aware of these seven aspects of the learning process, he/she is equipped to examine and plan educational experiences. Altering behaviour, the Christian educator provides experiences that permit the learner to select appropriate goals that are suited to his/her readiness to learn and interpret.

The Role of the Learner in Christian Education

Within recent educational scholarship, there has been an educational theory that favours student-centred learning. Learner-centred learning is well supported by impressive theoretical frameworks. Following Jean Piaget, J. A. Clines observe that learners construct their knowledge through two means.⁶⁸ First, through *assimilation* in which learners incorporate new knowledge into their already existing framework. Second, learners learn through *accommodation*, in which they revise their frameworks in the light of new knowledge. What the latter implies is that one might be able to learn something only if he/she can fit it into already existing frameworks of knowledge, or exceptionally, if he/she can reconfigure the existing framework into a new shape to accommodate the new fact. In the opinion of David J. A. Clines, "this activity of reformulating old knowledge and generating new knowledge, constructing knowledge by connecting new ideas and material to old ideas and material, and making meaning for ourselves, is the path to remembering."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ David J. A. Clines, "Learning, Teaching, and Researching Biblical Studies, Today and Tomorrow," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 1 (2010): 8.

⁶⁹ Clines, "Learning, Teaching, and Researching Biblical Studies, Today and Tomorrow, 8.

The learner-centred theory of Christian Education, therefore, holds that learners remember best what they have come to know for themselves. Learning does not require a teacher. Rather, “learners learn faster and better if they have someone who can see how they can capitalize on the knowledge they already have, who can edge them forward into the next arena where they can expand their knowledge, their zone of proximal development.” In the teaching and learning context, when learners learn how to go about finding information, rather than just learn information the teacher set before them, it will be a transferable skill they can apply through all their life.

Learning Styles in Christian Education

Every learner is different. However, in a typical teaching and learning atmosphere, they are treated as if they were all the same. If the class spends listening to the teacher’s voice, some learners will seem not to be interested because, either the pace would be too slow or others will become anxious because they are being left behind. In this case, if the lecture is the principal mode of delivery, those who learn through what they hear will do well, and those who learn from what they see will not do well, even though the two kinds of students might be equals, intellectually speaking. Much research on learning styles within the field of Christian Education has been done, yet it seems that learning styles have been relegated to the background. Worth observing is that an attempt to discover the preferred learning styles of students before trying to teach them is essential. No matter how talented naturally the teacher is to offer a variety of teaching methods some students will invariably be disadvantaged. One widely adopted analysis of learning styles is the VARK (Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic) model of Neil Fleming.⁷⁰ These are described below:⁷¹

⁷⁰ Neil Fleming and Charles Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, VARK, 2019. <https://vark-learn.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/How-Do-I-Learn-Best-Sample.pdf>. Access-ed July 13, 2021. Fleming and Bonwell have explained that the acronym VARK stands for Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic. The VARK are the sensory modalities that are used for learning any information. In the

Visual Learners

Visual learners learn best from diagrams, visual displays. According to Fleming and Bonwell, visual learners prefer information that is depicted in “charts, graphs, flow charts, and all the symbolic arrows, circles, hierarchies and other devices that are used to represent what might have been presented in words.”⁷² Moreover, layout, whitespace, headings, patterns, designs and colour are important to visual learners in establishing meaning. Learners who have a strong *Visual* preference are more aware of their immediate environment and their place in space. Most importantly, Fleming and Bonwell caution that it does not include pictures, movies, videos and animated websites (simulation).⁷³

In a classroom setting, they may prefer to sit at the front of the class to see the teacher’s body language. They also benefit from teachers who use gestures and picturesque language. For visual learners, therefore, PowerPoint presentations with vivid diagrams will be to their advantage.

Auditory Learners

This learning style describes a preference for information that is spoken or heard. Learners with this category learn best from “discussion, oral feedback, asking questions, email, mobile chat, texting, discussion boards, oral presentations, classes, tutorials, and talking with others.”⁷⁴ As the name implies, auditory learners learn best in a

atmosphere of training, teaching, coaching or mentoring these four categories seem to reflect the experiences of learners.

⁷¹ For a detailed description of these categories, see N.D Fleming and C. Mills, “Not Another Inventory, Rather a Catalyst for Reflection,” *To Improve the Academy*, 11 (1992): 137-155. https://vark-learn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/not_another_inventor-y.pdf Accessed July 13, 2021.

⁷² Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, 7.

⁷³ Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, 7.

⁷⁴ Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, 7.

class atmosphere when the method of delivering involves listening on the part of the learner. In this case, they learn best through lectures and discussions. Also, auditory learners may understand better and thus benefit from reading aloud.

Read/Write Learners

Read/write learners incline to prefer information displayed as words, either read or written. According to Fleming and Bonwell, Read/write learners describe those who prefer books and handouts – anything with text and so think that many academics and high-achieving learners have a strong preference for this modality.⁷⁵ This kind of learner, therefore, benefit from PowerPoint, the Internet, lists, handouts, dictionaries, thesauri, quotations, and words in the teaching-learning atmosphere.

Kinesthetic Learners

Fleming and Bonwell define this modality as the “*perceptual preference related to the use of experience and practice (simulated or real)*.”⁷⁶ In the observation of Fleming and Bonwell, “although such an experience may use other modalities, the key part of any definition is that the learner is connected to reality, ‘either through experience, example, practice or simulation.’”⁷⁷ Kinesthetic learners are often referred to as “Learning by doing.” However, this description appears to be an oversimplification especially for higher levels of learning which are often abstract and sometimes difficult or dangerous or slow.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, 7.

⁷⁶ Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, 7.

⁷⁷ Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, 7-8.

⁷⁸ Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner’s Guide to Improved Learning*, 8.

Kinesthetic learners tend to learn through performance, moving, doing, and touching in the teaching and learning atmosphere. This mode uses many senses (sight, touch, taste and smell) to take in their environment and to experience to learn new things.⁷⁹ This group of learners will therefore benefit from assigned project works and homework involving general movements.

The Possibility of Combining the Four Learning Styles

The fact remains that life is multimodal. It is therefore uncommon to find that only one mode is used or is sufficient. The mixture of two or more is therefore possible. Those who learn best through a combination of two or more learning styles are therefore known as multimodal learners.

The idea of Multimodal learning, therefore, suggests that when a number of our senses – visual, auditory and kinaesthetic are being engaged during learning, the learner understands and remembers more. Combining these different modes create a better learning experience.

⁷⁹ Fleming and Bonwell, *How do I Learn Best? A Learner's Guide to Improved Learning*, 8.

CHAPTER 8

THE GOAL, CONTENT AND CURRICULUM OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Goal and Content of Christian Education

According to E. D. Williams, Christian education aims at “helping believers to think ‘Christianly’ about all areas of life so that they can impact society with the message of the gospel.”⁸⁰ The import of this is that Christian Education purposes in the development of a Christian worldview. It can be said therefore that the purpose, goals, and values of Christian Education are derived from a biblically-based theological foundation. In this regard, Christian educational goals are drawn from the key functions of the church, which are worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and service. Effective Christian Education can therefore be measured based upon the accomplishment of these important functions.

In bringing the discussion to the African context L. E. Megill writes that “Christian Education aims to nurture the total family of the church in the Christian faith, taking into consideration the needs of the whole person, his or her unique situation, and his or her total environment and family.”⁸¹ The above quotation brings out certain keywords like nurture, family, Christian faith, whole person, situation and environment that any serious Christian Education endeavour has to consider. In our opinion, the purpose of Christian Education is to

⁸⁰ E. D. Williams, “Christian Education” in *The Portable Seminary*, ed. David Horton (Michigan: Bethany House, 2006), 642.

⁸¹ L. E. Megill, *Education in the African Church* (Accra: Trinity College Publications, 1976), 3.

bring people to saving faith in Jesus Christ, to train them in a life of discipleship, and to equip them for Christian service in the world today. It is to develop in believers a biblical worldview that will assist them in making significant decisions from a Christian perspective.

Decisions concerning educational content in Christian Education must, therefore, involve a conscious effort to connect the tasks of the church, namely, proclamation, community, service, advocacy and worship. Such a linking effort is understood in Pazmino's definition of Christian Education as "the process of sharing content with persons in the contexts of their community and society."⁸² From this definition, educational content can be referred to as that which is shared with participants in teaching. Perhaps L. E. Cremin explained it better when he suggested that the content includes "knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities as well as any outcomes of that effort."⁸³ Thus in our opinion, the content does not only include cognitive, affective, behavioural or lifestyle materials as some educators see it, but also spiritual growth materials. This is because the content goes beyond what the teacher intends to include what the participants receive as a result of the teaching (which may be quite different from the teacher's intention). Moreover, in Christian Education, it is worth recognizing that the ultimate teacher is God and that all of life makes up the content and not just the material identified as appropriate content for consideration. Notwithstanding, the teacher must assume responsibility for content and experience in the planning, practice, and evaluation of teaching.

Excursus on the Instructional curriculum of Christian education

With reference to the curriculum of the Christian educational ministry, that is to say, the content and material that form what the teacher

⁸² W. R. Pazmino, *Principles and Practices of Christian Education: An Evangelical Perspective* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 82.

⁸³ L. A. Cremin, *Traditions of American Education* (New York: Basic, 1977), 134.

teaches, it could be observed that most of the materials used in the Ghanaian context are not prepared by the local churches themselves but from their national headquarters. A case in point is that of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Ghana Baptist Convention. Wyckoff sees curriculum as “a carefully devised means of communication used by the church in its teaching ministry so that the Christian faith and life may be known, accepted, and lived.”⁸⁴ This definition does not automatically presume that we use printed materials, classes, teachers, or any of the other things usually associated with the curriculum.

A critical examination of each word and phrase as used by Wyckoff in his definition will help us to appreciate much more the importance of this view of curriculum. *Carefully devised* suggests that someone has spent time and energy thinking, designing and planning whatever the curriculum will become. *Means of communication* states that curriculum intends to engage persons in dialogue with one another, not exclusively in structured, formal classrooms. *Used by the church* refers to the whole church, all of its members, the church corporate as the living body of Christ.

The phrase *in its teaching ministry* includes all of those activities and programmes that feature instruction and nurture as important elements for equipping persons to be servants of God, disciples of Jesus Christ. *In order that the faith and life may be known, accepted, and lived* describes the content and the purpose of the church’s teaching ministry. It is not just a matter of learning some information about the Bible or Jesus, nor just a matter of stating what one believes. Rather, it is essentially putting into practice and living one’s life as an expression of what one knows and believes.

This view of the curriculum is equally appropriate for churches of all sizes. Thus, the problem that can be identified concerns the

⁸⁴ D. C. Wyckoff, *Theory and Design of Christian Education Curriculum* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press 1961). See also C. D. Wyckoff, *The Task of Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

question as to whether the materials and content prepared by and received from the National headquarters are relevant to the particular local church that uses the materials prepared. Can one be legitimate in arguing that a Christian Education director responsible for a particular local church who prepares a material will have a more effective, useful and relevant material than the one who has no contact with the receptive learners but yet prepares the material for them? It can be pointed out that the one who has contact with his or her members will have better material because the latter takes into consideration the needs and maturity level of the church members.

In looking at how the materials are to be relevant to the Ghanaian context, it could be said that Christian educators (both those who prepare the curriculum/instructional materials - exegetes and those who teach - facilitators) need to make their theology understandable to the receptors. As B. H. Kato succinctly puts it, "Africans need to formulate theological concepts in the language of Africa. But theology itself in its essence must be left alone."⁸⁵

We are inclined, therefore, to argue that the burden of the people who prepare the instructional material would be to examine the Scriptures and apply its message to the realities of the here and now." The aim is not to change the essence of theology, but to contextualize it to benefit Africans. This means that the Ghanaian educator needs to understand the African context. Arguing in a similar line, Abogunrin posits that African biblical scholars need to decolonize biblical interpretation by responding to their religiously and culturally pluralistic context.⁸⁶

In his other work, Abogunrin argues that that process is helped by the fact that "the Bible is more real to the peoples of Africa (than Western peoples), not because they cannot reason scientifically, but because most of the things described in the Bible still happen around

⁸⁵ B. H. Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (Achimota: African Christian Press, 1985), 12.

