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INTEGRATIVE MINISTERIAL TRAINING: A CASE STUDY IN THE BAPTIST TRADITION OF SOUTH AFRICA¹

ABSTRACT

Relevant theological education for our context is key, and the sharing of best pedagogical practice can make theological education more sustainable in Africa. Many in theological education use the word “holistic” to describe integration in their curricula, yet with no clear consensus about what it exactly involves. This article reports on an action research on integrative curriculum development. It explores how the Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa intentionally brings together the major learning dimensions of academic excellence, vocational training, and spiritual formation in a holistic way. The article provides key findings and reflects on the institutional, denominational, and contextual challenges that shape curriculum design. This article positions integration as a key approach to curriculum design, as learning dimensions are intentionally linked for meaningful learning, rather than simply the mastery of fragmented information.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article reports on a research project on integrative theological education at the Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa. The College participated in and hosted an Africa-wide research project from 2018 to 2020 in Protestant theological training. This was a three-way study, the other two training institutions being Justo Mwale University, Zambia (Banda *et al.* 2020) and Pentecost Theological Seminary, Ghana (Quampah & Naidoo 2020). The selection criteria employed in the overall study were established institutions from different parts of Africa focused on residential ministerial formation, with an accredited undergraduate programme, as well as research leaders with the necessary research skills to explore the curriculum design journey. The project sought to explore how theological institutions understood this concept of integration; how well the parts of the curriculum were intentionally connected; the rationale articulated for the interrelationships of experiences and requirements, and how best to move towards integrated education incorporating African values in terms of philosophy, world view and pedagogy.

In theological education, there are perennial concerns that ministry education is disintegrated and needs to recover, by engaging a holistic focus for various reasons: the fragmentation of disciplinary knowledge; the tensions between theory and practice; education is not focused on learning; various competencies and skills that must be mastered for an ever-changing Christian landscape, and the breakdown of social and cultural systems that support religious traditions. Integration is offered as a method in education to provide that re-integration, by fostering integrative teaching and learning, curricular approaches, and reconsidering all aspects of the learning environment. In education, an integrated curriculum is described as “interwoven, connected, thematic, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, correlated, linked, and holistic” (Beane 1997:32). In theological education, Cahalan (2011) describes integration in three ways: the integration of theological disciplines and ideas with each other (for example, interdisciplinary teaching and learning); the integration between theory and praxis or practice (for example, the classical and practical disciplines), and the dynamic interplay of knowledge, practice, and the self in context (for example, knowing, doing, and being). Integration is viewed as a goal and a process of theological education that is dynamic and ongoing. It is not only applied to students. Ideally, it is an aspect of community life with a corporate dimension and is the task of the whole faculty.

The need for this kind of research in Africa is due to the fact that hardly any attention has been paid to methodological or curriculum issues (LeMarquand & Galgalo 2004:15). Even though Africa has thrown off its colonial dominance and asserted its own energetic perspectives, dependence on the West remains extensive (Gifford 1998). According to Anderson (2004:8),

Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are clones of western forms of theologizing and new initiatives in providing relevant theological education for third-world contexts are very few and far between.

More reflection is needed on this area of educational practice, as, in most instances, curriculum issues are only considered at the time of accreditation.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa (BTC) was established in Central Johannesburg in 1951. It is owned by the Baptist Union of South Africa. However, they do not exercise direct control of the College. According to its constitution, it only allows Baptist members or those accredited with the Union to be employed as academic staff. BTC's vision is "to equip believers for Christian ministry globally" and its mission statement is as follows:

Through contact and distance learning to make Evangelical theological education and ministry preparation available primarily to Southern Africa and then the global community.

The ethos of the College is Baptist. Although it welcomes applicants from various evangelical churches, the focus of the courses offered reflects the needs for ministry within the context of local Baptist churches.

