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FEATURE

**Stakeholders' Perspectives on Bachelor of Arts
in Theology Curriculum at the University
of Arusha, Tanzania**

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Abstract. *This study sought to establish stakeholders' perspective on the relevance of various aspects in the BA Theology Curriculum at the University of Arusha. The study was propelled by the fact that curriculum specialists advocate for regular evaluation of curriculum in order to meet the expectations of stakeholders. The study employed descriptive design under the quantitative research methodology using a questionnaire as the major data source in a quantitative form that demanded statistical analysis. It involved a number of stakeholders, including employers, professionals, alumni, and current students who participated in filling out the questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was done through expert team from the faculty of Theology at the University of Arusha, and the reliability test yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.7, which implies that the questionnaire was reliable to be used for data collection. Data analysis was done through descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance. The study established that stakeholders considered such components as theoretical knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, ability to perform specific tasks, practical/hands-on skills, and logical thinking as very important and logical thinking, ethical skills, managerial skills, innovative skills, analytical skills, technical concepts as important for inclusion in BA Theology content. It is therefore recommended that curriculum developers in the Faculty of Theology need to include identified aspects in BA Theology Curriculum development. Furthermore, educators in the Faculty of Theology need to consider such aspects in the content of the courses they teach to meet the expectations of stakeholders.*

Keywords: stakeholders, theology, curriculum, evaluation, content, Adventist, Tanzania

Introduction

While curriculum reforms are of great concern to educators, curriculum designers and other education stakeholders, numerous scholars have explained the importance of curriculum evaluation based on stakeholders' perspectives in order to make relevant changes and determine what to include to suit the needs of the community in which the graduates will serve. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2009), curriculum evaluation enables educational institutions to gather feedbacks that are needed for the effectiveness of the curriculum to decide whether to accept or change the content in question. Nyabero (2016) has it that "evaluation is the determination of the worth of a thing. It includes obtaining information for use in judging the worth of a program, product, procedure or objective" (p. 60). Furthermore, Demirel (as cited in Aslan, 2016) contends that "curriculum evaluation involves determining whether there are any elements that fall short of meeting the needs in the implementation process or that prevent achievement of the targets . . . and applying necessary corrections" (p. 205).

Erden (as cited in Aslan, 2016) also describes evaluation as the "process of collecting data about the effectiveness and efficiency of the curriculum by means of different assessment tools, interpreting the obtained data by comparing them with the criteria and reaching a decision on the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum" (p. 205). According to Jurkowitz (2003), educators need to get engaged in curriculum assessment in order to bring about the improvement of learning and to provide a measure of accountability. Olibie (2013) further argues that "change is an important component of curriculum dynamics and such changes need to be studied and managed carefully for a better future" (p. 161). Based on this background, this study sought to determine the perspectives of stakeholders on the relevance of various aspects in the BA Theology curriculum in order to come up with relevant recommendations that might help to transform the existing situation.

Like other Adventist higher learning institutions, the University of Arusha offers academic degrees in various disciplines, including Bachelor of Arts in Theology. "This is a 3-year program designed to prepare students to serve as pastors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and scholars in theology and religious studies" (University of Arusha Academic Prospectus, 2017-2018, p. 151). The University of Arusha faculty of Theology and Religious Studies has its mission which is "to equip learners with theological, religious and ministerial skills in order to empower them to offer excellent and effective service to God and humanity by applying sound biblical principles" (University of Arusha Academic Prospectus, 2017-2018, p. 160). Therefore, the BA Theology curriculum intends to produce graduates who will serve God and humanity. To determine the effectiveness of this objective, it is important to involve stakeholders in determining what should be included in the curriculum. In

response to the pressing need to have curriculum evaluated from time to time, the present study involved key stakeholders in evaluating aspects of Bachelor of Arts in Theology curriculum so that important recommendations can be made. The study was guided by two major research questions namely, (a) what are the perspectives of stakeholders in various aspects of Bachelor of Arts in Theology Curriculum? (b) Is there a significant difference in Stakeholders' perspectives on the relevance of Bachelor of Arts in Theology content?

Review of Related Literature and Studies

To enhance discussion of results, the researchers went through a literature review. The areas related to the essence of the study include stakeholders' views, nature of BA Theology curriculum, and nature of pastoral work. The following is a discussion of this review.

