

Engendering Theological Education for a Transforming Pastoral Ministry

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Many women yearn to experience the Church as a community and space for healing and wholeness. For single women the desire is to experience the Church as a community that engages with their concrete needs within the framework of its biblical call to serve and bear one another's burden (Galatians 6:2). This article is a review of part of Chapter Four of my dissertation. "The pastoral ministry to single women in the Church of Christ in Nigeria, Gigiring Regional Church Council, Jos, Nigeria."¹

A transforming pastoral ministry necessitates the understanding of pastoral issues. One of the major tasks that pastors have is empowering the believing community for service, but the problem that often confronts many of them is how to do this since their ministerial training sometimes does not contain all that is required to adequately prepare them for this.²

Working on the framework that the Church provides a liberative space where everyone can experience wholeness, it is important to note that theological education is central to the equipping for pastoral ministry and that an engendered curriculum of theological education meets contemporary pastoral needs arising in the church. This article, therefore, addresses the need for engendering theological education for a transforming pastoral ministry in the church in Africa narrowing its focus on theological education and pastoral training in the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN).³ It examines the church's theological education to ascertain its effectiveness in preparing pastors for a gender sensitive pastoral ministry, particularly the pastoral care of single women. It also argues for an engendered theological education because of its potency to promote a transformative pastoral ministry through the development and construction of a curriculum of theological studies that adequately prepares pastors for dealing with the gender issues that arise in the exercise of pastoral ministry.

The notions of gender and engendering

The notion of gender applies to both men and women; however, debates and studies in this area have in the recent past tended to focus on the female gender because of the prevailing marginalisation and perception of women.⁴ This tendency to focus on women in gender discourses was replicated in the responses to the question on gender studies, which

¹Rahila Jakawa, *The pastoral ministry to single women in the Church of Christ in Nigeria, Gigiring Regional Church Council, Jos, Nigeria* (Doctor of Philosophy), University of Kwazulu-Natal: 2014, pp.126-133.

²Beatrice Stephen in a paper presentation at the "Gender equity workshop": organized by NETACT, EFSA and the Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, observes the centrality of seminary institutions to preparation for ministry and the shaping of students societal ideologies on gender issue. She maintains that education is the most liberating factor that empowers students to address gender issues in relation to service in the community. (<http://www.academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact/genderequality2011/Stephen.pdf>). [Accessed 20/12/2014].

³The Church of Christ in Nigeria recently changed its name to the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) to accommodate its worldwide coverage. COCIN has congregations in Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and the United Kingdom.

⁴Nyokabi Kamau, *Gender, masculinities and feminities and their connection with sex and gender based violence*. Paper presented at the monthly HBF forum, The Stanley Hotel, 2012; van Klinken, A.S. "The need for circumcised men." *The quest for transformed masculinities in African Christianity in the context of the HIV epidemic*. Amersfoort: Private, 2011.

suggest that participants understood gender studies to be an endeavour that aims at promoting women.

Gender is often viewed as a set of social relation, and gender discourses are largely concerned with how societies actively construct gender relations and how these affect individuals and the larger community. According to Schlegel, gender refers to how “the members of the two sexes are perceived, evaluated and expected to behave.”⁵ This definition restricts gender to non-biological difference. However, Borresen gives a holistic perspective in which she sees gender as a biosocial category, that is, gender is both biologically determined and culturally constructed.⁶ This implies that gender is a neutral term used to differentiate men from women, and that gender consciousness is the product of socialisation and is culturally defined.⁷

Key to this paper, however, is not only the promotion of women issues; but rather what COCIN stands to gain by engendering, that is, creating its curriculum of theological training with a particular focus on women’s issues. A curriculum that necessitates gender awareness promotes effective ministry to different categories of people in the church.

The strategies and methodology of theological education in the COCIN

The importance COCIN lays on theological education is a recognition of the vital place education holds in the preparation and dispensing of the pastoral ministry of the church. Theological education for the COCIN was more or less a Bible-based Christian education focused on evangelism. It was centred on moral, spiritual and character formation, and preparing individuals for spreading the Gospel and working in full-time ministry in local congregations. Additionally, the training of pastors was undertaken to fulfil the self-governing, self-support and self-propagation policy of mission work in COCIN.⁸

History indicates that the establishment of theological colleges was motivated by the political events in Nigeria. In the 1950s the colonial administration decided to revise the constitution of Nigeria to encourage the local people to become more involved in the governance of the country. However, nationalists felt this was not sufficient because what the country needed was not only equal participation in governance, but independence from colonial rule.⁹ This political change in Nigeria influenced the missionaries into revising their education programme. According to Lowry Maxwell, this turn of events meant three things for mission work. Firstly, Christians would be out-numbered and out-voted in parliament because the education of Christians had not been thorough enough to prepare Christians for secular leadership. Secondly, education of the indigenous people must transcend winning individuals for Christ to a comprehensive educational programme that empowers them to

⁵Alice Schlegel, *Gender meaning: general and specific*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, p.23.

