

**The prosperity churches in
Zimbabwe: The role of
theological education in
ministerial character formation**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late dad, popularly known as Evangelist Mavhiya Timothy Madimutsa by many in the Christian fraternity, but commonly known to us as Mudhara Heretani, who on the 4th of November 2010, went Home to be with the Lord. It will be remembered that prior to this fateful day of his life, he rose from his deathbed, raised his right hand, and assuredly said, “If you do not come back to see me alive...we will meet in heaven.” This man of God laboured to ensure that I obtained the highest academic qualifications in my life. I am deeply indebted for his motivation, courage and legacy.

Declaration

By submitting this dissertation, I declare that this is my own original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof and that I have not previously submitted it, in its entirety or in part, for obtaining any qualification.

Walter S. Madimutsa

Date: 22 September 2022

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Abstract

Prosperity preaching is a global phenomenon and hence it has attracted attention by various researchers (Maxwell, 1998; Anderson, 2001; Togarasei, 2011; Chitando, Gunda & Kugler, 2013; Zacka, 2015; Gbote & Kgatle, 2014; Magezi and Manzanga, 2016; Niemandt, 2017 and Mashau & Kgatle, 2019). In Africa, the practice of prosperity gospel has created a multitude of problems related to its hermeneutic, homiletic and character expressions of the leaders/preachers (Mashau & Kgatle, 2019; Togarasei, 2011). There is a contradiction between what prosperity teaching purports to address and what actually obtains on the ground. Debates in the field of prosperity theology have mainly focused on whether it is a true gospel or not or whether it exists as a commodified and commercialised gospel (Magezi & Manzanga, 2015).

Character issues of prosperity church leaders continue to be at stake today. As the prosperity gospel is developing with its leaders seemingly undeterred in focussing on, and drawing money from people despite their poverty situation, the Christian community is questioning their practices, demeanour and approaches to doing ministry. This problem raises a leadership character problem and the question that emerges is: what is the nature and type of theological education that the prosperity church leaders undergo? There is a lacuna on research between an understanding of how prosperity and church leaders are prepared for ministry, by various theological institutions and what actually transpires in practice. There is an appetite to understand why prosperity leaders behave in the manner they do in their practice.

This study sought to investigate the role of theological education in ministerial character formation among prosperity churches in Zimbabwe. The questions that the study raises are: what character expressions are consistent with prosperity gospel leaders? What theological understandings do we draw from the character expressions of these leaders? What is the nature of theological preparation for ministry that the prosperity church leaders go through if any? What informs the practices of prosperity church leaders/preachers, which makes them, take advantage of the poor? These and other questions remain problematic for theologians today.

The study used a qualitative research approach to collect data from three sources: the prosperity church leaders/preachers, the theological leaders and theological students in Harare Province. Interview guides were used to collect data from the subjects. The data was triangulated as a test on reliability. Findings were presented in line with themes that emerged in the data analysis phase. The study found out that at the centre of prosperity gospel and their theology practices

is the doctrine of faith through giving, which is the driver for acquisition of material wealth and prosperity gospel funding. The study established that the homiletic and hermeneutic of prosperity church preachers is aimed at persuading congregants to willingly part with their possessions. The study exposed the varied nature of prosperity gospel preachers' practices. They included spiritual deliverances, exploitation of the mass media to their advantage, commodifying the gospel through effective utilisation of social media platforms, abusing the prophetic ministry to their advantage, insisting on payment of consultation fees to secure appointments for counselling and manipulation of congregants' testimonies.

The study established that the prosperity leaders skewed hermeneutic of the Abrahamic covenant, atonement, giving, health and faith, informs and influences their practices. The study ascertained that the prosperity church leaders' homiletic is informed by the five theological pillars: a distorted view of God; the elevation of mind over matter; exalted view of humankind; focus on health and wealth; and unorthodox view of salvation and atonement. The study confirmed that the prosperity church preachers justified receiving the material wealth from their congregants and believed that the practice was consonant with the dictates of scripture. The study underscored the need for prosperity preachers to reconsider their understanding of the concept 'prosperity and wealth' as expressed in Joshua 1:8. The definition gives value to process not possessions, character not power/authority, and obedience not position.

The study found out that although the scriptures inform Christian character and ethic, community engagement and spirituality are primary for character development. In order to facilitate the growth in leadership and character among prosperity church leaders, the study proposed the Character Formation-Leadership Development Model (CF-LD) of theological education as the appropriate response to the current character problems of prosperity church leaders. With its emphasis on development of Christ like character, and visionary and transformative leadership, through curriculum integration, community engagements that tolerate diversity within a contextual theology framework, the CF-LD is the only possible alternative to solving character issues of prosperity church leaders. The study concludes that at least within a prosperity theology framework, the primary role of theological education is the leadership development and character formation of the pastoral leaders and preachers.

Key words of the Study

Prosperity theology, prosperity gospel, theological education,
Character, character formation, church leaders.

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CHAPTER 1: Orientation and background

1.1 Introduction

The history and practice of prosperity gospel theology in Zimbabwe has brought with it mixed feelings and perceptions among the Christian believers' communities and the public. Main line orthodox churches have been challenged to revisit their church practices as they continue to experience decreases in membership. The leadership of prosperity gospel churches has been brought under scrutiny by the public eye as they focus mainly on amassing wealth while their congregants suffer and fail to cope with the socio-economic challenges such as poor service delivery in the health sector and inflationary spirals in the economic sectors. The print media is abounded with reports of prosperity church leaders being dragged to public courts for various misdemeanours. Such cases have brought to question the character issues of many prosperity church leaders.

In some quarters and in the midst of economic meltdown in Zimbabwe, the prosperity gospel tends to give hope to the poor, the unemployed and the socially vulnerable groups of society. Prosperity gospel expressions that emphasise economic and social prosperity seem to contrast the expressions of the poor who cannot make ends meet in their daily lives. Questions are raised regarding the relevance of the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe for the Christian church development, for social development or for economic development. The theological educators are ever presented with challenges regarding justifying ministerial preparation for such prosperity church leaders.

This raises a myriad of questions: Is the prosperity gospel a true or false gospel? How far can prosperity gospel theology be justified in Zimbabwe? What are the expressions of prosperity gospel preaching? How do prosperity gospel practitioners prepare their pastoral leaders for ministerial functions? What role does theological education play among prosperity churches in character formation of their pastoral leaders? Furthermore, within the background of such complex issues, will the practice of theology remain rooted in its historical Christian foundations? In order to understand the background context of this study, definitions of key terms are essential.

1.1.1. Definitions of key operational terms

Definitions of key terms in the study give the study its context, meanings and understandings. The following key terms will be defined: theories, models, paradigms, character, character

formation, theological education and church leadership/leaders. Prosperity gospel / theology as a concept will be defined later in the discussion under section 1.3 to avoid monotony.

Theories, models and paradigms

Although the definitions of and distinctions between theories, models and paradigms is still debated, the study will adopt Ott's (2001:237-239) conceptualisations.

Theory: a theory is a more or less hypothetical construction of thoughts, which explains reality or aspects of it in a rational way based on evidence. However, differing theories can interpret the same data but may come out with different interpretations.

Model: a model reduces differing theories to comparable key elements, that is, it is a method to conduct comparative studies.

Paradigms: are the larger frameworks of thinking, the presuppositions of all theories in a given culture or community. However as alluded by Bosch (1991: 185), the term paradigm is not without its own problems "... it is a slippery concept."

Theories, models and paradigms are generally maps of reality that offer ways of ordering experience.

Character

Meye (1988:100) says character is "the-way-one-is" or "the-sort of person-one-is." Rogers (1991:437) considered character as a combination of feelings, conduct and knowledge, where feelings and conduct are learned through the early years of individual development and knowledge is acquired through interaction with the physical and social environment. Hauerwas (1974:53) defined character as "integrity and moral consistency." Grobien (2019:63) shares Hauerwas' conceptualisation and defines character as "the mark of integrity, consistency and...incorruptibility." Notably, Grobien added to this definition the third aspect or quality of character being incorruptible. This study takes on board Hauerwas' definition but stresses the point that it is the Christian character that we are concerned with, which includes Christ-like qualities, virtues and values as enshrined in the Holy Scriptures. Referring to the Christian character specifically, Francisco (2010:77) was more elaborative when he says character is "...having integrity (or the possession of morally clean and honest lifestyle), loyalty (to God,

family, church, and employers), and having a servant's heart (by willingly giving of one's time, talent and treasures).”

Character formation

Rogers (1991:427) defines character formation as a process of equipping an individual with internalised pattern of values and attitudes starting from precognitive times of life through the natural and normal educational patterns. Dykstra (1991) conceptualised Christian formation as the activity of God in sanctification, where sanctification is conceived of as the life-long process of formation and transformation of Christian character. Hauerwas (1975:231) maintains that character formation takes place because we are fundamentally social beings, implying that the character thus formed is relative to the kind of community from which we inherited our primary symbols and practices. Character formation is therefore a legitimate collaborative process of developing, shaping and growing character by various community agencies such as the church, the family, peers and educational institutions.

Theological Education

Ott (2001:14) acknowledged that theological education as a concept is problematic in defining because both the words ‘theology’ and ‘education’ have narrowed down their meanings in the 20th century. He was contending in considering the concept as a ministerial or pastoral formation program. Kelsey (1992:17) warned that in defining the concept theological education, it is important to first ask this question: What is theological about theological education? He defined theological education as a school program whose nature and purpose is, “...to understand God truly” (Kelsey, 1992:15). Kelsey’s (1992) definition fits well with Cheeseman’s (2011) and Otokola’s (2017:94) conceptualisations, who share the same view when they say, “theological education is the training of men and women to know and serve God.” The latter stresses that theological education is done in preparation for and results in special service or leadership in the Christian church or missions and that such training usually takes place in a college or theological education program beyond the church. Bellon’s (2017:21) definition of theological education is purpose oriented. He says, “[it] is the raising, training and educating of leaders who will shepherd the Church and influence society.” Marbaniang (2016) sees theological education as, the discipline that aims at an appropriate

understanding, interpretation, defence, and application of the Christian faith in the world. Finally, Aleshire (2018:34) understands theological education as a pedagogy that focuses on nurturing dispositions and habits that are integral to the vocation of religious leadership. Using these varied perspectives, the study defines theological education as a purposefully planned program of training men and women to know and serve God and influence the praxis of the Christian faith community and the larger society. Depending on context, theological education may be considered generically to refer to a wide range of models or conceptions of the Bible-, theology- and ministry-oriented education.

Church leadership/leaders

Dorr (2006:77) states that the term leadership can be understood in two ways, suggesting that it can refer to the person(s) in charge of a community, organisation, or group and to the activity or ability of that person. Lawrence (2004:28) says, “Leadership is about function, position, talent, gift and call.” The order of these attributes should not imply superiority over the other but suffice to emphasise that they exist in creative tension with each other, showing that leadership has to do with many areas in life. In this study, leaders refer to people that are called to serve others selflessly in a Christian community. Leaders share the vision of the ecclesia community, are focused to accomplish its tasks, and are prepared to suffer and show servanthood qualities of Jesus Christ as they seek to be Christ-like. Church leadership in this study is taken to mean the ability and availability to take responsibility for helping others at any level of the Christian community.

1.2 The prosperity gospel as a global phenomenon

Prosperity gospel preaching is a global phenomenon and hence has received great attention by various theological researchers (Maxwell, 1998; Anderson, 2001; Togarasei, 2011; Chitando, Gunda & Kugler, 2013; Zacka, 2015; Gbote & Kgatle, 2014; Magezi & Manzanga, 2016; Niemandt, 2017; and Mashau & Kgatle, 2019). In Africa, the gospel of prosperity has found fertile ground and its impact has been noted by various scholars (Mashau & Kgatle, 2019:2). Togarasei, (2011) noted with concern that because of its phenomenal growth, massive influence and the trail of devastation it leaves to the entire community of African Christianity, there is need to continually appraise it. Mashau and Kgatle (2019:2) posit that some authorities

writing on the subject of the prosperity gospel in Africa share the view that Christianity in post-colonial Africa is highly influenced and shaped by the prosperity message. Anderson (2001:19) referred to prosperity theology as a rapidly growing form of African Christianity, characterised by revival and renewal.

Zacka (2015) points out that the emergence and rise of prosperity teaching in Africa has been viewed with considerable concern by missionary established churches, mainly because it is perceived that many of those that are attracted to the prosperity teaching are coming from the membership of these churches. Two implications can be drawn from Zacka's (2015) observation. First, there is fear that the rise in prosperity teaching will eventually cause the decline in membership of the major missionary founded churches. In fact, Anderson (2001:167) confirmed the apparent rise of the prosperity gospel when he says, "They were seen as a threat by older churches from whom they often gained members...." The second assumption is the probability that the early church tradition could be annihilated and thereby affects the continued existence of its Christian identity, tradition and influence. The sentiments expressed by Zacka (2015) and Anderson (2001) are also shared by Mashau and Kgatle (2019:2) who say, "The popular and materialistic gospel is sweeping across the continent like a gale-force wind which is irresistible." This implies that there is some driving force behind prosperity teaching and that the recipients of it are destined to accept the package of prosperity theology without any resistance.

Referring to the Zimbabwean context, Magezi and Manzanga (2016) noted with concern the growth of prosperity teaching in the area of material prosperity and health. They argue that the prosperity gospel activities tend to grow rapidly where there are challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and health problems (Magezi & Manzanga 2016 :1). However, they warn that but note that there appears to be a contradiction, in that poverty and health issues have continued unabated despite its preaching. Amkye (2011: 291) noted in his research article that, just as prosperity gospel has raised much concern among Ghanaian churches, it has affected Christians and non-Christians in many countries in Africa. Questions that could be raised are: (a) Why is it that prosperity preaching has grown to be influential in Africa, Zimbabwe included? (b) If prosperity preachers have acclaimed reputation and status, what institutions or models of training exist in society that contributes to their acclaimed status? (c) Therefore, can we consider this exponential growth of prosperity theology as a contribution or a hindrance to Christian theology?

It is important to note here that Ngoy (2019:37), Gifford (2001:479), McGrath and Marks (2004:479) and Adogame (2011:145) argue that the biggest and single factor in the emergence of the prosperity churches is the collapse of African economies in the 1980s and the subsequent increasing dependence of the prosperity churches on America. This perspective blames American capitalism for the growth of prosperity theology in Africa, labelling it as capitalism in the guise of Christianity. A question can be raised now: how have prosperity gospel churches survived over time? Maxwell (1998:369) has this to say: “There is an inherent tension within them...ability to expand among the masses, by remaining of the masses, and ability to advance their condition (their practice) If the former remains powerful, the latter must operate at the margin.” Two issues are noted here as being the drivers of prosperity gospel: expansion and power. The question to ask is whether these apparent drivers have a biblical or theological basis.

1.3 Defining the concept of ‘the prosperity gospel’

Zacka (2015) stresses that it is important to define the concept ‘prosperity theology’ from two different viewpoints: the viewpoint of those who are apologetic to it and that of proponents of the gospel. This position will give us a balanced viewpoint and conceptualisation of the term ‘prosperity theology’.

Prosperity gospel is “...a faith gospel that focuses on this worldly- blessings and that it is balanced with a healing deliverance theology built on an amalgamation of African traditional worldviews and biblical thought” (Zacka, 2015:4). Tamfu (2020:1), a great opponent of the prosperity gospel defines it as, “... an idolatrous perversion of the gospel according to which Jesus is a means to God’s full blessings, primarily of wealth, health, and might, now available to those who trust and obey certain faith principles prescribed by a particular man of God.”

However, Zacka (2015) has noted with concern that there are two main problems that compound theologians in coming up with a consensus summary of what prosperity theology means. First, prosperity theology is not present in itself as a written theology, but rather a rhetorical and experiential teaching in which the appeal is as much tied to the language used and the personality of the proponent as to the theological content. Second, the enterprise of prosperity theology is difficult in that variations exist among the proponents of the same teaching on some of its details. These two problems make it difficult for researchers to understand and mark the coordinates of our arguments and therefore a confounding matter in this research.

1.4 Characteristics of the prosperity gospel

Prosperity gospel with its positives and negatives has grown to be a success story in African Christianity. The following characteristics show its post-colonial outfit as opposed to the colonial period.

1.4.1 It is a gospel of affluence

Arguably, Africa is home to some of the richest religious leaders. According to Nwaomah (2020:10), three characteristics of affluence can be noted. First, the lifestyle of the preachers of the prosperity gospel are themselves the living examples of their message of divine prosperity whereby most of them live extravagantly—with luxurious cars, private jets, mansions with gold plated fixtures, expensive designer clothing, vacationing in exotic places. Second, their lavish lifestyle reminds their followers of the power of faith that lays claim to hidden spiritual realities. Third, the extravagant lifestyle associated with the prosperity teaching leads some of them into financial stress, which in turn leads to manipulation, fraudulent activities, embezzlement of church funds, literally begging audience for money, or even covenanting with demonic powers. In this set, we have the following African religious leaders as listed by Mashau and Kgatle (2019:3): Nigerian Pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy International; Nigerian Pastor Temitope Balogan Joshua of The Synagogue Church of All Nations; South African Pastor Patseka Motsoeneng of Incredible Happenings Church and Malawian Shepherd Bushiri of Enlightened Christian Gathering. Chitando and Biri (2016:73-74) extended the list to include Zimbabwean Pastor Emmanuel Makandiwa of UFIC (United Family International Church); Zimbabwean Prophet Walter Magaya of Prophetic Healing, and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries; and Zimbabwean Pastor Uebert Angel Madzamire of Spirit Embassy Church now Good News Church (Magezi & Manzanga, 2016:2)

Umoh (2013:656) posited that religion appears to be the most lucrative business today. If Christianity is regarded as a business, what justification do we have it to be such? It is questionable why Africa is also home to some of the health and economic challenges, when in fact it is the same home for some of the richest pastors. This is a contradiction worthy of serious investigation. Hence, Magezi and Manzanga (2016:1) noted that prosperity gospel continues to give false hope to its adherents and therefore the need to evaluate prosperity preaching in Zimbabwe is great in order to provide pastoral insight and direction, as well as propose alternative strategies for coping.

1.4.2 It is a gospel that is paradoxically placed in a context where it thrives

Togarasei (2011) noted that the gospel of prosperity thrives in poverty-stricken contexts. However, the position taken by Togarasei (2011) is debatable if the context is always one of poverty. Other contexts such as economic and social emancipation can enable the prosperity gospel to thrive as maintained by Heuser (2016:1). The contours of the prosperity gospel attempt to portray and project a collective perception of victorious living in an environment of socio-economic and political decline (Komolafe, 2013:144). This observation seems to point to the need for theological institutions to equip leaders with the requisite, genuine praxis-oriented skills that help them to challenge the socio-economic and political disorder.

1.4.3 It is anchored in the spirit of 'name it, claim it' syndrome

The prosperity gospel teaches that all resources are there for people to claim (Togarasei, 2011:344), yet it is observed that African Christians who have embraced this message continue to 'name it', whilst the pastoral leaders are the ones 'claiming it' (Mashau & Kgatle, 2019:3). Writing about the Zimbabwean context, this is what Taru and Settler (2015:120) have to say, "With assurances of health and wealth as its theological locus, prosperity preachers of the 'name it and claim it' gospel successfully exploit popular insecurities." This is the contradiction of, and in the teaching of the prosperity gospel. Mashau & Kgatle (2019:3) further point out that it is evident that prosperity gospel preachers continue to live conspicuous materialistic lifestyles in affluent suburbs and drive the most expensive cars on the market, whilst their congregants are drowning in the triple unholy alliance of poverty, unemployment and inequality. The result is that the poor and marginalised continue to hope against hope, even in their hopelessness (Umoh, 2013:665). Magezi and Manzanga (2016:1) cautioned about the genuineness of such hope in the face of ever deteriorating circumstances of the prosperity gospel followers in Zimbabwe. This study seeks to investigate how the church select, prepare and educate such ministers and how they are taught to theologially interpret the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

1.4.4 It is highly commercialised

The prosperity gospel promotes the culture of consumerism among its followers and this aspect questions the theological soundness of the practice. Ayegboyin (2006:78) points out that commercialisation is perpetuated through the sale of handkerchiefs, anointing oil or prayer

books, with proceeds going into the leaders' pockets. In South Africa at least, government had to commission investigation into the alleged use of commercialisation as documented by Kgatle (2017) and Niemandt (2017). In their study, Sifile *et al.* (2014) recommended the need to have legislation that would make churches operate in an environment of increasing regulation and scrutiny. The challenge is whether this practice of commercialisation represents the appropriate theological position as we find it in the scriptures. Therefore, one may ask the question of whether the prosperity gospel is a theology that has to be followed or it is one that stands in contrast to the Bible.

1.4.5 It is explicitly linked to deliverance theology

Prosperity theology holds the view that demonic powers are to blame for any failures in life and this belief places the prosperity preacher in an advantageous position as he is the one who is believed to hold the powers of deliverance from such demonic spirits (Gifford, 2004:85-86).

1.4.6 Prosperity gospel has gone virtual and viral

Kgatle (2017) has documented that prosperity gospel has gone virtual on many social media platforms, for example, Facebook. The effect and impact are for prosperity preachers to have access to as many people as possible and bring them into their fold. While there are advantages associated with this strategy, there are concerns regarding how the congregants who access the gospel on such platforms, can be protected from the vices earlier discussed. Furthermore, the virtual nature of the prosperity gospel challenges its leaders to consider such training as part of leadership development, whilst the viral component compels the leaders to be alert on authorship, ownership and censorship of material that is either purposely or erroneously posted on the virtual platforms. This is important when considering the protection of already spiritually vulnerable congregants that visit those sites.

1.4.7 It is highly sensationalised

Gifford (2004:173) and Mashau and Kgatle (2019:3) concur that prosperity gospel is too sensationalised when considering the weight and effect of testimonies that are shared during church services, or on the internet, even on radio and television. Such testimonies make the congregants more vulnerable than ever and further expose their privacy and personal challenges to the public arena. The implication is for the leaders of prosperity churches to have

safeguard measures and techniques of handling such testimonies when they spill off into the domain of the public.

Many characteristics could be part of this section, but these seven show up as the main ones and are key in illuminating the issues of prosperity gospel that will be investigated in this research.

1.5 The issues /problems of the prosperity gospel

1.5.1 Ecclesia migration

Prosperity gospel teaching has facilitated ecclesiastical migration with a great number of people moving from traditional mainline churches in search of a new spirituality and economic emancipation. Bedford-Strohm *et al.* (2016:199-200) further posit that the motivation behind this migration is summed up as, “the promise of victorious living advertised by the new churches.” Another reason noted is that the preaching appeals to the needs of the majority, especially people living from poor backgrounds.

1.5.2 Committed evangelism

Zacka (2015) noted that prosperity teaching is committed to evangelism, filling in the gap that has been left open by main line missionary established traditional churches who seem to have abandoned evangelism, and whose growth is automatic.

1.5.3 Materialistic

Grandy (2013:1) lambasts the prosperity gospel by saying, “...it is a selfish and materialistic faith with a thin Christian veneer...teaching people to focus on getting not giving.” Grandy’s (2013:1) assertion is also highlighted by Mashau & Kgatle (2019) who point out that despite the fact that prosperity gospel has found fertile ground in Africa, it continues to milk and disadvantage the very people it seeks to serve. They propose that African Christianity must develop a spirituality of liberation, which taps into the African philosophy of Ubuntu, and systematically develop a theology of Ubuntu as an antidote to prosperity gospel issues. Dreyer (2015:193) and Banda (2019:219-220) affirmed that it has been proven that the concept of Ubuntu is theologically correct and biblically based. This study must determine the wholesomeness of such a theology of Ubuntu, to also encompass the very structures that contribute to the character formation of the leaders of prosperity churches.

1.5.4 Poisoned gospel

Prosperity gospel is accused of being a poison taught by paparazzi preachers of the prosperity gospel who prey on unsuspecting, gullible and abused members, who blindly follow their leaders without applying the much-needed spirit of discernment. Such an accusation stands to be tested in this research. Resane (2017:1) argues in favour of theological reflection and scrutiny. Reflection must include theological colleges since the so-called paparazzi pastors go through such colleges as part of their ministerial service before settling into these prosperity-oriented churches.

1.5.5 Oasis of false hope

It is an oasis of false hope (Kroesbergen, 2014:4). Related to the culture of greed above, it is argued that prosperity gospel preachers and prophets tend to encourage their congregants into believing that the prophecies that are pronounced regarding their lives and future business engagements will indeed come to fruition and that they will become prosperous. Ayegboyin (2006:81) argued that the truthfulness of such prophecies was questionable since some of the businesspersons waited endlessly in vain, for such prophecies to come true. In Zimbabwe, as noted by Magezi and Banda (2017), submission to the leadership of some of the prosperity teachers and prophets and their undergirding doctrine/theology is considered as steps towards economic emancipation and prosperity. The implication is that such people will develop a false hope and the researchers have noted this as a major problem.

1.5.6 Raison d'être for capitalism and neoliberalism

As a global phenomenon, it is riding on the wave of capitalism, which is sweeping the global economy (Mashau & Kgate, 2019). Umoh (2013:655) holds that capitalism has become an indispensable component of African Christianity, whilst prosperity gospel preaching has become a vehicle through which this capitalism is possible. Obadare (2016) points out that prosperity gospel is actually a 'raison d'être' of neoliberalism while Pentecostalism has become 'the religious mode or extension' through which this capitalism is made possible. Of interest in this research, is the need to ascertain in much detail what the agents of this capitalist drive are? Can our theological institutions be spared as we seek to understand the genesis of the supply chain in the prosperity gospel agenda/processing line?

1.5.7 Commodification of the gospel

Related to 1.5.3 above, prosperity theology has commodified the gospel. According to Chitando *et al.* (2013:9), prosperity theology has turned the Christian gospel into a commodity that can be a form of lucrative entrepreneurship. Chitando *et al.* (2013:9) refer to church leaders that use this approach as *gospelpreneuers* or what Heuser (2016:5) refers to as *economic missionaries*. Magezi and Banda (2017) noted that the phenomenon of *gospelpreneuers* or *economic missionaries* has been common in the West and is in fact biblically correct if pursued within the acceptable limits as described in Pauline literature.

1.5.8 Pentecostal kleptocracy

Related to the problem of commodification of the gospel is what Asonzeh Ukah (2013:145) refers to as ‘*Pentecostal kleptocracy*’ which is simply a system of corruption used by leaders in the churches to swindle congregants of their finances in order to transform their churches into economic, financial and entrepreneurial empires, which are completely controlled by them and their families.

1.5.9 Consumerism and greed

Prosperity theology has become a theology of affluence, as argued by Ayegboyin (2006:73). It has given birth to a gospel of greed and lavish consumption feeding into consumer culture (Mashau & Kgatle, 2019), where members are encouraged to give in order to receive God’s blessings (Gbote & Kgatle, 2014:5). The result is that giving becomes controversial, as prosperity preachers milk their congregants under the guise of conferring God’s blessings through requiring them to give more than the measure of grace accorded to them (Mashau, 2013:78). Two questions to ask are, first, what strategies are employed in preparing such leaders for such a ministry characterised by a high scale of affluence, greed and consumerism? Second, how does society prepare such pastors to adopt such a retrogressive theology of greed and consumerism?

1.5.10 Desire for social justice and transformation

Methula (2017:6) says, the biggest problem of prosperity gospel is, “...it leaves you without a desire and passion for social justice, structural transformation and overcoming the evils of

capitalism”. This view explains why rich prosperity pastors do not share their riches with the poor and cannot invest in structurally transforming the lives of their followers.

1.5.11 Another form of occultism

Finally, Grandy (2013:1) posits that, prosperity teaching is mixed with occultism. He argues that there are striking similarities between what African preachers do in church and what is practised in African Traditional Religion (ATR) contexts. Some of the practices involve *juju*, a kind of concoction and practice that is mostly common with witch doctors, and unsuspecting congregants become victims of this kind of occultism thinking that it is just a fair and alternative form of contextual worship similar to what they already know as Africans.

1.6 Character issues and the prosperity gospel

Ehioghae and Olanrewaju (2015:74) hold that the prosperity gospel has been implicated to feed pride, resulting in a warped style of leadership that is produced in an atmosphere redolent with greed. Ehioghae and Olanrewaju (2015:69) maintain that the prosperity gospel creates opportunists who will want to exploit every situation to profit, and that it emasculates the formation of Christian spiritual character. It is argued that the prosperity gospel leaves no room for brokenness and suffering (Ehioghae & Olanrewaju, 2015:74). In The Herald, on the article of 12th February 2015 and entitled, ‘The curse of prosperity gospel’, Wafawarova bemoaned Zimbabwean prosperity gospel preachers whose integrity and nobility has been largely compromised by the type of gospel they preach. He said, that the greatest threat to the Christian faith today was from its leadership, who preach destruction right from the pulpit of salvation, and end up as swindlers who are far from remorseful. He further commented that prosperity gospel works against the formation of Christian character (Wafawarova, 2015). If custodians of the gospel can no longer be trusted by the society, it is questionable how the gospel can develop.

Mboweni (2015) registered the same concern when he opined that the prosperity gospel is a poor imitation of the true gospel because it leaves no room for brokenness, suffering, humility or delay. Mboweni (2015) pointed out that there is a leadership crisis in the African church because many pastors are so set on getting rich, they cannot go through the process of discipleship that requires self-denial. Referring to a Nigerian Christian context, Ogungbile and Akinade (2010:208) noted that within most prosperity teaching churches, commercialisation

of Christianity has led to corruption and immorality of leaders, citing appointments to ecclesiastical posts based on monetary affluence and contribution to the church. The problem of compromised character has huge implications for theological educators in this study.

1.7 Theological responses to the prosperity gospel issues

In mapping the way forward to challenge these issues, Magezi and Manzanga (2016) noted that the Zimbabwe Christian leaders are fragmented in their unity and approach to the problem and encamped in three groups. The first camp refers to those that are against prosperity gospel and are to be taking measures to harness it. The second camp is not sure on how to respond to it and the third camp embraces prosperity gospel without finding anything wrong about it. This categorisation is very much similar to Kasera's (2012) analysis, consisting of first, fierce opponents; second fierce proponents and third, the middle view. The three-faced or tier categorisation is critical in evaluating strategies that are appropriate in response to the prosperity gospel issues.

1.7.1 Ubuntu concept as an antidote

Notwithstanding the apparent disunity among Christian leaders, Mashau and Kgatle (2019:5-6) propose a different but practical approach that is based on the philosophy of Ubuntu but based on five main theologies: Theology of life; Theology of care; Theology of solidarity; theology of economic justice; and theology of hope and accompaniment. They argue that the doctrine of Ubuntu is a very common theme among many African communities and places emphases on relationship of a person as 'being with others.' If adopted and administered well in the church, it could be an antidote to the problems of greed and egoism in the Christian church (Mashau& Kgatle, 2019:6).

In a practical application of these Ubuntu theologies as is suggested by Mashau and Kgatle (2019), theologians must remember Pascal's (2018:19) warning in dealing with extremes. Writing on a chapter entitled, *the misery of man without God*, Pascal says, "Extremes are for us as though they were not and we are not within their notice. They escape us or we them." Pascal (2018:19) goes on to add, "...too much sound deafens us; too much light dazzles us; too great [a] distance or proximity hinders our view." It is therefore implied in the research that various options have to be considered as possible alternatives to the issues raised by the

prosperity gospel. Subscribing to one theological viewpoint will be tantamount to bias. Nevertheless, theological research should be polemical and subject to the authority of Scripture and “...serve theological construction” (Peterson & Williams 2004:11).

1.7.2 The stewardship metaphor as a response to the prosperity gospel issues

While Vallet (2011) was immensely convinced that stewardship is an important element of congregational life, he was mainly preoccupied with the question: How can theological education be a steward of the gospel of Jesus Christ and protect it against abuse by prosperity preachers?

Defining stewardship.

Vallet (2011) defines stewardship by looking at what it is not. He posits four points as follows: first, it is not about funding institutions or ministries of the church; second, it is not based on legal or mandatory obligations, but originates from inside a person and compels him to act; third, it is not based on pressures such as guilt or pressures of feeling obligated to express thanksgiving; and finally, is not based on motivation such as responding to promises of prosperity or favouritism. Stewardship is based on the human beings’ need for God, which can be described as all-consuming thirst. Hence, Brueggemann (2018:26) defined stewardship as a “resolve to move beyond the tale of anxiety.” Vallet (2011:33) expanded the scope of this definition by adding, “...stewardship is drinking deeply from the waters of the living God by moving from the stagnating waterholes of ‘more’ to the living gospel of Jesus Christ and inviting others to do the same.” These two perspectives have important implications on how stewardship as a concept can influence the present prosperity gospel trajectory, and in a way, that is standing in the gap to serve the gospel from the false gospel.

Vallet’s (2011) argument is that the ‘stewardship’ metaphor has suffered from connotations of distasteful meanings attached to it by various Christian leaders including clergy. It was variously misconceived to mean pastoral visitations, building projects and financial/fund raising campaigns. He posits that stewardship can regain its biblical usage for as long as it is “linked to a thirst for God rather than fundraising for the church” (Vallet, 2011:9-10). Today stewardship has new meaning, entailing standing in the gap to serve the gospel from the jaws of false gospel and the challenge is therefore for theological educators to explore and share deeper understandings, meanings and applications of stewardship principles (Vallet, 2011:3).

Stewardship metaphor: Challenging the prosperity gospel issues

Vallet (2011) proposes a way in which the challenges of a false gospel can be engaged through reforms of theological education based on the central theme of stewardship. The researcher argues that a redefinition and new understanding of the praxis of stewardship should help us save the gospel from the jaws of false teaching, which has positioned itself as a competitor / parody to the true gospel of salvation. Branson (2004:16-17) defines the false gospel as a gospel of consumer capitalism and globalisation. This redefinition and new understandings of the praxis of stewardship should be spearheaded by the institutions of the church and in particular theological education and shaped/informed by appropriate/ relevant curricula and grounded in a strong and relevant biblical hermeneutic of scripture.

1.7.3 Hermeneutic metaphor: Challenging prosperity gospel issues

Related to the importance of stewardship above, is the concept of biblical interpretation of scripture, to also include a redefinition and understanding of what the gospel is. Vallet (2011:78) proposes that new meanings and understandings of stewardship should be augmented by consequent relevant biblical interpretation for it to have the desired effect on the prosperity gospel.

Biblical interpretations

The new biblical interpretations are based on six Brueggemann's (2001:14-20) dimensions: inherency; interpretation; imagination; ideology; inspiration; and importance. What Brueggemann (2001) emphasises is that, first, the bible is inherent and consistent in its theological claim. However, through the workings of the Spirit, "it is strange and new" (Brueggemann, 2001:16), implying that the Holy Spirit may give new meanings and understandings in scripture but that does not change the Bible's inherent nature. Secondly, the fact that it is 'strange and new' makes our human interpretation of scripture tentative, since human interpretation is "inescapably subjective, necessarily provisional, and inevitably disputatious" (Brueggemann, 2001:16). Thirdly, responsible interpretation of scripture requires imagination, which is the capacity to entertain images of meaning and reality that are beyond the 'givens' of observable experience (Brueggemann, 2001:16-17). Fourth, in biblical interpretation, human beings are affected by their ideological orientation (passions, convictions, and perceptions). Fifth, since scripture is the inspired Word of God, any utterances beyond what is inspired fall outside the circumference of truth. Finally, biblical interpretation

done with imagination willing to risk ideological distortion, open to inspiring Spirit, is important, giving the world access to the truth about God. The implication of Vallet's (2011) and Branson's (2004) perspectives is that sound biblical hermeneutics should be based on the six principles as advocated by Brueggemann (2001). These six principles are critical in re-envisioning theological education.

Re-definition of 'the gospel' and 'false gospel'

Part of this hermeneutic is a redefinition and distinction of 'the gospel' and 'the false gospel' and, according to Thompson (2004), this is the task of theological education. Thompson (2004:2) complained that many churches in the West and other places in the world, did not understand the gospel as articulated in scripture. Instead of the proclamation of the Gospel of God (Mark 1:1, Romans 1:1), we often hear a gospel of self-improvement and self-gratification. "We have become consumers, seeking what satisfies and delights.... It is all about a gospel about getting one's needs met, finding meaning and satisfaction, discovering a more comfortable way to live" (Thompson, 2004:2). Branson (2004:16-19) depicts the false gospel as a parody and competitor to the true gospel and defines it as a gospel of consumer capitalism and globalisation. Branson's position and definition raise the questions: how do you agree and have consensus on a dichotomy of 'false gospel' and 'true gospel'? Proponents of the prosperity theology argue that what they preach is in fact the true gospel, contradicting opponents' claim of the same who argue that the prosperity gospel is false. The implication portrayed by Vallet (2011), Branson (2004) and Thompson (2004) is that it is a theological education task to give new meanings, definitions and understandings of the gospel in the face of a competing *false* gospel. The new understanding and teachings should be grounded on firm understanding of stewardship and sound hermeneutics.

1.8 Relationship between theological education and the prosperity gospel

The thesis of this research points to a relationship between theological education and prosperity gospel, where the former relates to the latter in a contributory way. As a background to the problem context, different theological conversations taking place in different categories of theological education will now be discussed. However, it is important to reflect on the major challenge that theological education in Africa faces in a context of thriving prosperity gospel. Wafawarowa (2018), Soboyejo (2016:9) and Ehioghae and Olanrewaju (2015:1) concurred in their evaluation that prosperity gospel works against character formation. That observation is

a red flag for theological educators to embrace and consider the primacy of the character formation factor in ministerial formation programs. Questions will be asked of what theological education models will address the prosperity gospel challenges as highlighted in the prosperity gospel debates. Earlier discourse in theological education debates by early theological educators point to the importance of character formation in addressing contemporary ecclesiological challenges. Challenges posed by the prosperity gospel are not excluded in that dispensation. Schnier (1993: 86, 194) has proposed models that have a bias towards character formation as a unifying concept in theological education. Hall (1988:53) insisted on a perspective of looking at theological education as character formation while Rodgers (1991:430- 435) justified that character formation was indeed a neglected mandate worthy of revival.

Since ministerial formation continues to be a problem for all churches in Africa as noted by Kalu (2008:126-127), prosperity gospel churches also find themselves in the same situation. Their situation is compounded by a variety of factors: high levels of competition; conflicting theologies; informal ministerial formation models and use of unaccredited training colleges and in-house training methods with inadequate curricular. Kalu (2008:127) maintains that debate is ongoing about the credibility and effectiveness of such ministerial formation practices by some prosperity gospel churches. Willimon (2010:233) challenges theological education to produce ministers with a “consistent clerical character, whose personification of gospel foolishness is strong enough to withstand merely worldly wisdom.”

1.9 Paradigm shifts in theological education

Ott (2016) maintains that the whole field of education is in upheaval with the underlining causes taking many forms: globalisation; liberalisation; free market; information technology (internet); and mobility. These paradigm changes tend to create enormous challenges for education institutions including theological education. These paradigm changes will affect how we do theological education today in terms of goals. In a way, these changes influence how theological education prepares leaders to serve the Christian community.

1.10 Debates in theological education

1.10.1 A service ministry or a business

The current debate in theological education has manifested itself in many areas. Some argue that the leadership of theological colleges has become more like business, laying somewhere

between pastoral presence and management of business. The debate in this category has focused on whether it is theologically justified to use theological education as a commodity that can be exploited by consumers to solve their socio-economic challenges. Magezi and Manzanga (2016) question why theological education as a ministry is being used as a money generating enterprise? The question that is worthy pursuing in this research is how theological education can be done in such a manner that challenges the prosperity gospel issues (like commodification) but still remain rooted in its historical Christian foundations.

1.10.2 Defining and justifying theological education

The other form of the debate concerns the justification of theological education prompting the question, is there a thing as theological education? There is tension between market principles and tradition in theological education. The debate on justifying theological education focuses on the question: what is theological about theological education? (Kelsey, 1992:17). Other questions raised were: (i) To what extent and under what hermeneutical assumption can theological education lay foundations in and be shaped by the bible; (ii). What might a systematic theology of theological education look like?

1.10.3 The greatest challenge of theological education

There is substantial amount of conversation on the subject of what is the greatest challenge of theological education (Ott, 2016). Some argue for a theological education that is based on context and for Africa, it is the African cultural context, whilst others tend to argue that Western contexts are not fit for an African context, therefore questions are raised on whether Western theological models can continue to be used in theological education in the majority world. The thesis of this research is that theological education contributes to developing prosperity church leaders. Knowledge of how an afro-centric theological education can be constructed and informed by the Euro-centric model is essential. A pertinent position is to consider how prosperity gospel which was birthed from a Western context be informed by an Afro-centric theological education in leadership development.

1.10.4 Renewal and reform of theological education

A review of literature published over the past 50 years on the topic of theological education reveals a frequent use of the terms, 'reform' and 'renewal' implying the need for change in focus and strategy. Wolfgang Herman and Gerd Lautner (1965:11) in their book, *A reform proposal*, recommended proposals meant to do *repairs* to theological education. Banks (1999)

urged on the need for re-envisioning theological education grounded in the New Testament theology. Ferris (1990) in his book *Renewal in Theological Education*, advocated for clear strategies for change. Heimbrock and Kriegstein (2002:47) made recommendations on the process of theological training and noted that process, as a concept was key to reform theological education. These reform and renewal calls seem to suggest that there will be consequent renewal and reform in ecclesiology.

1.10.5 Fragmentation of theological education

Farley (1983) was the first to put forward the thesis that theological education is fragmented in a variety of areas: mission and theology have been broken apart; church and institutions are estranged; theory and practice stand as enemies opposed to one another; curricula have split apart and crumbled into a confusing conglomeration of unconnected pieces; spirituality (faith) and intellectual work (thought) are largely estranged; training students to think and training to do are often in conflict with one another; chasm between the past and the burning question of the present and future often seem insurmountable; and market driven thinking has made curricula more flexible and modular.

1.10.6 Discovering theologia/model of theological education:

a. In his book, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, Farley (1983) argues that theologia should help us understand God and life more completely through thought and reflection in such a way that we are able to love God more deeply, and to live as Christians in this world more wisely and more fully engaged. In this study, Farley's (1983) approach should help us understand how the prosperity preachers should be prepared for leadership ministry such that they are able to conceive their service in the context of theologia.

b. Stackhouse's (1988) debate is well documented in his book, *Apologia: Contextualisation, Globalisation & Mission in Theological Education*, and his advocacy for re-discovering theologia takes a different approach from Farley. He asserts, "Theological education has lost a metaphysical moral vision" (Stackhouse, 1988:78). He sees theology as having been relegated to assume second place to other sciences, yet it is a "first order reality." He calls for a deliberate effort to defend it from the premise that religion makes a fundamental and objective difference in the real world (Stackhouse, 1988:141). He argues that theology and theological education must re-gain ground that was lost during the Enlightenment period.

c. David Kelsey's publication of, *To understand God truly: What's theological about a theological school*, in 1992, was followed by his other masterpiece, *Between Athens and*

Berlin: The theological education debate, in 1993. In the former publication, David Kelsey focuses on the need for clarity in stating theological education goals, whether the goals reflect character formation or ministerial formation. His approach was to understand theological education traditions from where Farley left. He does that by giving hypothetical educational systems, which he calls: Athens (the classical model of theological education) and Berlin (the professionally oriented model of theological education). Speaking metaphorically, David Kelsey (1993) says that theological education occurs at an intersection of three roads: Athens Road, Berlin Road and the denominational road. He implied that the Athens and Berlin represent two forms of pedagogy, two ways of learning and understanding and the third component, the church, representing the content, which is the subject matter. For Kelsey (1993) the subject matter is ‘the Christian thing.’ Kelsey’s ideas inform how leaders of emerging ecclesia communities are prepared for ministerial service and the undergirding principles behind such a theological education system.

d. The Jerusalem Model: Robert Banks (1999) took up the debate further by maintaining that a better model should orient itself with the church, “with its centre of gravity being the Bible” (Banks, 1999: 81). Banks (1999) argues for *training in ministry* as opposed to *training for ministry*. Training for ministry is preparing students for a task without asking them to perform the tasks vocationally. Training students in ministry is exposing students in learning skills while doing a functioning vocationally. However, pertinent questions can be raised: To what extent can a model for theological education be from the Bible? How confident are we that our theological colleges use models from the bible? These questions are invaluable in this study as we seek to examine the nature of training models for the prosperity churches and how consistent they are with biblical principles.

e. Wisdom learning to wisdom: Warford’s (2005) conversation was focussed on investigating the place of practical wisdom as it relates to the process of teaching and learning. He argues for an approach that does not focus on foundational challenges of theological education, but one that focuses on practical formation of students. He also calls for a community of purpose among teachers in colleges of education where a *call* is distinguished from a *job/vocation*.

f. Edgar (2005:1) argued for a confessional model that he referred to as the ‘Geneva Model.’ This approach is presented by Edgar (2005:2-3) as a contrast to the earlier models, the Athens, the Berlin and the Jerusalem models. Within this confessional model, emphasis is on knowing God through the use of the creeds and confessions, means of grace and general traditions that

are utilised by a particular faith community. Formation occurs through information about the traditions and enculturation within it, through teachings of heroes, founders, struggles and traditions of the faith community.

1.10.7 Implications of these debates for the present research study:

Knowledge about the conversation on debate regarding models of theological education has important implications for this research study. The contributions highlighted above should inform the researcher on recommending a suitable theological education model or approach. Furthermore, an analysis of the issues raised in the theological education conversation will help discussing the issues raised by the prosperity gospel in context and how theological education can respond to these issues.

The background and orientation of both the prosperity gospel and theological education help the reader to understand the complex nature and scope of the problem under research. The background located the major issues presented by the prosperity gospel and the possible response to those issues against the background of what theological education could offer as a response to those issues. Therefore, this knowledge illuminates the two theological motifs and how they engage with, and relate to each other. Having access to this orientation and background will also help to understand the key problem under study.

1.11 The problem statement

The Zimbabwe ecclesia community is faced with a number of issues that arise from the so called ‘prosperity gospel’ (Kariati, 2015 and Mambo, 2016). One of the issues is what Chitando, Gunda and Kugler (2013:10) describe as “prophetic craze” and which is characterised by the prosperity teaching (Magezi and Banda, 2017:1). There is a contradiction between what prosperity teaching purports to address and what actually obtains on the ground because of prosperity teaching. According to Magezi and Manzanga (2016:1-2), the prosperity gospel proponents in Zimbabwe have taken advantage of the present socio-economic and political order. As such, they have gained much currency even beyond the Zimbabwe borders to include other African countries. Backyard theological colleges have mushroomed for servicing the prosperity gospel agenda and the practice is referred by Magezi and Banda (2017) as commodification of the Christian ministry. In Zimbabwe, there is an observable link between the decline of the national economy and the growth of the use of Christian ministry as a channel for economic survival (Biri & Togarasei, 2013; Chitando *et al*, 2013; Togarasei, 2011).

Furthermore, the link between theological education and Christian ministry is that church practices and ministry expressions reflect the underlying theology (Magezi and Banda, 2017). If this is the trend for theological education, how can it be done in a manner that theology remains rooted in its historical Christian foundations? As indicated in the above section, proponents of prosperity gospel end up as rich tycoons who continuously take advantage of the circumstances of the poor by taking from them. Some issues related to prosperity preaching have been noted and documented in the print and electronic media. For example, the following headlines were published in the Zimbabwe print and electronic media: “The curse of the prosperity gospel”, *New Zimbabwe*, 12 March 2018; “Zim’s Prosperity Churches: Opium of the oppressed”, *The Independent*, 8 January 2016; “Prosperity gospel brings hope, anarchy in Zimbabwe”, *Voice of Zimbabwe*, 15 November 2015; “Prosperity gospel: an apology to the prophets”, *NewZimbabwe.com*, 7 June 2013 (opinion); and *eZimbabwe.com*, “Prophets, prosperity and Promiscuity”, 6 January 2014.

In Zimbabwe, the print media frequently feature stories of ministers of the gospel that have been charged of various misdemeanours, and crimes, ranging from corruption, theft, fraud and rape. These tend to arise because of the esteemed place that prosperity preachers tend to occupy in the ecclesia communities they lead. Chitando, Gunda and Kugler (2013:20) noted that titles such as “Man of God”, “papa”, “spiritual father” have been ascribed to certain prosperity teachers/preachers and therefore denoting special characters, treatment and privileges that cause them to ultimately behave in ways that may appear as misdemeanours or indecorous. Writing in a newspaper article entitled “*The Curse in prosperity gospel*,” Wafawarowa maintains that the prosperity gospel works against the formation of Christian character, destroys the African social fabric, and undermines the nobility and integrity of Christianity itself. Masenya and Ngwa (2018:75) hold the view that the prosperity gospel leads to pride and opportunism in the leadership, thereby compromising authentic Christian values. Ehioghae and Olanrewaju (2015:1) labels prosperity gospel as “an emasculator of spirituality.”

Grady (2013) argued that there is a leadership crisis in the African church because many pastors are so set on getting rich and cannot go through the process of discipleship that requires self-denial. The African church is struggling. As the prosperity gospel is developing with its leaders seemingly undeterred in focussing on, and drawing money from people despite their poverty situation, the Christian community is questioning their practices, demeanour and approaches to doing ministry. This problem raises a leadership character problem and the question that

emerges is: What is the nature and type of theological education that the prosperity church leaders undergo?

Underneath the major character formation problem is the salient problem of the theological education process that underpins and determines the ministerial formation processes behind prosperity gospel leaders. Prior research has focused on understanding the nature of the prosperity gospel, its characteristics, limitations and strengths. Magezi and Banda (2017), Mbuagbo and Akoko (2019), Heuser (2016) and Becks and Gundersen (2016) have shown how prosperity gospel leaders have used Christian ministries as instruments of economic survival and financial prosperity. That relationship has brought about false hope among church members. There is a *lacuna* on research between an understanding of how prosperity church leaders are prepared for ministry by various theological institutions and what actually transpires within practice that makes the prosperity leaders behave in the manner they do.

It is imperative to understand the ways in which these church leaders are trained and prepared to lead their churches in a manner that they seem to focus on prosperity and wealth despite the struggles of the people. Therefore, this research asks the following three pertinent questions. First, what is the theological education approach that is employed to support prosperity ministry and its ministry approach? Second, how can theological education be done in a way that is relevant to issues arising from prosperity gospel? Finally, how can that understanding help engage with cherished social- cultural values that inspire and transform society, while at the same time, shunning such values as egoism, exploitation and profiteering within the church leadership. It seems in order therefore to question the status of existing leadership recruitment and training models and the quality and purpose of theological curriculum used to train leaders. At the same time, the role of a biblical literacy, discipleship and all the other elements that form part of ministerial character formation should be questioned. Furthermore, there is need to give a balanced assessment of the place of prosperity preaching in an economically struggling people like Zimbabwe and yet prosperity church leaders have an oversupply of resources drawn from the poor who form the majority in the country. Thus, it is imperative to question whether prosperity gospel and the practice of the leaders constitute a constructive theology of hope for people.

1.12 Research questions

The research questions emanating from the discussed background point the researcher to specifics as follows.

1.12.1 Primary research question

What role does theological education play in leadership character formation among some prosperity churches in Zimbabwe, which contributes to the current wealth focused practices?

1.12.2. Secondary research questions

- What are the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and in communities, they belong?
- What is the theological understanding informing the prosperity church leaders' practices?
- How do the prosperity church leaders view their practices from a Biblical understanding and ministry practice in the light of practical life of their congregation members and community people?
- What theological understanding can be discerned in Scripture regarding prosperity and wealth that should inform church leaders?
- What theological education recommendations can be made to inform prosperity church leaders' character formation in order to have balanced ministry practices contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church?

1.12.3 Objectives

Primary Objective

- To understand the role played by theological education in leadership character formation within a prosperity church context as well as and the character formation models that inform and shape leadership development of prosperity gospel preachers to result in balance ministry that does not emphasise wealth and prosperity.

Secondary objectives

- To explore the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and in communities they belong.

- To determine the theological understanding informing the prosperity church leaders' practices.
- To perceive how the prosperity church leaders view their practices from a Biblical understanding and ministry practice in light of practical life of their congregation members and community people.
- To describe the theological understanding that can be discerned in Scripture regarding prosperity and wealth that should inform church leaders.
- To recommend a theological education praxis that informs the prosperity church leaders' character formation in order to have balanced ministry practices contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church.

1.13 Research methodology

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:28) hold that methodology is the broad term used to refer to the research design, methods, approaches and procedures used in an investigation. This refers to how the whole research design is deployed through logical, systematic and consistent research decisions so that it withstands critique as to reaching valid and reliable findings (Symeou & Lamprianou, 2008). According to Jackson, Drummond and Camara (2007), methodological approach is about the identification of constructs and theories that can adequately facilitate how the problem is conceptually understood. Methodologies have a synergetic relationship with methods and are often defined differently based on the philosophical stance advocated by the researcher (Jonker & Pennink, 2010:21).

The research methodology of the study will have two phases: Phase 1 (Literature review) and Phase 2 (Empirical study)

1.13.1 Phase 1- Literature review using frameworks

Phase 1 will involve review of literature analysis using two distinct methodological frameworks by Swinton and Mowat (2016:89-92) on the one hand, and Ott (2016) on the other as outlined below. In this study, the two frameworks are used in a complementary context.

Grant and Osanloo (2014:13) defined a theoretical framework as the blueprint or guide for research, consisting of principles, constructs and tenets of a theory. For Eisenhart (1991:205), a theoretical framework is "a structure that guides research by relying on a formal

theory...constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships.” Ravitch and Carl (2016: 46) concur that the theoretical framework assists the researcher in situating and contextualising formal theories into the study as a guide. They argue that the theoretical framework helps the researcher in considering alternative theories that might challenge his/her perspective, thereby enriching the strength of the study. Lederman and Lederman (2015:593-594) posited that the purpose of any theoretical framework in research is to guide, justify significance of the study, explain the meaning, nature, and challenges of a phenomenon, so that we may use that knowledge and understanding to act in more informed and effective ways.

This study is based on contemporary issues arising from the prosperity gospel and how theological education with its ever-changing paradigms can respond to the issues. As indicated above, the two theoretical frameworks will be used to complement each other in providing useful lenses through which research questions could be answered.

- (a) First, Swinton and Mowat’s (2016:90) four stage Theological Reflection Model will be used as an interpretative lens to answer the four secondary research questions.
- (b) Second, is Bernhard Ott’s (2016) Theological Education Model of integration of theory, practice and spiritual/character formation. The framework will be applied in a complementary context to the Theological Reflection Model propounded by Swinton and Mowat (2016:90) to specifically address the theological education and character formation issues raised in the primary research question.

Therefore, literature will be analysed guided by the above frameworks.

Framework 1: Swinton and Mowat’s (2016:89-92) model of theological reflection

The model focuses on four main issues: studies the complexities of the situation; examines the methods deemed appropriate for gaining new knowledge about the situation; theologially reflects by analysing the data with a view to indicating how that data might help to explain the problem under discussion; and finally suggest forms of practice based on the findings.

Stage 1: Current praxis:

The key question is: What appears to be going on pre-reflectively? This stage will help answer the secondary research question: What are the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and in communities, they belong?

At the intuitive pre-reflexive phase, the nature of the situation is understood and key issues are identified. In this study, it is the issues raised by prosperity gospel. We are responding to the question; what is going on in the situation? The literature surrounding this area may not have been explored yet, but some provisional understanding of the situation is needed. This process enables us to begin to articulate our initial observations and identify the primary issues that will be explored. This stage is critical for the formulation of correct research questions, which are an essential component of the qualitative research process. Furthermore, this process enables the researcher to have some indications of what is going on, why things are structured in the way they are and why people function in particular ways.

Stage 2: Cultural/Contextual analysis:

The key question is: What is actually going on? In this stage, we focus on the following research questions:

- What is the theological understanding informing the prosperity church leaders' *practices*?
- How do the prosperity church leaders view their practices from a Biblical understanding and ministry practice in light of practical life of their congregation members and community people?

In stage 2, the researcher then enters into dialogue with other sources of knowledge with a view to have a deeper understanding of the initial reflections found in stage 1. The researcher's initial impressions may be challenged such that a deeper understanding of the situation may result. As the researcher engages with the complexities of the hermeneutical dimensions of the situation, new insights about the nature and structure begin to emerge. Some of the researcher's initial reflections will be confirmed, but others will challenge and enhance those initial reflections. The cultural and contextual issues in this study are the socio-economic effects of the prosperity gospel and how these expose the character of leaders.

Stage 3: Theological Reflection:

The key question is: How are we to understand this situation from the perspective of critical faithfulness? In stage 3, the focus of the discussion is on answering the research question: What theological understanding can be discerned in Scripture regarding prosperity and wealth that should inform church leaders?

At this stage, we begin to reflect on what we have discovered from a theological perspective. The focus is more now on the significance of the data that was identified in stages 1-2 and how it can be used to develop our understanding of the situation we are exploring and the practices, which emerge from the various practices we encounter. This reflection will help to develop a conversation by drawing out the implicit and explicit theological dimensions of the situation. Research data is analysed with a view to understand how the data complements and challenges one another. In the current study, theological reflection will show how the issues raised by prosperity gospel may be curtailed by considering how theological education could engage and challenge the major issues identified.

Stage 4: Formulating revised forms of practice:

The key question is: What understandings and meanings of practice do we learn from stages 1, 2 and 3 that help revise current practice and inform our future practice? The focus in this stage is the research question: What theological education recommendations can be made to inform prosperity church leaders' character formation in order to have balanced ministry practices contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church?

This stage requires the researcher to revisit stage 1, 2 and 3's formulations, bringing in the cultural and contextual analysis with the theological reflection, plus the initial reflections on the situation. This process makes it possible to have a dialectical conversation that produces new and challenging forms of practice that enable the initial situation to be transformed into ways that are authentic and faithful. The dialectical conversation between prosperity gospel issues and theological education will help answer the research questions of the study.

Framework 2: Ott's (2016) Model of Theological Education: Integration of praxis (spirituality and character), theoria (intellectual /academic work) and poiesis (practical productive skills)

The key question that Ott's (2016) model addresses is: What should be the holistic framework of an ideal theological education program?

Ott's (2016:202-205) model utilises the Aristotelian concepts *praxis*, *theoria* and *poiesis* as an interpretative lens to justify his model of integration of spiritual/character development, academic/intellectual knowledge, and productive practical skills in theological education.

- (i) *Theoria*: According to the ancient philosopher Aristotle, *theoria* is reflection (thinking and meditation), whose aim is to arrive to truth. The skill needed for *theoria* to take place is reason. Aristotle places emphasis on the perception of things, therefore maintains that *theoria* leads to knowledge, which is the knowledge of truth. However, unlike Ott (2016:203), Aristotle ascribes supremacy and superiority of thought over action/practice. He subscribes to the view that thinking is shaped by an idea, that the human soul is above the body, and that the mind is above the soul.
- (ii) *Poiesis*: This concept is used to describe the making and producing of things. The skill (or *techne* in Aristotelian terms) required in that respect is ability. Ott (2016:204) emphasises that the meaning of *poiesis* is in its purpose of producing. The emphasis is not in the making, but the product of the making.
- (iii) *Praxis*: Praxis not only refers to producing things, but also one's way of life (Ott, 2016:205). Central to praxis is spirituality and character. Whilst abilities (in the sense of skills and techniques) are needed, but also the art, the intelligence to live all of life wisely and virtuously. For as long as a person is living, he /she is living practically whether by thinking, reflecting, studying, doing, making or producing. Nevertheless, that practising life is not in an isolated individual, but in a political or social context. Therefore, the goal of praxis is the creation of a good society (Ott, 2016:205).

Ott's (2016) main argument was that in planning theological educational programs, first and foremost, praxis education (spirituality and character development) should be at the helm of the highest educational goal, followed by *theoria* (intellectual and academic work) and finally *poiesis* (practical and productive skills). Ott (2016:206) maintains that the three concepts as a single conceptual unit (*praxis*, *theoria* and *poiesis*) are a suitable interpretative lens through which we can understand how we should run theological education programs.

Therefore, Ott's (2016) framework will address the primary research question in the study: What role does theological education play in leadership character formation among some prosperity churches in Zimbabwe, which contributes to the current wealth focused practices? Stated differently, how should the role played by theological education be understood within a character formation approach for prosperity church leaders to result in a balanced ministry that does not emphasise wealth and prosperity?

In applying Ott's (2016) framework to this research study, it is important to understand the background of his model. The model is premised on four main points:

(a) firstly, he noted that theory and practice have been central issues in the theological education discourse, hence argues that every aspect of fragmentation and reform or desired integration can be assigned to one or the other of these terms;

(b) secondly, the need to holistically integrate the spiritual/character, the practical and the academic facets of theological education had been a concern raised by many theological bodies including the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) and therefore, to warrant inclusion in the Manifesto on The Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education;

(c) thirdly, the current educational programmes in theological education were criticised for only focusing on cognitive attainments at the expense of the growth focused on equipping the whole man - the formation of the spiritual and character; and

(d) Finally, the position paper of the ICETE Manifesto, which clearly opposed overly academic and theoretical approaches and pleaded for a more spiritual/character equipping and practical training. Therefore, Ott (2016) sees the present theological education models as inadequate and substantially lacking coherence and therefore, irrelevant to solving many of the problems arising from the long-standing theological education conversation and debates.

According to Ott's (2016) perspective, today's theological education systems are inadequate, because they are characterised by knowledge, power and technology, thereby adversely leaving out the essential pillars of any theological education model: character formation and spiritual formation. This entails that *theoria* and *poiesis* (that is, knowledge and technology) are only there to confer power, but what is dangerously lacking is *praxis* (spiritual wisdom, maturity, and character) (Ott, 2016: 225).

1.13.2 Phase 2: Empirical study

Qualitative research design

The nature of the problem under study demands that a qualitative design be used in the research. According to Jackson, Drummond and Camara (2007), qualitative research concerns itself with what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call 'the human as instrument approach'. Astalin (2013: 118) says, "Qualitative research is a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon." In other words, the focus of qualitative research is in understanding the

experiences and reflections of human experiences. The qualitative methodology relies on the participants to offer in-depth responses to questions about how they have constructed or understood their experiences. This humanistic, interpretive approach, also called ‘thick descriptive’, implies that it will help to gain insight, explore the depth, richness and complexity inherent in the phenomenon of how theological education can contribute to the development of prosperity gospel.

(a) The Population

The study population consists of church leaders that are practising prosperity preaching, all theological colleges and their respective leaders (principals, vice principals, academic deans and student deans) in Zimbabwe.

(b) The study sample:

The sample consisted of two groups who were respondents in the study.

Group 1: Prosperity church leaders:

This group consisted of seven prosperity church leaders from seven different prosperity church denominations. The prosperity church denominations were purposively sampled from Harare Province through the help of the Evangelical Association of Zimbabwe (EFZ). The EFZ is the official body that registers all evangelical churches in Zimbabwe. The seven churches were the largest prosperity churches chosen based on the sizes of their congregations.

Prosperity Church Denomination (D)	Prosperity leader/preacher (PL)	Average size of congregation	Location in Harare
D 1	PL 1	2800 - 3000	Harare Central
D 2	PL 2	2500 - 2800	Harare North
D 3	PL 3	2000 - 2250	Harare South
D 4	PL 4	2000 - 2200	Chitungwiza
D 5	PL 5	1500 - 1800	Chitungwiza
D 6	PL 6	1000 - 1250	Harare West

D 7	PL 7	800 - 1000	Harare East
TOTAL	7	Range 800 - 3000	7

Key: D - Prosperity church denomination; PL – Prosperity Leaders

Procedure of selecting Group 2 sample

The purpose of the research was explained to the prosperity church leaders. The researcher asked for the consent from the prosperity church leaders to carry out the research. Where the seven church leaders were involved in the interview process, they chose their assistants to be gatekeepers.

Purposive sampling

Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Palys, 2008: 697). According to Emmel (2013: 62), the advantage of purposive sampling in qualitative research is that it allows for certain kinds of analysis to be done because the sample depicts, portrays or symbolises a particular universe that the researcher can describe. The purpose of the research is explained to the leaders who will be asked to freely give consent to participate in the research.

Group 2: Theological education leaders and students

Three theological colleges were purposively selected from Harare Province for the research. Each of the three colleges represented a theological tradition that they ascribed to. Three theological traditions were identified: The Evangelical tradition; the Pentecostal tradition and the Reformed tradition. Four theological leaders (the principal, the vice principal, the academic dean and the student dean) were selected from each theological college. There were 12 theological leaders in all. From each theological college, four student leaders were chosen with the help of the student deans of each of the three theological colleges.

A total of 12 theological leaders and 12 theological students were interviewed as indicated in the table below.

Orientation	Principal	Vice Principal	Academic Dean	Student Dean	Students	Totals
Reformed	1	1	1	1	4	8
Pentecostal	1	1	1	1	4	8
Evangelical	1	1	1	1	4	8
Totals	3	3	3	3	12	24

Procedure of selection of group 2 sample

For theological leaders, the selection of interviewees was based on the leadership positions that they held in the college. Therefore, only the four categories of leaders (the principal, the vice principal, the academic dean and the student dean) were considered as essential parts of the sample. For the students, the selection of interviewees was based on their leadership position and participation in the student affairs departments in the colleges. The college leaders facilitated the identification of the student leaders through their appointed gatekeeper. In all the four colleges, the student deans played the role of gate keeping.

NB: In all cases involving gatekeepers and participating subjects, consent letters were issued out for signing and filed for future references.

(c) Data collection: Instruments & methods

(i) Instruments:

A voice recorder was used to capture the data, which was verbatim transcribed and records saved in the computer where access was through a password. Respondents' names were identified by pseudo-generated names by the interviewer. Notebooks were used to capture important extra-linguistic cues discerned through the interview process.

(ii) Methods: The interview

According to Oakley (1998:721-22) a qualitative interview is a type of framework in which the practices and standards are not only recorded, but also achieved, challenged and as well as reinforced. Hull (1985:27) elaborates further when he says, "...interviews are of particular kind, where actors talk to a specific and conscious purpose." The interview in this study will present opportunities for discourse regarding prosperity gospel and how theological education will engage with the issues raised.

The research approach in this study was qualitative. The researcher was guided by the use of an interview schedule, which consisted of closed, and open questions. According to Edwards and Holland (2013:2-3) interviews range through a continuum, from structured, through semi-structured, to unstructured (or focussed) interviews. They are semi-structured, lightly structured or in-depth, but generally fall under two main categories: the structured interview and the unstructured interview, each with variations noted (Akbarak, 2000: 1-2). However, although the continuum is wide, the characteristics of each determine whether the interview will be classified as structured or unstructured. In the former are lists of questions, which are answered and recorded. The content and procedures are organised in advance for the questioning. The sequence and wording of the questions are determined by means of a schedule and the interviewer is not allowed to make any changes, which means that there is neither room for variation nor flexibility in response in the way the questions are asked or answered. On the contrary, the unstructured interview is an open situation having greater flexibility and freedom for further probing. In all the two types, the research questions determine the question to be asked, their content, sequence and wording are entirely left to the interviewer, which gives the advantage of probing where responses are not satisfactory or where new themes develop. Whatever continuum of interview there is, Edwards and Holland (2013: 3-4) summarised that generally interviews denote the following:

- a. Interactional exchange of dialogue between two or more participants, in face to face or other contexts;
- b. A thematic, topic-centred, biographical or narrative approach where the researcher has topics, themes or issues they wish to cover but with a fluid and flexible structure;
- c. A perspective regarding knowledge as situated and contextual requiring the researcher to identify relevant contexts; and

- d. A social and learning event for both the interviewer and interviewee.

Despite the fact that both types have both advantages and disadvantages and taking note of the various characteristics, the interview method has been identified as the best approach to use in this qualitative study. In all cases, the interviews were held in a room allocated for that purpose at the respective premises by the responsible authority. It was brought to the attention of the interviewees that they were participating in the research voluntarily and that they were not going to be paid for their participation and that their responses in the interviews would be held in a secure safe and their confidentiality guaranteed. Where participants had incurred costs in transport, they were reimbursed the full costs incurred.

(iii) Key informants (KI):

The key informants in the study were leaders of the theological colleges (principals, deans and lecturers), theological students and prosperity church leaders/preachers (bishops and deacons).

(d) Research procedure

(1) Preparation:

The preparation stage involved selection, training and appointment of a research assistant who assisted the study promoter who was the principal researcher in the study. The duties of the research assistant were to transcribe the data and to assist the researcher in administrative tasks such as ordering interviewees as they came for the interviews. The research assistant was oriented on, and acquainted with the procedures of the research. Preference was for a holder of a Master's degree in social sciences. The assistant researcher was a holder of a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education. She was conversant with research procedures and ethics.

(2) Ethics clearance:

The study complied with the requirements of the North West University by seeking approval and clearance before the commencement of the study.

(3) The study followed five phases.

- (i) Phase 1 involved literature analysis in line with the literature review outline discussed above.
- (ii) Phase 2 involved holding interviews with different participants as described above.
- (iii) Phase 3 involved transcription and thematic coding of the data collected.

- (iv) Phase 4 involved data analysis.
- (v) Phase 5 involved discussion of results, outcome and recommendations.

(4) *Authorisation documentation:*

Permission to interview the church leaders, colleges' staff members and students was sought from the responsible authorities before the actual interviews.

(5) *Reliability and validity*

The reliability and validity issues were checked through the data triangulation method. According to Flick (2018:23), triangulation refers to combining different sorts of data against the background of theoretical perspectives that are applied to the data. It includes researchers taking different perspectives on an issue under study. Triangulation takes different forms: data triangulation; investigator triangulation; method triangulation; and theory triangulation (Flick, 2018:12-14). Its purpose is to get rid of biases arising from single methodologies thereby enhancing the validity of the study. In this study, data from the key informants (the theological leaders) were triangulated against data from theological students as a check on validity and reliability issues.

(e) *Data analysis:*

Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as the process a researcher uses to reduce data to a story and its interpretation (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Analysis involves three key processes: (a) data are organised, (b) data are reduced through summarisation and categorisation, (c) and patterns and themes in the data are identified and linked (Kawulich, 2015). This process involves coding, which are tags or labels for allocating identified themes or topics from the data compiled in the study (Wong, 2008). Both manual and computer assisted coding (NVivo Coding) strategies were employed. The use of both manual and computer assisted methods of analysis strengthened reliability issues in the study.

