

Roles Of Theological Education in Enhancing Women Leadership in The Church

Ishola, Olufemi Jacob

Department of Administration and Leadership, Faculty of Education, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

Abstract

The need to train and retrain leaders for the church cannot be overemphasized. One of the formal ways of achieving this is through theological training which has no preference for either male or female gender. Thus, it is imperative for a church which desires effective women participation in leadership positions to sponsor women in theological education, leading to a good exposure which will eventually enhance their leadership. The writer used both primary and secondary sources (Books, Journals, and Interview) to validate the argument pushed forward in this paper. Paper considers the nature of women in history and roles they have been playing in the church; discusses various formations taking place through theological education curriculum, and draws its implications on women leadership in the church. The findings showed that women have direct, indirect and mixed roles to play in the church. Ultimately, when women are maximally exposed to thorough theological education, it has the capacity to help them to accurately interpret the word of God and champion the leadership of Christian Education at the home front and in the church. Exposure of women to theological Education will also enhance ministerial counseling skills, makes them to develop leadership skills, and assist them to balance family responsibility with ministerial demand. In the light of these, the writer recommends that women who have proven to be called of God should be encouraged and sponsored by the church for theological education; theological institutions should intensify their efforts towards giving women quality education like their male counterparts; women in church leadership positions should use their influence to enlighten more women on their real identity; theological institutions should make their admissions more flexible to women; and that theological institutions should also make their training to be more flexible for women.

Introduction

The need to train and retrain leaders for the church cannot be overemphasized. One of the formal ways of achieving this is through theological training which has no preference for either male or female gender. Thus, it is imperative for a church which desires effective women participation in leadership positions and most importantly by those with the call of God, to sponsor theological education, leading to a good exposure which will eventually enhance their leadership. It must also be noted that, theological institutions do not offer leadership training to only God-called individuals; there are leadership programs for lay people. Thus, this paper considers the nature of women in history and roles they have been playing in the church; discusses various formations taking place through theological education curriculum, and draws its implications on women leadership in the church.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Theological Education Theological education is a distinct education that exposes students to Christian doctrines and practices. Most times, it gives preference to those called of God by equipping them for various leadership positions in the church. Corroborating this, Kenneth Mullolland submits that a theological institution is an academic institution providing systematic, biblical and doctrinal teaching with the purpose of preparing God-called men and women for the role of their special ministry in the churches, schools and denominations (Ishola-Esan 2012, 139). Ayandokun (2012, 138) further explains that “theological education is meant for men and women to be trained so as to teach people the way of the Lord”. From the submissions of these two scholars, theological education can be viewed as a medium of equipping men and women for a divine task. It could be viewed as the factory where raw materials are turned into finished products for the benefit of man. Theological institutions therefore ought to be a viable channel through which new and emerging generations are equipped for ministry with tools to solve different leadership crisis in the church of Africa (Ajibade 2018, 50).

Leadership Several scholars such as Achua and Lussier have attempted to describe leadership as “the influence process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through

change.” McCauley opines that leadership can best be understood as “a social process for generating a direction, alignment, and commitment needed for individuals to work together productively towards collective outcomes.” Also, Livetary Weem as reported by Adetunji (2010, 2) describes leadership as the development and articulation of a shared vision, motivation of those key people without whom the vision cannot become reality, and gaining the corporation of most people involved. From Ordway Tead’s classical point of view as reported by Adetunji (2010, 2), leadership deals with “the activity of influencing people to cooperate towards some goal which they come to find desirable.” Supporting this, Adeniji (2019, 85) asserts that “Leadership is an active process whereby a competent leader motivates and influences his followers to apply synergy and collaboration to work until organizational goals, vision and objectives are achieved.”

One of the world’s most concise descriptions of leadership is that “leadership is influence” (Maxwell 1993, 1). Going by this definition, it could be said that leadership is not an art of coercing people to perform a task; rather; it is natural influence on both human and material resources to be properly harnessed toward achieving a corporate goal. Maxwell (1993, 8) further states that “to change the direction of organization, change the leader.” This in turn stresses the role played by the good attitude of a leader. Maxwell (2003, 5) on this fact opines that “when the attitude of a leader goes up, so does the potential of the team and vice-versa.” Leadership, from this writer’s view, is therefore the process of influencing all the factors or agents that will bring about accomplishing the goal of an organization in an effective and efficient manner.