⁶Borresen, K.E, Women's studies of the Christian tradition: new perspectives. In Ursula King (Ed.), *Religion and gender*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995, pp.246-247.

⁷Beverly Haddad, *African women's theologies of survival: intersecting faith, feminisms, and development*, University of Natal: Pietermaritzburg, 2000, p.97.

⁸COCIN, General Church Council, *COCIN constitution*, Jos: COCIN Publications Unit, 2008, p.3.

⁹Jordan Rengshwat, *The Sudan United Mission British branch 1934-1977: an examination of the mission's indigenous policy*, (Doctor of Philosophy), University of Jos: 2011, p.141.

build a powerful Christian community that would be intelligent and progressive.¹⁰ Thirdly, the new changes may result in hostility toward foreign workers, which calls for comprehensive education. Maxwell writes:

There must be planned, persistent instruction on the actual Scriptures itself. They must be thoroughly equipped with, and taught to use, the Sword of the Spirit, for they will have to fight for their own faith against deceptive doctrines and diabolical propaganda. To this end it is imperative that we do our best to give them competently trained pastors, able not merely to 'break the bread of life,' as we say, to them, but also to perceive and expose the falsehood of much of the talk of today, which leads men to look for their heaven upon earth, and find their satisfaction in things, and not in God. If we have to leave, we must see to it that we leave a ministry behind us which, by the grace of God, will be theologically competent to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.¹¹

The above evaluation of a socio-political situation paved the way for a broader educational programme, and the establishment of theological colleges and seminaries for the training of people that would lead the Church and train others.

Theological education in COCIN began in 1934 with the establishment of the centre for the training of men for evangelistic work. Institutions for theological education and ministerial training of COCIN include: Gindiri Theological Seminary (GTS), Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), COCIN Bible Schools (CBS) and Theological Education by Extension (TEE).

Apparently, in all the courses offered in these institutions, no attention is given to gender or gender issues, even in the course descriptions. The programmes are characterised by the traditional mainline four-fold pattern of theological and pastoral training, which are Biblical Studies, Church History, Systematic Theology and Practical Theology. This problem is not peculiar to COCIN theological training. Harawa-Katumbi observed a similar discrepancy in theological education in Malawi. In order to remedy this, Harawa-Katumbi suggests the inclusion of themes such as Feminist African Theology, a feminist reading of the Bible, the role of women in African Traditional Religions and the development of Christian women movements, which touch on women studies and gender in the Degree programmes.¹²

The Theological College of Northern Nigerian was established in 1957 for the training of pastors for the evangelical Church in Nigeria. Although the TCNN was established in 1957, classes actually started in 1959. The establishment of TCNN has largely been linked to the need that arose for nationalists who wanted to manage their own affairs.¹³ In the spirit of ecumenism, COCIN also trains its pastors in TCNN, which today is an inter-denominational school owned by sixteen member churches.¹⁴ COCIN is one of the sixteen member churches that own TCNN.

¹⁰Maxwell, L.J. *Half a century of grace: a jubilee of the Sudan United Mission*. Belfast: Graham and Heslip [1954], pp.229-300.

¹¹Ibid, 300-301.

¹²Chimwemwe Harawa-Katumbi, *The Bible, gender equality and teaching theology in Malawi*, <http://academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact/genderequality2011/new/Ch9-Bible&GenderMalawi-Katumbi.pdf>, p.2. [Accessed: 27/7/2012].

¹³Maxwell [1954]; Rengshwat, 2011.

¹⁴Esther Megill, *Return to Africa: a Journal*, Indiana: Author House, 2008, p.88.

Like GTS, the curriculum of TCNN centres on the traditional four-fold disciplines of biblical studies, systematic theology, church history and pastoral studies. Gender study is not part of the curriculum content.

Although the programmes of the regional Bible school have been modified to include other aspects of pastoral ministry, much of the curriculum still reflects the earlier focus. Thus, self-support and self-propagation through farming and evangelism are still primary foci in the Bible school programme.