(f) *Data Application:*

This was the final task on the research method. The researcher reflected on the two methodological frameworks, Swinton and Mowat's (2016) Theory of Theological Reflection and Ott's (2016) Model of Theological Education, in making sense of the data collected and analysed. The reflection was tallied against evidence collected from the empirical study. Conclusions and recommendations were made on the basis of the reflection and evidence collected in the study.

(g) Delimitation of the study

The study mainly focussed on leadership character issues in prosperity gospel churches. The study used the Zimbabwean context to understand why and how these issues came about in the respective churches. Although the study was confined mainly to issues of leadership character formation, it was not limited to other peripheral issues that are raised by the prosperity gospel in an environment of socio-economic challenges.

1.14. Proposed contribution of study

Given the *lacuna* highlighted in the problem statement section, the study contributed towards:

- a. A proposal of a model of theological education, that addresses character formation issues of prosperity gospel preachers.
- b. Helping the ecclesia community to understand the role of theological education within a character formation perspective and in challenging other issues raised by the prosperity gospel.
- c. Showing ways in which theological education could meaningfully respond to the complex spiritual and socio-economic issues arising from the prosperity gospel so as to provide hope and meaning among despairing contexts of people in Zimbabwe
- d. Harmonising contradictions among prosperity gospel churches and evangelical main line churches and the socio-cultural contexts such that the practice of theology remains rooted in its historical Christian foundation.

1.15 Ethical considerations

Lichtman (2013:51) defines ethics in research as the approach to understand moral principles, rules or standards governing a person or profession, implying generally 'to do good and avoid evil.' Hammersley and Traianou (2012:36) concur by adding, "...it is about what the social

researcher ought and not ought to do, and or/about what counts as virtues and vices in doing research.”

Lichtman (2013:52-55) identifies nine principles of ethical research conduct as: do no harm, privacy and anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, rapport and friendships, intrusiveness, inappropriate behaviour, data interpretation, data ownership and rewards. To this list is also included other principles like plagiarism. What these definitions point at is that ethics are an essential part of credible research and therefore, ought to be complied with. The researcher complied with all the policy requirements and regulations of the Ethics Research Committee of North West University (NWU), in order to protect the NWU, the researcher, the research team, the research participants and the environment.

Regarding the first principle, this study was very low risk and it was not anticipated that harm would be a concerning matter, as all participants were adults over 18 years of age. In cases of negative situations that could arise, the participants were informed about the available support. The researcher ensured that privacy and anonymity were to be assured and interview notes would be securely stored in a lockable cupboard. Any access to data stored electronically would be through use of passwords generated by the researcher. The transcript of data from respondents would only be used for purposes of this study and the researcher only collected data from respondents who gave express verbal and signed written consent to be interviewed. In all cases, the researcher exhibited a professional behaviour and attitude consistent with North West University expectations. The researcher displayed such behaviour that was deemed would not compromise the integrity of the University community of research as a whole. Regarding plagiarism, the researcher gave credit by showing citations of research publications used in the study, recorded, and cited in the manner expected by the university. The entire study protocol went through ethics review and approval through Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) for approval before study commencement.

1.16. Classification of chapters

1.16.1 Chapter 1: Introduction - Orientation and background

This chapter introduces the study as reflected in the proposal. The background illuminates the issues at stake in the practice of the prosperity gospel and brings out challenges needing attention. Furthermore, the background also shows the option of theological education as a

possible response to the issues of prosperity gospel. The problem needing studying was contextualised in the backdrop of this orientation and background.

1.16.2 Chapter 2: Literature review - The prosperity gospel issues

- a. Conceptual analysis of the prosperity gospel
- b. Biblical examination of the prosperity gospel
- c. Theological examination of the prosperity gospel
- d. Issues raised by the prosperity gospel
- e. Debates and discourse in prosperity theology and how these relate to theological education

This chapter reviewed literature on prosperity gospel, such as challenges in conceptualisation of what the prosperity gospel is, its basic tenets and challenges with such principles undergirding the practice. The issues raised by the prosperity gospel were unearthed from research but emphasis was how these issues have caused controversy and debates among the ecclesia community. This review helped to point out the gaps in research.

1.16.3 Chapter 3: Literature review - Theological education issues were:

- a. Conceptual issues in theological education;
- b. The history of theological education;
- c. An analysis of Eurocentric practices and Afro-centric practices in Theological Education;
- d. Theological education discourse/debates;
- e. An analysis of theological education models and their interaction with prosperity theology; and
- f. The relationship between the prosperity gospel and theological education.

The chapter reviewed concepts in theological education as a practical theology. If theological education had to respond to issues in prosperity gospel, then the current conversation in the field should be holistically viewed. Therefore, the debates in their historical contexts were evaluated and their relevance to prosperity gospel issues analysed. Gaps in research were noted and related to gaps noted in chapter 2.

1.16.4. Chapter 4: Literature review: Character and character formation issues

The chapter reviewed literature on the following:

- a. Conceptual difficulties in the use of the term ‘character’;
- b. Relationship between character and spirituality;
- c. Character formation and related theoretical positions;
- d. Barriers to character formation;
- e. Theological and biblical justification for character formation;
- f. Character formation debates; and
- g. The place of theological education in character formation.

The chapter reviewed various definitions of the concept ‘character’ and how challenges exist in reaching a consensus in conceptualisations of the term ‘character’. The relationship between character and spirituality was explored and noted. These differences account for various misconceptions and challenges that arise in the study of character education. Character formation was considered as a process characterised by different stages and episodes. Different factors that enhance or discourage formation were identified and analysed. The place of theological education in character formation was also explored with a view to understand how character expressions of prosperity churches could be conceived.

1.16.5 Chapter 5: Field research/ empirical study

The chapter presents the research design and methods used, justification of methodology, reliability and validity issues in the research were presented.

In chapter 5, details description of research methodology used in the research is presented and methodology justified. Results of the fieldwork would be presented and analysed in relation to the problem statement.

1.16.6 Chapter 6: Biblical and theological analysis/examination

Chapter 6 presents an examination of relevant Old Testament and New Testament scripture that relates to how knowledge and nature of God was understood in the history of Israelites. The purpose was to understand the significance of the texts to the problems under study in the research. In essence, chapter 6 attempted to determine the normative standards for the practice of theological education and character formation. It sought to use our knowledge of scripture

to inform theologians how they should approach theological education and character formation using biblical and theological insights from the scripture. Analysis of scripture helped to understand the practice of prosperity gospel, character formation and theological education. Implications were drawn from scripture to establish normative standards.

1.16.7 Chapter 7: Towards a model of theological education

The emphasis of chapter 7 was the presentation of a model of theological education that was informed by implications drawn from the literature review and empirical study. The model covers its basic tenets and assumptions. The major highlight was an analysis of key factors that inform the proposed model, such as:

- (a) Understanding character formation in the context of prosperity gospel theology;
- (b) The role of theological education in character formation of prosperity church leaders;
- (c) The hermeneutic of prosperity gospel churches in Zimbabwe;
- (c) Theological and biblical responses to prosperity issues in Zimbabwe;
- (d) Community response to issues of prosperity gospel; and
- (e) A public theology approach to theological education.

1.16.8 Chapter 8: Conclusion of findings and recommendations

- a. Findings, conclusions and recommendations;
- b. Summary of the study based on findings; and
- c. Further research.

Major findings that related to the key research questions were analysed and research questions specifically addressed. Conclusions of the study focused on the research problem and recommendations for the practice of theological education, character formation and prosperity gospel were proposed.

1.17 Schematic presentation

<i>Title: The prosperity churches in Zimbabwe: The role of theological education in ministerial character formation.</i>		
<i>Research question</i>	<i>Aim and objectives</i>	<i>Methodology</i>

<p>What role does theological education play in leadership character formation among some prosperity churches in Zimbabwe, which contributes to the current wealth focused practices?</p>	<p>To understand the role played by theological education in leadership character formation within a prosperity church context as well as and the character formation models that inform and shape leadership development of prosperity gospel preachers to result in balance ministry that does not emphasise wealth and prosperity.</p>	<p>This research will be guided by the two theological models:</p> <p>(a) <i>Swinton and Mowat (2016:89-92) Theological Reflection Model.</i></p> <p>It consists of four stages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Current Praxis;</i> -<i>Cultural and contextual analysis;</i> -<i>Theological Reflection; and</i> -<i>Revised Practice Formulation</i> <p>(b) <i>Ott (2016:204-206) Model of Theological Education.</i></p> <p>It consists of three concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Integration of praxis (spirituality and character),</i> - <i>theoria (intellectual /academic work) &</i> - <i>poiesis (practical productive skills)</i>
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		These two models will complement each other in answering the primary research question
<p><i>Sub question 1</i></p> <p>What are the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and incommunities they belong?</p>	<p><i>Objective 1</i></p> <p>To explore the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and in communities they belong</p>	<p><i>Stage 1: Current praxis:</i></p> <p>Key question is: What appears to be going on pre-reflectively? This involves an exploration of the various practices of prosperity church leaders. This stage will help answer the sub research question 1</p>
<p><i>Sub question 2</i></p> <p>What is the theological understanding informing the prosperity church leaders' practices?</p>	<p><i>Objective 2</i></p> <p>To determine the theological understanding informing the prosperity church leaders' practices</p>	<p><i>Stage 2: Cultural/Contextual analysis:</i></p> <p>Key question is: <i>What is actually going on?</i> In this stage, we focus on understanding the cultural understandings informing prosperity church leaders' practices. The cultural issues in this study are those that effect the practice of the prosperity gospel and its leaders. Sub question 2 is addressed.</p>

<p>Sub question 3</p> <p>How do the prosperity church leaders view their practices from a Biblical understanding and ministry practice in light of practical life of their congregation members and community people?</p>	<p>Objective 3</p> <p>To perceive how the prosperity church leaders view their practices from a Biblical understanding and ministry practice in light of practical life of their congregation members and community people.</p>	<p>Stage 2:</p> <p>Cultural/Contextual analysis (continued):</p> <p>Key question is: <i>What is actually going on?</i> This stage is a continuation of stage 2 above. Focus is on discovering the perceptual contextual understandings informing prosperity church leaders' practices. The contextual issues in this study are the socio-economic issues affecting the prosperity gospel and its leaders. Sub research question 3 is addressed.</p>
<p>Sub question 4</p> <p>What theological understanding can be discerned in Scripture regarding prosperity and wealth that should inform church leaders?</p>	<p>Objective 4</p> <p>To describe the theological understanding that can be discerned in Scripture regarding prosperity and wealth that should inform church leaders</p>	<p>Stage 3: Theological Reflection:</p> <p>Key question is: <i>How are we to understand this situation from the perspective of critical faithfulness?</i> In stage 3, the focus of the discussion is on answering sub research question 4.</p>
<p>Sub question 5</p>	<p>Objective 5</p>	<p>Stage 4: Formulation of revised forms of practice:</p>

<p>What theological education recommendations can be made to inform prosperity church leaders' character formation in order to have balanced ministry practices contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church?</p>	<p>To recommend a theological education praxis that informs the prosperity church leaders' character formation in order to have balanced ministry practices contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church.</p>	<p>The key question is: <i>What understandings and meanings of practice do we learn from stages 1, 2 and 3 that help revise current practice and inform our future practice?</i> The discussion focuses on answering the sub research question 5. Ott's (2016) concepts of <i>praxis</i>, <i>theoria</i>, and <i>poiesis</i> will be used and applied in the discussion leading to the recommendations</p>
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1.18 Summary and conclusion

Chapter 1 comprised the background and orientation of the study. It highlighted the three main interlocking concepts in the study: the prosperity gospel; character formation; and theological education. The problem statement was clarified and key research questions formulated in line with achievable objectives. The research design was related to the nature of the research questions and the objectives formulated. The purpose of the relationship was to ensure that the research questions explored in the study would be answered by using the appropriate research design. The population and sample were specified and methodology of the qualitative research justified. Two phases in the research were identified – the literature review phase and the field research phase. Ethical considerations were spelt out and possible benefits of the study noted. A schematic view showing the structure of the research study provided a structure of the chapters that would comprise the thesis guide.

CHAPTER 2: Literature review: Understanding the prosperity gospel

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter will review literature on prosperity gospel focusing on the challenges of the conceptualisation of the prosperity gospel, its basic tenets, and challenges related to principles undergirding the practice. The review will also include discussion on the biblical and theological aspects of prosperity gospel. The debates raised by the prosperity gospel will be considered with emphasis placed on how these issues have caused controversy. The review

will also relate the ongoing debates among the ecclesia community and how these discussions intersect with theological education.

2.2 The meaning of prosperity and spirituality

It is important to understand the concepts ‘prosperity’ and ‘spirituality’ before proceeding to defining prosperity gospel because the two terms can also be easily misunderstood, thus complicating the definition. In everyday use, prosperity means good fortune and success, especially in money matters and along with its equivalent terms, success and blessing, prosperity has the undertone of material and financial wealth (Nihinlola, 2006: 29). Therefore, when it is not qualified, prosperity can be understood in this sense. Nihinlola (2006:30) says, “From a biblical sense, prosperity is defined as the state of obedience to the will of God resulting into the fulfilment of the purpose of God for a person, characterised by physical and material welfare, and healthy and social relationship with other persons.”

Referring to spirituality, Wakefield (1983: 549) defined it as, “...those attitudes, beliefs and practices which animate people’s lives.” Wakefield’s (1983) definition tends to equate spirituality to Nihinlola’s (2006) concept of prosperity. However, Wakefield’s definition has important implications. First, since every person is a spiritual being, therefore every person has spirituality. Second, spirituality is not only a Christian concept; even non-religious persons have their own spirituality. Nihinlola (2006: 29) further defines spirituality biblically by saying, “Spirituality is a life of healthy relationship with God characterised by obedience and submission to the will of God.” Nihinlola further emphasises that that relationship needs to be manifested in a meaningful coexistence with other human beings in the various dimensions of life – religious, social, cultural economic and political. Joann Wolski Conn (1999:97) defined spirituality as, “One’s entire life as understood, felt, imagined, and decided upon in relationship to God, in Jesus Christ, empowered by the Spirit.” This definition of spirituality identifies two marks of Christian spirituality: relationship and wholeness. It is therefore, fundamental to understand the relationship between the two – prosperity and spirituality – as they are interwoven and connected to the concept of prosperity gospel. They are contemporaries of each other in the sense that we cannot discuss one and exclusively leave the other out.

2.3 Relationship between prosperity and spirituality

Nihinlola (2006:33-35) identified five assertions that show the relationship between prosperity and spirituality. First, prosperity and spirituality are closely interwoven and not mutually exclusive because they are holistic concepts. This means that a person can be both prosperous

and spiritual. The ministry of Jesus as announced and practiced included preaching, teaching healing and deliverance. Thus, Jesus' mission in the world touched both spiritual and material needs of people. Second, the reality of poverty makes prosperity teaching relevant. Therefore, to deny the relevance of financial prosperity in a context of material poverty is ecclesiological insensitive. Thus, in an atmosphere of economic austerity, a theology of blessing cannot but be popular, attractive and marketable. Third, wealth is not a problem to the spiritual welfare of some people. Some people possess their wealth and combine it with godliness. They can touch it, control it, and use it to serve God and humanity. Fourth, material prosperity can hinder the spiritual welfare of some people as taught by Jesus (Luke 14:33; Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25). Fifth, it is a fact that spirituality has priority and primacy over prosperity.

Zacka (2015:1) encourages readers to diligently consider the definitions from two main perspectives: opponents' view and proponents' perspectives to have a balanced understanding of the concept. He acknowledges two major challenges in the search for an inclusive definition of prosperity gospel or prosperity theology (Zacka, 2015:2). First, he maintains that prosperity gospel theology is not a written theology but rather a rhetorical and experiential teaching in which the appeal is as much tied to the language used and the personality of the proponent as to the theological content. Second, there is considerable variation between the proponents of the teaching on some of its details. Despite these difficulties there are many commonalities that assist us in coming up with an inclusive definition.

Spencer (2014) says, "...prosperity gospel can be defined by looking at three main characteristics: faith, wealth and health." For the adherents of prosperity gospel, faith is defined by its efficacy. Faith is taken to mean positive thinking and expectation of God's material blessing. This is the simple law of faith according to the adherence of the prosperity gospel. Furthermore, financial blessing is considered a guaranteed result of faith in God. The implication is that to be a faithful Christian is to expect wealth from God. For prosperity gospel believers, God blesses the faithful with good health as a provision of atonement. According to this assertion, there is an inherent connection between good health and blessedness. In addition to these three main characters that define prosperity gospel is the fourth dimension, identified by Sarles (1986:331) as "life free of demons". Here Nel (2020) defines the prosperity gospel not in terms of its characteristics but in terms of its purpose. He says, "Viewed from an African perspective, prosperity gospel is a legitimate critique of contemporary economic and social trends" (p.7). However, Nel (2020) highlights that the solutions that the prosperity gospel give do not accord with dominant liberal norms.

Ayegboyin (2006:70) conceptualises the prosperity gospel as the teaching that emphasises, “Covenant access to a world of financial fortune,” and he stresses that it is precisely for this reason that the teaching becomes prosperity oriented. Oluoch (2012) first compares it with Baal worship of Canaanite gods characterised by pomp. He says, “The prosperity gospel is a high sensual involvement based on luxurious self-indulgences” (p.54). Oluoch (2012: 54) argues that although it can be defined as *nature worship*, a fitting word could be *material worship*. With this description, Oluoch (2012) is specifically referring to the prosperity gospel as a *gospel of increase*. Oluoch’s conceptualisation is very close to Mumford’s (2012:371) definition, which says, “It is a Christian theology whose signature teaching is that God wants believers to be rich and enjoy good physical health.”

For Peter (2009:109), this is a “gospel of human possibility...wrapped in God’s name.” Afolayan et al (2018:144) concur when they allude, “Prosperity teaching is a gospel that promises financial break-through or the preaching that does not address the concern of salvation from sin...the gospel that defines poverty as sin, derogatory and misleading.” According to Afolayan et al (2018), the description of the prosperity gospel as a gospel that has an affinity for affluence, and one, which is a God given program, or desire for humanity compares well with the Marxist perspective that sees religion as the opium of the people?

Ehioghae and Olanrewaju (2015:68) describe the prosperity gospel in much stronger terms as a teaching that advocates members of the Christian church “...to be vaulted from the pit of poverty to the dizzying height of affluence.” Kroesbergen (2014) uses a different approach in defining prosperity gospel, he lists a number of synonyms that describe the phenomenon, pointing out that these terms adequately define what prosperity gospel is. Thus, he refers to it as ‘positive confession’, ‘word of faith theology’, ‘health and wealth gospel’ or a ‘name-it-claim-it gospel’ (Kroesbergen, 2014:64).

This brief conceptual analysis of prosperity, spirituality and prosperity gospel helps to understand the scope of similarity and difference between biblical prosperity and biblical spirituality. Already different views shared by different researchers are evident of the fluid nature of the concepts under discussion. It is important in this study to investigate further, how consensus in conceptualisation of the concepts can be reached.

2.4 Analysis of definitions of the prosperity gospel

The diversity and complexity in definitions of the concept of the prosperity gospel noted above is evidence of the difficulty that scholars have in defining the concept (Mashau and Kgate,

2019). Folarin (2007) noted that although definitions of prosperity gospel abound in literature, there is remarkable ignorance of the concept of prosperity gospel among scholars in the field of prosperity theology. Hence, difficulties in having a consensus in understanding of the concept are always prevalent. Commenting on the difficulty of concept of the prosperity gospel Bowler (2013:3) says "...prosperity gospel is hard to describe but easy to find."

The apparent complexity of the concept "prosperity gospel" and its diversity makes a definition difficult (Mashau & Kgatle 2019). In fact, Wigger (2015:47-8) points out that popular definitions of the prosperity gospel have exclusively focussed on the financial blessings and material wealth available to believers arguing that there is more to it than these two to include aspects such as personal health sometimes referred to as abundant life, marriage enrichment, parenting, health eating and diet, inner healing and great sex within marriage. In spite of such challenges and difficulties in having a consensus in definition, there are common threads that run through its proclamation.

Mashau and Kgatle (2019) identified three distinct elements: faith, wealth, and health. Folarin (2007) identified four threads as follows: (a) the gospel that promises only financial breakthrough; (b) the preaching that does not address the concern of salvation from sin but only emphasises that God will make everyone materially rich; (c) the gospel that people should accumulate material things; and (d) the gospel that defines poverty as sin. Synan (2011:402) identified the following threads: emphasis on healing, wealth and deliverance from demonic forces; the basic belief that God has graciously met and provided for all the needs of humankind through the Atonement (the suffering and death of Christ); and the assumption that every believer should participate or share in Christ's victory over sin, sickness, death and poverty. These different classifications by these scholars point to an ensuing debate regarding the meaning of the prosperity gospel.

While the concept 'the prosperity gospel' eludes easy definition as noted by Carter (2013:40), two points sum up these definitions: It is exclusively financial; and it neglects the spiritual well-being of the people. This summary definition of prosperity gospel by Carter (2013) leaves out many characters of the concept, is not representative, and may not be succinctly inclusive. Folarin (2007) opined that prosperity preachers would not define their own theology so negatively. This explains why many of those that legitimately belong to the category refuse to identify with the term.

It is evident from these definitions reviewed that the proclamation of salvation and concern for spiritual growth are not part of the agenda for prosperity gospel preachers and therefore warranting scathing criticism from Anthonia Essien (2000:3) who portrays the prosperity gospel as a counterfeit religion and accuses prosperity preachers for preaching a brand of Christianity that not only neglects the cross but also is unmindful of the prophetic vocation of Christianity and Christians. Understanding the prosperity gospel in such a perspective is a misrepresentation. Can we therefore concretely conclude that the prosperity gospel is a teaching that does not include salvation and sanctification? That position can be contested as shall be demonstrated later in this chapter on the discussion on debates.

Three challenges emerge from this perspective. The first challenge is how do we interpret and evaluate the claim to salvation from sin in some of the testimonies sometimes given in the ministries of certain prosperity preachers if salvation from sin is entirely absent from their messages? Second, how to interpret statements in the articles of faith of the denominations of the prosperity preachers that the human being is a sinner in need of salvation which is only available in Jesus Christ by the exercise of faith? Third, what do we make of challenges to salvation from sin that are found in the messages of the prosperity gospel preachers, even though the challenges are made casually? Wright, Azumah and Asamoah-Gyadu (2010) of the Lausanne Theology Working Group (Africa Chapter) (2010) defined the prosperity gospel as the teaching that believers have a right to the blessings of health and wealth, and that they can obtain these blessings through positive confessions of faith, and the 'sowing of seeds' through the faithful payments of tithes and offerings. The perspective of the Lausanne Working Group can be regarded as closely inclusive and representative of the meanings and understandings of the concept 'the prosperity gospel.' The Lausanne Theology Working Group definition covers the characteristics of the gospel, its methods and its motivation or objective. This study does not have space to critique the entire deliberations of the working group but suffice to stress that the working group is an esteemed grouping of evangelical scholars and that their conceptualisation could be considered as significant.

The analysis of the definitions covered in this section helps to understand the diverse nature of the conceptualisations surrounding the term 'prosperity gospel'. The growing interest of theologians in understanding the meaning of prosperity gospel is a good indicator of the importance of this kind of theology among the Christian community. The attempt to identify areas of consensus and difference helps to resolve the controversies within the prosperity

gospel theology. An appreciation of the history of the prosperity gospel will help to put in context any approach that is meant to resolve any such controversies.

2.5 The history of the prosperity gospel

2.5.1 Conceptual beginnings and development

According to Jones and Woodbridge (2017), history can have profound implications for the future and the present and throughout history, where novel ideas have given rise to movements that eventually faded but later re-emerged into a new slightly altered form. This is true of the prosperity gospel. In order to understand the history behind the prosperity gospel, we need to understand three main variables: the events, the time and the personalities involved.

The roots of the modern prosperity gospel are long and tangled, and in order to understand the size, success and diversity of the movement today, we need to understand certain ways of thinking about spiritual power that emerged and competed for attention early in the 20th century (Bowler, 2013:11). Bowler (2013:11) maintains that this thinking took many forms and went by different names, the key ones being, mind cure, success literature, positive thinking, self-help and prosperity theology among others. As reviewed by Payne (2019:557), the prosperity gospel was composed of three distinct, though intersecting streams: The New Thought Movement, Pentecostalism and the American gospel of pragmatism, individualism and upward mobility. These traditions flowed across the American religious landscape and later developed new conduits of health and wealth (Bowler, 2013:11). These traditions emerged largely out of an understanding rooted in the power of the mind, implying that access to the Divine was through the power of the mind through prayer and positive thinking. It was believed that believers of the Christian faith could use *mind power* to command or more appropriately manipulate the physical and spiritual planes through the interior world of thought, imagination and meditation (Bowler, 2013:12). Mind power was seen as the world's or humanity's hidden potential to challenge and engage with problems to do with health and poverty, through proper mental and spiritual alignment. Regarding the historic development of the prosperity gospel, Essien (2020: 444-445) identified three primary influences as follows: (a) The Pentecostal and the charismatic influences; (b) the influence of Revivalism; and (c) specific cultic influences and teachings.

2.5.2 The New Thought's Mind Power

Bowler (2013) holds that The New Thought Movement represents a cluster of thinkers and metaphysical ideas that emerged in the 1880s as the era's most powerful vehicle of mind-power. It was known by several other names such as mind-cure, mental healing, or harmonialism (Jones & Woodbridge, 2017:22). The scholars identified three purposes of the New Thought Movement: (a) to create interest in the practice of a true philosophy and way of life and happiness; (b) to show that through right thinking, one's loftiest ideals may be brought into present realisation; and (c) to advance intelligent and systematic treatment of disease by spiritual and mental methods. These three aspects of New Thought Movement became foundational to the 20th century views of mind-power (Bowler, 2013:14). First, it assumed the importance of a theology of human capacity, which essentially believes that there is unity between God and humanity, and therefore, declaring that separation between God and humanity was only a matter of degree. Second, was the phenomenon that the world should be re-imagined as thought rather than substance, implying that the spirit world formed absolute reality while the material world was the mind's projection? With this thinking, the material world was contingent upon the mind and therefore right standing with the Divine required sacred alignment and mystical connection. Third, was the argument that people shared in God's power to create by means of thought. People shaped their own worlds by their thinking just as God had created the world using thought (Payne, 2019:558). Therefore, positive thoughts yielded positive circumstances and negative thoughts yielded negative situations. According to Bowler (2013), "These three features – a high anthropology, the priority of spiritual reality and the generative power of positive thought – formed the main presuppositions of the mind power.

2.5.3 Pentecostalism's Mind Power

There is no doubt that the New Thought Movement and its ideological framework influenced Pentecostalism in America (Jones & Woodbridge, 2017:56-57). The Pentecostals were better known for their heavenly-minded experiences of ecstatic worship, speaking in tongues and the Lord's imminent return, distinguishing themselves with radical claims of God's terrestrial blessings. According to Nel (2014), they preached a four-fold gospel of divine healing, personal salvation, and baptism of the Holy Spirit and the imminent return of Jesus Christ. They claimed the human material body as a primary focus of divine action. Therefore, they believed that healing was a result of faith, belief, action and praise rather than confession. The human body served as a site of healing, blessing and empowerment (Nel, 2014 and Jones & Woodbridge, 2017:64-65). The simple prescription for healing was; act faith, speak faith and

think faith. Healing was considered a legal right secured by Christ and accelerated through spiritual gifts by positive thinking.

Jones and Woodbridge (2017:69-70) documented that Pentecostals believed that confessions put God at work to fulfil his promises and thus humankind is ruled by the spiritual law of confessions. The developing doctrine of verbal power filtered a first generation of new thought inspired Pentecostals. Pentecostal's mind-power was psychological dynamite for its claims of powerful access to divine authority. The claims to spiritual power suggest that New Thought lit the fuse of Pentecostalism's psychological dynamite and helped to cultivate a Pentecostal popular theology and practice of verbal power, identified as glossolalia (speaking in tongues) as their spiritual seal (Bowler,2013:24). Therefore, believers demonstrated their divine connection not by doctrine or ritual, but by speaking in a holy language. Pentecostals cemented the material character of glossolalia in doctrinal formulas as the initial evidence of speaking in tongues.

Verbal power in prayer was considered as a conduit to receiving miracles from the divine not as pleas but as contracts guaranteeing miraculous results, hence, the emerging usage of God's many names for personal use. Bowler (2013: 25) noted as an instance that to the sick, God revealed himself as Jehovah Rapha (I am the Lord that healeth thee). To the fearful, God's redemptive name was Jehovah Nissi (The Lord our banner of protection). These names were articulated in prayer with sweet reverence expecting it to bring their petition, praise or deliverance to completion. Bowler (2013) opined that early American Pentecostalism, intersected with channels of New Thought, and had absorbed a high anthropology and view of divine speech that would shape its theology. The Pentecostal mind-power would later influence today's prosperity gospel in terms of its conceptualisation of health and wealth.

2.5.4 Mind Power and the metaphysical gospel

In the early 20th century, the concept of mind power provided African American Christians mainly, with an irresistible instrument of power. The metaphysical gospel spread like veld fire as Pentecostal gospel preachers promised to smooth the rough edges of capitalism and industrialism with theologies that countered poverty, disease and despair. These early prosperity gospels explicitly combined New Thought, Pentecostalism and the African derived traditions a cross pollination that resulted in Black theologies that viewed the material world positively rather than with scepticism. African Americans adopted and adapted the metaphysical religion and applied it to the pressing questions of the times: scarcity, racism,

segregation and despair arguing that it promoted and offered individual solutions. For instance, poor black communities were encouraged to challenge racism in prayer and positive thinking while others bent metaphysical ideals towards a communal gospel of self-help. Bowler (2013) noted that black metaphysical Christianity entwined racial uplift with the power of the mind with self-affirmed/ acclaimed prophets proffering a symbolic materialism. For instance, they enjoyed a lavish life style replete with expensive cars, regal attire, bestowed lordly titles to their congregations, which demonstrated their wealth thereby showing their Christian believers a path to personal fulfilment. These prosperity gospels promised a winning advantage within the framework of capitalism and industrialism. Leaders offered prayers, rituals and sacred objects to help Christian believers bring about their desires.

An analysis of the development of prosperity theology shows that mind-power facilitated the development of a faith that sought to close the gap between desire and fulfilment (Payne, 2019:557). African American Pentecostalism resonated with metaphysical religion. New Thought in contrast persisted as a religion of utility, implying that people found in it as a religion that could speak solutions to their situations and circumstances. Payne (2019:558) argued that the Christological framework so formed was a mechanism of mental magic (mind power) guaranteeing believers the ability to change their circumstances by tapping into new spiritual powers. Therefore, the fusion of New Thought and Pentecostal traditions produced a distinct strand of prosperity theology within African Americans religion – a live-wire that we now call the prosperity gospel today.

2.5.5 The roots of the Prosperity Gospel

Writing on an article entitled, *True origins of the prosperity gospel aka Word Faith Theology*, Ken Silver (2014) points out that the prosperity gospel message has over the years mutated to various variants that all share common traits and roots. However, the two (Pentecostalism and the New Thought Movement) have a different doctrinal and historical background. According to Silva (2014), the word-of-faith message developed simultaneously and parallel to the prosperity message, but its roots trace back through EW Kenyon to Christian Science, as explained by Bowler (2015). According to Silva (2014), the prosperity gospel/preaching roots trace back through Oral Roberts to Napoleon Hill. For clarity purposes, Silva (2014) stresses that the roots of the word-of-faith and the roots of the prosperity gospel can be summed up as ‘give to God and He will give back to you’ or ‘sowing and reaping’ whilst the Word of faith is summed up in ‘name it and claim it’ aka ‘blab it and grab it.’ Although these two ran parallel to each other it is interesting to note that the definitions of prosperity gospel discussed above

embrace some or all of the practices of the word-of-faith teaching implying that both movements ended up reciprocating concepts and borrowed from or shared practices with each other.

Silva (2014) maintains that most of the modern proponents of the prosperity gospel have been directly or indirectly influenced by one or all of the following early proponents of the prosperity gospel, who are: Kenneth Hagin (1917-2003); Kenneth Copeland (1936); or Fred Price (1932). Oral Roberts (1918 – 2009), referred to as the father of the prosperity Gospel, influenced these three. To Silva's (2014) list of early prosperity gospel practitioners, Nwaomah (2020) added Essek William Kenyon (1867-1948) and A. A. Allen (1911-1970) as the main prosperity gospel drivers, contributors or pole bearers. Bowler (2013:15, 45) accounts to detail the contributory role that Essek William Kenyon in particular played in the development of the prosperity gospel. The researcher accounts that William Kenyon (1867-1914) is considered the father of modern positive confession theology and had laid the cardinal principles of today's prosperity gospel. This position is contested by other scholars. Proponents of this view suggest that Kenyon's religious views were heavily influenced by the New Thought Movement and that he developed the teaching of positive confession from that influence. However, there is no doubt that his teachings also influence modern prosperity gospel advocates.

Nwaomah (2020) noted that Kenneth Copeland was acquainted to Oral Roberts as a student at Oral Roberts University after which he also became the personal pilot of Oral Roberts. He had the opportunity to travel with him to his crusades, and witnessed first-hand the ministry of Roberts. However, Kenneth Hagin, whose disciple he later became also influenced Copeland. Like the Copelands, Fredrick Price credits Hagin as the greatest influence in his life and ministry. Thus, most prosperity preachers traced their roots to Kenneth Hagin. This assertion has prompted scholars to determine the source of Hagin's teaching. According to Silva (2014) and Nwaomah (2020), Hagin claimed in his writings that no one introduced him to prosperity gospel but the Lord Himself. He says, "The Lord Himself taught me about prosperity. I never read about it in a book. I got it directly from heaven" (Hagin, 1985:1). What Hagin meant was that the idea of prosperity as understood by him was a revelation from God (Nwaomah, 2020). Silva (2015) has documented that it is important to note that both Oral Roberts and Allan had already been preaching the message for about ten years prior to 1959 when Hagin claimed to have received his revelation.

As documented by Bowler (2015) and Nwaomah (2020), the prosperity gospel teaching began in the 1950s after the World War II when some American Pentecostal preachers decided to depart from the traditional Pentecostal preaching to reviving Kenyon's theology of 'dominating faith' which he himself had borrowed from the Metaphysical Movement which emphasised positive thinking and psychology. According to Bowler (2013:59), these revivalists focused on themes such as healing, prophecy and evangelism using silent prayer, anointing oil, anointing handkerchiefs, laying on of hands, and the classical prayer of faith as a springboard to release one's faith toward God for blessings. However, mainly they focused on four key themes: faith, wealth, health and victory (Bowler, 2013:19).

By the mid-1950s, these revivalists succeeded in reconstituting Kenyon's approach but emphasising mainly on health, wealth and prosperity themes. They presented faith as that which operates the authority to positive confession and actualisation of health and wealth and prosperity in a believer's life. According to Bowler (2013:48) Oral Roberts significantly seemed influential among the revivalists because of his shrewd ability to anticipate the new frontiers for ministry in radio, television, and education, and his influential catchphrases like 'Turn Your Faith Loose,' and 'Something Good is Going to Happen to You' to sum up his theology. Silva (2015) appraised that Robert's periodical publications such as *Healing Waters* and *Abundant Life*, and his very first book, *God's Formula for Success*, and later, *Miracle of Seed-Faith*, also had an immense contribution to the development of the prosperity gospel at its infancy in the 1950s. The thematic ideas stressed by Oral Robert's teaching emanated from the scripture of Luke 6: 38, which he interpreted to mean that whatever a Christian desired, he or she needed to sow it first and God would give abundantly in response and in proportion to the seed sown. By the 1970s, Robert's teachings had gained dominancy and currency among Christians in American theological landscape and later in Africa and Latin America in the 1980s as shall be highlighted in the discussions that follow. Bowler (2013:86-89) noted that as the prosperity gospel teaching increased in fame, more prosperity churches and ministries mushroomed expanding across continental lines, especially among the third world nations.

For Africa, Nwaomah (2020) identifies Nigeria and Ghana as ranking high in the reception of the prosperity gospel. Paul Gifford (2007) identified Enoch A. Adeboye and David O. Oyedipo and Benson Idahosa as major proponents of this theology in Nigeria and in Ghana; the major players were Eastwood Anaba, Mensa Otobil, Duncun Williams, and Agyen Asare. Nwaomah's (2020) findings were that once the prosperity gospel had its footsteps and footprints in Africa, "...it included all kinds of prosperity, where it was considered as a tool of

hope equipping adherence to aspire for health, reversal of economic desolation, expansion of wealth, and prosperity in all human endeavours.” Commenting on the same issue Gifford (2007:20) posits that as the prosperity gospel came to Africa, it blended and resonated with some aspects of African traditional religion, where it was believed prosperity gospel included such blessings as fertility, longevity and abundance.

However, the history of African prosperity gospel will be discussed in greater depth below, suffice to mention for now that African personalities got the flame of prosperity gospel from their counterpart American preachers. Critical in the history of prosperity gospel is the phenomenon that it is was largely influenced by the New Thought Movement and therefore an intersection between Pentecostalism, New Thought and an American gospel of pragmatism, individualism and upward mobility (Bowler, 2013:11).

The key point to note in this section is that in order to understand the history behind prosperity gospel we need to understand three main variables: the events; the time; and the personalities involved. In terms of events, the prosperity gospel emerged out of the Pentecostal Movement and the New Thought Movement in America. These movements had a focus on a theology of human capacity and believed that believers of the Christian faith could use mind power to manipulate the physical and spiritual planes through the interior world of thought, imagination and meditation. It was noted in this section that prosperity gospel can be traced as back as 1880 but was much more visible in the 1950s especially after the Second World War period. By the 1970s, prosperity theology found its way into the third world countries. Key personalities in prosperity gospel theology are E.W Kenyon, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland and Fred Price. These personalities have found followers today in the name of T.D Jakes and Joyce Meyer and more recently in Africa with such personalities like the late T.B Joshua following the same prosperity gospel trends and beliefs. It will be interesting to understand how prosperity gospel theology penetrated the African landscape.

2.6 The history and development of the prosperity gospel in Africa

In a contribution to the book *In Search of Health and Wealth: The Prosperity Gospel in African Reformed*, Chilenje (2014:6) asked the question, “How did the prosperity gospel find its way to Africa?” He answers his question this way, “Pentecostalism opened the way in the early 1900s...with the result of the 1906 Asuza Street Revival in Los Angeles, ordinary but called out people fanned out to all corners of the globe as missionaries.” Through their efforts to win

souls to Christ, Pentecostalism was planted throughout Africa and became an integral part of the African Initiated Churches (Walker, 2007:252-253 & Mullin, 2008: 211-212). Chilenje (2014:6) further attributes the entry of prosperity gospel into Africa to Kenneth Copeland when he says, “In the early 1990s, Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland visited the AICs in Nigeria and preached the prosperity gospel. The impact was immense. Churches after that grew into millions of members, and the gospel of wealth found its way into the heart of the African church.” In describing and questioning this impact, Ukoma, Nnachi and Oji (2016:144-145) say, “Prosperity Gospel...plagued the African church...and left people to ask, ‘what would have been the ultimate purpose for the advent of Christianity into Africa?’” “Like wild wind, the Church is now engulfed by loud shouts as though of victory but that of prosperity messages” (Ukoma et al, 2016:144-145).

Heuser (2016) pointed out that the genealogy of prosperity theology in American immediate post war religious history coincided with still another revolutionary concept in Pentecostal self-presentation and social organisation. Prosperity gospel became popularised in the new media of mass communication such as radio programmes and TV broadcasts (Heuser, 2016). From the 1950s onwards, these new modes of communicating the prosperity gospel became characteristic features in groupings of individual prosperity preachers. Newly founded ministries exploited the situation by engaging in exchange programmes and joint conferences. The establishment of independent ministries was backed by the rise of bible schools and provision of fellowship programmes. The ever-expanding discursive networks helped to delocalise the prosperity gospel from the American soil to other parts of the world mainly to Africa and Latin America. According to Fischer (2011: 219-41), from the 1960s onwards, the prosperity gospel had experienced its breakthrough internationally, by delocalising from the American soil and re-localised in contexts of what is now termed the global south. In Africa in particular, the entry of prosperity gospel coincided with post-colonial independence of many African countries.

In the first recognisable phase of prosperity teaching from the 1970s to 1990s, single individuals of the stature of Benson Idahosa and Oyedepo (all of Nigerian origin) and Duncan Williams of Ghana and Ray McCaully in South Africa emerged as advocates and representative voices of the prosperity gospel (Heuser, 2016; Adeleye, 2011:87 and Gifford, 2004:13). Almost all of them had received their theological education in North American Faith Gospel milieus. Gifford (2004) identified Reinhardt Bonnke’s ‘Fire Conference’ in Harare in April in 1986 as one of the factors that accelerated the entry of prosperity gospel in Africa. The Fire Conference

drew 4,000 delegates from 41 African countries, with Kenneth Copeland conducting one of the key seminars on 'The Gospel and Prosperity'. Mashau and Kgatle (2019) documented that in Southern Africa the doctrine of prosperity gospel is associated with many of Africa's fastest-growing churches: the Rhema churches of South Africa and Andrew Wutawunashe's Family Church in Zimbabwe among countless others.

Within a few years, only the African recipients of the American prosperity theology evolved as megastars of their own, visible in international clusters of prosperity gospel conferences. The megastars in turn mentored emerging prosperity gospel preachers in their own theological seminaries. According to Bowler (2013), the network and cooperation among prosperity gospel preachers through clusters and conferences, crusades and autonomous circuits facilitated the emergence of diverse variants of the prosperity gospel across Africa. Gifford (2007:20) observed that for almost all prosperity churches that formed in Africa they had a Pentecostal background with a major focus on success. Gifford (2007:20) has this to say, "Discussing African Pentecostalism without discussing its emphasis on success is like discussing computers without mentioning software."

There is debate regarding the motivation behind the emergence of prosperity gospel in Africa. Heuser (2016) rejects Gifford's (1990) view that the movement of prosperity gospel into the African soil was an ideological import to establish a cultural hegemony of American shaped fundamentalism. He argues that it was a transposition narrative caused by many factors, key among them was the relevance of the gospel as a guarantor of hope to despairing contexts and to tackle key economic and social problems bedeviling the African continent (Heuser, 2016).

2.6.1 The popularity of the prosperity gospel in Africa

Research indicates that prosperity gospel in Africa has become very prosperous with the neo-Pentecostal and charismatic churches being the main drivers of the prosperity preaching (Nel, 2020; Mashau & Kgatle, 2019; Anderson, 2005; Gifford, 2004 and Heuser, 2015). Heuser (2016) for instance rightly describes the reality when he says, "African Pentecostal theologising has captured centre stage in present day public spaces by a disputed language of desire." Nel (2020) highlighted that the prosperity preaching is expanding faster than Islam, and twice the rate of the Roman Catholic Church and three that that of other non-Catholic religious traditions. According to Gifford (2004), this represents a paradigm shift amidst the development in African Christianity. They are characterised by their reconstruction of religious geography

through their construction of religious camps consisting of buying large expanses of land and construction of a range of facilities including auditoriums, schools, hospitals, guest houses, banks, dormitories, that function as alternative cities (Kgatle, 2017).

According to Cox (2009:245-246) in South Africa there were over 5000 independent denominations. Nel (2020) estimated that in Zimbabwe 50% of Christians belong to such independent denominations. According to Ganiel (2010:137), the positive of these mega churches was that they contributed towards better ethnic relations with multi-ethnic congregations promoting friendships and fellowships across racial barriers. Nel (2020) says, “The mega churches for which Ghana and Nigeria are famous are few in number among South African blacks. Only when Ghanaian, Nigerian and Kenyan preachers began to visit South Africa in the 1990s, after the dismantling of apartheid, did the idea of a new Pentecostalism began to take off among South African blacks.”

The proclamation of the prosperity gospel in Africa was characterised by charismatic worship services usually led by a prophet or prophetess who claimed extraordinary connection to and stood in a unique relationship with God (Nel, 2020:4). Nel (2020:5) observes that these incorporated elements of Pentecostal practice included characteristics of being spirit driven, and the ability of all believers to possess spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues. Pentecostal practice also included being able to deliver divine messages and effecting healing from all types of ailments, as well as bestowing material rewards for faithful obedience to biblical injunctions as they interpret it.’ Gifford (2007:22) observed from his many years of interactions with prosperity gospel preachers and congregation in Africa that these prophets consider themselves as of a different order than their congregants because of their special gifts and status and therefore considered themselves as unchallengeable. With the passage of time, these churches had in fact ceased to become communities or fellowships of worship but had transformed themselves as associations of clients of a particular man of God or patronages – a clear contrast with American prosperity gospel congregations and churches.

Gifford (2007: 22) posited that an evaluation of the history of the prosperity gospel in Africa has to be tied to one’s understanding of the African context, noting that such factors as colonialism, the cold war rivalry of superpowers, the world trade system, and a huge burden of debt shaped the manifestation of the prosperity gospel in Africa. He argues that the most significant factors shaping the face of the prosperity gospel in Africa is the dysfunctional political culture that permits elite to appropriate wealth and power at the expense of the people.

Notably, the prosperity gospel with its focus on success did less to challenge this dysfunctional political structure. Instead, the emerging prosperity gospel preachers disregarded the limitations of political-economic systems arguing that Christians will prosper under any political or economic regime (Gifford, 2007:22-23).

Anderson (2005:71) gives credit to the movement of prosperity gospel in Africa particularly by adding that it put emphasis on black consciousness and dignity and for that reason became an attractive alternative to the option presented by white charismatics, preaching about the realisation of the African dream of prosperity for black people. However, Bafford (2019) gives a contrasting viewpoint regarding discourses around the prosperity gospel in terms of the intertwining of theological, social and racial arguments. He argues that the reason why Evangelicals criticised prosperity theology was not only in the area of textual exegesis of those who propagate prosperity theology but also that the prosperity theology was socially unjust and abusive phenomenon. It exacerbates existing social gaps in wealth, demonstrated in the unimaginably high levels of economic inequality between middleclass neighbourhoods and the squatter camps and slumps that characterise the black people. If both Anderson (2005) and Bafford's (2019) arguments hold, one wonders how and why respectively, did the prosperity movement become famous on the African soil. Nel (2020) stressed that a history of the prosperity gospel in Africa is not complete without the reasons of its fame.

2.6.2 Reasons for the popularity of the prosperity gospel in Africa.

The popularity of the prosperity gospel in Africa with the masses of Africa can be viewed as a legitimate critique of contemporary economic and social trends, even if their solutions do not accord with dominant liberal norms (Bafford, 2019:4 & Nel, 2020: 7). Kgatle (2017) argued that there is a dangerous co- dependent relationship between leaders of the prosperity theology and their followers especially when they exist in an environment of other mixes such as poverty, fear of slipping back into poverty, ignorance born out of little education, feelings of despair, collapsed social institutions, defunct public systems and services, rampant corruption, and state of plundering of nations' resources. For instance, the prosperity gospel has had great impact in African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe. These countries are afflicted by poverty and disease, high unemployment rates and political instability, have limited institutional resources to solve health issues and experience difficulties due to state plundering and state debt that drains their economies.

Many Africans seek solace in spirituality, and the promises of the prosperity gospel and this explains why the prosperity gospel was popular in Africa even under these adverse political and economic platforms. According to Mbugau (2017), the prosperity gospel taps into the most basic of human desires. However, Nel (2020:7-8) argues, “Some of the solutions the prosperity gospel offers are unbiblical, misleading and detrimental to its adherents as they are left discouraged, disillusioned and bitter when the promises of the gospel do not realise in their personal circumstances.”

Third, in a context where basic survival needs of some people are not met, the gospel of health and wealth becomes attractive to people dreaming of a better future. In this regard, Gifford (2007:24) says, “The significant thing about the movement is the hope engendered, the vision imparted, the sense of destiny awakened, a relentless message of assurance is the distinguishing feature of these Pentecostal churches.” In many cases, a message delivered with eloquence and flair by enormously gifted and articulate preachers, often supported by superb soloists and choirs, distinguishes the practice of prosperity preaching.”

Fourth, is the utilisation of the ‘Big Man concept’ or ‘chief syndrome’ exemplified in the behaviour of some successful prosperity gospel preachers who amass great wealth and spend it on a lavish life style while members cringe in misery and poverty. These “big men” are able to function in Africa because of the respect many Africans traditionally have for their chief or head of their tribe.

In a summary of the reasons why the prosperity gospel was popular in Africa, Nel (2020) rightly described it this way, “The popularity of African neo-Pentecostalism can be explained in terms of its successful focus on socio-economic and materialist issues, in the same way, the prosperity gospel echoes and speaks to the neoliberal mentality of Africa that consists of the hope of visionary material gain with little investment.” Hence, Gifford was right when he said, “Whatever the tensions and inconsistencies exist, these churches are clearly developing a winning formula in Africa (Gifford, 2007:24)”.

This section noted that pentacostalism opened the way for prosperity gospel to enter Africa with the Asuza Revival Conference having had a great impact. The visits to Africa by the proponents of the prosperity gospel, such as Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland and the use of mass media as a tool for evangelisation encouraged many African believers to accept the prosperity gospel. It was noted too that the entry of prosperity gospel into Africa coincided with post-colonial independence of many African countries, thereby giving the Africans black

consciousness and dignity, which was a sharp contrast to the option presented by early white missionaries. The strong network and cooperation among prosperity preachers gave the prosperity gospel the impetus to forge stronger relationships with the Christian believers in Africa. The discussion pointed out that the prosperity gospel tends to be attractive in environments that are characterised by poverty disease and decline of provision of socio-economic services and this fact accounts for the reason why the prosperity gospel became attractive for African believers.

2.7 The history of prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe

2.7.1 Trends in prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe

Magezi and Manzanga (2016:2-3) point out that prosperity gospel tendencies in Zimbabwe are manifested in three major (among others) preachers: Uebert Angel, of Spirit Embassy, Walter Magaya, of Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries (PHD Ministries), and Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International (UFI). These and many others following the Pentecostal and prosperity tradition explicitly and implicitly present themselves as driven and sustained by the power of the Kingdom of God (Banda, 2019:3), leading to a disputed false mentality that sees the leaders as the only source that can access God on behalf of the congregation (p.1). Banda (2019:5) refers to the approach of impersonalising God as “commodification of the gospel.” According to Magezi and Manzanga (2016:3), all three have many features in common: performing miracles on healing and deliverance; an exceptional number of followers thronging their worship gatherings; the use of objects such as armbands which the followers buy; the use of holy oil and holy water by the followers; and a message that is predominantly centred on liberating people from the curse of poverty and sickness.

Mahohoma (2017:3) stresses that these prosperity churches emerged in part as a response to the influences of economic and social meltdown and deterioration of social services delivery systems such as health. All the three trace their origin to Temitope Balogun Joshua of the SCOAN Church in Nigeria. He is their spiritual father to whom they pay homage. The life style of these Zimbabwean prophets, their projects and wealth show their lavish way of living which is characteristic of many prosperity church leaders elsewhere (Mahohoma, 2017:2-3) and this is reminiscent to corrupt and lavish leadership styles (Jenkins, 2006:75-78). The scholar further noted that another feature of the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe that dovetails with the practices of many prosperity churches is miraculous healing power and prophecy. These features

resonate with a population that has lost hope and therefore locate their hope within the coordinates of the prosperity gospel territory (Magezi & Manzanga, 2016).

The economic, governance and social challenges experienced in Zimbabwe in the past years since 1995 have resulted in immense poverty and suffering. Mohan (2015) & Mahohoma (2017:2-3) have shown in a study of the development of prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe that prosperity gospel practices are manifest in emerging prophets, prophetesses and apostles. He identified influences of prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe as coming from two main sources: (a) political crisis and economic meltdown; and (b) the deterioration of health delivery system.

2.7.2 Reasons for the propagation of prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe

Magezi and Manzanga (2016:1) identified two major reasons that seem to have propagated the development of prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe as: (a) the prospect of prosperity gospel giving hope to many desperate people in Zimbabwe; (b) appealing parallels between prosperity gospel and African spirituality. Mahohoma (2017:3) identified two different motifs: (a) political crisis and economic meltdown; and (b) the deterioration of health delivery system. The latter is affirmed by Chibango (2016:61-62) when he writes, “The delivery of health care services remains scanty in the country due to lack of adequate medical facilities, shortage of drugs as well a lack of medical personnel.” Many skilled personnel have left the country for greener pastures. All four influences noted by these scholars are strong drivers for the emergence of the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe.

(a) The political crisis and economic meltdown

Regarding the reasons due to political and crisis as noted by Mahohoma (2017:3), the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in part changed the prosperity gospel landscape in Zimbabwe. The period of the GPA (2008–2012) saw a slight economic recovery but the situation remained bad to date (Mahohoma, 2017:3). Despite these small economic gains due to the GPA formations, Zimbabwean economy seems to be nose-diving as indicated by the UNDP report of 2010. In addition, the survey carried out by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) in 2014, showed that 75 companies had closed in 2013. The Zimbabwe Daily News (Chawafambira, 2013), reported that out of a population of about 13 million almost 90,000 people were jobless, making them economically and socially vulnerable and poverty-stricken. According to Chibango (2014), it is estimated that between 3 and 4 million people have left the country in search of economic greener pastures. Unemployment rates were slated at 80% - 95% according

to Chiumia (2014) and she confirmed that despite variations in the actual percentage points from other credible sources, it would be safe to conclude that the unemployment levels in Zimbabwe are extremely high. The reality that can be discerned from these findings is that Zimbabwean people have been adversely affected leaving them with no hope for the future. In the same vein, where the health delivery system deteriorates, the ordinary people turn to the so-called prophets and apostles as the only source of hope. Chibango (2016:61-62) affirms this when he writes, “The delivery of health care services remains scanty in the country due to lack of adequate medical facilities, shortage of drugs and medical personnel”. Thus, many skilled personnel have left the country for greener pastures.

(b) Deterioration of the health delivery system and miraculous healing

The second reason noted by Mahohoma (2017:3) refers to the deterioration of the health delivery system and its consequence of affinity for miraculous healing by prophets and apostles. Miraculous healing involves healing from physical sicknesses, mental retardation, spiritual attacks, and socio-economic problems. Healing can also take the form of deliverances from evil spirits. Such a state of affairs has been fertile ground for prosperity gospel to mature in Zimbabwe. For example, as illustrated by Mahohoma (2017:3-4), within Walter Magaya’s PHD Ministries, miraculous healing plays a central role in giving hope to people in despairing contexts. Congregants are encouraged to give testimonies of healings and exorcisms of the evil spirits to show how powerful the prosperity leader is. Many terminally sick people abandon their medication with the belief that they have been healed and or the embarrassment that they have little faith. However, the reality is that this hope is false hope as maintained by Magezi and Manzanga (2016:1). The implication of Mahohoma (2017) analysis is that where people do not have hope, politically and economically, they tend to look for alternatives. That alternative tends to be the prosperity gospel and such is the case in Zimbabwe.

(c) The prospect of hope as a coping mechanism

According to Magezi and Manzanga (2016:8), the shocking social conditions in which this gospel prevails in Zimbabwe are real and the prosperity gospel is trying to bring hope. The question that confounds many are as follows: If prosperity gospel gives people hope, why is it that they are still under poverty and not improving? The scholars argue that if prosperity gospel

in Zimbabwe is beneficial and giving hope to those in despairing contexts, then it should stand the test of time in line with the experiences of early gospel preachers like Peter and John (Acts 5: 28-33) who were forbidden to preach the gospel but that gospel has stood the test of time.

(d) Appealing parallels between the prosperity gospel and African spirituality

Magezi and Manzanga (2016:5) point out that there are four similarities between prosperity gospel practices and African Traditional Religion (ATR) practices and that these seem to have encouraged the thriving of the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe. First, within the ATR is the manipulation of the object of worship, which involves speaking the right words, performing the right rituals and acting appropriately? The prosperity gospel movement emphasises the same issues through the manipulation of God. Such manipulation takes the form of positive confessions and speaking positively. Both ATR and Prosperity Gospel Movement teach and believe that negative confessions before the objects of worship brings bondage, poverty and sickness (Magezi & Manzanga, 2016:5). These similarities serve as seedbeds for the prosperity gospel. In fact, many Zimbabweans who are cultured in ATR environments see the new gospel movement as a ‘glorified’ or more ‘honed’ ATR and easy to accept (Magezi and Manzanga 2016:5). The second similarity is the failure of both strands to solve the problem of man’s sins. ATR and the prosperity gospel do not offer a permanent solution to man’s problem of sin. Therefore, dealing with sin in a biblical way is foreign to both practices. The third similarity is the reverence of the medium (for ATR) and man of God (for the Prosperity Gospel Movement). Both the medium and the man of God receive reverence because of their assumed direct access to the more powerful deity—more powerful ancestors (in ATR) and God (in the Prosperity Gospel Movement). Finally, the medium’s responsibility in ATR is to identify and exorcise foreign spirits that might be seeking to harm the family. The same practice is found in the Prosperity Gospel Movement. What can be implied in these findings is that Zimbabweans from an ATR background find it easy to embrace the prosperity church teachings. These similarities provide a good environment for the prosperity gospel to copy and grow.

The Lausanne Theology Working Group (2010:100) noted that prosperity gospel thrives in an environment of poverty and suffering. Therefore, what Mahohoma (2017) and Magezi and Manzanga (2106:5) identified as the reasons of the flourishing of the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe supports the findings of the Lausanne Theology Working Group. Magezi and Manzanga (2016:5) are right when they challenge the protestant churches in Zimbabwe for an

open and sincere assessment of what is happening among prosperity churches in the country to give a relevant and satisfying response.

2.7.3 The prosperity gospel and prophecy in Zimbabwe

Furthermore, according to Vengei (2013:29) Zimbabwe has recently seen not only an increase in the number of Christian movements that have so far radically transformed the Christian landscape, but it has also seen an eruption of a phenomenon of ‘prophets’ that perform ‘strange’ miracles. Miraculous healing is dovetailed with prophecy and revelation. Within this, groups’ practices are miracles and doctrines of prosperity which are the anchor of their preaching and these are not entirely unknown to Zimbabwe’s prosperity gospel landscape (Vengei, 2013:30).

Some of these prosperity preachers cum prophets’/prophetesses’ and apostles’ practices as documented by Vengei (2013:30) include among others the following: filling pockets and wallets of believers with bank notes and gold nuggets; claim to heal people of cancer and HIV diseases; raising people from the dead; claim to help people stop smoking; instant weight reduction; instant teeth growth that had fallen off; prediction of people’s national identity card numbers, car registration details, addresses of places of residence ; immediate conception and bearing children within three days of conception and prediction of future events to come and dates and many others. Vengei (2013:30) noted with concern that all these miraculous practices anchor the prosperity gospel doctrine and practices in Zimbabwe.

2.7.4 The status quo: Reflection on Wafawarowa’s (2018) Report

The conclusion drawn from the analysis of the status quo of prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe is that the socio-economic and political environment prevailing in the country has encouraged the entry of prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe and its effects on the population. A brief review of the writings of one Zimbabwean writing with a theological, economic and socio-political lens will help unveiling the myths and realities of the prosperity gospel landscape in Zimbabwe. Writing on a New Zimbabwe newspaper article entitled, ‘The curse in the prosperity gospel’ the renowned political reporter Reason Wafawarowa commented, “There is a mutual link between the religious and the political charlatan: both thriving on pacifying their followers with deceit and false hope.... The popular prosperity gospel preacher is an excellent diversionary tool so important for the lazy and corrupt politician” (Wafawarowa, 2018). He blames the prosperity

gospel for the political instability and economic decline in the country. Wafawarowa (2018) describes prosperity gospel as a 'wave' 'spiritual virus', and 'worship crazy' practice that has threatened the Zimbabwean populace. He says, "The greatest threat to the Christian faith today is from its leadership, so increasingly infiltrated by dangerous mountebanks preaching destruction right from the pulpit of salvation, and the swindlers are far from remorseful."

Referring to the effects of the prosperity gospel to the Zimbabwean community Wafawarowa (2018) lambasts the prosperity gospel as a 'curse'; a 'diversionary tool' important for the lazy and corrupt politician, who provides the required false hope to the bewildered masses; a 'gospel of illegal shortcuts' that has promoted the scourge of corruption; and as a gospel that propagates corruption by promoting leaders in church not because of their integrity but due to their big-headed opportunism. The reporter noted a mutual link between the religious and political charlatan: both thriving on pacifying their followers with false hope and deceit. Wafawarowa (2018) is sceptical about "Bible schools (in Zimbabwe) for churning out charlatans" and hence maintains that Prosperity gospel works against the formation of Christian character.

In his scathing attack on prosperity preachers in Zimbabwe, Wafawarowa does not spare criticising his colleagues in the journalism fraternity for failing to do responsible journalism by sharing truthfully on how the prosperity gospel has marginalised the populace. He maintains that the sub-Saharan Africa (Zimbabwe included) is the only place in the world where poverty has been on the increase in the last 25 years and questions why the prosperity gospel has not brought in the prosperity the continent desperately needs. Therefore, he blames the Zimbabwean prosperity gospel hearers for wild cheering of the preachers, and mountains of empty pulpit driven hope.

Finally, Reason Wafawarowa condemns the prosperity gospel as demeaning the work ethic principle of hard work. He argued that today's prosperity gospel denies the relationship between work and wealth, and this breeds lazy zealots who sit and do nothing with their lives in the hope that miracles will transform their lives. What Wafawarowa (2018) says is testimony to what the status quo on the prosperity gospel is in Zimbabwe. While the reporter cannot be the sole representative voice of the people of Zimbabwe, being a Zimbabwean reporter writing with socio-political and socio-theological lenses to the Zimbabwean audience, gives him a credible vantage point in sifting truth from garbage. Furthermore, Wafawarowa's article prompts the scholars and likeminded researchers to understand the nature of theological education obtaining in the country and how it is contributing towards the formation of what

Wafawarowa refers to ‘churning of charlatans’ leadership styles and practitioners within the prosperity gospel ecclesiology.

The section documented that prosperity gospel tends to give hope to desperate people, and appeals greatly to African spirituality which accounts to the reasons why it was viewed as a positive theology by many Zimbabwean Christian believers. It was also noted that the current socio-economic and socio-political meltdown has made the prosperity gospel more attractive to Zimbabwe Christian believers. However, Wafawarowa’s (2018) concerns regarding the practice of prosperity gospel practitioners especially their character expressions can never be underestimated and ignored by theologians. Hence, this explains why the prosperity gospel is on the spotlight in this study.

2.8 Basic tenets / manifestation of the prosperity gospel

According to Agana (2016:169-182) the teaching and preaching of the prosperity gospel revolve around the themes of offering and prosperity, covenant, the world as a battle field, divine rewards, the human person as a creature par excellence created in God’s own image receiving empowerment from the Holy Spirit, the mind, the Word and faith. In this context, faith is always presented as a non-negotiable condition for acquiring prosperity (Agana 2016: 241). Agana (2016) further postulates that the prosperity ideas are lived out in various practices including different types of personal/communal prayer, songs, healing and deliverance, lifestyle, different types of offerings, rituals, publicity and testimonies. It is interesting to note that in all this, the theme of the cross is missing; which is consistent with the principle of positive confession according to which God has not created suffering and has subdued it through Jesus Christ. Any manifestation of suffering in the form of ‘poverty, death and sickness’ find explanation in the activities of the devil, deficient faith, family curse, witchcraft, hidden sin or ‘a mental construction’ (Agana 2016:206-207). A discussion of the ways in which the prosperity gospel manifests itself is therefore fundamental.

2.8.1 Ecclesiology

Bishau (2013: 67) maintains that a categorisation of the basic tenets of the prosperity gospel movement is not very easy because separating beliefs and practices is problematic and therefore, not easy to separate theology, biblical interpretation and practice of faith. It is argued that it is not easy to discern whether or not the prosperity churches possess an ecclesiology (Bishau, 2013:67), but it can be said with certainty that at least in the infancy stages many of them are interdenominational as well as independent. Coleman (2000:30) particularly made

two observations: the prosperity gospel churches reject Presbyterian polity (or governance) especially the idea that a pastor should be accountable to elders; second, that it is common for pastors of prosperity churches to be the highest organisational authority figure.

2.8.2 Life Style

According to Nwaomah (2020:10), the lifestyle of the preachers of the prosperity gospel are themselves the living examples of their message of divine prosperity whereby most of them live extravagantly—with luxurious cars, private jets, mansions with gold plated fixtures, expensive designer clothing, vacationing in exotic places. Their lavish lifestyle reminds their followers of the power of faith that lays claim to hidden spiritual realities and translates them into material realities. The extravagant lifestyle associated with the prosperity teaching leads some of them into financial problems, which in turn leads to manipulation, fraudulent activities, embezzlement of church funds, literally begging audience for money, or even covenanting with demonic powers. However, to members and admirers, the lavish living of the preachers is evidence of the authenticity of their preaching.

2.8.3 The place of music

Since music transcends language and culture, it is used as a means of communicating any Christian movement particularly as ministration of the good news. Nwaomah (2020: 12) cited a certain celebrated Zimbabwe hip-hop artist who claims that his message is intended not only to minister and inspire the word of God, but also to remind people of God's promise of prosperity, health and success. The artist attributes his fame and success to the prosperity gospel he preaches through his music (Gukurume, 2017: 37-8)

2.8.4 Hermeneutics and Theology

Bishau (2013:68) struggled to qualify their reading of the scriptures as neither exegesis nor interpretation because theirs is literal interpretation, which comes under the category of non-traditional biblical interpretation. According to Nel (2020:42) the Pentecostal hermeneutic adopted by prosperity preachers operates under the following assumptions. First, it is distinct from the customary Biblicist and literalist methods of interpreting the bible by being experiential based on the anticipation that the Spirit can be discovered in all of life. Second, it operates on the principle of the Bible as a performative book with a declarative use. Third, that the events in the Bible can be re-enacted today. Fourth, is the implication that the interpreter of the Bible goes beyond the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge to participate in the community of faith. Fifth, its hermeneutic includes interpreting the present in terms of the

past; Christian lives in terms of biblical narratives, and charismatic experiences in terms of the earliest church and their encounters with God. Finally, it defines itself in terms of interpreting scripture based on biblical narratives and not in terms of dominant perceptions of reality. Nwaomah (2020) shares the same view when he stated that the majority of prosperity gospel preachers are united in their hermeneutic approach, whereby they make generous use of Scripture to propagate the ideology of the Prosperity Gospel. Simpson (2007) identified four hermeneutical flaws as follows.

The first is a strong ideological bias that demands a prosperity gospel from the Scriptures. This bias controls their reading of Scripture, disallowing the text to speak to them. The second is a utilitarian use of Scripture that reduces the Bible to a contract for success. This approach disregards historical contexts of passages and seeks to universalize and make normative what could have been a localised and contingent theme. Third, prosperity hermeneutics shuns engagement with the scholarly community but rather emphasises subjective revelation. Subjective revelation is what is known to the preachers of this movement as revelation knowledge, which transcends sensory knowledge and reveals the reality of the spiritual realm. For McConnel (2011:102), the assumption is that revelation knowledge comes from God via the prosperity preacher and therefore is superior to sensory knowledge that any of the believers possess. The fourth flaw is a violation of exegetical principles: the movement's hermeneutical approach does not regard as important the study of literary elements (such as genre, structure, and argumentation) and historical contexts (such as backgrounds, date, authorship, and culture) of the biblical text.

The hermeneutical approach adopted suggests that instead of Scripture the so-called revelation knowledge (subjective revelation) is the primary source of the theology of the movement. If we take theology to mean discipline which strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life, as defined by Erickson (1985:23), then their hermeneutical approach may be considered as justified and therefore theologically consonant. However, other views classify their approach as misleading. For instance, Asamoah-Gyadu (2012:64-86) used the story of Jacob and Esau to argue and illustrate the case that the 'strong' can take advantage of the 'weak', and the 'wise' can subdue the 'ignorant' for personal prosperity thereby promoting injustice in the name of self-enrichment. Asamoah-Gyadu (2012) classifies such theology as tantamount to a theology that turns the Bible head down. He maintains that where such a theology exists, it distorts the relationship

between the believer and God (p.64-86). According to Bishau's (2013:68) summary of topology of theological positions, prosperity gospel principles are many but include the following: (a) That Christians are entitled to a wellbeing that is both spiritual and physical; (b) that Christians have dominion over creation, an exploitation of which must make them prosper; (c) that positive confessions allow believers to appropriate material wealth; (d) that redemption and atonement are equated to alleviation of sickness, poverty and spiritual corruption; (e) that poverty and illness are cast as curses which can be broken by faith; (f) that a bible is a faith contract between God and His people; (g) and finally that the contract, faith and positive confession are key to unlock God's promises.

2.8.5 Homiletic Approach

Nwaomah (2020:14) maintains that prosperity gospel preachers exploit their pulpits and media as a license to propagate their theology of materialism. Nwaomah (2020) noted, "... some of their homilies aim at those satisfied with mediocre living, those who think they are undeserving of God's blessings, the sick, the demon possessed and encourage them to speak positive confessions over their lives" (p.14). Part of their homiletic is speaking positive confessions into the lives of their audiences or exorcise by positive confession of ejecting demonic personalities, the preachers also prophesy about peoples' present and future situations (Haynes, 2012: 123-139). In some cases, the homiletic includes justifying their ownership of material wealth and possessions as coming from God because of their faith confessions (Brice-Saddler, 2019). Prosperity preachers use their pulpit dominance to reprimand or ridicule the faith of some people or their audiences, teaching that their economic status and wellbeing represents their level of faith and giving (Nwaomah, 2020:16). In some cases, as noted by Hinn (2017:103) the homilies of prosperity preachers include faith confirmations like "grace makes rich", "Christ is a magic genie," and "faith unlocks spiritual inheritance". Simpson (2007:85) lambasts such a homiletic arguing that the approach brings spiritual power into the sphere of human control and akin in principle to a form of idolatry or occult manipulation. Their homiletical approach emphasises visualisation and positive confession concepts related to New Age technique and magic respectively, which is the basis for the 'name it-claim-it' teaching (Nwaomah, 2020:16).