Church The Church has been viewed as an organized system in which functions and responsibilities are shared among the informed workers who will fill various departmental positions created as necessities for moving the church forward (Adeniji 2008, 1). There are some scholars who submit that church is a local assembly. For example, Mills quoted by Oladeji (2007, 3) opines that a church is a local congregation of baptized believers in Christ, who voluntarily band themselves together to carry out the work of Christ. Bolaji, quoted by Nihinlola (2020, 26) equally submits that so many names are used to portray church in the Bible among which are: “the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the flock of God, the vineyard of God, the garden of God etc.” For the writer, the word church goes beyond local congregation because it has to do with the coming together of the saved and baptized believers from all walks of life. Even though the writer does not deny the use of the word “local church” to be the gathering of a set of believers of a particular

region, town or area, the paper seeks to project the church universal which cut across all denominations, countries, states and towns.

WOMEN IN HISTORY

Historically, women have been considered as inferior to man. The study of anthropology reveals that in 500BC, women were identified with the negative values of sex and love; their nature and powers were considered primarily sensual (Harris 1967, 18). Affirming this, a renowned philosopher, Plato was convinced of the general inferiority of women and that the average male was superior to the female especially in intellectual powers. Considering the present rate at which women are performing excellently in education and business, this statement could be proven false. Also, some cultures treated women like slaves and cattle. There are cultures that regard women as properties and not as fellow human being worthy of equal rights with men. Furthermore, "Aristotle's writing also treated the female as important male" when he looked upon man as the active agent called "form" in his philosophical system and women as the passive element of "matter" (the material to be acted upon) (Harris 1967, 19).

Politically, Collins (1990, 6) opines that, Black women's oppression has been structured along three interdependent dimensions namely: exploitation of black women's labour through free wage labour in the rural south of the America; denial of rights and privileges routinely extended to white male citizens from African-American women in terms of voting, holding public offices, equitable treatment in the criminal justice; and controlling images of Black women that originated during the slave era. Images such as mammies, jezebels, breeder women of slavery, ubiquitous Black women prostitutes, and negative stereotypical images are fundamental to Black women's oppression.

Biblically, women are not counted in the Old Testament, because they are seen as inferior or mere property in the family and most importantly, because they would not be able to carry on the family line. This singular fact makes their exposure in terms of leadership positions, academic and religious duties to be limited. In spite of this, there are few women who stood out in leadership positions. Abdul-Hamid (2012, 288) also opposes the common notion among some members of the communities that in Africa, women cannot exercise leadership except over other women, arguing that this is not true as it is not supported in history and in Qur'an. He substantiates his point citing various women who in Islam who successfully led women and men.

In Enyinnaya's objective submission on the statement made by Apostle Paul in the book of Galatians 3:28, he states that,

There is "neither male nor female" is a categorical statement that Christian faith does not allow the kind of demeaning of the status of women which was common in Jewish and Greek culture. It does not mean that humans are no longer male or female, but it does mean that in the Christian community, nobody is to be put at a disadvantage simply on the basis of being male and female.

During this year's International Girl-Child Day tagged "Any Hope for the Female Gender?" opinions of women who are civil servants, students, entrepreneurs, and scientist were sought by the Nigerian Tribune. According to Akeredolu (2020), even though women are being heard in the stock-market, the discrimination in media houses, financial institutions, government parastatals and universities is glaring. On the other hand, Oluwo (2020) asserts that the female has a future because there is virtually nothing meaningful men can do without female or better said, what a man can do, women can do better. Onifade (2020) further notes that religious leaders are not helping the matter because all in the name of preaching submission, they have emboldened some men to maltreat their women. Stating optimistically, Ade-Alao (2020) asserts that there is hope for the female gender because the world is getting to know their capacity through united voices against gender discrimination. Olayimika (2020) supporting Ade-Alao's view opines that even though the world's perspective of female gender is changing, there is more to do to achieve total discrimination. All these submissions are alluding to the fact that female gender discrimination is still in the system most especially in African countries. However, notable progress has been identified with female gender liberation from inferiority and cultural bondages through western education and theological responses to the matter.

From the foregoing historical background of women, it is evident that culturally, women are treated as slaves, properties and as generally inferior to their male counterparts in the community. In philosophy, Aristotle and Plato have also projected superiority of male over female with reference to women as passive element called matter. Politically, African women have been denied their human rights out of gender discrimination mostly during colonial era. On the part of religion, Islam has also entrenched exclusion of women in leadership position, whereas Christianity vehemently opposes unjust gender bias. However, gender equity has been argued to be realistic through intellectual and biblical advocacy.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE CHURCH

Women, from the time of Jesus have been actively involved in ministry. If per chance one thinks that the role of women was primarily in the kitchen, or preferably in the kitchen, one may need to be reminded that Jesus commended Mary for sitting at His feet while Martha was preoccupied with fixing the meal (<https://bible.org/seriespage/6-new-testament-church-role-women>). Paul's racial, social, and gender unifying statement to Galatians 3: 28 which states that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one further justifies gender, social, and racial equality that is expected from the body of Christ.