Baptist theological education in South Africa has "maintained a conservative evangelical identity strongly connected to revivalism and pietism" (Rinquest 2012:80), involving training of a "mature regenerate church member ... one with a genuine conversion experience" (Longwe 2013:363). The general purpose of Baptist theological education "is to develop leaders, to equip churches to participate in God's mission in the world" (Longwe 2013:366). The Baptist tradition has a 400-year history. The Baptists are known for their non-conformist views and epitomise a variety of views within the same tradition. They are essentially a very broad evangelical grouping defined by a complete submission to the Word of God in everything, with "the consequent rejection of all else that has no explicit requirement in Scripture" (Hoad 1986:16). They adhere to an Evangelical statement of faith and have at least seven distinctive principles.

2.1 The educational programme

The programme explored was the newly designed three-year Bachelor in Biblical Studies (BBib) undergraduate degree, which began in 2017 with

compulsory biblical languages. The denominational emphasis of a strongly biblical based curriculum is due to the Baptist principle of the authority of scriptures. This degree is considered a specialist degree for pastors, youth leaders, and missionaries. The curriculum follows the traditional focus of Schleiermacher's four-fold pattern of the theological curriculum, focused strongly on biblical and theological foundations. Students are expected to complete 30 modules to earn the degree, totalling 360 credits. There are 26 core modules made up of Biblical Studies (six), Systematic Theology (five), Language Studies (five), and Church History (two). The few remaining modules are electives with a focus on a specialisation of missions, pastoral ministry, or youth work. The curriculum engages vertical integration and is foundationalist in that it begins with an introductory overview of different subjects and adds more advanced knowledge in later years. This, together with the horizontal integration (spiral learning that deepens) was evident. For example, the Preaching modules are taught in each academic year at a deeper level. In addition to the formal curriculum, there is practical ministry training involving annual exposures of Bible Study, Rural and Urban exposures. Spiritual dimensions involved weekly chapel service and small groups for discipleship and prayer.

The growing multicultural student body is made up of various church traditions with the minority of students being Baptist. Students include women who train as Christian workers. However, they are not expected to be ordained as pastors. The faculty consists of six full-time and 11 part-time lecturers.

3. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The specific aims of the project were to examine the academic and non-academic methods in which formation was fostered; understand the contextual and institutional challenges that existed in terms of providing an integrated formational education, and explore collaboratively how a model for integrative formational education could be assimilated into the existing offerings. An important lens of this study was to explore relevant and sustainable African solutions to theological education. This was approached by constantly reflecting on and incorporating African values in the educational process. Using integration as an approach is also in line with the African awareness of the unity of reality, with the material and spiritual being one, together with the search for self- and social meaning. In this approach, learning occurs best when new knowledge and experiences are integrated with previous learning, merging multiple layers of meaning, thus resulting in deep learning. In so doing, it changes and surpasses what is known to create something new. Not only are the learning dimensions transformed when brought together, but the student is also changed. The theoretical framework of this study is

built on Cahalan's (2011) definition, which views integration as an attempt to synthesise and coordinate the major learning experiences in a programme. Integration is regarded as a formative process that attempts to combine in a programme the three major dimensions of education, namely a cognitive or intellectual apprenticeship, pastoral skills development, and an apprenticeship of character or spiritual formation.

This qualitative methodology used case study research (Merriam 1998) with a cross-sectional research design, where research was conducted at one point in time at three different institutions. This constructivist inquiry engaged action research (Given & Somekh 2008:4), focused on improving practice, where the researcher was both an observer and a stakeholder in the outcome. This project described the integrative efforts in the curriculum as well as the constructive and strategic frameworks for developing integrative educational processes.

Data collection involved a total of 18 interviews. The respondents, who included academic staff members (six) responsible for formation, and recent graduates (five), were interviewed to establish how their educational experience had prepared them for ministry. Since the BBib was a newly designed degree, these students were from a four-year Bachelor of Theology degree that was recently phased out. At the time of the interviews, there was not much difference in the spiritual and practical training in these two qualifications. Final-year students (seven) were also interviewed to understand their experience of integrative education at their institution. In addition, a document study, reviewing institutional mandates and policies together with an analysis of the curriculum, was conducted. Participatory and observational research added to the triangulation of data for a full understanding of the integration practices. Principles of research ethics were maintained with institutional permission from the Baptist Union to conduct the research. The research involved informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the clarification of data management.