COCIN views education as the right of every member, and the TEE has been instrumental in many members acquiring this right. The TEE is a decentralised and field-based approach to theological education, which does not interrupt the student's productive relationship with society. Thus its focus is helping congregants to deepen and strengthen their beliefs through the knowledge of the Scriptures and their Christian beliefs.¹⁵

An evaluation of the Church's pastoral training programme

An examination of the curricula of COCIN theological training suggests that no gender studies course exists. Moreover there is no reference to gender studies in the course descriptions of the Certificate and Diploma programmes of the regional Bible colleges, the Diploma and Bachelor of Divinity programmes of the GTS and the Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Divinity, Postgraduate Diploma and Master of Theology programmes of TCNN where COCIN trains its pastors. The syllabi of these programmes cover only traditional theological courses such as Biblical studies, Systematic Theology, Church History and Pastoral studies. The absence of gender studies in the curriculum of the COCIN theological and pastoral training renders it a far cry from the current concerns in theological education. It is what can be described paradoxically as "visible through its absence."¹⁶ Moreover, as Heyns and Pieterse rightly point out, the task of theology is the propagation of the Gospel and helping human beings.¹⁷ This implies that an enabling theological education must address both the text and the context. The context in this respect is the experiences of women.

Although the realities on ground in these theological institutions indicate that gender issues are not integrated into the curriculums, it cannot be said that this is ignored completely, because gender issues are dealt with as appendages of other courses. For instance, in GTS, gender concerns appear in courses such as 'Global Trends', 'Marriage Counselling', or as 'matters arising' in other courses. All the four seminary lecturers interviewed indicated that although gender issues are not given priority in the curriculum, they discuss issues related to women in the other courses they teach. However, such discussions are often controversial as pastors have their different positions. According to Reverend Pokol:

Some teachers try to break gender differences through their teachings courses but you can see a lot of resistance from the responses of students and even some colleagues. An issue such as women ordination is a no-go area for some ministers. Many students are vehemently opposed to the inclusion of women in pastoral ministry because they see it as not supported by biblical teachings but as an agenda of women's liberation.¹⁸

¹⁵Kenneth Mulholland, *Adventures in training the ministry*, New Jersey, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, 1976, p.66.

¹⁶Sue Rakoczy, *In her name: women doing theology*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004.

¹⁷Lois Heyns, & Hendik Pieterse, *A primer in practical theology*, Pretoria, South Africa: Gnosis Books and Publishers, 1990, p.6.

¹⁸Benjamin Pokol, Recorded, *Interview* with Rahila Jakawa, GTS, 2012, 11 January.

This attitude and peripheral treatment of gender issues has an attendant implication for the practice of ministry to single women, which also explains why it does not reflect in the practices of the church. Thus single women suffer the most from the lack of concern towards women issues, because not only are they women, but single women.

COCIN has maintained the approach to theological education handed down by missionaries and western theological educators. This may have been effective in addressing pastoral needs of that time; however, in the present circumstance, this does little to prepare pastors for the realities of Christian ministry in a changing Nigerian context. Students who have been trained in purely western methods of pastoral ministry often find it difficult to integrate the values of their training into the African cultural context.¹⁹ Similarly, it has been argued that the specialisation and fragmentation of theological education, which is characteristics of the western model has hindered the effective equipping of people for leadership and ministry in the African context.²⁰ The Church needs a paradigm shift in its theological education to accommodate the realities of a changing world without negating the uniqueness, truth and relevance of the Gospel.

An observation of ministry training and practice in COCIN reveals an imbalance which has influenced even the curriculum content of the church's pastoral training institutions. Although COCIN views education as the right of every member, it had for decades limited theological education to the training of male pastors and ordination. This observation is echoed by Reverend Kachala, one of the COCIN clerics:

Our pastoral training is grossly inadequate. Pastors are not trained very well to pastor congregations. Our pastoral training is certificate and not ministry oriented. Core courses that have to do with pastoral work are not given the attention deserved. Not many theology students have gone through pastoral training, and many of them are released into churches as pastors. Not all people that go through theological education can be pastors, but the Church has not been able to categorise people for effective execution of ministry.²¹

The above observation challenges the Church to revisit the goals and focus of its pastoral training. Although the assertion also tries to draw a distinction between theologians and pastors, it stresses the need for the church to clearly define its pastoral ministry and identify people who should be involved. Furthermore, the consequence of the above scenario is that those who are trained monopolise ministry and some pastors pursue theological education for the sake of ordination. This is a concern Zikmund echoes in her argument, that focusing theological education on ordination has the danger of "subverting the potential of the Gospel to transform the world."²²

Another concern is that evangelism has always taken primacy in COCIN's education programme. This has been projected even in the Church's theological education and this to a large degree narrowed the scope of its theological curriculum. Positive and tremendous as the emphasis on evangelism may be to the mission of the church, the present conditions in which the church exists urges a different approach to ministry training. Kinsler and Emery

¹⁹Matthews Kapolo, *Premarital pastoral care and ounseling: a quest for an African model*, Word & World, XXI(2), 2001, pp.129-134.