Pryor (1989, 80-82) observes that in recent time, women's' ministry has taken three forms namely:

1. Indirect: This involves working silently behind and alongside their husbands and sons. Some women in this category serve as co-missionaries. Pastors' wives oversee women organs of the church, serve as volunteer children's workers, and so on.
2. Limited service: Some cultures have often believed that the women's ministries represent the faith and works of the whole society and thus those women have to be separated and protected from the public and political work.
3. Direct: When women claim the call and vocation to serve as pastors and in mere public roles historically reserved to men like "Director of Education, Theological Educator and Family Counseling" (Culver 1966, 284); irrespective of the forms of ministry that women have chosen to engage in, they have potential to be effective as they submit themselves to theological education. In fact, pastors' wives are equally expected to have theological preparation for their leadership position in the church where their husbands would pastor through Women Training Centre (WTC). Victoria Ayano (interview, 2020) opines that this programme is designed for wives of pastors who received a call into ministry and have enrolled for theological training so that they can be properly carried along with their husbands, and so that they may be responsible in church leadership roles which they will have to occupy in the place of assignments of their husbands.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM DESIGN

Ogunronbi (2016, 66-74) explains curriculum using five different approaches as suggested by Aristotle's categorization of knowledge and M. K. Smith model by stating that "Curriculum is seen as a planned course; as a syllabus or body of knowledge to be transmitted; as a product of

measurable behavioral objectives; as a process meant for a particular schooling situation; and finally as a praxis where ideas that widen the human horizon are brought into the center of the process of model.” Anglo (2016, 217) also submits that curriculum is essentially a systematic guide for any course of study, specifying the goal of such course, including the experimental activities which participants in the course must go through.

The submissions of Ogunronbi and Anglo are summed up by Ray (2016) in his comprehensive explanation on academic formation which states that “total academic formation takes into consideration the overall growth, learning and the finished product of theological learners in the three or four years of their stay in the theological institution. It includes their academic formation, their ministerial formation and their personal formation as well.”

Critically examining these definitions, with particular reference to the Catholic theological college, the academic course constitutes eleven semesters of full-time study which are spread over seven years, whereas in the Nigerian Baptist Theological seminary, a course of study for the first-degree candidate spanned over four years of eight semesters. The first year in the Catholic theological college emphasizes spiritual foundations that the students must have; the study of philosophy dominates the next two years. In the fourth year, students spend part of that year to reside and work in a parish. The last two years are for in-depth study of systematic and moral theology, canon law and continuation of his work in scripture and history.

On the other hand, the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, the three major programmes offered are Theological Studies, Education (Christian), and Church Music. The theological programme for the first-year degree students covers a period of four years in addition to field experience. Students of this programme are exposed to studies in biblical, theological, historical and practical fields. The programme also provides basic theological instruction for men and women preparing for other church vocations and places of Christian leadership in churches, schools and denomination (Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary’s catalogue, 2015, 32). In the same vein, students of the education programme are exposed to the rudiments in Christian education including biblical, theological, historical, and practical studies for persons whom the church have indicated to have given audience to God’s leadership to serve in specialized ministry. Theological instructions are also given to these students so as to be fit for churches, schools, and denomination Christian leadership (Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary’s catalogue. 2015, 32). The third programme

which is music provides students who are admitted for music education to explore biblical, theological, historical, and practical studies. Those in for media specialist are also provided with practical media education through studio work and daily practical exercise during chapel devotion experiences (Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary's catalogue, 2015, 32).

Comparing the academic formation of the two theological schools, Catholic Theological School's academic formation aims at assessing how well the students have developed an integrated view of catholic theology which he (the student) can clearly expound. However, the main goal of academic formation in the Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary is "to provide high quality theological education and professional training for God-called, spirit led persons, to help meet the need for effective ministry in theological institutions, church and society and to facilitate the fulfillment of the great commandment and the great commission of our Lord, and savior Jesus Christ" (NBTS Catalogue). The fact which cannot be ignored is that the curriculum of these training institutions is different based on the philosophy and doctrines of their denomination or Christian group (Ayandokun 2018, 31).

In Donald's (1996, 49-58) report on one of the questionnaires administered on the governing purpose and goals of theological field education; forty two percent indicated that the primary purpose is to be the integration of academic study with practical issues in ministry. This view means that all curricula are aimed at application after each course.