⁸⁶ S. O. Abogunrin, "Christology and the contemporary Church in Africa" in *Christology in African Context: Biblical studies series number 2*, eds. S.O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde and G.M. Toryough (Ibadan: The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2003), 17.

us daily.”⁸⁷ Thus, for Abogunrin: “The task before biblical scholars in Africa is for biblical truths that is authentically African, but which is at the same time orthodox and from which Christians from other continents can draw lessons, inspiration and encouragement.”⁸⁸ All this is possible because African culture is so similar to Jewish culture, making it possible for Africans to understand biblical realities.

Again, J. A. Ilori has insightfully observed that Education is said to be Christian when it “is an outgrowth of God’s revelation...(and) an outgrowth of the Christian worldview.” It is also Christian when the concepts are, “derived directly from sources provided by Christian theology, the Bible and Christian philosophy.”⁸⁹

The curriculum should integrate the Bible in theory and practice, with the Bible being a vital part of the content and integrated with all subject matter. Apart from being Bible-based, it must be life-related. In the words of L. Semenyé, “Relevant, theologically sound materials that address real-life issues need to be used. Our local churches should not continue to be a dumping ground for irrelevant materials from elsewhere.”⁹⁰ Only when Christian Education addresses real-life issues in Africa in a practical way will it become “a means of improving, developing and nurturing the church in its authentic walk with Christ so that the applied word of God will have a positive impact on our societies.” Teaching is the main means of addressing the issues in question.

D. T. Adamo proposes that “using the Words of the Bible as power is in accordance with African religion and tradition,” and differs from the tendency of Eurocentric biblical scholars to “treat the Bible

⁸⁷ S. O. Abogunrin, “Biblical Healing in African Context,” in *Biblical Healing in African Context: Biblical Studies, Series number 3*, eds. S.O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, D. O. Akintunde, G. M. Toryough and P.A. Oguntoye (Ibadan: The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), 9.

⁸⁸ Abogunrin, “Biblical Healing in African Context,” 9.

⁸⁹ J. A. Ilori, *Principles and Methods of Teaching Christian Religious Education in Post-primary Institutions: An African Perspective* (Bukuru: African Christian Textbooks, 2005), 144-146.

⁹⁰ L. Semenyé, *Christian Education in Africa* (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2006), 1480.

more as a book of the past than as a book that speaks to the present.”⁹¹ The treatment of the Bible as a book of the present can be seen in some Akan Gospel songs, where Jesus Christ is not just a spiritual or philosophical entity, but also a dynamic personal reality in all life situations. In this light, it could be suggested that the thoughts and aspirations of the people in the local Church who do not have access to advanced level theological education should be taken seriously in our theological formulations and discourses. In an attempt to formulate African theolo-gy, however, care must be taken not to go into syncretism.

⁹¹ D. T. Adamo, “What is African Biblical Studies?” in *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Biblical Studies*, Series number 4, ed. S.O. Abogunrin, J. O. Akao, et al (Ibadan: The Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2005), 24-25.

CHAPTER 9

THE ROLE AND ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF THE EFFECTIVE TEACHER/FACILITATOR

The Teacher as a Facilitator

Every traditional teacher should aim at becoming a facilitator. The differences between the traditional teacher and facilitator are worth presenting here. On one hand, a traditional teacher tells and lectures from the front. On the other hand, a facilitator asks and guides the learner. And thus, supports the learner from the back or side. Next, whereas the traditional teacher answers learners' questions according to the textbook and curriculum, the facilitator guides learners into forming a conclusion. Moreover, traditional learner transmits knowledge. But the facilitator enables knowledge. Again, whereas the traditional teacher focuses on content, the facilitator focuses on learners' activity. Similarly, for the traditional teacher, on the one hand, the learner is passive. On the other hand, to the facilitator, the learner is relatively active.

The Role of Christian Educators/Facilitators

There are many key players in the Christian Education ministry of every church. The first to consider is the *Pastor*. He or she is the key to effective Christian Education in the church. The Pastor's support of and involvement in the Christian Education ministry set the tone for its success or failure. The second key player is the *Director* of Christian Education (or Minister in charge of Christian Education). This person

has the responsibility of taking the mission of the church and translating it into the structure through people, programmes and resources. This position is highly people-oriented because there should be coordination and involvement of many people, training of teachers, and workers, administering programmes and playing a supervisory role as well. The Director/Minister is also supposed to work closely with the youth pastor or director, the children's pastor or director, the leaders of the adult groups in the church and the leaders of the family ministry.

It is worthy of note, that a Christian educator/facilitator must first of all be a Christian. This is because a person's relationship with Jesus Christ plays a pivotal role in how he/she approaches ministry. The Scriptures make a clear distinction between the flesh and the spirit. The person must also be a maturing Christian. In this context, the emphasis is not on age but on how the person is progressing in his/her walk with the Lord. Any person involved in the educational ministry of the church must be submissive and teachable. The person must also be people-oriented. This is because Christian ministry is about people for whose sake Christ came to die. In other words, Christ did not die for programmes but for people. The concerns of people must therefore move the minister to help others. The Educator/Facilitator must also be a team player. Cooperation is crucial if any success is to be anticipated. Above all, the educator must be continually dependent on God and in step with the Holy Spirit.

Qualities of an Effective Teacher

Many things characterize being an effective Bible teacher. These qualities could be classified under spiritual, educational, intellectual and social requirements.

Spiritual Qualities

The spiritual qualifications of the Christian teacher are very important. This is because the Christian educator must have the same Spirit which enabled the biblical writers to understand their revelation of God and to record it. The first spiritual qualification of the teacher is that the person should have a relationship with God. In other words, that the Christian educator must not only be a believer in the Christian Scripture but also have experiential knowledge of the Christian faith.

The second spiritual qualification is that the teacher should have a passion to teach the Christian Scripture. In this light, the person must have the zeal that consumes, and the enthusiasm that breeds both reverence and industry.

The third spiritual qualification is that the Christian educator should always have a deep reverence for God and respect for the learners who also reflect the *image of God*. Meekness, humility, and patience are prime virtues for teaching the Scriptures. It is important to point out that these virtues reflect our reverence for God.

The final spiritual qualification is that of the dependence on the Holy Spirit to guide and instruct the learners. The saying that “to pray well is to teach well” holds much water in this sense. Most of the Christian educators whose teachings have blessed the church have mixed prayers generously with their teaching ministries.

Educational Qualities

Since the teaching task and its challenges cannot be settled solely by spiritual means, an effective Christian educator should have the proper educational requirements. For one cannot pray to God, for instance, for information about the authorship of Hebrews and expect a distinct reply. The person with an average measure of intelligence can with industry and adequate guidance from teachers and books discover the central meaning of most passages of the Bible. History has it that in the Middle Ages, theology was the queen of the sciences

and therefore a student was not prepared for theology until he had been through the arts.

In this light, an effective teacher should be willing to be trained and desire to grow in Scriptural knowledge and for that matter scriptural truth. The Christian educator should also have ample knowledge in human psychology – educational psychology as well as in various teaching methods. Since many evangelical Christians regard the Bible as the source and to some, as an embodiment of all truth, the Christian educator should have adequate knowledge of it before sharing it with others through teaching.

Effective teachers also need to know about the developmental characteristics of their students such as their age group so that they will not overburden them beyond their capacity to produce. Teachers are to have adequate knowledge of the physical abilities and limitations of their students.

Effective Christian teachers are to have ample knowledge of the methods of teaching. This is necessary because adequate knowledge of the diverse methods of teaching is essential in holding the attention of their students for effective communication of scriptural truth.

Intellectual Qualities

Closely related to the educational requirement of an effective Christian teacher are intellectual requirements. The reason is that teaching is not only a science but an art. Hence rules of teaching must be applied with skills and this requires intellectual ability and teachability. There must be *open-mindedness* to all sources of knowledge. Judicious use of *intellectual* abilities reflects itself in high-quality teaching.

Social Qualities

The qualification needed to be an effective Christian teacher involve more than just being an expert in an academic field. The teacher must

be able to interact with the class and help the learners understand a new way of looking at the content of the study. Some social skills required of the teacher include putting up positive attitudes as well as being patient with the students. The effective teacher in this regard sees himself or herself as a role model who sets the tone for the class. The teacher who can show enthusiasm and commitment, on the one hand, is more likely to reciprocate. On the other hand, when the teacher is negative and thus unprepared, or impatient, these qualities will be reflected in the attitudes of their students.

Moving from Training to Equipping Christian Educational Facilitators in the African Context

H. W. Byrne⁹² succinctly posits that regardless of the type of curriculum adopted, one thing to remember is that ninety per cent of the curriculum is the teacher. Regardless of the excellence of the curriculum, a poor teacher will turn out a poor product in a poorly educated student. And conversely, a good teacher can be successful with a poor curriculum, however, a good teacher can be better, and a staff of good teachers can be excellent if they are united by a good curriculum. It can be said from Byrne's submission that although the curriculum is essential yet for a successful Christian Education, the teacher's role is supreme.

Regarding the facilitators/educators, many of the churches in the African Churches have in a way been training their educators. Their emphases are usually placed on training the teachers which find strength in the sense that Christian Education involves setting goals, identifying needs, planning programmes, teaching persons, developing skills, and evaluating accomplishments. It could be said, however, that since the educational facilitators need to be trained, of

⁹² H. W. Byrne, *Christian Education for the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Mich.: Zondervan, 1973), 230.

which almost all the churches train their members in one way or the other, there is the need to equip these facilitators. The point here has to do with equipping the educators rather than training them because persons need more than training when they are faced with doing a job. In the words of Grigs, et al, “they need nurture and support that come from sources other than training strategies.”⁹³ One of the best ways to equip persons to accomplish their tasks is to provide a class or a workshop. Such workshops would not only equip persons with skills and information but also provide a significant measure of nurture and support.

⁹³ L. D. Griggs, et al., *Christian Education in the Small Church* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988), 76.

CHAPTER 10

BASIC TEACHING METHODS

The Role of Teaching Methods in Christian Education

The role of teaching methods in ensuring effective teaching and learning cannot be downplayed in Christian Education. According to Miller,⁹⁴ a method is a way in which the learner is led to see the relevance of subject matter to the problems of his own life. J. Dewey also sees methods of teaching as the arrangements of subject matter, which makes it most effective in use.⁹⁵

The teacher is not only to know the teaching material or subject matter for teaching, he or she is also to know the best way to use the materials. Many a time, some teachers spend several hours studying materials, which are related to the lesson. They also discover meaningful ideas that seem relevant to the objectives of the lesson and thus master the content and organize the teaching materials. However, they fail to realize that the choice of a teaching strategy is involved in the teacher's preparation. To this, we agree with Miller that, since the purpose of Christian Education is to lead people (learners) into the decision to live as Christian and be disciples, the teacher is to be concerned with *how* to teach so that effective learning can take place.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ R. C. Miller, *Education for Christian Living* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1956), 94.

⁹⁵ J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillian Co., 1916), 194.

⁹⁶ Miller, *Education for Christian Living*, 54.

According to Robert J. Choun Jr, a method is a way of doing, a tool, a catalyst and a means of access. A method is not a time filler, an end in itself and a purposeless activity. Like the architect, the teacher needs a clear understanding of the aim of the lesson before selecting the method. He further points out that good teaching methods are to be used and developed. Jesus utilized different but appropriate methods for teaching situations which he saw as learning opportunities.⁹⁷

Types of Teaching Methods

One of the signs of good teaching is the use of suitable and effective methods of teaching. There are many types of teaching methods. However, for this study, we have described seven of the basic methods of teaching to be considered. These are lecture, discussion, storytelling, demonstration and question and answer methods of teaching.

Lecture Method

The lecture method appears to be the most popular of all educational methods. This is the method of teaching whereby the teacher presents information to the students by providing facts. Miller (1956:194-195) calls this method direct instruction.⁹⁸ Some advantages of this method are that it is a fast method of presenting facts thereby saving time and it can be used to teach large classes effectively.