²⁰Linda Cannell, *Theological education matters*, Indiana: EDCOT Press, 2006, p.19.

²¹Iliya Kachala, Recorded, *Interview* with Rahila Jakawa, GTS, 2012, 11 January.

²²Barbara Zikmund, "Christian vocation in context." In *Theology today*, 36(3), 1979, p.329.

argue that holistic ministry training requires that the interconnectedness between the personal, ecclesial and social transforming nature of the ministry be taken into consideration. However, they observed the danger of tilting towards one extreme in theological traditions where the personal is emphasised over the ecclesial and social transformation, or the ecclesial over the personal and social transformation, or yet still social transformation over the personal and ecclesial. Therefore, “one of the greatest challenges of theological education is to develop a clear and profound understanding of and commitment to integral human transformation.”²³ In order to respond to the contemporary needs of the people, theological education needs to incorporate a flexible and holistic framework. This framework must seek to redefine the ministry of the church and make it broad enough to include different categories of people in the church.²⁴ Kretzschmar observed that churches that view mission as purely personal evangelism are not likely to develop ministries that closely resemble the ministry of Jesus. Christ’s ministry was comprehensive, broad and all embracing, addressing both personal and social needs.²⁵

Similarly, the responses to the question on whether COCIN pastors are given adequate training to respond to gender complexities that may arise in their practice of ministry indicate that participants had divergent views. For instance, two (28.5%) out of the seven participants in the CMF focus group discussion emphasised that pastors are trained to deal with gender issues because some pastors are organising programmes that are geared towards an all- round empowerment for single people. However, the other five (71.4%) participants indicated that they were not sure if gender issues are included in the curriculum of pastoral training because the church does not have a specific ministry for them. They argued that the fact that only a very small number of pastors are exercising some form of ministry to single women indicate that priority is not given to gender issues in the training of pastors. One of the participants in the CMF focus group explained that the few pastors who execute one programme or the other for single people do not amount to even 10% of the pastors in the church. Even so, the programme that is planned is not always targeted towards meeting the need of single women, but all single individuals in the church.

The responses of the four seminary lecturers interviewed on the inclusion of gender content in COCIN theological education indicate that no gender studies is included in the curriculum of studies. The responses show that gender issues are only referred to in other course or implied, but not specified.

It is the general consensus of the 32 participants comprising four church leaders, four clergy, four seminary lecturers, and twenty focus groups participants²⁶ that COCIN’s theological education and pastoral training has been inadequate in preparing pastors to respond to gender complexities inherent in today’s pastoral ministry. For instance, Reverend Datiri (the COCIN President), observed that most pastors struggle in the area of gender issues when they come to the church and start their ministry. Many of them have to learn without being provided with any direction, and some of them go about it the wrong way.²⁷

²³Ross Kinsler & James Emery (Eds.), *Opting for change: a handbook on evaluation and planning for theological education by extension*. Switzerland: WCC, 1991, p.41.

²⁴Ibid, pp.8-9.

²⁵Lois Kretzschmar, *Ethics in a theological context*. New York: Orbis, 1994, p.15.

²⁶The question regarding the assessment of COCIN theological education and pastoral training was only directed to the church leaders, clergy, seminary lecturers, and the participants in three different focused groups of the men fellowship, women fellowship and youth fellowship.

²⁷Dachollom Datiri, Recorded, *Interview* with Rahila Jakawa, Rahwol Kanang, 2013, January 29.

Apparently, the Church needs to pay attention to the call for a curriculum review and probably re-development. This concern was echoed by the majority of the participants who suggest that the curricula of COCIN theological institutions need to be reviewed because gender issues have become a major part of current concerns both in the church and in the larger society. According to the Provost of GTS, Reverend Gonlur:

The curricula of pastors' training institutions do not make room for adequate preparations for pastors to meet the challenge of gender complexities. Our pastors are not exposed to gender issues. There is need to have a curriculum review to include contemporary issues. Singleness is a complex issue which needs to be addressed, because our training institutions reflect a bigger picture of our society. It is clear that culture determines how our pastors practice the pastoral ministry.²⁸

The above assertion connects the absence of a specific ministry to single women to the lack of a broad-issue-based theological education. From this one can infer that a gender inclusive curriculum will inform ministry to single women. The task of exegesis and theology should consciously and deliberately take into consideration gender factors. Therefore, the curriculum of theological training should transcend the treatment of gender issues as accidentals, and unfortunate appearances in other courses. Gender issues should be treated as a category in the curriculum. The inclusion of women studies in the curricula of theological training will empower women and promote the involvement of single women leading to a better and all round service in the church.