Dreyer (1996, 1-13) in the Journal of Association of Theological School (ATS) titled "Theological Education" stresses the importance of law, business and health as part of academic formation in theological institutions. Five basic reports drawn from her research are:

1. There should be equal emphasis on the acquisition and development of skills, values and attitudes like acquisition of knowledge.
2. Baccalaureate education should be a broad, encompassing study in natural science and the humanities.
3. Education should prepare students to be learners throughout their lives.

Namsoon Kang (2011, 5-7) submits that over the years, theologians have pointed out the crisis of theological education. The positions of these theologians differ from one another in terms of their perspective and approach; and this made it to be hardly unitary. Some theological education crises identified include:

- a. Widespread discontentment with the school from the main-line Protestant churches.
- b. The current organization of the curriculum, the issue of Christian identity and of theory and practice, especially in the school with the ecumenical spirit.
- c. Problems with the specialization of disciplines, or clarification of theological education, banishing the classical sense science.
- d. Reflection on feminist perspective and approaches into curriculum and teaching.

The crises identified above call for consistent reconsideration of transformational theological education which will require critical thinking and reflection on the concrete context in which it operates. With this, it can be deduced that the quality of theological education needs to be addressed in order for the possibility of re-modeling or continuous assessment in terms of curriculum and practical theologizing to take place. For theological education in the global context today, wherever they are located in the world, there is a shared interest in constructing new models of theological education to prepare leaders for services in a religious plural and culturally diverse world. Hence, new models of theological education can only survive where there is a shared standard and means for ensuring uniform quality in theological education. What constitutes quality in theological education is a shared understanding that various denominations and church traditions in various regions of the world can share and implement.

Again, Namsoon (2011, 1-7) asserts that a new model for theological education can become mobilizing an effective tool that will promote the fundamental religious values of dignity and equality of every individual human being regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, sexuality, nationalization, religious affiliation. In light of this, theological educators will need to reconstitute the nature of the quality in the theological education to engage the universal justice, equity, freedom, human rights, which must be done without any colonial imperialist or Eurocentric implication (Romans 2:11). Ray (2011, 44) in support of the view of Namsoon on theological education, asserts that theological education could be improved upon through E-Theological education to counter isolation, distance Theological education, and promotion of theological education in multi-religious settings. While the first two ways are being properly integrated into theological education across the world, the last one still suffers a major set-back because of denominational bias on the part of the proprietors of the theological schools.

Categorization of Curriculum design in Theological Education

Ray (2016, 241) opines that the primary aim of theological education is to prepare, train, and equip people for Christian work both in the church and in the society. The total formation of theological learners is a complicated but essential outcome of all theological education. This means that the theological education is not only interested in academic formation of students but also on other aspects of their lives.

Pressing further, Ray (2016, 243) states that integrated theological education categorizes student formation into three areas. Specific basic features that are inherent in each of the three formations are presented below:

1. **Academic Formation:** This takes place through classical disciplines, academic skills, critical thinking, contextual issues, interdisciplinary, integrated courses, research oriented and cultural relevance. Students in Saint John's Seminary in Boston, Massachusetts, for instance, are all exposed to philosophical studies through which they examine the heritage of philosophy which prepares them to understand theology by perfecting their human development and sharpening their minds (Saint John's Seminary in Boston, Massachusetts).
2. **Personal/Spiritual Formation:** Spiritual formation, personality development, etiquette, interpersonal relation, people's management; and physical wellbeing. In Saint John's Seminary, spiritual formation of the seminarian takes place through mass and communal prayer, schedule days of reflections and retreats (<http://www.Sjs.edu/seminary-four-areas-of-formations>).
3. **Ministerial Formation:** This happens through discipleship, communication skills, language skills, interpretative skills, writing skills, contextual issues, cultural sensitivity, and apprenticeship. Nathan (2017) opines that all these should bring about the conversion of heart and minds of seminarians and lead them to fostering integrative thinking, character formation, authentic discipleship, personal appropriation of knowledge and faith, and at the same time cultivate spirituality of intellectual life

(www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=s241394672017000100005).

It can be deduced from the foregoing discussion that the academic formation of a typical integrated theological education at graduate and post-graduate levels revolves round basic features as analyzed by Ray. It should be noted that no matter how important the academic formation may be, it must be integrated into other two formations to bring about a holistic formation.