Data was captured using ATLAS Ti software; the analysis involved content and thematic analysis (Denzin & Lincoln 1998). A research team reviewed these themes, and further clarifications were sought from faculty. These findings were presented at a stakeholders' workshop, hosted by the project and consisting of academic staff members, board members, alumni, and current students to provide verification and additional perspectives on the findings. This workshop was the first time that all stakeholders were consulted in curriculum design, and it was well received. After all inputs were obtained, meetings were held to consider the findings in relation to the institutional and contextual challenges that existed and to consider how best curriculum interventions towards integration could be introduced. In addition, to enable

BTC to fully engage, the project hosted a faculty capacity-building workshop, facilitated by an expert on curriculum development.

4. FINDINGS

The findings focused on the three learning dimensions and the integration thereof. It must be appreciated that the degree programme was in a state of transition. Many positive themes arose: faculty encourages the spiritual development of students; the good role models of staff, and the institutional commitment to holistic education. The findings point to gaps in the BTC curriculum.

4.1 Inadequate attention to integration in learning dimensions

Although there was the claim of integrated education at BTC, as the Prospectus (BTC 2018/2019:9) stated that “three integrated rings form the overall curriculum”, it was assumed that the student was responsible for the work of integration, as a faculty member stated: “at the end of the day it’s up to the student to take that and actually apply it to their own development”. The curriculum focused on academic work with a teacher-centred model of lectures in the classroom, consisting of a heavy workload, followed by assessment and examination, as another faculty member stated:

At BTC we provide a theory which is essential which we trust leads to their belief system and this is what they digest which ultimately becomes part of the practices, so theory, beliefs and practices all have to move hand in glove and I think for some time the practical aspect side of it has been lacking, we’ve been concentrated on the theoretical aspect and again we expect that the student would take this and implement it practically in their local church.

In spite of the fact that students appreciated the academic reputation of BTC, they also reported a clear academic focus, as a student stated:

To be honest spiritually maybe not as much because with the amount of academic work you do with BTC and trying to balance church ministry at the same time it does not leave [a lot] of space to intentionally spend hours in the Word just for spending hours in the Word.

Descriptions of courses revealed high-content courses with intensive library research, possibly understood to be in line with accreditation requirements. Each student is expected to complete ten modules a year, and balance ministry responsibilities with home life. This created a rushed learning environment,

with students perpetually focused on completing assignments. This is a common reality in theological education and does not serve integration. There is hardly time to reflect on internalising the learning, to which Tienou (1987) refers as the malaise in Evangelical theological education.

Pastoral skills development is important for Baptists, so that a student is not propelled straight from the College into a local church context. It was encouraging to note that the curriculum had youth ministry, counselling, worship, children's ministry, and preaching modules. However, these were mostly knowledge-based with some practical component. In terms of practical learning, it happens that the time in the classroom is spent talking about ministry, and learning happens artificially. For example, preaching is evaluated in the classroom. In addition, there was an annual week-long practical exposure and the requirement of ongoing ministry involvement in church. On this issue, students reported a lack of focused learning and that ministry involvement was not supervised. A faculty member also stated:

Last year we looked at the gaps, we give theory to our students, but there is no accountability in terms of the practical aspects ... it was assumed that when we provide a theory that the students are practicing with their local church ... we trusted that the student maintains that link with the local churches.