On the other hand, in the lecture method of teaching, learners' contributions are minimal in that this method makes the students passive listeners. The lecture method makes the scope of learners'

⁹⁷ Robert J. Choun, Jr. "Teaching and Learning Strategies," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 195.

⁹⁸ Miller, *Education for Christian Living*, 194-195.

activity very little. It thus undermines the principle of learning by doing. Using the lecture method to teach large, does not usually take into consideration individual differences. The lecture method tends to make the teaching process monotonous to the students.

Discussion Method

Miller⁹⁹ explains that discussion has to do with talking about an issue, a topic, somebody or something. As a method of teaching, a discussion can be used to teach an entire class or a group. A discussion is a method, which can be used to review information, clarify ideas and solve problems. It is conducted as a period of oral comments, questions and answers led by the teacher or the leader, in which the class members of the group actively participate.

For a discussion to be successful, the teacher should allow for the participation of all the learners in the discussions. During discussions, debates and arguments should be avoided. One important thing that makes the discussion method of teaching advantageous is that learners become active rather than passive learners thereby enhancing cooperation with fellow learners. However, the discussion could be time-consuming. Hence, it is suitable mainly for mature learners and not children.

Storytelling

A story is a real or imagined narrative account of people and events, which arouses interest, and progresses to climax or conclusion. A story is generally designed to convey a single truth or principle or to illustrate or prove a point. Storytelling is most effective with children but can be used quite well with adults also. Some purposes for using storytelling are: to secure attention and interest; to illustrate a point; to teach a central truth memorably and to summarize how truth is applied.

⁹⁹ Miller, *Education for Christian Living*, 213-216

Demonstration

A demonstration is a teaching technique, which shows truth visually through the use of physical materials and equipment or by acting out the truth. Some examples of physical equipment and materials are pictures, photographs, diagrams, maps, models, movies and slides. As a method of teaching, Miller succinctly points out that the rationale behind demonstration or show is that “concrete leads to abstract.”¹⁰⁰ Practising class assignments can also be designed to require them to “act out” or demonstrate the truth being taught. One benefit of the demonstration is that it visually shows students how truth works and thus associates truth with real-life situations. The other side of the demonstration is that it takes a lot of time and space.

Questions and Answers

Questions are one of the most useful teaching tools. This is because; questions require answers and thus demand thinking and response. According to Miller,¹⁰¹ it is a way of understanding attitude and evaluations of experience. With little work, anyone can ask good questions. Effective questions work well with adults and children. In relating questions and answers to teaching the scriptural truths, questions and answers are at the very heart of all effective teaching and learning. Inquiry opens the door of the mind for learning to take place. Good Bible study centres on asking certain questions about the text: what does it say? (Observation); what does it mean? (Interpretation); what shall I do? (Application). Thus, “who” “Where” “How” and “Why?” are all questions, which lead to learning. In this case, in preparing Bible study passages, the teacher should learn how to ask questions such as: what is the main idea of the passage?

¹⁰⁰ Miller, *Education for Christian Living*, 209

¹⁰¹ Miller, *Education for Christian Living*, 217-220.

Case Studies

This activity benefits a lecture situation. Case studies are effective before teaching takes place, during the teaching process, or even after the class. In this activity, the teacher presents a situation, called a case study, to the class. The teacher allows the students to discuss how the problem could best be solved in a Bible-centered way.

The case study must be detailed enough for the class to understand the problem, be able to study the aspects presented and relate to it. It must be true to life. Case studies help people apply Biblical principles to a real-life situation in a safe setting. It helps them think out a Christian solution to a problem they or their neighbours might encounter. It helps students understand the difference between reacting in anger toward a problem and acting in the love of Christ. A case study, therefore, presents two ways of handling a problem: the world's way and God's way.

Drama and Role-playing

In a Bible class, the drama is used to portray a Bible story that applies to the passage being studied. Drama can be meaningful to both adults and children. Select 'actors' from the class and present the drama unrehearsed. A drama aids students in remembering and may prompt thought later upon Bible truths they saw in the drama. A drama is never to be used for entertainment purposes in teaching the Bible. Instead, it should be used to make a spiritual impact. If there is only entertainment value, another teaching method should be employed, as entertainment is never the goal in a Bible study.

Children enter readily into drama and are often creative with Bible characters. In a children's class, the Bible story would first be read or told. Then parts would be assigned and acted out. Sometimes older children are less willing to act out a story, but usually, older teens and adults enjoy this activity. Role-playing is a form of drama. In this activity, the person or persons act out what they would feel or do in the situation the teacher gives them. For example, the assignment

might be to pretend you are a Samaritan woman. How would you act if this Jewish man asked you for a drink?

Role-playing is mainly an activity for older teens and adults. Another use of role play is to write down a puzzling situation a Christian might find himself or herself in. A student acts out or role-plays how he/she would behave in that puzzling situation. If the student does not portray the part as the Bible teaches, discuss the point with the class. Roleplay allows young Christians to decide upon attitudes and actions they should have. Sometimes it is useful to use role-play before the Bible lesson, and other times it is more beneficial to use it at the end of the lesson. An example of a puzzling a controversial situation to present for role play may be a social issue that applies to the passage, or to a verse being studied that could be interpreted more than one way. Ask a student to role-play two ways the woman in John 4 might have responded to Jesus' request in verse 16. Roleplay usually opens the class for discussion about what the Bible teaches versus the way the person acted in role play.

Some Factors to Consider in Selecting a Method(s) of Teaching

It is noteworthy to say that method and lesson content must work in harmony. Studies of the Learning Pyramid indicates that methods should involve the learners because studies show that learners remember only 10% of what they hear after three days, but 90% of what they do, see and hear.¹⁰² The best way to learn is through involvement in the learning process. Involvement and participation in the lesson help learners to own a new concept and apply it to life. Further, the teacher is to consider age group characteristics and needs. It is appropriate for the teacher to ask who his/her learners are, and determine lesson aims and choose the appropriate methods.

¹⁰² See "The Learning Pyramid," in *Education Corner that Matters*, <https://www.educationcorner.com/the-learning-pyramid.html>. Accessed July 13, 2021.

The teacher should not lose sight of goals, and he/she is to know what resources are available for teaching-learning to take place. Moreover, classroom conditions must be considered to determine the learning process. Learning starts where the students are and there is the need for teachers to remember that children, youth and adults process information in different ways and use different kinds of experiences to evaluate new concepts. The best way to find out is through a personal relationship and not in a large room. Contents communicated through skillfully used teaching methods will make a lasting impact on the learners and will result in life changes.

Contextualizing Teaching Methods and Techniques in the African Context

Instead of making use of teaching methods that are alien to the African context, it is worth looking for teaching methods that are at home in the African context. It could be argued that methods of teaching, which are African when adopted, could yield relevant results. This is not to suggest that indigenous non-biblical material should be appropriated as resources for biblical studies in Ghanaian Churches. For this cannot be both theologically legitimate and contextually relevant. Rather, there could be “folklore” which means retrieval of indigenous African narratives, folktales and poetry for reconstructing biblical theology in the context of the learners’ own cultures while eliminating the dehumanizing elements in that same culture.

CHAPTER 11

TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIALS: THE USE OF MEDIA

Media Explained

It is worth noting that everything we know comes to us directly or indirectly through media. In this context, media can be described as the variety of resources available that inform and enhance the teaching and learning process.

C. K. Mee¹⁰³ explains that media is a tool of communication that enhances the dynamics and dimensions of teaching and learning processes. Media is a plural form of medium. Medium in teaching and learning refers to that which contains or is used to communicate information. Thus the term 'teaching-learning material or media' has to do with the devices, which contain and or transmit information. Some examples of media are television, videos, cassettes, discs, films, pictures, books, objects, drama, chalkboard/mark board, arts and crafts, computers and film trips. These can be broadly categorized into print media and electronic media.

¹⁰³ C. K. Mee, "Instructional Media and Learning," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 203-208.

The Significance of Media in Teaching and Learning

Instructional media play a significant role in Christian Education. In the first place, media serves as an aid to interpreting thoughts and experiences. Next, they help in storing and preserving knowledge and research so that people will not lose them but rather improve or build on them. Also, media enables us to store information in ways that facilitate easiness in retrieving it later. In other words, the media enables us to access the world rapidly and thereby expand our stock of knowledge. Moreover, in teaching and learning, distance and time are not barriers to learning due to the role of media. For instance, computers and televisions enable us to observe happenings and events from all parts of the world.

In these contemporary times of information and communication technology, there are some particular values with special reference to audio-visuals that need to be looked at further:

- They help secure attention. This significance has it that the first task of the teacher is to gain and hold the attention of the learner.
- Audiovisuals also help the teacher to be faster in teaching.
- Audiovisuals make learning uniform because of the different backgrounds of learners.
- Audio-visuals also pace the presentation.
- They bridge the time gap. For example, the past can be bridged by films. The future can also be visualized.
- They also bridge the distance gap.
- Audio-visuals facilitate memory and multiply participation. The reason being that what people say and do in a learning atmosphere, they remember easily.
- Audio-visuals deepen understanding and make learning enjoyable.

- It gives more information to the audience within a limited time.

In critically looking at the above it can be said that teaching/learning materials are of immense relevance to both the teacher and the learner in Christian Education. This is because it helps before, during and after the teaching and learning process. Before the teaching and learning process, teaching materials help the teacher in lesson preparation and thus gathering information. Also, materials such as charts, real objects help both the teacher and the learner for a deeper, enhanced understanding during lesson presentation. Further, teaching materials help learners to source out information for further studies.

Brief Guidelines in Selecting Media

In selecting a particular media suitable for teaching in the church context there is the need to consider certain guidelines. The first has to do with scriptural or doctrinal accuracy. The next has to do with the needs of the congregation. The third has to do with the consideration of the finances available. These factors relate to the quality of the material as to whether they can stand the test of time.

CHAPTER 12

THE TASK OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Christian Education is essential to the effectiveness of the local church. New and challenging educational ministries, as well as established programmes, lead the church toward enlarged gospel witness. In this day of increased economic fluctuations and technological advancement, teaching God's truth should be a high priority in every church.

In small and large churches, in cities and rural churches, in well-established and new churches, in churches everywhere, the challenge is the same, to present the gospel of Jesus Christ in ways that are compelling and memorable so that persons of all ages and circumstances will be nurtured in the Christian faith in order to be empowered to live faithfully as disciples of Jesus Christ. According to Griggs, et al, even though we live and serve in an age of supersonic transportation and instantaneous worldwide communication, some of the essential needs of people are the same as they always have been.¹⁰⁴ Each person needs to discover what it means to be created in the image of God and named a child of God, to develop mutually fulfilling relationships of love, to know who God is and what God intends for one's future and to work for peace and justice in the world.

¹⁰⁴ L. D. Griggs, et al., *Christian Education in the Small Church* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1988), 12.

According to Evangelical Training Association (ETA),¹⁰⁵ Christian Education is a process by which persons are confronted with and controlled by the Christian gospel. The central concern of church education is the spiritual growth of the believer through character formation – whether child, youth or adult. A biblical church education ministry offers opportunities for growth through varied means, all focusing on explaining and applying God’s Word. In this regard, any serious approach to Christian Education must think of people as the primary focus. But, unfortunately, most churches think of Christian Education in terms of programmes, ministries, activities and organisations.¹⁰⁶

The Christian Education to Children

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matt. 19:14). With those words and His subsequent actions, the Lord Jesus elevated early childhood to a position of respect and importance. Those who are concerned about the educational ministry of the church must not develop the attitude that the ministry is for an adult alone. Clark (1991:233) says that a church that wants to be New Testament in every sense of the word must care about and provide for even the youngest individual who comes through its door. Clarence Benson, a noted Christian educator is quoted by Clark (1991:240) as saying about children’s ministry “Begin earlier!” We think that he is right because the church cannot begin too soon to mould and guide children. Spiritual nourishment must be provided for them during these formative years so that they would enter adolescence, and subsequently adulthood with a solid biblical foundation.