Engendering theological education for pastoral ministry transformation

To ask the entire Church to be in solidarity with women is to ask for identification with the hopes and fears women live in church and society. The ...call assumes an undivided Church and asks the Church to mind the totality of its membership.... It addresses the Church with a view that it must operate in such a way as to demonstrate that its interests are those of the whole community. If the interests of any sector are overlooked a Church ceases to function as one community.²⁹

The call for engendering theological education expresses the need for mutuality and solidarity between men and women in the pursuit of a transforming pastoral ministry. A pastoral ministry that facilitates the healing and transformation of the human person is gender sensitive. Apparently, the church in Africa can no longer shy away from its need of a gender sensitive curriculum in its theological education.

Key to the call for engendering theological education is not only the promotion of women's voice in theological training but much more what the Church stands to gain by engendering the curriculum of its theological education and pastoral training.

Phiri and Mombo point out that engendering theological education means including the experiences of women in the structure and content of theological education. They argue that engendering theological education challenges African patriarchy, male-centred theology and the assumption that western models of theological education are normative. They point out that central to engendered theological education are "contextuality, dialogue, openness, grace

²⁸Paul Gonlur, Recorded, *Interview* with Rahila Jakawa, GTS, 2012, 11 January

²⁹Mercy Oduyoye, "The meaning of solidarity." In *A reader in feminist theology*, P. Kumari (Ed.), India: Gurukul Publication, 1993, p.116.

and willingness to learn and to discern God's will and truth in every context."³⁰ Rutoro lists the essence of engendering theological education as:

- Taking initiatives to break the bonds of silence binding women and making the voices of women be heard in theological discourses;
- Reshaping and re-envisioning the contents of theological education by integrating women as subjects;
- Integrating gender issues in the curriculum as a major and not as an elective;
- Developing a new paradigm to integrate gender studies within the theological framework;
- Making justice the central theme in gender sensitive theology;
- Making theological education about doing justice because knowing is not enough we must apply, willingness is not enough we must do.³¹

The benefits of engendering theological education and ministerial training

Viewed within the framework of engendered curriculum discourse, this also raises the question of the importance and benefits of engendering theological education for pastoral ministry to single women. The question of why women's concerns need to be added to the programme of existing theological curriculum of the Church's pastoral training seems to be answered by King when she maintains that there is possibility of a different present and future for theology and the church (single women inclusive), in the engendering of theological education³², since the goal of gender concern is equal opportunities for men and women.³³

Firstly, an engendered theological education is an affirmation of the importance of the role of women in the church. It guarantees that single women would be involved in the decision-making and policy-implementation of the church. It will also pave way for the inclusion of single women in the ministry of the church, which will induce a systemic change in the structure of the church, as well as validate the Church's claim in the belief of the priesthood for all believers. The priesthood presented in the New Testament reflects a radical transformation from the Old Testament priesthood into a new priesthood that includes all believers from every race, class, status and gender (cf. Galatians 3:28). This presents a new "understanding of the nature and mission of the church" and an ecclesiology that necessitates "a partnership of men and women in all expressions of the ordained ministry."³⁴ It makes men and women work as a team to develop a theology that is complete. As Morton points out:

³⁰Isabel Phiri and Esther Mombo, "Women in theological education from an African perspective." In D. Werner, et al, (Eds.), *Handbook of theological education in world Christianity*, South Africa: Cluster Publications, 2010, p.61.

³¹Esther Rutoro, *Transforming pastoral leadership for a gender responsive Christian ministry in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe*. Paper presented at the Gender equity workshop on teaching gender in Africa, Stellenbosch University, 2011, p.9.

³²Ursula King, "Journey thus far: an overview of feminist perspective from around the world." In P. Singh (Ed.), *Engendering theological education for transformation*, Switzerland: The Lutheran World Federation, 2001, p.29.

³³Caroline Moser, *Gender planning and development: theory, practice and training*, London: Routledge, 1999.

³⁴Raoul Dederen, "The priesthood of all believers." In N. Vyhmeister (Ed.), *Women in ministry: biblical and historical perspectives*, USA: Andrews University Press, 1998, p.23.