BTC has recognised this gap and, since 2018, a new module Biblical & Church Residency was introduced. In 2019, a new ministry logbook was designed for students to provide accountability and gain the necessary feedback to track learning. Since Baptist ecclesiology is characterised by covenanting and listening together to find new theological understandings, more attention needs to be paid to how the learning in ministry is brought back to the classroom. This action-reflection cycle was a missed opportunity for integration. This is where the theory-practice breakdown happens; it seems that classroom learning and ministry exposures are separate events. The supervisory relationship provides an important bridge between the classroom and the congregation, as supervising pastors provide a model for ministry and advice on everyday ministry. This means that ministry supervisors need to be trained by the College to focus the learning and work closely with faculty in achieving learning goals. It was interesting to hear from the BTC graduates, who are now challenged by the demands of ministry, that they wished for more training in time management, counselling techniques, and the relational dimensions of church ministry.

In terms of spiritual development, staff were aware of, and supported the vision of students' spirituality development. A weekly chapel service was attended by students, staff, and prayer groups. In the curriculum, one elective

module on Spiritual Development was evident. The students could thus move through the programme without any focused learning on spirituality. BTC has since made an adjustment and a new module Spiritual Formation was introduced for the entire student body (at the same time). However, it was initially content heavy, resulting in some resistance from students, who felt that it was simply another “knowledge about” course, as a student stated:

here we focus a lot on knowledge which is good, but a lack of growing spiritually, how to internalize the knowledge, how to make it my own and act from it. Not just knowledge, it's about growing in other aspects of faith, getting deeper practices.

A student's personal characteristics, including personal faith in God, discipleship, and a serving attitude toward others, are important for Baptist theological education, but these outcomes require practical application. Formalising spiritual formation may be challenging, as a staff member commented:

It's difficult to make a spiritual formation an accredited part of a curriculum because it is such a personal thing which looks different to different people.

Balancing individual freedoms and institutional responsibility is a reality, yet due to the institution's commitment to the vision of integration, the Spiritual Formation module has since been revised to include a more interactive format that is team-taught. Other issues on spiritual development were the repeated request from students for more personal spiritual mentoring from staff which was not formally available. The fast-paced environment placed spirituality on the back-burner, as a student commented:

so spiritually I think a bit lacking but I see it as once I am done with BTC there is a large chunk that is off my plate and that will allow me to balance again.

In addition, with a growing diverse student body from other traditions – only 36% are Baptists – attention will need to be paid to ecumenical spiritual formation targeted at the millennialist generation. One will have to consider how to sustain the Baptist ethos, while nurturing other denominations that may want to experience other dimensions of spirituality.

4.2 Gaps in the curriculum content

A major finding was the lack of contextual learning closely related to the other content issue of a lack of societal or public focus, which no doubt impacts on integration and application of learning. According to students, aspects of

the curriculum did not speak to their experiences; they felt coerced to use Western ideas in order to interpret their own experience and cultural contexts. A student stated:

we are tossed in-between being trained with more of a western theology in an African context and these are two different worlds, so you find out that there are a lot of things that are not dealt with.

Students wanted exposure that is relevant to their African communities and mentioned that the “education at BTC was more suited to middle-class, suburban congregations than the African township context”. Students are contextual learners with their unique life experiences. For meaningful learning, integration “begins with an examination of the problems, issues, and concerns of life as it is being lived in a real world” (Fink 2013:90), rather than simply the mastery of fragmented knowledge. According to Longwe (2013:374), Baptist theological education is understood to

meet the ‘spiritual’ needs of the churches alone [and] basically produce preachers who could evangelize and plant churches wherever they went, with less regard for physical needs of the people they preached to.

By not being appropriate to the communities’ needs and the lack of social analysis to meet those needs, curriculum content that is more focused on dogma and tradition could be viewed as out of touch with the lived realities of communities.

4.3 The role of the hidden curriculum

Integration happens most intensely at an implicit level during informal interactions in the hidden curriculum. Formation has a corporate dimension; the predominant mood, the learning climate and all relationships within the community shape the students’ learning experiences. In the community, these interactions consciously and unconsciously shape beliefs and practices, where students integrate or reject learning. When there is conflict or dissonance and what is communicated differs from, or even contradicts what is experienced, students quickly come to understand power relationships with resulting superficial social relations.