¹⁰⁵ Evangelical Training Association, *Church Educational Ministries: More than Sunday School* (Wheaton: Lockman Foundations, 1976), 32.

¹⁰⁶ C. K. Mee, “Instructional Media and Learning,” in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 219.

Designing a ministry to meet the needs of children in the local church brings to mind pictures of crayons, clay and visualised Bible stories. Sunday school has been the church's traditional vehicle for training children in biblical truth. However, new and emerging children's ministry programmes are gradually replacing the traditional Sunday school.

According to Cunningham,¹⁰⁷ Sunday school was created in the late 1700s as an attempt to meet the basic educational needs of poor and illiterate city children. During the 1800s it grew more evangelistic in its emphasis and extended beyond the poor to include children from the middle- and upper-class strata. It became tied to the established church and a regular part of its programme. While continuing to espouse evangelistic goals, its primary purpose increasingly focused on the nurture and training of the children of church members.

The shifting needs of children are becoming the focus of both the secular and Christian press in contemporary times. Books and articles are reflecting on society's increasing concern for its children and their future. According to Cunningham¹⁰⁸ in October 1990, the United Nations called political leaders together for the first World Summit for Children. Even as world leaders have met, the church too is responding. Sunday school is undergoing an examination and redesign to more adequately meet the needs of today's children. Children's ministry is expanding to offer innovative programme approaches which take into consideration current trends without sacrificing unchanging biblical truth. The church needs to plan its curriculum for children, bearing in mind their developmental characteristics, consistent with their unique needs, interests and modes of thinking.

Children's church offers an opportunity for children to participate in worship at their level. It is the primary component in the church's educational ministry for instructing children in worship.

¹⁰⁷ M. S. Cunningham, "The Christian Education of Children," in *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education for a new Generation*, ed. Anthony J. M. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 137.

¹⁰⁸ Cunningham, *The Christian Education of Children*, 137.

Educationally sound and spiritually profitable children's church not only teaches children Bible content; but also provides a practical foundation for future church relationships. According to ETA,¹⁰⁹ churches with sufficient children have found separate children's choirs to be an attractive feature of the children's church programme. These choirs may periodically minister in songs to the adult church congregation, thus sharing the children's church ministry with the entire church. We believe that no investment a church makes has a great dividend as that which is invested in the lives of young children.

Youth/Teens Christian Education

According to Garland¹¹⁰ historical perspective makes it clear that the focus of youth/teens' ministry in the early 1950s was entertainment as a means of retaining the young people in the church. For some decades now, the local church's approach to teens' ministry has been greatly affected by sociological and cultural times. Ministry to youth/teens' is no less challenging.

No population group has been more influenced by the pleasure motif than teenagers. The effects of decades of eroding sexual standards, growing drug addictions, and epidemic violence which is now common scenes on our streets have each contributed toward an adolescent culture that is harder to understand and more difficult to unravel. Perhaps one of the most disturbing aspects of this sociological commentary is how teenagers have sought to get their needs met. The results of this urgency to get needs met are the increasing number of teenage pregnancies, teenage abortion, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, rampant use of drugs by teens, teenage alcoholics. Due to these, not only are their own lives so

¹⁰⁹ Evangelical Training Association, *Church Educational Ministries: More than Sunday School*, 33

¹¹⁰ R. K. Garland, "The Christian Education of Youth," in *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education for a New Generation*, ed. Anthony J. M. Grand (Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 160.

void of meaning that some no longer can cope, but the lives of those closest to them are also falling apart.

Megill¹¹¹ posits that we live in a world where the youth/teens' are in the majority and this world is also a changing world, a world of rapid social change, of political and social upheaval. These youth are caught in the change from the traditional African society and often do not know how they should relate to either the traditional or modern society. The African youth/teens of today are seeking identity.

The youth/teens' programme is one of the church's key educational challenges, for it provides Christian guidance for young people during some of their most crucial decision-making years. Reaching and holding young people with an effective youth ministry requires thorough planning and dedicated effort. In the opinion of ETA,¹¹² facilitators of youth/teens' ministries in the church need to remember that these young people want action and many feel the church ministry for young people is inadequate in this area. The action, however, must be part of a balanced programme and carefully related to the church's Christian education objectives designed to provide leadership development, Christian fellowship, and service opportunities.

Adults Christian Education

Megill¹¹³ has observed that it is easy to see when a child passes from being a baby to a child; puberty also marks a definite point in a child's maturing to be a youth; but when is a person an adult? An "adult" is more difficult to define and an understanding of when one becomes an adult varies in different cultures. She further points out that an individual may be a child intellectually, an adult physically, and

¹¹¹ L. E. Megill, *Education in the African Church* (Accra: Trinity College Publications, 1976), 104.

¹¹² Evangelical Training Association, *Church Educational Ministries: More than Sunday School*, 57.

¹¹³ Megill, *Education in the African Church*, 139.

socially and emotionally be an unstable adolescent. However, in any society, adults are usually identified by responsibilities and relationships. An adult in that case then has accepted responsibilities of economic independence or marriage or better still, living away from home and pursuing his/her concerns.

The adult life span offers the church a major challenge for ministry. Persons who are 20 years of age and over, in most countries comprise more than two-thirds of the total population. If adulthood begins at 20 years of age, then simple arithmetic reveals that the church has to direct its educational planning to the changing patterns and needs of more than forty years of an adult's life.

Adult education is a formal or informal activity, which gives adults opportunities to learn, grow or develop in their Christian lives. Since the adult life span comprises a long period, it is necessary for churches to consider the characteristics of each adult and plan educational programmes accordingly. To do this, it will be appropriate for churches to provide for adults in three major groups in the adult life span. Older adults who are 60 years and over, middle adults, approximately 40 years to 60 years, and lastly young adults who are 20 to 40 years.

Most people think that after a person becomes an adult there are no more stages of development, but more recent studies of adult development by some scholars have shown that adulthood is shaped by some clear developmental patterns. Stubblefield has noted:

Researchers now know that adulthood, including the late years, offers potential for growth and development. It is marked by stages, crises, challenges, disasters, and triumphs. The crisis faced and the solutions discovered in adulthood often produce progress as dramatic and far-reaching as some of the advances made in the early years.¹¹⁴

Churches that are aware of the needs and potentials of the older adults recognise that the issue facing the church is not how to care for the older adults, rather how to return a sense of purpose to their lives. The middle adult years are years of dreaded time and a time of

¹¹⁴ J. M. Stubblefield, *A Church Ministering to Adults* (Nashville: Broadman 1984), 257.

potential. Many are aware that life is changing, but it is not clear why? These should be years of consolidation, evaluation, and inner renewal. Few adults, however, take the time to reflect on the changes taking place in their lives.

Churches should recognise that adults need to understand and relate to the transitions of this period. Adults, especially middle adults begin to feel the passage of time. Life is now structured in terms of life left to live. They question the meaning of life and are concerned that their lives may not have taken the right direction. Young adults today are a new generation. Emerging trends in this age group, therefore, need to be observed by the church when dealing with them.

Christian Education Ministry to Families in the Local Church

The church as a family of God comprises many family units. The church will only be as strong as its families. If strong families are built, then there would be strong churches as well. Building Christian families in today's world is a difficult task. God's word gives the blueprint for successful families, but satanic influences and low societal standards and values hinder families from God's intended plan. Biblically, the church's responsibility is to equip parents to live out Christ's love in their family relationship. It must not be thought of as something, which happens automatically because of the teaching programme of the church. Wayne Rickerson thinks that every church needs a family life education ministry and ought to set specific goals in its ministry to families.¹¹⁵ Answers must be sought for questions like; how can churches strengthen marriages? What can be done to help parents become godly parents? What can be done to help those reared in dysfunctional families recover and find God's fullness?

¹¹⁵ Wayne Rickerson, "Building Healthy Families" in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 581.

As these questions are asked, the church can develop ministries to meet those needs. One of the greatest tasks needed in today's world will be for the churches to strengthen marriages and families. Megill says, "Christian education would indeed be incomplete if it did not have a place for family life education."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ L. E. Megill, *Education in the African Church* (Accra: Trinity College Publications, 1976), 164.

CHAPTER 13

PATTERNS OF LEARNING IN THE LOCAL CHURCH CONTEXT

This part of our study situates the topic of the task of Christian education in the context of the local church with particular attention to the Ghanaian context. An emphasis will be placed on the patterns of learning and age group programmes in the Ghanaian local Church contexts.

Sunday School

Some of the churches in Ghana such as Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist make mention of Sunday school, but from a different perspective. For the Presbyterians and the Methodists, Sunday school is for children and not adults. The Presbyterians call the adults Sunday teaching as Bible Studies whilst the Methodist calls it Bible class.¹¹⁷ But for the Baptist, Sunday school is for both adults and children. The question that comes to mind concerns the issue as to whether it can be found in the Bible.

Contrary to popular belief, Sunday school is not mentioned in the Bible. It began in 18th century England when Robert Raikes taught children to read on Sunday, the only day they were not working to teach them literacy. The Bible was their primary text, and biblical teaching was part of the process.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ See Mary Fosu, "Dynamics of Christian Education from the Ghanaian Perspective: A Study of the Christian Education Ministry of some Selected Churches in the Kumasi Metropolis" (M.Phil diss., Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2012) for a detailed case studies on some of selected Churches in Kumasi, Ghana.

¹¹⁸ Doris A Freese & J. Omar. Brubaker, "The Church's Educational Ministry," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 406-407.

Making mention of Sunday school in this context of our discussions presupposes that the institution of Sunday school still exists, but the purposes have changed. Most Sunday school ministries in the Ghanaian Churches, for instance, do not exist to teach literacy. Rather, the traditional focus is Bible knowledge in a classroom environment. Our observations of some churches revealed that Sunday school is usually the first thing people think of when they hear the term “Christian Education.” This crosses denominational lines and has generally been taught by non-professional Christian educators.

Sunday School has been an evangelistic tool for many contemporary evangelical and charismatic churches in Ghana. It appears today that Sunday school is the most common Christian Education agency in the context of the church and claims both evangelism and edification as some of the key accomplishments. The Sunday school offers the opportunity for relationships to occur in distinct ways. People who are unimpressed or affected in worship service sometimes commit to Christ after seeing Him in the lives of the friends they have met in a Sunday school setting.

It can however be said that Sunday school as a driving force of Christian Education has some loopholes. It appears to be the only agency that traditionally fulfils the purpose of Christian education in the Ghanaian church context. In contemporary times, as culture has been changing and many churches are adopting new strategies, many churches have used variations of Sunday School to meet specific needs – moving it to a different day of the week for adults, offering elective topics, or meeting in different locations. In our opinion, the issue at stake here is to assess its impacts to see if it is fulfilling its objectives. If it is, then we are to keep it. If not, we are to revise it or replace it. The point is that we must be willing to leave the familiar methods without disturbing the essential message if our Christian educational ministry is to be fulfilling. An example of the need to modify the strategy has to do with Calvary Charismatic Centre, Kumasi (CCC) who in addition to the Sunday service, the other medium through which the people are educated is the Wednesday evening service and the

programme pointed out as School for Christian Ministry Bible Course taught for one year which is specially designed to develop those who have the desire to be in part-time Christian ministry.¹¹⁹

Age-group Programmes

Almost all of the local churches in Ghana, in one way or the other have some sort of age group programmes: Children's ministry, teen's ministry, youth, young adults and adults. The strengths in these agencies of Christian education are both biblical and sociological. First, biblically, God designed people primarily to need each other. This is the whole concept of body ministry found in the New Testament. Second, sociologically, people who meet with others who have similar characteristics or interests can effectively learn from each other in a group setting.

Concerning the children's ministry, it is worthy of note that many adults determine their choice of a church by the type of treatment their children receive there. This usually takes place in a Sunday school setting or children's church service.

The teens and Youths have special needs and need a programme that allows them some solid interaction with other teens in an attempt to find a relevant application of biblical truth. The challenge of this youth and teens ministry is to find relevant connections between the things they are learning in the context of ministry and their day-to-day existence at school, work, and social situations.