Hunter (2018, 2-3), describing the twofold mission of theological education, states that “theological education focuses its attention on the formation of leaders for Christian service”. Holistic formations exceed mere academic instructions. It includes the development of Christian character, ministerial skills and cultivated habit of discipleship. Secondly, he notes that “theological education lies in the cultivation and exercise of prophetic voice”. Products of theological institutions are being trained to speak the truth boldly to the church and society bedridden with sinful practices. Hence, theological schools serve as a model for the church on how to speak clearly and boldly into the issues of the society. The response might come in the form of preaching, teaching, prophesying and writing.

In addition, academic formation in the theological education should be designed in such a way that it could integrate the contextual concerns of the immediate cultural group as well as the wider concerns of the country. In other words, some elements of global concerns should reflect in academic formation in order to make it relevant to the foreign scholars and to attract international endorsement.

The spiritual formation aspect of theological education is stressed here because it is one of the factors militating against women’s participation in leadership positions in the church. Many times, women are perceived to be less spiritual, more carnal, and weaker than the Bible described because of cultural and gender favouritism. Tamez (1989) notes that spiritual formation of theological studies starts with a critical study of the Word of God, using Bible commentaries and other Bible interpretation tools. Even though there may be crisis in bridging the gap in spirituality, the following efforts could be employed in overcoming the challenge.

1. Teachers should begin the class with short devotion.
2. Strictly bring out the meaning from the text during exegetical work.
3. With a view to overcoming the gap in communication between Seminarians and the church community in which they are involved, part of the course should be developed to work on the text on a mere popular level (Tamez 1989, 20-21)

Grant (1989, 42) also notes that spiritual formation of the seminary student should be geared towards helping the learners to understand relationship between the Christian and the world. Thus, an integral part of spiritual formation is social and political engagement. Any spiritual formation that cannot help students understand the world they live in and how they live in can be said to be

inadequate. The world in which the students would minister is characterized with injustice, immoralities, corruption, racism, and the like. Thus, they must be thoroughly equipped towards addressing these matters.

When addressing the spiritual formation of women in theological institutions, Pryor (1989, 50) submits that traditionally, there has been a dichotomy between spirituality and sexuality. Prior further opines that “On the other hand, some aspects of church tradition and practice have also been used to reinforce past patterns of oppression, *inhabiting* women’s spirituality; One of the important reasons for this is the use of masculine language patterns, dividing men from women and thus, keeping God at distance for most women” (1989, 80). For the purpose of overcoming the sexual dichotomy of spiritual formation in theological education, Spryer gives the following counsel:

1. More women should be faculty members so that men would also have personal experience of women exercising more direct roles of leadership. On this aspect, the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso should be commended because there are currently two females who are products of the institution heading other theological schools. Apart from the fact that these women are faculty members, they have not been denied key positions like Head of Department, Dean and Deputy President.
2. More traditional academic degree programmes should be open to more women so that they can have credentials like their male counterparts.
3. Provision of networking opportunities for women mutual support and also for making women comfortable with women’s spiritual leadership.
4. Search for a more holistic, healthy and deeper recognition of the female within male even in the spiritual formation of men.
5. Helping spouses to understand their relationship to their spouse’s vocation in new ways (Pryor, 1989, 80).

IMPLICATIONS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION ON WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

Academic formation widens the scope of students whether female or male and thereby equips them for ministerial practices outside the wall of theological schools after their training. Formation through this academic exposure has a great influence on the performance of women on the field.

Students who avail themselves for thorough training will better meet the demand of the contemporary age.

Women, who avail themselves of theological training, have been seen performing excellently in leadership positions in the church. The three essential formations which take place in the seminary impart their lives such that their way of life, manner, and approach to issues of life, response and reactions change positively. However, it must also be noted that in every organization, there are some difficult people who are clogs in the wheel of progress of the leader (Oyeniyi 2016, 197), irrespective of the leader's gender. When a woman is in leadership, this might be more difficult to deal with but with proper theological education, she would be able to trounce the challenges.

Generally, academic formation of theological education will achieve the following in the life of all students whether male or female according to Ray (2016, 247-249).

The learner will be ethically sound; students will be a responsible member of the family, society and country; practices of the multilingual, multi-faith, and multi-racialism will be greatly influenced; academic formation makes students to adopt, continues to learn and keeps space with rapid development all rounds; students will be able to practices; physical, social and mental wellness; deliberative attitudes and constraints of traditional bond society will be overcome; academic formation makes students to appreciate numerous challenges that the nation faces and meager resources available to meet those needs; students will develop personal code of value of ethics through exposure to ministerial ethics; students will not be overwhelmed by constraints but rather grabs the opportunity for services; academic formation helps students to become active participant and contributor in the transformation of society; students will not be afraid to accept challenges at work place and will be willing to work with others...