2.9 Biblical examination of prosperity theology

In their analysis and evaluation of prosperity theology, Jones (2006) and Sarles (1986:337-350) have identified five main contextual issues of prosperity theology among others: the

Abrahamic Covenant; Atonement; biblical teachings on giving; biblical teaching on faith; and biblical interpretation. According to Jones (2006) these five theological and biblical arguments suggest that the gospel is skewed towards falsity more than the truth and therefore leads one to the conclusion that they falsely represent the view of the relationship between God and Man. Expressed differently, what Jones (2006) meant was that if prosperity gospel is correct, grace becomes obsolete, God becomes irrelevant, and man is the measure of all things (Jones, 2006). In his prelude to the evaluation of prosperity theology, Barga (2018:201) points out that prosperity gospel is too varied to have anything approaching a systematic theology and therefore for the sake of convenience the primary divisions of theology will be used in evaluating certain prominent ideas that undergird the movement.

2.9.1 The Abrahamic Covenant

The theological basis of the prosperity gospel is the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12, 15, 17, & 22) (Jones, 2006 & Ukoma *et al*, 2016:144). Ukoma *et al* (2016:144) commented, “It’s good that prosperity theologians recognise much of Scripture is the record of the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, but it’s bad that they do not maintain an orthodox view of this covenant.” The implication is that they incorrectly view the inception of the covenant; more significantly, they erroneously view the application of the covenant. According to the prosperity gospel, the primary purpose of the Abrahamic covenant was for God to bless Abraham materially. Pousson (1992:158) expressed it in a more emphatic way by referring believers to “Abraham’s spiritual children” implying therefore that all believers would consequently have inherited these financial blessings of the covenant.

2.9.2 Jesus’s atonement extends to the “Sin” of material poverty

Sarles (1986:339) observes how the prosperity gospel claims that both physical healing and financial prosperity have been provided for in the atonement. While it is true that Isaiah 53:4 addresses the healing of disease and that Matthew 8:17 legitimately used it in that sense, the quotation of the Isaiah passage in Matthew 8:17 does not mean that Christ’s death on the cross would guarantee freedom from sickness. As exegeted by Sarles (1986), Matthew is highlighting the pre-Cross-healing ministry of Jesus, which had a specific time-bound purpose to it and therefore was not included in His atoning work. That purpose was to substantiate His messianic claims to the nation Israel, not to establish a guaranteed health plan for all who have enough faith (p.339).

A second error of prosperity theology, which also leads to a faulty view of the Atonement, is the misinterpretation of 2 Corinthians 8:9 (Jones & Woodbridge, 2011: 90). This is the verse to which prosperity teachers appeal in order to support their view of the Atonement. The verse reads, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” The problem with this interpretation is, of course, that in this verse Paul was in no way teaching that Christ died on the cross for the purpose of increasing anyone’s net worth materially. In fact, Paul was actually teaching the exact opposite principle, that since Christ through atonement gave his life as a sacrifice, the Corinthian were too expected to offer their riches for the service of the Lord (Jones & Woodbridge, 2011:90).

2.9.3 Prosperity theology and giving

Jones (2006) emphasises that one of the most striking characteristics of the prosperity theologians is their seeming fixation with the act of giving. Bishau (2013:68) concurred when he says, “giving takes centre stage in prosperity churches”. Jones (2006) noted that statements like, ‘True prosperity is the ability to use God’s power to meet the needs of mankind in any realm of life,’ and ‘We have been called to finance the gospel to the world,’ are not uncommon within the prosperity gospel fraternity. A closer examination of the theology behind them reveals that the prosperity gospel’s emphasis on giving is not built on anything but philanthropic motives. The driving force behind this emphasis on giving is what teacher Robert Tilton (1983:6) referred to as the “Law of Compensation.” According to this law, which is supposedly based on Mark 10: 26 and 30, Christians need to give generously to others because when they do, God gives back more in return? This, in turn, leads to a cycle of ever-increasing prosperity. Jones and Woodbridge (2011:65) complained that scriptures quoted from Ecclesiastes 11:1, Mark 10:30, 2Corinthians 9:6 and Galatians 6:7 are inappropriately applied to justify these claims. In the majority of cases the prosperity gospel church leaders in Zimbabwe have the practice of blessing the offerings to make the believers acknowledge their power in blessing (Bishau, 2013:68).

2.9.4 How to be healthy

According to the prosperity gospel, the provision of healing is found in the Atonement. A number of scripture texts are used to support this notion. Key among them is Isaiah 53:5: ‘By His scourging we are healed.’ This is interpreted to mean that Christ was the divine Substitute for all forms of physical illness, so that through the Cross-healing is as readily available as forgiveness of sin. Matthew 8:16-17 presents Jesus’s healing ministry as fulfilment of what the

prophet Isaiah had said in Isaiah 53:4. Another scripture that is often misapplied is 1 Peter 2:24, 'By His wounds you were healed.' From a prosperity theology perspective, this seems to suggest that physical healing was provided through Christ's substitutionary sufferings. Galatians 3:13 is used to prove that Christ has redeemed believers from the curse of sickness. In the prosperity theology, the confession of faith is paramount. It leads to the cure of any disease or physical handicap, since healing is always the will of God and has been provided for in the Atonement.

2.9.5 Prosperity Theology and Faith

A final area of prosperity theology that merits investigation is the doctrine of faith. Whereas orthodox Christianity understands faith to be trust in the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of His teaching, and the redemptive work accomplished at Calvary, prosperity teachers espouse quite a different doctrine (Jones, 2006). Jones and Woodbridge (2017:45) documented that at least for Kenneth Copeland (a strong proponent of the prosperity gospel); it is this force of faith, which makes the laws of the spirit world function. The implication drawn here is that the faith revealed in God's Word causes the laws governing prosperity to function.

The main point expressed in this section is that the prosperity gospel has five main basic tenets that characterise it. First, is their ecclesiology that is distinguished by individual governance by the leader of the prosperity church. Second, is the extravagant life style of leaders. The place of music is unquestionably esteemed. The hermeneutic and theology as well as the homiletic approach are distinctively different from orthodox approaches. The proponents of the prosperity gospel argue that their practice has biblical roots and supported adequately by specific scriptures. They are mainly guided by God's promises to Abraham, the atonement extended to cover the sin of poverty, and with teachings fixed on the act of giving. Probably the major belief by the prosperity gospel practitioners is that the force of faith makes the law of the spirit world function. It is not the faith in Jesus that makes things happen, rather it is the faith of the individual, which makes things, happen. These positions taken by the prosperity theology need to be examined to check their compliance with Christocentric theology.

2.10 Theological evaluation of the prosperity gospel

Jones and Woodbridge (2011:56) contend that the danger in evaluating the theology of the prosperity gospel is that the movement is broad making it possible for every prosperity preacher to have their own unique theological nuances. Notwithstanding this caution Jones and

Woodbridge (2011:56) identified five theological errors, which they refer to as categorical pillars, these being: distorted view of God; an elevation of mind over matter; an exalted view of human kind; a focus on health and wealth and finally an unorthodox view of salvation. These are the theological foundations of the prosperity preaching.

2.10.1 Pillar 1: A distorted view of God

Most prosperity teachers deny the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. They reject the orthodox view that God is three-in-one person, coequal and coeternal. They ascribe to the view that God appears at various times in different times as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which is the ancient heresy referred to as ‘modalism’ (Jones & Woodbridge, 2011: 57). These researchers noted that personalities among adherents of this modal heresy are T.D. Jacks, Creflo Dollar and Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland. Prosperity teachers also demote God, stripping Him of His sovereignty and place humans at the centre of their theological system.

2.10.2 Pillar 2: An elevation of mind over matter

Many prosperity preachers believe that words—both thought and spoken—are a force and have creative power. Charles Capps (2011) in his book ‘The Tongue: The Creative Force’ argues that the creative power of man comes through his spirit, therefore, leading to the belief that people can use the spiritual substance to change the physical substance. The implication thus being that by tapping into the right spiritual laws one can control physical matter, circumstances and situations (Jones & Woodbridge, 2011: 60). The theological premise of this implication is grounded in the view that since God created the world by speaking, that is, He used his words (Genesis 1: 3). Therefore, prosperity advocates argue that they too can use words in order to create new situations. Jones and Woodbridge (2011:61) disqualify the implication as false since human beings have not been able to create things out of nothing.

2.10.3 Pillar 3: An exalted view of humankind

This view inverts the relationship between God and human beings. Prosperity gospel preachers believe that God simply exists for the purpose of meeting all their needs including good relationship, sound health and financial gains. Jones and Woodbridge (2011:63-64) noted that some prosperity gospel preachers aim at convincing their followers that they indeed are little gods because since they were created in his image, they possess God’s DNA. Three problems are noted with this theological perspective. First, the Bible does not teach that people are made

out of God, rather it stresses that God made them. Second, the bible does not teach that God needed to make people in order to see himself. Instead, the Bible teaches that God created humanity for his purposes and glory. Thirdly, the bible does not teach that people have ‘God genes. However, equating DNA with the image of God is theological incompatible.

2.10.4 Pillar 4: A Focus on Health and Wealth

The core of prosperity message concerns material prosperity. It is alleged that most prosperity gospel preachers argue that Jesus was rich since the soldiers gambled over Jesus’ clothes at crucifixion. Jakes (2000:15) as an advocate of the prosperity gospel suggests that Jesus was rich and this explains why he supported his disciples. It is a common characteristic that prosperity gospel preachers are fixated on the act of giving. Prosperity gospel’s emphasis on giving is built on philanthropic motives, the driving force being what Robert Tilton refers to as the Law of Compensation (Tilton, 1983:6). The Law of Compensation derives from various scripture: Ecclesiastes 11:1, Mark 10:30, 2 Corinthians 9:6, and Galatians 6:7. Basically, the law states that Christians must give more in order to get from God many fold times.

2.10.5 Pillar 5: Unorthodox view of salvation

Many prosperity gospel preachers have face value orthodox view to salvation and a mixed view of atonement (Jones and Woodbridge, 2011:69 and Mbalamu 2015:4-8). Nevertheless, there are problems regarding their perceptions. The first problem is that many prosperity preachers have very skewed conceptions of Christ in whom they encourage their followers to trust. Second, most prosperity preacher misunderstand Jesus’s death on the cross for sin of the world. They interpret his death as standing in for spiritual death of human being. This view contrasts the biblical teaching that Jesus’s death on the cross-made it possible for reconciliation between humanity with God possible. Third, is the view that atonement was meant to rescue humankind from non-prosperous life.

A close examination of these pillars shows that the prosperity gospel borrows heavily from New Thought beliefs. Both New Thought and prosperity gospel exhibit a distorted view of God, an elevation of mind over matter, an exalted view of people and a focus on health and wealth.

The section highlighted five theological errors considered as pillars by prosperity gospel proponents. These are a distorted view of God; an elevation of mind over matter; an exalted view of human kind; a focus on health and wealth; and finally, an unorthodox view of salvation. The evaluation of these supposedly errors need to consider the fact that most prosperity gospel

movements display broad variant manifestations in different contexts and that aspect gives rise to different theological nuances. In that case, a robust theological examination of their beliefs is unlikely to produce good results. However, at this stage in the study, it is sufficed to indicate that based on the evaluation done, the five pillars of prosperity theology tend to be theological errors.

2.11 Debates in prosperity gospel

The field of prosperity gospel is abounded with debates from various perspectives (Heuser, 2016). The diverse nature of prosperity gospel itself in terms of conceptual understandings, theoretical focus and practice makes categorisation of the debates around the discipline varied and confusing. For purposes of this discussion, four debates have been identified.

2.11.1 Debate 1: Definitional challenges

Ganiel (2010:130) acknowledges that there is controversial discourse among scholars over the conceptual understandings of the prosperity gospel within the Pentecostal and charismatic fraternity. Carter (2013:40) says that the concept ‘prosperity gospel’ eludes easy definition. Niemandt (2017) warned his readers against defining the prosperity gospel in an unguarded perspective. Heuser (2016:16) hinted that its transformative nature, adapting context and travelling through history makes difficult defining this concept. The nature and extent of this debate has been highlighted above and therefore will not warrant coverage in this section save to highlight that to date there is no consensus on what exactly is the prosperity gospel. Hence, the Theology Work Group of the Lausanne Movement (2010) committed itself to defining the term by describing its various characteristics. This prompted Heuser (2016:20) to conclude that the term has become generic and therefore, resulted in the concept being canonised and thereby spilling to other forms of African Christianity. As such defining the concept still is contestable.

2.11.2 Debate 2: Is it a genuine or false gospel?

Probably the most discussed and sustained debate regards the question of whether the prosperity gospel is a genuine gospel or a false gospel, with proponents and opponents exchanging seemingly valid yet contestable arguments. Jones (1998) referred to prosperity gospel as a theologically bankrupt teaching; Muehlenberg (2009) as cited by Bishau (2013:1) referred to it as “...deficient heretic teaching.” Furthermore, Bishau (2013:1) noted that Mackay (2009) had described the gospel as “...a damaging and wicked teaching that makes my blood boil with anger.” The list of opponents that display negative comments about the gospel is endless (Bishau, 2013:65). Bishau (2013:65ff) further noted that despite these

negative comments about the prosperity gospel, the teaching has had its own fair share of positive criticism by a number of respected theologians and preachers. Walton (2009:109) and T.D. Jakes argued strongly for the propagation of the prosperity gospel and maintained that it is a welcome gospel that must be propagated for as long as the problem of poverty exists. For Jakes, poverty is a barrier to full Christian living and therefore, the place of the prosperity gospel should be respected. He argued that the prosperity gospel is a flexible theology that is well suited to be adapted to varying social locations. Hunt (2000:331) echoed the same sentiments when he contended that notwithstanding its success, the gospel is distinctively related to divinely-blessed health and wealth aspects which have enjoyed considerable acceptance in different parts of the world. Gifford (2008) posited that the prosperity gospel should be viewed positively because every believer has the right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ and that this is only accessible through a confession of faith.

2.11.3 Debate 3: Prosperity gospel as a form of colonisation agent

There is debate about the relationship between the prosperity gospel and colonisation. Niemandt (2017:213) raises the complex question of whether prosperity gospel as a form of coloniality has the decolonising energy or capacity to challenge the epistemic system or hierarchy that privileges Western knowledge cosmology over non-Western knowledge cosmologies. The review of the history of prosperity gospel has shown that it is deeply indebted to, and influenced by globalisation. Grosfoguel (2011) admits that this connection between globalisation and colonisation exists, raising three solid questions regarding the prosperity gospel (Niemandt, 2017:213).

First, is the question of whether the prosperity gospel challenges the epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies (Niemandt, 2017:213). Second, can prosperity gospel be understood as a form of global contextualisation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that challenges power systems? Third, is it a representation of global capitalism that succeeds in spiritualising materiality of that system? Gifford's (1990) contributions are that the movement of the prosperity gospel from America to Africa was meant to sustain American hegemony in Africa and strengthen its fundamentalism. Hunt (2000:332) argues that prosperity gospel is more oriented in buttressing the worldview of global capitalism than deconstructing the political, social, and cultural dominations established by Europeans and their descendants. Niemandt (2017) agrees with Hunt's (2000)

conceptualisation by adding that prosperity gospel represents a form of global capitalism that has succeeded in spiritualising the materiality of that system. Heuser (2016:3) argues that most of prosperity gospel preachers in Africa received their theological education in Western institutions and therefore imitated and modelled their mentors' Western cultural milieus.

2.11.4 Debate 4: Prosperity gospel as a socio-economic agency

The second question relates to the economic impact of the prosperity gospel. The core of the prosperity gospel is a spiritualisation of materiality and raising classic symbols of surplus excess (such as expensive motorcars, private jets, and other symbols of affluence) as symbols of holiness and God's blessing (Niemandt, 2017:214). Chitando, Gunda and Kugler (2013:105) placed doubt on the capacity of prosperity gospel to mobilise Christians to participate in economic programmes—they charge that it is built on elitists and shaky foundation.

Gbotoe (2013:70) argued that based on the life style of prosperity preachers as corrupt and lavish, it is true that the prosperity gospel thrives on the consumerist ideology. Rather than challenging the colonial power matrix, the prosperity gospel sanctifies it (Niemandt, 2017:215). The contrasting view is one held by Comaroff (2015:227) and Coleman (2011:33) that prosperity gospel is a kind of an ideal religiosity integrated with ordinary life, and as a way in which people can address economic marginalisation. Heuser (2016:8) reminds us that changes in socio-economic life of the people are evident among those communities and that some churches have succeeded in changing the outlook of members towards economic challenges, and assisted in empowering its membership to take responsibility for their own lives and future. Proponents take the view that prosperity gospel fosters a modernising work ethic by encouraging entrepreneurship and creating employment (Togarasei, 2011). Arguing along the same lines as Togarasei (2011), Martin (2002) and Berger (2008) have argued that the practical skills and business courses offered by some of these churches actually do lift people out of poverty. These churches teach people to be resourceful entrepreneurs and conscientious employees.

Others have concluded that because the prosperity churches are highly participatory environments where all men and women are active in the governing of the church, they are 'schools of democracy' (Mukonyora, 2008a:136) where people learn the skills necessary to become democratic citizens, such as 'leadership, literacy, public speaking, organisation and self-help' (Burdick, 1993). However, in the light of the ensuing debate, Heuser (2016:7) and Dronen (2015:263) warn that the debate on the connection between prosperity gospel's

techniques of personal transformation and empowerment for social changes is still open and growing.

2.11.5 Debate 5: Prosperity gospel as a liberating and transformation agency

The other question relates to the broader approach to liberation and transformation. Heuser (2016) maintains that prosperity gospel is a transporter of social transformation in Africa. However, a look at the sexual and gender debate in Africa shows that prosperity gospel churches have not done enough in addressing sexual and gender disparities but continue to perpetuate fundamentalist approaches of the West (Grossfoguel, 2011). Regarding the issue of failing to address gender disparities, Mukonyora (2008a: 136) views it differently by maintaining that prosperity churches are highly participatory environments where all men and women are active in the governing of the church, and therefore are ‘schools of democracy’. This view is contested by Gbote and Kgatle (2014:5) who argue that the failure of many African governments to provide basic services in African contexts makes the prosperity theology a true liberation, where church members in the prosperity gospel movement look up to their spiritual leaders as liberators and hope givers. Nevertheless, Magezi and Manzanga (2016) commenting on the Zimbabwean situation are contend that the prosperity gospel gives people hope. However, the scholars ask the questions: What kind of hope? True or false hope? Gifford (2008) and Dada (2004) maintain that the doctrine has an impetus for delusion.

Kwateng–Yeboah’s (2016) perspective is that there is an ambivalent relationship between the praxis of the prosperity gospel and the believers’ attitudes towards poverty alleviation. On the one hand, the prosperity gospel appears to demonstrate elements of optimism, entrepreneurship, self-reliance and self-supporting attitudes among believers. The prosperity gospel does not contribute significantly in engendering poverty alleviation among believers (Kwateng-Yeboah, 2016). Based on these opposing views, it can be discerned that the debate on prosperity gospel as a liberating and transforming agency are far from being conclusive.

2.11 .6 Debate 6: Prosperity gospel and globalisation

Ganiel (2010:135) pointed out that in this category the debate is about whether the prosperity churches are debilitating or empowering for African culture. On the one side is the argument that prosperity churches are seen as cynically and inauthentic manipulations by American prosperity churches that have had a debilitating effect on African cultures (Ganiel, 2010:135). On the other hand, is the notion that the prosperity gospel helps the African culture to adapt and change in line with local and global developments. Therefore, embracing globalisation

makes the African culture 'travel well' (Heuser, 2016:1), because prosperity gospel is itself a global phenomenon. Heuser (2016:3) noted that prosperity messages were made to travel internationally, have made religious mobility possible, through utilisation of new mass media communication such as radio and television has made this possible.

Hunt (2000:334) even likened the prosperity gospel to the famous global franchise McDonalds, and noted that both the fundamentalist doctrines as well as the organisational structure of the various ministries tend to be very much alike in form, direction and genre. Typically, some have well trained pastors, bible colleges and congregations which produce huge volumes of graduates who later find their way in the global village of “gospelprenuership”. Kuster (2016:203) uses the concept of “glocalisation” to describe the transformational nature of prosperity gospel from being a local entity to a global phenomenon and from being mono-cultural in scope to being a hybrid community centred unit. It was pointed out earlier in the chapter that the prosperity gospel movement manifest itself in different forms and therefore displays varied theological nuances. The fact that they manifest themselves in different forms magnifies the extent of the debates within the movement. Furthermore, since the prosperity gospel theology is not a written theology, it difficult to reach consensus regarding controversies raised by the different debates. However, the section raised the major fact that in assessing the validity of these debates, it is important to use theological lenses to help give answers to the questions raised in the debates.

2.12 Summary: Understanding prosperity gospel

The concept prosperity was analysed alongside its contemporary, spirituality. Similarities were noted in their everyday usage. Both terms carry different meanings if viewed biblically. Prosperity was defined as the state of obedience to the will of God resulting in purpose fulfilment of God’s mission in the world. The term spirituality was considered universal to all religions including Christianity. Notwithstanding other definitions considered in the discussion, spirituality was understood as a life of healthy relationship with God characterised by obedience and submission to the will of God. It was noted that the two terms have a close relationship and understanding their meanings helps to understand the problem under study. It was noted that prosperity gospel is not a written theology and that that aspect accounts for the failure to reach a consensus in defining it. However, characteristics of the gospel could be used to describe it. Such key characteristics as ‘wealth’, ‘faith’ and ‘health’ were identified as

descriptive enough of the gospel. Some researchers cited preferred to define prosperity gospel from a purpose driven perspective. They considered it as a legitimate gospel that addresses contemporary economic and social concerns of the people. Other researchers defined prosperity gospel from a teaching perspective where they saw it as a covenant access to a world of financial fortune or luxurious self-indulgence. Still others viewed it as a gospel of increase whose signature teaching is that God wants believers to be rich. The apparent diversity in defining prosperity gospel makes it difficult to conceptualise and settle for a universal definition. The gospel has a history. It was traced to have originated from the New Thought Movement and eventually found its way to Africa where it is believed it is thriving because of the declining state of economic and social development. The gospel has been popular at least in many African countries, as it tends to give hope to people who are already overstretched to deal with their economic and social challenges. Despite having been popular, the prosperity gospel brought with it challenges such as character problems of the leaders and the relegation of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ to the margins. Character expressions of prosperity church leaders are of importance especially viewed in the context of the problem statement presented in chapter 1 and in the context of the Wafawarowa's report. The character of the prosperity church leaders will be investigated further in the empirical study. The chapter considered the basic tenets that characterise the prosperity gospel. It was noted that their ecclesiology, life style, hermeneutic and homiletic left a lot to be desired and hence needing further investigation. The discussion also focused on a biblical and theological examination of the prosperity gospel and it was noted that biblically, the prosperity gospel relies on a faulty understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant, has a flawed view of atonement and giving, and adopts an unorthodox interpretation of salvation. Theologically, it was noted that the prosperity gospel borrows heavily from New Thought beliefs by exhibiting a distorted view of God, an elevation of mind over matter, an exalted view of people and a focus on health and wealth. The chapter reflected on the current debates in the field of prosperity theology citing challenges that emerged out of these discourses. The diverse nature of prosperity gospel itself in terms of conceptual understandings, theory and practice, makes categorisation of the debates difficult and confusing. However, the chapter identified five main debates. First, was the integrity of the prosperity gospel in term of whether it is a true or false gospel. The second debate referred to discussions centered on whether the prosperity gospel was a colonising or de-colonising agent. The third debate was related to the preceding one. It focused on the impact of the prosperity gospel on the socio-economic levels of the populace. In addition, associated to the preceding debate was the issue of whether the prosperity gospel had a liberating and transformative role

among its adherents. Finally, its role in global politics was also reviewed. The literature review in the current chapter helped to illuminate the problem under study and inform the researcher on methods to be employed in the fieldwork. In particular, the review helped to understand prosperity gospel practices and character expressions from varied backgrounds and to inform the study on key drivers of the prosperity gospel agenda and how the gospel manifests itself in practice. Against this background, it is noted that our understanding of the concept of the prosperity gospel, its history and development, its basic tenets both biblically and theologically and the raging debates thereon influence how we seek to answer key research questions in this study. Although this understanding has not been conclusive, it provides a safe ground for seeking to find out how theological education can have discourse with the prosperity gospel. The review on the development of prosperity gospel in Africa provided a lens through which we could understand its development in Zimbabwe. As stressed above, Wafawarowa's (2018) contributions and analysis of the status quo in Zimbabwe's prosperity gospel landscape can never be taken for granted. His concern about emerging pseudo theological colleges that are focused on servicing the prosperity gospel agenda, and prosperity church leaders that he described as 'charlatans' with compromised characters are areas that need to be investigated in this study. He finally challenges all like-minded individuals to come to the rescue of the Zimbabwean populace through challenging the prosperity gospel's approaches. The next chapter will review the theory and practice of theological education with a view to understand how the processes and agenda of theological education can help to address character issues of prosperity church leaders.

CHAPTER 3: Literature review: Understanding theological education

3.1 Introduction

In chapter one, the concept ‘theological education’ was defined for purposes of coming up with an operational definition in this thesis. This chapter discusses the concept ‘theological education’ further with a view to understand the in-depth as viewed by different researchers and informed by different contexts. The discussion will proceed to trace the historical development of theological education from the apostolic period to the post reformation period highlighting the main characteristics of each era. The discussion will also cover the specific trends in the development of theological education in Africa and in particular in the region of Southern Africa. Specific challenges in the trend will be analysed with a view to relate them to the current debates in the field of theological education. The discussion covers an understanding of the concept ‘models of theological education’ and identification of the models of theological education and their basic tenets and how such conceptualisations have informed current debates in the field of theological education today. Reference will be made to understanding how the theological education debates have influenced African theological education discourse in the 21st century.

3.2 Understanding the concept ‘theological education’

Hugh Hartshorne (1946:235), a 20th century scholar at Yale University, USA, once said that answering the question, ‘What is theological education?’ is not a simple answer because the concept ‘theological education’ involves varieties of concepts of theory and practice that one hardly knows what he is talking about. Therefore, “...one cannot find out what theological education is by looking in the dictionary. It is what it has become in institutions organised by the churches and church people to prepare men, and more recently women for church leadership” (Hartshorne, 1946:235). The simple reason is that each institution reflects the specific theological bias of some groups, and exists in order to perpetuate this bias. The implication of Hartshorne’s observation is that theological education as a concept has been variously defined: as school for the training of ministry; the teaching of doctrines for the church; sermon making; and church administration. Thus, anything befitting any of these categories would be regarded as theological education. The meaning derived from Hartshorne’s (1946) observation is that theological education means differently to different church organisations and therefore “...the pattern [and meaning] of theological education had become what it is today as an unconscious process” (p.236).

Defining theological education, Hartshorne (1946:241) says, “...it consists of isolated bodies of subject matter which are so taught as to remain largely unrelated to the ministers’ tasks.”

The implied meaning of the definition is that two types of integration that make theological education meaningful are missing: the coherence and relationships of the subject matter of study; and the meaning of the subject matter to the ministers' task. Edgar (2010) echoes the same sentiments when he argues that it is difficult to be definitive to the question, 'what is theological education?' because defining the concept involves four components: the content (referring to the subject matter that constitutes it); method (implying processes involved in the practice of theological education); ethos (referring to the spiritual components developed) and finally context (who is giving the definition), each carrying with it different emphases. Therefore, the orientation of the definer matters most.

Otokola (2017:94) defines theological education as "the training of men and women to know and serve God." Graham Cheeseman (2011) and Domenic Marbaniang (2016) share the same view as Otokola (2017) but Marbaniang expounds on his definition further by saying, theological education is "...the education one receives in the discipline of theology...both academic understanding and practical ministerial training." It is distinguished from Christian Education in that it is usually done in preparation for special service or leadership in the Christian church or mission.

Referring to theological education, Ott (2016:7) says, "It is specialised training for pastors and leaders." However, Ott (2016:196) expanded the scope of this definition when he said, "We understand theological education to be those courses of study that define themselves as the task of the church and that are done to serve the church...the primary venue for theological education is the church and the secondary venue is the world of science." In this definition Ott (2016:196ff) emphasises the need to specify the venue of theological education and whether it should occur locally in the context of the church or in a local institution. Ott (2016:196) is content with the view that the church is the primary home of theological education and the need for it to be integrated into the church. The former implies home-grown leadership while the later refers to in-ministry training. Nevertheless, the question is that distance should not be overlooked in the training (Ott, 2016: 196). Furthermore, the church as the primary venue for theological education underscores the pedagogical significance of relationships and community. Such relationships as between students and instructors, role models, mentor relationships as well as living and working in team are essential elements of theological education.

Ott (2016: 196ff) noted that in coming up with a more inclusive and comprehensive definition, two perspectives should be considered—the theological perspective and the theoretical perspective. In the former, theological education should embrace five elements: (a) Theological education is the study of God, both existentially and academically; (b) theological education is the study of the word of the Bible, which as the word and activity handed down to us has primacy over all sources; (c) theological education is a *missio Dei* project serving the church in its mission by equipping people for the various ministries of and for the church; (d) theological education is not only about equipping people with abilities and accomplishments but training them on their powerlessness and dependency on the Spirit of God. In the latter category, theological education is: (a) focussed training that equips for a particular vocation; (b) structured formal program that leads to some form of certification or degree; (c) curricula and courses of study that are meant to shape the individual and prepare him/her for service in the church.

Olusola Igbari (2001:4) defined theological education as, “The systematic study of the Word of God and of how it relates to man and his environment,” and consisting of various disciplines that fall under the overarching umbrella some of which are; biblical studies, church history, liturgies, moral theory, pastoral theology and Christian education among others. Igbari (2001: 14-15) sees theological education as an effort at developing three fundamental qualities: knowledge, spiritual growth and leadership for the church. The last quality of leadership development is what Easley (2014:7) argues constitutes theological education.

In the first world context, three terms have been used to describe theological education: *paideia*; *theologia*; and *habitus paideiais* (Easley, 2014:7), which is what Kelsey (1993:6) refers to as a process of “culturing the soul, and schooling as character formation.” *Paideia* implied “a reflective understanding shared by members of a Christian community regarding who they are and what they do given their concrete world-historical situation. According to Kelsey (1993:6) *theologia* meant a disposition and knowledge, which resembled wisdom, and as such had no clerical restriction. It was simply the knowledge to discern as one life the Christian life. *Habitus* refers to the “habit of making judgements about life, death, and community that are grounded in a fundamental understanding of what it is to be a Christian here and now. Informed by the ideas of Kelsey (1993), Easley (2014:9) expounded on his earlier definition when he says, “...theological education is the process of enabling the practice of theological and biblical wisdom in leadership events so that contemporary faith communities fulfil their mission to be salt and light to our world and maintain the repository of truth to future

generations.” In qualifying his definition, Easley (2014:9) raised three critical points. First, he argues that theological education is the *kerugma* of Christian leadership development. Second, leadership development seeks to enable men and women to become transformative practitioners of the word of God. Their fruitfulness comes as the leaders expand their ability for theological reflection, practice their engagement within the context of God’s calling and give attention to personal formation by the Holy Spirit. Third, theological education should help engender a growing practice of wisdom, which is the ability and practice of using experience, knowledge and good judgement to find and implement solutions for present and future issues.

Considering the various definitions discussed and analysed above, it is fairly apparent that theological education is the practice of preparing men and women for church leadership through a systematic exposure to and study of the Word of God. Theological education is intrinsically interested in understanding God better so that Christian believers know how to serve the same God effectively in His *mission Dei*. Furthermore, the quality of a theological education exercise is dependent on critical factors such as the church as the location of the theological education task, the content of what is learnt and the goals of the theological education task.

3.3 The history of theological education

Smith (2017:51-57) asked the question, “What exactly do we refer to when we are discussing the topic ‘history of theological education’?” Smith (2017:51) says, “There are a number of possible emphases. Should the focus be on the history of institutional structures? On pedagogical change? On the shifts in the theology that is taught? On curriculum design? On the shifting relationship between churches and schools? On major theologians? On major education theorists? On reasons and motivations for teaching theology? On professional preparation for ministers? On how church members at large learn theology? On the challenges of culture and context?”

What David Smith is alluding to is the fact that the history of theological education can be viewed from different perspectives, namely: the history in terms of institutional structure; changes in pedagogy; paradigm shifts in theology; curriculum designs; shifting relationships between the churches and schools; contributions of major theologians; nature of ministerial training; the changing contexts and cultural influences? In an analysis of the Australian history of theological education, Ball (2018:88ff) adds another dimension that focuses on themes. She

identified the following themes: the institutions; the students; the faculty staff; the curriculum; the pedagogy; and other wider engagements and the contemporary position. Although Ball's (2018) thematic approach is generally important, it will not be adopted in this review as it mainly refers to the Australian context and therefore not relevant to the Afrocentric context.

Marbaniang (2018) has given a very succinct account of the history of theological education from the perspective of time and events in the history of Christianity, beginning with the apostolic age (c. 32 – 100), the early church (c.100 – 500), the early Medieval (c.500 – 1000) period, characterised by the rise of monasteries and monastic schools, the later middle ages period (c. 1000 – 1500), which saw the rise of the universities, the reformation era(c. 1500 – 1700), and finally the post reformation mission era (c.1700 – 1980). These will be briefly discussed.

3.3.1 The apostolic age (c.32 – 100)

According to Marbaniang (2018), there is no evidence of formal theological education during the apostolic era; save to point out that there was indeed some form of informal theological education in the form of schools or seminaries. Scripture points out that Paul, then Saul had had some pharisaic training under Gamaliel and that training was certification of authority in matters of the law (the Tora). This assumption is evidenced by Paul's statement in his apology before the Jews of Jerusalem: "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in the city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law...." (Acts22:3). Paul underscored the importance of doctrinal and practical learning as indicated in some of his epistles. For example, in his epistle to Timothy, Paul says, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2Timothy 2:2). His zeal in mentoring Timothy and Titus point to the fact that there was some form of informal theological education during the apostolic era.

In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter refers to 'untaught' and 'unstable' people who misinterpret scripture to their own destruction. It is important to note here that although Peter was not trained in Jewish schools like those that Paul was trained, Jesus trained him along with the others. In Acts 14:3, the Jews "saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men...." Nevertheless, when they realised that they had been with Jesus, they acknowledged their authority, implying that they had received training from Jesus instead. Whatever informal theological training there was, it had to be authenticated by the Spirit as

confirmed by Paul in Galatians 1:12, “For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

3.3.2 The early church age (c.100 – 500)

Marbaniang (2018) noted that early historians indicated that Mark the evangelist at Alexandria established the first theological school (known as the Catechetical School). Domenic Marbaniang documented that historian like Jerome had indicated in their writings that Mark, “formed a church so admirable in doctrine and continence of living that he constrained all followers of Christ to his example.” Jerome also refers to him as the “learned Mark,” implying that Mark was trained and therefore what he was doing in ministry was part of theological training he was offering to Christians. Many historians are of the view that Mark was the head of the school in Alexandria based on inferences cited above. Marbaniang (2018) further argues that since Alexandria was a city of learning with one of the largest libraries in the world, it evidently also posed philosophical challenges to the Christian faith, and therefore, very compelling for a school of theology to begin there. However, Marbaniang (2018) documented that Rowdon (1971:76) cited by Marbaniang (2018) disputed the claims arguing that Bishop Demetrius founded the school in Alexandria towards the close of the second century and that it had a great influence on theological development. However, for purposes of this study, the Mark–Demetrius’s debate does not stand rather it is sufficed to note that during this period in the century there were indications of the existence of theological education institutions.

3.3.3 Early Medieval Period (c.500-1000):

According to Marbaniang (2018), this period heralded the rise of monasteries and monastic schools. These monasteries became places of learning for the monks who sought separation from the world, communion among them, and intimacy with God. In the course of time, the monasteries moved increasingly in the direction of theological and philosophical reflection. During this period, the monks had the responsibility of teaching in the churches since they were considered capable of understanding the Scripture with the tendency moving directly towards the training of the clergy.

3.3.4 The later Middle Ages (c.1000 – 1500)

This period saw the rise of universities among the Christian communities. It is noted that Bishops under the Roman government during this period had enormous political power and hence had the authority to sanction the universities to have theology as one of the main

disciplines of study (Marbaniang, 2018). The universities grew out of the bishop's responsibility to provide highly skilled clerical training.

3.3.5 The reformation period (c.1500 – 1700)

Theological education during the reformation was a serious priority. This period put emphasis on the critical importance of scripture (*sola scriptura*) with the focus towards a historical-grammatical study of the scriptures in their original languages and rejection of the allegorical method of interpretation (Marbaniang 2018). The attention was drawn to give ministerial training a firm basis in exegesis of the Scriptures in the original languages. Only pastors with more theological education and training served churches in towns while those with less training served in country parishes.

3.3.6 Post-Reformation – Mission Era (c.1700-1980)

As noted by Marbaniang (2018), the post-Reformation period saw increasing conflict between secular university interests and the need for sincere theological study. Some bishops attempted gathering trainees for regular biblical exegetical study. Pietism in academics began to largely diminish as church theological institutions were viewed sceptically as rivals by universities that were being overtaken by the rational spirit of the Enlightenment. The emergence of missionary activity in the 19th century also saw the establishment of theological education colleges but also with the increasing trend to shift theological training from the church to the university.

3.3.7 The historical question in theological education

In all these narrative historical milestones as postulated by Marbaniang (2018), the major question prompting conversion has been: at what point did theological education assume the status of a proper formal theology of theological education and what form did it take? As noted in this historical review of the development of theological education, the other question to pose is, to what extent in these historical episodes can a theological education of a particular period be regarded as authentic theological education and what yardstick of measurement could be used to ascertain its identity as a theological education? Kelsey (1992) in his book, *To understand God truly: What's theological about theological education?* posed the same question: 'what is theological about theological education?' (Kelsey, 1992:12, 17). Kelsey (1993) was concerned with the nature and purpose of theological education as it relates to the quest to know God truly. Buitendag (2019:1) asked the same question and answered it differently: "it is about the relationship between the Creator and creation, how theology as a

discipline can be a responsible discourse partner in the public domain in the human being's search for meaning and comprehensiveness." Buitendag (2019:1) was concerned with two aspects: the relationship between God and his creation; and the meaning and comprehensiveness. His point of emphasis is how theology as a discipline can create space in scientific research and develop into scientific theology so that it matches the pure scientific disciplines in their quest to explain phenomena of creation in the world. This question has itself become a historical question in theological education, prompting a sustained historical debate in the 20th and 21st centuries as shall be discussed later in this chapter but suffice to point out at this stage in the study that several, yet different answers have been given, prompting further conversation on the matter.

3.4. Development of theological education in Africa

According to Gathogo (2019), three versions of theological education in Africa can be identified. The first being the version that was propounded by the early Church fathers and the apologists before the 4th century. The second version of theological education in Africa was attempted in the 15th to 17th centuries by Portuguese explorers and missionaries. The third version of theological education in Africa is seen through the efforts of European missionaries of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is the latter version of Christianity that made a real impact on Africa. The planting of Christianity in the 19th century occurred simultaneously with colonisation, which has always made the scholars of religion wonder, were the colonial enterprise and the missionary enterprise related in any way? (Gathogo, 2019). The 20th century theological education culminated in both the liberation trend and the enculturation strand. In other words, theological education in Africa was geared towards enculturation (dialogue between gospel and culture) versus liberation (a free society in the socio-economic and political domains). Gathogo (2019) maintains that at the end of the 20th century, a reconstructive thread in theological education emerged with the insistence that theological education must be geared towards the reconstruction of the many 'African broken walls' such as; patriarchal beliefs, gender violence and insensitivity, post-colonial hermeneutics, and Afro-biblical hermeneutics. The 21st century theological education addressed these key concerns.

It is important to note, however, that theological education in Africa in the 21st century was holistic in scope, proceeding from the works of the 19th and 20th century European missionaries, who introduced a threefold ministry, that is, Christian ministry that incorporated basic education (through establishment of schools), healing (through introduction of dispensaries) and evangelisation (through building churches and reaching out to non-

Christians) (Gathogo, 2019). The scholar further points out that despite these explicit forms, there were also implicit forms of the 19th and 20th century missions in Africa which included condemnation of elements of African cultures (such as in the case of female genital mutilation), taking land for farming and for missions, and anti-slavery campaigns, especially on the East African coast. Gathogo (2019) argues that as the locals learnt how to read the Bible, and especially after the Bible was translated into the local African languages, theological education began to take shape in tropical Africa.

3.4.1. Trends in the history of theological education in the Region of Southern Africa

Gundani, Masenya, Maluleke and Phiri (2002:66) point out that the Southern African context is socially, politically, racially, religiously and economically diverse and complex, as such, it does not lend itself to easy characterisation. Gundani et al (2002:66) opined that it is therefore not a simple task to come up with a comprehensive paper on the history of theological education in the region. In their attempt to give an elaborate and comprehensive account of theological education in Southern Africa, the scholars settle for “...a bird’s eye-view of the situation in theological education in the region, without necessarily claiming to offer definitive statements” (Gundani et al, 2002:66).

3.4.2. Foreign theologies in Africa

Gundani et al (2002:66) highlight that the history of theological education in the region has basically been characterised by foreignness, that is, foreign theological content, methodology, and languages. Furthermore, it is characterised by a theological education that is inimical to the Western worldview and is showing little signs of struggle out of this form of oppression. The ‘colonial’ model of education is entrenched in the secular, ‘enlightened’ worldview, which promotes the importance of rationality at the expense of spirituality (Balcomb, 2012:8–9). Yet, this is not the reality of the African worldview. Guthargo (2019) commented that Gundani’s (2002) observation is acceptable on the grounds that there are few books written by Africans themselves that purely address African Christology, African hermeneutics, African church histories, African soteriology, and African pneumatology, among others, without appearing to duplicate Western content and canon.

This state of affairs is mainly because most theological colleges in Southern Africa depend very heavily on sponsorships and donations from the West, placing the latter in an advantageous position to market their brand but simultaneously becoming strangers to the

African context (Poerwowidagdo, 1995:59). A theological education that is dominated and characterised by Western worldview values is compromised unless it is offered in a language, context and content that makes sense not only to the student but also to the faithful whom he/she is meant to serve after graduating (De Gruchy, 1986). Gundani et al (2002:66) question whether the historical-critical method is still worthwhile for an Africa student of the Bible if the method is outdated and useless and if it results in an ivory tower product far removed from the daily needs of the African people. In the same way, Masenya (2000:21) bemoaned and lambasted the type of theological education in Southern Africa that is characterised by an African context that does not interact with the Bible. The scholar discounts theological education which is sympathetic to ivory tower theologies and hermeneutics that do not reflect praxis, theories and concepts that do not redress the African issues. The scholar suggests that theological education in Southern Africa, should adopt a deliberate and conscious account of the socio-economic and socio-political issues.

The implications that can be drawn from Masenya (2000:21) are that theological education in Southern Africa has become irrelevant in the light of the problems that face the African people. Therefore, such practice has failed to acknowledge the importance of a theology of social responsibility, hence the plea for theological education to equip the local context is a long-standing one (Womarck et al, 2020). However, not much has changed over the years in terms of domesticating theological education as alluded to by Mbiti (1976), Maluleke (2006:61-62) and Wahl (2013:267). These scholars noted the fragility of theological education over time. Houston (2013:109) noted the fragility when he says, “Most theological colleges in Africa are faithfully teaching knowledge that was generated in the West because we are dependent on Western textbooks for so many of the courses we teach.” For Maluleke (2006:67), “...the dependence on the West and inability to break its hold are leading to the perpetuation of an education that has no relevance in the immediate context [of Africa].”

Wormack (2020) stresses that theological education in Southern Africa is characterised by a history of failure to open up space for socio-economic, cultural, and political transformation. However, Magezi and Banda (2017:1) argue in the contrary that Christian ministry and theological education is being pursued to create the space for socio-economic survival, thereby making church ministry and theological education an instrument for economic profit. Under such circumstances, the assumption is that church practices and ministry expressions will reflect the underlying theology (Magezi & Banda, 2017:1).

3.4.3. The Africanisation of theological education

This history of failure leaves an imperative agenda behind: The Africanisation of theological education not only in form but in content, method, objective and vision so that theological education and church praxis contribute to, and facilitate the total liberation of the poorest of the poor in Africa (Gundani et al, 2002:67). Hence, the call by the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and Christian Theological and Tertiary Institutions to develop contextual models that speak to, and interrogate the African context. The AACC Christian Theological and Tertiary Institutions Consultation in Africa which met at Naro Muru recognised that “...in many respects the patterns and contexts of theological education in Africa are based on models imported from the West which do not take sufficient account of the distinctive needs of church and society in contemporary Africa...” (2002:61).

(a) Integrating public issues towards an integrated theological education curriculum

In line with the views and concerns of the AACC, Magezi (2021:134) proposes that one area in which the relevance of the ecclesia community can be felt is to make relevant the importance of public theology in the public space. Magezi (2021:134-135) asks the question, “What role can the church play in public issues? Expressed differently, what theological education and ministerial competencies are required for a minister to engage effectively with public issues?” The argument that Magezi (2021:135) seems to be propounding at is whether we have ministers who have the competencies and skills to minister in social, political, and spiritually chaotic and disruptive environments. According to Magezi (2021), the answer to these questions lies in the nature of the curricula that is offered by theological education institutions. This is what the researcher has to say, “...only theological education and curriculum that integrates different dimensions of life can prepare ministers for such public ministry...” (Magezi, 2021:136). The researcher further expounds, “For ministers to meaningfully help people to survive, thrive and cope with life in the public space, they need to explore new ways of doing theology and ministry. It is imperative to adopt an integrated, holistic, theological curriculum and education” (Magezi, 2021:136).

The rise of public theology to shift and challenge theology to intentionally reflect on life at the public calls for an alternative shift in ministerial training from narrowly focussing on clerical formation to the public level. Five tasks are essential to make this shift significant: a sound theological framework; interdisciplinary engagement; consciousness of historical developments; consciousness of one’s social, political and historical context, and the ecclesia

context. Since the mandate of public theology is to reflect on the meaning and significance and implications of faith in and for public life, it should by necessity draw from other disciplines that do not have bases in theology such as sociology, economics, ecology educational and political theory. Magezi (2021) sees public theology as having the capacity to forge an integrated holistic curriculum that can equip the ministers with competencies to challenge and address the concerns of the public. The question to ask is: How far will the public church address public matters? Some quarters like Foster (2020:15) believe that the church is sometimes regarded as a private entity. The researcher goes further to asks interesting questions: first, what is a public church? Second, how can a church be public? These two questions demand an understanding of the concept public theology.

(b) Understanding public theology

Different researchers describe public theology differently. A review of the definitions carried out by Magezi (2021: 138) shows that the margin of difference is small, whereas the areas of similarity in conceptualisation of the concept seem to be wide. By public theology is meant more than a public church responding to and addressing private concerns of people and engaging with diverse issues affecting people (Magezi, 2021:138). By its very nature public theology focuses on commonalities of people and also on their differences (Morton, 2004:25-36). Day and Kim (2017:2) cited in Magezi (2021:138) views publics as characterised by questioning, doubting, challenging as well as asserting, confirming and agreeing.

Day and Kim (2017:2) cited in Magezi (2021:138) views publics as characterised by questioning, doubting, challenging as well as asserting, confirming and agreeing. By its very nature, publics are forums or spaces, which allow and encourage encounters with that which is different (Day & Kim, 2017:2). Although different researchers share different perspectives of what public theology is, there is general consensus among researchers that public theology emerged out of the motive to address the shortcomings of individualistic and privatised Christianity that does not address people's lived experiences (Kim, 2017:40; Levesque, 2014:38 and Mannion, 2009:122, cited by Magezi, 2021:138). Magezi (2021:139) specifically refers it to as, "...an attempt to correct irrelevant, distant and aloof theology in [the] light of people's daily realities..." He labels a church that subscribes to public theology as a 'social life specialist', implying and emphasising the pivoted task of public theology. Brietenberg (2003:66) referred to it as, "...a theologically informed public discourse about public

issues....” The fact that it concerns itself with issues of the struggling masses makes it a kind of liberation theology thereby making it a suitable fit for Africanising theological education.

(c) The structure of public theology

The relevance of public theology in Africanising theology is apparent in its structure. First, is its incarnational nature, second its strategic initiative to identify the public to engage, third, its interdisciplinary approach, fourth, its dialogical quality and its bias towards practicalising its approaches (Magezi, 2021:139). Although by its nature public theology has an affinity for engaging struggling masses, its praxis is dependent upon, first, possession of diverse competencies and skills to address pluralistic issues. Second, a deliberate effort to integrate theological training with curriculum changes that focus on equipping and preparing church leaders to effectively function in the public square. Third, is the ability to engage in intra-theological discourse and exposure to other disciplines that affect the lives of people.

(d) The methods of public theology

Does public theology have the methodology to Africanise theology and make it relevant to the people? Mannion (2009) as cited by Magezi (2021:141) identify five approaches that are employed by public theology. The first is the defensive approach, which argues for the relevance of theology and religion in society. The second is the reactionary approach, which seeks to strike demarcations for theology and secular practices. The third is the integrationist approach, where church and theology co-exist but are free to engage with debates that concern them both. The fourth is a pluralist approach, where theologians advocate for inclusion of Christian symbols in the public square and ensure that theology is both fully theological and public; and finally, the fifth approach is an amalgamation of the pluralist-constructive and dialogical approaches, which have no restrictive borders but are attentive to historical consciousness and pluralism.

Whatever approach public theology adopts, it will find itself engaging with the publics—the Africans, the theological institutions and their culture and the socio-economic and political areas. Four core elements that inform the nature or structure of the integrated curriculum are as follows: the need to be motivated by the desire to engage with the masses; rejection of the missionary gospel and life; accommodation of missionary gospel and life; and embracing missionary gospel and life. This section shall not elaborate on the contribution of each of these influences but suffice to mention that an integrative curriculum has the power to Africanise

theological education through engaging with public theology. Part of the Africanising role of public theology is the task of integrating the curriculum to make it multidisciplinary.

3.4.4. Inclusion of ATR and contextualisation

Another important aspect of the history of southern African theological education is the apparent inclusion of African traditional religions in the curricula of most theological education institutions (Gundani et al, 2002:67). The purpose of the inclusion was meant to contextualise theological education and focus towards equipping ministers with skills to assist their members to manage the spiritual context in which Christianity is incarnated. Unfortunately, that purpose did not seem to materialise because most African Christians continue to operate within the African traditional religion (ATR) worldview in spite of their conversion to Christianity (Gundani et al, 2002:67).

3.4.5. The challenge of competing religions

Apart from the problem of competing traditional African religious worldviews, theological education in the region of Southern Africa is faced with the challenge of failure to embrace other religions as evidenced by failure to introduce the study of other religious theologies in their institutions. Gundani et al (2002:68) argue that the mere reason is that Christian Theological institutions are suspicious of other religions and therefore have failed to articulate a theology of religions and the formulation of a framework for inter-religious dialogue and collaboration. It is argued that failure in the history of theological education to adopt a theology of religions has created a vacuum within the Christian communities and therefore endangering prospects for peace and unity among multi-faith religious communities. Theological education institutions are implored to reflect on their religious contexts and come up with theologies that promote peace, religious co-existence, freedom of conscience and respect for diversity. An open mind, which does not only affirm difference and diversity, but also leaves room for inter-religious dialogue and collaboration is an absolute necessity in a multi-religious context that Southern Africa has become. Ministers who are equipped with knowledge and skills of inter-religious dialogue and collaboration can insulate their flock against religious fundamentalism or encapsulation (Gundani et al, 2002:68).

3.4.6. The loss of ecumenism

Gundani et al (2002: 68) maintains that over the years theological education has been exposed to the scandal of denominationalism and noted that the ecumenical gains of the twentieth

century, which the ecumenical world celebrated with hope in Harare in 1998, have been threatened by the unprecedented rise of the spirit of competition and conflict among the African churches. A new era seems to have emerged where denominational theological schools and universities are glorified and inter-denominational theological institutions are frowned upon. The same sentiments are shared by (Wormack et al, 2020) who maintain that the loss of ecumenism compromised unity and cohesion among churches and theological colleges and gave rise to a ‘denominational myopia’, with churches concerned more with their own needs than the needs at large. Amanze (2013: 227-228) critiqued that denominationalism is leading to private universities that focus on preserving their own church identity, which is degrading to the wider theological discussions. This is particularly evident in the number of Pentecostal colleges with strong ties and commitment to their mother institutions in the United States (Wormack et al, 2020). In some cases, the demise of ecumenism among denominations has motivated the emergence of backyard theological colleges serving nefarious theological agendas (such as theology of materialism-proliferated by some prosperity gospel churches) among Christian communities. The loss of the ecumenical praxis among the theological education fraternity deflects focus on and attention to the main issues of hunger, disease and poverty facing the region of Southern Africa. Gundani et al (2002) complain that ministerial training outside of ecumenical praxis compromises the quality of production (graduates coming out of those institutions). Hence, the scholars posit, “Ecumenism is an evangelical imperative which theological seminaries cannot forego without serious consequences for Christianity in Africa” (Gundani et al, 2002:69).

3.4.7. Commodification of theological education

Related to ecumenism above, the history of theological education in the region of southern Africa is characterised by the commodification of theological education. Womack, Duncan and Pillay (2020) define commodification as the action or process of treating something as a mere commodity. In relation to theological education, Magezi and Banda (2017:1) have this to say, “The rise of Christian ministry practice emphasising wealth and prosperity has heightened commodification of the Christian ministry.” With the rise of globalisation and changes in economic models, educational institutions went ‘from being in the business of education into being in the education business’ (Cloete, 2017:5). Referring to theological education in Southern Africa, Hadebe (2017:2) holds that commodification of theological education has stripped it of its essence and identity. Hadebe (2017:2) further argues that when we reflect on the task of ministerial formation to prepare individuals for ministry in their local context, it is

clear how the loss of context and subjectivity in theological education is detrimental to its very essence. The scholar takes note that when theological education became a commodity, it lost its vitality where knowledge production became an end to itself.

The implication that Womack et al (2020) draw from Hadebe's (2017) argument is that where theological colleges had devolved into universities, those institutions of higher learning have been portrayed as businesses offering knowledge packed and branded in the form of teaching programs for sale to interested clients (Naidoo:2017:2). Curriculum design thus, tended to be tailored around the clients' greatest financial influence, rather than the needs of the community (Womack et al 2020). According to Balia and Kim (2010:163), the commodification of theological education has created a 'fast food' approach to education, which lacks any real depth or development. Commodification has led to a compromised value system of education, which is measured in terms of what can be produced or consumed and becomes absolute utilitarian (Naidoo, 2017:2). This view authenticates what Maluleke (2006:69) established—that "...[Consumerism] leads to black or African students being targeted as consumers of theological education rather than as interlocutors...where Africanisation becomes a cosmetic enterprise". Hadebe's (2017:2) analysis is that commodification of theological education in Southern Africa came with the uncritical adoption of Western knowledge, which marginalises local customs and traditions.

3.4.8. The tendency towards theological activism and theological atavism

Another area of the historical narrative of theological education in Southern Africa is theological activism versus theological atavism. Gundani et al (2002:70) noted that some churches are not impressed by the idea of their students going to universities for their theological education. Instead, they prefer traditional standalone seminaries. Two reasons account for these preferences: First, is their fear of the secular approach of enquiry that universities thrive on; and second is that church leaders tend to make a simplistic dichotomy between spiritual and intellectual knowledge. Thus, by preventing their students from going to universities, they think that they are saving them from the secular theories of the corrupt world and contemporary practices like prosperity theology. In an attempt to popularise theology in an environment that is sceptical about its practical relevance, some theological institutions offer courses, which link theology to development, mission, gender and therapy. Over the years, there has been growing tendency among theological institutions to produce theological qualifications with least theology in them and the challenge of such preferences is producing ministers who are theologically illiterate particularly among prosperity church institutions

(Gundani et al, 2002). The trend in history has been the affiliation of theological institutions to departments of religious studies and theology at local universities. The breed of theologians working at those departments have served the church either in taking up pastoral appointments in cosmopolitan environments where they can stand the vagaries and complexities of pastoral life. It can be argued that in a prosperity gospel context such leaders find serving challenging, as the recipients of the gospel can have space to challenge the theology in the gospel. Under prosperity gospel theology, practitioners would prefer non-intellectualism.

3.5. Models of Theological Education

3.5.1 Background issues in theological education

Banks (1999:4) opines, "...theological education today presents a confusing picture... undergoing culture shock...and undergoing a painful transition." Ott (2016:1) concurs, "The whole field of education (including theological education) is in upheaval." Kelsey (1992:22-23) explains this state of confusion differently by referring to the nature of 'grumblings', where the complaint may be that the curriculum is too academic and insufficiently professional; too theoretical and insufficiently practical; or conversely too focused on producing professional ministers in a certain model, and too inflexible to allow individual students to pursue their own intellectual interests; or that the curriculum consists of too many small pieces of information that are not adequately integrated. Farley (1983:3) described the complaints about theological education as "...old as theological education itself..." including such issues as: graduates lambasting the system as not having adequately prepared them for church work; professionals who bemoan their professional isolation and loneliness; students who experience the ministry fields as trivial and academic fields as irrelevant; laity who are sure that the gospel has long been absent from the college's agenda. Farley (1983:3) contends, "The history of theological schools is a history of constant reform." He further pointed out that despite the travail of the theological school, all the constituencies seem to be content with both the institution itself (the seminary) and the inherited conceptual framework in which theological education occurs. Farley (1983) charged that for long, theological educators have been concentrating on minors (the symptoms) and not majors (the disease). The typical product of three years of seminary study is not a theologically educated minister, because the models used are not only irrelevant but counterproductive (Farley, 1983:4).

Niebuhr, Williams and Gustafson (1956: viii) described the extent of confusion in theological education as, “a series of studious jumps in various directions.” In another later publication Niebuhr, Williams and Gustafson (1957:209) pointed out, “The greatest defect of theological education today is that it is too much an affair of piecemeal transmission of knowledge and skills, and that in consequence, it offers too little challenge to the student to develop his own resources and to become an independent, lifelong enquirer, growing constantly while he is engaged in the work of ministry.

The deficiencies noted by Niebuhr et al (1956; 1957), Farley (1983), Kelsey (1992), Banks (1999) and Ott (2016) speak of problems imbibed within models of theological education. The review of literature will now focus on understanding the various models of theological education that have emanated in the course of history. The idea is to determine the ideal model of theological education that resonates with the practice of prosperity gospel churches and one that mitigates the challenges of prosperity church leaders. First, is the need to understand the meaning of related concepts: ‘*theologia*’, ‘*paideia*’, ‘*habitus*’ and finally the meaning of ‘*model of theological education*.’

3.5.2. Concepts in theological education: *Paideia*, *gnosis*, *theologia* and *habitus*

At least in the west, three interrelated terms have been used to describe theological education: *gnosis*; *paideia*; *theologia*; and *habitus* (Easley, 2014:7), which is what Kelsey (1993:6) refers to as a process of “culturing the soul, and schooling as character formation,” whereas *gnosis* refers to an intellectual intuition of God that results after the conversion of the soul through the purposeful study of scripture (Kelsey, 1993:70). Easley (2014:7) posited that *paideia* implied “...a reflective understanding shared by members of a Christian community regarding who they are and what they do given their concrete world-historical situation.” For Farley (1983:152-153), *paideia* is the “...ideal of culture...according to which education is the culturing of the human being in *arête* or virtue.” Kelsey (1993:64-65) stressed that *paideia* as a concept underwent important changes over time but retained important continuities through history. In his book, ‘*Between Athens and Berlin: The theological debate*’, Kelsey (1993:6) says, “In Greek *paideia* meant a process of ‘culturing’ the soul, schooling as ‘character formation’.” *Paideia* represented the oldest form of education to be found in Christianity and under Hellenist culture, *paideia* had come to be misconceived as meaning Christianity (Kelsey,1993:7). Banks (1999:19) defines *paideia* this way, “It has to do with cultivating a person’s spirit, character, and mind so that their faith is deepened and that they are better prepared for the practice of ministry.”

Related to the concept of *paideia* is Farley's (1983) idea of *theologia*, which means, "A disposition and knowledge which resembled wisdom" (Easley, 2014:7). According to Hough and Cobb (1985:3), "*Theologia* is a reflective understanding shared by members of a Christian community regarding who they are and what they do given their concrete world historical situations." The central concern of *theologia* was the character and wisdom of the trained minister and not on skills and competencies he/she had in doing ministry (Easley 2014:8). It was a focus on being rather than doing. According to Farley (1983:35 & 130), "*Theologia* is a state and disposition of the soul which has the character of knowledge," and as such "...had no clerical restriction. It was simply sapiential [discerning wisdom] which attended to Christian life." Farley (1983:13) propounds further by adding, "*Theologia* is the ecclesial character", which is the personal knowledge of God and the things of God. His concept of *theologia* is in a way similar to Kelsey's (1993) idea of *paideia*. "*Theologia* purports to promote Christian *paideia*" (Farley, 1983: xi). It was simply the knowledge to discern as one lives the Christian life. Whilst agreeing with Farley (1983), Banks (1999:25) expounded on the concept by saying, "*Theologia* includes reflection on virtues integral to the Christian faith as well as attention to symbols, beliefs, and practices. Such virtues cultivated by *theologia* include, clarity more than charity, honesty more than friendliness, devotion to a calling in general more than loyalty to specific communities of learning" (Banks, 1999:25). Therefore, by virtue of its character *theologia* becomes a "cognitive activity that is both contemplative and deductive....it has an affective side to it, and helps develop a propensity for action" (Banks, 1999:19). In short, it is theological wisdom (Banks, 1999:20).

Hough (1991:7) defined *habitus* as the "the habit of making judgements about life, death, and community that are grounded in a fundamental understanding of what it is to be a Christian here and now." It is what Banks (1999:19-20) refers to as, "...an intuitive disposition of character (both cognitive and behavioural) or cultivation of a person's faith for the practice of ministry." For Farley (1983:35) *habitus* is the cognitive disposition and orientation of the soul, knowledge of God and what He reveals." Kelsey (1992:126) defines *habitus* as, "A settled disposition to act in a characteristic way... [or] a disposition to engage in a certain practice." *Habitus* dispose us to act in certain characteristic ways but to do so intentionally (as opposed to automatically), thoughtfully (as opposed to instinctively), self-critically (as opposed to mechanically), and inventively (as opposed to rigidly) in light of the actual circumstances of the action (Kelsey, 1992:126). Therefore, *habitus* can be cognitive *habitus*, that is, a disposition to act concerning something in ways that compromise understanding it. In short, growth in

understanding comes through some kind of discipline that leads to acquiring capacities to act according to relevant rule (Kelsey, 1992:126).

3.5.3. The concept of ‘model’ of theological education.

According to Joseph (1993:12) a model of theological education is the approach towards achieving the goal of preparing believers, especially leaders for specialised ministry in the church and critical to this model is the shared effort and cooperation among all the stakeholders. Timon, Kaunda and Hewitt (2019:2) understand model of theological education to refer to an approach of equipping future leaders to effectively understand and appreciate how God responds to issues raised by their context. The implication drawn from Timon, Kaunda and Hewitt’s (2019:2) view is that models of theological education are informed by context. Arguing from a slightly different premise is what Willhauck (2002:117-118), refers to as a response to the call to service. She posited that a model of theological education is an approach that helps people to search for meaning and find purpose for being in the world that is related to the purpose of God (Willhauck, 2002:117). She further noted that such an approach should, “find meaning in service, using gifting and honing them to gain knowledge to serve” (Willhauck, 2002:2018).

Aleshire (2018:26-27) holds that a model of theological education deals with how education prepares persons for a life of religious vocation; how ministers have been trained for their work in the past; and how they are being trained now, and what might be the future of their ministry. Therefore, in the latter view, models of theological education refer to the approaches of cultivation of ‘authentic identify’ and ‘spiritual maturity’ (Aleshire, 2018:37). Mwangi and De Klerk (2011:1) conceive the concept model of theological education as a theological training and practical ministry task that seeks to nurture gifted leaders who are in turn to nurture other believers so that the church can effectively fulfil her missional mandate.

The implication that can be drawn from these different perspectives is that models of theological education abound in the field of theological education, each with its own thematic emphases. Furthermore, models of theological education concern themselves with aims, goals or purposes of theological education and are therefore relational to the contexts in which those goals can be achieved. For purposes of the current study, only five models of theological education shall be reviewed because of their historical significance and relevance to the problems under study: The Athens Model (Character Formation); the Berlin Model (Academic), the Jerusalem Model (Missional) and the Geneva Model (Confessional) and

Theological Education as Leadership Model. The review will consider the models' founding principles, their contexts, goals and purposes in theological education.

3.5.4 The Athens Model (Classical Model)

The Athens model, in which *paideia* was a central theme, was considered an excellent form of education since it was defined by the goal of capacitating people for political and public action (Kelsey, 1993:8). The Athens model views theological schooling as *paideia* and is ruled by a religious interest to know God by *gnosis*, that is, an immediate intellectual intuition (Kelsey, 1992:72). Critical in understanding God are four senses: contemplative understanding; discursive understanding; affective understanding and understanding in and through action. The setting for *paideia* is the theological school, implying that all that the student of theologia acquires is got through the schooling process.

According to Kelsey (1992:73), the Athens model of theological education has four features. First, it is ruled by a religious interest in coming to better understanding of God. The religious understanding comes in as *gnosis*—an immediate intuitive understanding of God. All understandings of God come as the fruit of *paideia*. Second, theological schooling on the model of *paideia* requires divinely assisted conversion of the one who learns. This quality has implications for the one who teaches and the meaning of what teaching entails. In practical terms, it means the identification of who is qualified to teach and the character of the relationship between teacher and learner. These are complex issues, because the relationship can only come in an indirect way. No one can directly give *gnosis* (knowledge) of God by teaching. Two reasons account for this position: first, as held by Plato, knowledge of the good cannot be taught and secondly, from a theological viewpoint, the condition of having *gnosis* is that one undergoes a conversion which finally only God can give. Hence, the teacher teaches only indirectly by providing the context in which the student may grace himself/herself to that combination of self-knowledge and God-knowledge, which is the goal of education under Athens.

There are two quite different kinds of capacities that qualify one to be a teacher in theological education as *paideia*: (a) unusual learning in regard to the relevant texts and practices, which is the subject, (b) possession of personal gifts for the indirect teaching, as a midwife, helps another come to *gnosis*. Mwangi and De Klerk (2011:1) emphasise the theological task by saying, “The task of theological training is to nurture gifted leaders who are in turn to nurture other believers so that the church can effectively fulfil her missional mandate.” Kelsey

(1992:74) points out that these two are difficult to balance in practical *paideia* situations. That is, if the former is stressed, teaching becomes direct communication of information and ceases truly to be life-shaping *paideia*. If the latter is stressed, technique becomes dominant, the substance by which the student is to be moulded is lost and thus schooling ceases to be *paideia*.

Third, theological schooling as *paideia* focuses on the student because it supposes that for the student to understand God some kind of shaping or forming of the student is required. Theological schooling thus tends to be individualistic. The goal of education under the Athens model was thus, "...public and very political: the cultivating of politically skilled citizens, for an idealised democratic self-governing city" (Kelsey, 1993:7).

Finally, theological schooling in this model is public schooling. The implication is that since understanding God cannot be achieved directly, it is sought by studying material whose study is thought to lead to understanding God, and therefore the subject matter (sacred texts or extra-Christian or secular texts) is understood to be publicly available and publicly explicable (Kelsey, 1992:74). David Kelsey stressed that as *paideia*, theological schooling generates its own narrative writings that are intended not only for use within Christian communities but also as contributions to the cultural life of the communities' host societies.

(a) Characteristics of Athens as paideia.

Kelsey (1993:9) identifies four characteristics as follows. First, the goal of *paideia* is the cultivation of the excellence or *arête* of the soul consists not in acquiring a clutch of virtues but in knowledge of 'Good' itself. Education as *paideia* is defined as inquiry into the essence of virtues, and therefore to be fully formed is the capacity to know Good. Second, 'good' is not only the underlying principle of moral and intellectual virtues, but the highest divine principle of the universe. *Paideia* was therefore the form of education that would perpetuate the culture of 'good'. Third, the goal of *paideia* (that is, the culturing of virtues) could not be taught directly by simply conveying information on doctrines of virtues. The teacher provides the student with indirect assistance, such as intellectual and moral doctrines or disciplines that will capacitate the individual for his own moment of insight. Fourth, insightful knowledge of good is only possible through the conversion of the soul, a complete turn around and focus on reality of the 'good'. It requires a nurturing environment provided by the culture and society as a whole. This makes education as *paideia* inherently communal and not solitary.

(b) The shift of paideia

Kelsey (1993:10) noted that over centuries, the goal of *paideia* shifted from the public to the private realm – from capacitating persons for public and political action to preparing them for inward and religious transformation. These changes were rooted in massive shifts in socio-political contexts in the Roman Empire. *Paideia* had no further role as the education of citizens for a self-governing city. Thus, it offered an education in inward happiness in the midst of social and political oppression and conflict (Kelsey, 1993:10). Culture came to be conceived as the *paideia* and hence Christianity as a form of religious culture was considered as a superior *paideia*. It is this historical meaning of Christianity as *paideia* that historically Christian theological education was deeply committed to the Athens as a normative model of theological education. The implication is that if Christianity is perceived as *paideia* as it has been in ancient traditions, then it is simply a theological education whose goal is knowledge of God and forming souls to be holy. The Athens model continues to be influential in the modern and contemporary period (Kelsey, 1993:11).

(c). The relevance of the Athens Model of theological education in an African context

Wahl (2013:274) argued that the primary relevance of the classical model for theological education revolves around its focus on *paideia*; that is, the internal formation as opposed to an external praxeology. Its focus on spiritual and character formation as well as social transformation of the student makes it relevant for church leaders in Africa. In a continent that is characterised by many injustices (economic, political and social) and ecological destruction, the Athens model's praxis-based reflection may make it relevant in producing graduates that are change agents. Its dialectical activity, which is crucial for the formation of new knowledge, makes it possible to transform the current euro-centric curricula into one that is Afro-centric. Reflective discourse around themes such as COVID19, poverty, corruption, ethnic conflicts, and political instability would greatly assist self-theologising of Africa. It would help to make theological curricula relevant to the needs of the African people (Wahl, 2011:274). Furthermore, the problem of fragmentation of theological education noted by Farley (1983: ix), Banks (1999:20) and Kelsey (1993:102) may be mitigated by applying the proposed disposition and reflective conversation of the classical model to the Africanised scholarship and curricula (Wahl, 2013:274). Praxis-based reflection insists that the church be the seedbed of ministry and thus the curricula of theological institutions could be related to the needs of the local faith community. Concepts like praxis-based reflection and making the church the seed-bed of ministry could integrate the curricula of theological institutions closely with the actual needs

of the local faith community, and establish proper accountability, thereby feeding into the formation of an Afro-centric theology.