Adults begin at college-age or tertiary education age and include young adults, middle adults and senior adults. The focus of Scripture is that the "older should teach the younger" (Titus 2), so adult ministry should encourage adults to become more involved in serving those who are younger than themselves. Whereas some churches in their programmes put more emphasis on some aspects of the age group

¹¹⁹ See Mary Fosu, "Dynamics of Christian Education from the Ghanaian Perspective," 79-83 for detailed studies on Calvary Charismatic Centre, Ayigya.

more than the others, there should be a balance when approaching different age groups.

Many Churches in Ghana have children's worship services. 'Children's church' is usually held during the time of the regular morning service. The purpose is to provide a worship service that is similar to the adult service but geared to their age level. It is a means of presenting biblical truth to them at a young age. It also serves as a training ground to help them know what to expect when they are old enough to attend the adult service. Usually, children's services are a blend of songs, Bible reading, prayer, storytelling, crafts, and other age-appropriate activities.

Grace Baptist Church, Amakom in Ghana organises Vacation Bible School for its teens during the August-September school recess. This serves as an agency to study the Bible in a different environment. The strength of this programme lies in its informal environment, providing a concentrated time for Bible learning, activities fellowship.

In an age where many parents do not know how to provide an environment of God's consciousness, perhaps this motivates some Churches such as Grace Baptist to embark on a Family Ministry. This is found in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6) in its suggestion that the primary training ground for Christian Education should be the home. This teaches that the family structure should surround a child with an environment of God-consciousness from infancy. Thus, the church's role is to be one of support and education-providing tools and training to make the home the centre of Christian education.

Special Education

Drawing from the research conducted on some selected Churches in the Kumasi metropolis of Ghana, it is apparent that the teaching-learning facilities and atmosphere are not physically challenged friendly.¹²⁰ A case in point is that of Grace Baptist Church, Amakom where most of the Sunday school classes for the children, teenagers

¹²⁰ Fosu, "Dynamics of Christian Education from the Ghanaian Perspective," 113.

and adults are held upstairs part of the building that has no elevators. Could it be argued that this neglect of special education ministries in the local churches contributes to the reason why many physically and mentally challenged persons in our Ghanaian societies are found on the streets begging? If that is a legitimate reason, then churches should have programmes for special members, especially for those who are physically challenged.

In providing a programme for exceptional persons we also create an opportunity for ministry to the families of those individuals. Often families are excluded from the worship and fellowship because churches are not prepared to meet the spiritual, educational, physical and emotional needs of challenged persons. Given that they may experience feelings of isolation and loneliness. Churches that provide for the needs of the disabled open the door for the entire family to participate in the life of the body of Christ.

CHAPTER 14

CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Meaning and Essence of Cross-cultural Teaching

The purpose of this section is to call the attention of Christian educators to the challenges and opportunities for cross-cultural teaching. It shows what cross-cultural teaching should be to provide helpful insights into what must be learned to become an effective cross-cultural educator. Thus, cross-cultural education seeks to teach persons of unfamiliar cultural situations of a local church in an urban context. Cross-culture has to do with the encountering of people of unfamiliar cultural situations. The current increase in rural-urban migration and influx of people of different backgrounds in search of employment in the metropolis requires the local church to become sensitive to the relevant issues involved in communicating with members of other cultures.

H. R. Brooks amply notes that culture comprises the very fabric of our lives.¹²¹ No aspect of life is untouched or unaltered by culture. Social outlook, how we express ourselves, and the ways we show emotion are all cultural. All we talk about or do not talk about, how we say it, what language and vocabulary we use to do it, and to whom we tell it will in some way be determined by the cultural patterns we practice. This is why teachers must learn some of the cultural patterns that are familiar to their students. Christian educators may offend the

¹²¹ H. R. Brooks, "Cross-cultural Perspectives in Christian Education," in *Foundations of Ministry: An Introduction to Christian Education for a new Generation*, ed. Anthony J. M (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 104.

sensitivity of the very people they are trying to help unless they become sensitive to the cultural patterns of their students.

According to Breckenridge,¹²² multiculturalism is the term often used when cross-cultural perspectives are applied to education. Breckenridge goes on to give a working definition by writing that,

Multicultural Christian education has its goal the embodiment of a system of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of individuals from diverse groups, acknowledges and values their differences, and provides an inclusive context that empowers all members of the church family so that they are encouraged and enabled to make a personal contribution to Christ's ministry.¹²³

When a Christian Education programme in the local church is truly cross-cultural in its approach, it will be viewed as a process that affects the structural organization of the church, directs instructional strategies, and changes the personal values of members of the congregation. The purpose of such a programme goes beyond the boundaries of a local church. M. F. Marty points out that the purpose of multicultural Christian Education is "to provide the widest scope and fairest representation of the surrounding world."¹²⁴

Effective Cross-cultural Educational Elements: An African perspective

This part examines certain values and worldviews for meaningful Christian Education in a cross-cultural context.

¹²² L. Breckenridge, "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Christian Education," in *The Portable Seminary*, ed. David Horton (Michigan: Bethany House, 2006), 667.

¹²³ Breckenridge, "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Christian Education," 667.

¹²⁴ M. F. Marty, "Christian Education in a Pluralistic Culture," in *Rethinking Christian Education: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. D. S. Schuller (St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press 1993).

Values

Beginning with values, age is honoured among Africans. In this case, the more mature the teacher, the more effective the ministry is likely to be. Thus the idea of a young person leading or teaching mature people is culturally out of place in most African communities. And this must be taken into account by Christian educators seeking to work cross-culturally. Another value has to do with communalism instead of individualism. Brooks is therefore right in pointing out that whereas independence and privacy are hallmarks of Western cultures, communalism is esteemed in the African context.¹²⁵ The African expects most decisions to be made by a group. One must therefore submit most proposals to social units such as clan, extended family, or parents, for discussions and consensus build-up.

This idea can be expanded in the light of the African concept of time and the Western concept of time. On one hand, many African cultures see time as event-oriented rather than time-oriented. They want events such as teaching to happen when they are ready. Thus, some churches start services or classes only after all the people have come. Westerners, on the other hand, are likely to start “on time” whether everyone has come or not.

Worldview

A culture’s view of God or ‘Deities,’ the concept of being, origins, the universe, man, sin, nature, and other philosophical issues are part of one’s worldview. Worldviews permeate all facets of culture for they are part of our authority system/belief system. For Christian educators, one’s worldview answers the most important questions of culture and thus must be addressed in our cross-cultural platforms. The importance of this issue of worldview has to do with the fact that just because a person may hold to a differing worldview does not mean that such a worldview is biblically incorrect. We follow the view of Brooks that: “What is needed is the ability to distinguish between

¹²⁵ Brooks, “Cross-cultural Perspectives in Christian Education,” 110.

biblical absolutes (e.g., personal purity, honesty, justice) and cultural standards or societal norms (e.g., dress codes, authority systems)."¹²⁶

The Teacher's Goal in a Cross-cultural Context

Christian educators should strive to communicate a biblical worldview to their students. What this means is that teachers are to teach not necessarily what is wrapped in the values and views of their culture. For instance, to forbid dancing to learners whose culture is expressed by dance is an imposition not from scriptures but the teacher's worldview. It is worth noting that the objective of Christian educators is to inspire students from other societies to learn the Scriptures. It is against this background that teachers need to learn to relate to their students in a cross-cultural setting.

Contextualizing the Christian Educational Ministry in the Ghanaian Local Churches

On the issue of culture and worldview, it could be observed that most of the illustrations in the teaching-learning process in the Ghanaian local church contexts appear to be limited to that of the local contexts, such as Akan context when it is apparent that most of the churches come from different cultural backgrounds.¹²⁷

We agree with Plueddemann that "the more we can learn about the influences of culture on thinking and learning, the more likely it is that the gospel will be understood by all nations."¹²⁸ The strength in

¹²⁶ Brooks, "Cross-cultural Perspectives in Christian Education," 112.

¹²⁷ Fosu, "Dynamics of Christian Education from the Ghanaian Perspective," 123.

¹²⁸ E. J. Plueddemann, "World Christian Education," in *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, eds. Robert E. Clarke, Lin Johnson and Allyn K. Sloat (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 353.

this statement is that if nations are understood to be people groups, then cultural sensitivity in teaching and learning play a paramount role. Thus, the task of Christian education will be enhanced if basic principles of cross-cultural teaching could be employed.

Could this neglect of cross-cultural sensitivity contribute to the increasing rate of nominalism in the Ghanaian Christian context as phenomenologically observed? To the researchers, one of the most urgent needs of the rapidly growing churches around the world is culturally sensitive Bible teaching. B. H. Kato warned about the dangerous lack of effective Bible teaching in Africa by saying that:

Biblical Christianity in Africa is being threatened by syncretism, universalism and Christo-paganism. The spiritual battle for Africa during this decade will be fought, therefore, largely on theological grounds. But the church is generally unprepared for the challenge because of its theological and biblical ignorance. The church in Africa is suffering from theological anaemia.¹²⁹

Kato's dilemma could be addressed when the Christian Education ministry of the church takes into consideration relevant contextualization of the teaching and learning process. When Paul was in Athens, he endeavoured to lead the Athenians from worshipping the God they did know to worship the God they did not know (Acts 17:22-31). This accords with the inductive method of teaching that, in the opinion of K. Gnanakan, "learning is most successful when we go from the known to the unknown. A child will learn from what is already familiar to him or her and then grows to absorb additional information."¹³⁰

An African theology of Christian education must describe how the God Africans worship through all sorts of intermediaries may be made known through the one Intermediary, Jesus Christ. Such a theology would affirm that the Almighty God known to the African is the One who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and commanded Moses to teach the descendants of Abraham his laws. He is

¹²⁹ B. H. Kato, *Biblical Christianity in Africa* (Achimota: African Christian Press, 1985), 11.

¹³⁰ Ken Gnanakan, *Learning in an Integrated Environment* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2007), 16.

the *One* who was incarnated as the Son of God and died for the salvation of mankind.

The early church lived in a community that resembled the communal system common in African traditional societies. It was in such communities that “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42), where “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had” (Acts 4:32). As “all the believers were together and had everything in common” (Acts 2:44), the result was that “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). To this, we agree with S. P. Ango that, African communalism, respect for elders and concern for the plight of others are nearer biblical value systems than Western existentialist individualism.¹³¹ This does not mean that Christian educators must go back to advocating African Traditional Religion with non-Christian practices. Instead, western approaches that agree with biblical concepts and practices should be integrated with African concepts and practices that do not contradict the Bible.

Moreover, a contextualized Christian education ministry would describe how biblical *koinonia* (κοινωνία) may be interpreted in terms familiar to Ghanaians in their communal relationships and caregiving, thus presenting to Africans the God of a fellowship who enjoins and enjoys fellowship with those he has redeemed (Heb10: 25; 12:22-24).

An authentic Christian education ministry must therefore be a contextualised theology that correctly interprets the Bible but applies it in a language understandable to the people among whom it is being interpreted, and in a way, that meets the real needs of the people, the learners. Such contextualization is best done by the people themselves. However, the culture of the people must be modified in those areas where it goes contrary to the teachings of the Bible. This

¹³¹ S. P. Ango, “Towards an African Philosophy of Christian education,” *Religious Forum Academia: National Journal of Contemporary Issues in Religions, Arts and Social Studies* 5, no. 1 (2006):7.

necessitates a theological formulation that emphasises what specific modifications are needed, and how such modifications must be done.

An educational ministry that seeks the transformation of a people's culture to conform to biblical precepts is in line with the way Jesus conducted his teaching ministry. Christ sought to change the way his audience thought. So he developed an intimate relationship with them, used figures of speech and narrative techniques to illustrate his teaching. He involved his audience physically, mentally and emotionally in his teaching, such as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where he dialogued with the lawyer, invited the lawyer's comments, and instructed the lawyer to go and do what he had understood (Luke 10:25-37). There is a close relationship between Christ's approach to teaching and the way African traditional teaching encourages audience participation.