In the light of these, specifically, women with opportunity have the capacity to demonstrate all the above listed qualities to the fullest just like their male counterparts. Thus, their introduction to these formations will definitely affect their output when they are involved in leadership positions in the church. Therefore, the following are areas where women's exposure to sound theological education can help them to perform better in church leadership:

1. Accurate interpretation of God's Word: Before now, the task of biblical interpretation has been among men. Now, women are expected to demonstrate this ability due to their knowledge of biblical interpretation in theological schools. They do not only interpret the Bible, but they equally

apply it to fit into a particular context. This ability is one of the factors leading to feminist theology among female theological educators. Ayandokun (2020, 74) opines that “women in ministry today have taken the challenge of right, biblical, and accurate interpretation” because of the theological training which some of them have been privileged to undergo. Ogundare (personal communication, September 20, 2020) also submits that theological education of women helps them to handle Bible concordance, Bible dictionary, maps and atlas in interpreting and applying the scriptures. They have also stood against heretical teachings most especially those that have to do with gender.

2. Promoter of Christian Education: The involvement of women in teaching ministries of the church has yielded positive results in the past centuries. The difference is now clear between churches which employ theologically trained women and those not trained as education ministers, children ministers, youth ministers, and evangelism / social ministers. Ogundare (personal communication, September 20, 2020) affirms that theological education has made her to be more effective in children ministry and in overall church administration due to her level of exposure, theologically trained women are better equipped to teach Bible-based lessons to different age groups, thereby meeting their needs (Ayandokun2020, 74). The reasons for their effectiveness owe to the fact that women are naturally caring and they have the strength to instruct children, teenagers, youths and even adults more carefully.

3. Provision of Holistic Counseling: Due to the natural ability of women to show more concern over matters coupled with loving attitudes and their theological exposure, women can best fit for the counseling ministry of the church. Ayandokun (2020, 76) observes that “women in ministry do combine their Christian experience, virtues, knowledge of God’s word to restore people who are experiencing painful and grieving experiences to wholeness.” Corroborating this, Grace Ogundare and Ruth Okunade (personal communication September 20, 2020) also established that theological education of women aids their counseling ministry in the church because they are equipped with the skills of counseling using scriptures, unlike ordinary counseling psychologists, and it gives them accessibility to a larger audience. Thus, counseling sessions handled by such women have tendencies to bring lasting solutions to problems confronting the church and the society at large. This fact makes theological education a strong tool

that can enhance women's capacity to function more effectively and efficiently in church related ministries.

4. **Balancing Ministry and Family Responsibilities:** Women who have availed themselves of theological education have the ability to balance ministry and family responsibilities. This happens when they clearly understand their roles as ministers, mothers, and wives in the home. Definitely, this would make them to be a model to other women in the church and in the society. Ogundare (personal communication, September, 20, 2020) further notes rather than making them to be less responsible at home, the theological exposure of women would open their eyes to the importance of their family in relation to their ministry. Thus, there is the need for them to balance family responsibilities and ministry demands. A typical outstanding biblical minister who demonstrated this understanding is Deborah the prophetess who did not fail in her responsibility as mother at home despite her role as judge and prophetess among others. It is therefore plausible to say that knowledge gained from theological education is meant to make women to be more responsible as mothers and ministers of the gospel. Ayandokun (2020, 76) also submits that "women in ministry serve as agents who keep the family together through their exemplary lives among other women in the church and in the society."

5. **Resources for Human/Leadership Development:** The theological exposure of women can aid their skills in recruiting, training, and developing other women for leadership in the church and in the society. Women are now given opportunities to lead theological institutions designed to equip leaders for the church ministry. For example, the Nigerian Baptist Convention is currently having two females heading her theological schools. These two scholars are Rev'd Professor Esther O. Ayandokun of the Baptist College of Theology Oyo, and Rev'd Dr Mrs Helen Olomu Ishola-Esan of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku, Delta. Within the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, there are several female faculty members including Rev'd. Dr. Mrs Faith Opade, the only female lecturer in the department of Biblical Studies, Rev. Dr Mrs Mariam Ishola and Rev'd. Dr. Mrs Omolara Areo as former and present heads of Departments, Rev'd. Dr Mrs Ruth Oyeniyi, the head of department of Community Education and Director of Women Training Center, Rev'd. Dr. Mrs Ayo-Obiremi, Dean of the faculty of Education, and Rev'd Dr Mrs Yeside Odiase who is currently serving as the Deputy President Administration which is an unprecedented role for any woman in the institution. These women through their outstanding performance and

their commitment were able to defy all odds to hold the positions that their male counterparts jostled for. They have proven to other women in Africa that women are significant when it comes to the leadership development for the church.

