



THE CHALLENGE OF RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT TRAINING ON THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF LEARNERS IN BAPTIST COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY, LAGOS

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ABSTRACT This paper titled The Challenge of Resident and Non-Resident Training on the Spiritual formation of Learners in Baptist College of Theology, Lagos argues that residential and non-residential training has impact on the spiritual formation of learners in the College. The paper argues further that residential learners are less distracted in their spiritual formation exercise or activity than the non-residential learners. It was further discovered that there are inherent challenges confronting resident and non-resident learners in their quest to satisfy the spiritual formation requirement in their theological education curriculum. There are other arguments discussed in the paper. The paper was written from a descriptive point of view and the instrument used to gather information for the paper was graded interviewguide. The Baptist College of Theology, Lagos (Isolo campus) served as population for the study. The sample population for the study was drawn from the population through random sampling which allow for a representative selection of the learners comprising of both male and female students involved in resident and non-resident training. The paper was concluded with advice on strengthening spiritual formation activity in theological colleges.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral Training has assumed a new dimension in this contemporary time. It has move from obscurity to limelight, and from non-competitiveness to competitiveness. The era of begging and conscripting Christians into pastoral training are gone. Admission into pastoral training today is based on merit, and ability to compete favourably with others seeking similar opportunity. The number of persons seeking admission into theological Schools meant for pastoral training is more than the number the available institutions can adequately catered for physically, morally, socially, financially, materially and spiritually (The above assertion is the writer's opinion based on his involvement in the theological education in the last two decades in the Baptist denomination, specifically Lagos Baptist Conference that had multiplied into three distinct Conferences).

In other to create opportunity of training for qualified persons, most theological institutions devised various means of admission such as written and oral examinations to eliminate and reduce candidates for training. In spite of the introduction of exams most theological institutions are still discovering that they have more qualified candidates than they can cater for. Therefore, in order not to discourage qualified persons for training, other forms of training were introduced such as non-resident, sandwich, and weekend to complement the resident form of training that is in vogue.

This paper is meant to explore the effects of resident and non-resident training on spiritual formation of students in theological institutions, because spiritual formation is a vital aspect of every pastor's life and ministry which theological institutions cannot toy with. The inclusion of spiritual formation in the curriculum of theological schools helped such schools to provide a well-rounded preparation for ministry for Christian ministers. It helps students in forming godly character, which is the first priority in Christian service (lahaye:1992, 93). Spiritual formation is meant to help learners cultivate spirit-filled life as well as authentic Christian living (Imasogie: 2011, vi-vii).

EXPLANATION OF RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT TRAINING

Resident training involves drawing students, for a time into a special community, with the intention to have them learn something different from what they would learn from the community at large (Gordon Chamberlain: mcmlxix). Thus, resident training is carried out within the four walls of a training institution, where all participants lived compulsorily in the institution hostels throughout the training duration (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. England: Longman, 2007: 1399). Resident training affords the institution having such training the opportunity of monitoring the progress, development and spiritual wellbeing of its students. It affords the institution the opportunity of regimenting its students lifestyle with regards to dressing habit, eating habit, time usage, working habit, leisure habit, and spiritual habit (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. England: Longman, 2007. 1399).

Non-resident training is the opposite of resident training. It affords students the freedom of living wherever they want, provided such living places are convenient, and accessible to the institution of training. However, the ability of the institution to monitor the progress, development, and spiritual well being of students is greatly limited, because the institution authority cannot follow them to where they are living and possibly lived with them. More often than not institutions of learning operating non-resident training act on utmost good faith that their trainees are living and acting as worthy ambassadors of their respective schools. It is not within the scope of this write up to determine which is ideal resident or non-resident training. Instead this paper seeks to find the effects of both on spiritual formation of students. Distractions are much in non-resident training and more often than not are beyond the control of students and teachers. However, distractions are less in resident training and are controllable. Resident training enhances spiritual alertness and zeal for growth while non-resident training do not due to distractions (This assertion is based on gleaning the writer gleaned from resident and non-resident learners he intracted with in the cause of writing this paper in 2015).

EXPLANATION OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Spiritual formation in the Christian tradition is a lifelong process through which one's humanity becomes new and visible in Jesus Christ through the teaching of the Holy Spirit ("What is Spiritual Formation" *The Spiritual Formation Bible*, xi). Spiritual formation is fully divine and fully human, because it is initiated by God to be manifested in communities of faith and in the lives of individual disciple ("What is Spiritual Formation" *The Spiritual Formation Bible*, xi). Spiritual formation is forming attitudes, beliefs, and practices which animate and help human life to reach out towards super-sensible realities (Gordon S. Wakefield: 1983, 361-363). It embraces the whole life. Hence, Pobee said it is not simply for the "interior life" or the inward person, but as much for the body as the soul. He said it is the summation of man relationship with God (Pobee:1983, 5-8). Pobee view was shared by S. Kolawole who said that spirituality is a life in Jesus Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit (Kolawole, 66-77). Spiritual formation is essential because it encompassed moral and ascetical theology. Anyone who takes it serious and continue in it would have his/her ministry sought after. In essence spirituality is essential for ministerial success and a crucial factor in the practical life of a minister.