CHAPTER 15

GHANAIAN INDIGENOUS PATTERNS OF LEARNING

This chapter looks at the African indigenous education with particular reference to the Ghanaian context. The chapter thus studies the way Ghanaians used to transmit cultural and life values, skills and knowledge before their encounter with western methods of teaching and learning referred to as formal education. This is against the background that in Africa, Christianity was mainly introduced by voluntary groups from Western Europe. They came from Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, Germany, Italy and other states at different times before, during and after the colonization of Africa.¹³² For example, there were groups such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Wherever it spread, Christianity in many areas became strongly associated with the promotion of formal education.

Some Ghanaian Traditional Patterns of Learning and Nurturing

Traditional education refers to traditional indigenous education. It can be defined as a process by which an existing society transmitted learnt culture, knowledge, skills and values from one individual to another. B. K. Amankwaa sees culture as a defining characteristic of society and for a country.¹³³ Culture comprises all kinds of the learned

¹³² John Kwasi Fosu, *Experiences of Pneumatic Phenomena in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity as Appropriations of 1. Cor 12 -14: A Critical Analysis* (Hamburg: Missionshilfe Verlag, 2019), 47-48. See also Richard Foli, *Christianity in Ghana: A Comparative Church Growth Study* (Accra: Trust Publishers, 2006).

¹³³ B. K. Amankwaa, *Indigenous Religion and Culture* (Accra: Baffour Publications, 1980), 65.

behaviour of a people. It is important to point out here that this culturally our people had means of educating their generations before the introduction of formal education. This can be substantiated by what one learns from parents, relatives and peers before going to school. The teaching and learning process in the traditional sense was informal. It did not involve elaborate preparations similar to that of the formal system of education (formal education is a structured, systematic and organized system of teaching and learning). In the modern context, formal education is offered mainly in specific places (schools, colleges, universities, churches, etc) under specialized instructors.

Formation and nurturing of indigenes in traditional values of Akan community life are considered important. R. S. Rattray¹³⁴ saw and therefore described the whole of the Asante life as educational. To him, one cannot, upon a critical observation, find any systematic training process. There was no formal education but every minute was an educational moment because educational instructions were given to the younger generation by the elderly.

Akan indigenous formation sought to nurture the young people for proper community participation. Children for instance were trained to know the acceptable social norms. Rattray observed that the Akan children were trained to avoid those pitfalls which could cause them troubles in their adult life. Virtues like keeping oneself from fornication, respect for others and knowledge of all the taboos of the society were instilled in them. The young were taught to work with their hand to make a living as adults. Whereas the formation of boys was the prerogative of fathers, the formation of girls was also done by mothers.

Traditional leadership formation was done by parents, family members, traditional leaders and the larger community. Rites of passages like a naming ceremony, puberty rites, marriage and death were the main formation moments. Festivals, storytelling, proverbs, symbols and music provided Akan formation values. To R. S. Rattray,

¹³⁴ R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 11.

even drum language is a means of communicating traditional values and messages.¹³⁵

Young people were taught to acquire a profession. According to Rattray, some of the men were woodcarvers, some fashion umbrella frames for the great state umbrellas, some were drum makers, others were weavers. Traditional clothes were artistically designed to communicate Akan values. For Rattray, not only were Akan textiles artistically designed but they were beautifully put together, and of standard. The patterns had their name and, in many cases, also represent the clan, social status, or even gender of the wearer or to some proverbial saying.

Although the traditional patterns of learning were informal, yet they had and continues to have some aims and objectives. Some of the aims and objectives of the Ghanaian indigenous patterns of learning are to:

- Produce informed and knowledgeable persons.
- Impart skills for productive purposes in society.
- Integrate the person into society to preserve its identity.
- Preserve the cultural heritage of the group.
- Foster unity of the group.

From the foregoing discussion, it is worth observing that traditional education aims to train youngsters to develop morally, spiritually, materially, culturally and physically. These aims appear more to be major areas in which the child's educational processes unfold.

In relation to the individual and for that matter the learner, E. Suom-Dery¹³⁶ posits that the aim of traditional education is aimed at maintaining and invigorating the child as a life force. In this regard, the individual is educated for life. Pertaining to the individual's life on earth, the goal of traditional education is for attaining the highest good of the learner. This entails being totally healthy and happy, self-fulfilled and socially integrated. In relation to life after death,

¹³⁵ R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 242.

¹³⁶ Eugene Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context: Incorporating Christian Ethics among the Dagara of North-western Ghana* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2000), 206.

education for life enables the individual to achieve his/her destiny in union with ancestors and God. Since many Africans place a high premium on good character, the formation of character is another important aim of traditional education. Kwame Gyekye describes the good character as “the essence of the African moral system, the linchpin of the moral wheel.”¹³⁷

To sum up, following Suom Dery¹³⁸ traditional education has two main purposes. The first relates to the individual and the second relates to the community. In the first place, education has the aim of forming and developing the personhood and personality of the unique individual to the highest stature in the areas of character, conscience, reason, will, physique in the light of the person’s happiness and success in life here on earth and in certain preparation for the attainment of his ultimate destiny. In the second place, traditional education seeks to ensure the harmony, integrity and permanence of the family and society here and now and in honour of the eschatological assembly of ancestors.

Organising Traditional Patterns of Learning

This is about looking at the people who conducted the traditional patterns of learning as well as where it was conducted. It could be discovered that it was carried out in the homestead or wherever activities occurred. For example, teaching took place in the garden, grazing grounds, in the communal places sometimes far away from home. In the olden days, the fireplace was especially used in Ghana to pass on knowledge, skills and values.

According to J. C. Ssekamwa,¹³⁹ some teachers gave basic knowledge and skills and those who were more specialized and resourceful. The parents played a major role in teaching their children.

¹³⁷ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996), 71.

¹³⁸ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 208.

¹³⁹ J. C. Ssekamwa, *History and Development of Education in Uganda* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1997),

They were supplemented by elders, peers and those who were considered resourceful.

Worth observing here is that traditional education is not the concern of the person's nuclear family. It is conducted by the whole household, neighbourhood and by the whole community. In the observation of Suom-Dery, the formation of the child is community centred and community-sponsored in that it is community-bound.¹⁴⁰ Hence all paternal and maternal relatives and peer groups are all agents of education.

¹⁴⁰ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 210.

CHAPTER 16

CONTENT AND METHODS OF DELIVERY IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Contents of Delivery in Indigenous Education

The content here refers to the values, knowledge and skills that were learnt in traditional African societies. It is worth pointing out that in the traditional African societies, what was learnt depended on what was available and desirable and the learning situation was never the same.¹⁴¹ Though the societies varied in their social, economic and political settings, they shared the following:

- The culture of the group (such as the family, clan and tribe);
- Environmental education covering the physical features of the area;
- Names of plants and animals and their functions;
- Skills especially of a manual nature that enabled the learners to perform certain tasks for their own good and that of the community in which they lived;
- Social values such as respect, love, unity and cooperation;
- Gentility and humility which required exhibiting manners of civilized conduct and behaviour;
- Leadership skills that shaped a person's role in society, based on sex, age or status;

¹⁴¹ J. P. Ocitti, *An introduction to indigenous Education in East Africa. A Supplement to Adult Education and Development No 42* (School of Education, Makerere University: 1993).

- Religion also featured on the curriculum and was vital for the spiritual and moral fibre of the learner and the whole community; and
- History of the group where the learner was expected to know and appreciate the ancestry of the group and the past fortunes or misfortunes among others.

Since the ultimate aim of traditional education is to lead to a successful and happy life on earth and the realization of the ultimate destiny of the person, Suom-Dery has amply argued that the whole exercise of education in all its dimensions is “fundamentally an ethical and moral exercise.”¹⁴² To this, he suggests that all traditional processes of education could be designated as moral or ethical education. The pervading presence of religion in traditional education seems to support Suom-Dery’s assertion. However, given the holistic nature of traditional education, especially in its endeavour to make a person fit into society in an economic and social sense, the content of traditional education cannot be limited to moral and ethical themes. For among other things, as pointed out already, traditional education also sought to impact vocational skills.

Methods of Delivery in Indigenous Education

It is common knowledge that the methods of delivery in indigenous education were largely informal. In this case, the real life-situation is practically the school of education, and every place and moment could be worthy of imparting knowledge and inculcating values in children and young people. According to Suom-Dery¹⁴³ the educational process is not “strictly guided by a systematic organization of learning-material nor does it unfold according to a pre-programmed instructional learning-timetable as of a formal school context.” The

¹⁴² Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 209.

¹⁴³ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 211.

strength in Suom-Dery's assertion lies in the fact that reality-bound and life-oriented activities in which the learner is very active in the process of learning from parents and adults, peer group members learning from one another are the most common and effective methods and moments of education. Among others, the methods of traditional education that are described in this section include oral narratives, language and mini-lecture, experience, observation and imitation, participation and apprenticeship, symbols and symbolic actions and sanctions.

Oral narratives

By traditional oral narrative is meant the use of folklore. This is the whole collection of oral forms of literature such as story-telling, proverbs, riddles, folktales, poems, songs, maxims, aphorisms, riddles, puzzles, conundrums, saga, legends, myths, migration stories, dirges, sayings, traditions and customs. This oral literature constitutes a subsystem of many African traditional cultures and is articulated verbally. In the observation of Suom-Dery, oral narratives are a very important source of traditional African conceptual thought relative to the world, humankind and society, religion and morality.¹⁴⁴ They, therefore, exercise a strong influence in shaping the thought and life of the people. For children and youth, oral narratives constitute an important aspect and means of cognitive learning and transmission of moral instruction.

Traditional African people enjoy story-telling. More often, these stories are told to entertain. However, their values go beyond their entertainment. Perhaps Suom-Dery describes the values better in his observation that:

Over and above the rollicking atmosphere of laughter, refreshing humour, spirit-elevating songs and boisterous conversation that characterise African story-telling sessions, folktales conjure the

¹⁴⁴ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 221.

whole African world and social reality in a make-believe art and have moral didactic and pedagogical power.¹⁴⁵

Suom-Dery's observation is very tenable in that traditional African stories do not only provide recreation but aims at giving emotional release and education.

Among others, oral narratives become educative due to several reasons. In the first place, stories point to the consequences of doing evil and the benefits of doing good. From this, the young hearer or learner are given the decision either to do good or evil in their relationships with others. In the second place, following Suom-Dery, oral narratives aim to propose values for interiorisation or to warn against an inclination to do a particular evil.¹⁴⁶ This value is common among many *ananse stories* among the Akans of Ghana. In the third place, stories are educative due to their characterisation feature. For behaviour traits of the characters in the story that are often reflected in the human world make stories educative.

On the whole, oral literature gave the learner not only the desired educative message but also equipped the individual with communi-cative skills, among other values.

Language and Mini-lecture

Among the subsystems of culture (social relations, technology, ideology, language), in the opinion of Suom-Dery,¹⁴⁷ the component of language is the most effective way of communicating and transmitting culture and values to young people in all cultures. C. A. Ackah has affirmed this truth in his observation that the use of language is an important factor in human motivation.¹⁴⁸ The reason is that words are powerful tools that motivate particular forms of human behaviour.

¹⁴⁵ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 222.

¹⁴⁶ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 225.

¹⁴⁷ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 216.

¹⁴⁸ C. A. Ackah, *Akan Ethics: A Study of the Moral Ideas and the Moral Behaviour of the Akan Tribes of Ghana* (Accra: Ghana University Press, 1988), 105.

Thus, the use of language demonstrates superior intelligence. Through language, parents have various ways of giving virtues to their children.

Language, therefore, serves as a context in which the concepts of morality and cognitive development and self-development are made. The ability of the learner to express his or her thoughts boldly through speech but within reasonable confines and with prudence, respect, and empathy for others, is a mark of wisdom and maturity in that it enhances a good relationship with others. It also demonstrates self-mastery and self-possession.¹⁴⁹

The mini-lecture was used where short messages were verbally given to the learner who was expected to listen, observe and later do as instructed. The process was repeated whenever the need arose. A case in point is when parents wake their children up at dawn and give them a piece of advice.