Essence of stakeholders' perspectives. Stakeholders' assessment is based on a biblical principle where God himself evaluated his work after creation. After finishing the creative work, God looked into his creation and declared that behold everything was very good (Genesis 1:31). This means that God values quality. In his creation, everything was perfect. Nothing was substandard. Therefore, God's followers must value their works and strive for perfection through God's enabling. Like any other academic department, the Faculty of Theology must consequently come up with and maintain quality programs that prepare theologians, pastors, and bible instructors holistically as far as biblical principles are concerned. The programs offered must also meet the current needs of the society the graduates are going to serve after completing their studies. This is the basis for involving stakeholders to give their inputs. According to Tiwari, Chan, and Law (2002) "when stakeholders are involved in curriculum planning, there is a greater likelihood that the needed education is delivered" (p. 265). They further bring to view a practical example whereby besides the nursing faculty, other stakeholders such as nurses, doctors and policymakers also contribute in shaping the curriculum. According to UKEssays (November 2018), curriculum development requires the input of various educational stakeholders including teachers, school heads, parents, community members and students.

Engagement of key stakeholders in the assessment of curriculum is further advocated by Koskei (2015), who holds the view that "various views from different stakeholders are normally a good ingredient in any curriculum development process" (p. 79). He gives the example of New Zealand, which has excelled in involving stakeholders in curriculum formation whereby "representatives from a number of groups were involved in the development process which included trials in schools, collaborative working parties, online discussions and an inquiry into relevant national and international research" (p. 80).

The Tanzania Commission for Universities (n.d) guidelines also stipulate that a "university has the responsibility to ensure that community engagement activities

are conducted within institutional policies and strategies that facilitate collaboration between the University and the local, national, regional, continental and global stakeholders for mutual gain in knowledge and resource exchange” (p. 21). Furthermore, it is advised that any “program submitted to the Commission for the purpose of accreditation shall be accompanied with evidence indicating that the University submitting the program had carried out a comprehensive market analysis, . . . involving relevant stakeholders in the development of the program” (p. 21). Based on this recommendation, it was deemed necessary for the faculty of Theology at the University of Arusha to distribute questionnaires to relevant stakeholders, including students, employers, and community members to come up with relevant inputs to enhance the quality of BA in Theology curriculum. Involving stakeholders in curriculum formation has numerous advantages. Ornstein and Hunkins (2009) in Ngussa and Makewa (2014) consider students as important sources for curriculum development. They contend that students “. . . should have a voice in curriculum development. Their input is important in its own right, but allowing them to participate in curriculum development also empowers them and encourages them to take responsibility for matters that concern them” (p. 29).

Nature of BA theology curriculum. Like any other academic program, BA Theology at the University of Arusha includes content from various areas. The main objectives in the provision of BA in Theology program include the provision of

. . . resources to enable the delivery of theological, pastoral, and religious education, exposing learners to the study and interpretation of the scripture by using the historical-grammatical hermeneutical methodology, provision of consultancy services within the church and the community, instillation of Christocentric moral values to learners, guiding learners to attain pastoral, evangelistic and teaching skills needed to become competent and committed workers, fostering the spiritual, academic and professional development of the learners as well as developing and maintaining a friendly learning environment between the faculty and the learners. (UoA Academic Bulletin, 2018-2019, p. 139)

The content of the BA Theology program includes general requirements, concentration requirements, and cognate requirements. While the concentration requirement is the major aspect in preparing pastors, it carries heavier weight as compared to the rest of the requirements. Particularly, it includes Biblical Studies, Biblical Languages, Historical Studies, Pastoral Theology, as well as Theology and Philosophical Studies (UoA Academic Bulletin, 2018-2019).

Nature of pastoral work. While most of the BA Theology program are prepared to be Pastors under the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, it is necessary to get acquainted with the nature of pastoral work. While pastoral work is universal, it may have slight differences in the application based on geographical location, job facilities, and finance. In Tanzanian Seventh-day Adventist Churches, a pastor's responsibilities can be categorized in terms of administrative assignments, managing

the church programs, visitations, evangelism, pastoral counseling, social service such as wedding and funeral ceremonies, and taking care of the pastor's own family. For more clarification, there is a need to explain each of these responsibilities in detail as follows:

Administrative assignments. A local church pastor has to consider the

. . . five functions of management, which are planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. One of a pastor's responsibilities is, therefore, to attend to the church needs in the administrative context. This includes compiling monthly reports from each of the local churches in the district he serves and sending them to the higher organizations, attending the church disciplinary meetings, supervising church officers' election, and training the new and existing local church officers to take their responsibilities effectively. (Mpwani, 2015, p. 74)

The General Conference of SDAs, Ministerial Association (2009) suggests that "such training should include expertise in sermon preparation, conducting committee meetings, responsibilities of departments of the church, care of church properties, and care of newly baptized members" (p. 113).