6. Development of Young Women and Adequate Response to their Needs. Women who are properly trained and exposed to feministic theology have chance to develop young women through their inspired life. Ayandokun (2020, 76) observes that “women in ministry have unique privilege of educating young women on moral development.” Considering the level of moral decadence in the society and the level of assault on women dignity in terms of ungodly dressing, rape, and domestic violence, theologically trained women can be equipped to respond to these challenges. Also, women in ministry are expected to know and adequately respond to women’s needs because they share similar wants. Ayandokun (2020, 77) affirms this by stating that “women in ministry today have fared well in their ministry to their fellow women in the church and in the society because they share similar needs.”

7. Involvement in Wholesome ministry: With regard to this, Ayandokun (2020, 77) opines that “women in ministry (with proper theological education), are appropriate agents to correct all myths that women are irrational, illogical, fickle, weak, frivolous, and myth that women cannot reach God.” Against this view, women in ministry have successfully led churches, denomination, theological institutions towards holistic development. Women in ministry have the platform to teach that they can reach God just like their male counterparts.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed the impact of theological education on women leadership in the church by explaining various dimensions of formation that take place in the theological education through her curriculum design and how they can shape women for universal church leadership. The paper has established the fact that even though there is gender discrimination among some notable tribes in Africa, women’s active participation in preaching the gospel and in taking leadership position cannot be denied. The writer therefore submits that women leadership roles in the church are such that cannot be underestimated due to their laudable contributions to the development of many Christian denominations.

When women are given as much exposure as their male counterparts, it is no doubt that they can successfully lead the church and the society to a promise land. Women are equally encouraged to

seek for knowledge that can liberate them from all forms of inferiority complex and cultural slavery through theological education. The writer is also aware that there is a theological education for a specific set of women who are either called by God to serve in various leadership positions or called to support their spouses. These women, after they have been trained, will serve as instruments in the hand of God to liberate other women who are in the church through their leadership positions.

In conclusion, church leadership positions are not exclusively for men. Women who have submitted to thorough theological education have been found to be qualified and fit to hold leaderships roles meant for men. Thus, theological education carries equal liberating powers for both genders. In the light of this, the writer makes the following recommendations for the church and for theological institutions.

1. Women who have proven to be called of God should be encouraged and sponsored by the church for theological education.
2. Theological institutions should intensify their efforts towards giving women quality education like their male counterparts
3. Women in church leadership positions should use their influence to enlighten more women on their real identity.
4. Theological institutions should make their admissions more flexible to women.
5. Theological institutions should also make their training to be more flexible for women.

References

1. Abdul. (2012). "Women and Islam in Africa: Towards an Inclusivity theology of Leadership". Hamid, Mustapha. In EmiolaNihinlola et al. (Eds.), *Leadership in Africa: Challenges four Theological Institution*. West Africa Association of Theological Institution Paper 4. Baptist Press (Nig) Ltd.
2. Achua, & Lusier. (2010). *Effective leadership*. Centage Learning.
3. Ade-Alao, T. (October 11, 2020). Any hope for female gender? *Nigerian Tribune*. <http://tribuneonline.ng/international-girl-child-day-any-hope-for-the-female-gender/>
4. Adeniji, A. A. (2008). *Leadership in Church operation Lagos: Practical concepts Limited*.