3.5.5. The Berlin Model (The Vocational Model)

(a) Background to Berlin

Kelsey (1993:11) documented that the decision to include a faculty of theology in the newly founded University of Berlin in 1810 created a new excellent type of theological education herein referred to as the “Berlin Model” of theological education. The model was bipolar in that it stressed the interconnectedness of two different enterprises: orderly and disciplined critical research (*Wissenschaft*) on one hand; and professional/ clerical education for ministers on the other.

Since Berlin University was designed to be a research university, the question was whether a faculty of theology had any place in it. According to Kelsey (1992), it was Schleiermacher who worked hard to include theology as a research discipline at Berlin University. Therefore, the Berlin model of theological education owes much to Schleiermacher and his contributions to the discipline of theology as a whole. Although *paideia* as a method of theological education involved to some extent critical study (involving, testing what was studied for clarity, logical validity and coherence), its major weakness as a discipline of research was that it was premised on the assumption of the authority of texts in regard to both secular and sacred matters. The Berlin model contrasts the Athens model in that it demands testing of unproven truths. Thus, in principle, neither the antiquity of an opinion nor the esteem of the person who hold neither opinions, nor alleged divine inspiration alone justifies the acceptance of the opinion as an authority. It has to go through the rigors of empirical research testing (Kelsey, 1993:14). According to Kelsey (1993:14), the approach to do research through an orderly and disciplined inquiry is referred to as *Wissenschaft* and this concept is critical in understanding the Berlin model of theological education. Kelsey (1993:14) stressed, “...the results of the inquiry, that is, *wissenschaftlich* can count as knowledge.” Therefore, the place of theology at university was in doubt because theology had traditionally rested on revelation, on authorities whose authoritative status could not itself be examined in an orderly, disciplined and critical way.

Furthermore, Kelsey (1993) posits that three characteristics make *Wissenschaft* a defining goal in university education. First, *Wissenschaft* was united to teaching. Theological education under *paideia* had emphasised on the development of capacities for knowing God. In contrast, in a research university, teaching is aimed at cultivating capacities in doing research, which is,

engaging in *Wissenschaft* (p.14). The university had to be both a research centre and a teaching institution. Second, the superiority and hegemony of theology as the queen of the sciences in the university was shifted to the margins as its role in the search for knowledge became increasingly questioned. Third, essential to a research university was the protection of academic freedom. Freedom to learn (*Lernfreiheit*) and freedom to teach (*Lehrfreiheit*) are its central ethos. This was a deliberate rejection of theology's right in universities as a superior discipline. Schleiermacher presented a sociological, philosophical and theological argument that eventually made theological education under the Berlin model be accorded the respect it had lost, echoing the sentiments that had been expressed by Farley (1983:86), that theological education was critical "to give cognitive and theoretical foundations to an indispensable practice." Therefore, theological education as a 'practical theology' (Farley ,1983:91) under the Berlin model came as a compromise between Christian theology demands for professionalism and the research university's demands for academic research (Kelsey, 1993:17).

(b). What the Berlin model entails as a model of theological education

The Berlin model of theological education, just as the Athens model, has influenced Western approaches to theological education. No doubt, the influence has transcended over to the African continent as noted earlier by Gundani et al. (2002:66) who complain about the foreignness of theological education and how Western theological education models have affected the African theological education practice. Today in most theological education institutions in Africa and elsewhere, the Berlin model dictates prevailing standards of academic education. In his book, *Between Athens and Berlin*, Kelsey (1993) argues that theological education is a movement from data to theory, to application of theory to practice. As indicated above, the model is bipolar in structure: *Wissenschaft* for critical rigor in theorising; and professional education for rigorous study of the application of theory in practice. The bipolar character of the Berlin model presents three challenges. First, the concept 'professional' can be understood in a variety of ways in theological education. Second, there can be a variety of arguments about what forms of *Wissenschaft* are relevant in theological education. Third, there can be different judgments about how the relevant *Wissenschaft* pole is related to the 'professional' pole.

In all cases, the Berlin Model places importance on the role of communication. Both poles (*Wissenschaft* and professional) require communication implying therefore that the

relationship between teacher and student is made healthy through communication. Expressed simply, Kelsey (1993) says, "...the teacher does not exist for the student, as is the case in *paideia*. Instead, the teacher is basically a researcher who needs the student to help achieve the goal of research in a cooperative enterprise." Cooperation proceeds by combining the practiced mind (the teacher) with the weaker mind (the student).

Another implication of the two poles is that when theological education conforms to the 'Berlin' type of education, what makes it *theological* is its professional pole, not its *Wissenschaft* pole (Kelsey, 1993). Inquiry is governed, not, as in the 'Athens' type, by an interest thereby indirectly come to know God, but by an interest to discover as directly as possible the truth about the origin, effects, and essential nature of Christian phenomena. What makes theological education of the 'Berlin' type theological is that it aims at preparing leaders for just those community leaders capacitated to help those communities nurture the consciousness of God.

Kelsey (1993) posited that what makes theological education of this type *theological* is that it is ordered, not theo-centrally, but ecclesio-centrally. That is, to understanding church leadership, not to understanding God. Although what makes it properly 'theological' is its goal (as 'professional' education) of nurturing the health of the church by preparing for its excellent leadership. Similarly, what entitles it to a home in the *wissenschaftlich* education it needs is the rather different goal of nurturing the health of society as a whole (for which professional church leadership is a 'necessary practice' (Kelsey, 1993).

The implication of the Berlin model regarding teaching faculty is that there is governing of the selection of persons for faculty positions. Staff that is well qualified in an established knowledge must be able to demonstrate the capacity to engage in scholarly research and be able to cultivate capacities for scholarly research in others. Scholarly work is determined by publication of results of critical enquiry as a contribution to the field of knowledge.

Furthermore, it is critical to note that the public nature of theological education on the Berlin model exists in some tension with each other. On the one side, since it is public, it is accessible to any interested person who has the necessary competencies without any prejudices. On the other hand, as professional education, it is public in the sense of contributing to the good of the public welfare. If either of these two senses of 'public' is stressed to the disadvantage of the other, theological education on this model is in danger of becoming either under or over engaged in social and cultural controversies of the day (Kelsey, 1993). Concerning the problem

under investigation in this study, *Wissenschaft* as a critical, disciplined and theoretical thinking, it is a powerful weapon against ideological distortion in efforts to understand. In the context of theological schooling, *Wissenschaft* is a powerful tool against religious idolatry of ideological captivity and distortions, both in efforts to understand the object of theology and in the practice of ministry.

(c) Relevance of the Berlin model of theological education in an African context

Wahl (2013:275-276) maintained that the vocational model's, focus on professional practitioners and specialised knowledge may assist greatly with the formation of an Africanised theology arguing that its emphasis on *Wissenschaft* should ensure that practitioners do not fall behind on current scholarship and facilitate proper contributions to literature in the field of theological education. The scholar further argued that the vocational model's rootedness in the Aristotelian actions of critical reflection, creative thinking and doing, as well as the notion that knowledge originates in doing instead of in theory, means that African leaders could be more informed in this regard than their Western partners could. Its focus on practical vocational skills helps address the socio-economic and political challenges of the continent. Additionally, its emphasis on research and professional scholarship makes the vocational model conducive in producing influential church leaders whose contribution is skewed toward improving the welfare of the Christian community (Wahl, 2013:276).

3.5.6. The Jerusalem Model (Missional Model)

The scholar behind the missional model of theological education is Robert Banks (1999), whose contribution is articulated in his publication, '*Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a missional alternative to current models.*' Banks (1999:142) says, "By mission I mean not just 'mission-oriented', but an education undertaken with a view to what God is doing in the world, considered from a global perspective." The model covers; reflection, training, and formation for work in the mission field. Hence, by missional, Banks (1999:124) emphasised, "It is theological education that is wholly or partly based field work, which involves some measure of doing what is being studied. This could take the form of reflective action—since effective action involves some element of, or relationship with reflection. Effective reflection involves some element of, or relationship with action. The same view is held by Hough and Cobb (1985:121-123) who in their analysis of the vocational model insisted that if the approach takes a missional character, it requires more than observant participation.

The missional model of theological education places the main emphasis on theological mission, on hands-on- partnership in ministry based on interpreting the tradition and reflecting on the practice with a strong spiritual and communal dimension (Banks, 1999:144). The missional model considers theological education as mainly concerned with actual service in the kingdom which is informed and transforming and therefore primarily focuses on acquiring cognitive, spiritual, moral, and practical obedience.

(a) The nature of teaching under the missional model

Banks (1999:157) insists that there are two basic elements in the missional model of theological education: action and reflection; and theory and practice. These underpin our understanding of the nature of learning in the missional model. First, it is important to understand that this approach has a view of learning that revolves around active involvement in ministry through both practical reflection and reflective practice. While the approach underscores the importance of learning the tradition—biblical, historical and theological—it stresses that such learning should take place in a formational and life-oriented way. The approach stresses that such learning should have reference to all the dimensions of the personal life, such as, family and friendships, work and neighbourhood, church and Christian organisations, voluntary and civic involvement which should be guided by specific people who have a special understanding and calling to such work (Banks, 1999:157).

Second, and following from the above, it means that theological education is not a higher stage of Christian education but a dimension of everyone's Christian education depending on their stage in life and calling. While in some cases Christian education has been regarded as subservient to theological education, the two are not as separate as generally thought. In this regard, it is implied that theological education is a continuing education program. Viewed in this continuous learning paradigm, theological education helps ordinary believers assess the meaning of mature discipleship, apply this to their witness in the world, and review it as they continue to learn. What is historically known as formal theological education builds on this by helping believers pursue this process in a more integrated, discerning, and sophisticated way. It can therefore be pointed out that Christian education encourages Christians to live out their faith, while theological education models it to others. Wood (1990:65-81) explained the distinction between Christian education and theological education this way: "...implicit ministry that takes place largely through everyday activities and explicit ministry, involving

the ordained and lay leaders,” respectively. The missional model is thus a model for all ministries.

The point that Wood (1990) stresses in his article is that theological education should not focus directly on forming us spiritually, mediating the Christian tradition, equipping with leadership skills or participating in Christian witness, but should concentrate on developing habits of critical self-reflection on spiritual formation, faith, leadership quality and practice that indirectly will influence these important areas of life and ministry.

(i) Action and reflection

The missional model places emphasis on action and Groome (1987:55-78) argued that the primary locus of theological education is not academia nor even the church, but human history. Groome (1987) further postulated that the praxis of God is the primary text for Christian or theological education. Praxis here is taken to mean action and reflection. The meaning portrayed in preceding statement is that in order to understand what God is doing, we must bring the scriptures into dialogue with our situation, for they already reflect elements of divine truth that are presented in it (Banks, 1999:159). According to Banks (1999:159-160), five stages help us bring dialogue between scripture and our situation: (i) encouraging people to express or name their present praxis; (ii) engage in critical reflection; (iii) bring the results into contact with the Christian story and vision; (iv) allow a genuine conversation to take place between the two; (v) follow this through to a renewed praxis. Banks’ (1999) approach in marrying scripture with our situation is analogous to Don Browning’s (1992:79-102) approach on the action criteria in reflecting on our situation. He asks five basic questions: (i) what kind of the world do we live in? (ii) What should we do? (iii) What are the basic needs, tendencies and values we should satisfy? (iv) What constraints does our present sociological, cultural or ecological context place on our context? (v) What are the concrete rules and roles we should follow? What follows these series of questions is the exploration of what the Bible and Christian traditions have to offer and engage in systematic reflection on it. Reflecting on the issues earlier pointed out in the study which is caused by the prosperity gospel, we are prompted and thus compelled to apply a reflective praxis on them. The task of the teacher is to train students across the whole curriculum and help ordinary people ask and answer these questions (Banks, 1999:160), so that they ‘act out’ and not just ‘learn from’ the educational process (Browning, 1992).

The role of the theological college in the context of reflective praxis is not only it being the place of reflective practice but most importantly, it is the place where theory is put in practice. Banks (1999:161) identifies two ways in which the college might encourage this to happen: first, is to view it as a *working model* of the world in the sphere of education, where the seminary can be the ‘laboratory’ of the everyday world in which we can learn to reflect on and respond to its demands and challenges—out of this we develop the character necessary to equip others for mission, and the ability to reflect on action and to act on reflection. Second, is *preparing* people for ministry but *inserting* them into it. In the latter strategy, the sequencing of courses facilitates learning how to learn, learning how to use learning for others and practising the learning this involves, and a kind of apprenticeship in ministry.

The view of theological education as working models pushes emphasis on spiritual formation to the margins as noted by Douglas John Hall (1988). Instead of theological education being viewed as developing spiritual and character formation, it becomes a central component that carries out present ministry in the place where one is learning (Banks, 1999:161). For Hall (1988) spiritual formation ought to be replaced by emphasis on the language of discipleship. This would require us to integrate spiritual formation into theological education so that it enhances our understanding of discipleship that is sensitive to the believers’ context.

(ii) The relationship between theory and practice in a missional model.

Banks (1999:164) posits that theory is embedded into practice, and practice embodies theory and therefore theory does not exist outside but inside what empirically or practically takes place. Banks (1999) acknowledges that the relationship between the two is always complex. What Banks (1999:29) emphasises is that theory is formulated in the midst of practice. For teaching and learning to be effective in theological education, thinking should be embodied, experiential and contextual, not abstract, objective and universal.

Furthermore, what comes out of the relationship between theory and practice is a dialectical relationship, which has important implications for teaching and learning in theological education (Banks, 1999:171). First, teaching becomes a sharing life as well as knowledge. It is through the sharing of a person’s life as well as their beliefs that is passion, which life-giving change comes to others. Hence, Craig Dykstra (1989:24) opined, “We are not responsible for making people whole or training them for ministry. Our approach should be a grace-based not work-based one.”

Second, teaching under the missional model ought to be active and dominated by reflective practice. The question to ask is, how can those involved in teaching put into practice their biblically informed role? Banks noted three considerations (1999:175-176). (a) Only if teachers are in vital touch with the presence of God in their area of expertise, will they be able to communicate this in a life-giving and life-changing way. It is not just their competency to deal with the subject matter that counts, but the extent to which the subject personally matters to them. In this way, theory is matched to reflective practice.

Third, teachers must be able to situate their subject matter within the bigger picture of God's purposes. That is, they must provide an account of the bigger picture within which their subject finds its place. Knowledge of the vision helps students develop an integrated understanding of what they are learning.

Finally, apart from explaining the substance of what they are conveying, teachers should find ways of demonstrating the practical outcome of this and how it contributes to God's own purpose. Bridging the gap between the world of subject matter and the world around us is action that addresses a concrete situation. Thus, passion, vision and action bind theory and practice (Banks, 1999:175).

(b) The relevance of the missional model (Jerusalem Model) of theological education in an African context

The missional model revolves around the focus on collaboration and partnerships, which is significant in that it enlarges the possibility of providing access to theological education to many people in Africa, thereby feeding into the *mission Dei* (Wahl, 2013:280). The missional model underscores the importance of empowering, enabling and equipping of many people for the benefit of the whole community thereby relevantly positioned to speak to the socio-economic and political debates of the African people (Wahl, 2013:280). The scholar further posits that since the model puts emphasis on service and obedience as pointed out by Banks (1999:144), the unique relationship between action and reflection, and theory and practice helps to develop competent leaders who can lead their ecclesia communities well and thereby demonstrating the true values of Christian leadership in a practical way (Wahl, 2013:279).

3.5.7 The Geneva model (Confessional model)

(a) Background issues to the Confessional Approach

The scholars behind the confessional or Geneva model of theological education are Schnier (1993) and Brian Edgar (2005). Marbaniang (2014) says that the confessional model relates to the context of the seminary and focuses on knowing God through the study of creeds and the confessions, the means of grace and the general traditions that are utilised by a particular faith community (doxology). The main idea of Schnier (1993:2-3) is that most models of theological education lack focus on the object of the habits they endorse, which are, God, God's character, work and relations to us. The weakness makes them inadequate in offering models that are cognisant of, and consistent with Christian practice and traditions. He further argues that Catholics are a good example of a Christian community whose theology has not succumbed to the technical definition of the professional and have always insisted on the moral and spiritual dimension (Schnier, 1993:18-19). Banks (1999:64) noted that these habits are what drive theologians and therefore it is plausible to discount and dismiss even Hough and Cobb's (1985) assertion that the 'main thing' in theological education is simply producing reflective and practical theologians. The same can be said of Stackhouse's (1988) approach, which puts emphasis on doctrinal core that stresses the intellectual rather than the life-giving character of understanding God.

Considering the limitations and strengths of earlier models, the search for a model that would change the character of theological study continued and found expression in confessional model, one that would understand formation as an integral aspect of seminary life, not merely as a preparation for service in the church. For Schnier (1993), the confessional approach would involve making liturgy, proclamation, service, teaching and community the basic activities of the church as well as the basis for reconceiving the aims of the curricula as well. Second, the tasks of the teachers and students would be to reinvent the tradition of the church, where the former takes the role of parenting rather than mentoring the latter. Arguing alongside Schnier (1993), and being an ardent supporter of the confessional model, Muller (1991:61ff) views the model as one that bridges the gaps between theory and practice, church and seminary and therefore as analysed by Banks (1999:66), holding the capacity to unite the four disciplines: objective knowledge of God (*theoria*) and subjective union with God (*praxis*), sub disciplines and competencies (*Scientia*) and moral and spiritual dimension (*habitus*).

(b). Characteristics of the confessional model

Brian Edgar (2005:213) maintains that in a confessional approach to theological education, the goal is to know God through the use of the creeds and the confessions, the means of grace and

the general traditions that are utilised by a particular faith community. There is an emphasis of formation through teaching about the founders, the heroes, the struggles, the strengths, and the traditions that are distinctive and formative for that community of faith (Edgar, 2005:213). Formation occurs through in-formation about the tradition and en-culturation within it. For it to be effective, it needs to have reference to all dimensions of life including family, friendships, work community and ministry.

Edgar (2005:213) noted three contrasts with other models: the context; the goal; and the theology. (i) The context for theological education in the confessional model is the seminary, standing in contrast to the classical model that is grounded in the academy, the vocational (Berlin) that is intrinsically connected to the university and the missional that undertakes training in the wider community. (ii)The goal of the confessional model is to enable people to know God through a particular tradition, while for the classical approach the aim is the transformation of the individual. The vocational model aims at strengthening the church, and the missional aims at converting or transforming the world. (iii)*Theology* in the Geneva model is understood as the process of knowing God, while in Athens, theology is intuited wisdom. In Berlin, theology is a process of thinking and applying theory to life and the church and in Jerusalem theology is missiological. These contrasts show that major debates in theological education are in fact mainly focused on fundamental theology.

(c). Diagrammatic representation of the typology of models of theological education (Adapted from Edgar, Brian. The theology of theological education).

<p>CLASSICAL</p> <p>Transforming the individual</p> <p>(ATHENS)</p> <p>Academy</p> <p>THEOLOGIA</p>	<p>CONFESSIONAL</p> <p>Knowing God</p> <p>(GENEVA)</p> <p>Seminary</p> <p>DOXOLOGY</p>
<p>MISSIOLOGY</p>	<p>SCIENTIA</p>

<p>(JERUSALEM)</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Converting the world</p> <p>MISSIONAL</p>	<p>(BERLIN)</p> <p>University</p> <p>Strengthening the church</p> <p>VOCATIONAL</p>
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(d) Relevance to theological education in an African context

Regarding the relevance of the confessional model to theological education in Africa, Wahl (2013:279) argues that since the main emphasis of this model is on understanding theological information, its primary relevance centres on the development of an Africanised scholarship and curricula. Like with the dialectical model, although not to the same extent, the confessional model also includes, through its emphasis on spiritual formation, different dimensions of learning. Although this model focuses on the pedagogical value of hermeneutics, it might become irrelevant in an African context, which values an oral tradition over a written framework (Wahl, 2013:279).

3.5.8 The leadership development model (Personal Formation Model)

Igbari (2001:14-15) and Easley (2014) see the purpose of theological education as leadership development, and in particular for the former the emphasis was identified as developing three fundamental qualities of leadership: knowledge; spiritual growth; and leadership within the church. Easley (2014:9) explained it emphatically when he says, “Theological education is the *kerugma* of Christian leadership development.” Leadership development seeks to enable men and women to become transformative practitioners of the Word of God in a broken and hurting world (Easley, 2014:9). As leaders expand their ability for theological reflection, practise their community engagement within the context of God’s calling, and give attention to personal formation by the Holy Spirit, they become fruitful. Theological education as leadership development helps engender a growing practice of freedom, that is the ability and practice of using experience, knowledge and good judgement to find and implement solutions for present and future issues.

(a) Three dimensions of leadership development

Different scholars have come up with different aspects of what the leadership model of theological education should seek to develop. For instance, Igbari, (2001:14-15) proposes three qualities as follows: knowledge; spiritual growth and leadership. Foster, Dahill, Goleman and Tolentino (2006:5), posited that the three qualities or apprenticeships that should be developed through the leadership model are cognitive intellectual apprenticeship; the practical apprenticeship; and the apprenticeship of identity formation. In the first, the classroom is the appropriate location for education. In the second, the practical skills are best learned by living transmission—through pedagogy of modelling and coaching. Whereas regarding identity formation, it is the formation of dispositions, character and ways of thinking. Easley's (2014:11) category consists of theological reflection, community engagement and personal formation. Easley (2014:11) maintains that the three qualities ought to be integrated for them to produce a leader who is not a bystander but a fully transformational leader. These will be briefly discussed as follows;

(i) Theological reflection

Theological reflection deals with the head or mind. It begins with mastery of content and moves to an application of the wisdom gained from such knowledge. It is the ability to see present realities in the light of biblical truths and theological constructs. The process is a progression from the stage of understanding biblical scripture until we give evidence of thinking theologically.

Investigation of the content of scripture:

First, there is the need to investigate the content of scripture and the revelation of God in the scriptures. The investigation of scripture provides a foundation, which helps us to understand why we exist, what we are to be about in this world, and how we interact with his redemptive purposes. Leadership development must include the study of scripture texts and understand the principles of interpretation of scripture. Thus, the Bible must be understood as infallible, historically preserved and divinely inspired and complete record of God's revelation to man. Matters of biblical introduction (authorship, date and purpose) must be viewed in the light of traditional research. Christ is the central theme of the scripture and the Holy Spirit is the ultimate interpreter of the scripture. The Old Testament is unfolded into the New Testament and vice-versa. As the leaders embrace these principles, they move towards a deeper practice of theological reflection.

Exploration of theology:

Second, theology ought to be explored. As we investigate scripture, our understanding of God deepens and we begin to build a theological framework that informs our worldview. Easley (2014:12) insists that the exploration must include a journey through the basic tenets of orthodox Christianity: the nature of God and his revelation to humanity, the nature and fallenness of humanity, the incarnation and atonement of Christ, the plan of salvation and restoration from sin, the meaning and nature of church and God's plan of humanity in eternity. The Bible, as the inspired Word of God gives the metanarrative that unites the Old Testament and the New Testament narratives. This narrative informs our theology and inspires our faith. The truth of Scripture serves as the solid foundation for all life; the Christian leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively when on this biblically informed theological foundation.

Historical awareness:

Third, our ability at theological reflection takes on richness as we integrate biblical and theological understandings with a sense of knowing who we are and what our historical roots are. Therefore, a study of church history, world and national history and personal family histories gives an awareness of progress, timing and responsibility. Easley (2014:12-13) holds that the study of scripture gives us a grasp of the redemptive history that is necessary for faithfulness to redemptive metanarratives. The intentional and persistent exploration of scripture, theology and historical context enables us to think theologically—making decisions that are influenced by biblical and theological understanding. With a biblically framed worldview, we can analyse current issues from a theological perspective, asking the right question that will lead to right solutions.

The detached intellectual

If theological education only attends to the first dimension, there is a danger of living in 'ivory towers' and therefore becoming a detached intellectual. Detached intellectuals are not concerned about the outside world, nor other's problems and concerns. Therefore, they live in a world of ideas and concepts, and thus relegate practical efforts to solve such challenges. Insistence on higher educational qualification in order to hold certain offices causes detached intellectualism. In some cases, inordinate emphasis on theology, research and academics leads to detached intellectualism. A good example can be cited from Europe where it gave the world Christianity and theological scholarship but today Europe has become an ivory tower, worshipping the god of intellectualism. Commenting on the rot of intellectualism in theological

education, Kohl (2009:151) pointed out, “Seminary education in general has only four things wrong with it: it is taught by the wrong people, in the wrong place with the wrong curriculum and has wrong oversight.” Chandler (1991:210) expressed the same sentiments when he said, “...seminaries have largely outgrown their capabilities to train leaders for the next century...[and have become] dysfunctional in training life changing leaders.” Therefore, we need leaders who engage in theological reflection but refuse to be detached intellectuals. Such leaders give attention to community engagement.

(ii) Community engagement

Community engagement contrasts with theological reflection in that it focuses on the hands rather than the latter which deals with the head. Leaders are more than intellectuals; they lead and engage the community towards desired goals and solutions, and in changing the world. According to Easley (2014:15-16) community engagement requires vision, competencies transformation and impotent pragmatism. By vision is meant the ability to discern needs of the community in relation to the gospel. Whereas competencies refer to acquisition of professional skills (reading, analysing and diagnosing, communication and interpersonal skills). Communication becomes incarnational as we become sensitive to the needs of those in distress. Theological education must help leaders develop competencies in interacting with people by building strong relationships of mutual understanding and trust.

Fundamental to this model is that the goal of community engagement is transformation of that which is broken. Change, restoration and improvement within the kingdom of God should be the goal as we engage the community. If theological education produces faithful apologists who fully engage in ministry but lack theological depth then we have a situation of impotent pragmatists. According to Easley (2014), George Whitfield coined a phrase, ‘rope of sand’ to describe the nature of people who were well disciplined in faith but lacked sound theological education which is an excellent metaphor for describing the reactionary dismissal of any theological education or formation as important. ‘*Rope of sand*’ will be produced through the intentional abandonment or unintentional neglect of proper and appropriate theological education.

This seems to be the tendency in many prosperity-gospel led churches in Zimbabwe where theological education tends to be pushed to the margins. Regarding the Zimbabwean situation, a critical question can be asked: how can the country crumble to its knees socially and economically when there are numerous rich prosperity churches leaders who intercede daily

for the nation? The possible answer to the question points at the shallowness of the Christian leadership training and character development in the country. A lack of theologically informed leaders will lead to anaemic and short-lived church.

(iii) Personal Formation

Leadership calls for more than theological reflection and community engagement that deal with the head and hands respectively. That dimension is the personal reflection, which focuses on the heart. Personal formation may also be called spiritual formation, spirituality or personal character but may be equated to *theologia* as argued by Farley (1983), or *paideia* as insisted by Kelsey (1993). Easley has this to say about personal/character formation: “It [is our] ability to think theologically about the circumstances we face at a personal level. It is the culturing of our soul for facing the realities of today’s world. It is the sanctification of our spirit by the Holy Spirit. It is the commitment to live a Christ-like life in relationships, behaviours and possessions.” This analysis has great implications for prosperity church leaders who have life styles that do not conform to the standard of well-developed character formation. Gatwa (2009) observed that the greatest hindrance to church leadership growth is lack of character formation among church leaders. He likened the African church to a giant standing on clay legs, and longed for investment in leadership character formation so that the church would stand on steel legs.

The point that Gatwa (2009) stressed is that personal formation of church leaders anchors the churches they lead. Why? Because personal/character formation begins with a commitment to serve Christ as our saviour from personal and inherited sin and a consistent willingness to walk in obedience to the Spirit as He unfolds God’s purposes in our lives. That walk shapes our character and enables us to embrace the values that reflect God’s divine character. In his conclusion regarding the appropriateness of the leadership model of theological education, Easley (2014: 20) says, the leader who will be best fitted to guide the church through the cultural and ideological clashes and opportunities we have today is the one who is equipped with skills for theological reflection, community engagement and character formed. Furthermore, Easley (2014:20) stressed, the qualitative depth of one’s ministry and theological reflection is determined by the extent of character formation one has received. The scholar is contending with a model of theological education that is leadership focussed.

3.6. Debates in the theological education discourse

The debates in theological education abound and therefore a discussion of these in this section is not meant to be exhaustive because of space limitations. However, the study will only allude to those that have relevance to the issues currently under study.

3.6.1. The fragmentation and unity of theologia theological education.

Edward Farley (1983) raises questions regarding the fragmentation and unity of theological education. In the debate Farley (1983:ix) says, “Theology has since disappeared as a unity, subject matter and end of clergy education and this disappearance is responsible for the problematic character of that education as a course of study.” According to Wheeler’s (1993:87) summary, three main points are raised in Farley’s (1983) debate in his master piece, *Theologia: The fragmentation and unity of theological education*. First, that the theory taught in theological schools does not seem relevant to the practice of ministry; second, the content of elements of the four-fold pattern of studies (bible, theology, history and practice) are not readily integrated; and finally, the graduates of theological colleges are unprepared for the complex demands and stresses of ministry practice. These three points were also reiterated by Dowson and McInerney (2005:403-404). Scholars in Kelsey’s (1993) persuasion point out that the fragmentation noted by Farley (1983) can be addressed by re-envisioning the curriculum content, rethinking of the purpose of theological education and equipping students with capacities ‘to truly understand God’ (Kelsey, 1992:15). Binau (2014:41) was motivated by questions raised by Farley (1983). The scholar also noted that those questions still remain pertinent in the 21st century theological education conversation and posits that the focus for theological education should be to “...form leaders for Christ’s church at work in the world” (p.41).

3.6.2. The historical debate: What is theological about theological education?

According to Kelsey (1993:1-2) the most widely discussed debate in theological education has been the question, “What is theological about theological education?” The debate was not focused on pedagogical questions such as, ‘what is the most effective way of teaching in theological education?’ Nor was it about the future integrity of the discipline, such as, ‘how can we strengthen and preserve its financial resources or how do we attract abler students?’ or ‘how do we make our course of study more responsive to the church’s multiple demands without fracturing into a collection of unrelated programs?’ Rather, the question has been, ‘what is the nature and purpose of theological education?’ Arising from this question is the million-dollar question: Should theological education focus on character formation, or

vocational excellence, or acquisition of theological knowledge, or leadership development or all of these dimensions? If so, what is the nature of such a praxis?

As earlier pointed out above, Buitendag (2019:1-2) engages Kelsey's (1993) question on 'what is theological about theological education?' and argues that the conversation should not be about the nature and purpose of theological education but rather a way of redefining theology as a discourse partner in the public domain in the human being's search for meaning and comprehensiveness (p.1) and therefore transforming it in line with 21st century challenges particularly for Africa. Buitendag's (2019:1-2) thesis is that theology (in particular at a public university) has to shift beyond the current thinking and move from actualities to potentialities, from inter-disciplinarily to transdisciplinary, from critical realism to meta-critical realism, from post-theism to meta-theism, and from autonomy and heteronomy to theonomy. The question he engages is therefore, 'How far are theology faculties willing to engage in a revolution that shapes the study of theology as a scientific discipline?'

At the centre of the theological education debate is what Ott (2016:200) identifies as the theory-praxis debate. Ott (2016: 200-201) maintains that the problem with the theory-praxis debate is that there is no consensus yet regarding what proportion spirituality, practice and academic take in the integration process. Hence, Kelsey (1993:227 ff) believes that because of the fact that there is still no consensus, theological education operates between two axes—Athens and Berlin.

3.6.3. The theological education debates in an African context

The theological education debate from an African point of view has been proliferated on six fronts; access, lack of resources, socio-political and socio-economic, and an Africanised curriculum, economic injustice and ecological destruction. The discourse and conversation sustained by Chitando (2009), Houston (2009), Gatwa (2009), Mwesigwa (2009) and Swanepoel (2009) and Werner (2009) is that these six challenges have caused major upheavals in the way theological education is offered at least in the African context. Against the background of these contextual challenges, Wahl (2013) insists that the relevance of existing models of theological education must be tested. These will be briefly reviewed.

(a) Access:

Wahl (2013:269) noted that access to theological education remains a challenge within the African context. On the one hand are a vast number of church leaders without any theological education, and on the other hand, is a huge need to equip part-time ministers and church

members in order to fulfil their individual callings. Houston (2009) maintains that 80% of African pastors are insufficiently trained and Werner (2009) opined that the problem of access was attributed to unfair conditions that exist. Mwesigwa (2009) blames ethnic biases for the state of affairs. Swanepoel (2009) acknowledges that these gaps were due to legislation that discounted some institutions as unchristian and hence isolated them. Furthermore, he argues that traditional methods of theological education are insufficient to equip part time ministers and focused ministries like those operating in the fields of children's church and correctional services. Consequently, Swanepoel (2009) suggests better collaboration, cooperation and networking between institutions in Africa in order to address the need for theological education on academic levels lower than university' training. The challenge of access to theological education is magnified by the great need in Africa for the training of church leaders, implying that access to ministry training should not be limited to full-time ministers but should be expanded to include part-time ministers and church members (Wahl, 2013:270). The question raised is: How far can issues of access affect theological education in Africa?

(b) Lack of resources

Chitando (2009) pointed out that one of the biggest challenges towards providing access to theological education in Africa is the lack of proper resources. This situation is compounded by training, which often takes place amidst poverty, wars, economic chaos, digital divide and erratic electricity (Houston, 2009). Gatwa (2009) observed that the shortage in proper library facilities and trained personnel challenges the provision of the needed theological education in Africa. Houston (2009) raises issues of the relevance of full-time residential system of theological education *vis-à-vis* the costs and the need to search alternative modes to cut on costs. Chitando (2009) suggested income generating alternatives, raising questions on whether such a weak resource base or foundation can sustain and ever develop theological education in Africa. Wahl (2013:270) encourages a theological education conversation that focuses on addressing the root causes of this lack which also hinges on the socio-economic and socio-political environment. The practical implementation of such a program remains contestable.

(c) Socio-political and socio-economic illness

Chitando (2009), Gatwa (2009), Houston (2009), Mwesigwa (2009), and Swanepoel (2009) have identified some of the areas where socio-economic change in Africa is needed, namely, the Covid19, the HIV and AIDS pandemic (and the resulting number of orphans), ethnic conflict and wars, the abuse of children, family malfunction, political instability, poverty, and

economic chaos. To this list, Werner (2008:86) also identifies leadership as one of the crucial competencies theological education needs to establish. The question raised for debate is whether these socio-political and socio-economic illnesses are sufficiently strong reasons to compromise the credibility of the church in Africa (Wahl, 2013:271).

(d) Commodification of theological education:

Magezi and Banda (2017:1) raise two prominent questions: First, how are Christian ministry and its undergirding theology being utilised as instruments of economic prosperity in Africa? Second, what is the theological education approach that is employed to support this ministry approach? The major question arising out of these two is, to what extent is it justifiable to use Christian ministry and theological education as a means of economic survival? Using Zimbabwe as an example, it is noted that there is an observable link between the decline of national economies and the growth of the use of Christian ministry as a channel for economic survival (Biri & Togarasei, 2013; Chitando, 2013; Chitando, et al., 2013; Maxwell, 1998; Togarasei, 2011; Vengeyi, 2001). Magezi and Banda (2017:1-2) pose three major implications that crisscross one another. First, church spaces, spiritual conversions, certain spiritual disciplines, membership into certain churches and submission to the leadership of certain prophets and pastors, are now considered as steps towards economic emancipation and prosperity. Second, there is a strong conflict between the traditional view of ministry as a sacrificial act and the prosperity Pentecostal entrepreneurial view of ministry as a means of economic prosperity and how Christians need to respond to poverty meaningfully. Third, given this scenario (taking the Zimbabwe context as an example) where there exists endemic, systemic and intergenerational poverty, theological education must be transformed to empower church leaders to play an economic role that empowers Christians to engage poverty meaningfully. To this dimension, Magezi and Banda (2017:6) ask, “What then should theological education be and do in order to foster a system of economic survival from Christian ministry that is God-honouring manner that does not abuse God’s people, but enables Christian ministers to be productive economic participants?” One view is a construction of an ecclesiology that de-commodifies and the other extreme is a construction of a theological education praxis that capacitates the Christian community against the socio-economic challenges (Magezi & Banda, 2017:6-7). The debate hovers around the theological integrity and justification of such milieus.

(e) Africanised scholarship and curricula

To what extent can African theological education self-theologise? It is noted that the African theological institution is far from providing praxis of teaching that is African context dependent. Houston (2009) and Walls (2002:222-226) emphasise that African theological curricula are often Western in their content and mode of delivery. In this, they make a case for accredited and accessible competence-based curricula irrelevant to the African context. Chitando (2009) argues for a need to re-visit the curricula to ensure relevance. Werner (2009) holds that the relevance of the theological education curricula is further problematised by the emergence and ongoing growth of Charismatic/Pentecostal churches in Africa, giving rise to a different student population with different needs. Amanze (2009) questions how far possible or attainable it is to make African theology both theoretical and action-oriented. Hence Gatwa (2009) calls for reforms in theological education that are competency-based with emphasis on inclusion of relevant contemporary themes in the curricula, but these reforms are far from being implemented, thus calling for the need for a continuous conversation on the subject.

(f) Global challenges: Economic injustice and ecological destruction

Kinsler (2008a:7-8) argues that theological education must address, through diverse and contextualised approaches, two global challenges of the twenty-first century, namely, economic injustice and ecological destruction, and justifying the need for a theological education praxis that equips people at grass roots levels with ‘the basic tools, skills and concepts’ to fulfil their calling. The extent at which such a discourse is practicable is compounded by the global nature of challenges in African theological education.

(g) The choice of an appropriate model of theological

Wahl (2013:273ff) holds that the relevance of models that emerged out of the discourse on theological education during the past five decades has been a major area of concern for theological educators in Africa. The models on offer tend to have many euro-centric nuances and hence the debate has focused on what model of theological education will address African theological education challenges. Among the models present are the following: The classical Model; the Vocational Model; The Missional Model; The Confessional Model and the Leadership Model. As discussed in the above sections these have their own historical origins and challenges. Orientation to any one of these traditions has been largely denominational raising questions on how far the ecumenical society in Africa can unite theological education in the face of such theologies of theological education. Although these models are relevant in

different ways in relation to challenges like access, lack of resources, socio-political and socio-economic illnesses, an Africanised scholarship and curricula, and global challenges of economic injustice and ecological destruction, there has not been consensus with regards to what model of theological education is ideal, and the search for it continues in the theological education discourse (Ott, 2016:87).

3.7. Summary and conclusion

This chapter reviewed literature on the meaning of the concept theological education and the challenges arising out of different perceptions of the same concept. The importance of this part of literature review to the issues under study is that if we are to analyse the methodologies used by prosperity churches in leadership formation in their churches, there is need to understand the meanings they attach to theological education. Furthermore, an understanding of theological education in a historical perspective serves to clarify the origins of the various training models currently in practice by many prosperity gospel churches and how the models help to understand the problems posed by these Christian communities in training church leaders. The review further highlighted the current discourse in theological education and how these debates capacitate practitioners in theological education in coming up with models of theological education that are consonant with current realities on church practice. The next review will focus on theoretical understandings of character formation and how theological education has contributed to producing graduates that perpetuate the practices of prosperity churches.

CHAPTER 4: Literature review: Understanding character and character formation

4.1 Introduction:

The chapter reviews the concept character, by analysing the different definitions that have been put forward by scholars. These definitions will be discussed in relation to different perspectives on the nature of character and character formation. The relationship between character and spiritual formation will also be reviewed as the concepts are intricately related. The biblical and theological analysis will help to appreciate the various theoretical perspectives on character formation and how these relate to the praxis of theological education. Current debates on character formation will be highlighted with a view to understand how these debates influence and inform theory about character formation. It is intended that this chapter will help us understand how theological education can contribute to leadership character formation of prosperity church leaders.

4.2 The need for character

The importance of the study of character in this study cannot be overemphasised. According to Pradhan (2009:3), character is the core component of humanity. Just as an organisation is known by its work culture, a government is known by its administration, a film actor by his/her unique art, so is a person, he is known by his character (Pradhan, 2009:3). The major research question of this study focuses on how theological education as a praxis contributes to the character formation of leaders of prosperity churches.

According to Perkins and Timmerman (2014), character as a concept has gained considerable currency among academics and practitioners, and especially among Christian business persons, the concept character holds particular attraction as it seems to correlate with the teachings of scripture. On the one side is the argument that the development of character is a legitimate avenue for instilling ethics. On the other side is the view by ethicists that character never does exist in any meaningful sense. Writing to the western audience Rogers (1991:428) pointed out that character formation agenda has been neglected for some so long a time and therefore has become a concern for various groups in society such as in business and education. The concerns seem to be as much a reflection of the unaccepted consequences of a decline in character as they do any altruistic concern for the quality of life of individuals. As the indicators of concern multiply, it seems crucial that this agenda should not be left to secular agencies who are not adequately informed by the perspective of the church (Rogers, 1991:428).

Douglas Hall (1988:55) says, “We are disturbed by a certain lack which we perceive in centres of theological education in the persons of those who emerge from them. We identify this lack as an absence or diminution or deficiency of character.” Douglas Hall bemoans the state of theological education for failing to tailor their practices in restitution of the missing quality of character formation. His argument is that we need to understand the nature and extent of the malaise and deficiency of character formation before recommending a pedagogical cure (Hall, 1988: 55). Hall (1988:56) asks two critical questions: First, can a theological tradition centred on grace not works be transmitted without distortion in its zeal to reclaim the forgotten theme of character formation? Second, when we speak about theological education as character formation, are we not running the risk of materially altering the primary focus of this theological tradition? Heywood (2013:6) shared the same sentiments as Hall (1988) when he criticises higher educational institutions for focusing on intellectual attainment at the detriment and neglect of qualities of character.

MacIntyre (1985:2) referred to the neglect of character as “the loss of an agreed framework within which to think and talk about questions of character and virtue.” Haywood (2013:5) underscored the essence of character formation in theological education arguing that knowledge about character formation is foundational in producing quality ministers. Haywood’s (2013) views are reinforced by Pickard’s (2009:1), who commented that to exercise ministry requires spiritual maturity which itself is underpinned in the development of a virtuous ministerial character, hence the need to prioritise character development at the heart of a theological education curricula. The development of Christian character is integral to the acquisition of theology as *phronesis* (wisdom) (Heywood, 2013:22).

The views of Rogers (1991), Hall (1988) and, Perkins and Timmerman (2014) tend to imply that little is known about character and hence the need for an elaborate assessment of the concept. For Bialik, Bogan, Fadel and Hrvathova (2015:1) we need character education to develop and equip world citizens with virtues, values and capacities to fulfil social and community responsibilities as global citizens and mitigate the challenges of the 21st century which include among them terrorism, corruption and inequalities. Yet still, as stressed by Habl (2011:147-148), the need for character education is premised on three pedagogical inspirations: first, is the notion that education in knowledge without morality is dangerous. “A person who is well informed but not morally formed is merely a useless encumbrance on the earth... even a misery to oneself and others” (Habl, 2011:147). Second, is the assertion that education on morality without piety is incomplete – without the spiritual, knowledge becomes pointless,

morality becomes moralisation, and education becomes spiritless—a personal relationship with God the Creator on the contrary is what makes morality meaningful (Habl, 2011:147). Finally, it is the belief that morality (as well as piety) is both teachable and learnable, so why not engage in it? (Habl, 2011:148).

Pettit (2008:158) stresses that there is a great need for character development because most leaders have not developed adequate character for the tasks they face. The problem is that although it is possible to experience a transformation of character, most people are not exposed to the types of life changing influences that stimulate such transformations, and in most cases, people are motivated to character consistency- they would rather not change or develop their character. The scholar argues that character flaws bankrupt future leadership promise. At least for Christians and theological students alike, there is need to appreciate that character develops through suffering even though it is not desirable. Pettit's (2008) concerns account for the need why this study seeks to understand why prosperity church leaders' character is not compatible with the Christian values of the congregations they lead.

4.3 Defining the concept 'character'

Various scholars have come up with many definitions of character. Stout (1927) defined character as “the constitution of the self as a whole.” Whereas, Holmes (1991:61) says, “Character refers to the kind of person one is, the agent who acts rather than just the actions.” Lickona (1991: 325) defined character as doing the right thing despite outside pressures on the contrary. The root of the word character in Greek is ‘engraving’ and thus applying it to humans; it refers to the enduring marks left by life that sets one apart from others (Pradhan, 2009: 3). The scholar further postulates that the mark is the distinguishing feature or quality of an individual and finds expression or reveals itself in conduct (p.3). As such, it is closely connected with volition, decisiveness, consistency, and sustained effort in the face of difficulties.

In *Dimensions of character*, Ernest Ligon (1956: 274ff) defined character as the total effect of one's evaluative attitudes on the social influence of his personality. He identified six variables that constitute character: the extent of ethical values; moral consistency; social effectiveness; temporal and social orientation; personality integration; and maximum potential behaviour. Perkins and Timmerman (2014) restrict their definition to the issue of values by saying, “...character is that quality within us that enables us to live by our values.” Rogers (1991:437) defined character as a combination of feelings, conduct and knowledge, where feelings and

conduct are learned through the early years of individual development where knowledge is acquired through interaction with the physical and social environment.

Stanley Hauerwas is probably best renowned for having invested so much of his scholarly work in studying the concepts character and ethics. In another of his publications, *Character and the Christian Life: A study in theological ethics*, Hauerwas (1975:203) says, “Nothing about my being is more me than my character. Character is the basic aspect of our existence. It is the mode of the formation of our “I”. For it is character that provides the content of the “I” Our character determines the primary orientation and direction, which we embody through our beliefs and actions.”

Stanley Hauerwas has been very consistent in his conceptualisation of the concept character. For example, in two of his volumes, he says, “I defined character as the qualification of a person’s self-agency through his or her beliefs, intentions, and actions, by which a person acquires a moral history befitting his or her nature as a self-determining being (Hauerwas, 1994:11 & Hauerwas, 2015:73). For Hauerwas, character designates the distinctiveness and individuality of the self. Character also refers not only to what is distinctive but also to what is deliberate. He further went on to postulate that having character means self-determination, implying that a person is accountable for his actions for who he has become and is becoming. Grobien (2019:63) shares Hauerwas’s conceptualisation and defines character as “the mark of integrity, consistency and...incorruptibility.... Formed and revealed by action.... Shaped by roles and expectations of society.”

However, despite Stanley Hauerwas being a *guru* in the subject of character, it is interesting to note that two decades later in an interview conducted on 17 April 2018, and details of which were published in his other volume, *The character of virtue: Letters to Godson*, Hauerwas (2018) confessed that he still did not know what exactly character was but was content to say, “Character is what you do when no one is looking.” Hauerwas (2018) went on to reflect that character has a sense of the indomitable commitment to live out a life that is true, irrespective of the consequences. Hauerwas (2018) propounds further by saying, “To have character is to be a person of constancy,” implying that “if you’re a person of character, you’re someone who can be trusted (Hauerwas, 2018).” Character entails having self-knowledge that allows us to make our lives our own (Hauerwas, 2018).

The apparent shift in conceptualisation of the concept character by Hauerwas shows that as a concept it is complex and fluid and therefore definitions are far from being comprehensively

conclusive. With this understanding, the current study agrees with Hauerwas' definitions but hastens to point out that in as far as, Christian character is concerned; it refers to Christ-like qualities, virtues and values as enshrined in the Holy Scriptures. According to Francisco (2010:77), Christian character is having integrity (or the possession of morally clean and honest lifestyle); loyalty (to God, family, church, and employers); and having a servant's heart (by willingly giving of one's time, talent and treasures). Essentially Christian character contrasts world's philosophy of 'what can I get out of a situation. Instead, people of Christian character are willing to serve in capacities that are considered by many as beyond the call of duty by asking, 'What can I give to the situation?' (Francisco, 2010:77). Pettit (2008: 146) echoes Francisco's (2010) and Hauerwas' (2018) sentiments in a more succinct manner when she says, "Character is what you do when no one is looking", emphasising the pivotal aspect of integrity in character.

Character has been considered as that aspect of the person that forms the foundation for behaviour. One of the best-known treatments of character at this level is that of Sheehy (1990). According to Sheehy (1990), character is a pattern of behaviour that is engraved through significant experiences and decisions. It is evident by observing a person's "important threads of experience" which is that person's life story (Sheehy, 1990:20). Others have continued a similar framework and have propagated the perspective that character is a multifaceted dimension of personality that incorporates all things such as values, morals, attitudes, interpersonal traits, character for leadership, intrapsychic processes, and personal interests and preferences (Hogan & Sinclair, 1997). However, this perspective serves to continue the confusion about how each of these constructs differ and relate to each other. In order to dispel this apparent confusion, it is necessary to understand the nature and aspect of character. The discussion below will now focus on understanding the various aspects and nature of character.

4.4 The nature and aspects of character

In an article entitled, '*Theological Education as character formation*,' Robert Meye (1988: 107ff) argues that it is confusing trying to define character as a dismembered unit from spirituality. Therefore, he equates character formation to spiritual formation and posits that character is synonymous to our understanding of 'the heart' as the powerhouse of the human body function. He argues that character—the heart—is a comprehensive term for the personality of an individual as a whole, its inner life—its *character* (Meye, 1988:98). He further expounds, "Character is the conscious and deliberate spiritual activity of the self-contained human ego" (Meye, 1988:98). He argues, 'the heart' (the character) is the organ of spirituality—the primary

place and means of encounter between God and the creation of God (Meye, 1988: 100). It is a description or conceptualisation of the "the-way-one-is," which is the thumbnail description of character, that is, the "sort of person" one is (Meye, 1988:100).

Cloninger, Svrakic and Pryzbeck (1993) argued on the strength of their research that there are at least three distinct aspects or primary traits of character: self-directedness; cooperativeness and self-transcendence. According to these scholars, these three-character traits, self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence, comprise means by which individuals relate to oneself, other individuals and the surrounding world as a whole respectively.

(a) Self-directedness

Commenting on the validity of Cloninger, Svrakic and Pryzbeck (1993) findings, Pettit (2008:151-152) opined that the primary character trait of self-directedness contains other secondary traits built in within the primary trait, these being responsibility, purposefulness, resourcefulness, self-acceptance and good behaviour. According to Pettit (2008:151), responsible individuals recognise the consequences of their choices and do not blame others for their actions, and take charge of their actions believing that their actions will produce the desired results. This is called self-efficacy (Pettit, 2008:151). Purposeful individuals are able to regulate their behaviour by comparing behavioural choices with long term values and goals, for example, delaying immediate gratification in order to achieve their goals. Delayed gratification is a significant self-regulatory aspect related to character of self-directedness. Resourceful individuals are able to find their way out of a problem. Self-acceptance includes ability to make a genuine appraisal of one's weaknesses and strengths. Good habits are those values acquired through practice and discipline.

(b) Cooperativeness

Pettit (2008:152) noted that the character trait of cooperativeness includes secondary traits like: tolerance, empathy, helpfulness, compassion, and ethical interaction with others. Cooperativeness is one's ability to interact appropriately with others. Matthew 7:12: says, "Do unto others as you would do unto you." Tolerant individuals are able to accept those with very different values or opinions, that is, listening to the opinions of others without being critical but patient. Empathetic people are those who can walk in someone's shoes and understand the feelings of others. They hold fundamental respect for people's feelings. Helpful people approach others with humility, recognising that more is achieved in working in teams than by working alone. Helpful people often labour for others in service to others. Compassionate

people are willing to forgive. They do not resort to revenge when they are wronged. People who interact ethically with others are not driven by power motive. They treat others fairly and are not opportunistic but possess a humble understanding of the need for others.

(c) Self transcendence

Transcendence is one's perspective on his relationship to creation, and refers to how an individual views his/her place, role activity in relation to the rest of creation (Pettit, 2008:153). Secondary traits include creative self-forgetfulness and spiritual acceptance. Creative self-forgetfulness is when we are involved in an activity that corresponds directly to our giftedness. For example, a feeling like, this is what I was created for, and losing track of time while you are engaged in that activity. Such people are able to transcend their own boundaries and become engaged with the activities /persons with whom they are interacting with, and experiencing deep meaning from the event. Self-forgetting people are able to move beyond rugged individualism to see the manner in which their lives connect with those around them. Such people are able to understand how their actions relate to other people and what is occurring in the world. They see the big picture. Spiritual people are able to understand that not everything can be explained by science but that there is a supernatural being/ power behind some phenomenon elsewhere. They have the ability to see hope beyond what the human mind can imagine. Spiritual people move beyond the search for personal pleasure and power, but instead find meaning beyond oneself. Spirituality has marked implications for effective leadership (Pettit, 2008: 153).

However, Pettit (2008) insists that mature Christian character requires balance between self-directedness, and discipline—the ability to interact with others and the ability to embrace the mystery of life that goes beyond what we see with the naked eye. Mature character is the interaction of these three: To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

4.5 Relationship between character and spirituality

In the biblical, and particularly in the New Testament perspective, "the-way-one-is" (the-way-one's-heart-is) is particularly defined and shaped by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Hence, Meye's (1988) argument that we cannot dismember character from spirituality, as the two are inter-lockingly related. Therefore, spiritual formation and character formation will of

consequence be related concepts as well (Ott, 2016), since they are inextricably linked (Pettit 2008:145).

Meye (1988:101) maintains, that to be spiritual is to exist in the power field of the Spirit, the Spirit of God who is incarnate in Jesus. To be spiritual is to have one's life "genetically" imprinted by divine agency, is to be congruent with that which is made known of God and that which was manifest by God through the Incarnate Son, Jesus (Meye, 1988:101).

The life of Jesus of Nazareth, in Christian perspective, is the normative instance of life in the Spirit. The fruiting of the Spirit (the spirituality of a person) [leads] into Christian character [the fruits of the spirit]. Meye (1988:104) noted that spirituality in the New Testament may be defined as "the forms that holiness takes in the concrete life of the believer," which may include spiritual activities such as praying, communing and fasting etcetera. While spirituality implies activity, character implies condition, which is the way we are understood in a passive-static sense. Meye (1988:106 -107) insisted that character and spirituality can exist in a reversal role relationship as follows: First, character is "in process" as we are engaged in life. Love, joy, and peace, marks of character (in the Spirit) are surely "active"— so that the New Testament is well-populated with calls to love, to rejoice, and to be at peace; second, spirituality is "in condition" as life in prayer, in the Word of God, and in community, as spiritual activities, are clearly activities initiated, sustained, and made fruitful by divine agency (the Holy Spirit); and third, it is also clear that these activities are descriptive of character understood as *the sort of person one is*; thus, when we speak of devout persons, the connotation of the term is as much inward and passive as outward and active.

Critical to note in our understanding of the relationship between character and spirituality are three points: they are synonymous concepts; they are dependent of each other and never independent of each other; Christian character involves a devotion to God and that this devotion to God is a vehicle for the growth in Christian persons' character traits (such as love, joy, peace). The flowering of Christian character leads one in a deepening "pursuit after God" along the pathway of traditional devotional praxis (spiritual). The essential question to note in this study is whether an advocacy for ministerial character formation should also include ministerial spiritual formation?

4.6 Character Formation

Having discussed various perspectives on character as a concept, there is need to look at the concept 'character formation' particularly as it relates to the praxis of theological education.

Unlike character, character formation is a process (Oxenham, 2019; Rogers, 1991: 430) and a journey (Bland, 2015:41), implying that it has a starting point and focuses on a goal. In *Vision and Character*, Dykstra (1981) defines Christian formation as the activity of God in sanctification, where sanctification is conceived of as the life-long process of formation and transformation of Christian character. According to Collicutt (2015:3) the use of the word ‘formation’ to describe the Christian life has been treated both with loath or appreciation, and controversy or aversion. The scholar points out that in the former, it has been associated with status as it is associated as part of the jargon of the ‘spiritual professionals.’ In the latter, its meaning is implied to mirror a picture of a sausage machine, which mixes and minces up meat and then literally forces it out into a uniform mould to suit the requirements of the production company. Here formation implies violence, restriction, blandness and objectification (Collicutt, 2015: 3). Formation can be seen to mirror a picture of a potter moulding his clay. Again, this is a picture of bashing, breaking and squeezing. However, are these pictorial images or imagery depicting the kind of formation Christians undergo?

Hauerwas (1975:231) maintains that character formation takes place because we are fundamentally social beings, implying that the character thus formed is relative to the kind of community from which we inherited our primary symbols and practices. Character formation is therefore a legitimate collaborative stance among various community agencies such as the church, the family, peers, and educational institutions, are all key to the formational process.

Habl (2011:141) noted that in the 21st century, questions about character formation are moving from the margins to the centre of social and educational attention. As Lipovetsky (1999: 11) has written, “The 21st Century will either be ethical or it will not be at all”. Jabl (2011:141) complained, “...the physical survival of the population” is at stake, surmising that if things continue as they are, the planet will become uninhabitable, thus suggesting that the 21st century will either be ethical or it will not be at all. It is critical to note that at the centre of the apparent emphasis is that there exists a moral deficit in society and therefore arising is the need to reclaim a forgotten mandate—character formation. At least among the ecclesia communities of prosperity gospel fraternity, it was noted in chapter one that there is a state of moral decadence on the part of church leaders and questions were raised whether it was due to flawed character formation in theological colleges or pressures from materialism.

Jabl (2011:141) observed that the need for character formation has raised critical questions on different fronts as follows. On the one hand are questions about methodology, such as how to

educate character—by what method, in what form and using what means. On the other hand, are questions of content—what to teach, what kind of knowledge, and which skills to be developed. There are also teleological questions: what is the goal of moral education and what should the properly formed character look like? Equally important are questions of philosophy and anthropology, which require a cultural—historical interpretation: where did the moral deficit come from that drive people to the brink of self-destruction? What are its roots, what is it based on? Fundamentally important is the question: how is it that human character needs formation in the first place? Why does it suffer de-formational tendencies?

According to Pradhan (2009:4) character formation is mainly gradual growth rather than inborn. It grows through activity, effort and taking responsibility through the making of hard choices in life. The growth process is greatly affected by personal and social influences. The growth of character brings with it an increasing integration that manifests itself among other ways, in resistance to the various influences. However, it has been found out that when character and intellect grow side by side and reciprocally influence one another, the two growth processes and the resulting organisations are largely independent of one another (Pradhan 2009:4).

Although there are many theoretical views about character, the most common one highlights the following points: that character of a person is not the whole but a part of his personality; that character is not innate but rather a product of gradual development; it is highly a complex organisation or structure consisting of likes and dislikes, loves and hates, admirations, respects and contempt; that the mere possession of sentiments does not in itself constitute character but rather character is achieved by each person only in so far as his sentiments become organised into some stable integrated system; that individuals progress to various stages and forms. It also has been noted that any attempt to classify character under a few types is doomed to futility but that it is possible to speak of dimensions of character.

4.7 Biblical justification for character formation in theological education

Ferdinando (2008:45) asked the critical question why character formation should be a central question in theological education. In answer to this question, the scholar argues from a biblical viewpoint by reflecting exegetically on four biblical passages of scripture the view that character formation should be the main focus of attention in theological education colleges. The scholar identifies four scriptures: Matthew 4:18-20; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 5:1-14 and 1

Timothy 4:1-16, to argue the case for why character should be the major concern in theological education. For clarity, these shall be evaluated each in turn.

4.7.1 Character formation is what Jesus intended for the disciples: Matthew 4:18-20

[As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers; Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him.]

Ferdinando’s (2008) argument is drawn from Matthew 4:18-20 where Jesus calls his first two disciples, Simon Peter and Andrew and pledging to them that He wanted to make them fishers of men. In this scripture, the scholar argues that Jesus wanted to form the character of his disciples because this is what he intended to do to them. The task that Jesus was focused on was four-fold as follows:

- (a) *Training fishers of man:* When Jesus called the first disciples, he called them so that they will be trained as fishers of men. This means that he wanted to form them into some new people for a new assignment—to prepare them for engaging in God’s mission for the world – a mission directed to the redemption of lost souls (Ferdinando 2008: 45). Jesus’s intention was to form disciples into characters that would value the mission of God for the world. Any formation that misses the missiological intention misses the whole point of formation. The content and method of programmes of theological education should therefore reflect that fundamental concern.
- (b) *Following Christ:* Following Jesus was going to be a holistic experience, to include forming their character. Jesus modelled his disciples so that they were to be like him in all respects—Christ-like even in character. Paul reiterates the same thing (1 Corinthians 11:1): “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” Following Jesus was not just about walking behind him, or about learning his teaching in a purely cognitive sense, but about living the sort of life, he lived and having the sort of character, he had (Ferdinando, 2008:47).
- (c) *Character traits of Jesus:* According to Ferdinando (2008:47-48), there are three main character traits of Jesus that explained the whole concept of following Jesus and being trained as fishermen in pursuit of God’s mission for the world.

- (i) First, there is a *spirit of dependence* on God. It is an attitude- a character trait—of humility and trust. Training should communicate dependence on God and humble submission to God. Education, sadly, can produce the opposite spirit: the higher the qualification the greater the danger of intellectual pride and self-sufficiency.
 - (ii) Second, is the *spirit of compassion*, which is seen in Jesus’ attitude towards the crowd (Matt 9:36). Unless compassion characterises our students, we risk producing Christian Pharisees (John 7:49).
 - (iii) Third, is a *spirit of service and sacrifice*. Ferdinando (2008:48) noted that Jesus’s own words indicate something about the nature of his relationship with his disciples when He said, “I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). The disciples were specifically chosen to a life defined by the bearing of the cross. “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 18:21-25). Jesus modelled the cross shaped life before his disciples, constantly reminding them that gospel advances through suffering, the human weakness and pain of its servants. The danger is that theological students may see their education and qualifications as a means to avoid suffering and to be served. Theological education—our institutions—should not be a ladder to ease, but a gateway to suffering.
- (d) *The method of training*: Ferdinando (2008:49-50) emphasises that theological educators (teachers or lecturers) should teach character through the hidden curriculum just as Jesus did. By their attitudes and behaviour (towards colleagues, students, work and the church), teachers and their institutions teach an invisible curriculum: they display a character, which will affect their students with lifelong effect. Theological educators (knowingly or unconsciously) are shaping character as Jesus did.

The main idea that Ferdinando (2008:49) stresses is that theological education and educators should consider character formation important in training theology students because it was important for Jesus: he valued and invested on character. Character was important to Jesus because it was vitally and organically linked to the task for which he called his disciples—the mission of God. It is those who reflect something of the character of Jesus who can fish for men. Theological educators should have as their central task the training of character befitting to be fishers of men.

4.7.2 Character formation is the product of the Truth (The Word of God): Romans 12:1-2

[Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.]

The second argument that Ferdinando (2008:49-50) puts forward regarding the biblical justification for character emanates from Romans 12:1-2. Character should be a critical concern in theological education because exposure to Truth (the Word of God) ought to produce transformed lives—*renewed character*. Character is important in theological education because renewed character (changed persons), and not just increased knowledge, is what the Word of God is intended to produce. Training in college does not make sense if that training does not produce transformed lives. To sustain this argument, Ferdinand (2008:50) uses the hermeneutic in Romans 12:1-2 as follows:

- (a) *The living sacrifices*: Knowledge of God's mercies (through His Word) should penetrate hearts and attitudes of the whole person so that he/she considers himself as a living sacrifice of worship to God. For as long as a person sees himself now as a new character, one that can see himself as a living sacrifice, then the life of that person will have been changed by the Word of Truth. The entry of truth (the word) into their experiences thus changes their reality. It puts them in a new place existentially so that they are no longer, what they were before. "Truth does not only inform minds, but it should lead to the total consecration of lives as God intends it to do. It should impact character – hearts, attitudes, motives, and dispositions" (Ferdinand, 2008:51).

- (b) *Transformed minds*: Non conformity to world demands does not happen on its own, but it takes place through the transformation of the mind. In Galatians 5:22-23 Paul speaks of the fruits of the spirit as coming out as a result of a transformed character. Therefore, transformation into non conformity is a question of the mind. Why? Because what we live emerges from what we think. "It is the content and disposition of the mind that fashions character and so determines action" (Ferdinand, 2008:51). Paul's implication and assumption is that our minds have been programmed to act in conformity with a fallen world and with the old pre-Christian nature. Human beings, "go with the flow" adopting the world views and habits of their cultures which themselves reflect the fallenness of those who have constructed them. They follow the 'ways of the world and

of the ruler of the kingdom of the air' (Ephesians 2:2). If that is to change, minds need to be renewed—to be reprogrammed. Thus, old patterns of thought must be replaced with new ones. There needs to be a Christian mind—a *character change*—such that believers think and so act Christianly. The problem with Paul's assumption is that he does not explain how the renewal of the mind should happen. However, he contends that through the workings of the Holy Spirit, men and women are transformed and changed into the image of Christ. Ferdinand (2008:51-52) hastens to warn that change will not occur in the absence of intentionality on the part of the individual. They are to actively engage into it by putting into their minds those things, which will promote change and produce a Christian worldview, a new set of assumptions, values and ambitions. This implies a steady assimilation of the Word of God. The scriptures stress their own efficacy in changing people. The truth set you free (John 8: 32); releasing men and women from the slavery of ingrained sinful dispositions (John8:34); the truth of God's word sanctifies (John 17:17). Truth informs the mind and transforms the character of a person (Ferdinand, 2008:52).

- (c) *Testing and approving*: Renewed minds make renewed judgements: 'they test and approve what God's will is,' and work towards obeying His will. Obedience to His will can only effect through a transformed character, rather than from compliance to a set of rules/commandments.

From a theological education viewpoint, as teachers teach students, they are ideally addressing human minds so that they are equipped to discern God's will. Theological implications can be discerned from this discussion of the effect of truth on character:

- (i) Theological education must impress on the humble seeking of God's grace for both teachers and students. As alluded above, transformation of minds is the work of the Spirit, but prayerful life should be the invested component from the individual
- (ii) There must be an intentional pursuit of character transformation about the teaching of theology. Teachers may hinder or facilitate this transformation. Lectures, courses and programmes must be prepared with the ultimate goal of mind renewal.
- (iii) Transformation is about Christian character – Christian wisdom – and not about Christian rule keeping. True theological teaching pursues an understanding of God's perfect will, rather than a preoccupation of quantity of material covered. 1 Corinthians 10:15 (*I speak to sensible people: judge for yourself what I say.*); (2

Timothy 2:7: *Reflect on what I am saying for the Lord will give you insight into all this*).

- (iv) Teachers/lectures do their students a disservice if they are hearers and note takers only. Because ‘...from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded...’

Ferdinando’s (2008:51-52) main idea from the scripture in Romans 12:1-2 is that theological education must focus on transformation of character because it is what is the Word of Truth seeks to produce.

4.7.3 Character formation is a requirement for ministry: (1 Peter 5: 1-14)

Theological educators train students in various ministries. Whatever the type of ministry it is, character is vital. In this scripture, Peter is responding to the question: In the light of the persecution the church is facing, what sort of character should the leaders show? Peter is addressing the vitality of leadership character as shown in the appeal, the attitudes and hope.

- (a) *Peter’s Appeal*: The appeal is that leaders should show a shepherding character. One of caring about the flock, and recognising the privileged trust and responsibility assigned to them to lead God’s people – the attitudes which they bring to leading the flock – their (leaders) character.
- (b) *The attitudes*: Peter in this scripture is not addressing pastoral issues, but rather the attitude that leaders should show – the character which the leader brings to the task of leading the flock. The approaches that stress heart and motive rather than technique and skill will build the character of a leader. The implication here is that theological colleges should stress issues to do with the heart and the motive than technique and skill. Peter particularly addresses three things: motive, power and money.
 - (i) Leaders should do their work out of a motive to serve God first and foremost. Transformed character is the critical element out of which true motivation for Christian service flows.
 - (ii) Elders must work, ‘not greedy for money, but eager to serve.’ However, this issue is sensitive as there are scriptures that tend to justify earning for work done. For example: Luke 10:7- the labourer is worthy of his hire; 1 Corinthians 9:14 – those who serve the gospel have a right to a living on it; 1 Tim 5:18: the oxen should not be muzzled as it treads the grain. It was noted in chapter one

that in many prosperity churches, these scriptures are interpreted and skewed in favour of the leaders. In the scripture, Peter is saying leaders should not be working for the money...it is not the money that motivates them to serve but they are eager to serve the Lord Jesus and the people. Therefore, the financial recompense they receive is simply what makes concentration on the task possible. The issue is not whether people are paid or not but what their motive is for doing the work. They should be paid, but they do not serve because they are paid – they serve because they are eager to do so.

(iii) Leaders are to serve and not loading it all on those that they shepherd (simply because they have power to do so). They should lead by example. The possession of power reveals the leaders' real character. Power corrupts and leaders quickly assimilate to the models they see in the secular world. As Peter writes, it is probable that he remembers how the pursuit of power had more than once divided the apostle themselves during the earthly ministry with Jesus (Mark 9:33-37; 10 :35-45; Luke 22: 24-28). Leadership can be undertaken simply for the sake of power, in which point, leaders serve themselves rather than those they lead. When that happens, consequences are dire: relationships are disrupted as rivals compete and wrestle for positions; openness and transparency suffer; schism develops; destruction of the Christian testimony results; defiling of the gospel. Truly counter-cultural leadership is not about control but focussed on a godly life: one that mirrors and incarnates the person of Jesus. Character is therefore foundational in how leaders show themselves. Theological educators must intentionally focus on what produces leaders and what motivates them to lead others.

(c) *Hope*: Peter refers to the reward that is promised to those who serve faithfully as “the glory to be revealed...the crown that will never fade away.” Hope is what should inspire and stimulate Christian life and ministry – and the motives and ambitions that drive them. Therefore, the teaching of theology should be transformative in intentions – shifting the hope of the students from the present and visible – from the pursuit of money, power and position to the eternal and invisible. Hope changes character and produces ministry that glorifies God and edifies his people. It takes character to cultivate a hope for the invisible eternity. New Testament eschatology is not an

academic debate; theological educators should cultivate a character that hopes for glory and a crown that never fades away.

What Ferdinando (2008) seems to be emphasising is that ministry requires a certain kind of leadership skills and these skills develop because of a character that seeks to be transformed. Ministry succeeds because of the character the leader brings to the task of leading.