In interviews, academic staff members were unaware of the potential of the hidden curriculum for integrative learning. Findings showed that students experienced a lack of community, as a student stated: “[Y]ou find the cliques and the different guys hanging out and doing their own thing.” The location of BTC as an inner-city institution, with its fast-paced institutional life and curriculum, has resulted in reduced time for interaction as a community. The formal curriculum did not have sufficient informal spaces for staff and student

interactions, in order to build relationships, except for a tea break after chapel, which was not attended by all staff. Some students lived in a residence block with their own community; others commuted for daily classes. The SRC planned social and recreation activities that did not always lead to community, as a student stated:

I learn more from the classroom and when it comes to informal interactions, we normally don't get those as the students will stay and sit in our own small corners. We have a community, but we don't sit and discuss or talk. We learn more in the classroom than outside.

Learning in community is difficult when there is an "incongruence between the student's communal cultural orientation and the institution's individualistic stance towards life in community" (Kuh & Love 2000:197). Some students have a consumer mentality and may think that theological education is something that is purchased. Hence, building community is not valued. In an individualistic approach, the focus is on knowledge rather than on community and experience, which can breed a contentious environment, as a student stated:

I realise that there seems to be dichotomy between spirituality and issues that concerns everyday living and not just an issue of holiness and faith, but issues that affect me, like contemporary and social economic issues. It's multifaceted, for example, if there is a racial issue, it's not just a political issue, it's a spiritual issue as well. It always comes back to – ok you have the right theology, but why is it failing to translate?

Findings showed that there were cultural differences in the community. These incidences can be teaching moments and profoundly more powerful for learning. Yet, if not managed well, they can inhibit authentic community-building and students may unconsciously take this way of relating into their ministry.

5. DISCUSSION

It must be noted that the Baptist College engaged in this reflexive research because of its desire to learn. This is in line with its Baptist trait of openness, as well as its overall commitment to quality education. This action research attempted to hold a mirror to the institution so that it fully understands the nature of the issue and can act in an informed way. It is also instructive to theological institutions in similar conditions about the critical need to reflect on curriculum practices; that what is intended in terms of educational purpose is actually implemented and lived out to produce the desired characteristics required in ministerial students.

In trying to comprehend how BTC understands integration, we found that, as much as this institution has good intentions towards an integrative approach, more intention is required. On the positive side, the curriculum now reflects the three major learning dimensions, which must be deepened, especially the spiritual and practical components. A core principle of integration is the articulation of a *known* educational philosophy of education (Fink 2013:7) that shows how all aspects connect. This was missing, together with a rationale for how the major learning dimensions are integrated *and* aligned to the vision and mission of the institution which is supposed to give direction to the curriculum. In addition, while their Graduate Attribute Matrix focused on educational goals – “learners are being intentionally developed toward the attributes which we eventually desire to see them portray” (BTC 2018/2019:26) – it was unclear how these student competencies are developed. Importantly, there was no mention of the Christian characteristics that needed to be developed in students.

What was evidenced in the curriculum was the overly academic focus on some pastoral training courses and spiritual development. Two thirds of the traditional curriculum focused on theological and biblical courses from a theoretical perspective. It must be noted that this type of traditional curriculum was and continues to be fragmented along disciplinary lines and was initially not designed for ministry training, but for acceptance into the German university in the 1940s.² The academic focus does have a historical dimension. Baptist theological education has been “traditionally intellectually focused ‘banking-education’ which is narrowly focused on impartation of knowledge” (Rinquest 2012:80). We do know that knowledge is an important part of Baptist theological education, as it is related to its ecclesiology, since it is the task of the future pastor to teach the Bible to church members and, as a community, they read the Bible together. However, excessive focus on the cognitive is a “coercive form of education which overwhelms students and force-feeds them with information that they are in no position to resist” (Humphreys 1994:6). Likewise, being trained primarily as textual interpreters may cause some sense of superiority, as Martin (2003:8) states: “[I]t is no wonder that congregations suffer from their lack of interpersonal skills.”