Any theology developed by one sex, out of the experience of one sex, and taught predominantly by one sex cannot possibly be lived out of as if it were whole theology. For whole theology is possible only when the whole people become part of its process, and that includes women. And in time, wholeness ... when men and women together can participate fully and equally in bringing faith to expression.³⁵

Furthermore, it also creates opportunity for an integrative and transformative approach to gender in theological education, which occasions a participatory involvement of every member. Located within a feminist framework, pastoral ministry respects the dignity of the human person and sees the need to include single women in the true meaning of church. Aside from opening up a space for single women's equal participation in pastoral ministry, it serves as an avenue for consciousness-raising, which in the words of Hogan, "reveals to theologians [sic] the extent of oppression—both their own and others..."³⁶ Further still, it exposes assumptions that trail pastors' views of single women as well as help pastors to avoid the pitfalls of male bias in pastoral ministry.

Secondly, because gender-studies are not likely to be a part of the curricula of many theological education and pastoral training programmes in Africa, students may lack the exposure to literature that deal with gender issues. Engendering theological education opens a door of opportunity to access literature on a wide range of single women issues. It helps to correct negative religious and cultural ideologies about single women and promote unbiased interpretations of gender Scripture texts, as well as offer alternative versions and visions of addressing contemporary pastoral challenges. Knowledge of single women issues offers pastors that have been trained the opportunity to challenge patriarchal interpretations of the Bible and the implementation of church policies as they relate to single women's issues. Many cultural patriarchal-conditioned assumptions trail people's perception of single women; however, engendering pastoral training can necessitate a deconstruction of such patriarchal assumptions. As Stephen rightly argues, an engendered curriculum educates and deepens the students' understanding of the life of the church and enables them to acquire skills that prepares them to deal with a wide range of pastoral responsibilities. There is also the potential for shaping the students' understanding of cultural issues relating to customs, norms, beliefs, practices, and other factors that mitigate gender imbalances.³⁷ This is supported by the social analysis framework of thought, which argues that for any action that must be taken towards meaningful change, an analysis of the social realities within a given society or organisation becomes an imperative. This is because social analysis transcends the personal right to speech, attitude, and behaviour, and induces specific structural change as it calls the system into question.³⁸ Individual lecturers may be challenging the status quo in their teaching, but a deliberate inclusion of gender studies will equip both lecturers and students with tools for analysing the position of single women in the church.

Thirdly, engendering theological education gives an in-depth insight in contextual pastoral training. Fundamentally, pastoral training in COCIN has not taken into account individual gifts, skills and understanding. An engendered training enables and encourages the pursuit of specialised ministry, personal development of pastors as well as takes care of gender needs in ministry practice. Gaikward concurs with the call for a contextual curriculum

³⁵ Nelle Morton, *Toward a whole theology*. Geneva: Lutheran World, 1975, p.14.

³⁶ Linda Hogan, *From women's experience to feminist theology*, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, p.95.

³⁷ Stephen, (<http://www.academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact/genderequality2011/Stephen.pdf>). [Accessed 20/12/2014].

³⁸ Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, *Social analysis: linking faith and justice*. New York: Orbis Books, 1984, p.24.

when he asserts that “theological education should be a bonding and blending together of the text and the context, a transformative interaction between guidance from the Word of God and the situational needs and challenges of the people.”³⁹ Reynolds supports this when he states that “there is need for contextual theological education programmes for the training of clergy and laity.”⁴⁰ He argues that contextualising theological education demonstrates the strength of the flexibility of Christianity, which also “helps people to embrace and appropriate the message of the Gospel in their lived experiences.”⁴¹ Apparently, COCIN lacks this flexibility because it has adopted a rigid traditional approach to ministry that is damaging and seriously impedes on the overall well-being of single women.

A contextual approach resonates with the social analysis framework, which suggests that pastoral responses and plans must be located “in the lived experience of individuals and communities.” In its social analysis the Church must probe the consequences of failing to address the concerns of any one category of its membership in its ministry preparation. Its theological reflection must lead to new insights and open new responses to social and ecclesial issues.⁴² The curriculum of theological education and pastoral training must reflect the church’s interpretation of the context of the people. Kumalo affirms the importance of engaging and interpreting life issues in theological education when he states that “interpretation enables the deeper understanding of the issues, informing better actions, and thereby shaping or influencing affected individuals or communities for the better good.”⁴³ The experiences of single women can only be interpreted if the ministerial training takes gender studies as a vital component and content of its curriculum.