4.7.4 Character formation implies teaching abilities: (1 Timothy 4: 1-16)

The scripture cited in 1 Timothy 4:1-16 stresses the view that certain character traits are critically necessary in order to carry out the teaching role faithfully and effectively (Ferdinando 2008:58). Teachers communicate attitude and character as they teach their students. In Africa, we have many teachers who possess impressive diplomas, but what we need are models that Christians can imitate (p.58).

- (i) *Submission*: In the quoted scripture, Paul is responding to a teaching, which was not in line with scripture. He summons Timothy to refer to scripture by humbly submitting to scripture yet also being aware of the limitations of human reasoning. Paul exhorts Timothy that good teaching must submit to the authority of scripture. Revelation should never be compared nor allowed to compete with academic reason and academic freedom. Theological colleges should cultivate this virtue of humility in their teaching: it sets the boundaries of acceptable character before God.
- (ii) *Courage*: Paul reminds Timothy that teaching sometimes requires courage. What Paul was saying could have provoked serious issues within Greek cultural milieu and as such would require courage to stand on his ground. The character issue is having the courage to communicate the truth even in dangerous circumstances.
- (iii) *Godliness*: Paul reminds Timothy never to waste time on worthless theological debates and speculation but to invest that time in prayer and building a relationship with God. To develop Godliness requires a character that can accept tutorship by the Holy Spirit in discerning and understanding God.

- (iv) *Conviction*: Paul exhorts Timothy to teach and command with authority and conviction. In his cultural context, Timothy experienced the problem of his youth – people may have despised his teaching because of his young age. Communicating God’s word under such prejudice is in itself a conviction. Traits of character needed to counter such prejudice needed to be developed.
- (v) *Diligence*: Paul urges Timothy to be diligent in his work despite his challenges. Paul ends with an imperative: the teacher is to watch both life and teaching – both shape lives. The truth he speaks is to be the truth he lives – in humble submission to God’s word, with courage and authority, godliness and diligence. Character is more important than anything else in theological education for it is vital to the student’s life and to the tasks, they are prepared for.

The main idea that Ferdinando (2008) seems to uphold is that teaching requires possession of character traits that facilitate the object of the teaching where submission, courage, godliness, conviction and diligence are character traits that should not be ignored in theological education programs. In conclusion, Ferdinando (2008:63) says, “...each of these scripture passages help clarify for us the critical significance that character should have in our practice of theological education.”

4.8 Theological basis for character formation in theological education

Pettit (2008:144) views character as those attributes by which we attribute something or someone. Thus, since God created man, his highest aspirations should be to know the character of God and mirror His character as we were created to do. According to Pettit (2008:144), God’s purposes for man and his primary responsibilities are specified in Micah 6:8 as follows:

He has showed you oh man what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

Justice, mercy and humility are the fundamental biblical qualities necessary to accomplish the greatest commandment (Love your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with your mind (Matthew 22:37, 39). It is Pettit’s (2008) view that if these are the primary attributes, then we should be asking the critical question: how should the attributes be developed? The answer to this question resides in canonical theological considerations in both the Old and New Testaments.

4.8.1 New Testament perspectives

(a) Paul says in Romans 5:3-5, “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know sufferings produce perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope.” An exegetical analysis of this scripture tends to point out to the notion that suffering provides an opportunity to develop a long-term perspective that is not rooted in our temporal surroundings. Through the change in perspective, we are able to endure that which is unpleasant and painful. Continual changes in this focus develop character that lasts. Character that looks to the future (hope) for the consummation of God’s kingdom and his reward for our endurance. Essentially Paul is describing the process of spiritual formation here that is the process of being transformed from our temporal perspective to an eternal one (Pettit, 2008:144).

(b) Scripture also addresses the role of discipline in character development (2 Peter 1:3-9). God has given us power through the Holy Spirit so that we are transformed to Godly men.

Peter lists goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, & love in that order and says;

“If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus. But if anyone does not have them, he is near-sighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from the sinful past.”

In this scripture, self-control is a foundation for godly behaviour, including the love that we share among our brothers and sisters. It is motivated by a good heart, which comes from faith and knowledge of our tendency to act. Just like Peter, Paul addresses the role of self-control (1 Corinthians 9:25) in character formation;

Like athletes, we beat our bodies to make them slaves (v.27) if we followed our own desires without controlling them, we would behave in ways that hinder our witness.

4.8.2 Old Testament perspectives

The wisdom literature contains a wealth of information regarding the theological basis for character formation.

Proverbs Wisdom Literature

In Proverbs 1:2-3 Solomon states that discipline or instruction on wisdom is his goal. The use of the word discipline in the context of Proverbs implies formation – moulding, something

from one form into another. God disciplines us for our growth and development in godliness, unfortunately making the process of character formation painful.

Now that we understand the theological basis for character, especially self-control for godly behaviour, as a primary goal for a Christian, we need to understand the following questions: How do we get there? What does it take for us to formulate this character in our lives? What is good character anyway and what does it look like in our lives? Furthermore, if there is sufficient biblical and theological basis for character formation, why is it that within the prosperity gospel fraternity, the level of apostasy is alarming as noted in chapter one? What factors account for lack of character formation among prosperity church leaders? What kind of formation did these leaders go through in their ministerial training if there was any? In order to understand these questions, there is need to understand the characteristics of Christian formation.

4.9 Characteristics of Christian character formation

The use of the word ‘formation’ to describe the Christian life has been treated both with loath or appreciation, and controversy or aversion. In the former, it has been associated with status as it is associated as part of the jargon of the ‘spiritual professionals.’ In the latter, its meaning is implied to mirror a picture of a sausage machine, which mixes and minces up meat and then literally forces it out into a uniform mould to suit the requirements of the production company. Here formation implies violence, restriction, blandness and objectification. Formation can be seen to mirror a picture of a potter moulding his clay. Again, this is a picture of bashing, breaking and squeezing. However, are these pictorial images or imagery depicting the kind of formation Christians undergo?

According to Collicutt (2015: 3), there are seven key characteristics that act as indicators of what Christian formation entails, and these have a biblical foundation in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and Galatians 4:19. These will be discussed each in turn.

4.9.1 The context: Formation happens in the context of cosmic transformation

Formation happens in the context of transformation, a transformation that involves the whole created order (Romans 8:19-21). There is a process of radical change afoot, and part of this process is the birthing and growing of something new (Collicutt, 2015:4). The concept transformation is explicitly prevalent in the bible: (a) the message of the kingdom of God is one of radical transformation – the mustard seed, the yeast, being born again, the inversion of

worldly values and priorities where the first are the last and the last are the first; (b) The work of Jesus is in essence radical transformation, for example, water is turned into wine; of want into plenty, of disease into health, of social exclusion into welcome, of sinner into saint, above all, of death into life; and finally (c) this work is continued by the Spirit, for example, of a group of cowering wretches into articulate and bold witnesses to Christ at the first Pentecost. This brings us perhaps to the most important facts about formation: formation is a work of the Spirit.

4.9.2 Formation is the work of the Spirit (Collicutt 2015:4).

Collicutt (2015:4) contends that formation is the work of the Spirit. Meye (1988: 101) shares this view when he stresses, “To be spiritual is to exist in the power field of the Spirit, the Spirit of God, who is incarnate in Jesus.... the fruiting of the Spirit (the spirituality of a person) [leads] into Christian character [the fruits of the spirit].” In 2 Corinthians 3:17, Paul says, “the Lord is Spirit.” He describes Christian believers as letters written by Christ using the Spirit of God as ink (2 Corinthians 3:2). In this scripture, Paul is emphasising that the process of transformation of which his readers are a part is a special work of the One we now know as the third person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the formation of the Christian can be said to be spiritual (Collicutt, 2015:4). The scholar notes that spirituality as a concept may have different meanings attached to it and thus warns readers about the need to understand ‘spiritual’ as used in the context. Whatever understandings we might have on spirituality and confusion thereof, formation acknowledges the importance of the lived human experience: life in God’s spirit and a living relationship with God’s spirit. It is a physical relationship: embodied human beings are alive to God in the material world here and now.

Christian spiritual formation can be understood as the transforming work of the spirit in every aspect of the life of a believer. This understanding leads to two interesting consequences. First, formation is seen to involve the whole of a person’s life- embodied thinking, feeling, acting and being in relationship. Second, as Paul asserts in 2 Corinthians, because of the nature of the Spirit, formation results in freedom (Collicutt, 2015:5).

4.9.3 Formation involves liberation and cooperation (Collicutt 2015:6)

The Holy Spirit is a liberator. The work of the Spirit is not to change a person into something he is not, but to enable that person to be truly and fully herself/himself. The Spirit, after all is

the spirit of truth. Understanding ourselves better enables us to cooperate with the spirit's work of personal transformation and liberation. Cooperation is a key aspect of the birthing, which is formation. Scripture (Luke 1:35 & 1:38 & 11: 27-38) biblically supports the idea of cooperation where Mary was an actively cooperating participant with the spirit in the birth of Jesus. Our intentional cooperation with God in the process of formation is discipleship.

In Romans 8:15 Paul says, "...you did not receive a Spirit of slavery..." implies that the Spirit liberates. Liberation brings forthwith willingness to act on the part of the one who has been liberated. The consent and willingness of the liberated is needed, hence Paul insists, the Spirit works in cooperation with the human spirit. A person does not become Christ-like because Christ has somehow jackbooted into a person's life and taken it over. Instead, a person becomes Christ-like because he has chosen to cooperate with the Spirit in a jointly owned work of personal transformation. Based on this understanding, formation then is more than the work of the spirit: It is the work of the spirit with our spirits. It starts with God, but this is the God who works with the human being.

4.9.4 Formation is for all of us

In 2Corinthians 3 Paul talks about "all of us" implying that God is at work with the life of every Christian and that every Christian is eligible to enter the door that beckons him/her to transform. Each Christian is 'called' to the work of ministry...therefore; all Christians are to participate in the formation process. Regarding those in leadership, none should regard themselves as special: there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

4.9.5 Formation is happy and glorious (Collicutt 2015:7)

Our formation should make us want to sing with joy because through it we are granted the privilege of participating in the glory of God because it takes pleasure in participating in it (Luke 12:22). Our formation could be described as God's happy project (Cherry, 2012:247). Given the circumstances of life, and our varying moods and temperament, we may not always grasp the sheer happiness of this process of transformation.

4.9.6 Formation is corporate

The corporate nature of formation is both easy and dangerous to overlook. The formation of the individual only makes sense in the context of the formation of the faith community in which

the individual is a member. Individuals are parts of a body; they stand in relationship to other individual parts of the body and to the body as a whole.

At Pentecost (Acts 2: 1), (the coming of the Spirit when people were all gathered on one accord), the corporate nature and social nature of formation is emphasised. The Spirit came upon them as a group, but the tongues of fire were individually distributed. The Spirit acknowledged both the collective and personal identity of these people. The body is made up of parts; both the parts and the whole are respected (Collicutt, 2015:10).

Every Christian has a personal life in the Spirit because he/she is a child of God. He also has a collective life in the Spirit because he is a member of a community who are God's people. In addition, he is in an interpersonal life with the Spirit because he is the brother of other Christians in the community, sometimes taking on a particular role or ministry, but always being in a relationship with his brethren. It is in this complex context that individual and corporate formation takes place: it is personal, collective and interpersonal. The body (the church) is itself situated in a wider environment – the world. It is this wider concept that reminds us of the whole point of the church's existence. Like Christ, who lived and died for the world, his body – the church – exists for the world. It is part of the mission Dei.

Collicutt (2015) uses the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32) to show the corporate nature of formation. In this story, the seed grows into a healthy tree through a process of deep and glorious transformations. The tree is an organic and complex whole of independent parts, whose branches must remain connected to the source of nourishment offered through the plant's vascular system if they are to flourish and bear fruit. However, in John 15, the branches bear fruit because they reach out into the wider environment and serve the inhabitants where upon the birds of the air make their homes. Here we have an image of a flourishing, integrated community that is open to others (Collicutt, 2015:9).

This story adds two important dimensions to the notion of formation. First, the community is formed through relational growth. Second, in the process, the peace, justice and social inclusion that are the marks of God's kingdom spill outwards from the flourishing community into the world.

4.9.7 Character formation is a reflection of 'Christ is formed in you'

The question to ask is: As the Spirit is doing the forming, who exactly is being formed? Galatians 4:19 is the only place in the New Testament that talks of the Christian life as a formative process (Collicutt, 2015:10). Who is formed? Paul makes it clear that it is Christ who

is formed. The outcome of the formation process is that a Christian community becomes what it is, it is true self, and the body of Christ. Like a child birth as Paul concedes, it is a happy event but one that has pain along the way. Therefore, Paul's words may be understood as a way of indicating that Christian communities should be conformed to the character of Christ. Collicutt (2015:10 -11) acknowledges that there is a sense in the scripture that through the formative work of the Spirit, Christian communities are to undergo a real 'ontological' change to become not just Christ-like, but to become Christ himself.

4.10 How does the formation of character take place?

Having looked at the nature and aspects of formation, the need for it and the biblical and theological justification of character formation, there is need to question how character formation actually takes place in practice.

4.10.1 Cultural and genetic influences

As an individual develops, the socialisation process is crucial to the building of character and culture (Hutcheon, 1999: 45). The social interaction that engages all people to participate and interact with one another defines socialisation. As the individual exists as a social being, he or she is enmeshed in some form of social interaction, where he or she shapes society just as society shapes him or her, implying that the relationship so formed is not linear but complex.

Hutcheon (1999:92) noted that many people believe that character for good or ill is determined by genes, whereas Hauerwas (1974:49) holds that character is determined by both genetic and cultural influences. Whilst both Hutcheon (1999:92) and Hauerwas (1974:49) acknowledge that the former view is a very contentious issue, Hauerwas (1974:49) emphasises, "Our actions are also acts of self-determination... [Implying that as such] character must be acquired and cultivated." Hutcheon (1999:95) urges biological determinists, "to stop believing in an obsolete doctrine of inherited (or revealed) character long invalidated by science," and maintains that it is the socialisation process that shapes the character and the cultural environment feeding the process of character formation. However, Hauerwas (1975: 231) maintains that character formation takes place because we are fundamentally social beings, implying that the character thus formed is relative to the kind of community from which we inherited our primary symbols and practices.

4.10.2 Life narratives and practices

Grobien (2019:71; 69) holds that character is shaped by life narratives and practices but develops in degrees by the influence of actions and practices. Grobien's (2019) view discounts

the view that moral life is based on law or existential freedom and thus validating the fact that moral principles and norms cannot be sufficiently adequate guides to character formation. Hauerwas (1974:72) maintains that moral principles are mere shorthand reminders necessary for moral education and explanation. Life narratives experienced by a person present the settings and events in which the person makes decisions about values leading to action, which forms character.

Hauerwas (1974: 74) notes, “Our character is the result of our sustained attention to the world that gives coherence to our intentionality. Such attention is formed and given content by the stories through which we have learned to form the story of our lives.... The significance of stories is the significance of character for the moral life.”

Since stories and metaphors communicate the comprehensiveness of moral character, they shape a person’s milieu and character and therefore represent the person’s life narrative (Grobien, 2019:72). It is for this reason that narratives are central in character formation. Narratives communicate the mutual influence that individuals have of each other’s lives. Grobien (2019:72) argues, “With regards to the Christian narratives, the basic requirement is conversion.” A person does not become Christ-like only through learning the narrative of Jesus but through conversion via the regular activities and practices such as baptism, worship and prayer. At least within the Christian tradition, discipline, forgiveness and repentance are critical core practices that shape character. The activity of the Holy Spirit cannot be underestimated in the character formation process. The question to ask is how far can church practices, especially prosperity church practices be the true stewards of narratives that form Christ-like characters?

4.10.3 The self as agent

Grobien (2019:63) maintains that character is both formed and revealed by actions. Past actions form the present character of a person, and actions that he takes in the present, form who he will be in the future. Character may be formed by roles and expectations of the society. Norms, values and direction of society form the character of a person by attending to these norms, values and direction. Despite external pressures, a person will exhibit certain identities he has received from the society.

Character and agent are closely linked. According to Grobien (2019:63), an agent is someone who acts in order to bring out a certain effect, an effect which the reasons can be attained through action. The scholar holds that character is both a horizon for action and is affected by choice (Grobien, 2019:63). Grobien (2019:63) stressed, “Choice is the centre of action but

character is the determination of choice as well as its continuing result.” This relationship between choice and action is consistent with Hauerwas’ (1975:112-113) conceptualisation of character as deliberate action in the light of our chosen patterns of descriptions. According to Hauerwas (1975), the self can be an agent in as far as it embraces the integrity and willingness to claim one’s past actions as one’s own. These past action and experiences become the person’s imprint of character. Character formation develops out of the interaction of developing virtues as our present acts draw from our past determinations into a new synthesis of possibilities made by the agent’s decisions and beliefs.

4.10.4 Community as agent

Character formation is a legitimate collaborative stance among various community agencies such as the church, the family, peers, and educational institutions (Hauerwas, 1975). Jaison (2017) has this to say, “Without context of community, formation and transformation [of character] would remain invalid and irresponsive.” Thus, in the context of theological education, a learning community does not refer to a group of students, but it is the body that lives, learns and grows together in the knowledge of God (Jaison, 2017). All of these are key to the formational process.

Hauerwas’ (1975) perspective is shared squarely by Meye (1988:107) who maintains that spiritual character or Christian character formation is formed by body, mind, self, body-life, life-in-the world and life- against- powers. The implication is that the community is an indispensable part in the development of character formation. Meye (1988:107ff) identifies five constituencies from which character formation takes place: family; significant others (to include those who make a difference in our lives); peer and social groups; school experiences (to include the range of all nurturing instruction); and the world about us (in the form of media, and an unending succession of personal and impersonal experiences, some freely chosen, some forced upon us, all with the power to shape us). Hutcheon (1999:46) places high regard on the family as a strong influence in character formation. With these influencing constituencies in the background, Meye (1988: 107ff) identifies five key points that characterise the formational process.

4.10.5 Key points: the character formation process

First, the entire formation process is the result of both “forming” and an “in-forming” pressure. The pressure is sometimes internal (as in self as agency), sometimes external; sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh; sometimes effective, sometimes ineffective; sometimes repressive of

growth, sometimes catalytic toward growth; whatever the case may be, whether as in genetically imprinting a seed, or as in moulding clay, more or less visible forces are constantly "active" in shaping us.

Second, and at least within the Christian perspective, the supreme formative power is God, and that all other powers must bow before God's good pleasure for us, we who as a race are created with the genetic imprint of the divine, and then recreated through the instrumentality of faith in Christ, the giver of the spirit of God. It is critical that we know and confess who is the power and the glory in this shaping process, and how the wisdom and power of God are mediated to us so that we are rightly formed in the image of Christ. It is also important that we recognise, as part of the body of Christ, wherein we ourselves are called to serve as one of God's pressure points in the continuing formation of the people of God.

Third, the formative influences in our lives are dominantly good and strong from our earliest childhood, to the full flower of life; it is we ourselves who, subject to the formative wisdom and power of God, have the major role in our own character formation. A critical mark of character is the readiness of a person to be formed in and by the Spirit, to have a responsive heart, to be changed from *the sort-of-person-one-is* outside of God to *the sort-of-person one-may-become* in and through the Spirit. Our readiness, within the give and take of relationships with God and the children of God, to listen, to repent, to be informed and inspired, to be directed, to be discerning, and to be an active-passive instrument in the formation of others (among other things), will determine what sort of persons we become.

Fourth, character is permeable and malleable; when permeated and shaped by the good, it will be transformed from one degree of glory to another. If impermeable and hardened, it is subject to degradation, changing in an unspiritual and a dehumanising direction. Finally, character formation is exponential. To the one that has, it will be given; from the one who has not, it will be taken away. The Good News is that the One who takes away has a prior disposition to give. The love of God poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us, is the great shaping power forming Christian character.

4.11 Barriers to character formation

However, despite having knowledge of these essential constituencies to character formation Meye (1988) warns readers of the need to take note of potential challenges of formation, which

are four-pronged: disintegration; dissolution; trivialisation; and pollution. The first challenge arises where there is instability in the nuclear family resulting in depleted family influence over the individuals. Regarding the second challenge, dissolution arises out of disharmony between the players in the formational process. For example, where the family and the church and theological institution do not work in harmony to achieve formation, dissolution arises. Trivialisation often occurs where there is a general attitude of reluctance on the part of the individual(s) towards character building efforts. In some cases, where environmental and contextual factors exhibit toxic influences towards character formation, we have pollution. A good example is that media may sometimes feature models of character that are not of grade, thus facilitating formation that is polluted.

Issler (2012:140-143) draws from an exegetical analysis of scripture (Matthew 13:3-23; Mark 4:3-20 and Luke 8:5-18) about the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and postulates five key barriers to character formation as follows: the dismissive barrier; the discrepancy barrier; the distracted barrier; the disconnectedness barrier; and the distressed barrier. The first three come from the parable of the four soils, and the last two come from John 15: 4-5 and Jesus' experiences in the garden of Gethsemane respectively.

In the exegetical argument, Issler (2012:138) offers insightful clues to Christian believers on what influences tend to affect character formation. According to Issler (2012: 148, 152), the seed that fell on the road represents the dismissive barrier, so that the seed could not grow at all, representing the barrier of our worldview beliefs where we tend to restrict our search for new-to-us truths by the ideas or concepts we regard as not possible or plausible. Our false worldview beliefs can hinder us from learning new truths by bracketing off whole areas of ideas we now consider to be beyond belief (Issler, 2012: 148).

The discrepancy barrier was based on the seed that fell on the rocky ground in which the seed could not develop a sufficient root. The implication that Issler (2012:150) draws from it is that our deeply held worldviews beliefs are not what we necessarily profess or say we believe. In fact, our professed beliefs have little relation to our worldview beliefs – how we actually live. The problem is that we have a perception of ourselves – an idealised image without faults – that is in contrast to reality. We therefore envision that our own idealised self firmly holds to that truth, but reality often disrupts our routines, giving us an opportunity to notice a discrepancy. The existence of a false self is a hindrance to character formation.

The seeds that fell on the thorny soil represent the distraction barrier. The basic implication for the Christian community is that our way of life can be distracted due to worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and desires of other things. Stated differently, Issler (2012: 141-142) maintains, “What chokes fruitfulness is simply getting busy and pre-occupied with living, but without much attention towards Jesus’ Kingdom priorities.” Based on this analysis, the scholar stresses that the distraction barrier can be a hindrance to character formation.

The barrier of disconnectedness is perhaps one of the major hindrances to character formation (Issler, 2012:142). Disconnectedness results when people decide to live a life of dependence on oneself. Jesus taught a life of total dependence on God the Father (John 5:19-20). The implication is that if we are disconnected from divine relationships and resources, we are just as fruitless as the three soils in the parable. Furthermore, if we are cut off from divine empowerment, we cannot accomplish anything of lasting value regarding character formation. Thus, character formation cannot develop in the environment of disconnectedness with the divine.

The Gethsemane experiences show that Jesus was distressed but never sinned. The distressed barrier challenges us to be alert of sinful anxiety and excessive worry (Issler, 2012: 144). Distress can be a huge potential hindrance to character formation especially when during the distress a person is disconnected from the divine. Issler (2012:155) says, “What does God expect at the moment when we realise we have barriers? Transparency. The bible calls it ‘confession’, agreeing with God about this particular gap or sin.” According to Hauerwas (1975:206), “...the fundamental character of Christian life is given and defined in conversion.” Thus, Christian character, that is, possessing a Christ-like character, is a gift, and conversion provides the opportunity to develop the gift – the Christian character (Grobien, 2019:68). The advice that Issler (2012:155) recommends to the Christian community is, “...we need to become aware of what is hindering our formation journey into becoming more like Jesus.”

4.12 Theological implications of character formation on leadership roles

Character and leadership are inextricably linked (Pettit, 2008: 154). Pettit holds that leadership without mature character is not true leadership at all since leadership has its ultimate goal the glorification of God (Pettit, 2008:154). We were created as the crowning point of creation – God’s image bearers on earth, created to rule over it (Genesis 1:26-28). Spiritual leadership is a worthy ambition given that a man or woman of mature character desires the role.

One of the greatest roles of a leader is to integrate values with action. It is our character that determines the selection of some values over others and therefore defines our value system. At its very core, character is essential for effective leadership (Pettit, 2008:154). If character is essential for effective leadership, the question to ask is: What does effective leadership look like?

4.12.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership elevates the role of values and beliefs in the leader-follower relationship. Transformational leadership has become the predominant leadership paradigm of the 21st century. Kanungo and Mendonca (1996:35) maintain that leadership is very much a moral enterprise, the determination of which depends on the underlying motivation of the leader. The scholars assert that organisational leaders are truly effective only when they are motivated by a concern for others, when their actions are guided primarily by the criteria of the benefit to others even if it results to some cost to self (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996:35).

The underlying rationale or purpose of having a leader in a group or organisation is to move it towards the pursuit of objectives that, when attained, would produce benefits to both the organisation and its member. The altruistic motive becomes the only consistent motive for the leader role. This altruistic motive is consistent with moral leadership behaviour. In contrast, immoral leadership is egoistical and benefits the leader personally rather than benefiting others or the organisation as a whole. This is very much the problem under research in this study, where the prosperity church leaders tend to benefit more than the people they lead. Pettit (2008:156) observed that the challenge in real life situations is identifying the other – focussed from self – focussed motives of a leader. This difficulty is complicated when some personally motivated leaders may truly believe that their motives are altruistic. Such leaders are pseudo-transformational leaders (Pettit, 2008:156). The problem with transformational leadership theory is that it does not specifically include character as an essential and fundamental component of the process. So, if it does not, is there a theory of leadership that does?

4.12.2 Visionary Leadership Theory

One theory of leadership that does include character is visionary leadership theory. According to Sashkin and Rosenbach (1996) Visionary leadership theory is based on the same theoretical literature as the transformational leadership theory but explicitly acknowledges that leadership is more than specific behaviours enacted by the leaders. Visionary leadership theory declares that the leader's character is what promotes the transformational behaviour of the leader. The

reason why the Visionary Leadership Theory stands above other leadership theories is that it shows how the personal characteristics of the leader guide the transformational leader's action (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2002: 184). Leadership theory does not discount the importance of leadership behaviours, rather, it attempts to include such factors that influence transformational leadership behaviours, that is, both the leader's personal characteristics and the characteristics of the situation, and therefore it is a holistic theory. Personal characteristics included in the visionary leadership theory are:

(a) *Confident leadership (self-efficacy and self-control)*: Leader confidence involves personal control or belief in purpose and meaning in life's events, which is a sense of coherence. All these traits correspond to the character trait of self-directedness.

(b) *Follower-centred leadership*: This leadership type involves the leader's motivation for leading, that is, whether leader actions are personally or other-motivated. Follower-centred leadership correspond to the character trait of cooperativeness.

(c) *Vision*: A third characteristic of vision leadership is vision. However, within the theory understanding, vision is considered as ability rather than an aspect of the leader's character. The foundational components of vision are linked to leader self-regulation for they require the capacity to see long term implications and consequences of action before any action is undertaken. The big picture perspective corresponds to the character trait of self-transcendence. Visionary leadership approach attempts to incorporate the leadership character into the theory to account for the motivation behind effective leadership behaviours. This theory attempts to show how the inner life of the leader (the leader's being), causes the leader to act in a manner that transforms those around the leader, both people and organisations.

Pettit (2008:157) raises two critical questions: If who we are (our character) affects the way we lead, and it is true that our very being is corrupted by sin, how can we ever be expected to lead as God intended? We assert that mature character is necessary to sustain effective leadership over time, how do we develop this mature character? As Christians, spiritual formation tends to be the answer.

4.12.3 Leadership and Spiritual Formation

As a leader spiritual formation should be the primary focus of life. "Leadership is essentially a spiritual activity... [Therefore] leadership failure is at its root a spiritual issue" (Rima, 2000: 129). Rima (2000:129) further contends, "Whether the failure takes the shape of sexual immorality, unethical business practices, criminal activity or any other impropriety that could

lead to a leadership failure, at the core of these failures is the leader's inability to recognise, diagnose or address spiritual disease of one sort or another in his life." Such a spiritual disease is a deficiency in justice, mercy or humility, and a character deficiency (Pettit, 2008:158).

The key to understanding a leader's character lies with the first character trait: self-directedness. Pettit (2008) maintains that research has shown that low self-directedness caused personality disorders. Inability to regulate one's impulses and desires eclipses any attention to other people or non-self-focused perspective one possesses. Therefore, self-directedness is the pathway through which all other character traits are accessed and utilised. Practically then the key to unlocking the character mystery is through personal discipline which also comes through spiritual formation.

4.13 Theological Implications for character development

Pettit (2008:159) and Easley (2014:11) identified three major aspects that are the cornerstones of Christian leadership formation: community engagement; theological reflection and personal (character) formation. The scholars argue that these work in a complementary role in producing an effective Christian leadership. Figuratively expressed, theological reflection is the 'head', the community engagement, is the 'hands' and character (personal or spiritual) formation is the 'heart' (Easley 2014: 11, 14, 19). Thus, in critiquing the nature of leadership styles in prosperity gospel churches, there is need to be cognisant of the interrelatedness nature of these three dimensions.

4.13.1. Community is indispensable to character development

The key question to ask then is, what implications can we draw from our knowledge of what culture is, its nature, and its theological and biblical basis? Pettit (2008:159) draws on three major implications for character development. First is the indispensability of community for character development. Expressed in a figurative sense, community engagement deals with the leader's hands, implying working together in a community with purpose towards set goals (Easley, 2014:14). From a psychological viewpoint, people develop character over time, primarily through socialisation. Therefore, we possess a desperate need for a community in which we can grow and be nurtured. The community must be one in which the members practice, "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). It is possible for a leader to be practising authentic leadership (altruism) and be blinded by his own values, leading to pseudo-

transformational leadership in action. The only safeguard to this problem is the participation of the community, which allows for the exercise of character development.

Character development aided by community is supported in the scriptures: The reason why the church is essential in the life of each believer is, “so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12-13). The way we are to accomplish this is by way of following Paul’s command, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21). We must belong to a community where each person can both know others and be known, sustaining each other when challenges arise. Christians can provide mature leadership to create and sustain others, so that others too may become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

4.13.2. Character development must be sustained

Easley (2014:19) holds that since character development is the ‘heart’ of leadership formation, it has to be sustained. Easley (2014:20) contends, “The qualitative depth of one’s ministry and theological reflection is determined by the extent of personal formation one has achieved.” The scholar further points out that coming up with a Christian leader who has a cultured soul, transformed and sanctified spirit by the Holy Spirit and who has a commitment to live a Christ-like life in relationships and behaviours is not an easy task: it is a sustained process (Easley 2014:19). Pettit (2008:160) maintained that character and value changes are not temporary: character development is a long-term goal with setbacks along the way. “It must be treated as a marathon, not a sprint!” (Pettit, 2008:160). Lapses may occur due to self-regulation failures. These surface in a variety of ways: addiction, poor or self-centred decisions because we are all susceptible to the human condition as Paul in Romans 7:15, confirms, “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” Paul recommends us to live by the Spirit, for you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16). Dykstra (1996: 252ff) contends that the community takes part in this redemptive process as they collectively seek to understand how growth and development occurs through the life-giving power of worship, which is the heart of Christian education.

4.13.3. Reflection is required to facilitate character development

The third implication as noted by Pettit (2008) is that time for theological reflection as leaders is critical for character development. Heywood (2013:15) says, “...reflective practice is an expression of character.” At some point, a leader should first ask himself: Who am I? And

followed by, who do I want to become? Stone and Duke (2013:2) contend, "...the task of theological reflection is a key component of the Christian life." Tracy (1996:374ff) opined that theological education is designed to function as a dialectic in the formation process, examining the assumptions that form the basis for a particular belief system. The transformative learning theory requires that there is need for an evaluation of one's understanding of 'the way that the world works' also called one's worldview.

According to Easley (2014:11), these three elements; character formation, theological reflection and community engagement, have important implications for ministerial formation. As alluded above, community involvement speaks of the participation of the church, family and society towards character formation of students. Forming leaders of character is not 'sprint' as alluded by Pettit (2008:160); it is a process and thus, demands careful planning. This three-dimensional construct can serve as a framework for evaluation and shaping of the curricula and practices in our theological institutions (Easley, 2014:23). In reference to the research questions in this study, this framework moots the following questions: To what extent is this three-dimensional construct present in the Zimbabwean theological education institutions particularly among the prosperity church practices? What reformulation of the construct would make it more meaningful for ministerial leadership development among the prosperity churches in Zimbabwe? What resources and instructional methodologies would best support a curriculum that is based on a three-dimensional construct? What personnel are needed to model and mentor theological reflection, community engagement and character formation? This study will not deviate nor detour to focus on these questions because of space limitations but nevertheless these questions help to evaluate and critique models of theological education that will produce effective Christian leaders.

4.14 Debates on Character Formation

4.14.1 Definition of character

As indicated above, the varied definitions evaluated above tend to show controversy among scholars in what is meant by the concept 'character'. This controversy arises out of many premises and chief among them is the orientation of the definer. For example, Lickona (1991:51) identified three key components that constitute and define character: knowing the good; desiring the good; and doing the good. These components can be referred to as habits of the mind, habits of the heart and habits of action respectively. Desiring the good is understood

to be composed of six elements: conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving the good, self-control, and humility. Others have defined character somewhat differently. The Josephson Institute of Ethics has listed six “pillars of character”: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, citizenship. Berkowitz (1997:11ff) has offered a more psychological model of the “moral anatomy” which consists of seven aspects of moral functioning: moral action, moral values, moral character, moral emotion, moral reasoning, moral identity, meta-moral characteristics. The apparent lack of consensus as shown in the diversity of the rubric elements has contributed to the ensuing debate regarding the meaning of character (Berkowitz, 1999:2).

4.14.2. The place and source for character formation

Berkowitz (1999:5) says, “There is a centuries old debate about the appropriate place and source for the formation of character.” The authority to teach character has been claimed by religious institutions, families, and the state. For instance, Everding (1983:11) maintained that the shaping for character is a task for theological education, implying that theological institutions are the main authentic places where character is developed. Some argue for exclusive authority and others for shared authority. Most contemporary arguments are of the view that schools should be active participants in the formation of the character. Some argue that this is a natural venue for character formation, whereas others take a more remedial stance, arguing that schools must make up for the failures of other institutions (e.g., family, church) to fulfil their rightful duties as character forming agents.

4.14.3. Can virtue be taught?

As noted above, the study of virtue is very central to the formation of character. Marvin Oxenham (2019) opined that character formation is inextricably linked to virtue, the former being the whole and the latter acting as components of the former. According to Thoma, Snow and Curren (2014) of The Jubilee Centre for Character and Values, there is a raging debate on what virtues are, what constitutes virtuous character and whether they can be taught in any learning situation. Murphy (2003:433) acknowledges and confirms that the question, ‘Can virtue be taught?’ remains a contentious issue for the 21st century. In a paper entitled ‘Character Education’, presented at the Midwest Philosophy of Education Society Annual Conference, Murphy (2003:433) asked the question: can we teach virtues, values and character to students in today’s schools? Will they be ethical, moral and virtuous leaders who promote peace and justice and show through their actions that they care for others? Or will they be hypocritical leaders who lie, steal and cheat as long as no one catches them? As the scholar preoccupied herself with the two questions, she postulated a construct, which describes the virtues that can

be taught, and how they can be taught. Murphy (2003:434) opined that there are core virtues that ought to be taught to every human being no matter what their social, cultural or religious preferences. The core values are, honesty, respect, responsibility and kindness. On the basis of these core values, character formation therefore revolves around the main institutions of family, church and schools (Murphy 2003:434).

4.14.4. What character values/virtues are cardinal?

Oxenham (2019) says that it is easy to say that we want to develop character and virtue, but whose character and what virtues are we aiming at? Running alongside the major question of whether virtuous can be taught are two peripheral yet critical questions: what values are you going to teach; and how can you teach them in a more effective way? The scholar is convinced that although the question of whether virtues can be taught remains unanswered, he is convinced that character does not automatically develop from self-volition but rather should be a deliberate and conscientious effort on the part of educators. Still, the question of what values are cardinal has raised some debate too, with different scholars making different propositions. For instance, in Murphy's (2003:436) original core listings are the following virtues: trustworthiness, responsibility, caring, fairness and citizenship. To this list is Eliam's (1994:41ff) listing which included: respect, industry/hard work, persistence, fairness, compassion, civility/politeness, self-esteem or high expectations of one's self. Lickona (1991:325) argued that there are only two core virtues, respect and responsibility, which are the hub of all the other virtues. Kilpatrick (1992: 239), Wynne and Ryan (1993: 51-54) and Vincet (1994:7) maintained that every list of character trait should contain the four cardinal values (prudence, justice, courage and temperance) as handed down to us from Greek wisdom culture. The scholars argue that these four are the axis on which the moral life turns. In today's modern terminology, prudence is good decision-making skills, courage is 'fortitude', temperance is 'self-discipline' and justice is 'fairness' (Murphy, 2003: 437).

Thoma *et al* (2014) raised questions regarding how we can know that others including ourselves are virtuous at all. Furthermore, the methods used to measure virtue are inconsistent, therefore unreliable, and thus raising questions on what the right instruments are to measure virtuous character.

4.14.5. Is character endemic or situational?

The other debate which remains hotly contested stems from the approach that considers character as nothing else but simply situational responses to stimuli. Everding (1983:7) and

Hauerwas (1974:49), for instance, held that character could be determined by genetic and cultural factors. The wide belief that much of the variation in what people do cannot be attributed to enduring and general features of their character but can be better explained as resulting from situational stimuli has been contested vigorously (Thoma *et al*, 2014; Perkins and Timmerman 2014). Marvin Oxenham (2019) opined that this debate is far from being concluded.

4.14.6. How far can Scripture be used as the yardstick to assess the importance of character and virtue education in theological institutions?

According to Oxenham (2019), Scripture has a monopoly in arguing for the teaching of character and virtue education in our theological education. However, the question to ask is: what percentage does Scripture content help to justify the importance of character and virtue education? Therefore, Oxenham (2019) argues for the importance of other categories such as reason, tradition and experience. He argues that as individuals who respond to our cultures, our histories, and our experiences, we have inevitably been influenced by all the sources (reason, tradition and experience) in our theological thinking. Heywood (2013:15) seems to echo the same sentiments as Oxenham (2019) when he says that character is an expression of experience, thus, implying that we can know more about character by understanding our experiences. The proposals put forward by Pettit (2008) and Collicutt (2015) for Christian formation above seem to suggest that Scripture (theological and biblical) is the only definitive source that qualifies the need for character formation.

4.14.7. What methods can we use to work out a theology of character and virtue education?

According to Oxenham (2019), the question of methodology and tools that we use to theologise on culture, about the place of tradition in theology, and about our attitude towards other sources remains of substance in our study of character and virtue education. Regarding Scripture, there is also the central question: What exactly do we mean when we claim that we want the theories and practices of theological education to be biblical? Oxenham (2019) identifies four sources of Christian theology: Scripture, reason, experience and tradition. He argues that all these four contribute in shaping how we think theologically about education.

(i) Using Scripture for a theology of character and virtue education

Regarding Scripture, we are asking the question: How do we go about constructing a biblical theology of character and virtue education? (Oxenham, 2019). To the extent that Scripture is

the Word of God, therefore, it is a source good enough to justify the character and virtue education in theological education institutions. Therefore, key biblical texts and terms, biblical heroes and stories and biblical patterns of good practice among other things could have influence on character and virtue education. Oxenham (2019) posits that if Scripture assumes the supreme source for justification of character education, then scholars and theologians could focus on three legitimate expectations that need to be nurtured. First, the need to find explicit and implicit biblical support for educational theories. Second, the need to be equipped with critical filters that will help us spot theological incoherence in theological theories and practices. Third, a focus to find original content that will inject new elements of theory and practice that are not present in other sources.

(ii) *Using the cultural mandate for a theology of character and virtue education*

According to Oxenham (2019), articulating a theology of character and virtue education using the cultural mandate is responding to the *missio Dei* of creating culture on the basis of the mandate of Genesis 1. Man was given mandate to subdue the world, and fill the void with what is deemed good; therefore, he has the capacity to create a culture that encourages character formation and virtue ethics.

The scriptural and the cultural perspectives have been contentiously in tension when considering the theology of character and virtue education and these remain a subject for theological conversation. The varied nature of the questions raised in the debates show their historical and contemporary nature, and sufficient acquaintance to these questions will help to answer the key questions in this study.

4.15 Summary and conclusion

The research theme in this study focuses on the contributions of theological education in ministerial character formation. Therefore, this chapter reviewed character as a concept. It was noted that the concept has diverse readings and meanings, hence the continuing debate regarding its actual meaning. The review also focused on the nature and aspects of character, the need for character formation and the biblical and theological justification of it. In theological education, questions were asked regarding the foundational bases of character formation and the barriers to formation. It was noted too that character formation, spiritual

formation and leadership development are intricately related and hence, the need to have a holistic approach when considering the development of each of these three aspects. The chapter noted that there is ensuing discourse in character studies regarding a variety of issues, most important among them is how character formation can be developed, the methods of character formation and the place of Scripture culture, and environment on character formation. Finally, it was noted that shaping character for ministry is an essential task of theological education (Everding, 1983:11). The scholar stresses, “It is necessary, therefore, for the institution to discern what its social character is, how that character fits its shaping vision, and how that social character is functioning in the educational process” (Everding, 1983:12).

CHAPTER 5: Field Study: Understanding the role of theological education in character formation among prosperity churches.

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents empirical data that was collected in the field work from three different sources as follows: theological leaders; theological students and finally from prosperity church leaders/preachers. The interview questions in each of the categories sought to solicit answers from the respondents that would help in answering the research questions in the study. Please refer to the appendix section for fuller details of questions used in the interview for each of the three categories of respondents. Mainly, the data helped the researcher to understand the relationship matrix among the three main constituents: theological education; its role in character formation and how prosperity pastoral leaders were prepared (positively or negatively) in formation of character. Of critical importance is the idea that these three sources of respondents were meant to give data that would triangulate each other in order to understand the relationship among three variables: prosperity behaviour /practices; theological preparation in character formation and character expression of prosperity preachers/leaders.

5.2. Description of subjects

i. Theological Colleges

The theological colleges involved in the sample were purposely selected and were from three different theological orientations or persuasions: evangelical, Pentecostal and reformed traditions. To guarantee anonymity, the theological colleges were assigned pseudo names as follows: A, B and C.

ii. Theological leaders

Theological leaders that were interviewed were leaders in their respective theological colleges as follows: the Principal (P), the Vice Principal (VP), the Academic Dean (AD) and the Student Dean (SD). There were 12 theological leaders in all, that is, four from each of the three colleges. First, appointments were sought to seek permission to carry out the research in their institutions. Second, the theological leaders were asked to help identify student leaders who were the subjects of the research. The interview questions that the respondents were asked focussed mainly on the following thematic areas:

- a. Their views about the role of theological education in character formation;

- b. The nature and processes of student character formation; and
- c. Their evaluation of the characters of prosperity church pastoral leaders.

For full details of the interview schedule or questions, please refer to the appendix section.

iii. Theological students

Respondents involved in the interviews were student leaders in the colleges A, B and C. In total there were 12 students from the three colleges, that is, four from each college. The identification and selection of the interviewees was done in consultation with the student dean of each of the three colleges. The interview questions asked, provided data regarding the following themes:

- a. Their knowledge and perceptions of prosperity practices;
- b. Their view of these practices from a character formation perspective; and
- c. Their assessment of the role of theological education in ministerial character formation especially among pastoral leaders from prosperity church backgrounds.

iv. Prosperity church leaders/preachers

The seven (7) prosperity church leaders involved in the research were purposely selected. These were chosen from Harare Metropolitan Province. According to the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) statistics, Harare Metropolitan province constitutes the highest number of prosperity churches in the country. These were purposely selected based on their dominance in followership or members. The personnel at EFZ used their database to identify the top 7 (in terms of numbers) prosperity churches in Harare Metropolitan province. It was from the database that contact details of the prosperity church leaders were identified. The leaders were contacted and permission to carry out the research was requested and granted.

The interview questions in the category of prosperity church leaders focussed on three themes:

- (a) The nature and process of theological preparation for ministry;
- (b) Character formation of prosperity church leaders; and
- (c) The character/behaviour of prosperity church leaders in the practice of ministry.

5.3. Data collection instrument

5.3.1. *The interview schedules*

For the three categories of respondents, the instrument of data collection used was the interview schedule. Wilson (2014:2) defines an interview simply as “...a verbal questionnaire in which the interaction is limited by a script and a limited set of questions.” “In qualitative research, like is the case in the present study, an interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meanings of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world before scientific explanations” (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017:88). The advantage of using the interview was that by their very nature they are structured as maintained by Jamshed (2014:87). Gill et al (2008: 291) underscores, “The purpose of the research interview was to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and motivations of individuals on specific matters”. In this research, the interview allowed the researcher to probe further and understand the salient meanings in concepts and practices.

5.3.2. *Procedure of the interview*

The assistant researcher contacted the subjects to fix dates and times for the interview. The interviewees were guaranteed of anonymity and confidentiality. The interviewer introduced himself by explaining the purpose of the research that was being undertaken. Thereafter, the interviewer used a digital recorder to capture responses. Each interview took at most 40 minutes to complete. The responses were later transcribed. During the process of transcription, the interviewer discovered emerging themes and further polished the interview questions to find the underlying cause of the themes through probing.

Table 1: Showing summary of themes identified in the study

Category of respondents	Themes identified
Theological Leaders	a. Their views about the role of theological education in character formation; b. The nature and processes of student character formation; and c. Their evaluation of the characters of prosperity church pastoral leaders.
Theological students	a. Their knowledge and perceptions of prosperity practices;

	<p>b. Their view of these practices from a character formation perspective; and</p> <p>c. Their assessment of the role of theological education in ministerial character formation especially among pastoral leaders from prosperity church backgrounds.</p>
Prosperity church leaders	<p>(a) the nature and process of theological preparation for ministry;</p> <p>(b) character formation of prosperity church leaders; and</p> <p>(c) the character/behaviour of prosperity church leaders in the practice of ministry.</p>

The table below shows distribution and characteristics of the theological colleges and therefore the number of students leaders and theological leaders involved in the research.

Table 2: Distribution: Theological colleges, leaders and students.

Theological College	Theological Orientation	Theological Leaders Designation	Sex	Assigned Name	Highest Qualification	Theological Students Leader	Program	Sex
A	Evangelical	Principal	M	PA	Masters	SA1	BA	M
		Vice Principal	F	VPA	Masters	SA2	BA	F
		Academic Dean	M	ADA	Masters	SA3	BA	F
		Student Dean	M	SDA	Bachelors	SA4	BA	F
B	Pentecostal	Principal	M	PB	Masters	SB1	BTh	F

		Vice Principal	M	VPB	Masters	SB2	BTh	F
		Academic Dean	F	ADB	PhD	SB3	BTh	M
		Student Dean	M	SDB	Bachelors	SB4	BTh	M
C	Reformed	Principal	M	PC	PhD	SC1	DipTh	F
		Vice Principal	M	VPC	Masters	SC2	DipTh	M
		Academic Dean	M	ADC	PhD	SC3	DipTh	M
		Student Dean	M	SDC	Masters	SC4	DipTh	M
3	3			12		12		

As indicated above, the 7 prosperity churches and their leaders provided information that helped to understand the three matrices: their character formation, theological education and their practices. Each prosperity leader among the seven churches responded to a variety of interview questions focusing on the following:

- a. The nature and process of their theological preparation for ministry that informs their prosperity beliefs and practices
- b. How the prosperity churches prepare their pastoral leaders for character formation.
- c. Their perceptions of their behaviour or character in practice.

Table 3: Distribution of prosperity churches, leaders/preachers

Prosperity church name	Prosperity leader/preacher's name	Sex	Number of respondents
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PC1	PL1	M	1
PC2	PL2	M	1
PC3	PL3	F	1
PC4	PL4	M	1
PC5	PL5	F	1
PC6	PL6	M	1
PC7	PL7	M	1
Total 7	7	M(5) & F(2)	7

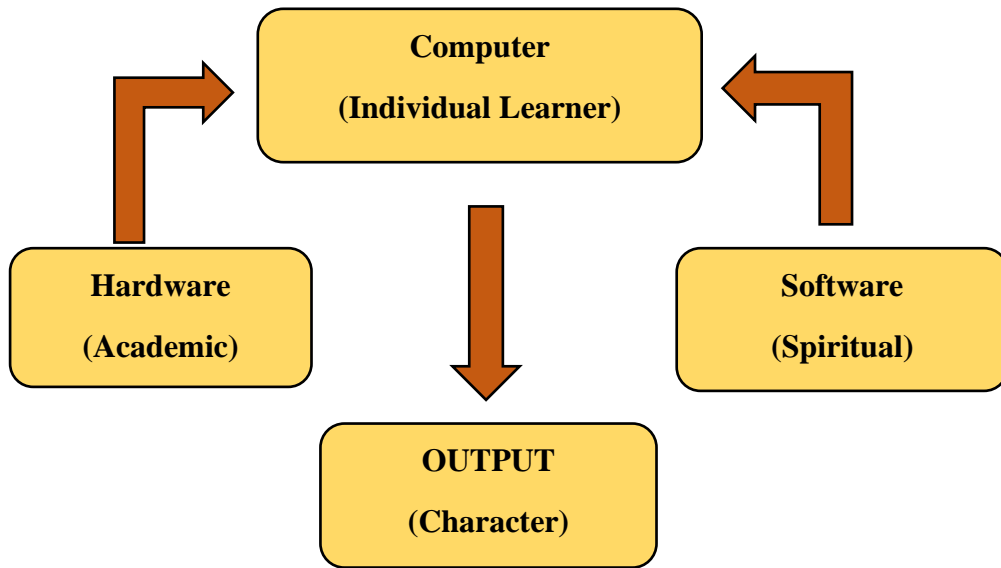
5.4. Presentation of data from theological leaders

5.4.1. The role of theological education in character formation: perceptions of theological leaders

(a) The role of theological education in character formation: Principals' (PA, PB, PC) comments:

It was noted that PA stressed that the role of his theological college was to prepare students for ministry by ensuring that they are trained in the 'theoreticals of ministry'. By this, he meant that in order for students to function with purpose in society, they needed the tools to "scan and study the environment" in which they will eventually be working. He specified that principally his college equips students with skills to serve not only within monolithic contexts in Zimbabwe but also in other contexts that are beyond the borders of Zimbabwe. Upon graduation from the college, a well character-formed student should have been equipped with knowledge and skills that are adaptable to both urban and rural or peri-urban environments. PA specified by way of example that Harare city can be considered as having three divides: northern affluent suburbs; southern affluent suburbs and the slumps. Therefore, whatever character these divides demanded, the student from his college adopted a character formation trait that would equip him/her suitably well to serve such diverse contexts. However, PA applauded churches for acting as a sieve to ensure that those students who finally find their way to his college would have been character formed at some level during their encounter with their churches before they were admitted to his college. He further illustrated the role of their theological college in character formation by referring to the analogy of a computer device and its two essential components: the hardware and the software.

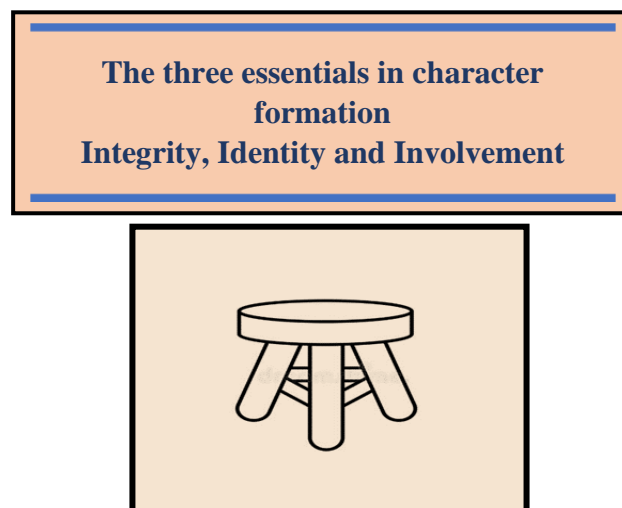
Diagram illustrating the concept of character as hardware and software



PA maintained that it is the interaction of the hardware and software that gives an output in the computer. Meaning to say the interaction of the academic and the spiritual must produce a character of a student. PA further pointed, "...there must be a match between orthopraxis and orthodoxy for good character formation." He insisted, "If there is no equilibrium between the academic and the spiritual, then no robust character is formed, in which case the inconsistencies in the software (the viruses) will have interrupted the desired ministerial character formation.

PB pointed out that his college's role is to train students with skills that will help them transform the lives of men and women in society and therefore such a leader will finally 'character form to fear God and model the character of Jesus Christ'. He added, "...the basis for character is enshrined in the Word of God, which compels us to a life of praying, worshipping and meditating..." PB emphasised, "Character is tested in real life situations..." Therefore, the role of his college was to train students to acquire character skills and traits that would enable them to transform society. PB noted, such traits such as, 'integrity and credibility' are the corner stones of a character that they wish all students graduating from his college should have. In his emphasis of the transformational role of the college, PB said, "...they are called, we will train them, they will change the world."

PC differed considerably from PA and PB as he stressed, "...theological education is about teaching theological doctrines and practical disciplines that finally shape the character of the student." He went further, "theological education prepares transformational agents with 3 I's— integrity, identity and involvement." He argued that these three are the cornerstones for a fully formed character that would match the demands of the environments the students were going to be working. If any one of the three fails, PC argued, the character of the product fails the community and finally God. "Therefore, according to PC, the basis of that character formation is in the teaching of the 3 aspects: identity (who am I?); integrity (the real you); and involvement (practice). He argued, "... a student who possesses these three qualities will adequately represent the person and character of Jesus Christ. The target for character formation therefore was the head (implying knowledge of theological disciplines and doctrines), the heart (the character and passion) and the hands (involvement – meaning the doing part)." Represented diagrammatically, the role of theological education was to produce a balanced and disciplined pastoral leader who can transform the society.

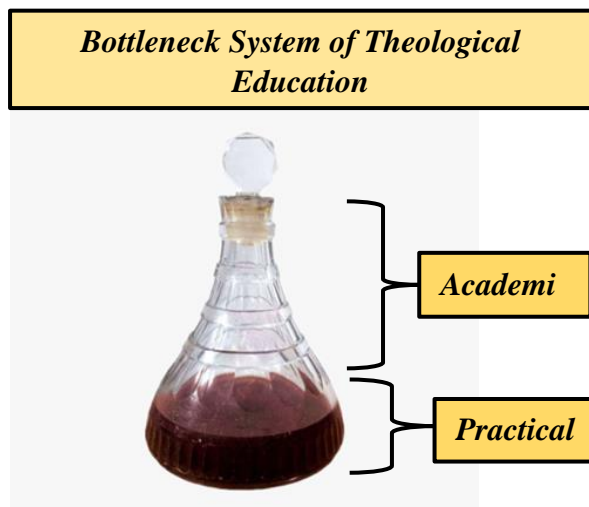


(b) The role of theological education in character formation: The Vice-Principals' (VPA, VPB, VPC) comments

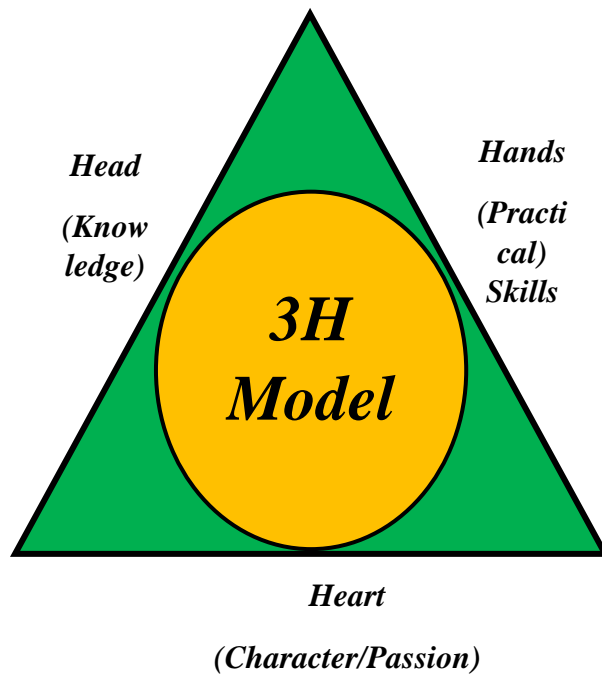
VPA shared that the role of their college in student formation was "...to ensure that they acquire a sound theological foundation that will help them be testimonies so that society understands basic Christian values." She believed that as a college, their principal role was to produce students who could in turn represent their admirable testimonies to their community. Such testimonies speak of codes of conduct, respect of individualism and individual differences, hard

work and integrity. VPA argued, “It is these attributes that make a society tick and work cooperatively for the good of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

VPB insisted that the role of theological education was to teach society to understand God and develop their relationship with Him. In describing his point, VPB described what he referred to as ‘inconsistencies and deficiencies’ of what most theological colleges do in training students for ministerial formation. He said, “Most theological colleges in Zimbabwe are bottlenecked”, implying that they insist on training the student on academics at the expense of the practical.



He maintained, “True theological education must not only reflect on faith but on practice... to teach and direct students what they believe and what they do”. He added, “Theological education must not aim at training the head, but the heart because it is the heart that is the storehouse for character... the attitudes and the perceptions that we use to see the character of a person.” Asked and probed to explain what he meant, VPB illustrated using the diagram below:



He maintained that the purpose of theological education is to connect the three: the head (knowledge); the Heart (character) and the Hands (the practical skills). He further noted that the position of the heart in the illustrative diagram is critical and this is why it is at the centre. He argued, "...it is character that we all want to form."

VPC differed from the other two vice principals. He said, "We train students here so that they can be theologically formed to understand God, but mainly to function as entrepreneurs or developmental agents." Probed to explain what he meant by 'entrepreneurs or developmental agents', VPC explained that when students eventually graduate from their college, they are mainly active on Sundays where they are engaged in preaching and managing meeting. After the Sunday, their pastoral pressures cease and spend the bulk of the week loitering around and not doing anything productive waiting for salary at the end of the month. Such a practice makes the pastoral candidate a lazy product. Therefore, his college emphasises on making the students have a developmental mind set. However, VPC noted that while gospel preaching is at the centre of theological education, he was of the view that the student must have the following qualities of character that will make him/her a useful character for society: a developmental mindset; business management mindset and entrepreneurial skills. Why? He argued, "...because society demands certain character dispositions...society needs change agents that can transform their lives for the better."

(c)The role of theological education in character formation The Academic deans' (ADA, ADB, ADC) Comments

ADA expressed the view that the role of theological education in character formation can be viewed at by looking at why colleges train students. The answer to this question is in Ephesians 4 :12 which is, “To equip the saints for the work of ministry in the church of Jesus Christ.” Therefore, whatever character has to be formed by the students must enhance the work of ministry in the church. In other words, the motivation for character formation stems from the imperative to produce saints for the work of ministry in the church of Jesus Christ. Whatever character has to be formed that character must have a quality of being the salt of the earth. ADA echoed the same sentiments as his principal (PA) when he said, “Theological educators must season the church in the society with the salt so that the same society is transformed.” Therefore, character formation within theological colleges must necessarily focus on producing students who have the ability and skill to transform the lives of their communities. ADA insisted, “The church is not a venue... it is the people who have a transformational agenda.”

ADB was an expatriate who was serving as a missionary in Zimbabwe. She expressed the view that although she was an academic, her views in mission were influenced by the imperative from Matthew 28: “Go yee therefore...” and therefore, alluded that her views about the role of theological education in character formation would very much be informed by her missionary beliefs. Character formation at her college revolves around the concept of transformational learning whose central belief is that students are adults and therefore, responsible for their learning. The basic tenets are enshrined in the following: “Tell me I hear; show me I see and involve me I learn.”

“Transforming is changing....” she argued. “What transforms a person’s character is reading scripture.” It is how much a student is exposed to character that makes him/her possess astute character. She argued, “...our lives must demonstrate that we are called to be Christ-like...Christ came, he was sinless and loving, not selfish... therefore we must be Christ-like if we want to achieve commendable character among students.” For ADB, ‘theological educator’ is a very broad term encompassing even those in the streets who know Christ and live a Christ-like life. She emphasised that the model character is Christ and the role of the lecturer in the theological education setting is not to facilitate formation but to be partners in the transformational learning of the student. Once transformational learning produces fruits of the spirit as indicated in Galatians 5:22-23, then we will have succeeded in collaborating with the student in character formation.

ADC reiterated the same comments as noted by ADB. He said, “The church is in the world... the church is the light of the world...the church imparts values...sets standards and influence society.” Therefore, theological educators are constituent parts of the church that are used to impart values, set standards of harmonious living and influence the society in the ways in which they relate with each other. For the church to be light, it needs the complement of the saltiness from the students. He argued, “...but the students will not have any salt if they have not been formed in their character.” The implication shared by ADC is that the theological educators’ role in character formation is to nourish the student so that he possesses the salt and light to function and influence the communities in which they minister to. By light, ADC meant love and kindness and by saltiness, he meant the theological disposition to influence society to be transformed positively into understanding their role with one another and their relationship with God. This view was illustrated when ADC quoted from Hosea 4:6. ‘My people are destroyed because of lack of knowledge...’ [NKJV]. Theological education in essence is the provider of the knowledge and wisdom referred to by ADC.

(d) The role of theological education in character formation: The Student Deans’ (SDA, SDB, SDC) comments

Student deans in the three theological colleges expressed different views as regards the role of theological education in character formation.

SDA expressed that theological education helps students to appreciate acceptable behaviour patterns in society. He maintained, “It [theological education] is a mover of social change, where praxis and theory are made to go hand in hand.” Theological education as an arm of the church helps to apply the praxis that has been learnt as theory. The implication is that the students’ character forms out of the interaction between theory and praxis. As theory (theological academics) interacts with praxis (application of what was learnt), the student is able to respect the value of scripture. It is that ability to respect scripture that describes the character of the student.

SDB used scripture cited from Romans 12:1-2 to further explain his view.

Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

SDB's interpretation of this scripture was that theological education engages the mind with the goal of changing the heart by expanding and expounding the truths of scripture. Therefore, theological education is the playing field for the interaction of theory and praxis which gives rise to the formation of desired character. For example, Jesus trained and lived with his disciples so that what was theory (scripture) was applied as praxis (the way Jesus and the disciples lived). The disciples lived and believed what they were taught by Jesus. It [theological education] sets the coordinates of the playing field by the very nature of its operation as a theological education unit.

The second point alluded to by SDB was that theological education equips saints for their role in society. If the student does not possess the character to transform the society, then character formation has become undernourished or malnourished. The academic dean at college (ADB) already alluded to this point.

SDC maintained that theological education develops the learners' skills (academic, interpersonal and communication) and character so that they are able to interpret scripture, both theoretically and practically. Theological educators are themselves facilitators of character formation as they exhibit model traits of characters that their students should imitate and integrate in their process of formation.

5.4.2. The nature and process of character formation: views of theological educators

Within the theme of nature and process of character formation, various and different conceptual understandings were noted. For easy of understanding and grasp, the comments by principals, vice-principals, academic deans and student deans shall be discussed separately.

(a) The principals (PA, PB, PC) comments

PA defined character as "...that which forms as a result of shaping and sieving by both the church and the theological college." It is the achievement of the equilibrium of what one believes (software) and the actual practice (the hardware). It is the match between orthopraxis and orthodoxy. For example, if scripture says 'you shall not steal and the student does not steal in practice, then character formation will have formed. However, various attributes are considered. That which forms are the behaviours and attitudes that form character formation. PA added, "As we conceive the concept character, we cannot avoid the concept of spiritual formation."

As regards process, the curriculum (academic and extra-curriculum) are inevitable components in the process of character formation. In the former, spiritual formation as a discipline plays a critical role in the formation of character. Other core- curriculum aspects include counselling, chapel services, mentoring group discussions. The assumption that PA held was that formation is itself a process and cannot be attained in a short period of time.

PB conceptualised character formation differently. He stressed, "...spiritual formation is at the centre of character formation. Formation of character takes place through praying, meditating upon the Word of God. Formation of character is the result of tested behaviour response to a situation in real life situations." PB highlighted the place of spiritual formation, chapels' services and the academic disciplines in the process of character formation. He argued, "...every effort is made to ensure that the process of character formation involves balance between the academic and the practical." Another important part of the process is what he referred to as 'market place evaluation,' where a student is given an opportunity to preach a sermon and be open to criticism on the theoretical aspects of the sermon and the practical aspects of the sermon. The market place evaluation gives the student the opportunity to accept and manage criticism as well as venting out frustration and accommodating positive thoughts. The college adopts a practice known as *grasseology*. This is the process of establishing or creating ground for the student to conflict with his value and belief system. *Grasseology* involves general work like toilet cleaning, watering the garden or any other manual related work. The college believes that a student who has been character formed should not struggle to follow rules and obey orders and instructions from authority or to work harmoniously with colleagues. It is *grasseology* that provides the opportunity to share, make friendships, develop sound relationships, and solve contradictions and conflicts among students. Other aspects of the process of character formation include encouragement of diversity in groupings. PB noted that his college takes students from various African countries who come from different tribal groupings. He maintained that such diverse backgrounds are essential in character formation as students learn from each other's backgrounds.

PC's conceptualisation of character formation is that it consists of three main elements: integrity, identity and involvement. The relationship among these is a mutual one and he likened this to the triune relationship. He alluded to the fact that the process of character formation is arduous since it involves many factors such as academic components, practice, devotions, chapel services and discipleship groups.

(b) The Vice-principals' comments (VPA, VPB, VPC)

VPA affirmed that from a theoretical viewpoint, character formation basically referred to the process of teaching the students basic Christian values such as Bible readings, prayer and outreach to other people whereas on the practical point of view it involves the process of monitoring the students on how far they are developing and providing opportunities for that practice. Spiritual formation, journal writing and study of ethics instil into the student Christian values. These activities should not exclude the church from collaborating with the college in character formation. Preaching, theological reflection and journal writing facilitate reflection on scripture, which is the essence for character formation. She bemoaned the non-residential status of the college as an impediment to character formation.

VPB remarked that Galatians 5:22 could best summarise character formation

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control [WEB].

However, he affirmed that of these perhaps humility, generosity and compassion could be added onto the list as key indicators of character formation. However, he clarified that the process of student character formation is complex and develops over a long period of time. Activities that enhance character formation include the residential nature of the course as it provides the environment for development of relationships, and devotions where students are grouped to lead in preaching and allow to be critiqued by other colleagues. Internships arrangements for considerable periods of times before qualification foster character formation. Spiritual formation as an academic discipline was singled out as an essential component for character formation to take place.

VPC maintained that character formation is the process of emulation of the life that Jesus lived. At the centre of character formation is the helping ministry where motivation to do good is driven by the desire to want to help others.

(c) Academic deans' (ADA, ADB, ADC) comments

ADA's view of character formation was that it was "...the teaching of biblical truths and the intake of truths, ... the establishment of convictions...the vicarious development of character and the transformation of the heart by the Spirit of God...a humble disposition to be taught and accommodate change and the development of a set of values that you live."

ADB agreed with her vice-principal that character formation denoted ‘fruits of the spirit’ in which honesty, integrity, transformation, accountability is categorised as essential qualities. She argued, the process of character formation mainly involves studying scripture and can be considered as a *full bucher* of all that happens in the college. Activities that nurture character formation include an attractive curriculum (to essentially include spiritual formation, leadership and development,) chapel services, grouping settings and opportunities for practical field work.

ADC proposed that the concept character formation implies a planned process of socialising and influencing an individual towards the model who is Jesus Christ. Integrity and being development oriented are essential qualities of character formation. Regarding the later, ADC argued that living a Christ-like life demands that a student possesses a developmental mindset that motivates him/her to participate in helping other people. Furthermore, a student who is in the process of character formation should have zeal to imitate the characters of famous imminent historians St Augustin and Cyprian and African theologians like Desmond Tutu and Cannan Banana. ADC noted, “A character formed student is one who aspires to achieve great things in life such as continued learning and research, and in working with others.”

(d) Student deans’ comments (SDA, SDB, SDC)

SDA held that character formation entailed allowing God to change your behaviour and motivation, and as alluded to above, the concept can best be understood in Galatians 5: 22 which describes the fruits of the spirit, and Titus1:1 which enunciates the qualities of good disciples such as being temperate, self- control and, finally 1 Timothy 3 which relates to qualities of good leadership. SDA argues that all courses taught in the college have components of character formation built in them. The process that is involved includes what has been alluded to by ADB above.

5.4.3. The character of prosperity gospel leaders: Perceptions of theological leaders

(a) Principals (PA, PB, PC) perceptions about prosperity leaders, practices and beliefs

PA held that prosperity churches are emerging churches and exist in a continuum ranging from moderate to extreme. Preachers have emphasis on materialism such that spiritual growths are equated to material blessings. Spirituality is judged by the measure of material blessings that one gets. It is a dangerous practice that has an unbalanced and unbiblical emphasis on material things. It is dangerous in that it teaches people to focus on the wrong things and unbiblical truths. Thirdly, when the claims of the pastors do not come true, the followers are stressed.

However, viewed differently, what PA articulated was that prosperity gospel appeals and gives hope to people that are in poverty-stricken environments. They also encourage congregants to desire good things. “Some moderate prosperity practitioners encourage productivity by encouraging people to work hard and shun poverty,” PA argued. PA indicated that prosperity gospel preachers benefit from the gospel as they milk their congregants, hence “...they shun workshops that discuss and critique their theology. As an evangelical college, we address the problem of prosperity through offering a diverse curriculum.” However, approaches to address the problem of prosperity gospel within colleges are frustrated because “...the prosperity church leaders have found their own colleges that help to perpetuate their agenda and egos.”

(b) Vice-Principals (VPA, VPB, VPC) perceptions about prosperity leaders, practices and beliefs

VPA described prosperity gospel as “...a money focussed gospel, a wrong representation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel of false hope, a heaven on earth gospel, a gospel of manifestation of pseudo power, and a gospel of false pretence.” Of great concern was the assumption by many prosperity preachers that they possess divine power and their claim to perform unnatural miracles. VPA asserted and complained, “...the greatest theological tragedy is their flawed hermeneutic on scripture and skewed homiletic.” Despite these negative characteristics and practices, VPA highlighted positive aspects as well, such as the need for people to prosper in their lives and the large followership in their congregations noting that many people got saved through their preaching with less being casualties of the Christian faith.

