

Effectiveness of Theological Education by Extension in Training Church Workers in Africa Gospel Church in Kericho County, Kenya

Author: Kennedy Kimutai Kirui

Africa Nazarene University,
P.O. Box 53067 – 00200 Nairobi, Kenya
Author E-mail Address: kenrui2002@gmail.com

Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to examine effectiveness of theological education by extension in training church workers in Africa gospel church in Kericho County, Kenya. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. The study targeted approximately 40,000 people in Kericho County. The targeted population included TEE Instructors, local pastors and former TEE students and current TEE students. In this study, both purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to arrive at a study sample size of 250 respondents. Questionnaires were used by the study in data collection. Data was analyzed as per the research questions and objectives. Data was summarized in tables, frequencies and percentages. The statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) was used to aid in the analysis. The study findings revealed that Theological Education by Extension is perceived to be more effective in training church workers compared to residential training in Bible College, and other Training Institutes. These results can be attributed to the fact that majority of those interviewed have been trained by TEE. Also those who were trained under TEE and are pastors or church leaders do not keep on changing their job prospects like those who were trained in Bible Colleges. There is a high rate of TEE students being directly involved in local church ministries as opposed to those trained in residential training that can sometimes be absorbed in the marketplace. These results were attributed to the fact that the trainings are much flexible and that is why people from different professions such as teachers, managers, business people etc. can enrol and complete successfully. The study therefore provided the following recommendations: the revamping of the TEE program to meet the current educational demands is recommended. This would greatly aid the Church in achieving its vision of the whole church, taking the whole Gospel to the whole world.*

Keywords: *theological education by extension, theological education, theological education effectiveness, theological trainings, training church workers, Africa Gospel Church*

INTRODUCTION

The Africa Gospel Church has been using Theological Education by Extension model to train its workers from 1972. The program was begun so that it could, give training in Bible and Bible related subjects to those serving as pastors and to adult lay-leaders who are actively involved in Christian service, but because of home and work conditions do not find it possible to study in residence at Kenya Highlands Bible College (KHBC) or at Kaboson Pastors Training College. This study is not only for the increasing of Bible knowledge, but also for the growth and deepening of the church. The program was in response to a great need for more workers to serve in a quickly growing church. There was a vast majority of church members with a genuine

calling into ministry, but did not have the requisite education as well as the convenience of leaving home for a residential training at Kenya Highlands Bible College. This led to the adoption of Theological Education by Extension as a means of training the workers. This has ended up being the lead avenue for training church workers, approximately 150 trainees enrolled that first term. There are currently more church workers who have graduated from TEE serving than those trained through the church's training colleges.

TEE is a well-known form of established model of leadership training, by several factors, of which the most obvious is the extension aspect. The extension means extending the seminary to where the student is. Whatever courses are offered in a seminary, are extended to the students to study where they are. By its mode of delivery, TEE would look like correspondence only that in a correspondence model, there is no teacher-student face to face encounter. TEE offers some kind of face to face encounter; where the teacher acts as the facilitator. As an extension program, the training is offered at a location near the student's home, eliminating the need to spend months or years in preparation at an exclusive residential Bible school or seminary. Open and Distance Learning modes of study give learner's equal opportunities anywhere and anytime. It also maximizes the use of qualified personnel to reach more people and gives opportunity to offer uncompromised quality education (Mwololo, 2014). Theological education is the seedbed for the renewal of churches, their ministries and mission and their commitment to church unity in today's world.

If theological education systems are neglected or not given their due prominence in church leadership, in theological reflection and in funding, consequences might not be visible immediately, but quite certainly will become manifest after one or two decades in terms of theological competence of church leadership, holistic nature of the churches mission, capacities for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and for dialogue between churches and society (World CONFERENCE Association, 2009). Distance education possesses the potential of providing a way for churches and religious leaders of developing programs in conjunction with theological institutions, or in place of seminaries where the institutions are considered insensitive to current ministerial and contextual realities. Many of such efforts view theological education as ministry-centered with the aim of developing leadership skills. They are invariably built on the idea that ministerial learning is more effective when based at the very place of use. It may be difficult to avoid probable criticisms of distance education in regards to its effectiveness or otherwise in theological education. Yet, its current reality and possible usefulness cannot be denied or overlooked (Oladejo, 2005). And as the World Conference of Associations of theological Institutions stated, "Most probably decentralized TEE programs for most of Christianity in the South will prove to be the most effective and most widely spread models of theological education in the 21st century as many rural or poor churches cannot afford to maintain residential theological education programs" (World Conference Association, 2009).