Managing church programs. According to Mpwani (2015), a pastor has the responsibility to organize church programs to be meaningful to the worshipers and connect them to God. It is advised that the church programs for the Sabbath, vespers, and midweek prayer should be well prepared ahead of time. Other church programs include wedding services, child dedication, baptism, burial service, camp meetings, youth camp meetings and so on. For all these programs to be effective and to have a meaning to the worshipers, the pastor's input is highly needed.

Pastoral visitation. While pastoral visitation is one of effective ways of meeting the church members' spiritual needs, White (as cited in Mpwani, 2015) states that when a minister has presented the gospel message from the pulpit, his work is only begun. There is personal work for him to do. He should visit the people in their home, talking and praying with them in earnestness and humility. Pastoral visitation is very helpful for the church nurturing. Therefore, a pastor is obligated to do it effectively.

Evangelism. According to Mpwani (2015),

. . . a minister is to lead the church in evangelism. This can be seen from Jesus's ministry. He was always eager to spread the good news to those who are in need (Luke 4:18-19, 43). To carry on what He had started, Jesus ordained the same responsibilities to His disciples (Matt 28:19-20). When the apostles saw that the number of new believers increased, they considered the importance of electing seven deacons so that they may be able to provide the services that were needed by believers." (p. 76)

In other words, evangelism has two dimensions, in-reach, and outreach. Thus, a pastor has to make sure that evangelism has to be active in the church to increase in number and spiritually.

Pastoral counselling. Counseling is essential for pastoral work whereby a pastor has to attend to the church members' needs. According to Benner (2003), "pastoral counseling is also an activity of pastoral care. . . . Furthermore, pastoral counseling typically has more of problem focus: that is, a parishioner (church members) contacts the pastoral because of something problematic and for which he or she seeks help" (p. 20). Hence, most church members' problems are taken care of through pastoral counseling.

Social service. Social services are a key factor for the success of a pastor's work. This has been advocated by Mpwani (2015) who argues that Jesus' aim in His ministry was "not to be served but to serve" (Matt 20:28, NLT). The church is therefore obliged to engage the ministry of social service in the community whereby Christ's love needs to be witnessed and demonstrated in action to society. A pastor, therefore, needs to encourage the church to participate in social issues and to enable the society to have a better understanding of a Christian community. Social service is a bridge between the church and society.

Personal family care. A minister belongs to a big part of a Christian family at the church. When the daily ministry to believers ends, he or she must do his best to attend the physical and spiritual care needs of his or her family. The minister must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. How can you expect someday to look after the church of God) who does not know how to manage his own family?" The pastor therefore needs to take care of his family as he attends the larger church family.

Research Methodology

This study employed quantitative research methodology. Specifically, the research design was survey using a questionnaire for data collection. This part describes the methodology employed in detail.

Research design. The study employed a descriptive research design, which is defined by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) as one which entails a systematic and empirical inquiry in which the researcher describes certain aspects and establishes how the independent variable affects the dependent variable. In the context of this study, the researchers described the views of stakeholders on the relevance of BA Theology curriculum to pave the way for statistical analysis.

Sampling procedures. This study involved a number of stakeholders who participated by filling the questionnaire. The researchers tried as much as possible to involve a wide range of stakeholders in evaluating the curriculum. With that regard, respondents included 19 employers (16.1%), 43 professionals (36.4%), 29

alumni (24.6%) and 27 others (22.9%). As Table 1 indicates, the majority of respondents were professionals, followed by alumni, students, and employers.

Table 1

Categories of Stakeholders Who Participated in the Study

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Employers	19	16.1
Professionals	43	36.4
Alumni	29	24.6
Students	27	22.9
TOTAL	118	100

Validity and reliability. The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through an expert team whereby the panel of experts in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Arusha went through the questionnaire and gave comments for improvement in order to ensure that it will come up with answers that address the problem under investigation. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences to ensure acceptable internal consistency. Results yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.7, which implies that the questionnaire was reliable to be used for analysis.

Data Analysis and Results

The treatment of data involved descriptive statistics whereby perceptions of respondents were described using mean scores and standard deviation. Therefore, after describing the perception of respondents, one hypothesis was tested.

Research question one. What is the perspective of stakeholders in various aspects of Bachelor of Arts in Theology content?