The importance of spiritual formation in the training of Christian ministers cannot be overemphasized. Its importance includes: enhancement and enrichment of students devotional lives, ministries, mission and evangelism activities. Spiritual formation breeds spiritual discipline which is a catalyst for godliness (1Tim.4:7). Spirituality describes God-human relationship and how it is mediated as an experiential relationship of the believer and God. Spiritual formation is a transforming experience that has two dimensions. The two dimensions are relationship with God (theology) and relationship with fellow human (mission and ethics). Thus, spiritual formation is a fusion of theology, mission and ethics. Spiritual formation is therefore

a cluster of acts and sentiments that are informed by the beliefs and values characterizing a specific religious community such as the Christian community. Thus, Thornton said spiritual formation is the total practice of every aspect of Christian daily living.

John White in his own contribution said that spiritual formation have the capacity to change participants perception of self and others. He said further that spiritual exercise makes a person see other persons differently; approach problems differently; have different view about work, study, job and future. Randall L. Frame in one of his article titled 'preparing the perfect pastor' said that seminaries have realized that without diminishing the importance of theology, preparation for ministry goes beyond the academic. He said the most effective pastors are those spiritually matured, exhibiting strong moral character and relating well with other persons. Don Whitney said that if a person does not make spirituality, that is, Christlikeness his/her highest pursuit, the person does not deserve to be in vocational ministry regardless of how great his gifts or talents may be.

B. B. Warfield of Princeton Theological Seminary in one of his article titled "Spiritual Culture in the theological seminary" said that proper preparation for the ministry must include three chief parts, namely the heart, the hand, and the head. He said the preparation of the heart, hand and head would make possible the acquisition of knowledge, skill and experience. He said further that spiritual formation is meant to enhance spiritual life of Christian ministers; because an unspiritual minister is a contradiction to his/her calling, and a denial to his/her office. It can also be deduced from the letter of Paul to Timothy that the spirituality of a minister has direct bearing on his learners or hearers (1Tim. 4:16).

Spiritual formation is a needed course in theological institutions because some of the students admitted may not have been opportune to have been disciple in their respective local churches before receiving call and admission to seminary. In addition some students in the seminary never had years in Sunday school; Church Training Programme; Bible study; because of their varied backgrounds. Thus, spiritual formation is needed to enhance their spiritual life. The contents of spiritual formation include faculty mentoring of students; inductive bible study series; worship and fellowship; spiritual exercises such as prayer, fasting, hymn singing, quiet time, bible reading, evangelistic outreach, reading of devotional literature and academic work. Above all, the purpose of spiritual formation is to help participants recognized the facts concerning God and humanity; and to open them up to the reality of God in human life. A life outside God is a useless, rebellious, and unprofitable life.

EVALUATION OF RESIDENT AND NON- RESIDENT TRAINING ON SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF STUDENTS

The evaluation was done at the Baptist College of Theology, Lagos. The College was established in January, 1997 to train men and women called into ministerial work. The College started as a non-residential training institution before graduating into residential training in 2011. The College has however continued to run resident and non-resident training at two campuses. The resident training is run at Agbowo campus while the non-resident training is run at Isolo campus. Specifically students who have had the spiritual formation course served as respondents in this work. A self- designed questionnaire on the effects of resident and non- resident training on spiritual formation was administered among the students, consisting of men and women. Sixty questionnaires were produced and administered among year one, two, and three students. The questionnaires were self administered. The questionnaire was made up of three sections. Section one contained items on personal information; section two contained items on resident training and section three contained items on non- resident training.

Section one contained items on personal information. The section was used to collect information on each of the respondents. Section two contained items on the effects of resident training on spiritual formation, while section three contained items on the effects of non-resident training on spiritual formation of students. Fifty students responded to the questionnaire and they were all non- resident students. Forty-five of the students were male while five were female students.

All the respondents responded that spiritual formation is a needed course in a theological school. They said it is essential for the spiritual development of Christian ministers in training now and in the future.

They said further that it enhanced growth morally and spiritually. These various assertions agreed with the earlier facts stated in the work. Ninety- five percent of the respondents mentioned prayer, bible study, chapel attendance, devotional reading, listening to others' sermon, quiet time, discipleship training, and mentoring as the essential elements of spiritual formation. The gains of spiritual formation mentioned by 98 percent of the respondents are conversion, spiritual growth, self- control, obedient, healthy relational skill, knowledge, and insight. The gains mentioned agree with the ones earlier enumerated in the work.

Eighty five percent of the respondents said that resident training serves as catalyst for spiritual formation more than non- resident training. Fifteen percent of the respondents said that resident and non- resident trainings serve as catalyst for spiritual formation. 85 percent of the respondents said that resident training enhances spiritual growth, communal living, small group participation, bible study, chapel participation, prayer and evangelism. To them non- resident training does not enhance spiritual formation because of distraction and time loss associated with it. Non- resident training according to them involved daily journey from home to school which consumed energy and time that could be used for spiritual formation activities. Students and trainers lack of effective control over time, living environment, and transport in a non resident training situation are distractive, problematic, and often result in procrastination and neglect of spiritual formation activities by some students. However, in a resident training situation control and effective monitoring of students' life and activity are possible.

The evaluation revealed that spiritual formation activities thrived more in a resident training context than in a non- resident training context. Therefore, effort should be made to promote resident training at minimal cost to participants. In situation where resident training is not yet in place incentive for spiritual formation participation should be given constantly to participants to increase their zeal and interest in spiritual formation. The incentive may include:

- * Time negotiation;
- * Arranged and subsidized transportation for students;
- * Assisted and negotiated resident places for students to live together in groups around the community where the school or training institution is located.

In conclusion, Spiritual Formation should be given the utmost consideration in the training of Christian ministers in order for them not to make shipwreck of their ministry. The Pastor who is deep in spiritual matters will be well stabilized and focused when the expectations and demands of ministry are high on him/her.

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