VPB denied and disputed the claims suggesting the existence of a prosperity church. He said, “I do not believe there is a prosperity church or teacher. I believe in the full gospel – Christ became, was born, died, rose and will come again.” PB further maintained, “The current trends in prosperity theology are unhealthy and are a liability to holiness and righteousness.” He noted that the over emphasis on financial freedom and material blessing over spiritual blessing compromised the gospel of Jesus Christ and was in itself “...an unhealthy trend.” VPB argued, “Scripture teaches the reality of suffering emphasising that it can indeed take any form”. However, he also claimed that scripture teaches us that those financial blessings are also real as contained in 2 Corinthians 8:9, which says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” VPB further made reference to Galatians 3:14, “...that in Christ Jesus the

blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

The relevance of these quotes by VPB was meant to demonstrate that there must be balance in our approach in evaluating prosperity gospel. He argued, “... we cannot outrightly condemn prosperity gospel, we have to look at it from a holistic approach.” For example, VPB defended the prosperity practice of accepting gifts from the congregation arguing that it is a good gesture that the congregants must give generously and cited Acts 20:35 which says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (RSV). VPB established that there are two levels of practitioners to note: Level 1 consists of blatant crooks that use scripture to get what they want; and Level 2 consisting of genuine and seasoned givers who have grown up under the regime of a prosperity preacher and have been disciplined to give generously. Based on his assessment in practice, VPB pointed out that there are positive points to consider in evaluation the practice of prosperity gospel theology. First, the view that it is a solution and panacea to survival skills, second, that it has bridged the gap of unemployment in Zimbabwe, third, the practice of prosperity gospel has taught poor people to be accustomed to the hustles of living by teaching them the tactics of establishing and managing small businesses, fourth, they give hope to those that are economically and socially disadvantaged.

It is worthy to mention that VPB put forward important recommendations to consider in dealing with issues of prosperity theology. First, the need for theologians to do balanced research on the practice of prosperity theology and ensure that such research is evidence based. Second, the need to insist on proper accreditation and registration of prosperity related theological colleges. VPB noted that prosperity gospel leaders tend to rely on their own established colleges and shun conventional colleges because they prefer to set up their own so that they can continue to perpetuate their ideology. Finally, he advocated that in dealing with prosperity theology issues, theologians need to be wary of “the principle of perceived injustice” whereby the practitioners of prosperity gospel may feel persecuted for their theological beliefs and standpoints, and end up as hard-core practitioners who are not willing to compromise their faith in the gospel and its practice. VPB remarked, “Jesus is our story, let us work towards the fundamentals of our Christian faith.” He advocated for more training in evangelical and Pentecostal hermeneutic teachings.

VPC contrasted significantly with VPA. He said, “Prosperity gospel is not bad at all...it is how it is handled.” He argued, “Prosperity gospel empowers people to be entrepreneurs and

productive and therefore, is development oriented...seeding money helps run church programs.” “The gospel teaches people how to grow economically and that is what preachers should emphasise in their preaching”, he said. He noted that accusation that prosperity gospel practitioner’s milk people of their hard-earned money are unfounded and unfair and asserted that it is the historical circumstances and traditions of a people that make them poor. VPC defended his argument when he affirmed, “...the riches that come on a silver plate which you did not work for does not last and can make you a weird person...but something you have sweated for...and this is precisely why prosperity preachers teach their congregants to work hard.” He voiced concern regarding seed money that is not ploughed back in the system for further investments. He maintained, “...where such seed money is related to false promises, then at that point the prosperity preacher becomes unfair to his/her congregation.” VPC confirmed that prosperity leaders own colleges where they train their leaders on their belief system and practices. As a recommendation, he advocated for prosperity church leaders to be trained on sound entrepreneurial skills so that they are not unfairly evaluated as money swindlers.

(c) Academic deans’ perceptions about prosperity leaders, practices and beliefs

ADA described prosperity gospel as a lop-sided theological view of the gospel, which has no balance. He defined it as a gospel that appeals to poor communities because it promises riches without too much work. He added, “Heresy is truth out of balance and that is what prosperity gospel is all about.” When asked to explain his quote, ADA said, “...we know that God blesses but He does not always bless us the way we want.” He interjected, “...if prosperity gospel is all about blessings and... is a true gospel, then by now Africa should be the most prosperous continent because by comparison, prosperity gospel abounds more in Africa than in other continents.” Commenting on the conduct of prosperity preachers he said, “They are charlatans who fleece people of their hard-earned money using the bible. God is not the agenda. The agenda is themselves.”

ADA pointed out those identifying prosperity characteristics is not difficult. They are noted by the following: the flamboyant and majestic leather seats; glass topped pulpits; expensive refreshments; flamboyant dressing; driving expensive cars; and claims of angelic visitations. However, ADA acknowledged the good attributes they exhibit, such as teachings on giving (even though the motive is bad), attractive churches and the encouragement to work hard for rewards.

Both ADB and ADC's perceptions about prosperity churches and preachers match those described by VPA. ADB recommends that colleges should be bible based in their approaches for character formation. ADC's proposition was that since prosperity preachers' teaching induces fear, their theology should be constantly under scrutiny. Theological study in colleges should prioritise equipping students in creative abilities so that they shun enticement to prosperity practices.

(d) Student deans' perceptions about prosperity leaders, practices and beliefs

SDA observed that the major characteristic identifying with a prosperity church is their failure to adopt acceptable hermeneutical principles of interpreting scripture, emphasis on materialism (money especially) and an unbalanced theological approach that does not have a place for salvation in their preaching. He commented, "...this is a disaster for the church." However, SDA applauded some prosperity churches for having done well in building relations among groups of people, encouraging economic prosperity within communities and fighting poverty through establishing small income generating businesses. Regarding the formation and theological preparation of their leaders SDA said, "Many of these prosperity church leaders have their own theological colleges that are not registered nor accredited...they just operate the way they want." Whatever leaders come out of these colleges, SDA maintained, "...they are trained by the Man of God (the leader of the prosperity church) to adopt practices that are consistent with their system."

SDB noted discrepancies in the theology of prosperity and insisted that character issues should be looked at using two models: what you teach and what you model. In using the former model, SDB argued, "...prosperity churches have failed to use scripture to teach the basics of Christology." Asked to expound, SDM said, "Prosperity preachers tend to use scripture in their teaching to help them achieve what they want... they do not want to achieve understanding about Christ... Christ is not at the centre...they want material things." Furthermore, he insisted, prosperity churches have overemphasised what they teach at the expense of what they model, that is, "...how they move from text to praxis." He maintained that prosperity churches have overemphasised on issues of suffering and failed to address those issues in the context of scripture. For example, prosperity churches model affluence but have failed in their practice to model generosity.

Asked to commend about the character of prosperity church leaders SDB insisted, "We need to be satisfied first that they are saved... in the absence of knowledge about the salvation story

their characters remain compromised.” SDB gave an example of the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministry which only teaches prophecy, healing and deliverance. He argued, “...their congregations will forever remain malnourished...they are giving a diet without diversity”, implying that prophecy, healing and deliverance teachings are not complete without teaching of salvation. He speculated that it is precisely for this reason (malnourishment in scripture) that the prosperity church leaders produce pastoral leaders who are not adequately formed to deal sufficiently with theological matters.

SDC expressed sadness at how some prosperity church leaders have abused their congregations by “...suffocating them of the real gospel of Jesus Christ and chocking them with sermons about how to become wealthy.” He singled out ZAOGA (Zimbabwe Apostolic Church of God Africa) as the major culprit for introducing a gospel that was mainly centred on the concept of ‘*matalenta*’ (talents), which is, the generation of income by lending it out to someone and getting it back with interest. SDC bemoaned the practice by some prosperity churches of charging ‘consultation fee’ to meet one-on-one with the man of God. He lambasted prosperity leaders for spiritualising the concepts of ‘giving and blessing’ arguing that such practices within the Christian community only succeed to “decolonising and capturing the souls.” Commenting on how the prosperity church leaders are prepared for ministry he said, “Most of them have been to formal and renowned theological colleges but have been attracted to the system ... the system of getting rich quickly without much labour.” Furthermore, where the prosperity leader has had formal theological training, he assumes that he/ she has the skills requisite enough to train his pastors only in theological etiquette that he/she deems necessary for the prosperity church.

5.5. Presentation of data from theological students

The data collected from theological students is presented in three categories as follows: data from students at theological college A (evangelical tradition); data from students at college B (Pentecostal tradition); and data from students at theological C (reformed tradition). In this category of data, three thematic areas were identified: the role of theological education in students’ character formation; characteristics and practices of prosperity churches; and theological preparation/character formation of prosperity church leaders. Interview questions that the interviews were asked reflected on these thematic areas please refer to Appendices section for full details.

5.5.1 The role of theological education in character formation

(a) The views of theological college A students (evangelical tradition)

Four student leaders (SA1, SA2, SA3 and SA4) were interviewed at college A. The student dean of the college assisted in identifying student leaders who were going to be involved. These came from different denominational backgrounds as well.

SA1 viewed character formation as, "...how one establishes a relationship with God... it is the total of what you think and do. Therefore, the starting point should be your relationship with God." He believed that college A deals with character formation sufficiently well through their robust curriculum especially in the discipline of Spiritual Formation. SA1 observed throughout his studies that Spiritual Formation adequately addressed the person's relationship with God. He added, "Spiritual Formation helps to establish balance between text and praxis." Furthermore, he emphasised that the college system groups students into cells that are led by college lecturers. The purpose of these cells is to foster character formation through relationships with mentors. The assumption is that as the students and lecturers share stories and life experiences with their mentors, they develop characters that are in conformity with the character template set by the college. These cell groups help students develop plausible character traits such as fairness, compassion, honesty, integrity and love. SA1 observed that within these small groups it is easy for students to accept criticisms and critic others with humility.

SA2 had difficulty in defining character formation but was able to explain how it takes place at college A. She said, "The curriculum fully provides for character formation with various theological orientations questioned and assessed." She cited the study of Christian Leadership, History of Christianity and Spiritual Formation as important disciplines in character formation. Furthermore, SA2 noted that college A as a theological unit is intimate and therefore conducive to good character formation. She said, "...the college is a small place and very intimate." SA2 summed her assessment of the contribution of her college in character formation as follows: "Life at this college opens your eyes and therefore your character." However, she warned that colleges should not enrol students that are not cognitively mature yet as that affects their character formation process, pointing at cognitive development as a primary factor in character formation processes.

(b) The views of theological college B students (Pentecostal tradition)

All the respondents at college B (SB1, SB2, SB3 and SB4) applauded the college practice of *grasseology* (coined euphemistic term for cutting grass and used generally to refer to general manual work). In *grasseology* students are engaged in doing different sorts of manual work (such as grounds clearing, cutting grass, toilet cleaning and mopping floors). They maintained that *grasseology* afforded them the following opportunities: sharing tasks collectively; discussing and solving social and relational issues together; mentoring each other; developing affective attitudes; practising what they learn in theory; developing listening and interpersonal skills; and fostering sound interpersonal relationships and friendships.

All student respondents at college B confirmed that the college had a strong Spiritual Formation program and a strong student dean department that complement each other in forming the character of students. Of interest to note was the important place of devotions and compulsory chapel sessions in character formation. SB2 commended the college's efforts in character formation by saying, "...by looking at the quality of the students who have passed through this college, we can say that it has done its best."

(c) *The views of theological college C students (reformed tradition)*

There was a general consensus among students SC1, SC2, SC3 and SC4 that the ecumenical nature of their college was an essential ingredient for character formation. "Ecumenism encourages diversity," SC1 commented. She maintained that when students from different denominations worship together in the same chapel, live together and share dormitories, diversity is embraced. SC2 emphasised, "...if you have had poor formation, you cannot accept diversity." SC3 highlighted, "Here at this college we live a life similar to that of *komboni* (Shona for compound) where we share almost everything – buckets, toilets, firewood, and even clothes – who can share these things if you are not character formed?" It was noted that shortages of accommodation and facilities at the college has prompted students to live a life similar to *akomboni* set-up. However, SC2 and SC4 cautioned that credit for character formation should not only be attributed to the college but also to the home environment. SC4 said, "...there is so much character development that takes place before we come to the college. SC2's comments tended to support SC4 when she said, "Character formation is a difficult thing...the college only takes over from the home environment."

However, all students at college C (SC1, SC2, SC3 and SC4) identified the following aspects as essential programs that the college has put in place to buttress the development of character formation. These are: chapel services, communal college life, ecumenical status of college,

attractive academic disciplines (Spiritual formation and Conflict Management), heterogeneous group settings, general cleaning tasks, daily devotions and students' sermons and critiquing them. Sporting was emphasised by SC3 who exclaimed, "...character comprises the whole person... a healthy body produces a healthy mind – good character!"

5.5.2. Characteristics and practices of prosperity churches/leaders

(a) Perceptions of college A students (evangelical tradition).

SA1 admitted that the concept of prosperity gospel is difficult to define but easy to describe. SA2 defined the concept as "...the preaching of wealth and... the use of scripture to justify what they want." SA3 contended, "...it is a gospel that assumes that if you pray you get riches... come to God is having earthly possessions." SA4 assumed a totally different position saying, "It is an Afro-centric theology that values the importance of African identity and understands African problems using the Bible." SA4 further added, "...their view of prosperity is skewed," citing examples such as, successful marriages, fruits of the womb, building residential stands, promotion at the work places or election to leadership positions in the church or community as prosperity.

All respondents (SA1, SA2, SA3 and SA4) agreed in their assessment of characteristics of prosperity church leaders. The following aspects were identified as consistent with prosperity leaders' characteristics: flamboyant and lavish life styles (expensive clothes, driving porch cars, drawing attention when they are in the public); occupying elegant positions and seats in the church (such as leather finished seats and use of glass-finished pulpits) and being surrounded by security guards and inability to be accessed or communicated to by the ordinary person in the congregation.

Over and above these observable characteristics and key practices, SA1 went further to suggest that prosperity theology hermeneutics has been taken to dangerous precedents citing the following beliefs as incompatible with scripture:

- i. If you do not give then you will be cursed
- ii. If you do not bless the man of God, you will never prosper in life.
- iii. God will assess the quality of your blessing before he rewards you.

Of the list above, SA2 added another fourth dimension

- iv. Poverty and poor health are not the believers' portion.

SA2 noted, “Prosperity preachers believe in personal enrichment and the nature of their prayers are indicative of their egos.” Such words like claiming, demanding and command are common in their prayer vocabulary. “They have a skewed view of life – a life lived without suffering”, SA2 added. SA3 commented, “Problems are viewed as a result of not walking in tandem with God.” SA2 made reference to her personal experiences as a member of a prosperity church when she said, “...it (prosperity gospel) can be very disillusioned... you tend to ascribe to some sentiments of prosperity practices when you are in it (prosperity church). SA3 queried prosperity leaders’ apparent lack of participation in social responsibility community projects and lack of involvement in funerals of their members arguing that they tend to shift responsibilities to others when the situations demand finances.

They have a tendency of attributing failure or demise to spirits from deceased forefathers. Both SA1 and SA3 noted close parallels between prosperity practices and African Traditional Religion (ATR) beliefs. For example, unexplained and tormenting phenomena can be attributed to avenging spirits of the dead that were not appeased. Furthermore, SA3 complained that prosperity gospel leaders tend to usurp or abuse their roles as pastoral leaders. For example, in marriage discussions and weddings, they tend to take the roles that relatives (parents and brothers) would normally take under an ATR structure.

SA4 pointed out that since they lack on their understanding of scripture, they emphasise on prophecy, healing and deliverance services where not much scripture is needed.

(b) Perceptions of college B students (Pentecostal tradition)

SB1 defined the concept of prosperity gospel referring to Oral Roberts when she cited, “...it is a literal interpretation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” She added, “it (prosperity gospel) is more like ‘pain-eeze’ tablet for a man in the streets, releasing pain immediately but offering no cure to the root cause of the disease.” SB1 further emphasised, it is a gospel that leaves congregants with a shallow mind...a social gospel that equips people and addresses their social problems. SB2 conceived of prosperity gospel as “... a half-baked gospel that centres on material things – where giving is associated with blessing.” However, SB1 cautioned that the impact of prosperity gospel should never be underestimated. She maintained, “...the gospel attracts the youths... it is a twister.” SB3 defined prosperity gospel as a gospel that has to do with “...how best Christians live a better life on earth.” SB3 maintained, “...yes, it’s not bad, it depends on how you practice it. David and Abraham were prosperous – money is good for us. God did not

create us to live a spiritual life only.” SB4 failed to define the concept of prosperity gospel but described it as, “...a gospel that is not right – not a proper gospel.”

Regarding characteristics of prosperity churches, SB1 insisted, “they are like a business – too much seeding – too much tithing – drawing money from congregants.” Her personal assessment of the gospel was, “... although the gospel appeals to solving social problems of people, in reality it just gives a false hope.” SB2 complained when she articulated, “the gospel has hermeneutical flaws,” arguing that it focuses on strategically applying text that focuses primarily on prosperity. Conversely, SB2 pointed at what she referred to as strong points of prosperity gospel as follows:

- i. It teaches people on giving as opposed to being close-fisted.
- ii. It encourages hard work as opposed to laziness.
- iii. Some people get saved through the gospel
- iv. Encourages entrepreneurship.
- v. It gives a sense of hope as opposed to disillusionment.

Both SB3 and SB4 characterised the prosperity preachers as people who live flashy life styles and commanding high status in society. They noted that their sermons and prophecies focus mainly on people with life challenges and blame witchcraft as the source of their problems. SB3 alluded that prosperity preachers teach more on gifts of the spirits than fruits of the spirit, arguing that such a perspective does not change the character of the person.

(c) Perceptions of college C students

SC1 was contend in understanding that the prosperity gospel “...is a gospel that addresses the physical needs of people focussing mainly on materialism.” She argued, “...unlike protestant churches who say ‘come to us’, prosperity churches say ‘we are coming to you,’ ... to give you hope.” SC1 argued, “Protestant churches premise their gospel on the spiritual while prosperity churches focus on things that affect people daily.” SC2 expressed it differently, “It is a health and wealth gospel that teaches that Christ came to save us from poverty and sickness, whereas SC3 referred to it as, “...a theology which contradicts the theology of God.” SC4 maintained, “...it’s a gospel that concentrates on human empowerment and materialism.”

Regarding the characteristics of the prosperity churches, SC4 pointed out that the churches dwell so much on “...the God that gives abundantly on condition that they probe the same God

to give beyond the measure of the blessing asked for.” The prosperity churches thrive on eisegesis as opposed to exegesis of scripture. This type of approach in their hermeneutic and homiletic works in their favour as it easily evokes emotions among the poverty stricken or burdened. However, she warned critics of prosperity theology from outright condemnation of the practice arguing that the prosperity preacher has not manufactured a new gospel but rely on what is in the Bible. Hence, many people have found the gospel saving and therefore therapeutic.

SC3 outrightly condemned prosperity preachers saying, “They are inhuman, have no conscience and use people as a means to their ends.” SC3 added, “Prosperity itself as a concept is not a problem, but without a suitable biblical foundation, it can be a problem.” She further applied the parable of the prodigal son to castigate the practice of prosperity churches. She said, “Prosperity preachers/leaders resemble the character of the prodigal son who spent riches without having sweated for the resources.” The converse is true, SC3 argued, “The same with congregants, when they realise that they have been cheated, they too are like the prodigal son. When they realise, they will never have the resources they have been promised, they go back home to seek help from credible pastors and churches.” She lambasted at their practice of idolising the man of God, fanning indoctrination through a system of brainwashing their followers. Despite these shortcomings, SC3 noted that they are good at teaching giving, prayer, and empowerment, and are good motivators to those without hope.

5.5.3 Character formation of prosperity leaders: perceptions of theological students

(a) Views of college A students

SA1 conceived character formation as, “A transformation of the mind and heart yielding to the will of God.” She maintained by citing from Galatians 5: 22-23 and argued, “...most prosperity preachers have character issues as emphasised by John Maxwell – ‘if you have everything in the world and you do not have character, you have nothing’.” She attributed poor character formation to lack of scripture since the prosperity gospel itself has hermeneutical flaws, suggesting the absence of any character formation program at all. SA2 defined character formation as, “Character formed for ministry – where your worldview is being formed and fine-tuned in the person God wants you to be.” She complained, “...but prosperity preachers are not well equipped to witness Christ because their gospel is not Christ centric.” SA3 applauded her college for a character formation - sensitive curriculum that is all inclusive. She noted, “Prosperity church leaders do not come to theological colleges for training because they

think that their theology and practices will be changed.” SA4 viewed character formation as, “The essential attributes of a person and how he relates to other people.” Furthermore, she cautioned, “Although the majority of prosperity church leaders have character issues, it is not fair to categorise them as bad apples – some are good.” Regarding character formation of prosperity church leaders, SA4 maintained that the problem lies on their backgrounds, which were very harsh.

(b) Views of college B students

SB1 looked at character formation as, “Being refined from bad to good.” SB2 considered it as “...a process that deals with the whole person – his spiritual and his material needs.” SB2 noted that many prosperity church leaders in Zimbabwe have not had any theological training and therefore, sees it fit to conclude that they lack character formation. Hence, she concluded, “...judging by the way things are, they are going out of bounds – they manipulate the gospel for their own benefit.” This view seems to have been disputed by SB1 and SB3 who maintained that some of them have very good hermeneutic skills, suggesting that they have been well formed in colleges but just that they have made a choice to ascribe to prosperity oriented theological position for one reason or another. SB4 showed apparent confusion in understanding character formation when he asked, “Will pastors ever be fully character formed and be like Jesus anywhere?”

(c) Views of college C students

SC1 held the view that character formation is a way of being formed to discern the call of God in a person. Alternatively, she argued, “It is a way of being set aside or apart for the work of ministry.” With that understanding, SC1 maintained that it is difficult to determine the character formation of the pastoral leaders because it is the Holy Spirit that sets a person apart for ministry. SC2 viewed character formation as “...the changing of one’s character in order to align it to a character that is unacceptable in Christian circles.” SC3 complained that most prosperity pastors are not of good character, “... because they promise a pie in the sky,” implying that such pastoral leaders’ character formation is questionable. As indicated in the section above, SC3 sees prosperity church leaders resembling the character of the prodigal son, implying that they have not gone through formal processes of character formation.

SC4 shared the same sentiments as SC1 when she said, “...a person’s character is difficult to form... a person’s character has already been formed by the time he/she accepts the call to ministry.” The views of SC1 and SC4 tend to suggest that there is very little colleges can do to

help students in character formation since they assume that character has already been formed before they come to the college.

5.6. Presentation of data from prosperity church leaders

The data presented in this section was collected from 7 prosperity church leaders who were running their own churches for a considerable period of time. These were selected purposely from the top 10 (in terms of followership) prosperity churches in the Harare Metropolitan province. The Evangelical Association (EFZ) assisted in identifying 7 prosperity churches from the top ten in the province. Each of them had an average of 5 junior pastors assigned to different assemblies/congregations in the province.

The data focussed on three re-occurring themes: the nature/process of theological preparation for ministry; character formation of prosperity church leaders; and character expression of prosperity church preachers/leaders. For full details of the interview questions, please refer to the appendices section.

5.6.1. The nature /process of theological preparation for ministry: the voices of the prosperity church leaders

PL1 confirmed that he was engaged in ministry at a young age of 19 years as a junior pastor and was mentored by the senior pastor of the prosperity church for a period of 4 years before being appointed to lead a congregation. The leader of the church and the congregation were all involved in the process of engaging him for ministry. What was considered a pre-level entry qualification was a mere GCE “O” Level certificate with a pass in English Language. The English language as a means of communicating with the congregation was preferred to the vernacular Shona or Ndebele languages. He came to understand the work of ministry through seminars, class meetings and prayer groups organised by the prosperity leader. Regarding formal theological training, PL1 said, “When the Man of God (MOG) is satisfied with your performance, he will send you to *his* college for further theological training.”

PL2 maintained that God began to call Him for service at a tender age but enrolled as a student at one of the prosperity colleges in Harare. PL3 was engaged in ministry through her father who pleaded with theological college principal to enrol him despite not having the requisite qualification. The college adopts a prosperity gospel theology. PL3 is a holder of a Diploma in Theology qualification from a registered theological college and a practising prosperity preacher. PL3 reported, “In ministry, there are key scriptures that will forever become relevant and keep recurring, those scriptures you should know.” She added, “...therefore you adopt a

certain mental picture built around certain beliefs and practices.” Probed to elucidate further, she said, “...things like, divine partakers of the kingdom promise, we are the Father’s children, poverty /failure is not our portion...these phrases are used many times and they eventually become part of your mental vocabulary.” PL4 also was mentored by his leader for 6 years, then engaged in private studies with private online colleges in the USA and achieved a Doctor of Ministry degree.

PL5 recollected that after getting married to a bishop, the husband convinced her that she would assume the role of pastor as the wife of a bishop. In short, her status as a bishop’s wife promoted her to the role of pastor of the prosperity church. PL5 engaged in private studies till she obtained undergraduate qualification from an online bible college. She became acquainted with theological disciplines through further online theological studies. His husband – the bishop – complemented the knowledge about the practice of ministry.

PL6 described that he emerged as a church leader “...not by election but by divine appointment.” Having demonstrated hard work and effectiveness in outreach and evangelism, he joined a prosperity church that he is serving in now. Later, he was recommended to joining a Bible College for training. It was a bible college known to the prosperity church leaders.

For PL7, he had a personal conviction of heart that he was called to the pastoral ministry. He recollected, “Firstly, we had in-house training then I attended a school of ministry.” Asked to comment how the process of ministerial formation helped to understand what the prosperity church beliefs and practices, PL7 contended, “It helped me to understand the true gospel and how the prosperity gospel is consistent with scriptures.”

5.6.2 Character formation of prosperity church leaders: Views of prosperity church leaders.

This section presents data collected from prosperity church leaders regarding their perception of character formation and how they believed they were formed for ministry.

PL1 held that character formation, “...is the real of real personality...and involves their conduct, behaviour/ humility, accountability, tenacity, sympathy and the desire to be holy and Godly.” He believed that his prosperity church did not contribute anything in forming his character, but attributed it to further education and association with senior pastors. PL1 also noted, “...like other systems out there, pastors receive doctrinal teachings that focus on certain objectives and beliefs.” The point that PL1 referred to was meant to stress that doctrinal teaching in their prosperity church settings was a priority.

PL2 was just contend in conceiving character, as the greatest attribute a man of God should have but failed to define the concept. PL3 maintained that character has two dimensions: first, your personality and who you think you are, and second, your behaviour characteristics as seen by the outside person. She confirmed that apart from mentoring from the senior pastor, her character has been developed through exposure to scripture.

PL4 defined character as, "...the intrinsic quality of a person's behaviour expressed through their public and private lives...and includes such qualities as, trustworthiness/ dependability, level of integrity, communication skills, fidelity." He maintained that his character was greatly shaped by association with and inspiration from 'great man of God'.

PL5 described character as good (such as honesty, self-control, uprightness, being charitable, and integrity) and bad (such as dishonesty, lack of self-control and stinginess). She added, "...solid character is seen in consistent behaviour while a person with a flawed character will hide behind deceptive words and actions." She held that the preaching of sound and true gospel of Jesus Christ in the church has been the foundation for the development of her character and her junior pastors. PL5 emphasised that ever since she pursued and attained higher theological qualifications, she has seen her character formed throughout her theological training. She expressed it this way, "...no doubt, Spiritual Formation has positively impacted my character development at college." However, she expressed reservations about the effectiveness of church leaders within the prosperity churches in character formation arguing that some of them display character issues that are not consonant with good character. She said, "...it's very difficult to trust prosperity church leaders with the duty of forming the character of their junior pastors... some of us teach their junior pastors to receive their salaries from the congregations they lead... sadly they fleece the sheep."

PL6 shared the same ideas as PL5 when he said, "Character is the total sum of one's beliefs, convictions, principles, habits, and values." He believed, "Character is what you are in the dark... it is like the foundation of the house, it is below the surface." The last part of PL6's definition assumes that character may be unobservable. To the list noted by PL5, PL6 added 'trust' and 'adherence to a value system as important character qualities. He argued, "Our tendency is to work harder on our image than on our integrity...which means living the truth myself, before leading others, because a charismatic personality may draw people, but only integrity will keep them." The implication of PL6's argument is that many prosperity preachers/leaders tend to focus on their image instead of polishing their integrity. The former

only helps to temporarily attract congregants but the latter makes them mature Christians. Regarding contributors to his character formation, PL6 singled out his parents, noting, "...the primary character foundation was laid by my parents whom I emulated. Indeed, they maintained a consistent character, which they taught me. I did not only hear what they said, but also saw how they lived." What PL6 implied in the above statement is that character is imitated and learnt from childhood and initiated by parents or caregivers. He further alluded that prosperity leaders have the influence of forming the character of their junior pastors since they present themselves as the models. PL6 remarked, "It's not uncommon to see junior pastors and even congregants imitating the hair or dressing styles or even the verbal cues of their prosperity leader...I do not see how they fail to imitate their character – good or bad?"

PL7 shared very close parallels with PL5 and PL6 on his definition of character. He said, "Character is who you are... constituted of qualities like integrity, God fearing, honesty and humility." PL7 maintained that the Word of God contributed to what character is today. He remarked, "I feed on the daily bread – the Word of God – which makes who I am. It is the greatest contributor of my character formation." However, PL7 did not dispute his influence on character formation for his junior pastors, claiming, "I am the model in the church – how can they not imitate me?"

5.6.3. Character expression of prosperity church leaders/preachers: Perceptions of prosperity church leaders.

The data presented in this section concerns the perceptions of the prosperity church leaders about their characters or conduct. These perceptions were based on their own assessment of themselves and others' characters or behaviours.

PL1 contended, "...my preaching does not focus on giving tithes only... I concentrate on goals so that people live a happy life...kind of a liberated life." He warned, "... as a preacher I am wary of overemphasis of prosperity issues at the expense of the Christian doctrines like salvation and repentance... It creates a syndrome of miraculous gaining of riches rather than hard working." Responding to the allegation that prosperity churches milk their congregations off their hard-earned money, he denied, saying, "If one is really doing this evil thing, you definitely would be annoyed, embarrassed and disappointed. If not, then it would be an opportunity to teach the truth about God's word." The implication was that whatever monies they get from congregants is an act of giving and therefore is the truth taught by the Word of God. PL1 refuted the claims that prosperity gospel is a false gospel arguing, "The gospel of

prosperity is not actually a false and useless one, but one that has also been misinterpreted, misrepresented and preached out of context.” Asked to comment on the characters of prosperity preachers PL1 maintained, “Most of these prosperity pastors are or become very selfish and proud, do eisegesis than exegesis, focus on money and riches, careless about the flock and the poor... and give ‘cooked’ [false/faked] love [to those in the congregation] who have material riches.”

PL2 confirmed that he valued preaching on the subject of giving and the place of God in supplying the needs of the people. He stressed, “I hate people blaming us of milking congregants...the right word to replace milking is ‘giving’. If ever they think they are being milked, it is a misunderstanding of the meaning of giving as prescribed by the Word of God.” He further questioned, “Why was Jesus focusing on the woman who gave a coin as a gift? (Mark12:41-44). He answered his own question, “...because money is important in all facets of live, this is why Jesus’s eye was on the offering plate.” Responding to allegations that the prosperity gospel is a false gospel, he argued, “...those allegations are baseless... they are attributed to people who do not understand the Bible.” Asked to give his assessment of characters of prosperity churches he maintained, “People are different, but from those I know do prosperity preaching, I can say they are flamboyant, live a flashy life style, proud, sometimes compassionate, have integrity but show no humility and are generally clever – that is, if ever they can afford to lure people to give them money, then they cannot be dull.” The comments by PL2 suggest and confirm that he is indeed an ardent apologetic of the prosperity gospel practice.

PL3 indicated that she valued preaching the gospel which has “...a bias towards working hard in order to furnish God's house so that yours in return is also furnished.” Furthermore, she argued, “All preaching no matter which verse, should end encouraging seeding by giving so that you can be given back a hundred-fold.” Responding to allegations that some churches milk their congregants, she said, “[it] has always been that the members are not under duress when they give. Those who give after all should also receive their fair share of improvement materially in Christ Jesus! Those who think men and women of God should be poor and pathetic are misconstruing the Word.” Regarding her defence about the truthfulness and relevance of prosperity gospel she contended, “...my position is that the Word of God has always been interpreted differently, no wonder why we end up with multiple choices of where to go and fellowship. If all people were the same, world events would be very monotonous.” Interestingly she concluded her critique by saying, “Remember when two parties are always in

agreement, then one is not thinking,” reinforcing the idea that scripture can be interpreted differently to suit situations. Asked to comment about characters of prosperity church leaders, she said, “Prosperity gospel preachers are easily identified by their showy tendencies. They also always hammer on pastors who despise prosperity gospel...”

Regarding what he values in prosperity preaching, PL4 pointed out, “I challenge my junior pastors to preach prosperity gospel centred on giving and prosperity to demonstrate their calling.” However, she admitted, “...it may not be realistic to life and not inclusive of everyone.” Hence, “...most prosperity church leaders end up losing members as they [the latter] end up not supporting their [the former] doctrine.”

PL5 indicated that she enjoyed preaching on the subject of faith as the commodity that makes provisions from God possible. She refuted allegations that she does not milk congregations of their monies and said, “I would deny this and show them the fruit of my labour and the support I have given to the needy as evidence.” This aspect confirms the earlier assertions made by PA1 that prosperity gospel practitioners exist in a continuum with some participating in social responsibility agendas and some entirely enjoying the benefits primarily on their own. However, she admitted that she is a strong advocate for prosperity gospel but rather lying somewhere in the middle of the continuum. Commenting on the character of prosperity church leaders, this is what PL5 believed:

Most prosperity preachers are not living righteously. Most of them have a fragmented moral fibre with no clear financial accounting to the flock. Their major aim is to enrich themselves instead of helping the poor to be fed and clothed adequately. Giving towards the needy should be the DNA of all Christians (see Deuteronomy 15 and Galatians 2:10).

PL6 stressed, “I value correcting the belief among Christians that money is evil... In fact, wealth creation and proper stewardship are consistent with human flourishing.” He argued that the only way to refute allegations is to be involved in tent making just like Paul did. The implication of the statement is that the accusations that prosperity church leaders milk congregants are true, hence the suggestion that pastoral leaders should live a life of tent making to reduce overloading the same congregation with material demands. He defended the notion that prosperity gospel is not a false gospel and cited Philippians 4:19, which says, “My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Furthermore, he argued, “...3 John 1:2 says, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” This scripture should seal it all. Asked to comment about the

characters of prosperity preachers, he said, “In my view, I believe that the character of many prosperity preachers is to make money and become wealthier than the congregation.”

PL7 agreed with PL6 that prosperity church leaders are flamboyant people but could not commit himself to describing their characters further. He further commented, “I value preaching about giving hope to people using scripture.” Asked to expound how he gives hope, he said, “Scripture is full of verses that empower people to be rich. This is my favourite area... there is no need for people to live a miserable life when there is Scripture to give them hope.” He maintained that he will always support and defend prosperity gospel saying, “This is the gospel of the times in Zimbabwe, when people are struggling with the economy, they need the gospel of empowerment and hope.”

5.7. Analysis and discussion of data from theological leaders, theological students and prosperity church leaders

Osmer’s (2008:8) theory – The Core Tasks of Practical Theological Interpretation – reminds theological researchers to focus on four core questions in any empirical study as follows: What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? How might we respond? This analysis section seeks to understand the data collected so that it can help us understand and answer the key research questions in the study. The analysis will follow the major themes that emerged from the category of theological leaders in the study as follows: The role of theological education in character formation; The nature and process of character formation in theological colleges and perspectives on the character of prosperity church leaders/preachers. Responses of subjects may be used to augment the analysis done in this section.

5.7.1. Discussion and analysis: the role of theological education in character formation

(a) The role of the theological educator in character formation

The data presented showed that theological educators are an indispensable part of character formation of the students. Noted was their critical role and participation in the delivery of the academic and co-curricular programs of the college. Critical among them was the role of the theological educator as the mentor and model for character formation. The data collected revealed that the theological educator is the conduit through which character formation can take place. This explains why ADB emphasised the importance of the character of the theological educator whose own character display would be imitated by his/her students. She therefore, follows the praxis rule, “Tell me I hear, show me I see and involve me I learn,” arguing that such praxis will encourage transformational learning which is the heart for

character formation. “In the absence of theological educators performing the model role, it is doubtful whether any character development will ever take place,” insisted PA. In similar studies, Sanderse (2012) underscored the importance of role modelling in character formation.

(b) The nature and process of character formation

Theological leaders showing apparent misunderstandings of the term defined the concept of character formation differently. In some cases, the concept was understood as spiritual formation. The apparent inconsistencies in defining the concept character confirm earlier findings discussed in the study. Nucci (2018:1) confirms that the source of misunderstanding the meaning of character stems from the fact that traditionally the term was defined in terms of virtues, which was problematic. Nucci (2018:1) argued, “This approach to character had several fundamental problems.” First, is the lack of agreement across cultures and historical periods as to which qualities count as virtues. Second, defining character in terms of virtues contradicts evidence that people apply virtues inconsistently since they behave differently depending on the context. Therefore, this apparent failure to understand the concept character formation leads to heterogeneous understandings, which affect how each of the colleges implemented their character formation programs. Worse still is when theological leaders have different conceptions of the meaning of character formation. The implication is that each theological leader will adopt a parallel program of character formation and hence a distorted view of what exactly the college as a unit is doing to character form students.

However, the data presented from the responses of theological leaders of the three theological colleges with different theological orientations show that there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that theological education programs are pivotal in character development. There was agreement among the college leaders that the curriculum of the theological colleges was a clear determinant of character formation in the theological institutions. Such curricula subjects such as Spiritual Formation and Ethics of Religions were identified as critical curriculum disciplines in character formation. The respondents in the category of theological leaders all confirmed that these two academic disciplines were indispensable in character formation. This finding is consistent with findings by Pike, Hart, Paul, Lickona and Clarke (2021: 449- 466) that differential curriculum intervention produced impact on character development in the development of virtue. The implication that can be drawn is that where the curriculum is not nourished with relevant academic disciplines, then character formation is stifled.

Other co-curricular disciplines were also cited as important in character development. These were sporting activities, chapel services, mentoring groups and general cleaning activities. Extracurricular activities are part of the effort to give birth to a person who is not only smart but also a good character” (Solfema, Wahid and Pamungkas, 2019: 923). The same view was shared by Christison (2013:18) when she said, “...participating in extra-curricular activities contributes to character development.” Where students are not in residence as in college A, it remains theoretical to assume that there exists a system of extra-curricular activities at the college. The implication is that there must be space and resources for the extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, Christison (2013:18) further warned, “The type of extracurricular activity affects different components of character development,” implying and emphasising the need to have variety in the nature of the activities. The type of activities referred to by the respondents in the category of theological educators was soccer and athletics, showing the limited nature of activities on offer in the respective colleges.

Of critical importance in the development of character formation was what the four academic deans referred to as field work or attachments, where upon graduating in the theory part of the program, the student is asked to serve for another one or two years on attachment. This process allows the student the opportunity to put the theory into practice as alluded by PA1, who said, “There must be a match between orthopraxis and orthodox.” VPB referred the opportunity to engage in practice as, “...connecting the head (knowledge), the heart (character) and the hands (skills)” or what PB highlighted, “...character is tested in real life situations.”

It was noted that theological education has critical roles in society apart from character forming students who come under its fold. Two sub-themes emerged because of probing. First, was the role of theological education in the society, and second, was the role of theological education in the church. It was important to understand these two sub-themes since character formation does not exist in isolation from the society as maintained by Nucci (2018:6).

In terms of the process of character formation, PA1 cautioned that character formation does not start at the school but rather on the home environment, the churches and finally the colleges of education.

(i) Sub-themes: Theological education in the society

What emerged evident was the overwhelming consensus that theological education is a socialising institution in society, helping to connect different institutions in society. Second, it was noted by theological leaders that theological education is a transformational agent in the

society. Of particular interest was the emphasis that theological education helps to change the quality of life of the citizenry. Regarding this aspect, and despite the general consensus among the respondents, it is difficult to ascertain with specificity how the transformational aspect takes place in a dynamic society like Zimbabwe. However, regarding the former theme of being a socialising agent, it was highlighted that when students come to college, they are indeed coming from cultural and denominational environments. Therefore, their life at the college will provide for an environment that promotes socialisation as students interact in different group settings. It is noteworthy to point out that the extent to which socialisation at theological colleges is effective is dependent upon the nature of the programs on offer but also on whether the college is a residential one or not. Where the college is residential, opportunities for effective socialisation increase due to student-student interactions. In college A, for example, VPA was concerned that her college did not have residential facility and therefore affected socialisation and hence character development. Nucci (2018:6) noted, “Character does not exist as an entity because it functions coactively within the social context.” Where a college exist in a residential context, students are presented with a socialising atmosphere upon which they can build character that can function in that particular society. Nucci (2018:5) supports the same argument by saying that educational programs that foster responsive and transactional discourse encourage character formation.

(ii) Sub-theme: Theological education in the church

Regarding the role of theological education in the church, it was overwhelmingly pointed out by almost all the theological leaders that one of the primary roles of theological education is to produce pastoral leaders for the church. However, it is worth mentioning that not all theological colleges produce pastors of high moral character as shall be highlighted in the subsequent themes. The findings in this study seem to point out that certain theological colleges produce pastors only for their denomination. For example, college C was an ecumenical college affiliating 7 denominations and training students who could only fit in the denominations affiliated with the college. Where that is the case, then it can be argued that the pastoral candidates so produced are not for the church in general but for particular denominations. It was evident too that College B would only produce students who would fit in churches that follow the Pentecostal tradition. The same could be said of college, A which followed the evangelical tradition.

(c) The character of prosperity preachers

There were similarities in the way theological educators perceived the behaviours or characters of prosperity church leaders. However, it appeared that the theological orientation of the theological leaders did not matter much. The perceived notions confirm what was noted under literature review that the characters of many prosperity church leaders are problematic and not consistent with what is expected within the Christian fraternity. In fact, these perceptions confirm the statement of the problem highlighted in chapter 1. Whatever characters the prosperity pastors showed, they did not seem to be the result of flawed character formation processes from the theological colleges. It will be argued in subsequent analysis that such flaws of character formation varied from person to person and from prosperity church to prosperity church. However, the responses from interviewees were very clearly showing that the theological colleges did not have a deliberate effort to address behaviour issues of prosperity church leaders. It appeared they all adopted a 'look and see approach,' with the exception of PA1 who made efforts to invite prosperity church leaders to attend seminars but the invitations were received with cold shoulders and hence, suspicion.

5.7.2. Discussion and analysis: Theological students on the role of theological education in character formation

(a) The role of theological education: Views of theological students

As noted in the presentation of data, there were very close parallels between the responses of theological educators and theological students. The responses of theological students overwhelmingly triangulated those of theological educators, confirming the notion that theological education has a role to play in character formation. However, there were mixed feelings regarding the commitment of theological colleges in character formation pointing to the possibility that there the levels of commitment vary from college to college. Since the colleges' backgrounds were different, it was possible that the emphases of each would be different. It is worth noting that just as theological educators had different understandings of the concept character formation, the same was the case with theological students. The varied misunderstandings by theological educators would affect how the students conceived of the concept.

(b) Students' views on prosperity practices

There were mixed views regarding the concept of prosperity gospel and the practices as well. The reasons could be attributed to the fact that students came from different denominations and therefore had different theological orientations. Since these students were third year theological

students due for graduation, it was apparent that they were going to practise prosperity gospel preaching without knowing that they had become facilitators and conduits of the same gospel. It was interesting to note that the students who supported the practices of prosperity gospel did so for financial gain purposes. The majority of the students cited the difficult economic situations prevailing in Zimbabwe as having an effect in drawing college graduates towards prosperity preaching. This view by students confirmed earlier findings in research literature so far discussed, which say that the prosperity gospel thrives in contexts where there is social and economic insecurity (Eyo, Eissein and Ekong, 2020: 450). There is no doubt that the Zimbabwe's situation is that type of context as explained by (Eyo et al, 2020:450). The challenge is how theological students should respond to pressures of economic and social insecurity. The response of the students to these insecurity contexts will finally define the prosperity gospel trajectory that the students finally take.

(c) Character expression of prosperity preachers: Views of theological students

Theological students' perceptions about prosperity church leaders and their practices mirrored those of college leaders as well. According to (Eyo et al, 2020:450) one of the beliefs of prosperity gospel preachers is that success is linked to financial blessing, which is a moral issue demanding an ethical analysis. Theological students may indeed be caught up in ethical challenges where they are called to ethically interpret the practice, approve it or condemn it. Where they fail to display what is commonly accepted as the ethic, their credibility in practice is questioned. For example, on one end of the continuum, prosperity church leaders were described as flamboyant, proud, boastful, flashy, accountability issues, thriving on milking congregants of their hard-earned cash, and twisters of the gospel of Jesus Christ. On the other end of the continuum, they are described as business minded; hope oriented, successful entrepreneurs, clever and promoters of social justice. If graduates from theological colleges fail to acknowledge the ethical implications of both ends of the continuum, their behaviour and hermeneutic is brought to question. Eyo et al (2020:454) opined that good ethic can have a positive effect on behaviour [and character].

It emerged that students questioned the way prosperity gospel church leaders were prepared for ministry. SA4 noted, "...many prosperity church leaders/preachers have not had access to theological education for one reason or another," therefore, "...they should be able to be in class with their peers [congregants]." SA4's observations seem to suggest that the prosperity preachers are not qualified to teach their followers since they too have not been exposed enough

in their theological preparation for ministry and therefore at the same level as those that they purport to lead. SA3 noted, "...prosperity church leaders do not want to train at theological colleges because they believe that their theology will be compromised." This view was shared by PA1 who pointed out that prosperity church leaders shunned attending seminars whenever they were invited because they felt theologically insecure and believed that the agenda of seminars was to change their theology. SA3 further expressed the problem with emphasis, "There is danger in being led by people who have not had experience in theology – *unorasiswa* [you will be misled]." SA1 expressed the same issue differently by saying, "...the absence of theological education cripples their character formation. Theological training shapes the character of the student." SA1 argued, "...because they lack adequate theological training, they are only accountable to their 'spiritual fathers' and therefore, rely on the same source for pastoral formation, which is informal."

The implication of these findings for the theological students is that upon graduating from their colleges, they should never take it for granted that they possess the same background of theological preparation for ministry as their peers in prosperity churches. Instead, they should co-exist with each other and be ready to fill in the gaps created by the prosperity preachers. The other wider implication relates to what has been shared above as the ethic of consciousness. That is, as the prosperity gospel leaders articulate their ethico-religious values, they are responsible for the welfare of those that follow them. As such, if they fail to protect their congregations from any harm that arises because of their church activities, then they are guilty of the ethic of consciousness. Such failures by prosperity gospel practitioners are inevitable since most of them have not had formal theological training.

5.7.3. Discussion and analysis: Character expression of prosperity gospel practitioners – self-appraisal

The purpose of engaging fieldwork in the research was to understand the prevailing views concerning the prosperity gospel leaders' practices and their character formation processes. The main themes being (a) the nature and process of their theological preparation for ministry, (b) the character formation process for prosperity church leaders, and (c) perceptions about their character expressions in the practice of their ministry. These themes will be discussed and analysed in turn.

- (a) The nature and process of theological preparation for ministry

Probing the interviewees revealed that three models of theological preparation for ministry existed: mentoring process by the Man of God (MOG); ministry preparation at a prosperity church related theological college; through conventional established theological colleges. In the first model, the pastor's calling is identified through vetting by the leader of the prosperity church. The vetting involves ability to do certain tasks such as ability to speak in tongues, ability to perform miracles of healing the sick and ability to give tithes or gifts beyond the measure expected by the man of God. Once the MOG confirms the candidacy of the intern then theological preparations begin. The form that it takes include being taught the basics of prosperity theology, tactics of communication (personal and interpersonal), knowledge of key biblical texts that resonate with prosperity theology thinking and being given opportunities to preach and do deliverances and general intricacy within the prosperity gospel fraternity.

In the second model, well established prosperity church leaders have set up their own theological colleges to perpetuate the same prosperity gospel agenda and ideology. Theological educators that teach at those colleges are appointed by the MOG to ensure that they do not depart from the established norm. Such colleges are usually not full time and do not offer a full theological curriculum but seminars that run during designated times. Thus, students are carefully selected to attend recommended courses. The Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education has affirmed its position that it will not register such colleges as they operate outside of the confines of the law. A visit to the ZIMCHE offices by the researcher revealed that the prosperity gospel colleges identified were not registered to operate. Whenever reprisals came, the owners of such colleges bribed the government agents, and hence continued to operate.

In the third model, the prosperity church leaders are those that lie on the middle of the continuum. They demand genuine theological qualifications from trainee pastors who express interest in working with them. These types of prosperity gospel leaders are those that want to strike a balance between prosperity gospel and the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Trainee pastors that ascribe to this model are usually given small congregations where their prosperity gospel prowess is tested in the areas of deliverances, preaching and healing. Once they demonstrate reasonable ability, they are promoted to manage bigger or more affluent congregations.

In all the three models, there are key implications to note. Three ethical principles are worth noting: ethic of consciousness; ethic of judgement; and ethic of behaviour. In the first, where prosperity leaders know that they have a duty to protect their congregants from harm that occur in the process of their church activities, and fail to comply, they are guilty of the ethic of

consciousness. In the second, prosperity church leaders are aware of the ethical dimensions of a particular situation or action, which compels them to make moral judgements. However, the chances are that despite having knowledge of the moral judgements they have to make, they continue to perpetuate the same practices. When that happens, they will have flouted the ethic of judgement. Finally, sometimes prosperity leaders are caught in between their personal beliefs and personal egos such that they behave in a way that may justify either their personal beliefs or egos. When that happens, they may be compromising their ethic of behaviour.

(b) The character formation process:

It has been noted by all interviewees (PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, PL5, PL6 and PL7) in the category of prosperity gospel leaders that they have very different understandings of the concept character formation. The implication is that different programs of character formation are used and this taints the kind of formation pastors have within the prosperity gospel fraternity. For example, PL7 advocated that his juniors should model his character. PL5 and PL6 expressed reservations regarding the competency of prosperity leaders in character formation. If such is the case as alluded by PL5 and PL6, how can they be trusted to train junior pastors to model them? Again, the ethical implications (ethic of consciousness, ethic of judgement and ethic of behaviour) as discussed above cannot be underestimated. They are overwhelmingly important in a Christian church environment.

(c) Perceptions about their character/behaviour in practice.

It was reported by PL2, PL3, PL4 and PL5 that as prosperity church leaders they valued prosperity preaching. They refuted allegations that they are unfair to their congregants arguing that their congregants give out of their will. However, if we are to go by the perspective that prosperity church leaders want their juniors and congregations to imitate and model them, the likelihood is that the latter end up copying behaviours that are not consonant with the Word of God. Behaviour traits such as pride, flamboyant, materialistic and egocentric are negative qualities, do not match Christ-like qualities, and will not be worth imitating or copying. Since these behaviour traits came from the prosperity leaders themselves, the implication is that they have described what they are in reality and therefore a cause for concern. Triangulating the data with the data from theological leaders and students will strike marked similarities, authenticating claims that prosperity church leaders display mainly bad characters in their practice of ministry.

5.8. Summary and conclusion

This chapter presented data that was collected from three categories of respondents: the theological leaders, theological students and prosperity church leaders. First, the methodology used in the collection of data was presented, discussed, and followed by the description of the respondents. Coding of the responses of theological leaders produced three major themes: the role of theological education in character formation; the nature and process of character formation and their perceptions about the character /behaviour of prosperity church leaders. In the second category, the theological students, key themes that emerged because of coding were the role of theological education in character formation; the prosperity gospel practices; and how they perceived these practices from a character formation perspective. Regarding the third category of prosperity gospel leaders, the key themes were the prosperity church leader's perceptions of their own practices; their perception of the characters and behaviours of prosperity church leaders; and their views regarding the ministerial preparation for their ministerial candidates.

The data collected from the three sources of respondents was triangulated and confirmed to be consistent with information discussed in the literature review. The analysis of data was done in line with the themes that came out in the study. The conclusions from the three sources of respondents (the theological college leaders, the theological students and the prosperity church leaders) are that:

(a) The theological college leaders have a huge responsibility in shaping character formation of students who go through their institutions. The nature of the academic curriculum and the extra-curriculum determines the quality of formation. How students respond to the demands of the curriculum is a matter for the college leaders. The college leaders have the power to influence ministerial formation. Since the majority of college leaders expressed reservations about the characters of prosperity church leaders, they had the power to put in place a curriculum and regime within the student learning experiences that challenge those questionable behaviours. They had the power to change the curriculum so that it addressed those aspects demanding change. Engaging the community and the prosperity churches was the express function of the theological colleges. Therefore, the colleges were the initiating power source for dialogue and engagement with community and prosperity church leaders.

(b) The theological students were identified as indispensable co-learners and co-teachers in the character formation processes. It was noted that theological students helped to form the

characters of their colleague students through their formative and informative group dynamic interactions. How college teachers manage and involve students in groupings and in academic and other menial tasks are of critical importance but a huge responsibility. Programs that involve group interactions and sharing among students were found to encourage behaviour shaping. In particular, the interactions and relationships between lecturers and their students were noted as encouraging character formation as the latter modelled the former as role models.

(c) Prosperity church leaders' perceptions of their practices and character expressions provided insights into understanding their worldview regarding prosperity theology. A critical lens helped to understand why they practiced what they believed. Regarding how they prepared their students for ministry, they argued that Western models of formal theological education have become irrelevant to the Zimbabwean situation. Therefore, they argued that they are essential gape fillers who relied on biblical principles of discipleship and modelling as displayed by Jesus' disciples who learned from their master. As they established their own bible colleges, and mentored students into understanding prosperity theology, they maintained that the practice was their *modus operandi* and a public theology approach to the public church and the public community. They noted that most students do not have the opportunities to secure places in the conventional colleges. Their duty was to give such students the opportunity to learn as they practise ministry. Perceptions regarding their character expressions in the practice of theology and in their personal life styles were analysed. The analysis gave insight into understanding the origin of and motivation for their behaviours. They were overly motivated and driven by self-egos to possess material wealth. This is where the congregants were disadvantaged. Hence, the situation demanded awareness of the three ethic principles: ethic of consciousness; ethic of judgement; and ethic of behaviour. The full intersection of these three principles could produce the desired character that is consistent with normative standards discerned from scripture. These implications have great impact in informing and reforming the church practices among Christian believers in Zimbabwe. With the abundance of information gained in the empirical study, the next chapter will focus on biblical and theological examination of the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures to determine normative standards of theological practice. Such an analysis helps to inform the practice of theological education and in particular character formation of prosperity church leaders.

CHAPTER 6: Understanding the theological and biblical foundations for theological education and character formation.

6.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to understand the theological and biblical foundations of theological education. It seeks to establish the biblical and theological normative view for the practice of theological education and for understanding character formation by drawing from the insights of scripture. Therefore, the chapter draws from the Old Testament and New Testament scripture texts to demonstrate that some form of theological education and character education existed within the set-up of Hebrew history. Using Swinton and Mowat's (2016: 100-102) Theological Reflective Model, the discussion focuses on critical reflection in the practices of theological education and character education in the light of both Old Testament and New Testament scripture. The key question to ask is: How are we to understand this situation from the perspective of critical faithfulness? By critical faithfulness Swinton and Mowat (2016:100) mean "... acknowledging the divinity of scripture" as a yardstick that can be used in interpreting a set of events. For Osmer (2008), it is answering the question, "What ought to be going on in the light of our understanding of theology and the bible? Expressed differently, Swinton and Mowat (2016) and Osmer (2008) are asking the question: what normative standards do we discern and draw from scripture that point us to the way theological education and character formation should be taught? In order to do justice to this question, it is important to identify and exegete selected Old Testament and New Testament scripture to demonstrate that some form of theological teaching and character formation existed within the confines of the Hebrew history and culture.

The texts that have been identified for the exegetical analysis are shown in Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 below.

6.2 The biblical and theological framework

Meaning

By biblical / theological framework, we are looking at the basic structure of the questions that theologians are trying to answer (Stamoolis, 1986:75). The framework takes a part of the text message and makes it the interpreting key for the whole message, depending on what key is chosen, parts of the message are either distorted or even ignored. Starling (2016) defines a theological interpretation of scripture as an approach to biblical interpretation that approaches the text with explicit theological presuppositions, questions and concerns, seeking to hear in

Scripture not only the thoughts and voices of its various human authors, but a word from God that functions as the primary and authoritative source for our knowledge of him.

Assumptions

In relation to this study, there are five assumptions guiding our perspective of the Bible.

1. First, that the Bible is not a human authorship, but is to be received as the Word of God, breathed out by the Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16 & 2 Peter 1:20-21).
2. Second, that the one that speaks of as the 'Lord' is the one true God and creator of all things (Genesis 1:1).
3. Third, that the universe holds together by His Word, and by the Word of His Son, the Lord Jesus (Colossians 1:16-17).
4. Fourth, that the Scriptures are given by him to his people to strengthen them in faith, hope and love, to make them wise for salvation and for life, and to equip them to play their part in his mission in the world and in the building of the church (Romans 15:4).
5. Fifth, that the Bible is the primary authoritative source for our understanding of God and His relationship to us and to all things.

Procedure:

The procedure for applying the framework was guided by the five major elements:

1. Identifying – knowledge of the text and taking note of the facts in the text.
2. Exploring – describing the world within the story in experiential (emotions and thoughts) and theological terms.
3. Connecting – making connections between the story and the faith traditions (scripture, liturgy, church history, theology).
4. Generalising – drawing implications and conclusions for theological practice and prosperity gospel theology.
5. Applying – acting on these implications and conclusions to the problem under study.

6.2.1. Identification of Old Testament and New Testament scriptures and teachers

Relevant key scriptures from the Old Testament and New Testament are identified to support the analysis of teaching roles. The criteria for the identification of the scripture are based on the following five indicators:

- i. The relevance of the scripture to the teachings about the knowledge of God;
- ii. The historical importance of the scripture to the people of Israel;
- iii. The importance of the scripture for future generations of the people of Israel;
- iv. The value of the scripture to the Jewish community’s way of life; and
- v. The implications that can be drawn from such scriptures for the practice of theological education and character formation today.

The identification of scripture subsequently helps to identify the content of the teaching, which in turn helps to qualify the normative standards for theological education and character formation today. In doing this, the first step is to establish that God was the principal teacher and that all teaching about Him was based on what He, as the supreme teacher, taught Israel to know about Him. What God taught Israel would be used as the basic content of all that would be taught about Him. The content would be regarded as the normative standard to be used by all who performed the teaching roles.

Table 1: Identification of Old Testament scriptures and teachers

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Supporting scripture</i>	<i>Purpose/justification</i>
God – Principal Teacher	Exodus 3:14; Chronicles 20: 7	God as the principal teacher specified what He wanted His chosen people to know about Him.
Abraham – first patriarch to enter a covenant with God	Genesis 17: 1-6	The first patriarch to interact with God through a binding covenant based on obedience – an essential yardstick for a relationship with God the Creator.
Moses – the teacher of the law	Deuteronomy 6:6-7 Exodus 18:20	The first patriarch to be given the Law by God. He taught the people of Israel the laws given to him by God. Through God’s

		promises he leads Israel from captivity to the promised land of Canaan.
Joshua – the teacher/leader who finally takes Israel to the promised land	Joshua 1:7-8	He took over the leadership and teaching role from Moses and was entrusted with the task to lead Israel to the promised land of Canaan. He was instructed to teach future generations about the Law and God.
Samuel - the Priest and judge of Israel	1 Samuel 2:35	Samuel the priest taught the dictates of God's Law as prescribed in the laws given to Moses
Elisha the prophet/teacher	2 Kings 6: 1-7	Prophets were God's mouthpiece in checking compliance to the standard set by God's laws. They interceded for the people whenever relations were unfavourable.
Scribes	Ezra 7:10	Scribes wrote the law, explained it and taught it.
Wisemen	Proverbs 1:7 & 9:10	Wisemen taught using Wisdom Literature as their content. It played a significant role in character formation.
Jewish Parents	Exodus 12:26-27	In ancient Israel, the parents had a special role to teach their families about God and His statutes.

Table 2: Identification of the New Testament scriptures and teachers

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Supporting scripture</i>	<i>Purpose/justification</i>
Jesus- The principal New Testament Teacher	Mark 2:13 & John 3:2	The fulfilment of the Law and redeemer of humanity – the bridge to harmonious relationships with God of the Old Testament
Holy Spirit – the teacher of today's Christian believers	John 14:26	The Holy Spirit was the divine teacher who took over Jesus' teaching roles

Peter	John 21:17	Peter as a disciples accepted the imperative to teach the gospel to future generations.
Paul	2 Timothy 1:11 & 1 Timothy 2:7	Paul as a disciples and apostle to the Gentile community accepted the imperative to teach the gospel to future generations
Apollos	Acts 18:24	One of the Jews who was mighty in knowledge of the scriptures

6.2.2. The practical guiding framework for theological and biblical analysis

The framework for biblical analysis will consider that the Bible is composed of two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The analysis will therefore cover selected scripture from both sections of the Bible. Other scripture may be used to support the analysis.

(a) The Old Testament

Within the category of the Old Testament, the framework for the biblical and theological analysis is based on the following guiding principles:

- (i) First, the acknowledgement that there was no formal theological education in the Old Testament. Theological education as we know it today was primarily constituted of teachings about God. Knowledge about God was taught informally at different levels within the Jewish culture.
- (ii) Second, the instrument that was used as content in teaching about God was the Torah or more commonly known as the Law of God or the Law of Moses.
- (iii) Third, the contexts in which the Torah was taught differed considerably. For example, teaching was done within the family structure, with the parents required to perform different teaching roles. Alternatively, priests and prophets who acted as God's messengers who guided Israel into the knowledge and worship of God did the teaching.
- (iv) Fourth, the expectation was that a good grasp of the teachings of the Torah and strict adherence to the contents of the law was in itself a model for character formation. Since there were no formal schools in ancient Israel, the understanding was that a good grasp of the Law of God was considered sufficient to model a person into a God-fearing citizen possessing good character considered worthy in the society.

(v) Finally, specific people or groups of people within the Jewish culture had the express function of teaching the Laws of God. These were, (1) the parents at the primary home level, (2) the patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) – these were the founders of the religion now known as Judaism and their descendants are the Jewish people – , (3) the first prophets of Israel (Moses and Joshua), (4) the priests – these had the specific role of interceding for the people and acting as custodians of the law, and (5) the scribes, who were assigned the role of writing the law so that it was readable to all and understood by all citizens, and (6) the sages who actually taught the law of God in public places. Outside the influence of these five categories of people, there was no teaching about God or knowledge of worship of God.

(b) *The New Testament*

Just as was the case in the Old Testament, there was neither formalised theological education nor formalised theological institutions during the New Testament period. However, teaching and learning about God was evidently passed on through history from generation to generation through oral history. The principal teacher of the New Testament is identified as Jesus. And the Holy Spirit. Other teachers about God were disciples, such as Peter and Paul, who themselves were mentored and taught by Jesus. After the ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit being part of the Trinity takes over from Jesus as the principal teacher to Christian believers of today. The guiding assumptions and principles in this section are that:

- (i) The acknowledgement that there were no formalised bible colleges or theological education colleges;
- (ii) The New Testament was an extension of God’s work in the Old Testament period;
- (iii) All teachings were about knowing and worshipping God and how God was seeking to establish a new covenant relationship through Jesus’ ministry of teaching about the Kingdom; and
- (iv) The primary teachers of the New Testament were Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the disciples and believers.

6.2.3. *The exegetical analysis and teaching roles*

The biblical analysis will cover two categories: the exegetical analysis of texts; and the identification of teachers of the Word of God and the justification of their teaching roles.

The exegetical analysis of the texts will mainly focus on four key questions:

- (a) What audience was the message intended for?
- (b) What was the content of the message?
- (c) What effect and implications did the message have for future generations?
- (d) What implications can be drawn for the practice of theological education and formation of character?

In addition to selected scripture, some scripture may be identified, used and commented on to support the argument presented in the discussion. In relation to this point, the exegetical analysis on the role of wisemen, scribes and Jewish parents will not be applied in the discussion but relevant biblical scripture will be cited to support the argument.

The analysis will also include identification of teachers and examination of their teaching roles within the context of Jewish history in both the Old Testament and New Testament periods. The subject of what they taught will be considered as the content. The content will constitute what can be considered as the normative standard for the teachings about God or what today can be referred today as the curriculum of theological education.

Implication for the practice of theological education and character formation are drawn from the exegesis of texts and analysis of teaching roles. An exposure to Jewish teaching ministry will help us discern from the text how theological education should be done today and therefore, guide its practice. What the scripture says will be a voice that will help to steer theological education practice in the right direction today.

6.2.4. The rationale/justification for this analytic approach

The justification for using this approach is that we need to understand the nature and content of the teachings about God in both Old and New Testament periods in order to establish normative standards for today's believers. The template for any theological education program will be based on and informed by such understandings. Such understandings will then inform us on how theological education and character formation should be done using the biblical lenses of both the teachings of the New and Old Testaments. It seems logical that we cannot establish normative biblical standards without understanding the teachings that were done by those entrusted with the roles of teaching during the two testament periods. It is logical to understand the nature of biblical teachings about God and the contexts in which those teachings

occurred before determining the normative status of such teachings. The teaching roles of the different categories of people that were identified above will now be analysed to see how those teachings affected the people on their knowledge of, and relationship with God. Therefore, scripture from both Testaments has to be identified to demonstrate and illustrate the nature and form of teachings that existed in the history of the people of Israel. It is argued that such an analysis will serve as an informant basis and template for theological education and character formation day.

6.3. Teaching about God and character formation in the Old Testament period

This section analyses the roles played by specific groups and categories of people in the Jewish history in the Old Testament era. The analysis will include how the teachings of the Torah facilitated character formation. A brief historical contextual background of Jewish theological teaching will help to put the discussion into its proper perspective.

6.3.1. Brief contextual background of Jewish theological teaching/education

Budiselic (2013:135) says that the Jewish model of theological education involved a teaching ministry of the Holy Scriptures which was carried out by various categories of people. The emphasis of the education about God was not much about form but was about the content of what was taught. The form within which theological teaching was done was different involving different categories of people. In the same way, the Bible does not recognise a form called theological college or school. During the Old Testament era, theological colleges did not exist but was constituted of informal teaching of the scriptures as shall be discussed in the ensuing sections. The following sections will consider and analyse the teaching activities in the Old Testament as manifestations of theological education. Character formation will also be considered as a constituent part of theological teachings of the times.

6.3.2. The teaching of the Torah and character formation in the Old Testament

Budiselic (2013:135) stressed that the terms ‘theological education’ and ‘theological college’ are not strictly biblical terms, but their existence are theologically justified. He further argues, “If under the term biblical, that which has been written or mentioned in the Bible is implied, then it leads to the activity of studying” (Budiselic, 2013:135). According to Jackson (1997:503), theological education has a long and rich history that is based on Old Testament scriptures. However, Ott (2016:142) noted that during the Old Testament there were no formalised (structured and institutionalised) modes of training leaders.

Be that as it may, an analysis of the Jewish model of theological education and character formation shows that the key cornerstones of the theological education tasks were God, Moses, the Jewish parents, the priests, the prophets, the wise men and scribes. Their roles in teaching and learning about God, and character formation will now be analysed and implications drawn for 21st century theological education practice. The discussion will now proceed to analyse the different teachings that were done by each category of teachers in the Old Testament. God is first identified as a principal and primary teacher in the Old Testament.

6.3.3. God as teacher (Exegetical analysis of Exodus 3:14)

The underlying and fundamental theological point that can be discerned from scripture is that God wanted his creation to know who he was (Hayes, 1991:42). When God appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush in Exodus 3:14, The Lord identified himself with the name, “I AM WHO I AM”. Moses did not know what name to ascribe to God and hence he declared his ignorance, prompting him to ask, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ What should I tell them?” In verse 14 God’s response was, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

In this text the phrase ‘I am who I am’ is translated in Hebrew as ‘*e'heyeh aser' e'heyeh.*’ The answer that God gives to Moses is crucial for understanding the identity and nature of God. It carries a sense of necessity, simplicity, and absoluteness. In using this particular phrasing, God identifies Himself as the self-existent One—the eternal, unique, uncreated God. He is the ultimate truth, the only necessary being, the beginning and end, the first cause. At this point in history, God is new to humankind. The revelation of God’s name as ‘I am’ meant to demonstrate to Moses that this is to be the name used and understood for the rest of history. Jesus later used the name, ‘I am’ to Himself in John 8:58 and his audience immediately recognises this claim to divinity in John 8:59. The purpose of the conversation between God and Moses was to teach Moses that God was real. The same teaching (confirmation of God as real) was going to be taught to all Israel and future generations that God was real. Moses was also ordered to inform Israelites that the same God was going to be responsible for his mission. The conversation between God and Moses demonstrates that God played the teacher’s role in educating Moses about his nature. First, Moses was surprised that the burning bush did not burn. This was a display of God’s power that Moses had never experienced in his life. This display of power demonstrated by God showed the omnipotence nature of God and thus his

experience of the burning bush quashed out any doubts about the nature of the God that had revealed himself to him (Adeyemo, 2006:90). The conversation between God and Moses demonstrated to the latter that the power that he was conversing with was indeed great and holy. This is why Moses was told to undress his sandals because the land he was on was holy. It can be argued that God was taking Moses through a learning curve that would help understand the nature of the God who was focused on rescuing the people of Israel from bondage. Such an experience would give Moses the trust and hope in God's powerfulness. The implication that we draw from this scripture is that any theological education program must confirm the reality of God in all areas of theological education. This ought to be the norm.