Because Baptist theological education is rooted in Baptist ecclesiology, education must be strongly linked to the local church and be in continuous conversation with it. This makes ministry skills development that more important, where the learning of theology happens with the actual doing of

2 The Enlightenment’s critical methodologies reworked theological disciplines into Schleiermacher’s positive sciences, which resulted in the universalising of the fourfold pattern of Bible, church history, dogmatics and practical theology for theological education. See Kelsey (1993).

ministry, while the theology is being assimilated. Ideally, the criteria for selecting the theoretical aspects of the course should be whether it genuinely relates to, and benefits the practice of church ministry, as this is a focus for Baptists. On the other hand, it was assumed that students' spiritual development is the responsibility of the "local worshipping community engaging with a student to help shape their formation and subsequent ministry" (Andronoviené *et al.* 2010: 690), as students are commissioned by their church. Spiritual formation was understood as a "by-product of a classical theological education" (Rinquest 2012:79), as it was assumed that propositional knowledge once confessed and believed, is transformational. Lawson (2003:440) cautions that there is a danger that teaching can become transmissive indoctrination that "can quickly degenerate to contentment with knowing the content of the Scripture instead of being transformed by it". Even the Baptist principle of religious liberty and freedom of conscience and belief needs the appropriate pedagogical principles to enable the values of the principles to emerge. Unfortunately, students may "indeed produce correct answers to doctrinal questions, but that doctrinal truth may not find meaningful expression in the individual" (Mittwede 2013:310). It requires beliefs to be lived out, involving the experiential and the practical. Spiritual formation requires intentional planning that engages the whole person for it to be integrative and not merely involve the mind. This is more suitable for Africa, where it is more about "what it does to and for its followers than about what kinds of beliefs it promotes" (Balcomb 2016:120).

The findings revealed that the curriculum lacked contextual relevance. This is from an overt western emphasis in Baptist education arising from its mission history. Kretschmar (1998:7) mentions that Baptist theology "has been confined with a white, male middle class and clerical perspective". Traditionally, Baptists are also embedded in global evangelical theology known for rationalism and a verbal expression of Christian faith that tends to be homogeneous in practice (Naidoo 2017). Balcomb (2016:120) states that

evangelicals ... tend to take western criteria of who they are and what they believe as universally true for evangelicals everywhere.

Black (2015:25) suggests that hermeneutical approaches such as the historical-grammatical approach used in evangelical institutions favour a western bias to the historical author's meaning, with propositional truths or theological absolutes. In this instance, Rinquest (2012:80) states that Baptists, with their conservative outlook, have "tended to be more concerned with the dangers of liberalism than fundamentalism". According to Black (2015:29), this historical-grammatical approach does not focus sufficiently on the text-reader side of the hermeneutical equation and can result in interpretations that "remain in the past, without adequately exploring the ways God continues to speak through the Bible today". Biblical interpretation will impact on

integrative learning, as it may not ask the questions of the community. Black (2015:30) suggests:

In Africa, people long to find in Scripture answers to the great needs of their lives for identity, security, health, prosperity, and defense against demonic spiritual forces, the relationship between the biblical text and the reader needs to be more thoroughly explored.

Another reason for not engaging the context fully is that Baptists use Bebbington's (1989) fourfold criteria, namely conversionism, activism, Biblicism, and crucicentrism. For Baptists, using a biblical world view is central and would take preference over any other world view; any attempts at enculturation are considered syncretic. Balcomb (2016:121) writes about African Evangelicals having to forsake their African culture and adopt the Western culture. However, Magezi (2017:3) argues that Christianity is replaced by Western culture, because it seems that coming to faith requires a "completely new ontological being". Magezi (2017:3) argues, using Bediako's (1999)

deconstruction of Christianity as a Western religion on the basis of Christ's universality. Because of the universality of Christ, Christianity is fundamentally universal and so beyond any language, tribe or nation.