ODEL is truly contributing not only to the well-being of the church and private stakeholders but also the government. ODEL also contributes to national development; Mwololo notes that, "The seamless modes of study contribute positively to the economic growth by increasing the capacity for training opportunities for manpower beyond the available capacity in the conventional

institutions. This enables a growing number of school leavers to acquire higher education for participation in the knowledge based economy (Mwololo, 2014).

In light of the current rapidly changing society and the increasing emphasis on education, Distance Learning has become a necessary learning system for education for many institutions and individuals. In Kenya, it is the direction of the future means of training. Likewise, Africa Gospel Church Kenya, which is in dire need of trained personnel for church ministry, has to make use of this form of training for her personnel. The Africa Gospel Church, therefore, has to focus a fresh on the TEE Program. Theological Education by Extension has evolved significantly over the years. The mode of provision of education has improved tremendously from a simple delivery of education through correspondence to a more sophisticated and better means of delivery. The changes in the mode of delivery of Theological Education have made it a necessity to continuously evaluate the existing distance programs to assess their viability to meet the contextual needs of the society. Even though the Africa Gospel Church, Kenya has used TEE for training its ministers since 1972, an evaluation of the program as an effective tool for training leaders for church ministry has never been carried out. This research was carried out to examine the effectiveness of the program as a tool for training ministers for Africa Gospel Church in Kericho County, Kenya

METHODOLOGY

Cross-sectional survey was used in this research because it was concerned with describing, recording, analyzing, and reporting conditions that exist or existed (Kothari, 2004). The survey described the status of TEE and examined the impact of this type of education. This method is suitable because it helped in gathering information about people's attitudes, opinions and habits. The design allowed the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2005).

Africa Gospel Church, Kenya has close to 400 churches in Kericho Region. The target population for this study was 40,000 church members, lay leaders, pastors, TEE students and Instructors. The estimated population was arrived at by averaging 100 members for each of the 400 congregations. The corresponding area TEE Instructors, local pastors and former TEE students and current TEE students were contacted by the researcher as co-researchers and committee members for the purpose of helping with the discussion and implementation of the research results. They were selected because they are co-ordinating, directing, and/or are currently involved in the TEE Program in their respective Areas.

Both purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used in this study. The purposive sampling technique was used in this research because the researcher critically thought about the parameters of the population to be considered and the simple random sampling of the respondents would be crucial to the success of the research, in that the selection was representative.

The sample size for the study was calculated using the formula by Slovin, 2015:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where n = is the size of Sample

N is the population of the sample

e² is probability of error

Therefore the Sample size will be: n = 5000

$$1 + 5000(0.05)^2$$

$$n = 250 \text{ respondents}$$

The sample size comprised of 50 TEE instructors, 50 pastors, 100 TEE students and 50 church leaders. The total number of the sample size was 250 respondents.

Questionnaires were the major data collection instruments used by the study. The research employed open-ended questionnaires that were prepared and administered to the respondents. Questionnaires were relevant to this study because they are less expensive, they are free from bias, and the results generated are more reliable and dependable (Kothari, 2004).

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. The validity of a research instrument concerns the extent to which the instrument yields the same results on repeated trials. Before the actual study, pretesting of the instruments was carried out in one of the TEE centers. This helped to determine the reliability, which is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or is influenced by random error, which is the deviation from a true measurement. The researcher undertook pre-tests data collection before the actual study schedules. This ensured that discussion procedures would obtain the data required to meet the objectives of the study thus enhancing reliability and validity of the data collected. Data collected during pre-testing is essential in adjusting the research instrument A. Mugenda and O. Mugenda (2003)

After data had been collected the researcher documented the findings as explicitly as possible. The data from questionnaires were all listed. A table with rows and columns was developed to take responses for all the questioned asked in the questionnaires in line with the summated scales. After the transcript of the data was prepared, the researcher wrote comments on the statements being the first interpretation of the data. If certain issues seemed to be still unclear or controversial, the researcher formulated additional questions and included them in the next questionnaires conducted in this research. Data was analyzed as per the research questions and

objectives. Data was summarized in tables, frequencies and percentages. The statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) was used to aid in the analysis.

RESULTS

Background Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics included are; gender, age, level of education, occupation and duration of membership.

Slightly more than a half (56%) of the respondents was men while 44% were females.

Regarding the age bracket, the results shows that the respondents aged between 18-39 years represented 20% of all respondents while those aged over 40 were 80%.

With reference to the educational level, 8% of the total respondents had no formal education, 24% had primary education, 40% had secondary education, 20% had tertiary education, 15% had university education and 2% had either Masters or PhD. This means that 32% of the respondents had not attained education beyond primary school level, while only 68% of the respondents had gone beyond secondary school education.