Another example that can be used to demonstrate the teaching role of God can be cited from 2 Chronicles 20: 7. "Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?" The contextual background is that King Jehoshaphat is afraid of an approaching army and in his prayer to God, he makes reference to the covenant that God and Abraham made. The underlying relationship between God and Abraham is that the latter became the former's friend and that friendship was formed because Abraham was obedient to God. Viewed differently, God revealed Himself to Abraham, and in this revelation, God taught Abraham His Word; He taught him what it was to believe and trust in Him; to hold on to God's promises under all circumstances. Abraham became a friend of God because He learned from Him and obeyed Him. The exodus of Israel from captivity demonstrates that God also taught the Israelites about whom He really was through the miraculous deliverance from Egypt and through the mighty deeds He brought to pass on the way to Canaan. In this way, God was teaching the Israelites to honour Him and believe Him as the only God who was. Throughout, God was involved in the process of teaching the Israelites. His revelation was intended to educate them. Moses's experiences at Mt Sinai where he was given the Ten Commandments as narrated in Exodus 19:1-20, was in fact a learning experience where God was teaching His laws to Moses through his mighty miracles.

The implications that we draw for the practice of theological education is that any theological education program must be informed by the knowledge that God is at the centre of the teaching exercise, because He is by His very nature a teaching God. The centrality of God in teaching and execution of the theological education task is the imperative norm. His omnipotence and his love and willingness to rescue His people from the bondage of sin make him an indispensable partner in the theological education tasks. Furthermore, and in relation to

character formation we learn from the relationship between Moses and God that obedience is primary in forging a long-lasting relationship. The relationship that Abraham had with God was based on trust and obedience and therefore lasted for generations. Jehoshaphat alluded to the God of Abraham that He would not leave them at the mercies of the enemies. Thus, the theme for theological education should be one to teach about God since God himself demonstrated that he had taught humanity that He was God.

6.3.4. Abraham instructed to teach about God (Exegetical analysis of Genesis 17: 1-6)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before me and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

At 98 years old, Abraham had waited for 25 years for the fulfilment of God’s promise to give a son through Sarai. It had been 13 years since his last recorded word with God. This period of time demonstrates the patience that Abraham had with God. The special trait of patience is what God desired of Abraham and that explains why God revealed himself to Abraham and declared that he was Almighty God. God’s first words to Abram made an introduction and a declaration of His being. By this name *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), God revealed His Person and character to Abram. According to the Kidner commentary, “A traditional analysis of the name is ‘God (*el*) who (*sa*) is sufficient (*day*).’ Whereas Clarke’s commentary maintains, ‘*El Shaddai*’ means ‘I am God all-sufficient’ where ‘*shadah*’ implies to shed or to pour out. The overall meaning implied is ‘I am that God who pours out blessings, who gives them richly, abundantly, continually.’ Donald Barnhouse took the approach that the word ‘*shad*’ means chest or breast implying a God who has strength or the comfort likened to the nourishment of a woman’s breast. The interpretation derived from ‘*shad*’ is that the Almighty is a God of tender care. Leupold commentary maintained that *Shaddai* comes from the root ‘*shadad*’, which means to display power. The overall meaning that can be discerned from the conversation between God and Abraham was a confirmation that God had the power to bless, give tender care and to display power to Abraham and his descendants. Such knowledge about God was meant to be taught to future generations of Abraham. This made Abraham a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7), after God confirmed that Abraham was indeed his friend. It was a confirmation of Abrahams’s obedience to God. Obedience becomes a special mark that pleases God. It becomes a standard of character by which believers ought to conform to. The meaning portrayed to believers is that no one would please God outside of the mark of being obedient. The entire conversation between God and Abraham makes the latter a great teacher of faith,

trust and obedience among the great patriarchs of Israel. Teaching obedience is therefore essential for believers.

6.3.5. Moses' role in teaching the law (Exegetical analysis of Exodus 18:20)

“And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do” (Exodus 18:20).

The role played by Moses in the teaching of the Law can never be underestimated. God handed over the law to the nation of Israel through Moses. He represents a special connection between the nation of Israel and God. His role was to establish a relationship between Israel and God through observance of the law. The fact that Moses had received adequate teaching from the principal teacher – God – about who he was, assured Him that Moses would be the right person to hand over the law to Israel (Exodus 18:20; 24:12; Deut. 4:14; 31:19). An exegetical analysis of Exodus 18:20 will clarify the point.

According to Clark's Commentary, the person that God was addressing was Moses. The 'statutes and the laws' referred to the instructions relative to the whole system of morality. Whereas, 'show them the way' meant that it was the only way God himself had revealed to Israel. Therefore, they (Israelites) should walk in the same way in order to please him and be everlastingly saved. The phrase 'and the work they must do' meant that it was not sufficient that they must know their duty to God and man, but also that they were compelled to engage with the work diligently fervently and effectually. This brief analysis shows a clear teaching imperative given to Moses that can be summarised as follows:

First, Moses was to teach the people the nature, use and importance of God's ordinances by laying before the people of Israel the complete moral law and their obligations to fulfil all its precepts. Second, he was to point out and direct the people what they had to do in terms of duty expectations, and set them to work and see that they comply in doing the work.

This summary shows the standard by which the people of Israel would relate to God. The normative standards would only show up after Moses applied himself to teach the people. As a teacher whom God had ordained to teach, it followed that Moses would only teach that which God had taught him as a principal teacher. What he had heard, learned, and saw in God, he would pass on to Jews.

Although theological education was not formalised in the Old Testament, Moses's experience can be regarded as a form of theological teaching/education. In the same way, educational

implications can be drawn from this kind of learning. Theological education colleges by their very nature and function can be regarded as conduits to the learning process whereby they facilitate learning for those who pass through the institutions and making it accessible to others through them. The law was intended to expose sin. It also demanded holiness and righteousness, which was based on the holiness of God (Leviticus. 11:44-45). The law was the central core of Jewish education. Leviticus 11:44-45 is a typical example of a text that addresses the issue of character formation.

“For I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls upon the earth. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

The text addresses the need to live a holy life because the Lord himself is holy. Adeyemo (2006:148) expresses it this way, “To ignore this rule makes one unclean. The state of uncleanliness is contrary to the calling of the Israelites. The Israelites were called to imitate the covenant God. They were called to be holy because God is also holy.” Standards of character were thus measured according to their allegiance and adherence to the statutes of the laws of Moses.

6.3.6. Joshua as a teacher to Israel (Exegetical analysis of Joshua 1:7-8)

“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

This scripture relates to God giving His express instructions to Joshua after the death of Moses. God commissions Joshua to take over from Moses and assume both the leadership and teaching roles as was done by Moses. The phrase “...only be strong and very courageous...” is an encouragement to Joshua to exercise boldness in the ways of God. It exposes his weakness outside of God’s involvement. Joshua was instructed, “...to observe to do according to the law...” which was an imperative to take great care to observe the law, which was God’s Word. His commitment to it would be the pillars supporting his success. According to the Enduring Word Commentary, the phrase, “...to all the law...it must not depart from your mouth...”

meditate in it day and night... observe to do according to all that is written” meant that Joshua did not only need to read God’s word, it had to be on his lips, in his mind and he had to do it. His future prosperity was based on his adherence to and practice of the law.

Great theological education implications can be deduced from the teachings of Joshua that would result from compliance to God’s laws. First, theological education ought to be primarily about the knowledge of God and his statutes. Short of this requirement, there is no theological education to talk about. Second, the standard to measure a successful theological education practice is compliance to his mandate: to teach about Him, and Him only, and His statutes. Furthermore, character formation is achieved in full when people comply with the requirements of the law. In the same way, prosperity should never be judged based on material possessions. Christian success is not measured by the same standards as world’s success. God’s Word is a guarantee of Christian success. God’s Word does not promise a life without problems, but it ensures a life able to deal with anything through the providence, presence and promises of God. This a great lesson for prosperity church leaders whose theology is pivoted on material possessions.

6.3.7. The teaching role of priests (Samuel the priest) in the Old Testament (Exegetical analysis of 1 Samuel 2:35)

“But I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. And, I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever.” According to Clark (1997), the words “I will rise up for myself...” were coming from God through Zadok the priest. The words were meant to express dissatisfaction to the sons of Eli, who had become incompetent in their priestly functions. The one referred to as “...a faithful priest...” is Samuel whom God had chosen to replace the sons of Eli. Samuel was to continue the priesthood of his family, lead and minister before the kings of Israel and he was to walk before the Messiah (Jesus), for, in their proper and more extended sense, these things are supposed to belong to our great High Priest and the Christian system.

The scripture clarifies that Samuel was going to be raised to assume the roles of priest, prophet and teacher. “The word Samuel . . . is a contraction of the words . . . *Shaul meEl*, that is, asked or lent of God” (Adam Clarke Commentary, 1 Samuel 1:28). Samuel was trained as an apprentice by Eli the priest at the tabernacle to become a messenger of God. Samuel is

recognised as a priest, judge and prophet who settled disputes and led the nation of Israel as he performed these roles. His role as a priest, judge and prophet, also entailed teaching about God and the laws of Moses. As a prophet, Samuel conveyed messages from God to the people of Israel. “And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the LORD” (1 Samuel 3:20). Samuel was also referred to as a ‘seer’ (1 Chronicles 9:22), which is another name for prophet. A ‘seer’ meant one who sees, as in one who receives God’s revelation. The people of Israel consulted Samuel on difficult subjects (1 Samuel 9:6-10) since he was representative of God’s authority. He was also an intercessor for the people of Israel (1 Samuel 7: 7-8). There is strong evidence to suggest that one of Samuel’s roles was teaching as evidenced by establishment of a school at Ramah to train young men in prophetic service (Pulpit Commentary, 1 Samuel 19:18-19). According to the Bible Dictionary, the training of these religious leaders was to serve as a barrier against corruption and to protect the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act as leaders and counsellors in the fear of God. According to the Holman Bible Dictionary, Prophets spoke the word of God. They were primarily spokespersons who called His people to obedience. As a judge, Samuel fulfilled a more general sense the role of a judge, being a person carefully selected by God for his integrity and skill to decide legal cases for the people. Samuel served as a judge who focused on teaching and administering justice (Holman Bible Dictionary, Judge).

Huge implications for the practice of theological education can be drawn from the scripture under question. First, God calls people whom He chooses to come to His service. Secondly, those finally chosen are expected to execute their duties as defined by their calling. Third, they are expected to adopt a multidisciplinary approach in the course of their duty. Finally, they are to have a character that God approves of. The life of Samuel – his early childhood experiences, his call, his serving as an apprentice under Eli, his obedience to God’s instructions and his ministry as priest, judge, and teacher – represents normative standards that inform the practice of theological education.

Douglas (1987:966-967) defines the priest as descendants of Levy, who were appointed for the task of serving God and the people, representing them to God and God to the people. The primary requirement was that they were not supposed to own property, but lived on the tithes from the people of God (Leviticus 10:12-15; 21-35 & Numbers 18:8-20). One of the most important functions of the priest was to teach God’s law. The basic requirement was that the law had to be read after every seven years to all Israel and all Israel was to listen to the reading of the law. Some of their other duties involved teaching people how to worship, performing

the law of sacrifices and engaging them in ritual and other religious duties. This meant that every place a priest functioned was a place of instruction in the law and in religious observance. One of the other primary functions of the priests was to teach people in relation to another. The role of the priests in teaching character formation can never be underestimated. It was a yardstick to measure good character and allegiance and conformity to the law. Since the law is reflected in the bible, then it is plausible to think of compliance to biblical statutes as the yardstick to measure character formation. Theological education programs should of necessity focus on learning and complying with the biblical laws. A theological education program that does not involve biblical mastery is out of place. Mastering the bible has important implications for discipleship in our theological institutions today.

6.3.8. The role of prophets (Elisha) in teaching scripture (Exegesis analysis of 2 Kings 6:1-7)

According to Douglas (1987: 975), the first person whom the bible refers to as a prophet was Abraham (Genesis 20:17; Psalm 105:15), but the Old Testament received its normative form in the life and person of Moses, who constituted a standard of comparison for all future prophets (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 34:10). Every character which characterised and defined the true prophet of Yahweh in the classical tradition of the Old Testament prophecy, was found in the prophet Moses. He received a specific and personal call from God (Exodus 3:1- 4:17).

Prophets can be regarded as people who were raised by God to declare His message to the nation of Israel. However, the prophets were also teachers of God's law as confirmed by Eavey (1964:59) who argued, "Probably no nation has ever produced a group of religious and moral teachers comparable with the prophets of ancient Israel." Eavey (1964:60) further maintained that the prophets represented the highest education that was centred on God. The character of the message was that it was centred on the teachings of Moses's law and centred on God the creator and ruler of the universe. The prophets taught that God was the God of Israel whose character was described as just, holy, righteous and merciful, loving, understanding and patient with his chosen people – the people of Israel. An exegetical analysis of 2 Kings 6:1-7 may bring out some of the key features of prophets as teachers. The scripture says,

"Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, 'See, the place where we dwell under your charge is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan and each of us get there a log, and let us make a place for us to dwell there.' And he answered, 'Go.' Then one of them said, 'Be pleased to go with your servants.' And he answered, 'I will go.'"

According to the Enduring Word Commentary, the scripture above shows the reader two aspects: First, the sons of the prophets, their condition and character; second, the role of the prophet – Elisha. The college here spoken of seems to be that at Gilgal since Elisha was near Jordan. It is clear in the text that wherever Elisha resided, many sons of the prophets flocked to him for the advantage of his instructions, counsels, and prayers. It appears everyone preferred to dwell with him and be near him. When they confirmed that the place was too small for them, it can be inferred that many were added to Elisha because of the positive influence of his teaching. The prophets were humble men. When they wanted room, they did not speak of sending for fancy materials, but only of getting every man a beam. The prophets' behaviours and characters contrast that of modern-day self-proclaimed prosperity gospel prophets who profess to look for great things in the other world, and not be content with mean things in this. The sons of prophets were poor men (since they had to borrow tools) and industrious men willing to take pains. They desired not to live upon the labours of others, but only desired leave of their master Elisha to work for themselves. They were men that had a great value and respect for Elisha; though they were themselves prophets, they paid much deference to him. They would not go to build a house without leave and the permission of Elisha their master. They desired to be under the good guidance of Elisha. They were honest men, and men that were in care to give all men their own. When the axe head accidentally fell into the water, he did not blame anyone, but instead he felt sorry that that would trouble the owner of the axe head.

Concerning Elisha, the chief value of the story lies in its revelation of the influence that Elisha was exerting in the nation. The growth of the school of the prophets was most remarkable. Elisha was a man of great compassion. He went with the sons of the prophets to the woods, when they desired his company. He was a man of great spiritual power who could make iron to swim, contrary to its nature, for the God of nature is not tied up to its laws. The miracle was enough to authenticate the fact that Elisha was a God sent prophet.

The implication is that God's grace can thus raise the stony iron-heart, which has sunk into the mud of this world, and raise up earthly affections naturally to things above. The teachings of the prophets represented the normative standard of teaching that the prophets were supposed to dwell on. Today's prophets, especially those in the prosperity movement represent a sharp contrast with the Old Testament prophets in terms of their character and roles.

Huge implications for theological education can be drawn from the teachings of the Old Testament prophets. Although the Bible does not recognise a form called theological school,

they (theological schools) carry out the activity of studying and teaching about God. In that sense, their existence is biblical. The theological education syllabus or curriculum should reflect the study of such prophets in detail as they have great implications for believers. For example, among most prosperity churches, the content of the Word of God leaves a lot to be desired (as was the case in the empirical study) but the trend can be corrected if there is a concerted effort to match the normative standards of teaching shown by the Old Testament prophets. The same could be said for character formation implications that can be discerned from Elisha's teaching ministry as reflected in the scripture under discussion. Compassion and care are character attributes that are essential in ministry.

According to Adeyemo (2006:449), the company of prophets which are mentioned in the scripture above refer to trainee prophets that were in Elisha's school/college. He argues, "Their reference to meeting with Elisha suggests that this was some kind of a residential school..." (Adeyemo, 2006:449). While it can be argued that the prophets were in a school or college – other views indicate that the prophets were living in some kind of community and under the leadership of Elisha the prophet as evidenced by the phrase, "...the place where we dwell in your presence..." In the present story, we see a community building a new settlement to accommodate numbers – a sign that it was flourishing under the leadership of Elisha the senior prophet.

From this Old Testament story, we can draw insights on the importance of residential programs in theological education. The fact that they all agreed to expand the present facilities indicate that they acted in common purpose, authenticating the view that residential courses or programs build unity among the students and therefore, should be preferred to non-residential programs. From a character formation perspective, we also learn the importance of working in teams in completing a given task. Ability to work in teams is an important character attribute. In using the story in 2 Kings 6:1-2, we can deduce that the normative standard for theological education is going residential where students share their study of God in a community setting. Amolo (2008:1) had this to say, "Theological education in the Old Testament is all embracing and inclusive... an average Israelite was exposed to this kind of education." Developing character formation within community settings is fostered as students interact with one another.

6.3.9. Wisemen (sages) as teachers (Proverbs 1:7 & 9:10)

The sages were a group of wise people such as Solomon who had the primary role of teaching in the Jewish society. The Israelite community regarded the sages as wise people because of

their age, insight, understanding and experience (Easey, 1964:56-57). Solomon is one example of the sages. He had tremendous contributions to the wisdom literature we find in the Old Testament. However, other sages contributed immensely to some of the literature within the genre. For example, Ecclesiastics 12: 9 says, “Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs” – suggesting an orderly presentation of the teaching (Earle, 1979:560). Jamieson, Fausset and Brown (1977:487) noted that the teaching that the people received seemed to have been oral while the proverbs could have been in written form. The authority further suggested that it was likely that there were communities that were assembled in auditoriums to hear the inspired wisdom of the preacher. The wisdom literature suggests that what was taught was of great interest and value to the communities as evidenced by their keenness in attending. Regarding the content of what was taught by the wisemen, it is evident from Proverbs 1:7 and Proverbs 9:10 that the emphasis was ‘the fear of the Lord’. The phrase ‘fear of the Lord’ appears thirteen-times in the book of Proverbs indicating that whatever teaching was done by the wisemen it was meant to inculcate in the minds of the people the need to worship God with reverence and supplication since God was almighty. The wisdom literature in Proverbs assumes that a person cannot make sense of the world or live a full and successful life unless you see God being involved in a person’s whole life. The expected attitude would be to seek understanding from God with reverence and humility. The wisdom literature is also abounded with literature on good character formation. For example, Proverbs 10:8 – 12 says, “The wise of heart will heed commandments, but a prating fool will come to ruin. He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out. He who winks the eye causes trouble, but he who boldly reproves makes peace. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.”

The centrality of love is emphasised in the last sentence. Love is an indispensable character trait. According to Adeyemo (2006:761) the writer of Proverbs 10:8 portrays a contrast between a person who is wise and one who is a fool. The one who is wise is obedient to the orders of superiors, whereas a fool is so busy talking such that he pays no attention to what he is being told to do. In Proverbs 10:9, the contrast is between the man of integrity and he who takes crooked paths. Such a person will have his crooked lifestyle exposed. The wisemen used the wisdom literature (Proverbs for example) as a storehouse from which they can use to teach conduct and behaviour in the community. Such wisdom literature set the standard for

acceptable morals in the society, as pointed out by Earle (1997:541), that Proverbs 10 represents, "...sundry observations upon moral virtues and their opposite vices." Whilst exegesis cannot be done for all the verses in chapter 10, Earle (1997:541) summarises the main ideas in chapter 10 as follows, "...the wise man states in this chapter the difference between the wise and the foolish, the righteous and the wicked, the diligent and the idle. He speaks also of love and hatred, of the good and the evil tongue, or of the slanderer and the peacemaker." Such literature was the storehouse from which teachings could be sourced and sought for stabilising relationships amongst people in the community and therefore represented a yardstick to measure character development within individuals.

The teachings of the wisemen focussed on forming the character of citizens, emphasising on virtues like integrity as desirable qualities of good character. The teachings of the sages in the wisdom literature justify the teaching of values and virtues at theological education colleges. These virtues and values form the basis for character formation in the students. To some extent the teaching of values and virtues, also represent the normative standards that theological education colleges should set as guidelines for spiritual and character formation.

6.3.10. The role of scribes as teachers (Exegetical analysis of Ezra 7:10)

According to Douglas (1987:1079), scribes were writers or copiers of the law. They were experts in the study of the law of Moses (the Torah). The scribes were also an indispensable part of the Hebrew history as they had key responsibilities to copy the law especially after the fall of Judah and the destruction of the temple when there was urgent need to preserve written and oral traditions. Thus, the scribes became very important categories of people in the lives of the Hebrews as they served to preserve the law through copying it and interpreting it correctly to the people. Viewed from a different angle they can be regarded as teachers of the law as well. Their method of teaching was by public discussions, questions and answers, memorisation and the exact verbal reproduction of the teacher's words and stories. One of the most well-known scribes in the Old Testament was Ezra. The Bible confirms that Ezra had devoted his work to studying the laws of the Lord and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel (Ezra 7:10). In his exegesis of Ezra 7:10, Adeyemo (2006:541) identified three aspects regarding the scribe Ezra. First, he taught the law as was the task of every scribe, but over and above that, he studied it and finally he put it into practice. These three elements – teaching the law, studying the law, and putting the law into practice – define the key roles of anyone who would like to live a holy life. "All the three elements are important for a successful Christian life" (Adeyemo, 2006:541). Ezra's experience embodying these three aspects (teaching the

law, studying the law and practising the law) has great implications for theological educators and even for character formation. Adeyemo (2006:541) insists, "...Many Christians do not experience a deepening life because they have not made these things priorities." Ezra's model practice represents the normative blueprint for any Christian work. It is the same for character development as well. Many church leaders have failed on integrity because they teach and study the Word and fail to practise it. Therefore, Ezra's life offers a model for teaching the Word of God especially in theological colleges. The reason Ezra went to Jerusalem was to apply the law of the Lord. Such a mission could not succeed unless he applied this word in his own life. This was the price he had to pay in order to earn credibility and respect. Pastors, evangelists and Christian teachers must, above all, practise the word that they teach (Adeyemo, 2006:541). Thus, it can be said that the scribes had a very important role in preserving the law of God in Israel.

It is very clear from the texts studied in the Old Testament that the ministry of teaching the Word of God was very much at the core of the Hebrew way of life and culture. It has been discussed above that God and Moses effectively carried out the teaching function by Jewish parents, priests, prophets, wise men, and scribes. The normative standard was that at least in the Old Testament era, the Word of God had to be taught setting the criteria for shaping character as well for the Hebrew people. A comparative analysis with the current status quo in theological colleges shows that there is every reason why teachings about God and his character ought to be 'the main thing' in the colleges because teaching as it were represented the normative standard for learning about God.

In the discourse so far outlined, it is clear that the Old Testament was and still is a seedbed for religious education as seen with the lens of Hebrew traditions and culture. The various categories of teachers of scripture discussed highlight their importance in any theological education program and therefore need not be compromised. The Old Testament scriptures remain the storehouse for character development. The implication is that any character formation program should be resourced from the Old Testament scripture.

6.3.11. The teaching role of Jewish parents (Exegetical analysis of Exodus 12:26-27)

Just as the patriarchal leaders of the Jewish community had important teaching roles about God, such responsibilities also were with the parents. The parents had a duty to teach their children the dictates of the laws of Moses as given to them through tradition and history by

Moses. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Moses gives very clear instructions regarding how the parents were obliged to teach the law to their children.

“Moreover, these words, which I command, you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Moses communicated the above instruction to the Israeli community after he himself got the instructions from God. The Israelites are reminded to reflect on God’s covenantal laws, teach them to their children and share them to the entire community. In the scripture cited above, Moses describes the covenant laws as ‘these words.’ The immediate context of the phrase is verses 4-5 which deals with the commandment to love God wholeheartedly. Not only did the individual Israelite needed to constantly reflect on the Word in order to remain faithful but they had an express instruction to pass the knowledge to their descendants as well. In practical terms, what was implied was that the knowledge of God should flow from the individual’s private heart to his own family in the home – the family – and this was an express responsibility for fathers and mothers. Hence, the requirement, “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” According to the Enduring World Bible Commentary, the piling up of pairs of contrasting verbs such as ‘sit and walk’, ‘lie and rise’ is referred to as ‘merism’ which is some form of emphasis that this teaching to children was not meant to be a one-time or once per week activity but was a continuous activity. This explains why Moses teaches the parents to talk about these words all the time, regardless of the location or time of the day. The practice became a standard by which parents and their children lived. The practice was possible because God’s law covered every aspect of human behaviour.

Also, Moses figuratively spoke of wearing the commandments to their bodies. The implied meaning was that Israelites were to constantly have God’s commandments in view and in mind in order to carefully and continuously observe them. Such careful observance of the law would translate Israel’s genuine love and faithfulness towards God into action – it would be a public demonstration of their commitment to God’s precepts and a witness to surrounding nations to seek and receive the same relationships and benefits respectively.

Finally, Moses commanded the Israelites to remember covenant principles every time they left their homes and came back. He said, “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house.” The requirement was that they were to write on gates and doorposts. The gates referred to city gates because in ancient Israel most houses did not have gates, implying that God’s law would be the standard foundation for all aspects to their community life. This foundational requirement could also apply not only to individuals but to family households and the entire city or village.

In summary, this section confronts us with a pattern in the way God’s teaching should properly be done. The knowledge of God went from the individual’s private heart to his family in the home, before it finally reached the public (the community) and its governance, including its system of justice. Such a pattern, when applied diligently, would be beneficial for any society because obeying the Lord’s commands leads to social harmony, justice, opportunity, and mutual benefit. It creates a people dealing with one another in a loving and mutually beneficial manner. Other similar examples of scripture could also be cited to support the same point, though not going to be subjected to exegetical analysis. For example, Exodus 12:26-27 says, “And when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ You shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he slew the Egyptians but spared our houses.’”

This scripture demonstrates that the parents had a huge responsibility in teaching the key concepts of their history to their children. According to Earle (1997:110) the Jews did not take their children to the temple or tabernacle until they had attained the age of 12 years, neither did they allow them to participate in any rights until they were 12 years old. The assumption was that they would be educating their children whilst they were at home. Therefore, the writer of Exodus alludes to the fact that they (the parents) were to teach their children the meaning of the Passover Feast. The role of parents cannot be underestimated in any theological education program. It is the norm to undertake the duty of teaching their children the dictates of the Bible. The implication is that theological education programs should necessarily involve parents, as they are key in the transmission of the Bible tradition.

Theological education practice should be informed by the understandings from this scripture that teachings about the knowledge of God should cascade from the individual, to his family in the home, before it finally reaches the public (community) and its governance, including its system of justice. The scripture also appeals, to how the public theologians should help to teach

about theology of God by engaging publics. According to what is discerned from the scripture under discussion, theological education programs should involve parents, the community, and the systems of justice and governance. This is a challenge for curriculum integration in theological education institutions.

Likewise, Deuteronomy 4:9-10, is an astute example that demonstrates the teaching responsibilities of parents to their children. Moses instructs the Israelites,

“Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children—how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, ‘Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children so.’”

From this text, the parents are implored to teach their children the events leading to the exodus and the miraculous work that the Lord displayed throughout the exodus. There is a stern warning accompanying this imperative: He that forgets them (the laws) forgets his own mercies. “Therefore, if a man knows the worth of his soul, he will feel the importance of the salvation of the souls of his family” (Earle, 1997:207).

The responsibility of parents in character formation of their children has important biblical and theological foundations. In Proverbs 1:8, children are urged to respond in obedience to the teachings of their fathers and mothers. “Listen...to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.” According to Adeyemo (2006:749), the word ‘instruction’ means the same as ‘discipline’ and is associated with the father, while the word teaching, which is a translation of the Hebrew word for ‘law’ is associated with mother. The mention of both parents here is a tribute to the significant role played by mothers in the Hebrew family. The reason why the son should listen to these teachings is that they will be a garland to grace their heads and a chain to adorn their necks. In the preceding text (Proverbs 1:9), the son is reminded of the beauty and delightfulness of a life lived in obedience to parents. Character formation is rooted in theological foundation, demanding that the family, as it were, has an important role in shaping the character of an individual. The implication for theological education is that programs should engage families of students in the community for effective character shaping.

These above cited scriptures have shown the importance of parents in teaching the traditions of the Hebrews about God. In other words, the normative yardstick for teaching effectively

about God also rested with the parents. Today's theological education programs must ordinarily embrace the participation of parents, as they are an important aspect for effective theological education and character formation of the students.

6.4. Teaching about God and character formation in the New Testament

Since Christianity as it is practised in the New Testament had its roots in Judaism as portrayed in the Old Testament, it is also critically important to understand how the New Testament can inform present day theological education practice. During the New Testament era, the charismatic nature of ministries of the apostles, prophets and teachers contributed significantly to the teaching and direction of the newly formed church in apostolic times. The apostles, disciples, and new believers depended, largely, on their charisma and charismatic gifting. Just like the Old Testament era, there were no theological colleges in existence during the New Testament era, but the church was involved in studying and teaching the Word of God.

The next section will answer the question: What normative biblical and theological standards does the New Testament set for the practice of theological education today? Expressed differently, what theological education praxis existed during the New Testament period that can inform how we do theological education today? In answering these questions, the discourse will focus on studying some of the teachings and life of Jesus, and the nature of ministry of the apostles after Jesus' ascension. A brief exegetical analysis of scripture references to the ministry of Jesus, his disciples (Peter, Paul and Apollos) and the Holy Spirit will help to understand the effectiveness of the teaching ministry in learning about God and how these teachings facilitated character formation. It is hoped that implications can be drawn from New Testament theology regarding theological education and character formation.

6.4.1. Jesus as the teacher (Exegetical analysis of Mark 2:13 and John 3:2)

Mark 2:13 says, "Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them."

Just as the Old Testament began with God as the teacher, so the New Testament will also begin with Jesus as the teacher. In the New Testament, Jesus was referred to as the teacher for forty-five times and as rabbi fourteen times. John 3:2 quoted Nicodemus saying to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him."

The word 'Rabbi' denotes a title of respect, which means a teacher of divine things (Earle, 1997:903). Rabbi (*didaskalos*), as a title of respect, also signifies a person who not only has the name of teacher but who actually does teach. Nicodemus, as a member of the Sanhedrin Council, was convinced that Jesus was a teacher from God. As highlighted above, forty-five times Jesus is referred to as teacher and fourteen times as a Rabbi. There are three reasons that account for the fact that Jesus was in fact performing the role of a teacher. First, in Matthew 7:28 and John 3:2, Jesus is referred to as 'Rabbi', which as has been described above means teacher. Second, the gospel writers described Jesus' ministry as a teaching one. For example, in Mark 4:1-2; 6:2; 8:31 and 12:35 Jesus is described as a teacher. Third, his followers were pupils or disciples, implying that they were learners.

Eavey (1964:78) stressed that Jesus used teaching as a chief means of accomplishing what he had come into the world to do. That was, to show humanity the way to God and to shape their attitudes, and conduct and conform to God's will. It follows from this text that whatever teaching has to be done, be it in the church or in theological education lecture rooms, it must be Jesus centred because Jesus himself came from God. What is strikingly important is that Jesus' ministry was characterised by a lot of teaching than preaching. Theological education is by definition a Christian education teaching exercise. If we use the normative standard of Jesus' practice as a teacher as a guideline, then we should envisage that much of what happens in theological education should be focused on forming students so that they are good teachers of the Word of God just like Jesus was.

Jesus' approach to teaching was one of engaging people of various categories. For example, in John 3: 4 we learn that he engaged Nicodemus as an individual, and in John4:7, we understand that he had an encounter with the Samaritan woman. In Matthew 13:10, he engaged small groups like his own disciples and in Matthew 5-7 he engaged with large groups of people. Group dynamics is of paramount importance in Christian education settings especially in a theological education context. Character formation unfolds well where students are engaged with others in the group.

Jesus' methodological approach was unique, in that he moved from place to place proclaiming the message of God. That way, his approach could be rated evangelistic in scope. But also, his instructional strategies were from the known to the unknown making use of parables and stories to teach. In his response to the disciples, Jesus stressed that people understood better, when he taught them in parables.

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to him who has will more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand (Matthew 13: 10-13).

The methodologies used by Jesus set the basic standard of teaching scripture. Unlike most teachers who complicate the Word, Jesus’ emphasis was that it should be simplified in a way that the ordinary hearer of the Word will understand it without major challenges. Regarding the thematic content of his teaching, his overarching theme was to lead people to God through himself (John 14:6). His other themes were that he came to reconcile man back to God and to demonstrate how people ought to live in relation to God and to one another. In John 10:10, Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Another important aspect of Jesus’ teaching was that he stressed on the equipping of his disciples for the work of ministry so that when he was gone, the disciples would imitate how he did ministry. The command Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 is enough evidence to suggest that he was satisfied that they (the disciples) had been formed well enough to go into the world and make other disciples. The mentor-disciple relationship should inform theological practitioners on its merits and demerits. The mentor-disciple bond can be regarded as a suitable standard yardstick for training of kingdom workers. Where the bond is strong, the effects are likely to be positive but where the bond is weak, the results are imminently detrimental. Discipleship has huge implications for ministry formation and character building.

Of critical importance is the fact that Jesus’ teaching provides a reservoir for the teaching of character, or more commonly referred in theology as character formation. Below is an exegetical analysis of some of the teachings that have implications for character building. Matthew 7: 24-27 says,

“Therefore, whoever hears these sayings, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears sayings, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and

the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24-27).

Taylor (2022) presents every person in one of the two classes: wise or foolish builders. In the passage, Jesus encouraged those who had heard his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount to apply them in their lives. Each of us is to be involved in that building process by applying the principles of Scripture to our thoughts and conduct, conforming to the will of God in all things – even bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ as illustrated in 2 Corinthians 10:5. The process by which this is possible is described by the apostle Paul in Romans 12:1-2 when he said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” The mind that the apostle Paul refers to is, “the mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5). Taylor (2022) argues, “When one allows the gospel to mould and renew his mind, a transformation occurs. It is at that point that the person begins to take on the qualities of character that resemble that of Christ. Every Christian must build such as character (2 Peter 3:18).

What Taylor (2022) is saying is that Jesus is our perfect standard for character formation. To be specific, Taylor (2022) identifies the quality and outstanding traits that Jesus possessed that would be good for character formation: Luke 2:51 says, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”.

- (a) As a child, he was subject to his parents (Luke 2:51; Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20);
- (b) He was interested in spiritual things (His Father’s business) at an early age (Luke 2:49);
- (c) He lived, not selfishly, but for others (Mark 10:45; Philippians 2:4);
- (d) He accomplished God’s will in his life (John 6:38); and finally,
- (e) He left a legacy that all believers could follow (1Peter 2:21).

There are four areas of Jesus’ development that are related in Luke 2:52 – wisdom, stature, and favour with man and favour with God (Taylor, 2022). These four areas have important implications for our character development. By wisdom is meant to grow intellectually. It is the quality of being wise; the power of judging right and wrong based on knowledge,

experience and understanding. Wisdom and diligence are qualities that were reviewed under wisdom literature above as reflected in Proverbs 3:13-26 and in 2 Timothy 2:15 respectively. The practical implication is that a good understanding of biblical teachings is far more valuable than an education at the finest academic institution. A closer examination of these three qualities will draw us closer to understanding the growth dimensions of Jesus in more detail.

- (i) *Stature*: Regarding stature, Jesus developed a strong, healthy body. Our bodies are to be instruments of our service (Romans 12:1; 6:12-13) and temples of God. This comes about through eating proper food, exercise and keeping the body from disease.
- (ii) *Favour with man*: means God given grace to live and communicate socially with man (Earle, 1979:860; Jamieson et al, 1977:994). It has to do with human beings living well and harmoniously together as a group. Jesus related and associated well with all kinds of people – publicans, sinners and Samaritans, because he loved them (John 3:16).
- (iii) *Favour with God*: Spiritual development ought to be a primary requirement for every child of God. The importance and value of the soul is seen in Matthew 16:26 where it is shown to be of greater value than all the amassed wealth to be found in the world. The correct spiritual food is the Bible (Acts 20:32; 1 Peter. 2:1-2). Spiritual exercise is the application of the Word of God to one's life, which results in proper character development and worthwhile service to the Lord and others. Freedom from disease is being pure and "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27) by keeping one's lusts in check. Based on this exegetical analysis, we can conclude that Jesus is the standard for character development.

6.4.2. The imperative and charge to teach the Word of God – the Gospel

There are striking similarities regarding the imperative to teach the Word of God that we witness in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God instructs His people. We learnt in Deuteronomy 6:6 that Moses instructed parents to teach the Word of God (as was in the Ten Commandments) and never to forget even for future generations. In the same way, in the New Testament, Jesus instructs his disciples to teach the gospel to other nations far and beyond (Matthew 28:19-20) and promised that he would be with them to the end of the age. After His resurrection, He commanded Peter to tend His flock. Three times He commanded Peter to look after His lambs – the church (John 21: 15-17). Feeding the flock

means among others, teaching the Church of Jesus Christ (Earle, 1997:955). In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul urged Timothy and other church leaders to teach, thus passing on what they had heard from him to other witnesses, who would in turn pass it on to others. The author of Hebrews (Hebrews 5:11-14) rebuked them for having not mastered what he was teaching them when they should actually be teachers themselves.

In Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 Paul urges parents not to provoke their children to anger, but instead should bring them up with Christian discipline and instruction. The practice of teaching children was taken over from the Old Testament as discussed above, where parents were responsible for teaching their children. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul says, "...teach and admonish one another in all wisdom..." and in Titus 2:1-2 Paul says, "But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine." The women folk are also encouraged to do the same; "...they are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited" (Titus 2:3-5). These scriptures show that the normative standards for the sustenance of the gospel (the Word of God) are continuous teaching. Theological colleges and Christian believers all are charged by the same imperative – to teach the gospel. The letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 5:12) sums it all when the author says, "...you ought to be teachers..."

6.4.3. The teaching role of the apostles and disciples of Jesus (Paul, Peter and Apollos)

The New Testament teachings rose from different circumstances and contexts, each addressing particular situations and problems. Teachings of Jesus for example, as shown in the above section were done to address rising criticism about his ministry, misconceptions about his ministry and in some cases addressing the Laws of Moses. In the same way when the apostles and disciples set out to teach the word, the teachings were done in different contexts to address different challenges. For the apostles, teaching and preaching were interchangeable as indicated in Acts 5:42; "And every day in the temple and in people's homes they continued to teach and preach the good news ..."

(a) Paul as a teacher (Exegetical analysis of 2 Timothy 1:11)

2 Timothy 1:11 says, "...to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." Paul is the writer of the letter to Timothy. He emphasises his three office credentials: a preacher, an apostle and a teacher. A public preacher is one who may discharge his office even in one and the same place. Second, an apostle goes about everywhere; but he would have fully satisfied the requirements of his apostolic office, if he had once for all declared his

message. Third, the teacher's role that he refers to requires diligence and perseverance in executing the role but also exposes him to suffering for Christ. Paul believes that he was appointed by God to be a teacher to the Gentiles. The reason he gives these charges to Paul is that he believes that Timothy must take the button to preach and teach the gospel at a time when he was incarcerated and waiting for his fate in prison. Paul stresses to Timothy the need for the ministry to the Gentiles. The Gospel of the uncircumcision, or the ministration of the Gospel to the uncircumcised Gentiles, was committed to him; and he was a teacher of them in faith. That approach was what Timothy was to inherit.

Paul's encounters involved more teaching than preaching as evidenced in Galatians 2:7; "...when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised..." This part of scripture sees him as a preacher and teacher to the gentile community. Paul's experiences in teaching the Galatian church are also evident in Galatians 5:22-23. Paul identifies love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control as 'fruits of the spirit'. According to Paul, these qualities only come about through the workings of the Holy Spirit in the individual, and have the capacity to transform the believer into becoming Christ-like. This teaching has important implications for character formation. The Christ-like qualities are the normative standards upon which we can build character. The role of the Holy Spirit in character formation is unquestionably important and indispensable.

In 1 Corinthians 1:23 and 9:16, Paul sees himself as having preached. Acts 11:22-26 records Paul as having spent a year teaching in Antioch. In his preaching / teaching, Paul engaged both the Gentiles and the Jews. Acts 18:11 gives an account of Paul having stayed in Corinth for one and a half years teaching people the Word of God. Acts 19:9-10 also reports that Paul taught and held discussions in Tyrannus for two years. It is clear that teaching was at the centre of Paul's ministry. Dickson (2014) maintains that Paul used the term 'didaskalia', meaning to teach, fifteen times in his pastoral letters. It cannot be denied that teaching was very important in his ministry. Biblical texts confirm this fact, and these are: 1 Corinthians 11:4; Ephesians 4:21; Colossians 1:28 and 2 Timothy 2:2 just but to mention a few. In the majority of cases the leaders that he appointed through his teaching performed well in managing the churches they were assigned. Timothy and Titus are good examples. This confirms the effectiveness of his teaching ministry.

The implications that we draw from Paul are that the knowledge about God is learnt through the activity of teaching and preaching and that the former aspect is fundamental to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Second, the teaching of the gospel requires selflessness and sacrifice. These are the same qualities required in theological education. Partnerships are essential in theological teaching. Just as Timothy was an essential partner of Paul in ministry, so do theological educators need essential partners for the ministry of teaching in order to succeed.

(b) Peter's role as a teacher (Exegetical analysis of John 21:17)

Peter's ministry appears to have been effective as well. John 21:15-17 says,

“When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Feed my lambs.’ He said to him a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ He said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love me?’ Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ and he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’”

Three key instructions that Jesus gives Peter are, “...feed my lambs...tend my sheep... [and] feed my sheep.” The apostle Peter had rejected Jesus 3 times. This time around, Jesus questions Peter's standard by asking three times the same question. The approach that Jesus used is a demonstration of his trust and loves for Peter in discipling his believers through teaching. According to the Ellicott's Commentary the imperative, “feed my lambs,” was an instruction to Peter to be a shepherd to the weak ones among the believers. “Tend my sheep” was a command to protect and discipline the mature believers, ensuring that none is lost through the teaching ministry. It was also a commissioning of Peter to the ministry of discipleship and teaching. Finally, “feed my sheep,” meant taking great care to those that are extremely vulnerable. The feeding of ‘sheep’ and caring of the ‘lambs’ demand discipleship and teaching responsibilities from Peter.

This is also evidence in Peter's letters such as in 1 Peter 2:1-3 to demonstrate that his audience was a mature church, which was a result of his teaching ministry. In 2 Peter 3:18 Peter urges them “...to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”. His encouragement assumes that the believers had grown in their knowledge of God through his teaching ministry.

(c) Apollos role in teaching (Exegetical analysis of Acts 18:24-25)

Regarding Apollo, the narrative in Acts 18:24-25 shows that he was an effective teacher.

“Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great favour and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.”

The teaching credentials relating to Apollos tend to point that he might have been the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. According to the Ellicott’s Commentary, the facts in the New Testament show that Apollos occupied a prominent position in the history of the apostolic church at Alexandria. It also indicates that his influence to the early church through his teaching ministry was great. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges Commentary says, “His influence as a Christian teacher made itself most felt in Corinth.” The Benson’s Commentary insists that Apollo’s mastery and knowledge of the scriptures show that he had been well taught in the doctrine of Christ, a sign of a very effective teaching ministry by the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ. The Expositor’s Greek Commentary estimates the word ‘eloquent’ to ‘learned’ implying an acquaintance with scripture due to teaching. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges Commentary confirms that the word ‘eloquent’ in the original Greek meaning expresses not only ability as an orator, but also the possession of stores of learning, thus implying that Apollos was learned and could use his learning with effect. The phrase ‘mighty in scriptures’ mean that Apollos had great power in the exposition and application of these Scriptures. Such skill can only result through effective teaching ministry.

It is evident in the discussions so far pursued that the disciples engaged in a serious teaching ministry and it was the imperative to teach what they learned from Jesus that motivated them to take the baton further afar to areas that had not heard about the gospel of Jesus. However, they would not have managed on their own as was promised by Jesus, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The implication of this charge was that the Holy Spirit was also going to be a co-partner in the teaching ministry.

6.4.4. The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit

It has been shown in this study that in the Old Testament and New Testament God and Jesus were the teachers of the Word respectively. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit assumed the responsibility to teach as well. The teaching role comes with it three other roles

that support his teaching role. First, John 14:26 confirms that the Holy Spirit will teach the disciples everything and make them remember all that which Jesus had told them. Second, as a teacher, the Holy Spirit was to guide them into all truths (John 16:3) and third, the Holy Spirit was going to equip them with gifts of teaching, knowledge and discernment (1 Corinthians 12:8-11; Ephesians 4:11).

The Holy Spirit's other function was to help the disciples in understanding the things about God. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul says, "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

According to Earle (1997:1089), the knowledge that the gospel saves through the crucifixion of Jesus could only be revealed by the Holy Spirit otherwise without the Holy Spirit revealing that truth, nobody would know. Hence Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14 -15, "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one." The message that Paul was insisting was simply that a person who is not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit has difficulty in understanding the things of the Spirit of God.

The other crucial function of the Holy Spirit was to reveal the truth. For example, in Matthew 16:13-17, Jesus asked Peter who he thought he was. In response Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus' comment was that it was through the revelation of the truth by the Holy Spirit that made Peter identify him as the Christ and the Son of God. Without the revelation by the Spirit of God, it is impossible to reveal truth. Paul speaks of the same revelation power in 1 Corinthians 14:26 when he says, "What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation..." The revelation that Paul points at comes from one source – that source is God the Holy Spirit. In short what Paul insisted on was that God was the dispenser of knowledge of the truth.

The other teaching role of the Holy Spirit concerns his transformative power on both the teacher and the learner. In Ephesians 4: 11-16, Paul insists that through the transformative works of the Holy Spirit believers will resemble Christ so that whatever they do is Christ-like. The importance of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit is critical in character formation. Until the Holy Spirit transforms a person, there can never be a change in that person's character.

Furthermore, just as the Holy Spirit transforms both the learner and the teacher at the same time, He also enables the latter (the teacher) to teach the Word of God with power conviction and

courage. In 1 Thessalonians 1: 5 Paul says, "...for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." In this scripture, Paul is confirming the fact that the gospel can only be preached through the dispensing of power from the Holy Spirit. It is the same spirit that gives conviction that it is indeed a gospel coming from God. Without the power and conviction, preaching the gospel would indeed be a mammoth task. In Acts 4:29-31, the writer of Acts points out, "When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness." The text confirms the power ratio that the Holy Spirit gives the believers so that they demonstrate the presence of God in what they do for Him.

Generating interest in the things of God comes through the workings of the Holy Spirit. Colossians 3:1 demonstrates that the Holy Spirit generates interest about the things of Christ by "... seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Above all, the Holy Spirit brings the Word as the inspired and breathed Word of God as indicated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, that "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." As the breathed Word of God is preached to the believer and non-believer, the Holy Spirit's role is to elevate and glorify Christ. Jesus confirms the role of the Holy Spirit in John 15:26 when he says, "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, He will testify on my behalf." The scripture confirms the Unitarian role of the Holy Spirit – where the Holy Spirit with harmony could play Jesus' role.

The roles of the Holy Spirit confirm his teaching capacity among believers and non-believers. The Holy Spirit's teaching roles have great implication for the practice of theological education. Put simply students cannot learn about God without the intervention of the Holy Spirit. This presupposes that the Holy Spirit should be at the centre of all theological instruction. Furthermore, and in reference to character formation, there cannot be transformation of character without the involvement of the Holy Spirit as a great teacher. A closer look at the roles of the Holy Spirit discussed above confirms that the Spirit of God is an indispensable part in character formation and in all teachings about God as the Spirit transforms people, reveals the truths, generates interest and motivation to learn and above all breathes the Word for people to learn it and worship God.

6.4.5. Teaching as a gift of the Holy Spirit (Exegetical analysis of John14:26)

The teaching roles of the Holy Spirit discussed above should be looked at as essential gifting that comes from the same spirit. Teaching is a special gift that the Holy Spirit gives to believers. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul says, “He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” Among other portfolios, teaching comes fifth in the list. However, the fact that teaching comes fifth in the order does not mean that it is of least importance compared to the others but just that it is part of an essential role in the fivefold ministry (Adeyemo, 2006:1433). In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul identifies teachers as taking position three in the list as follows, “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.” Whereas in Romans 12:7, Paul gives emphasis to teaching when he says, “If we can serve others, we should serve. If we can teach, we should teach.” Teaching is compared with serving in this context and it implies the transmission of truth contained in the gospel (Adeyemo, 2006:1369). The fact is that teaching is an essential gift bestowed to believers by the Holy Spirit.

The fact that teaching is an indispensable gift in the ministry of Holy Spirit should encourage teachers and educators alike to do their work with diligence knowing that they are empowered by the Holy Spirit to exercise their teaching roles. Hammond (2008) an experienced missionary in Africa once said,

“We need to ensure that pastors, teachers, evangelists, and chaplains are strongly grounded in Reformed doctrine and piety. We need to ensure that our preaching deals with head, heart, and hands. We need to be involved in the renewing of minds, the transforming of hearts, and the practical application of the lordship of Christ to all areas of life.”

A closer look at the quotation reveals that transforming the hearts (character and spiritual formation), and grounding people on doctrine (teaching about God) is a basic requirement and responsibility for the teachers of the Word of God. Hence Hammond (2008) recommends “...Bible-based discipleship books – particularly Bible teaching.” The recommendation has great implications for the role that theological educators play in teaching the Word of God.

6.5. Summary and conclusion

The chapter focused on the biblical and theological foundations of theological teaching as the normative for the practice of theological education. Doak (2004:132) cited a renowned character formation scholar, Hauerwas, who maintained that Scripture canons have a valid

claim to a role in the formation of Christian identity. Doak (2004:132) cited Hauerwas as having said, “Knowledge about God is primarily narrational because it is received through the historical experiences of the Christian community.” Understanding God is therefore through narrative texts in the Bible. Doak (2004) noted that in order to understand the Christian God, we must make the story of God’s presence in Israel and in Jesus Christ the story out of which we live. Hauerwas further contended, “We are storied people because the God that sustains us is a storied God...” These insights demonstrate the importance that this chapter attached to the Old and New Testament as stories from which we can depict normative standards for the practice of theological education.

The chapter highlighted that at least within the confines of the Old Testament there were no formalised theological education institutions but that theological teaching existed within various groupings of the Hebrew set up. The question that was raised was, in the absence of formal theological institutions, how did the covenant people learn about God? It became apparent that theological teaching manifested itself in various ways and groupings for purposes of transmitting the knowledge about God from one generation to another. God was identified as the principal teacher in the Old Testament whose role was to teach Moses about who He was so that he would transmit the same knowledge to future generations. Moses engaged with Israel and made sure that all children through their parents would learn the laws of God. The teachings about God were also a responsibility for Joshua as the one who took over from Moses. Teachings also included the roles of the priests, scribes, wisemen, prophets and sages. The Jewish family had the central responsibility for character formation and teaching their offspring the laws of Moses. The traditional historic set up of the nation of Israel ensured that future generations would learn and know about God.

Within the New Testament era, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are the primary teachers playing significant roles. Their roles are made possible by other participants; the apostles and disciples of Jesus (mainly Paul, Peter and Apollos teaching ministry), and other Christian believers. It was noted too that what made learning the Word of God possible was the underwork of the Holy Spirit as it seeks to transform believers to be Christ like by His revelation power that comes through the Word of God. Since teaching about the Word of God is essentially a theological education task, it is imperative that today’s theological education practice should tap into what we know as the historical normative standard for teaching about God. The normative standards that theological educators draw from the discussion are that:

- (a) The principal teacher of the Word is the Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Word of God should necessarily embrace the Unitarian nature of the Trinity. Any teaching that denies the harmonious nature of the basic Trinitarian construct is flawed. The trinity is critically important for teaching the Word;
- (b) The gospel is communally owned through the participation of different categories of people playing different teaching roles. Therefore, success in teaching the gospel depends on the nature of engagement of people in the community notably the parents and other key stakeholders like colleges and the church;
- (c) Knowledge of God comes through cultural engagement. Since cultures are diverse, there is need to be tolerant and apply theologies of context as the Word can be shared variously in different cultural entities;
- (d) The role of public theology is essential in making the practice of theology meaningful to other publics in the society; and,
- (e) Finally, the Bible is the key component and reference resource. It contains the breathed Word of God. It is important to note that anything outside of the Bible cannot be considered as ‘the gospel’. This explains why the Bible has stood the test of time. The importance of the Bible as the credible source has vivid implications for prosperity gospel practitioners and practices. All that the prosperity gospel says and what the preachers preach has to be tested for compliance with the Holy Scriptures.

As a way forward therefore, for theological educators, the analysis in this chapter has set the normative standard upon which any theological teaching or education program should be grounded. The next chapter will discuss the way forward regarding what role theological education plays in ministerial character formation among prosperity churches. The current chapter provides the biblical and theological base from both the Old and New Testament teaching experiences for the proposals.

CHAPTER 7: Towards a character and leadership sensitive model of theological education

7.1. Introduction

The chapter focuses on the application of Swinton and Mowat's (2016) theory regarding formulation of strategies for revised forms of practice. For Osmer's (2008:12-13) it is the practical theological interpretation on the current issues under study. The approach seeks to find the pragmatic solutions to the problem under study. The stage involved determining strategies of action that will influence the situation on the ground in ways that are desirable. The stage requires us to do reflective analysis of the findings from the findings of the empirical field study and the normative positions of theology and scripture with a view to answer the question: where do we go from here. Our approach to formulating strategies for practice is informed by current praxis, cultural and contextual issues and also theological reflection. These will help answer the question: What understandings and meanings do we learn from current praxis, cultural and contextual issues and theological reflection that will inform future practice and help revise current practice?

The answer to these questions is to propose a theological education model that will help address the issues highlighted as problematic among prosperity run churches. For purposes of refreshing our memory, briefly the issues that are under discussion are as follows:

First, was the need to determine the role that theological education plays in leadership character formation among prosperity churches; second, is the need to identify the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and communities they belong; third, determining the theological understandings informing the prosperity church leaders' practices; fourth understanding how the prosperity church leaders viewed their practices within their congregations and communities from both a theological and biblical viewpoint; fifth was the need to understand prosperity and wealth focused practices of prosperity churches and their leaders ; and finally is the need to recommend practices for character formation of prosperity church leaders in order that we have balanced ministry practices that contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church. These questions were at the core of the research study.

This chapter seeks to recommend a model of theological education that will help us solve the issues of character formation of prosperity church leaders. The approach that the researcher adopts is one of identifying the core determinants or elements that will qualify the proposed theological model. The second stage is to identify imperatives for the proposed model to work

well and finally justifying why the proposed model is suitable in addressing the issues raised in the research. It is believed that these three stages will lead us to have answers to the questions raised by Osmer (2008), Swinton, and Mowat (2016) above.

The major research question in the study is leadership focused, therefore there is need to identify the type of leadership that will address the issues of character formation among prosperity church leaders.

7.2 The search for mature character and ideal leader

It has been shared elsewhere that the three qualities of character – self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence – finally determine the character stability that a person should show as he/she moves towards developing mature character. Institutional programs that have a responsibility to develop character move along a continuum from immature character to mature character as they seek to develop the fineness of the three traits. However, we need to understand the implications of mature versus immature character. One of the major findings of the empirical study was that prosperity gospel leaders' characters leave a lot to be desired as the prosperity leaders/preachers go about their pastoral practices. In our search for a model of theological education model that addresses such character issues of prosperity gospel leaders, we are also searching for a relation that exist between character formation and mature leadership. Pettit (2008:154) asserted that character is inextricably linked to leadership. Leadership without mature character is not true leadership since leadership has its ultimate goal the glorification of God. As God's image-bearers (Genesis 1:26-28), we are expected to demonstrate a mature leadership disposition, prompting us to search for a leadership theological model that is character biased – one that matches admirable leadership practice. The study utilises Easley's (2014:9-11) leadership model of theological education as a guide that informs us on the nature of the product that theological educators seek to produce. A brief summary of the model will help us appreciate the role that the leadership model plays in informing the proposed model of theological education in this study.

7.2.1 Basic tenets of the leadership model of theological education

Easley (2014:9) sees theological education, "... as the process of enabling the practice of theological and biblical wisdom in leadership events so that contemporary faith communities fulfil their mission to be salt and light to our world and maintain the repository of truth for the next generation." Three dimensions of leadership qualities that need to be developed were identified: theological reflection; community engagement; and personal formation (Easley,

2014:11). The first aspect is the ability to see present realities in the light of biblical truths and theological constructs. Figuratively theological reflection deals with the head. The second quality, community engagement, deals with the hands. This quality involves leaders engaging the community in problem solving and goal achievement, thereby bringing about the peaceful and restorative kingdom of God in the world. In simple terms, “community engagement moves us from the ivory tower to the dirty and dangerous streets in response to the call of Christ to be salt of the earth and light of the world [Matthew 5:13-14]” (Easley, 2014:14). Regarding the third quality, which is personal formation, the focus has moved from the head and the hands to the heart. Personal formation is spiritual formation, spirituality, or character formation. Personal formation equates to Farley’s (2001) *theologia* or Kelsey’s (1993) *paideia*, and has to do with our ability to think theologically about circumstances we face at a personal level. It is ‘culturing the souls’ for facing the realities of our world. It is the sanctification of our spirit by the Holy Spirit and the commitment to live a Christ-like life in relationships, behaviours and possessions (Easley, 2014:19-20). It begins with our commitment to Christ as our saviour from personal and inherited sin. Therefore, personal formation has its roots in theological reflection – the exercise of biblical study and theological investigation.

A good leadership model of theological education seeks to develop leaders so that they have wisdom in leadership events so that the faith community fulfil their mission to be the light and salt in the world. Good leadership models of theological education should adopt integrated theological approaches that seek to prepare ministry leaders to be with the people and listen to their challenges and journey with them without offering simplistic solutions (Magezi, 2021: 153).

7.2.2 Exploring the relationship between character and leadership

As we explore the relationship between character and leadership, we are indeed seeking to define the qualities of leadership that will eventually shape the leader that is sought. It is unavoidable to discuss leadership qualities or behaviour without discussing values since values are essential for effective leadership. The effectiveness of a leader is rated against how values and action are invested and integrated in leadership practice. This means that it is critically important to look at how leaders develop and hold the values that are foundational to their actions. In reality, the character determines the selection of some values over others and therefore defines the value system. At the core, character is critically important for effective leadership. The implication for theological educators is that in order to produce a model that is character sensitive, there is need to have some idea about the kind of leader that the character-

sensitive model is seeking to produce. For effective management of prosperity run churches, theological education practice must help us to develop a leader quality or material that can bring effective and positive leadership change in those prosperity gospel contexts. Such leaders must aim to bring transformation in how prosperity churches do church.

7.2.3 Transformational Leadership

It has already been pointed out above that effective leadership is the result of particular character traits. Nevertheless, it is apparent that no single trait can predict and define effective leadership but that it is a conglomeration of many traits. In the twenty-first century, a transformational leadership paradigm has developed, which seeks to elevate the role of values and beliefs in a leader-follower contextual relationship. Where we have prosperity church leaders who lead huge congregations, we need to explore the theological education model that can transform the character of many prosperity church leaders into effective and responsible leaders. Pettit (2008:155) asserted that within certain organisations – churches included – leaders are most effective only when they are motivated by a concern for others, when their actions are guided primarily by the criteria of ‘the benefit to others even if it results in some cost to self.’ In a theological education context, we are asking how theological educators can produce Christian leaders who are motivated to serve others even if such service results in cost to self. Such Christian leaders should be guided by the altruistic motive, which is consistent with moral leadership behaviour. Transformative leaders are ‘others-focused’ and therefore have a moral responsibility and obligation to serve others.

In contrast, immoral leadership is egotistical and benefits the leader personally rather than benefitting others or the organisation. In the empirical study, it was evidently shown that, most prosperity church leaders are motivated by egoistic concerns, values, and therefore are ‘self-focused leaders’ instead of being ‘other-focused leaders.’ This difficulty is compounded by the fact that some transformational leaders who are not ‘self-focused leaders’ may genuinely believe that their motives are altruistic. Where this is the case, we have pseudo transformational leaders who look like they are acting transformational. The view that transformational leaders are not self- focused but ‘others focused’ tends to make us believe that they can rightly address leadership characters within the prosperity gospel churches. What is apparent with transformational leadership is that it does not adequately address the problem of distinguishing moral leadership from immoral leaders based on their actions. Another problem is that transformational leadership does not explicitly include character as a foundational component of the process. The implication for theological education is that if moral leaders are to be

produced in theological education institutions, the programs must clearly be character focused since it has been pointed out above that character and leadership are inextricably related. This entails looking for a program that considers character essential in determining the quality of the leaders that need to be produced to transform the characters of some prosperity gospel leaders. One such perspective is to look at a model of leadership that includes character as a fundamental component in leadership development.

7.2.4 Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership acknowledges that the leadership is more than specific behaviours enacted by the leader. Visionary leadership declares that the leader's character is what promotes the transformational behaviour of the leader. What makes visionary leadership distinct among other leadership models is that it shows how the personal characteristics of the leader guide transformational leader's action (Pettit, 2008:156). The challenge for theological educators is to look for a theological education model that takes account of both leaders' behaviours and the leader's personal characteristics and one that considers the characteristics of the situation, which is the context. The ideal theological education model should be holistic and contextual in its scope. In a prosperity theology context, a theological education model should consider the context of the leader and that of the followers and the other cultural dimensions – political and socio-economic contexts. The learning program must be aligned and relevant to the lived needs and worldview of the context (Naidoo, 2021:53). Such a program will produce ministry leaders who are willing "...to be with people and listen to their challenges and journey with them without offering simplistic solutions" (Magezi, 2021: 152).

Personal characteristics included in visionary leadership include such qualities as 'confident leadership', 'follower-centred' leadership'. According to Pettit (2008:156-7) 'confident leadership' is the same as 'self-efficacy' and 'self-control' which are tied to emotional intelligence. Leader confidence involves personal control and believes in overall unifying purpose and meaning in life's events, which is a concept that is equivalent to the self-regulatory construct 'sense of coherence' (Pettit, 2008:156). Magezi (2021:152) adds another quality – vulnerability – which entails exposing oneself to being stupid and failing, and yet in that process the lessons you learn are priceless power (Magezi, 2021:153). The urge to "...intentionally prepare leaders to be wounded healers who are vulnerable like the other people" (Magezi, 2021:153), should be a priority for theological educators.

These characteristics of visionary leadership correspond to the character trait of ‘self-directedness. Follower-centred leadership involves the leader’s motivation for effective leading. The question to take note of is whether leadership actions are personally or other motivated. Follower-centred leadership corresponds to the character trait of cooperativeness. The third characteristic of visionary leadership is vision. Vision is the ability of the leader and not necessarily the character trait of the leader. The foundational components of vision are linked to leader self-regulation for they require the ability to see long term implications and consequences of actions before any action is taken and this ‘big picture’ perspective corresponds to the character trait of self-transcendence. The distinct quality of visionary leadership is that it considers the primacy of character in the motivation behind effective leadership behaviours. Within the context of theological education, a model that takes cognisance of the importance of visionary leadership will suit the context of Christianity within the prosperity gospel situation. A prosperity church leader who has the ability to display visionary leadership in their prosperity gospel context is able to function well as they consider the effect and role of their character and behaviours in the entire management of their churches, which includes among others, the way the gospel is preached, the management of funds and any material possessions that the churches might have as a result of their actions.

Visionary leadership attempts to consider how the inner life of the leader – the leader’s being – causes the leader to act in a manner that transforms those around the leader – the people and the institutions they lead and those living within the wider cultural context (Pettit, 2008:157). In short, our character affects the way we lead. Our very being is also affected by sin. A leadership type that calls the inner life of the leader to account for his actions and behaviours has a regulatory effect. It puts the prosperity church leader in a self-evaluative situation where they question their own integrity for the riches they acquire from the tithes and offerings given by the congregations. Therefore, we should always question ourselves, “How can we lead the church of God if our character is questionable and compromised?” Prosperity church leaders have an imperative to sharpen their character since it affects the way they lead and even the congregations they lead. To this end the challenge for theological leaders is to design models of theological education that place emphasis on producing leaders of character – leaders that are both visionary and transformative in their approaches. It can equally be said that even experienced and renowned leaders have not been spared from sin and therefore, every effort is needed to train Christian workers to attain mature character for effective leadership in the churches.

The above identifies the visionary leader as the ideal leader that can challenge the prosperity gospel preachers' character problems. However, transformative leaders are not outrightly discounted, as by virtue of their characteristics they are not self-oriented but others-focused leaders. Therefore, the type of leader that a suitable theological model seeks to produce, in the context of this discussion is a visionary-cum-transformative leader. The next question to address is: What aspects of theological education should be in place to produce the mature visionary-cum-transformative leader? These various aspects shall now be identified.

7.2.5. Qualities of a transformative-cum-visionary leader

(A). Spiritual formation

As a leader, spiritual formation should be the primary focus for his/her life. It is necessary for theological education since it is a requirement for mature character formation. The importance of Spiritual Formation as a discipline in a theological education curriculum is stressed by Rima (2000:129) when he says,

“In light of the reality that leadership is, at its most essential level, a spiritual activity, I would strongly contend that in the final analysis of every leadership failure is at its root, a spiritual issue. Regardless of whether the failure takes the shape of sexual immorality, unethical business practices, criminal activity or any other impropriety that could lead to leadership failure, at the core of all these failures is the leader's inability to recognise, diagnose and address spiritual disease of one sort or another in his /her life.”

Any such 'spiritual disease' must be treated appropriately, first by recognising it is, at its core, a deficiency in justice, mercy or humility – a character deficiency (Pettit, 2008:158). As discussed above, the key to understand a leader's character lies with the character trait of self-directedness where low self-directedness is the root cause of all personality disorders (Rima, 2000:129). Furthermore, the inability of leaders to regulate their impulses and desires eclipses any attention to other people. Therefore, self-directedness is the pathway through which all other character traits are accessed and utilised (Pettit, 2008:158). The implication from a practical point of view is, to understand that the key to unlock the character mystery is through personal discipline. In a theological college context, the praxis becomes the means of involving the students in contexts where they work and exercise cooperation with other people. Extra-curricular activities and allegiance to codes of conduct through the department of student affairs are such environments where the character mystery is unlocked. Unfortunately, the majority of prosperity gospel pastors have had challenging character issues in the churches they lead as

evidenced by the findings of the empirical study. The imperative is to equip the curriculum with disciplines that adequately address issues to do with traits such as self-directedness. During the field study, there were countless stories that were shared by respondents revealing the character flaws of prosperity church leaders and preachers. If left unresolved, those character flaws of senior church leaders eventually bankrupt future leadership investment in the same personality or in other junior leaders who fall under the guidance of the senior mentor. The imperative is that all who aspire to lead church groups or congregations must commit to developing their own character. There is need for some form of organised reporting and assessment structures within the churches and within theological colleges. In practice, such praxis entails having a board that assesses students' character as they go through their training and also some kind of psychological assessment of students' character before they are released to serve the Christian community. The biggest challenge for character formation is probably the fact that most people are not exposed to an environment or that context of life-changing influences that stimulate such transformations. In the context of a theological college setting, we are considering growth environments such as chaplaincy services and devotions, student-peer group cells, staff mentoring teams and opportunities for sporting activities.

(b). Community focused

It has already been discussed in Chapter 6 that character development requires community and that for it to develop; it needs time and the process of socialisation (Hogan & Sinclair, 1997:260). Socialising agents were identified as the church, family, school and state apparatus. Within the theological college setting, the structures for socialisation must be distinct enough to promote the community environment that encourages character development. Participation in one or more community-focused groups would promote character development. These community groups may be civic groups. In the college set up, students may be compelled to be part of a community development grouping during their training at the college.

While these two, spiritual formation and community, do not represent the entire repertoire of factors that facilitate the development of visionary leaders, they stand out in contrast to the rest because of their primary importance. Other factors such as peer groupings, mentoring groups and affiliation to civic groupings, all contribute to developing visionary-cum-transformative leaders.

7.3. What informs the choice of a suitable model of theological education?

Theological models differ from one another because of their different perspectives on goals, context, ethos, content, resources, governance, responsibilities and formation (Banks, 1999:17-18). The first four concerning the aims and purposes of theological education are the major sources of difference, while the remaining factors concern the means and ends of theological education

7.3.1. A public theology approach to integrative theological education

Suitable theological education praxis should be informed by the public theology approach to public life, one that applies an integrative theological approach to education. An integrative theological education approach is a systematic attempt to connect, synthesise and coordinate the major learning experiences appropriate to the formation or education of clerical ministers (Naidoo, 2021: 27). A suitable model of theological education should of necessity be equipped and focused to produce ministerial leaders who respond to every part of a person's life (Naidoo 2021:28). Since every aspect of a person's life is interconnected, the process of learning in theological colleges should be continuously related to the students' lives. "Public theology is an attempt to correct irrelevant, distant, and aloof theology in light of people's daily realities..." and "...it is a theology that interrogates the role of theology in society." (Magezi, 2021: 138-9). Brietenberg (2003: 66) described public theology as, "...a theologically informed public discourse about public issues..." Kim (2017:40) viewed public theology as "...a critical, reflective and reasoned engagement of theology in society to bring the kingdom of God, which is for the sake of the poor and marginalised." Magezi (2021:139) noted five marks that make public theology a critical theology that adequately informs modern models of theological education: its incarnational character; its affinity to engage; its interdisciplinary nature; its dialogical quality; and its practical nature.

The critical question that a public theology approach asks is: What theological education and ministerial competencies are required for a minister to engage effectively with public issues emanating from the social, economic and political contexts? The question challenges theological educators to design models of theological education that produce ministerial leaders that are equipped with competencies that are required to effectively deal with public issues. Since today's societies need ministers who meaningfully help people survive, thrive and cope with life in the public space, theological education practice needs to explore new ways of doing theology and ministry. According to Magezi (2021), for this public approach to theology to work, there is need for an integrative approach to theological education, which involves the

adoption of an integrated, holistic theological curriculum and education. From a public theology perspective, Naidoo (2021:28) maintains that a suitable model of theological education should train students who end up linking their calling, competence and identity as African ministers of the gospel. According to Magezi (2021: 139) the task of producing ‘social life specialist’ or an ‘expert generalist’, who possesses multiple skills to competently engage diverse issues that are present at the public spheres of life requires a deliberate attempt to shift and challenge theology to intentionally reflect on life at the public level (Magezi, 2019:5). In practice, this involves constructively engaging with public life issues. The imperative is for ministerial training to shift from focusing narrowly on clerical formation to emphasising public issues. Magezi (2021:139) further argues that the shift does not come about by accident, but requires “...a well-thought-out theological curricula and teaching methods that effectively orient, prepare, and inculcate an understanding of the integrated-ness of life.” A theological education that is blind to public theology concerns is disoriented and irrelevant.