When we consider the typology of Niebuhr (1951), we find the model of "Christ of culture" and "Christ the transformer of culture", which speaks of Christ enriching culture not by inserting a foreign, Western culture, but by transforming the local culture, its beliefs and traditions. Due to dogmatic evangelicalism, this impacts on students, because their world view is not considered, but remains important for integrative learning, as students learn best within their lifeworld (Beane 1997).

Contextual issues also involve social engagement. Denominational theological institutions are parochial, loyal to their confessional foundations, and can be overly focused on church maintenance ministry. According to students, there are "*two worlds*": the theological curriculum offered and the realities of ministry that students encounter. In spite of the missional focus, Baptists have been

very wary of practising a 'social Gospel' ... suspicious of theological courses and educational processes that have tended to emphasise social engagement (Rinquest 2012:81).

Because of the principle of the separation of church and state, a general apolitical stance of the Baptist Union is entrenched even in theological education (Mogoshoa 2003). The criticism has been referred to as "an "other-worldly"

commitment at the expense of “contemporary world” engagement” (Rinquest 2012:81). However, in attempting integrative education, students’ learning outcomes need to engage public issues, in order to help people develop theological judgement on a range of issues, be it social, economic, or political. This will overcome the secular-sacred divide Evangelicals are most about. Baptist theological education needs to reflect on their denominational assumptions if they claim integration. According to Longwe (2013:374), Baptist theological colleges have paid hardly any attention to the debates to include the social dimensions and “remain tied to Western theological models that were abstract, conservative and privatized in emphasis”.

When considering the potential of the hidden curriculum for integrative learning, this sample raised the challenge of forming an authentic community. The hidden curriculum is lived out in the institutional culture, which is always a microcosm of the broader society, that is, whatever is reflected in the broader society will be reflected in the community. The Baptist Union of South Africa is now multicultural, with over 50% of membership being “non-white” and where the challenge of full integration remains “with a cultural divide always operating below the surface” (Rinquest 2014:97). Evangelicalism appeals to

individuals in a community and often introduces the very concept of individualism into societies because of its emphasis on the need for personal decision (Balcomb 2016:121).

Individualism can support nonconformist values in line with the Scriptures (Rom. 12:2). However, it causes individuals to become autonomous and isolated. The tension raised in the community emanates from an individualistic perspective that avoids the real social differences and does not see how systemic, structural and institutional dynamics privilege some and oppress others. It is the difference between the Cartesian “I think, therefore I am” and the African “I am, because we are”. It narrows the notion of what it means to be human and fails to account for the ways in which social history and communal context shape personhood and influence access to full participation in church and society. Hence, not only the content, but also the environment impacts on leadership formation. Instead of a dualistic world view, African thought views relations within the community as key to determining our relationship with God. For Baptists, in general, the

task of doing contextual theology in a world of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and not so resourced communities is a challenge facing many Baptist seminaries (Andronoviené *et al.* 2010:689).

A key value of Baptist theological education is “integrity of life and teaching”. If we believe the classic axiom “the medium is the message”, then

some attempt would have to be made to model new forms of community, in order to ensure credibility.

This research project positioned the integrative approach as an attempt to reform education. One would think that it would be easier for church-based theological institutions that focus on the clerical paradigm than for university faculties. Even so, there are no common theoretical or pedagogical strategies for the training, with hardly any connection to other disciplines that would highlight the interconnectedness of ministry. By way of this analysis, we find that there are many doctrinal, denominational, social, and historical reasons for the current practices. The College must navigate these various assumptions and positions, while remaining economically viable. This is a difficult task. It is worth mentioning that BTC has experienced significant growth in its distance-education programme and has a similar offering for both contact and distant students. Initiating curriculum adjustments to practical and spiritual training is a challenge, as changes can only be made if they can be made in both modes.