Fourthly, engendering the curriculum empowers and transforms single women. Assie-Lumunba affirms that education facilitates the reproduction of social structures and provides the basis and impetus for transformation. In the context of the church, an engendered theological education is bound to condition some changes that may not only affect its structure, but would also affect single women positively. It will provide space for the increasing number of women in theological training in the Church to participate fully in the ministry of the church because, as Park rightly observes, “women’s social and cultural locations shape their ideas and experiences of the church and their ministerial practices.”⁴⁴ Women are sparsely represented in the curriculum planning of theological education, which naturally informs the absence of their voice and the male bias in the content and methods of pastoral training. Moreover, women’s late arrival in COCIN theological education has made it difficult for women to possess the necessary knowledge and skills for curriculum planning. This absence of women in curriculum planning invariably affects single women because not only do men design programmes that affect women, the assumption is that women issues

³⁹Roger Gaikward, *Curriculum development in the theological education: urgencies and priorities. Senate of Serampore College: exercise in B.D. curriculum revision, 2006-2009.* <http://archived.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p5/ete/Roger%20Gaikward%20-%20Curriculum%20development%20in%20theological%20education%20-%20Senate%20of%20Serampore.pdf> 2009, p.8, [Accessed: 20/6/2012].

⁴⁰James J Reynolds, *A critical analysis of the interpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone by the in Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria Gongola Diocese*, University of KwaZulu-Natal: Pietermaritzburg, 2013, p.39.

⁴¹Ibid, p.40.

⁴²Holland and Peter Henriot, p.8.

⁴³Raymond Kumalo, “Teaching and learning in community with others: a transformation-centred approach to theological education.” In *Journal of constructive theology*, 2008/2008, p.149.

⁴⁴HiRho Park, *Practices of ministerial leadership of Korean-American United Methodist clergywomen: toward a Wesleyan ecclesiology in a global context.* (Doctor of Philosophy, Boston University), 2011, p.9

discussed will also apply to single women. Single women have experiences that are unique to them; and appropriate ministry to them is achieved only through addressing their concerns as a category among women.

Fifthly, engendering the curriculum will not only benefit single women, but will also express a wider range of human experience and encourage mutuality between men and women in the pastoral ministry of the church. It will encourage cooperation in participation, decision-making and sharing of benefits between men and women in the church. Additionally, it will help to decrease the polarities between men and women, as well as provide equal attention to the realities and experiences of men and women.⁴⁵

Lastly, an engendered curriculum is bound to affect both the educators' and learners' perception of single women which have been moulded by socio-cultural factors. It is also likely to influence the way both lecturers and those that have been trained, think and teach. Theological education and pastoral training in COCIN have to a large extent been masculinised. Both men and women have been orientated to regard this field as a man's domain. It is widely accepted that individuals' psychological and social development is moulded by their society's definition of character and conduct assumed to be appropriate for each gender. Drawing on an example from the Latin American context, Foulke affirms the role of a peoples' social location in influencing the theological task. The consequence with regards to gender and theological education is that the gender perspective of researchers and expositors of theology affects the entire context of their work.⁴⁶ The engendering of theological education may have a ripple effect of demasculinising theological education and pastoral training in COCIN and provide new perceptions of single women and their role in extending God's Kingdom, and building the community of faith. It may facilitate and improve the Church's engagements within an increasingly changing social world and influence how the Church can be more responsive to the needs of single women.

A transforming pastoral ministry

With respect to providing a space for healing and wholeness for single women, a transforming pastoral ministry will require that women's experiences become a major theme in the Church's social and ecclesial discourses. Essentially, a gender-sensitive pastoral ministry is transforming because it has the potency of pulling down all that seek to limit single women's full humanity and acceptance as equal.

A transformative pastoral ministry is inclusive and underscores the importance of community because it is characterised by acceptance, belonging, commitment and support. It promotes and demonstrates the spirit of shared responsibility, accountability and cooperation. A gender- inclusive approach relocates the focus of ministry into communal contexts.⁴⁷ In a gender- inclusive pastoral ministry there is opportunity for individuals to identify and utilise their potential to the maximum. According to Buthlezi, Bishop Emeritus, "the passport to the place of receiving God's gift is opportunity in education, employment and general development. To deny a person these opportunities is to displace him (sic) from his (sic)

⁴⁵Maria Riley, *Engendering the pastoral cycle*. New York: Orbis Books, 2005.

⁴⁶Irene Foulkes, (2000). "Theological teaching and gender perspective II conference of Latin American women theology professors." In *Ministerial Formation*(91), 2000, pp.38-39.

⁴⁷Linda Graham, "Pastoral theology in an age of uncertainty." In *HTS*, 62(3), 2006, p.860.