In order to determine the perspectives of stakeholders on the relevance of various aspects in the BA Theology Content, 12 items were constructed for respondents to rate through a self-administered questionnaire. This research question was analyzed through descriptive statistics in terms of Means and Standard Deviation. In order to determine the perspective of stakeholders, item responses were interpreted as follows: 4.50-5.00 = *Very Important*, 3.50-4.49 = *Important*, 2.50-3.49 = *Fairly Important*, 1.50-2.49 = *Slightly Important* and 1.00-1.49 = *Not Important*.

Table 2

Stakeholders' Perception on the Relevance of BA Theology Curriculum

SN	ITEM	MEAN	STD DEV	INTERPRETATION
1	Theoretical Knowledge	4.59	.73073	Very Important
2	Critical thinking skills	4.56	.72181	Very Important
3	Problem-solving skills	4.53	.82361	Very Important
4	Ability to perform specific tasks	4.50	.82427	Very Important
5	Practical/Hands on Skills	4.50	.78174	Very Important
6	Logical thinking	4.50	.73671	Very Important
7	Ethical Skills	4.45	.92120	Important
8	Managerial skills	4.39	.78599	Important
9	Innovative skills	4.36	.88352	Important
10	Analytical Skills	4.27	.93265	Important
11	Technical Concepts	4.20	.86290	Important
12	Numerical Skills	4.00	.97840	Important

As Table 2 indicates, the mean score of six items ranged between 4.50 and 5.00, which signifies *very important*. This includes theoretical knowledge (4.59), critical thinking (4.56), problem-solving skills (4.53), ability to perform specific tasks (4.50), practical/hands-on skills (4.50) and logical thinking (4.50). This implies that stakeholders perceived the six items in question as very important to be included in the teaching and learning content. Therefore, it is important for lecturers in the faculty of Theology include theoretical knowledge, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, the performance of specific task skills, practical/ hands-on activities skills as well as logical thinking skills components to meet stakeholder's expectations.

On the other hand, the last six items had mean scores ranging between 3.50 and 4.49, which signify importance. This included logical thinking (4.45), ethical skills (4.45), managerial skills (4.39), innovative skills (4.36), analytical skills (4.27), technical concepts (4.2) as well as numerical skills (4.00). This implies that stakeholders perceived the six items as important to be included in the teaching and learning content. Therefore, it is important for lecturers in the faculty of Theology to include ethical skills, managerial skills, innovative skills, analytical skills, technical concepts, and numerical skills components.

Research question two: Is there a significant difference in stakeholders' perspectives on the relevance of Bachelor of Arts in Theology content?

This research question sought to test differences in perspectives among stakeholders on the content of Bachelor of Arts in Theology. Analysis of the question called for testing of the following null hypothesis: there is no significant difference

in stakeholders' perception on the relevance of Bachelor of Arts in Theology Content. As seen in Table 3, the mean score in all categories was between 3.50 and 4.49, signifying that respondents considered the content relevant. The group of alumni, however, had the highest mean score, followed by professionals, employers, and finally, students.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholders' Perception

Category of Respondents	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev
Employers	19	4.31	.76000
Professionals	43	4.43	.55633
Alumni	29	4.44	.40353
Students	27	4.40	.33014

Table 4

Analysis of Variance for Stakeholders' Perception

	Sum of Squares	Df.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.225	3	.075	.277	.842
Within Groups	30.789	114	.270		
TOTAL	31.014	117			

Although there were some variations in mean scores among groups, the Sig. of .842 in Table 4, which is greater than the critical value, suggests the difference is not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, and we maintain that there is no significant difference in stakeholders' perception of the relevance of Bachelor of Arts in Theology content. All groups considered the components relevant for inclusion in the curriculum.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The researchers give the following conclusions about the relevance of various components in BA Theology content: Stakeholders considered such components as theoretical knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, ability to perform specific tasks, practical/hands-on skills, and logical thinking as very important for inclusion in BA Theology content. They also considered logical thinking, ethical skills, managerial skills, innovative skills, analytical skills, technical concepts, and numerical skills as important in BA Theology content. It is also concluded that there is no significant difference in stakeholders' perspectives on the relevance of Bachelor of Arts in Theology Content. Respondents, regardless of their varied

backgrounds, considered various components that appeared in the questionnaire relevant for inclusion in BA Theology content.

Based on the conclusions of the study, it is recommended that curriculum developers in the Faculty of Theology need to include theoretical knowledge, critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, the performance of specific task skills, practical/hands-on activities skills as well as logical thinking skills components in BA Theology Curriculum development in order to meet stakeholder's expectations. Furthermore, it I recommended that educators in the faculty of Theology need to consider the aforementioned components in the content of the courses they teach to meet the expectations of stakeholders.

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