Experience, Observation and Imitation

Experience, observation and imitation were commonly used indigenous methods of education. These methods are implied in the Akan maxim that *relin/huntlefiud# / do h#* (no one teaches a child how to find God). The traditional Akan and many other traditional Africans believe that experience is the best teacher. Transferred to the field of traditional education implies that experience is one of the most important methods of teaching and learning. Moral education in areas of learning the value-systems, the idea of good and evil and family ethos become part and parcel of the learner through his/her experience of life realities. Experience is made possible as the child interacts with the adults. In the words of Suom-Dery, "A child cannot *understand* love and kindness unless it experiences the joy of being loved and be treated kindly by those with whom it lives and interacts."¹⁵⁰

Observation and experience are all included in the educational moments. Religious and moral values are appropriated as the child

¹⁴⁹ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 220.

¹⁵⁰ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 213.

attends and participate in religious activities such as ritual performances.

Participation and Apprenticeship

In addition to the active participation that was crucial in the learner's life, especially in the transmission of skills, the learner engaged actively in the informal "school" of apprenticeship. Thus, a more elaborate apprenticeship was also used to expose the learner to specialized knowledge, skills and values. The instructor trained the person for a relatively long period. Such instructors had special skills in general areas of crafts, arts and medicine. On the part of the learner, vocational training and apprenticeship in areas of blacksmithing, weaving, carving and mouldings are all learnt primarily through participant observation and practice.

Symbols, Symbolic Actions and Cultural Functions

Symbols are concrete representations of meaning in the forms of signs, objects, images, sounds, gestures and persons that evoke and demand appropriate responses from those who understand them and for whom they are meaningful.¹⁵¹ To Suom-Dery, Symbols are the "most effective and powerful means of expressing the inexpressible and of making visible and present the invisible and the otherwise removed and distant."¹⁵² From this understanding, it can be said that symbols serve as concrete media of contact with reality and existence.

The African world is replete with symbols and symbolic actions. A life without symbols is inconceivable because symbols are the language of life.¹⁵³ Following Paul Tillich,¹⁵⁴ Suom-Dery observes that "symbols are perhaps, the most pervasive meaning-communicating

¹⁵¹ Klaus Schilling, *Symbole erleben : Glauben erfahren mit Hand, Kopf und Herz, Bd 1* (Stuttgart: Verl. Kath. Bibelwerk GmbH, 1998).

¹⁵² Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 228.

¹⁵³ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 228.

¹⁵⁴ P. Tillich, *Gesammelte Wertk*, Bd. 5 (Stuttgart, 1970).

devices and a medium of ethical teaching and religious education, symbols being the 'language of religion.'¹⁵⁵ The African child is born into a world and house of symbols and grows up and dies with symbols. Many a time, these symbols are explained to the child and young person so they could be motivated to live the meaning, values, expectations and aspirations that they signify.

For sociological educational purposes, and within traditional Akan communities, for instance, presenting water to a stranger is an expression of *Gastfreundschaft* (hospitality towards strangers and visitors). In the context of performing a naming ceremony, presenting water to the child has the intention of giving moral education not only to the newly born child about the virtue of truthfulness but also to the growing youth witnessing the occasion. Pouring water on the ground accompanying by verbal declarations could also signify invoking the presence and justice of ancestors or deities. In this regard, symbols teach theology and for that matter the faith of the people. Similarly, the philosophy of the traditional Akan is taught through symbols and symbolic actions. At death, objects presented to the deceased as a final rite of passage tells about the traditional Akan belief in life after death. How well funerals are celebrated is also a symbolic indication of a life well-lived.

There are cultural functions and ceremonies in times of happiness and sorrow. They were used to teach the learners hidden traditional practices and beliefs.

Sanctions: Rewards and Punishments

Like many other societies, traditional Africans have mechanisms in place to effect social control and peaceful co-existence. These mechanisms are expressed in the form of sanctions. According to Suom-Dery, sanctions are indispensable instruments for the creation of moral sensitivity and inculcation of moral norms in young people.¹⁵⁶ Sanctions are a society's reactions to a mode of behaviour

¹⁵⁵ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 228.

¹⁵⁶ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 234.

that is thereby approved or disapproved. Approved sanctions can be termed as positive sanctions and that of the disapproved sanctions are negative sanctions.¹⁵⁷ G. K. Nukunya classifies sanctions into *external* and *internal* or *organised* and *diffused* sanctions.¹⁵⁸ Whereas *external* sanctions approve or disapprove acts of others, *internal* sanctions are applied or imposed by the actor himself/herself which could be negative or positive.

On the one hand, *diffused* sanctions are the spontaneous expressions of public opinion such as gossip, sarcastic comments and nasty looks with which any bad behaviour or action may be greeted. On the other hand, *organised* sanctions are those that are imposed as a response to a recognised procedure. In this regard, organised positive sanctions are prizes, awards or specific honours. Organised negative sanctions are the various kinds of punishment that range from public expression of reprobation, songs, flogging, stoning, imprisonment and execution.¹⁵⁹

In traditional African societies, a child grows up in the context of sanctions. These sanctions are expressed in the form of taboos and prohibitions believed to be coming from the supernatural such as God, ancestors, spirits and other deities. Violating taboos then attract punishment in the event of non-reparation or neglect for reconciliation.¹⁶⁰ Hence, practising witchcraft, incest, theft, poisoning and killing clansmen could invite the wrath of the supernatural and the community as well.

The positive aspect of the sanctions consists in the fact that they motivate others especially the young to moral development with the conviction that the supernatural rewards good behaviour. Society likewise approves or applaud good behaviours to motivate others. In this regard, songs are used to approve or applaud good behaviour and

¹⁵⁷ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 234.

¹⁵⁸ G. K. Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*, 2nd ed. (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2003).

¹⁵⁹ Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, 84.

¹⁶⁰ Suom-Dery, *The Family as Subject of Moral Education in the African Context*, 235.

thus to honour heroes or heroines and people with outstanding achievements.

All in all, it could be said that the traditional African lives with sanctions. These functions have educative roles. Growing up in the African society, the child gets to know and understand that certain actions, emotions, attitudes and words are approved and rewarded and others are disapproved and punished.

CHAPTER 17

GHANAIAN TRADITIONAL EDUCATIONAL MOMENTS AND VALUES

This chapter seeks to establish the fact that there are some Ghanaian traditional patterns of learning. It is interesting to point out that before the inception of Christianity and encounters with Western traders and volunteers with their inherent formal education, Ghanaians had their traditional educational patterns such as apprenticeship, rites of celebration and cultural functions.

Traditional Education in Ghana

Africans have educational values and educational moments. This is because if there are values to impact then they must be a moment of transmitting those values. All the rites of passage such as naming ceremonies, puberty, marriage and death provide educational moments in Ghanaian traditional education.¹⁶¹

A “rite” is a public ritual that should not be confused with “right” or write. “Passage” in this context means the recognition that a person has passed from one social status to another. Biologically, human beings are about the same from birth to death. However, it is common knowledge that humankind differs in the stages of life: infant, toddler, child, teenager, young adult, mature adult and senior. There is

¹⁶¹ K. Opuni-Frimpong, *Indigenous Knowledge & Christian Missions: Perspectives of Akan Leadership Formation on Christian Leadership Development* (Accra: Sonlife Press, 2012), 93-117.

nothing biological or in our experience that provides boundaries between these stages of our lives, except birth, puberty and death.

As a social element within sociology, therefore, a *rite of passage* provides social recognition or acknowledgement to the members of the community that a person has changed in social status.

In life, the first rite would be the recognition that a new person has entered society. In Akan society, this is the outdooring ceremony, which must first wait to see if all seven of the day spirits allow the child to live, after which the father has the right to name the baby.

Historically, when it was very important to have babies and perpetuate the community, the rite of passage that changed a person from child to adult, was very important. More importantly, was that rite which recognised the change from girl to woman, and therefore of age to marry and give birth. In the European middle ages, this declined as an overt rite and was absorbed into the ritual of the first communion. Today, with the decline in the importance of organised Christianity, this has now been replaced with the high school graduation ceremony.

Death is an important biological transition. *Rites of passage* to recognise that a person has died differ from society to society. In Akan societies, those remaining alive dress in red (danger) or black (destiny) but not white (joy) while the corpse is usually dressed in white. The funeral is a rite of passage that marks the transition of an elder to an ancestor, who will be considered to maintain involvements in the family, lineage and community after death. In traditional Christian theology, the deceased will remain in stasis until the apocalypse when the Messiah returns to raise all from the dead and send them each to heaven or hell. In some modern societies, there appears to be no overt theology in the celebration of funerals to bid farewell to the deceased.

According to Sarpong,¹⁶² marked differences exist between the upbringing of boys and girls. Girls have a biological marker, their first

¹⁶² P. Sarpong, *Girls' Nubility Rites in Ashanti* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1977), 10.

menstrual period, for which there is no direct equivalent for boys. In some societies, boys to men rites are more elaborate to counteract this difference. In other societies, the girls to women rites are more elaborate, because female fertility is more important than male fertility, as in matrilineal Akan communities.

After the child's naming ceremony, puberty rites are the next set of rituals of social status transformation which children undergo in Ghanaian culture. The most well-preserved puberty rites are the Dipo of the Krobo ethnic group and the Bragoro of the Ashantis. These ceremonies mark the entry of young women into adulthood. In Ghana, only a small section of ethnic groups usually found in the northern parts of the country have initiation rites for men and where they occur they are done in secret and not given as much prominence as that for young women.

Distinctive Values of Traditional Education: An Examination of Indigenous Education

It can be pointed out that indigenous education plays an important role (and still plays) in society. This is due to its strong attributes, namely:

- It was relevant to the peoples' needs
- Functional and practical in terms of training
- Democratic, that is, education for everybody
- Affordable in terms of cost
- Integrative as it prepared the individual to fit into society
- Productive as learners produced in the process of training
- Conducive to the learners who were mainly taught by close persons around them
- Life-long and thus rewarding
- It had no dropouts, etc.

It should be noted, however, that indigenous education, in all societies, had its shortcomings. To begin, it could be pointed out that the knowledge; skills and values were so localized and could not be applied or appreciated outside a given community. In other words, it was so rigid or conservative and consequently, resistant to change. Consequently, new ideas innovations were not readily embraced. This stunted creativity and intellectual development. Though it was an education for all, it had elements of gender bias. In Africa for instance, most communities had assigned roles for the male and female and discouraged members of one sex against doing what was regarded as prerogatives of the opposite sex.

Other criticisms include the informal nature of indigenous education. It was not programmed or structured. Thus, uniformity in terms of content delivery and learning varied so much among the members of a given group.

Incorporating Traditional Patterns of Learning in the Local Church

Traditional patterns of learning could be critically contextualized in the local church context. A case in point is what Grace Baptist Church, Amakom Kumasi does through the organisation of a 'White Bible' ceremony for young ladies who are entering into marriage. It serves as a kind of initiation rite similar to the Akan concept of 'Bragorɔ' puberty rite. At this ceremony, the lady is counselled about some realities of married life, crowned for staying pure, and given a sceptre as a queen in Christ. Those who are unmarried witnesses are also encouraged to stay pure and truthful to God in their singleness states.

Ghanaian Christianity today appears to be using only foreign patterns of learning to teach Christian values. These patterns are missionary patterns of learning, which therefore make us unable to make any significant contributions. One of the many questions that arise then is, can we not make Christianity our own by picking our values through our indigenous pre-missionary patterns of learning?

Many of our indigenous patterns of learning share affinities with the Christian patterns of learning.

It appears that some Africans have neglected our pre-missionary patterns of learning because religion and everything that African people identify with as their own has been described by earlier 18th and 19th-century Western missionaries and anthropologists as primitive, paganism, animism, heathen, superstitious, fetish, salvage and barbaric. These concepts were used by Europeans who were encountering different cultures in their attempt to describe the religious phenomenon, which was so different and uncommon to their religious experiences. Africans have rejected such derogatory concepts in their efforts to describe Africans and their belief systems. In the effort to respond to this Western concept of Africans pre-missionary belief systems, some have come to be very hostile to Western missionaries and their ideas about Africans. But the question that stands unanswered is, can what Africans feel about Western missionaries' description of them solve the problem? In our opinion, the answer is a big no. Rather Africans must understand that the Europeans who came to Africa also had their cultural influences.