As an action research, one of its aims was to explore collaboratively how integrative education could be a reality. First, it is a long-term process that involves the work of the entire institution: to describe, define and process integration for itself. To highlight the tensions, for example, within the Baptist tradition, it is debated,

that the focus of training should be on creating scholar-pastors with skills in the Biblical languages able to exegete the Scriptures competently, and those arguing for a pattern of formation which would give future ministers necessary skills and competencies for engaging in pastoral ministry in community (Andronoviené *et al.* 2010: 688).

In curriculum design, a particular perspective needs to be taken for the obvious reason that each theological institution has its own vision, purpose and core business tied to the denomination in a specific context – one size does not fit all. By taking a pragmatic stance to be “all things to all people”, institutions have become cookie-cutter images of each other and have tried to compete instead of operating from their unique purpose. In the case of BTC, they may not be fully aligned to the educational principles of integration; yet the education offered is very much aligned to the Baptist perspective and the evangelical tradition, which include the following characteristics:

- Baptist theological education is rooted in Baptist ecclesiology;
- Personal faith and integrity are crucially important aims of theological studies;
- Biblical hermeneutics and knowing one’s tradition in context;

- Constant openness and search lead to even better understanding;
- Baptist theological education is always missional (Pilli 2019:40).

These principles should be prioritised and integrated into the design of the formal and hidden curriculum, so that there is integrity in Baptist theological education. Faculty must make the transition from being a teacher of content to a facilitator of learning and transformation. Knowledge is not a matter of transmitting information; it requires a continuous cycle of action and reflection. In this instance, the institution needs to reassess not only *what is taught* and *why it is taught*, but also *how it is taught*. Amidst the diversity of practices, there must be a clear, known institutional purpose that includes an articulated educational philosophy, which connects to the student's life experience and incorporates the concept of deep learning. The relational dimensions of learning should not be overlooked. This vision must be embraced by the entire faculty with resources and capacity to support this vision.

6. CURRICULAR INTERVENTIONS MOVING FORWARD

To be part of this action research, institutions need to make curricular commitments towards integration. For BTC, these commitments include the following changes:

1. From the feedback received, BTC commits to further review each major learning dimension, so that academic departments find areas of commonality, to teach in an integrated way. The College is reconsidering its entire educational offering undergirded by an integrative missional focus. For its ministerial recognition, the Baptist Union now has a four-year Bachelor of Theology qualification in place.
2. To better reflect the African context within the curriculum, faculty is requested to make available African sources that are applicable to its courses as part of the library acquisitions for the coming year. African pastors and scholars will be invited to speak at College chapel services and other special events. New courses have been introduced: History of African Christianity and African Realities as well as Contemporary Theology and World View.
3. Because the stakeholders' workshop was found to be helpful, the institution will engage College stakeholders, including local pastors, College board members, alumni and faculty, in future curriculum design.

4. The institution commits itself to ensuring that their student body and faculty are further integrated and to see more vivid expressions of what it means to live in unity amidst diversity. The Student Representative Council (SRC) will facilitate student events both on and off campus for meaningful interaction. Faculty have undertaken to intentionally interact with students informally and to be more available to students.

7. CONCLUSION

Integration implies unity which is difficult to achieve in our turbulent times. To explore integration, this research took a broad view where *all* aspects of education were examined for whether they support or do not support the work of integration. It acknowledges the complexity and challenges of providing holistic theological, vocational and spiritual training grounded in African values. Seminary curriculums attend to this work implicitly and explicitly, often without a collective understanding or operating framework. While the Baptist Union does have a ministerial code of ethics, “the denomination does not possess a stated philosophy for ministerial formation” (Rinquest 2014:82). This would be an opportune time for BTC to develop a philosophy as they continue the journey of curriculum integration. In that way, they achieve their aim of being a “world-class African seminary”.

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