About their occupation, 20% were TEE instructors, 20% were Pastors, 40% were TEE students and 20% were church leaders in different Churches.

With reference to the duration in which the respondents had attended AGC membership, less than 1 years were 2%, between 1-5 years were 8%, those who had attended the church between 5-10 years were 32% and those who had attended the church for over 10 years were 58%.

Effectiveness of Theological Education by Extension in Training Church Workers in Africa Gospel Church

The study sought to examine the effectiveness of theological education by extension in training church workers in Africa Gospel Church. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents.

Table 1
Effectiveness of Theological Education by Extension in Training Church Workers

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
TEE Has Been Effective in Training Church Workers	90	36	87	34.8	5	2	35	14	37	14.8
I Would Highly Recommend a Student to Be Enrolled in TEE than Residential Training	87	34.8	95	38	5	2	33	13.2	30	12
The Church Should Continue to Train More Church Workers through TEE	100	40	68	27.2	16	6.4	40	16	26	10.4
TEE Is More Cost Effective and Flexible Than Residential Training	93	37.2	87	34.8	10	4	30	12	30	12

According to this study majority (71%) of the respondents noted that TEE is more effective in training church workers compared to residential training (Bible College, Training Institutes). Those who were neutral on this idea were 2%, those who disagreed were 14% and those who strongly disagreed were 13%.

The respondents were asked whether they would highly recommend a student to be enrolled in TEE than in other residential training and 73% of the respondents were optimistic that they would recommend students, while 25% of the respondents indicated that they will not. However 2% were neutral on this issue under study.

Slightly more than two thirds (67%) of the respondents supported the idea that the church should continue to train more Church workers through TEE, 27% of the respondents were not for this idea while 6% were neutral on this idea.

According to this study (72%) majority of the respondents noted that TEE is more cost effective and flexible than residential training. Those who were neutral on this idea were 4%, those who disagreed were 24%.

Rating Effectiveness of TEE in Training Church Workers Compared to other Forms of Training

The study sought to examine the ratings of effectiveness of TEE in training church workers compared to other forms of training. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents.

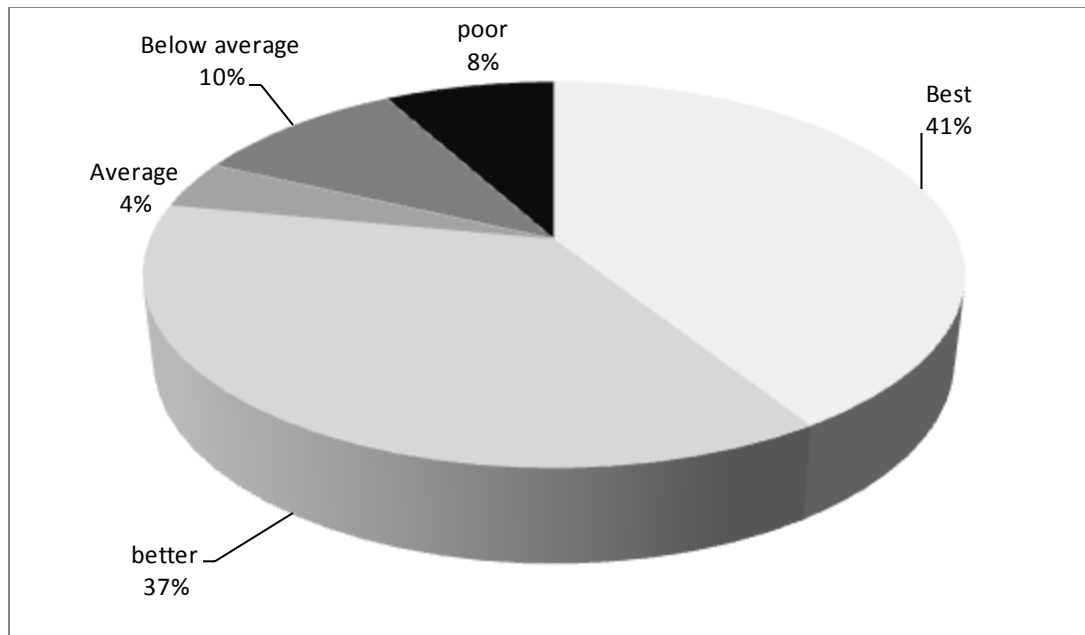


Figure 1 Rating effectiveness of TEE in Training Church Workers Compared to Other Forms of Training

The respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of TEE in Training church workers compared to other forms of training and their response were as follows: Those who rated it best were 41%, those who rated it better were 37%, those who rated it average were 4%, those who rated it below average were 10% and those who rated it poor were 8%. This can be attributed to the fact that TEE has been an effective way of teaching and training church leaders in AGC-K.