There is an urgent need to re-design an approach to the study of African cultural categories and indigenous knowledge systems for the up-and-coming generation to know the rich cultural heritage of our land. According to Gyekye¹⁶³ even though African Traditional religion has no sacred writings like Christianity and Islam, they philosophise. Nana Addo Dankwa III¹⁶⁴ says, the African people have their ways of recording events through stools, skins, arts and crafts, rites of passages and festivals. He emphasises that oral source has always been an authentic source for the African. One can therefore search for values in all the systems of the Traditional Akan people.

¹⁶³ Kwame Gyekye, *African Cultural Values: An Introduction* (Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, 1996).

¹⁶⁴ Addo Dankwa III, *The Institution of Chieftancy – The Future* (Accra: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004),

Through the traditional patterns of learning, knowledge and desirable values are passed on to generations. A critical look at Akan concepts, proverbs and stories demonstrate the knowledge of the society. At any point in the life of the Akan, values are transmitted through their educational pattern. When one exhibits acceptable indigenous values, the person is looked upon with respect and honour. Akans for instance use traditional values in the formation process of an individual as well as the community. The whole process is meant to prepare one for life and it is worth mentioning that the traditional people do not take chances, they plan to teach systematically.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

We have attempted to deal with the dynamics of Christian education with the African ecclesiastical context in mind. Christian Education has been defined as a process by which persons are confronted with and are controlled by the Christian gospel. In relation to the local church, it is an equipping ministry to all age levels that nurtures spiritual growth and outreach to the world.

We have looked at various aspects of Christian Education, its understanding, impact, materials and teachers/facilitators. The emphasis has been given to the increasing importance of Christian Education in the local church. These values of Christian Education in the local church are enormous. As the church embarks on its educational ministry Christ becomes honoured, the believers are strengthened, the church's heritage is conserved and there is also parental guidance. It also establishes the church's beliefs and practices.

For a successful Christian education ministry, the roles of the Christ, Holy Spirit as well as the personnel involved are of utmost importance. The programmes (patterns of learning) and the needed facilities and equipment are also essential. Effective Christian education in the local church must also have aimed. These relate to evangelism, edification and equipping for Christian service.

An observation of the contemporary educational ministries of Ghanaian Churches reveals that the local churches are steadily making relevant impacts although the assessment of the impact is difficult to measure since there are divine and spiritual elements that may call for faith and discernment. For improved performance in these educational impacts, this book represents the perspective that there is the need to contextualize and incorporate some traditional patterns of learning in the areas of the educational content and curriculum and teaching methods to the receptors' existential realities.

In this book, we have looked at the dynamics of Christian education with special emphasis on the Ghanaian ecclesial context. The book has attempted to examine the theological and biblical bases of Christian education to include the roles of the teacher, learner, teaching and learning materials and curriculum to the current situation in Africa. In doing that, an attempt has been made to look at its implication for the Ghanaian ecclesiastical context.

Teaching is the most powerful nurturing ministry of the church and so the formulation of an authentic ministry of Christian Education in the local churches in Ghana will ensure that Christian teaching is done in line with biblical content and biblical examples of teaching. The essence of a theology of teaching would be an expression of what God commands to be taught, who God commands to do the teaching, how God commands the teaching to be done, and where God commands the teaching to be done. The objectives of the teaching would be the clear understanding of the principles of Christian life in the Bible, conviction of sin and repentance. The goal would be a people fully transformed into Christ-like lifestyles.

Further, we have argued in this book that this can be done successfully in Ghana when the content and curriculum are contextualised, and the method of communicating theology also becomes familiar and acceptable to the learners who are primarily Africans. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that if the gap between the Christian profession and Christian life in Ghana can be bridged by an effective Christian educational ministry, there is the need to creatively embark on contextual theology of Christian education. Thus, the relevant educational ministry will serve as timeless guidelines for rectifying the issue of nominalism in the Ghanaian ecclesiastical context.

In the light of this perspective, the following recommendations are made:

Consideration and establishment of special education ministry in the local churches

That the Church's educational ministry should take a holistic look at intellectually impaired and physically challenged individuals who come to church. Here, training of personnel and special education classes should be put in place by providing an environment for intellectually impaired and physically challenged persons that will provide for their emotions, physical, mental and spiritual development. It is only in this way that we will be able to shall the Gospel to all humankind and also to recognize their uniqueness and potential. The church must be aware that society has become more informed than ever of the special needs of the physically challenged and the church must recognize their special needs in ministry. It is there and then that special emphasis can be given to their needs by people with special training in these areas.

The local church ministries must not downplay the Christian call for discipleship

The church must instead emphasise the belief that is lived out in the whole body of Christ. It must teach the basis of biblical faith in a way that is relevant to the African context.

That Churches encourage and recruit more women into its teaching ministry.

For New Testament women engaged in teaching and other forms of Gospel ministry with apostolic approval. For example, in Romans 16, ten out of the twenty-nine people commended for loyal service were women. Paul instructs older women to teach younger women and children.

There should be cultural sensitivity and contextualisation of the content and methods of Christian education

In the context of the local church, the content of the instructional materials must encounter the traditional religious background of the people for relevant and contextual impact.

An authentic African theology of Christian education will clearly show how the Christian faith can be effectively taught in Africa, using terms familiar to Africans, acknowledging and affirming that which is good in the sight of God in African tradition, while condemning and advocating a change from that which is reprehensible in African culture and tradition, in favour of biblical lifestyles. Jesus did not leave people the way he met them. He led the Samaritan woman to understand that worship of God was not to be done at any particular location, but in the sincerity of the heart (Jn 4:21-24). He taught a lawyer the true meaning of a neighbour (Lk 10:30-37), and he showed a religious leader the difference between intellectual religious adherence and being born of the Spirit of God (Jn 3:1-8). Christian education must lead to the understanding of the difference between religious rituals, traditions and prejudices on the one hand, and spiritual rebirth, reformation and empowerment on the other. An African theology of Christian education would define the role and place of the Holy Spirit in conviction, conversion and illumination, which can be understood in terms of the African traditional power of divination, but which replaces that power and confers the power of God, "the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4) on the believer. Similarly, Churches could have classes for different language groups in Bible studies.

Organisation of workshops and seminars

There should be a periodic and continuous organisation of workshops and seminars, especially for Christian educational facilitators. This training should cover the crucial topics necessary for effectiveness such as Bible knowledge and theology, human development, home and environmental concerns, working with goals and objectives and programme planning skills.

That the churches take the educational ministries to the youth and teens through the Vacation Bible School pattern seriously

Since the future of the church rests upon the youth and teens of our local churches, it is imperative that they receive some kind of focus-teachings on relevant topics and issues that confront their lives. One way to make that possible is the organisation of the Vacation Bible Schools.

Examination of traditional patterns of learning

The church should also examine the traditional patterns of learning and possibly adopt or modify some of the good ones into the church for educational purposes.

Relevant contextualization of Christian education

The educational ministry of the local Church should provide the platform where there would be the rethinking of the major theological themes of the biblical message that should fulfil the African quest for the Supreme Being. That is to say that there should be a contextual African theology of Christian education. An African theology of Christian education would insist on acknowledging the basic awareness of Africans that the almighty God exists, and that they have a legitimate concern to seek to worship him, but God has revealed how he may be more fully known and more acceptably worshipped.

This God, whom Africans worship without fully knowing, could relate as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God sent Jesus Christ to die for the reconciliation of the world. The death of Jesus on a cross is the only sacrifice acceptable for the forgiveness of the sins of humankind. Man does not need to go through ancestral spirits who dwell in stones, trees or rivers, to approach God. Man does not need to fear spirits of nature or demonic spirits anymore because Jesus has overcome them by his death on the cross. Jesus is our ancestor, elder, relative, sacrifice, defender and redeemer. Jesus satisfies all that Africans seek through African Traditional Religion, be it forgiveness of

sins, appeasement of angry spirits, deliverance from poverty, disease and death, or protection against all kinds of enemies. These truths must form the content of Christian education in Africa.

There should be a creation of a teaching-learning atmosphere of Love that is relevant to the African context

God is love and loves fellowship. Worshipping God involves fellowship between God and humankind, and between humankind and others. Learning about God can best be done in an atmosphere of fellowship. Just as Jesus lived in close relationship with his disciples, eating, sleeping and travelling with them, much as is done in African traditional education where teachers and students live together in close community, Christian education in Africa must be carried out in close, *koinonia* (κοινωνία) fellowship. Sharing and caring must define the relationship between teachers and students, and among the students themselves. This will not only enhance learning but will help the students to put all they learn to practice. It will also restore the traditional African relationships of caring that have been lost through modern lifestyles. Existential individualism appears contrary to the fellowship advocated by Christ and practised by the early church. Christian education in Africa should therefore become a means of practically demonstrating the Christian concepts of peace, honesty, conflict resolution, love and fellowship.

The Christian education ministry of local Churches must be structured to meet the communal and practical needs of the receptors. God is the provider, for it is written, "On the mountain of the Lord, he shall provide" (Gen 22:14). God is the healer, for God says, "I am the Lord who heals you" (Ex 15:26). God is the redeemer, for it is written, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 43:1). God is the one who can meet all our needs and solve all our problems. God is the one who can solve the problems of poverty, disease, war, and corruption in Africa. God does this through the ministry of prayer (Jn 5:13-16); stewardship (Matt 24:45-47); and integrity (2 Cor 4:2).

Christian education must train believers in the habit of praying in faith, the attitude of faithful stewardship, and the practice of

honesty. Christian education in Africa must train Church members to abhor political violence, corruption, and unethical work practices, which are lifestyles that are abhorred in African traditional society. The God of the Bible does not need ancestral or traditional gods to punish the wicked.

Since the research could not exhaust all the possible areas of religious education such as Islamic education and traditional religious education in the Ghanaian context, further research into these areas is recommendable. Further research should be conducted using a comparative research design to compare Islamic education and that of Christian education.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The Reverend John Kwasi Fosu holds Doctor of Theology (Dr. theol.) from the University of Hamburg, Germany. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Ghana Baptist University College, Kumasi where he lectures New Testament studies, African Pentecostalism and other related theological subjects such as Foundation of Teaching and Theology of Development. Dr Fosu also serves as the Senior Pastor of Amazing Grace Baptist Church, Hamburg.

The Reverend Mrs Mary Fosu is a PhD in Religious Studies candidate at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi (KNUST) with a special research interest in Christian education, Ethics and Systematic Theology. She serves as the Senior Associate Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Amakom – Kumasi. Rev. Mrs Fosu also serves as the Chaplain and an adjunct lecturer at the Ghana Baptist University College, Kumasi.

Rev. Dr John Kwasi Fosu and Rev Mrs Mary are both ordained ministers of the Ghana Baptist Convention. As a married couple, Rev Dr and Rev Mrs Fosu are blessed with three children: Nyameama Pokuaa- Fosu, Nyameye Nyame-Fosu and Nyameadom Pokuaa-Fosu.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book, *Dynamics of Christian Education: Ghanaian Perspective*, explores the facets of Christian education and thus provides useful information to guide Christian educators in their ministries. The book establishes that the Bible and Christian theology should constitute a firm foundation for Christian Education. It has also been established that the content, persons, instructional materials, methods and context need to be balanced throughout the educational process for maximum effectiveness. It is needless to point out that Christian educators can draw norms and implications from the model of Jesus' teaching and also become receptive to the continuing work of the Holy Spirit against their own socio-cultural and church contexts. In this regard, it has been pointed out that the church constitutes the primary context for Christian education. Among other things, therefore, this book serves as a resource material for training Christian education instructors, pastors, Church leaders, theological students and all Christians who are involved in the teaching and learning ministry of the Church.