5. Adeniji, J. (2019). Leadership. In E. Nihinlola et al. (Eds.), *The minister's manual*. Baptist Press (Nig.) Ltd.
6. Adetunji, O. G. (2010). *Leadership in Action: A Sourcebook in Church Administration for students and Ministers*. Baptist Press.
7. Ajibade, E. A. (2018). Bringing theological education into the melting point: A case for Dynamic Pulpit Ministry in Africa. *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*, xxiii(1).
8. Akeredolu, A. (October 11, 2020). Any hope for female gender? *Nigerian Tribune*. <http://tribuneonlineng.com/international-girl-child-day-any-hope-for-the-female-gender/>
9. Ayandokun, A. A., & Ayandokun, E. O. (2020). *Essential for serving Church workers and ministers*. Gloryline Christian Publications.
10. Ayandokun, E. O. (2012). The imperative of Integrity in Leadership challenges in Africa. In E. Nihinlola et al. (Eds.), *Leadership in Africa: Challenges four Theological Institution*. West Africa association of theological institution Paper 4. Baptist Press (Nig) Ltd.
11. Ayandokun, E. O. (2018). Diversification of Theological Education towards Equipping the Saints for the Work of ministry. *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*, xxiii(1).
12. Ayano, V. O. (2020). *Interviewed by Ishola, Olufemi J. Ogbomoso, Oyo State*, October 4.
13. Bolaji, E. A. (n.d.). Church leadership and administration *A Lecture delivered at Baptist College of Theology, Lagos*.
14. Church Leadership, Jr., W. L. H., Jr. (1993). Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrol, 1984. *Vision, team, culture, and integrity*. Abingdon Press.
15. Collins, P.. H. (1990). Black feministic thought: Knowlegde, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. *Britain*. The University Press.
16. Culver, E. T. *Women in the world of religion*. Double Day, & Company, Inc.
17. Enyinnaya, J. (2012). Biblical and theological concerns on gender issues in leadership. In E. Nihinlola et al. (Eds.), *Leadership in Africa: Challenges four Theological Institution*. West Africa association of theological institution Paper 4. Baptist Press (Nig) Ltd.
18. Akande, O. A., Ukpabi, I. D., & Adeolu, O. J. (2024). Impact of brain drain and factors contributing to migration of staff abroad in the University of Ibadan. *Edumania-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 02(04), 47–56. <https://doi.org/10.59231/edumania/9072>

19. Evan, H. (2018). Developing leaders for the institution, Church, and society. *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*, xxiii(1).
20. Grant, J. (1989). Spiritual formation and engagement in the world. In S. Amirthan & R. Pryor (Eds.), *Reasons for spiritual formation in theological education*. World Councils of Churches Programmes on Theological Education.
21. Harris, P. R. (1967). Women in history. In (no ed.) *Dialogue on Women*, New York: The Bobbs—Marrill company, Inc.
22. Ishola, E. H. O. (2012). “Theological Education and Leadership Development for Effective Ministry in Africa”. In EmiolaNihinlola et al. (Eds.). *Leadership in Africa: Challenges four Theological Institution*. West Africa Association of Theological Institution Paper 4. Baptist Press (Nig) Ltd.
23. Maxwell, J. C. (1993). *Developing the leader within you*. Thomas Nelson Publisher.
24. Maxwell, J. C. (2003). *What every leader must know*. Maxwell Publishing Motivation, Inc.; a Georgia Corporation.
25. Nathan, C. (2017). Mentoring and the ministerial formation of seminary students. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 3(1). Retrieved from (www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=s241394672017000100005).
26. The New Testament Church-the role of women. <https://bible.org/seriespage/6-new-testament-church-role-women>
27. Nihinlola, E. (2020). *A practical Handbook for Church Administration*. Ibadan: Baptist press (nig.) Ltd.
28. Ogundare, G. (2020). Interviewed by Ishola, Olufemi J. Ogbomoso, Oyo State, October 4.
29. Okunade, R. (2020). Interviewed by Ishola, Olufemi J. Ogbomoso, Oyo State, October 4.
30. Oladeji, M. O. (2007). *The local Church, its officers and administration: African perspective of the New Testament Church*. Ibadan Bounty Press Limited.
31. Olayimika, C. (October 11, 2020). Any hope for female gender? *Nigerian Tribune*. <http://tribuneonlineng.com/international-girl-child-day-any-hope-for-the-female-gender/>
32. Onifade, O. (October 11, 2020). Any hope for female gender? *Nigerian Tribune*. <http://tribuneonlineng.com/international-girl-child-day-any-hope-for-the-female-gender/>

33. Oyeniyi, R. M. (2016). The wearing of working with volunteers. In P. R. Oyeniyi & G. O. Olaniyan (Eds.), *Theological educators*. Hirige Fidelity Publisher.
34. Pryor, B. (1989). Special issues related to spiritual formation in theological education: Women's perspective. In S. Amirthan & R. Pryor (Eds.) *Reasons for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education*. World Councils of Churches Programmes on Theological Education.
35. Saint John's Seminary. (2020). 'Four Areas of Priestly Formations.' retrieved from <http://www.sjs.edu/seminary-four-areas-of-formations>
36. Tamez, E. 1089. Spiritual Formation and Critical Study: A case study. In S. Amirthan & R. Pryor (Eds.), *Reasons for spiritual formation in theological education*. World Councils of Churches Programmes on Theological Education.

Received on April 30, 2025

Accepted on June 15, 2025

Published on July 01, 2025

Roles Of Theological Education In Enhancing Women Leadership In The Church © 2025 by Olufemi Jacob Ishola is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0