God-given place; it is to alienate him from the wholeness of life.”⁴⁸ The full participation of single women in pastoral ministry will enable their general development and experience of wholeness of life.

A transforming pastoral ministry requires an understanding of the present social context in which the church exists. The recognition that theological schools educate women to function effectively as leaders and ministers of the Gospel creates a transformative pastoral ministry environment. Additionally, a shift towards a deconstruction of the patriarchal and androcentric interpretations of the Scriptures, which has informed the Church’s practices, by embracing interpretations that are gender sensitive resonates with the ideals of a transforming pastoral ministry. A transforming pastoral ministry recognises, affirms and utilises to the full the gifts and call to service of both men and women in the capacity that God desires for them. Women, including those who are singles, like every believer have a right to full participation in all aspects of the Church’s ministry.

Although, the communal concept of ministry is not foreign to COCIN, it has however not taken conscious steps to utilise the virtues of community in its ministry. Many single women in COCIN are care-givers, but their contribution in this important aspect of the church’s life is not recognised. COCIN needs a gender- inclusive approach so as to broaden pastoral ministry and move away from the prevailing male vocation, which is characteristic of the westernised missionary models and notions about pastoral ministry. As Graham points out, every believer is entitled to an opportunity to be involved in community formation. She maintains that “the gathered community may also be the agent of Christian practice, either in its enactment of ritual functions, or by its emphasis on the shared ministry of the laity.”⁴⁹ A communal dimension of ministry is what is needed to counter the clericalisation of and centralisation on single male individuals in the pastoral ministry in COCIN. Communal involvement creates opportunity for accessing the available and needed human resources that promote healing for those facing despairing situations. As Hislop aptly argues, it takes the full participation of everyone in the community, “the personal walk of the woman in pain, and the support of others who understand –to bring ...healing.”⁵⁰

Conclusion

The discussion of the theological education and pastoral training of the Church has led to the conclusion that there is a fundamental need for re-orientation and reconstruction of new perceptions of theological education in Africa. The absence of gender studies in the curriculum of pastoral training and gender consciousness in the practice of the church has implications for its pastoral ministry. Women’s issues deserve attention in the curriculum of theological education and pastoral training. The inclusion of gender studies in the curriculum of pastoral training holds hope for single women. The Church has strong theological beliefs supporting its theological education, but these beliefs have not been reflected in preparation for ministry and by extension, ministry practice.

The findings of the research with respect to ministerial training have shown that the theological education of the Church falls short since the curricula of its ministerial training

⁴⁸Manas Buthelezi “Salvation as wholeness.” In J. Parratt (Ed.), *A reader in Christian theology*, London: SPCK, 1990, p.100.

⁴⁹Graham, 2006, p.859.

⁵⁰Bervely Hislop, *Shepherding a woman's heart : a new model for effective ministry to women*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003, p.156.

institutions lack vital aspects that will enable teaching and learning take into account present day realities. Since the search for new patterns of ministry must be an ongoing one, COCIN theological institutions need to review their curricula to include models and approaches that are broad enough to take into account contemporary pastoral needs. The inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum of ministerial training will be an affirmation by the Church that ministry is first and foremost God's will, his initiative, his project and that humans, male and female, married and single, young and old are part of it because He has invited them. This aligns with the core value of the Great Commission, which underpins the church's pastoral training.

Reconstructing ministry in the Church will draw the attention of the church to its facilitatory and transformative role to its members, particularly single women. This conclusion is supported by Ozele's argument that the church in Africa has not adequately addressed women's education and constructive engagement in ministry. This is because African theology has often neglected African women's issues. Even when they are addressed, the discussion is clouded with assumptions that women's experiences of God are the same as those of men.⁵¹ Addressing women's issues, however, gives pastoral ministry a different sensitivity and perspective because "even the best care can fail when it is insensitive to a woman's experience."⁵²

The corporate identity of believers in the one household requires them to function for the good of the whole as enabled by the Spirit. Thus, biblical teaching and contemporary challenges invigorate a rethink of what church and the pastoral ministry are all about. The lack of an effective pastoral ministry to single women is a result of inadequate preparation for dealing with gender complexities in the pastoral training of the church.

⁵¹Anthony Ozele, *Cultural paternalism and the challenges of educating Nigerian women*. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of religious education association, Hyatt Harborside Hotel/Boston, Massachusetts, 2007, p.3.

⁵²Maxinne Glaz & Jeanne Moessner, "Introduction: I heard a cry." In M. Glaz & J. S. Moessner (Eds.), *Women in travail and transition: a new pastoral care*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, p.1.