DISCUSSION

This study was interested in establishing the effectiveness of TEE in training church workers compared to other means of training church ministers. This was brought about when the respondents were asked whether TEE is more effective in training church workers compared to residential training (Bible College, Training Institutes) where 71% of the respondents agreed with this fact under study while 27% disagreed while 2% were neutral. This in line with the study by Mwololo, which noted that, ODEL maximizes the use of qualified personnel in order to reach more people and it also, gives opportunity to offer uncompromised quality education. This is attributed to the fact that the trainers spend a considerable time with the trainees and ensure that they are trained well.

Majority of the respondents were in support of the fact that they will highly recommend a student to be enrolled in TEE than residential training and 73 % of the respondents agreed while 25% of the respondents disagreed with this fact. This variation is as a result of the fact that majority of those trained feel that they are well prepared for the ministry. Further this response is as a result of the fact that the trainers spend a considerable time with the trainees in order to mould and train them. This is in line with the argument put across by World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions which stated that, most probably decentralized TEE programs for most of Christianity in the South will prove to be the most effective and most widely spread models of theological education in the 21st century as many rural or poor churches cannot afford to maintain residential theological education programs (World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions, 2009).

According to this study still 67% of the respondents supported the idea that the church should continue to train more church workers through TEE while 27% of the respondents were not for this idea. These results might be attributed to the fact that the TEE trainees are doing great job in the church since they are trained on the job by well-trained instructors. Also the instructors are approachable and available when they are needed to serve in the church. This further supports what Evangelical Friends Church (2015) observed that since the students are normally involved in leadership positions, the knowledge gained in the lesson materials and through sharing in the seminars can be applied almost immediately.

According to this study majority of the respondents (72%) noted that TEE is more cost effective and flexible than residential training compared to 24% of those who disagreed. The results can be attributed to the fact TEE materials are affordable to most students and the program is much cheaper as compared to residential training. There are not costs associated with residential training such as accommodation, food and other tuition expenses. It is easier therefore for the local church to support a student or an individual student to meet his/her training costs. The cost of residential training continues to rise due to the high cost of living and scholastic resources.

The respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of TEE in training church workers compared to other forms of training and 82% of the respondents rated it above average while 18% of the respondents rated it below average and poor. This can be attributed to the fact that the TEE students have a more practical approach to ministry. They can easily apply what they study because it is on the job training. This also can be attributed to the fact that the instructors are very committed in their work of helping the student integrate theory and practice. The instructors are also practitioners and also qualified for the work they do, thus the good results.

CONCLUSION

TEE is perceived to be more effective in training church workers compared to residential training in Bible College, and other Training Institutes. These results can be attributed to the fact that majority of those interviewed have been trained by TEE. Also those who were trained under TEE

and are pastors or church leaders do not keep on changing their job prospects like those who were trained in Bible Colleges. There is a high rate of TEE students being directly involved in local church ministries as opposed to those trained in residential training that can sometimes be absorbed in the marketplace.

These results can be attributed to the perception of those trained towards the programme. This can also be attributed to the fact that the training is flexible and it can be done by people who may already have many other responsibilities of their families and professions and would not have the time to go to regular or residential trainings. Again, considering the cost factor; it is cheaper to enrol in TEE than in the residential trainings.

REFERENCES

- Evangelical Friends Church. *Impact of Willis Hotchkiss*: <http://www.evangelicalfriends.org/200> (Retrieved from Worldwide Web 23/05/2015).
- Jacobs, D. R. *Leadership Training Programmes: Mennonite and Brethren in Christ, Covering Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean*. Landisville, PA: Mennonite Christian Leadership Foundation, 1986.
- Mugenda, O., & Mugenda, A. (2003). Research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative methods. *Revised in Nairobi*, 56(12), 23-34.
- Mwololo, Millicent. (2014) *The Next Big Thing in Academic Delivery and Training*. Daily Nation, Col. 7/page 44. 09/04/.
- Njoroge, S. N. A. A. (2015). *Factors affecting youth participation in Church Programmes within the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Kajiado Presbytery, Kajiado County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, Africa Nazarene University).
- Oladejo, M., & Akanbi, T. (2012). Banker's perceptions of electronic banking in Nigeria: A review of post consolidation experience. *Research Journal of Finance and Accounting*, 3(2), 1-11.
- World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions. *Theological Education in World Christianity Challenges and Opportunities in Theological Education in the 21st Century*: November 2009.