7.3.2. Contextual theology as a prerequisite for theological education

The studies done by researcher Murithi (2014:48) indicate that African theological education colleges are thirsty for theological education that takes into consideration her unique situation – the African traditional context. This need is particularly evident in the teaching of theological education. The argument for contextual theological education in Zimbabwe’s theological colleges is that character formation can be taught from the perspective of African Zimbabwean cultural values. In other words, the Zimbabwe cultural milieu is so rich that the same can be used as a source for teaching values and behaviours that are compatible with Christian values. The theological education curricula should therefore embrace aspects of traditional culture that are complementary to the Christian ethical values. As an example, within an African context, we may not need to refer to the ethic of the Bible to teach that adulterous affairs and thefts are wrong for society, or that jealousy is a wrong attitude, because the African traditional value system is abounded with such teachings. Therefore, theological education needs to be taught in the context of our rich African cultural milieu. What Murithi (2014) seems to be pointing at is that in the case of character formation for example, we cannot rely on the value system of a Eurocentric culture when the Afro-centric culture can provide the same milieu. As regards the central issue of the character of prosperity church leaders under discussion, the issues could be dealt with effectively if our curriculum allows for contextualisation. Murithi (2014:48) argued, “It seems that the theological education offered in the majority of seminaries in Africa has not been able to quench the thirst of the African church. As such, there is a disconnection between

what is taught in the seminary and what is needed to do ministry in the churches.” The model of theological education that is sought to be proposed in this study must encompass contextual and contemporary issues bedevilling the Zimbabwe people. Typical examples are the challenges of HIV/Aids, the Covid 19, the spiritual power encounter, poverty issues, hunger challenges, climate change issues causing catastrophic situations, and very importantly prosperity gospel issues. For purposes of this chapter, only a few of these challenges shall be discussed for illustrations.

(a) The spiritual power encounters

Since the Enlightenment, the world of beliefs has been shaped by a worldview that belittles the idea of spirits among the African community. Those who believe in these are seen as primitive and uncivilised. This worldview has brought many challenges to African Christianity and especially among its mission-founded churches. The African Christian is at the crossroads where the pastor ignores his/her questions on spiritual encounters and yet forbids a visit to the diviner who is willing to answer them. The dichotomy between the sacred and the secular was non-existent in traditional society. This division leaves the African wondering about the compartments in dealing with one’s life (Murithi, 2014:49). Pastors that are trained in the conventional theological college are ill equipped (from a spiritual formation and character formation perspective) to deal with these issues. This is the reason why Pastors who have been trained in missionary established theological colleges have failed to deliver adequately and effectively to the person afflicted by these powers. The African church believer has no option but to go to a prosperity church leader/pastor who is willing to give hope through prosperity preaching on healing, exorcisms and deliverance sessions even if the process compromises their character or behaviour. Unfortunately, the Western worldview of spiritual welfare is far from being accepted as a reality which bothers many African believers. In such many circumstances, the absence of the subject in theological textbooks used by the colleges is clear evidence that the issue is of marginal importance and relevance to the African Christian believers. Traditional churches have lost influence on the African believers with the latter opting to have their issues solved by the prosperity church preachers. As such, the African has little use for a theology that says that there are no ancestral spirits. This is the reason why Hiebert (1982:46) advocated for a contextual theology when he said, “There is need for a holistic theology that includes a theology of God in human history: in the affairs of nations, of peoples and of individuals. This must include a theology of divine guidance, provision and healing; of ancestors, spirits and invisible powers of this world...” This vicious circle

culminates in prosperity church leaders perpetuating their practices, and therefore, leading to the compromises of their characters.

(b) Prosperity gospel

With reference to Zimbabwe, the socio-economic and socio-political situations have been identified elsewhere in this study as the main drivers of the prosperity gospel agenda. The people need hope in the midst of poverty and oppression. They need to hear that God will bless them, that God wishes for them to overcome their problems and be free from the powers of disease and chronic poverty. It has been alluded to in the previous chapters that prosperity preachers emphasise creating hope at the expense of biblical teachings on Christianity. On the other hand, teachings on accountability, stewardship and responsible living are deemphasised or not addressed at all. Such a gospel has been labelled by Murithi (2014:50) as toxic for Africans and should be a concern of all (including theological colleges) who hope to present an unadulterated gospel of God's kingdom. The model of theological education that is proposed in this chapter is one that sufficiently considers the theology of context, where contemporary issues troubling Christian believers are addressed in a holistic fashion.

(c) Poverty

Murithi (2014:50) acknowledges that one of the contemporary problems demanding a theology of context is the state of poverty of the African person in most African countries. Unemployment rates are low, investment levels have deteriorated, standards of living have been compromised to very low levels, and these have exacerbated the status of citizens and reduced them to mere paupers. Bad leadership and dictatorial governments with officials whose main concern is amassing wealth for themselves from public coffers has left the citizens poorer than ever before. The situation is so prevalent that many have resigned themselves to embrace poverty as their only way of life and their destined fate. This has been fanned further by individualistic mindsets that do not concern themselves with the welfare of 'others' (Murithi, 2014:50). It has been pointed out in this study that prosperity gospel practitioners tend to adopt behaviour characteristics that take advantage of the poor and overstretch citizens by preaching a gospel of prosperity, which has been identified as giving hope but at the same time compromising biblical truths. With these circumstances manifesting very evidently within societies, theological educators should not be blind or have deaf ears to such contextual challenges. The proposal in this study is that the curriculum for theological education should

embrace contextual theology as a discipline so that character formation of Christian leaders takes place within a known context that considers the contemporary issues on the ground.

(d) Pandemic diseases: HIV/Aids and Covid 19

The effect of diseases such as HIV/Aids and Covid 19 cannot be underestimated among Christian believers. No doubt, it has caused untold suffering among the society and the Christian church has not been spared either. The question that a contextual theology asks is: How does the church respond holistically to such pandemic? In the case of HIV/Aids, some people have viewed HIV patients as immoral people because HIV is supposedly only a disease of sexual promiscuity resulting in ostracising of the patients. Others tended to justify their actions and attributed the disease to divine punishment from God. Regarding Covid 19, some interpreted it to mean the end of the world or end time signs. In the majority of cases referring to the latter pandemic, it was related to 666 concepts in the book of Revelation. Faulty theological interpretations were made to suit these pandemic situations. Obviously, as evidenced by the field study, interview data, prosperity gospel preachers pounced on their believers by suggesting a hermeneutic that was biblically flawed. What these examples show is that these issues should be studied in the context in which they occur and proper analysis and interpretations made about them. Where curriculum in theological colleges does not have space for the study of contextual theology, the problem that the students will face will continue to haunt them even as they graduate to practise ministry in the society. Against this background, the researcher proposes the primacy of theology of context as a discipline in the theological education curriculum. A question could be asked now: How does contextual theology deal with character issues on prosperity church leaders?

7.3.3. Contextual theology as a facilitator of formation

As students are enrolled at theological colleges, they engage with the learning processes. By learning is meant a permanent change in behaviour (Scorgie, 2011:677). The teaching of disciplines such as Spiritual Formation, Systematic Theology, Hermeneutic and Homiletics and many others characterise the learning process. Character formation and spiritual formation are gradual processes since they do not happen overnight. They are a learning process that moves us closer to being like Christ. According to English (2010:76), the process of learning through inquiring uncovers discontinuities, disruptions, interruptions constitutive of learning, and the perplexity, frustrations and irritation that characterises the learners. Theological education in Africa must recognise that its discontinuity with education does not respond to

her needs because it does not provide the formation needed. It relies on a foreign Eurocentric approach that falls short in providing the needs for formation to take place. In contrast, contextual theology takes seriously the needs of the people. It is specific, strategic and intentional. Learning experiences that take place in their contexts are permanently stored, and can have the effect of changing peoples' behaviours. The process of changing people's behaviour is itself character formation. For example, if one learns about a God who is willing to heal their diseases and save them from oppression, they will take the teachings of this God seriously to heart and follow him to obedience. That learning process is in itself character formation.

The major reason for proposing the consideration of a theology of context in the proposed model is that contextual theology has a theological justification. God in Jesus Christ uses himself as a powerful teaching aid hanging on the cross while declaring undying love for humanity. He comes into the situation/context through incarnation to solve a relationship issue with humanity. In the same way, Jesus came into the world to teach humanity the divinity of God. In that case, the incarnation was the ultimate contextualisation (Murithi, 2014:53). The whole of Jesus ministry on earth could be regarded as contextualisation. God became incarnate to fit a particular situation. The theological educator is therefore, a channel through which God forms the student. With that in mind as theological educators, we should join Christ in his ministry and help people to find meaning in their lives through our teaching. What this discussion on contextual theology tends to point out is that the challenges that we seem to be experiencing with prosperity theology may not have been challenges at all had we been seriously engaging contextual theology. The proposal to engage with contextual theology as a way forward for theological education brings with it two imperatives to the situation. First, is the role of the theological educator and second, the role of the institution in moving towards contextualising theological education. The two parts are crucial because the inefficiency of one affects the other in critical ways. This is in consideration of the fact that a teacher may desire to do incarnational teaching, but then their efforts would be strangled by structural ineffectiveness, and vice versa.

7.3.4. The role of the theological educator

The background to the roles that the teacher and institution play is that theological institutions have a God given mandate to provide direction in Christian teaching. Christian leaders pass through these institutions to be prepared for the work of ministry. The task itself should be regarded as a critical one. If these leaders are not adequately prepared, they go to the field to

do more harm than good. The community that is looking up to them as resource people end up being disappointed. However, it is worth mentioning too that part of the background is a Eurocentric theological education system that has shaped many theologians who are now leaders in many churches. The time is ripe for African theology to answer African questions thus solving problems that are deeply felt by the people that it seeks to serve.

7.3.5. The role of the institution

The following proposals can help institutions to offer contextual theology in their institutions.

a. Communal education through mass engagement

For theological educators to facilitate contextual education, they need to listen to the theology that comes from the people on the ground. Contextual theology cannot be formulated from academies that are oblivious to people at the grassroots. The teacher needs to learn from the people those issues that concern them. The masses that are ministered to are a great source of information as to what is missing. In the case of the practices of prosperity churches, teachers need to engage with the congregations of the prosperity church leaders and determine whether character issues are a matter of concern to them or not. Engaging the community will put theological leaders at a platform where they understand the concerns of the congregations regarding prosperity church leadership and character. Learning in community and through community is a biblical model that should not be ignored. God created people as relational beings, and what he seeks to establish on earth is a kingdom community rather than pious disconnected individuals. Engaging the community will help handle prejudices and gathering grassroots theology that is needed for them to know how to formulate content. In addition, the teacher becomes aware of what is happening in the community, and be in a position to give a correct hermeneutic of the situation, and to know how God is working in the particular situation. Applying this reasoning to the prosperity theology context under discussion in this study, it is important to understand why congregants support or do not condone the practices of prosperity churches and their leaders. It is equally important that we should be balanced in our assessment of prosperity theology practices.

b. Relevant curriculum

The proposal for a contextual based theological education praxis calls for a development of a curriculum that includes theory and praxis. To achieve this, the teaching space should not only be confined in the classroom but should be situated in the community context so that the students not only learn from the community what is happening but also what is missing. With

reference to prosperity practices, the theological teacher should situate his teaching within the prosperity gospel context for them to be acquainted with what is happening and what is missing as the prosperity gospel leaders engage the congregations. One of the findings of the study was that character formation among the prosperity church leaders took the form of mentoring of the junior pastors by the senior pastors. Situating learning in the context of prosperity churches will help understand why the prosperity church leaders have chosen that route and identify what is missing in their character formational strategies.

Theological leaders should seek to design and teach courses according to need (Wahl, 2013:282). For example, in the case of prosperity gospel, it has been found out in the fieldwork that prosperity gospel teachers lack formation and hence have character issues, and that their hermeneutic of the scriptures is flawed. A contextual approach from a curriculum point of view is to integrate prosperity theology in the core-curriculum to be studied. Such an approach will create an opportunity for examination of the prosperity theology in detail and help appreciate a balanced assessment of the practice. The model that is proposed here is one that considers the importance of studying religious studies side by side with Christian studies. The approach will help create awareness of what is missing in Christian studies that other theologies are considering as paramount in their practice.

c. Theological educator as a role model

The teacher is a role model of character and ministerial formation. The approach should be the same displayed by the apostle Paul who said, “Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). As the teacher invites his/her students into his life in the same attitude that the apostle did, the teacher realises that they are being imitated as role models of faith. They become morally compelled to check their own practices against the biblical standards of what is expected of leaders. The theological teachers become aware of the great impact they have on their students and in turn urge themselves to exhibit exemplary conduct throughout their interaction with students. Furthermore, theological educators who respect the worldview of their students enter their context and can embody the gospel in a very profound way. Acknowledging the contexts of students makes the teacher well informed of the experiences of the students’ community. This enables the teacher to plan better on how to train the students to have impact in the community. Ultimately, both the trainer and the trainee are transformed.

d. Use of African Arts

It was noted in the field study that prosperity churches offer an attractive medium, particularly to the youth and young generation of believers, for praise and worship, one that is absent in the majority of main line traditional churches. Theological teachers should recognise that people are spiritually formed when they pray and worship God in their ‘heart languages’. By ‘heart language’ is meant the language of praise, the body language of dance and communal language of laughter. Since the African people are endowed with a very rich artistic culture, it is a disservice to the community when this great culture is not incorporated in the people’s worship. For example, within prosperity church contexts, testimonies take substantial portion of the time, leaving music and dances characterise praise and worship – these are critical African arts. The role of the teacher is to structure the course in a way that recognises the very DNA of the African culture. The effect is that the people will own the faith as authentic and relevant to them.

e. Hearing the African Voices

Theological educators in Africa need to develop a theology that is African in scope for it to be relevant in and to the church. In addition to listening to grassroots theology, they also need to hear African scholars. During the field study, one student was asked the question: How do you think character formation should be done in the theological colleges? The response was, “...colleges must teach about eminent theologians like Canaan Banana, Desmond Tutu and John Mbiti, and learn from these great theologians.” It is good for students to study the mighty works of famous theologians like Karl Barth and Paul Tillich, but the example just cited above demonstrates that students want to hear the African voices of African theologians. The field study noted that the problem of prosperity gospel commodifying the gospel emanated from borrowed concepts of Western materialism. The gospel itself originated from the West, hence, today the problems that were highlighted in this study should be looked at using the African theological lens in order to get to the root of the problem. Regarding the character formation challenges as noted in the study, an African theological lens will understand why prosperity leaders prefer church situated mentoring as opposed to college situated training.

f. Proactive development of a Health Theology

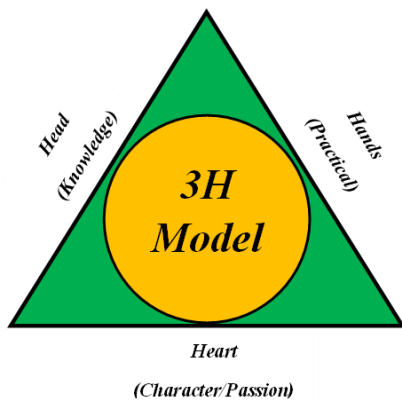
Furthermore, theological educators should be in the forefront in creating orthodox theology rather than waiting until a wrong one is displayed and having to fight it. In the case of the prosperity gospel, many theological educators encountered it in its early stages but did not think that it would go very far. Teachers have a calling to correct heresy and ground society in the

correct theology. When prosperity gospel claims nothing but materialism, it needs to be challenged by a proactive development of a health theology that desires to proclaim a true gospel. Theological educators are called upon to challenge the prevailing challenges within the prosperity gospel traditions and uphold the authentic traditions of scripture.

It appears in this study that the only way to character form people in a godly lifestyle is to enter their contexts and see the world through their eyes. Theological educators ought to acquaint themselves with everyday struggles of the people. Theological educators in Africa in the twenty first century have a divine duty to address the issues with which Africans are contending. One way in which this is possible is through contextualising theological education. Hence, a theology of context stands out very starkly as a pointer to challenging character formational issues of prosperity church leaders.

(g) Relational instructional pedagogy

Cuenza (2010:15) defines pedagogy as “...strategies of instruction”. Loughran (2008:1180) views pedagogy as “...knowledge of teaching about teaching and knowledge of learning about teaching and how the two influence one another....” Van Manen (1994) expanded the scope of this definition by considering the etymological roots of the word *pedagogue*, which meant a slave who accompanied a student to and from school. This perspective implies an inter-individual relationship, based on the concern of one for another. The meaning implied is that teachers stand in pedagogical relation to students, with the responsibility of leading students toward academic and personal [character] growth (Cuenza, 2010: 16). The ‘why’ and ‘what’ of pedagogy are fused together by the nature of the relationship between a teacher and student (Cuenza, 2010:16). Since pedagogy is as much about mind as it is about body as maintained by Cuenza (2010:16), the instructional approach for theological education students should be informed by the fact that teachers stand in relations of influence to our students. Therefore, any pedagogical relationship that separates teachers from students is untenable. In this regard, the model below should be regarded as a powerful informant to the proposed model of theological education.



In the above model, instructional pedagogy should focus on the three dimensions: the head; the hands and the heart. Theory, practice and character are key components of the theological education process. Character formation develops out of relational interactions between teachers and students as they learn from each other.

7.3.6. The place of discipleship in the model of theological education

This study evaluated the methods of ministerial character formation used by some prosperity churches. It was noted that the majority of prosperity church leaders preferred mentoring and discipling their junior pastors, to sending them to learn theology at conventional theological colleges. The responses that came from respondents showed that they had very sensible reservations for taking that decision. They inferred and argued that as the junior pastors imitated them, they (the junior pastors) would develop leadership and character qualities/traits that imitate their seniors. The question to be asked is, ‘What characters would the junior pastors imitate?’ Research evidence produced in the field study showed that the character expressions of many prosperity church leaders left a lot to be desired, and hence suggesting the need to have a mechanism that checks the morality of the character traits that constitute what is imitated by the junior pastors. This practice of mentoring or discipling is not to be considered as unbiblical. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ”. In this scripture, Paul was urging the church to emulate his character and way of doing church. In reality Paul was discipling and mentoring his church on how to walk in the spirit through their faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He followed the apprentice model of Jesus in training a company of men who travelled with him. He encouraged this method of learning through his father-son relationship with Timothy. The same model can be discerned in Luke 12:22-34, where Jesus taught his disciples saying, “Listen to me. Never let anxiety enter your hearts. Never worry about any of your needs, such as food or clothing.” The purpose of the teaching

was to mentor his disciples so that His father in heaven would do to them exactly what God had done to Jesus. The fact that there were no formal theological colleges in the New Testament era does not mean that there were no models of theological education. The one that Paul used was one example of a model of theological education that was based on discipleship. It is for this reason that the prosperity church leaders preferred the approach used by Jesus and Paul.

However, in the proposals of this study, it is envisaged that discipleship is a strong determinant for choosing a theological model that will address the prosperity gospel challenges highlighted in this study. Since the practice of discipling or mentoring has already been embodied and adopted by the prosperity gospel leaders, it seems logical to have discipleship built in the model's disciplines. The component of discipleship should have a strong bias on doctrinal teachings. Doctrinal pedagogy as part of the theological education model is essential in that teaching and learning in theological education must centre on Christ – the head of the church. Doctrinal particularity as the content of theological education implies that there is no other thing to learn and preach other than the Word. Doctrine focused pedagogy ensures that discipleship will point people towards Christ who is the essence of theological education. Just as Paul charged Timothy to 'preach the gospel', so as part of the constituent components of the theological model, the theological college must be charged to disciple its students to learn sound doctrine. A model of education that is devoid of discipleship is equally devoid of Christian particularity. Christian particularity is in fact the content of theological education. Commenting on the importance of a discipleship focused theological education model Mckinnon (2010) cited Hall (1988:70) who said,

If faithful Christian discipleship is the concrete spiritual matrix for theological education, then it will be imperative that this education reflects at every point the ecclesiastical 'mark' of responsible apostolicity. Such theological pedagogy will be far removed from the ideal of learning for the sake of learning. It will be in the exact sense of the term practical, because its goal is not encompassed within the educational process itself but is found in the service (*leitourgos*) for which it equips one. (Hall, 1988:70).

According to the discipleship model, character formation develops, first, out of personal commitment to the faith, and second, out of a discipline where the training of the mind, prayer and brokenness are characteristics to be nurtured. Through discipleship, theological educators are to equip their students, and make the churches they interact with acquire more profound

knowledge of God by teaching and learning Christian particularity. That way, they will capacitate the churches to stand firm to the challenges of the era, such as prosperity gospel issues. Doctrinal teaching provides a theological rationale for the life of the church in the community. The implication is that the church must be aware of its fundamental discipline in order to retain and maintain its particularity in a pluralistic society like Zimbabwe, and the medium in which such doctrinal teaching and learning is done is through discipleship. Discipleship therefore, remains at the pinnacle of essential determinants to the proposed model in this study.

7.3.7. A theology that embraces diversity

One of the key aspects of the model of theological education that will deal decisively with the character issues of prosperity gospel leaders is a theology that is sympathetic to diversity. Seymour (2002:1-2) defined diversity as "...a relationship of mutuality, an open space where persons contribute simply because they care about the mission of the church to the whole world—to those created as children of God." First, the focus on diversity does benefit individual groups by highlighting and considering the particular practices of ministry. It makes curriculum tasks particular, and expands scholarship by including ecclesiological practices in theological reflection. Second, the focus on diversity also recognises our interconnections and brokenness. Seymour (2002:2) argues, "Diversity makes curricular tasks particular. It expands scholarship and includes ecclesiological practices in theological reflection. Second, the focus on diversity also recognises our interconnections and brokenness."

Seymour (2002:2) further expanded the scope of the definition of diversity when he says,

"Diversity means resisting the homogenising of racial, ethnic, cultural, and class differences into uniformity. Honouring diversity means honouring particular practices of the faithful persons engaging in the religious and practical issues of everyday living. Honouring diversity reflects the multiple conflicts and commitments that emerge as Christian communities bound by time and place seek to witness and be faithful to the saving presence of the Christ in their lives."

Furthermore, in order to be adequately trained and formed for ministry, students need to understand the Christian theological tradition and practices of ministry. How these traditions are internalised and learnt by different people who have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds presents some challenges but in contexts where diversity is tolerated, such challenges may be submerged by inclusive approaches. In reference to prosperity churches,

differences in theological interpretations may occur but when that happens, Christian believers should be in a position to be tolerant to each other by acknowledging those differences. Learning the practices of the people of God as they seek to be faithful is a key task in preparation for ministry. A model of education that tolerates diversity will create opportunities to grow people's faith and learn from their experiences.

Taken seriously, and in the context of the prosperity gospel theology, diversity implies tolerance to each other despite differences in practice. Theological education done in the context of diversity encourages sharing culture and practices of doing theology. Diversity may take the form of learning how diverse constituencies use power to control and shape the agenda of theological education and its mission. The ability to communicate the Word in the midst of an expansive world of cultural and religious beliefs and practices is in fact a response to God's call to communicate the perspectives of one's faith community and seeking to understand the perspectives of the groups to whom one communicates and witnesses. In order to witness Christ, we need the ability to see, understand and respond across cultures (Seymour, 2002:2). In the context of a theology of diversity, communication among different groups implies openness and listening, seeking to participate in more than one perspective of doing church. The communicating Christian community itself consists of a perspective that differs from public cultural traditions and meaning patterns. We need to know the faith and know the world in which we live. Therefore, for communication, the norm is diversity (Seymour, 2000:3). The one thing obvious within the theology of diversity is that we seek to be faithfully live and communicate amidst of differing perspectives and meanings, some of which are in direct conflict with each other.

7.3.8. Theological curriculum and public theology

Twenty-first century theological educators are preoccupied with the question: What roles can the church play in public issues? Looking at this question from a curriculum and training point of view, we are asking the question; what theological education and ministerial competencies are required for a minister to engage effectively with public issues? According to Magezi (2021:135), in order to give answers to such a question, we need to identify the ministerial skills required to minister in contexts of socially, politically, and spiritually chaotic and disrupted environments. Magezi (2021:136) further maintains, "...only a theological curriculum and education that integrates different dimensions of life can prepare ministers for such public ministry." There is need to explore new ways of doing theology and ministry, and this calls for an adoption of an integrated, holistic theological curriculum and education. In the

21st century theological discourse, the rise of public theology "...is an attempt to shift and challenge theology to intentionally reflect on life at the public level" (Magezi, 2021:136), where ministers should be motivated to meaningfully help people survive, thrive and cope with life in the public space. The implication is that for theology to constructively engage with public life issues, "...ministerial training should shift from focusing narrowly on clerical formation to public issues" (Magezi, 2021:136). The imperative is that the theological education curriculum and ministerial training programs should be oriented towards addressing public issues. Magezi (2021:136) warns that the process requires astute thinking to include "... consideration of various dimensions that include (1) a sound theological framework, (2) interdisciplinary engagement, (3) consciousness of historical developments, (4) consciousness of one's social, political, and historical context, and (5) ecclesial context." There is need for a public theology approach that provides a useful perspective for the calibration of such an integrated theological curriculum and training (Magezi, 2021:137). Curriculum innovations and development in theological schools becomes an essential requirement to meet the five criteria above. An integrative curriculum approach requires inclusion of other disciplines that are usually outside theological disciplines like economics, sociology, ecology and educational and political theory.

7.3.9. Who matters: A question on hospitality

In the context of diversity, theological leaders ask the question, "who matters?" This question has hospitality connotations and is meant to probe theological teachers and students into considering differing perspectives in many situations that arise at the college. The answer to such a question is, "everyone matters". Despite the fact that there are different theological beliefs between prosperity church doctrines and main line, church doctrines does not matter. What matters is adopting a more inclusive and tolerant approach to a situation. Change in approach tends to be imminent in environments that are less hostile and friendly. An example can be cited from the field research to make the point clear. PA raised a concern that prosperity gospel preachers shun attending seminars that the Evangelical theological colleges call for. The reason for turning down the invitations is that the former expects a hostile voice when they attend because of lack of tolerance on the part of evangelical colleges. A model of theological education that embraces diversity presents fewer threatening environments and therefore presents more conducive environments for learning.

Diversity has theological foundations. Acts 10 is one such an example where the apostle Peter was called to be inclusive and tolerant of the Gentile people. However, embracing diversity in our theological education systems is not without problems. There is need to rethink and

consider what traditional boundaries must be transgressed as we prepare effective religious leaders for ministry. Speller (2002:5) has this to share, "...as institutions of theological education that are gifted with the lenses of faith and values, and we are challenged to identify, reinterpret, and dismantle barriers that prevent diversity. If our mission is to prepare women and men for effective and liberative ministry in the world, we miss the mark with educational experiences that do not reflect the realities of diversity in our daily lives."

7.4. The Proposal: The Character Formation cum Leadership Development (CF-LD) Model of Theological Education

Chapter 3 in this study presented an analysis of five models of theological education and considerable coverage was done which helped to distinguish each model from the others. Basic concepts and tenets of each were identified and discussed. For purposes of avoiding repetition and monotony, these models will not be discussed again but for refreshing our memory, it is worth mentioning them.

7.4.1. Brief summary of the five models presented in the study

The first model presented was the Athens (Classical) model, which has its main emphasis on *paideia*, which is the cultivation of a person's spirit, mind and culture. It had as its main goal the shaping of character and preparation of the students for ministry by developing their capacities to know God. The second was the Berlin (Vocational) model of theological education, which focused on *wissenschaft*, which is the acquisition of specialised knowledge specific to the study of theology. Its major goal is the production of academic professionals for ministry, who have skills in cognitive discernment. The third, is the Jerusalem (Missional) model, whose emphasis was producing mission-focused servants who are not theory based by practical oriented to serve within communities. The missional model is characterised by two aspects: action and reflection; and theory and practice. The fourth, is the Geneva (Confessional) model, which stresses on knowing God through the study of creeds and the confessions, the means of grace and the general traditions that are utilised by a particular faith community. The confessional model generally relates to the context of seminary. The fifth model of theological education is the Leadership Development (Personal) model. Its aim is to develop Christian leaders with adequate leadership qualities in the area of knowledge, spiritual growth and church discipline so that they become transformative and visionary practitioners of the Word of God in a broken and hurting world. Three dimensions of leadership qualities that need to be developed were identified: theological reflection; community engagement; and personal formation (Easley, 2014:11). Figuratively theological reflection deals with the 'head'. The

second quality – community engagement – deals with the ‘hands.’ The third – personal formation – concerns the ‘heart’. All the three qualities interact to produce the desired leader.

7.4.2. The Character Formation and Leadership Development Model of Theological Education (CF-LD)

The study proposes a blend of two theological models: the Athens (Classical) or more popularly referred as the Character Formation model; and the Leadership Development model. For purposes of this discussion and thereon the blended model shall be referred to as the ‘*Character Formation cum Leadership Development*’ (CF-LD) model of theological education. It is not an entirely new model as it borrows essential concepts and themes from the two different perspectives and therefore, its basic tenets are defined and informed by the two models – the Character Formation and the Leader Development Models. This implies that each of the two models will lend its specific quality and identity to make the CF-LD model holistic in outlook.

7.4.3. Goal, content and context

The five models of theological education presented earlier in the study are by no means representative of the entire spectrum of theological education models within the theological education fraternity but they represent a general trend of how theological education has been practised in the history of theological education. In fact, there are many theological models and this study does not have the capacity to analyse and review them all. In general, models of theological education are by their very nature goal directed, context and content defined. For example, our understanding of the Reciprocal Ecological Model of theological education is based on the concept of interconnectedness of things in the natural ecosystem and the reciprocal interconnections of humans with one another in the social ecosystem. It utilises Urie Bronfenbrenner’s insights of human ecology to explain how we grow and develop through reciprocal interactions embedded in social networks (Lowe & Lowe, 2013:2). The model becomes context defined. Regarding the Ashram Model of Theological education, the Ashram is a small Hindu community of people who gather together to sustain each other during intense spiritual quests (Klaudt, 1997:25). It is characterised by the relationship between the community and its ‘*guru*’ – the spiritual leader. It is therefore content defined. Whereas the Coconut Model of theological education argues for the coconut tree as an appropriate cultural conceptual metaphorical idiom for translating and understanding Christian faith and shaping a

theological pedagogy within the Kiribati context of climate change. Kiribati people symbolically interact with God through their understanding of the coconut tree, which is conceived as the embodiment of God's presence. Therefore, the Coconut Model of theological education seeks to understand theological education and ministerial formation within the indigenous framework of Kiribati coconut imagination that is embedded in the promotion of justice and equitable society not only for human beings but also for all of God's creation, through symbolic interaction with the presence of God in the coconut (Timon, Kaunda & Hewitt, 2019:1-2). The coconut model of theological education is therefore defined by both context and content. These three examples of models of theological education show that either content, context or both may define the basic constituents of any one model of theological education. Interestingly, all have focused goals. By contrast, the CF-LD model of theological education gets its insights from and informed by, both the Athens and the Leadership Development traditions. What is of critical importance in this study is to understand its relevance to the practice of theological education especially with reference to character formation and leadership development as it relates to prosperity gospel leaders and their practices.

7.4.4. Basic elements of the CF-LD Model

As indicated above, the CF-LD model is not a new model but a blend of two models with 'adds on' from both the Athens and the Leader Development models. The 'adds on' are the key ingredients, referred to above as determinants, which complement and give the model its robust approach to theological education practice.

(a) Concepts in the CF-LD Model

i. *Paideia*:

Paideia is a very special concept in the Character Formation- Leadership Development model of theological education. As defined in chapter 3, *paideia* simply means personal theological formation by which a certain disposition (or *habitus*) is required (Wahl,2013:273). Kelsey (1992:64) defines it as 'schooling', 'culturing' or 'character formation'. Although the use of the word *paideia* went through transformations over time, it retained its essential meaning – the culturing of the soul to have virtue ethics, or expressed differently it is cultivating a person's spirit, character and mind so that their faith is deepened and that they are better prepared for the practice of ministry. This is generally referred to as character formation.

- ii. *Theologia*: It is the theological understanding behind the subject matter and education goals in the ecclesial community (Farley, 1983:176) or further elaborated, it is reflective understanding shared by members of a Christian community regarding who they are, and what they are to do given their concrete world historical situation.
- iii. *Habitus*: is the habit of making judgements about life, death and community that are grounded in a fundamental understanding of what it is to be a Christian here and now – which is sapiential wisdom (Easley, 2014:8).
- iv. *Theological reflection*: is the ability to see the present realities in the light of biblical truths and theological constructs (Easley, 2014:11).
- v. *Community engagement*: the process of engaging the community in problem solving and goal attainment
- vi. *Personal formation*: the ability to think logically about circumstances we face at a personal level through culturing the soul, sanctification by the Holy Spirit and a commitment to live a Christ-like life (Easley, 2014:14).

(b). Basic elements:

The Character Formation-Leadership Development Model (CF-LD) of theological education has the following elements that define it. Since these elements have already been discussed in the study, they will just be listed to show that they are constituent elements that characterise the model:

- i. Focus on spiritual formation /character formation/ paideia /personal formation;
- ii. Focus on community engagement social development and social responsibility;
- iii. Embraces diversity through inclusive practices;
- iv. Encourages pluralism and dialectic conversation;
- v. Focus on theory, praxis and theological reflection;
- vi. Developing leadership skills – transformative and visionary development skills;
- vii. Values contextual theology - doing church in the context of community and its culture;
- viii. Values integrative theological approaches; and,
- ix. Esteems the role of public theology in publics.

7.4.5. The goals of the CF-LD model of theological education

The CF-LD model has two major goals as follows:

- (a) First, it is the cultivating of a person's spirit, character, and mind so that their faith is deepened and that they are better prepared for the practice of ministry, where they respond effectively to public issues affecting the public.
- (b) Second, it is the development of leaders with transformational and visionary skills that will help them to lead churches and challenge socio-economic problems affecting the church.

Any other subsidiary goals should stem out of the interaction between the two major goals highlighted.

7.4.6 The relevance of the CF-LD Model on character formation

The primary relevance of the CF-LD model revolves around its focus on *paideia*, that is, the internal formation, as opposed to the external praxeology. As *paideia* focuses on producing a product (pastoral leader) of quality, it also shapes the product into a 'substance' that can engage the community in social transformation. What *paideia* does in the process is a double, first creating a pastoral leader who has desirable character and second, creating a pastoral leader who becomes an agent of social change. The product so formed, can attend to socio-economic matters affecting the people in the community. Since the model has the capacity to equip the pastoral leaders with transformative and visionary skills as well, a computation of such skills with the right moral character should be able to challenge the socio-economic problems affecting the church. For example, prosperity gospel practices tend to thrive in situations where there is poverty, disease and hunger. A visionary and transformative leader has the capacity and skills to challenge the church to come up with strategies of equipping those that are affected by poverty, disease and hunger, so that they rescue themselves from their predicament. While the transformation and visionary leaders drive that agenda, they will not be prone or tempted to abuse or take advantage of the very people that they intend to help because they possess character traits that reflect self-directedness. Its praxis-based reflection makes it possible to continually assess the progress they are making in solving any such problems because reflection involves continual assessment of the situations. The CF-LD model equips leaders to be 'other-focussed' making such leaders have a concern to help others who are in distressing circumstances. As the leaders execute their transformative and visionary roles in the

community, the chances that such leaders exhibit corrupt tendencies are slim since the CF-LD model will have dealt with their moral formation processes.

7.4.7. The dialectical quality

One of the qualities of the CF-LD model is that it possesses a dialectical character, which is crucial for the formation of new knowledge, which helps to transform the scholarship and the curriculum. Its dialectical activity encourages the formation of new knowledge as the curriculum is continually questioned and revised, giving rise to change. Sometimes change in the curriculum is necessary as new challenges and needs in the Christian community emerge so that what the college offers as disciplines of study matches the needs of the people. The fact that the CF-LD model encourages and encompasses diversity makes it possible to effect curriculum changes without much resistance as people concerned see the desired changes with the same theological lens. Sometimes change is difficult to accept and effect in a society with differing diverse perspectives. We need visionary and transformative leadership to motivate and stir people towards the desired change. With reference to the practices of prosperity gospel teachers, if there are desired changes in the curriculum disciplines that are deemed relevant in addressing their character issues, the theological education leaders engage in dialectical reflection and determine the needs for change. The transformative and visionary leaders who are 'other-focused' are able to assess the impact of the desired change without any prejudices since they are leaders who possess moral character attributes.

7.4.8. Praxis-based reflection

Praxis-based reflective methods of the CF-LD model make it possible to use the church in the community as the seedbed of ministry. Since the model itself encourages community-based integration and collaboration, it is easy to match the needs of the community with the changes in the curriculum of the theological college. Regarding prosperity gospel practices, the model allows assessing the needs of the congregations who are supposedly taken advantage of, and design curricula in a way that addresses those needs without necessarily seeking confrontation with the prosperity gospel leaders. The CF-LD model by its nature encourages collaboration and diversity as indicated above and therefore, manages undesirable confrontations well.

7.4.9. Discipleship strategies

The role of discipleship in character formation and doctrinal teaching was discussed above. The CF-LD model of theological education has a strong emphasis on the place of discipleship in character formation. It was noted that prosperity church leaders shun conventional colleges

as the proper locations of theological and ministerial preparation. They believe that they have the capacity to mentor and disciple their trainees. They also argued that the practice of mentoring and discipleship has theological and biblical foundations, citing Galatians 1:18 which says, “Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days,” [NIV] which seems to imply that he was absent from Jerusalem for three years, presumably in Arabia, where he got his training through the Holy Spirit discipling him. Again, Paul says in Galatians 1:11-12, “I want you to know, brothers and sisters that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.” Basing on these texts, prosperity preachers prefer mentoring and discipleship to formal theological training. According to the discipleship model, character formation develops first out of personal commitment to the faith and second out of a discipline, where training of the mind, prayer and brokenness are characteristics to be nurtured. The CF-LD model of theological education considers value in differing perspectives, otherwise sometimes referred to as diversity. The model assumes that diversity encourages tolerance. Prosperity church leaders may not accept Christian doctrine in training if it comes to them in a confrontational way. Rather, theological colleges can collaborate with prosperity churches by accepting and being tolerant to their preferred models of formation. Through discipleship, theological colleges can then fuse in the desired doctrine without necessarily being confrontational. The dialectical nature of the CF-LD model will allow for dialoguing with the prosperity theology practitioners. Such discipling strategies may bring in the desired character formation results among prosperity church leaders. What the CF-LD model presupposes is that we do not necessarily need theological colleges to teach Christian doctrine but rather doctrine can be taught within church communities and still be effective in spiritual and character formation. The fact that the CF-LD model is tolerant of difference means that it can consider prosperity gospel leaders’ methods of leadership formation as right-standing in scripture and therefore being able to co-exist in the same community as members of the same body of Christ. Since the model has emphasis on developing transformative and visionary leaders, the prosperity church leaders can still have their leadership developed using the cues of the model. Concerted efforts to teach doctrine among prosperity gospel churches provide a theological rationale for the life of the prosperity church in the communities they exist.

7.4.10 The communal engagement as praxis

The communal engagement character of the CF-LD model makes it possible to assess the value and impact of its programs with prosperity churches. The model makes it possible by engaging the people at grass roots level to determine their needs, and a way of assessing whether any of its programs has effect and impact on their lives or not. The model does this through a contextual theological lens where it uses the structures in the community to effect attitude change and innovations. As an example, by using the CF-LD model, theological colleges can empower their students to do discipleship lay training programs for Christian believers in the church on specific subjects such as spiritual formation, character formation, healing, salvation, history of Christian faith and many others. Willhauck (2002:115) advocates for lay church educational programs by stressing that they help to cultivate a culture of call among lay people, and help the community assess their participation in church ministry. If well managed and implemented, lay participation programs can bring change within the lay community, from being institutional maintenance workers to ministry of changing lives. In the context of the prosperity church laid believers, such programs will transform the lay believers to believers who know their purpose and meaning in ministry and help them identify their gifting and use the gifts for the work of ministry. If theological education programs are able to develop lay believers with those skills, then such believers may not be easily penetrable by the prosperity gospel false doctrines.

Another valid point is that as the prosperity church leaders continue to dwell and thrive on their preferred theology of prosperity, the congregations at a parallel level are being discipled in various doctrines of the Christian faith. The congregational members end up well equipped to challenge the prosperity gospel teachers if any unbiblical doctrine filters in the prosperity leaders' teaching and preaching. Equipped with its transformational and visionary leadership skills the model can equip the Christian believers to the level of mature believers who can challenge their leaders and systems.

7.4.11 The unifying factor of theologia

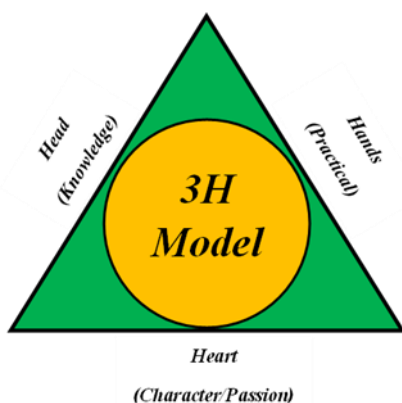
The problem of fragmentation of theological education caused by the mere application of theory and the abstraction of theory from its context (Banks, 1999:20; Kelsey, 1993:102) may also be reversed by applying the proposed disposition and reflective conversations of the CF-LD model. Its emphasis on community engagement, leadership development and discipleship make it possible to test case theory by offering to practise it on the ground. If for example, the theological colleges teach the students to avoid being attracted to materialism-focused

prosperity practices by engaging in self-empowering economic projects, the community can be the testing ground for such theory. What was taught as theory can then be put in practice on the ground. Fragmentation of theologia is reversed as we see theory being put into practice. By its very nature, the CF-LD has the capacity to reverse fragmentation of theologia.

7.4.12. The integrative nature of CF – LD

The CF – LD model is by its very nature integrative in scope and holistic in approach. The key indicator of the integrative approach is the intentional integration of knowing with being and doing, of theory with practice, and of theology with life and ministry (Naidoo, 2021:48). The CF – LD model is tolerant to diversity and difference. It encourages formation that is informed by a rich African cultural milieu where formation is strongly aligned to the African concept of ‘personhood’ (Naidoo, 2021:61). Its insistency on character formation and leadership development and on collaboration and community engagement makes it possible for students to form attitudes and characters that serve as lifetime tools for ongoing conversion and transformation. The CF – LD embraces cultural diversity and tolerance thereby balancing the insights and sources of scripture, tradition, cultural information, and personal experience in a dialogical way. According to Miller (2019:7) as cited by Naidoo (2021:59), integrative educational programs “...there must be focus on the training of the person, mind, heart and body for greater social impact and for individual and collective well-being” (Miller, 2019:7). However, Naidoo (2021: 64) warns, “For integrative education to become a reality it must first have an educational strategy that is significantly related to context, including the cultural, social, economic and political contexts, where learning objectives come from the *real world*.”

7.4.13 The relational nature of instructional pedagogy



The CF-LD model of theological education implores the role of theological knowledge, and values the role of theory in enhancing our knowledge (theory) of God, through practical applications (hands) and developing character (the heart), that is compatible with Christian

norms and beliefs. The CF-LD model's relational nature enhances learning through the three dimensions: the heart (character); the hands (practical); and the head (knowledge). As teachers and students relate favourably to one another, teaching the 'heart', the 'hands' and the 'head' becomes possible and effective. The successful application of this instructional pedagogy ensures development of a rounded ministerial candidate who can effectively minister in the public church.

7.4.14 The public theology approach/quality

The emphasis of the CF – LD approach on character and leadership development makes it possible to focus on developing leadership qualities and character qualities that are needed for full functioning in a public society where specific astute leadership skills and character attributes are needed for full functioning in the public society. A public theology approach demands that preparation of ministers is linked to specific characters and qualities that interact with the challenges people are facing in their lives. The focus on character and leadership makes the CF – LD model attractive for public theologians because the approach is designed to develop ministerial competencies that are required for a minister to engage effectively with public issues. Such skills and competencies will equip the pastoral leader to function purposely and effectively in contexts of socially, politically, and spiritually chaotic and disrupted environments. The CF – LD model will address the leadership challenges faced by many churches as it focuses on visionary and transformative aspects leadership. Magezi (2021:153) refers to such leaders as possessing 'the strength of vulnerability' as they 'think with and feel with' other people from different contexts (Louw, 2014). Embracing vulnerability is considered a strength, which is a critical success factor in ministry and care giving (Magezi, 2021:153). Magezi (2021:153) observed that a theological model that situates and interacts with a public theology approach makes it possible to prepare "...humble leaders who jointly explore life with people while journeying with them." Magezi (2021:153) further noted, "This is contrary to pastors being viewed as dispensers of blessings, which is tantamount to being manufacturers of God's grace and power." This is a huge implication for prosperity gospel preachers. Therefore, training should intentionally prepare leaders to be wounded healers who are vulnerable like the other people.

7.5. Strengths and weaknesses of the CF – LD approach

The CF – LD approach is not without weaknesses. It has challenges in addressing the historical past that characterise African theological education in many countries. The major hindrance being that the colonial educational system which had alienated the African from his or her culture has not changed much as the Western framework remains (Naidoo, 2021:65). Such challenges are: Theoretical training not linked to practice; theological faculties that have become so diversified that theological disciplines are no longer able to converse meaningfully with one another; the stereotyped foreign language of instruction; lack of cohesion and relevance as highlighted by research pointing to the disintegration of theological education; and the professionalisation of theological education. The pursuance of theological studies divorced from the context of faith, a fragmented theological curriculum, study of theology divorced from character formation, denominationalising of seminaries and theological studies, lack of organised motivation towards training for ministerial formation as opposed to secular occupation, and academic studies focused on textual analysis and doctrinal exposition rather than on the situations, needs and skills development of students and many more, all complicate the medium and context under which CF – LD model should operate. That said and understood the proposed model of the CF – LD is an appropriate model of theological education that seeks to address some of the challenges alluded to in the study.

7.6. Summary and conclusion

Chapter 7 utilised Osmer's (2008) method of theological analysis to identify and determine the strategies of action that would influence the situation on the ground. A reflective analysis of findings from literature review and empirical field study was done in relation to the normative biblical and theological positions with a view to answer the question: Where do we go from here? Since the major research question was leadership focussed, three essential qualities of leaders were identified. These were self-directedness, cooperativeness, and self-transcendence. It was noted that these qualities determine the character stability that a person in leadership position should show and therefore, are essential in dealing with character issues of prosperity gospel leaders and preachers. The discussion proceeded to discuss how in a theological college setting or in an informal discipleship context such qualities could be obtained among Christian leaders. In this regard, the leadership model of theological education was employed as it provided detail on how leadership qualities could be developed in formal and informal settings. Two types of leaders were identified as essential in character formation. These are transformational and visionary leaders. Both leadership types possess traits of the three

essential qualities of leadership. It was stressed that theological colleges should train students with a view to equip them with both transformational and visionary leadership skills. The role of discipleship and mentoring was analysed. Both methods contribute to shaping character in both formal and informal settings.

The study considered the strengths of the Athens (Classical) and the Leadership Development models of theological education. Both models have immense contributions to make in as far as dealing with character issues of prosperity gospel pastoral leaders is concerned. As a way forward, the study proposed the Character Formation cum Leadership Development (CF-LD) model of theological education as an ideal model that could address character issues of prosperity gospel leaders. It was noted that the CF-LD is by no means a new model of theological education but a blend of the Athens (also referred to as Classical or Character Formation) and the Leadership Development models. Each of the two models complements each other and together they produce a robust model of theological education.

How the CF-LD model would translate itself in practice was an issue that the study dealt with. Therefore, the relevance of each of the models was discussed. It was highlighted that contextual theology, community engagement and public theology had a lot to offer in making the proposed model function well. By its very nature, contextual theology is context based and tolerant of other practices, while public theology is focused on engaging publics. Other factors that were considered in the implementation of the model included discipleship/ mentoring, diversity, and dialogical relationships between true churches, theological institutions and prosperity churches. In the midst of other models, the CF-LD model of theological education was found to be most appropriate and effective in dealing with character issues of prosperity church leaders. The study found out that theological education has immense contributions in shaping the character formation of prosperity church leaders.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusion and recommendations of the study

8.1 Introduction

The chapter marks the conclusion of the study. It gives succinct summaries of chapters 1 to 7. This is followed by a presentation of the findings of the research presented as answers to each of the research questions. The conclusion to the chapters and the whole study takes the form of answers to the research questions. This is informed by the findings from both the literature review and the empirical field study. First, the approach is to present answers to the five secondary research questions, which helps to provide the ground for the answer to the major research question. The chapter then concludes by presenting the recommendations for the practice of theological education, and potential future research areas and themes are presented.

8.2 Summaries of chapters

8.2.1 Chapter 1: Orientation and background

Chapter 1 presented the orientation and background to the study. Key concepts were identified and operationally defined, which gave the study its context, meanings and understandings. The prosperity gospel as a global phenomenon was analysed. The purpose was to have understandings of how the prosperity gospel situated itself in the African context apart from it being a global phenomenon. As a central concept in the study, the prosperity gospel was exposed to further examination, by drawing from various scholars from different Afro-centric and Eurocentric persuasions whose contributions exposed the fluid nature of the concept. Characteristics of the prosperity gospel were noted reflecting both the colonial and post-colonial outfit. The chapter further explored the concept 'theological education', identified theological education debates, emerging paradigms, and their relationship with a thriving prosperity gospel in Africa. The culmination of the background issues in the chapter was the formulation of the statement of the problem in the study, which was premised on character challenges presented by prosperity gospel theology and the theological education process behind prosperity gospel preachers/leaders.

Against that background, the chapter posed pertinent questions that deserved attention. First, what was the theological education approach that was employed to support prosperity ministry and its ministry approach? Second, how can theological education be done in a way that is relevant to issues arising from prosperity gospel? Finally, what role does theological education play in character formation of prosperity leaders and preachers? These concerns challenged the status of existing leadership recruitment and training models, the quality and purpose of

theological curriculum used to train leaders. Still other questions focused on ascertaining whether the prosperity gospel practice constitutes a constructive theology.

8.2.2 Chapter 2: Literature review on prosperity gospel theology

The literature review in chapter 2 was an appreciation of the concept ‘the prosperity gospel’. The chapter focussed on definitional concerns of the concept ‘prosperity gospel’. Its relationship with spirituality was examined. Key personalities behind prosperity theology were identified. The history of prosperity theology was explored tracing its conceptual origins from the New Thought Movement up to its entry in Africa and also in Zimbabwe. Factors contributing to its growth in the third world were identified and explored. The chapter identified and analysed the basic tenets of the prosperity gospel as manifest in its ecclesiology, life styles of leaders, and the place of music in their worship style, their hermeneutic and homiletic approaches and theology. The chapter further explored the prosperity gospel by using the theological and biblical lenses to examine its practices. The discussion also focused on prosperity gospel debates and underscored the need for a continuous discourse in the field of prosperity gospel in order to understand the theology behind the practice. The purpose of the review was to give prosperity gospel practice its context in relation to the problem statement.

8.2.3 Chapter 3: Literature review on theological education

Chapter 3 evaluated the concept ‘theological education’ in order to understand the various perspectives and lenses used to define it. It was acknowledged that coming to a consensus in defining the concept was not easy, prompting discourse and debates regarding those definitional challenges. The chapter proceeded to trace and explore the historical developments of theological education from the apostolic period to the post reformation period highlighting the main characteristics of each era. A comparative critical evaluation was done to understand historical developments of theological education in Southern Africa and foreign theologies in Africa. The discussion helped to put in context the nature of the theological education debates of the 21st century. The discussion in the chapter proceeded to show that 21st century theological education practices presented their own unique challenges and trajectories.

The chapter covered an understanding of the concept ‘models of theological education’ and identification of the models of theological education and their basic tenets and how such conceptualisations have informed current debates in the field of theological education today. For purposes of the study, only five models of theological education were reviewed because of their historical significance and relevance to the problems under study: The Athens Model

(Classical/Character Formation); the Berlin Model (Academic), the Jerusalem Model (Missional) and the Geneva Model (Confessional) and the Leadership Model of theological education. The review considered the tenets undergirding and underlying each of the models, the founding principles, their contexts, goals and purposes in theological education.

8.2.4 Chapter 4: Literature review on character and character formation

The chapter reviewed the concept 'character', noting challenges to do with consensus in defining the concept. The relationship between character, character formation and spiritual formation was explored. The factors that influence character formation were identified and discussed. Barriers to character formation were also investigated. The biblical and theological analysis was established and helped to appreciate the various theoretical perspectives on character formation and how these related to the praxis of theological education. Theological implications of character formation were explored and the concepts 'transformational leadership' and 'visionary leadership' investigated. Current debates on character formation were examined and discussed. Their influences on theory about character were identified and examined. The chapter helped to understand how theological education could contribute to leadership character formation among prosperity church leaders.

8.2.5 Chapter 5: Field research

Chapter five primarily dealt with the field research – the empirical part of the research. The chapter presented phase two of the research after phase one focused on the literature review. This chapter presented empirical data that was collected in the fieldwork from three different sources as follows: Theological leaders; theological students and finally from prosperity church leaders/preachers. The interview questions in each of the categories sought to solicit answers from the respondents that would help in answering the research questions in the study. Mainly, the data helped the researcher to understand the relationship matrix among the three main constituents: Theological education; its role in character formation and how prosperity pastoral leaders were prepared (positively or negatively) in formation of character. Of critical importance was the idea that these three sources of respondents were meant to give data that would triangulate each other in order to understand the relationship matrix among the three variables: Prosperity behaviour /practices; theological preparation in character formation and character expression of prosperity preachers/leaders. Data was analysed in relation to the research objectives and the research questions. The data presented was adequate and satisfactory in answering the research questions.

8.2.6 Chapter 6: Biblical and theological analysis of theological education and character formation

Chapter 6 presented the biblical and theological analysis of theological education and character formation. The purpose of the analysis was to establish from the Bible the normative understandings in theological education and character formation. A lens could be used to justify the findings of the literature review and the empirical study. The question that chapter 6 asked was: What normative standards do we discern and draw from scripture that point us to the way we practise theological education and how character formation should be taught? In order to gain the insights from scripture a framework based on five key principles and five assumptions was used. The analysis showed key findings from scripture. First, that within the Old and New Testament periods there were no established theological education colleges but knowledge about God and character formation were presented and taught through the tradition of the teachings of scripture. Second, various categories of people within the cultural set up of the Jewish people, performed teaching and character formation roles and that the traditions regarding knowledge about God have stood the test of time with God being the principal teacher. The analysis in the chapter set the normative standard upon which any theological teaching or education program should be grounded.

8.2.7 Chapter 7: Towards a model of theological education

Chapter 7 presented a proposal for a theological model of theological education, which was informed by the findings from the literature review and the empirical fieldwork. The proposed model drew its tenets from both the Athens Model and the Leadership Development model. Core determinants or elements that qualified the proposed theological model were identified and key imperatives noted. The chapter explored the relationship between character and leadership, with a view to define the qualities of leadership that would shape the desired leader. The chapter went on to explore the factors that informed the proposed model of theological education. Among the key aspects that were noted were the following: A public theology approach to doing theology; the employment of an integrative theological curriculum; the importance of contextual theology; the role of the theological educator and theological institution; the place of discipleship; and the role of dialogue and community engagement in theological discourse. The chapter proposed the Character Formation cum Leadership Development (CF-LD) Model of theological education as the ideal model to address character formation challenges presented by prosperity church leaders. The basic tenets of the proposed

model were analysed and their relevance to character formation and leader development determined. The chapter also presented the strengths and limitations of the proposed model.

8.3 Conclusion

In chapter 1, the primary and secondary research questions were identified and presented. This section answers in succinct form the answers to each of the research questions based on the findings presented in the study. The primary research question was: What role does theological education play in leadership character formation among prosperity churches in Zimbabwe? Following the primary research question were five secondary questions. These will first be presented and answered with the assumption that the answers build to effectively answer the primary research question.

8.3.1 What are the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and in communities, they belong

(a) The practice of faith in giving

The study found out that at the centre of prosperity theology practices is the essential place of personal faith as a driver for acquisition of material wealth. The study established that prosperity gospel preachers practise the doctrine of faith through giving, which explains and justifies the bulk of their financing. Their practices focus on acquisition of material wealth emphasising various methods of giving such as ‘seeding’, tithes and offerings of different kinds (such as love offerings and thanksgiving offerings prayer offerings). The study noted that faith is a precondition and motivator or driver that sets God in motion to respond to their petitions. The practice of faith is connected to the belief that their guarantee for God’s response to their petitions is measured by the quality of their giving (such as seeding, tithes, and offerings)

(b) The homiletic practice of prosperity gospel preachers

The study established that the homiletic of prosperity church preachers is aimed at persuading congregants to willingly part with their possessions (cars, money or any objects of value). Such words like ‘claiming’, ‘demanding’ and ‘command’ are common in their prayer vocabulary. They also practise deliverances and exorcisms of evil spirits. They are an oasis of hope to people that are socio-economically disadvantaged. The approach appears to be favourable for people who cannot get help from the national health services. Some moderate prosperity practitioners encourage productivity by encouraging people in their communities to work hard

and shun poverty; thereby giving people that are socially distressed some form of hope for their lives.

(c) The practice of spiritual/demonic deliverances

The study found out that prosperity churches engage in the practices of spiritual deliverances. The prosperity gospel preaching was accompanied by some discourse of deliverance from the enemy, Satan, and evil spirits, which are thought to attack believers and prevent them from enjoying the goods and blessings of God concomitant with salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was noted that one of the prosperity gospel beliefs was that evil spirits attributably cause failed marriages or unemployment or chronic sicknesses and therefore, the remedy from such circumstances purportedly needed deliverance.

It was noted that one of the issues that elevated prosperity church leaders' dignity and prestige was their approach to spiritual deliverances, where they also engaged in exorcisms. The study observed that the practice of deliverances opened opportunities for the pastoral leaders to demonstrate possession of enhanced spiritual power. Since the spiritual warfare is a common challenging belief and practice for most African families, congregants considered their prosperity preachers as effective in dealing with such spiritual warfare matters. The study noted that the practice has proved popular among the prosperity gospel fraternity. The study established that congregants who have been failed by the deteriorating health service delivery system eventually found themselves seeking deliverances from the prosperity church preachers.

(d) The practice of media exploitation: Public address systems, Television broadcastings

The study ascertained that the prosperity churches effectively exploited media to their advantage. Where they are located nearer main line churches, the use of public address systems obliterated the worship services of main line churches through disruptive noisy reverberations. Where the prosperity churches operated near each other's locations, it was discerned that the use of more powerful public address system attracted more congregants than using weaker public address systems. The younger people were more likely to be attracted by such practices than adult people. Each church was inclined to outdo the others in terms of use of public address systems. Therefore, the study observed that there was competition for recognition demonstrated by effective use of the media opportunities. The study confirmed that part of the practice of prosperity churches was the use of the television as a means of communicating to their congregations or advertising their programs. The study noted that only prosperity churches that

are connected with the media personalities are much more able to get opportunities to air their programs or advertisements in the national broadcasting services through favouritisms and tips.

(e) Practices related to social media functions: WhatsApp and Facebook and Twitter & Instagram

The study found out that the utilisation of WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram by prosperity preachers has gone up to unprecedented levels. Observations from the fieldwork noted that the emergence of Covid-19 lockdown regulations influenced the extensive use of these media alternatives because prosperity church leaders were failing to connect face to face with their congregations. The use of these media platforms was the only option available for them to continue to receive donations and seed money and tithes from their congregants. It was confirmed that the use of these media platforms exacerbated the problem of prosperity churches swindling money from congregants. The study noted that in some cases, some appeals for help through donations on media platforms were acted out and dramatised before being broadcasted, thereby confirming the claims against their acts of misdemeanour.

(f) The practice of consultancy and counselling

The study discovered that practice of fixing appointments had become rampant such that the prosperity pastors/leaders had established or created secretariat departments that fixed appointments for counselling their members. However, the study noted that such appointments were only fixed after a payment of a consultancy fee ranging from as much as USD\$50 to USD\$300. Various factors determined the charge: The affluent or common class of the congregant; the urgency of the matter; the availability of the Man of God (the prosperity church leader); and the purpose of the appointment (exorcisms, marital counselling or business proposals requests prayers for blessings at workplaces, blessings of the womb, and many others).

(g) Practices related to prophetic utterances

The study endorsed that prosperity gospel preachers exploit the prophetic ministry by giving utterances to congregants to explain problematic episodes or unexplained narratives or phenomena in their congregants' traditional lives. They give the prophetic utterances under the guise that it is the Holy Spirit speaking through them. In some cases, the prosperity preachers aimed to know the national registration numbers of people in the congregation or the names of their relatives or siblings. The study discerned that the practice was meant to elevate and

qualify their piety and spiritual standings to the level of God's messengers, prophets or angels. The practice tallies well with claims that the prosperity teachers often claim divine visitation by angelic beings.

(h) The practice of testimony manipulations

The study corroborated that the prosperity preachers manipulated congregants' testimonies related to healings or miraculous deliverances. The study observed that congregants were actually privately drilled into practising the miracles of healing and spiritual deliverances well before the start of the services. Those who agreed into performing such acts are allegedly paid huge amounts of money by the prosperity preachers. The purpose of the manipulation of testimonies was to prove to their congregations that they were God-sent and therefore had the power to solve their problems. Furthermore, such acts were meant to give authenticity to their abilities in demonstration of the power of God as indicated in the Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:4).

(i) Practice related to commercialising the gospel of prosperity

The study found out that most prosperity churches engaged into practices that commodified the gospel. Related to practices highlighted under (d), (e) and (f) above, some charismatic prosperity churches found new market techniques by making use of mass media opportunities mainly radio, television and print media to advertise their services and create a niche for themselves. These practices ranged from the sale of anointing oils, car stickers, wristbands to the charging of fees for counselling services, otherwise known as "consultation fees" as indicated under section (f) above.

(j) The practice of bidding for the prosperity preachers' personal artefacts or clothing as a money generation scheme

The study realised and endorsed that the prosperity preachers put their personal clothing or personal artefacts or belongings on bidding with the aim of fund raising for a particular project. For example, the preacher could put his neck tie for bidding and such objects of so little value like USD\$5,00 could attract thousands of monies to as much as USD\$1500. Related to this practice was the method of raising funds by pegging a price of USD\$10 per one brick for financing the prosperity leaders' housing projects. Congregants would therefore be pushed into committing to buy say 100 bricks for the pastor's house which means they will have given out USD\$1000 just for one hundred bricks which cost USD\$100 on the open market. The worst practice was lending money to congregants under the pretext that they are investing their talents

as depicted in Matthew 25:14-30. The congregants were given short periods to pay back, where upon failure to repay, they would be required to pay the full amount plus a high rate of interest, usually not less than 15% within a short period of time. This practice was commonly referred to as '*chimbadzwa*', literally implying a very high yield investment but with very tight repayment conditions.

8.3.2 What is the theological understanding informing the prosperity church leaders' practices

The practices of the prosperity church leaders are consistent with their theological motifs. Their hermeneutic can be described as literal interpretations, which come under the category of non-traditional biblical interpretation. Their skewed interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, atonement, giving, health and faith informs and influences their practices. The premise of their hermeneutic is from the following assumptions: First, their methods of interpreting is experiential, based on the anticipation that the Spirit can be discovered in all of life; second, the Bible is considered as a performative book with a declarative use; third, the events in the Bible can be re-enacted today; fourth, the view that the interpreter of the Bible goes beyond the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge to participate in the community of faith; and fifth, the view that the present is interpreted in terms of the past, where interpreting scripture is based on biblical narratives and not in terms of dominant perceptions of reality.

The five theological pillars inform their homiletic: a distorted view of God; the elevation of mind over matter; exalted view of humankind; focus on health and wealth; and unorthodox view of salvation and atonement. Part of their homiletic is speaking positive confessions into the lives of their audiences or exorcise by positive confession of ejecting demonic personalities, the preachers also prophesy about peoples' present and future situations. In some cases, some of their homiletic includes justifying their ownership of material wealth and possessions as coming from God because of their faith confessions. Prosperity preachers use their pulpit dominance to reprimand or ridicule the faith of some people or their audiences, teaching that their economic status and wellbeing represents their level of faith and giving. Prosperity gospel preachers generally exploit their pulpits and media as a license to propagate their theology of materialism.

8.3.3 How do the prosperity church leaders view their practices from a Biblical understanding and ministry practice in light of practical life of their congregation members and community people

Prosperity church preachers justify receiving the material wealth from their congregants. However, their justification is based on their skewed hermeneutic and flawed homiletic. Whatever the criticism they get, prosperity preachers believe that their practices are consonant with the dictates of scripture. Key scripture that they use as defence for their practices are: Luke 6:38 (on the subject of giving); 3 John 1:2 (as it refers to prosperity); Luke 18:12, Deuteronomy 26:12 & Malachi 3:8-10 (as they refer to giving tithes); James 4:2-4 (as it relates to asking for blessings from God); 1 Corinthians 9:11 (as it refers to material riches); Galatians 6:7 (as it relates to giving money as an investment); Luke 12:33 (as it relates to disposing the congregants' wealth) and many more such scriptures. The study discerned that their preferences in biblical interpretation as defence for their practices are based on eisegesis as opposed to exegesis of the scriptural texts.

8.3.4 What theological understanding can be discerned in Scripture regarding prosperity and wealth that should inform church leaders

A proper grasp in exegetical understandings of the concepts prosperity and wealth is essential for the theological practice of prosperity church leaders. The term 'prosperity' was first used in Joshua 1:7b. In Hebrew, the word 'prosperous' is translated *tsalach*. Used in the context of the text, the word 'prosperity' means to advance, make progress or succeed or be profitable. In the context of scripture, the Lord was assuring Joshua that he would accomplish all of his endeavours if he was faithful and obedient to him. In 3 John 1:2 (the Greek translation is *euodoo*) it literally means to grant a prosperous and expeditious journey, to lead by a direct and easy way or to help on one's way. In Nehemiah 2:2a, the word 'prosper' is used to demonstrate the need for a safe journey. The common theme that runs through the biblical accounts of the lives of Joshua, Nehemiah, Abraham, Jesus, the apostle Paul and many others is the fact that they were following a way or journey that God had determined for them. He caused them to prosper and have good success (Hammond, 1996:12). The theological and biblical position is that God assures all who delight in His Word, as doers and not hearers only, that He will cause them to prosper as they submit themselves to His statutes, as in Psalm 1:3 and Proverbs 28:20. Biblical prosperity is neither a get-rich-quick scheme nor acquisition of material wealth to satisfy carnal desires. The standard normative that should inform prosperity church leaders

regarding their understanding of prosperity is enshrined in Joshua 1:8, what is popularly known as ‘God’s definition of prosperity’.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it, for then you make your ways prosperous, and then you will have good success.

From the scripture above three qualities, justify God’s definition of prosperity: Process not possessions; character not power; and obedience not position (Crosson, 2012:31-36).

1. Process not possessions

In God’s economy a person is prosperous and successful as a result of the process he/she goes through in working towards the goal with the right attitude (Ecclesiastics 5:10 & 12). The process of working is the real blessing.

2. Character not power

God sees character as a true indicator for prosperity. If a person has power but prideful, dishonest, disloyal, arrogant, greedy – he or she is not successful in God’s eyes (1 Peter 5:5). A clear understanding of God’s definition of prosperity is in the character quality of ‘humility’ (Luke 14:10-11 & 1 Peter 5:6).

3. Obedience not positions

Instead of seeing position as a symbol of authority and prosperity, God sees obedience as the indicator.

Prosperity preachers need to adopt a theology of prosperity that is guided by the God’s definition of prosperity as in Joshua 1:8 and give value to process not possessions, character not power/authority, and obedience not position. These principles or qualities define prosperity and wealth from a truly theological viewpoint.

8.3.5 What theological education recommendations can be made to inform prosperity church leaders' character formation in order to have balanced ministry practices contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church

The study identified the principles and processes that make possible character formation. It was noted that these principles and processes have biblical and theological basis or orientation. Christian character and ethic draw their qualities from the scriptures. The study verified that the Bible desires all believers to have a Christ-like character (2 Corinthians 3:17-18 & Galatians 4:19). Christian character is attained as a process characterised by: (1) The desire to follow Jesus Christ as a true disciple (Matthew 4:18-20); (2) knowledge of the truthfulness of the Word of God (Romans 12:1-2); (3) the knowledge that character is requirement for ministry (1 Peter 5: 1-14); and (4) possession of teaching abilities (1 Timothy 4: 1-16). Theologically, character development is a matter of discipline (2 Peter 1:3-9) and that it involves sufferings (Romans 5:3-5). Therefore, Christ-like character formation takes place in the context of cosmic transformation, the work of the Holy Spirit, the need for liberation and cooperation, happy and glorious events and the acknowledgement that it (character formation) is for all of us. Finally, and most importantly character formation is Christ being formed in us (Galatians 4:19).

The study observed that community engagement is primary for character development. Three essential traits were identified as critical for the development of character within the context of a community. These were self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence. The traits comprise the means by which individuals relate to oneself, other individuals and the surrounding world respectively. Self-directedness entails traits such as responsibility, purposefulness, resourcefulness, and self-acceptance – what is generally referred to as self-efficacy. Cooperativeness includes such traits as tolerance, empathy, helpfulness, compassion and ethical interaction with others. Transcendence is one's perspective on his relationship to creation, and refers to how an individual views his/her place, role activity in relation to the rest of creation, and includes such traits as creative self-forgetfulness and spiritual acceptance. Such people are able to transcend their own boundaries and become engaged with the activities /persons with whom they are interacting with, and experiencing deep meaning from the event. Self-forgetting people are able to move beyond rugged individualism to see the manner in which their lives connect with those around them. Such people are able to understand how their actions relate to other people and what is occurring in the world. Furthermore, as they develop their spirituality, they are able to move beyond the search for personal pleasure and power, but instead find meaning beyond oneself. The important point that the study noted was that mature

character developed out of the interaction of self-directedness, cooperativeness and self-transcendence within a community environment, thus stressing the importance of community engagement in character formation. Within a theological college setting, the community of the college and those around the college are an important consideration for character development.

The study also underscored the indispensability of the development of spirituality in students. It was noted that spirituality and character cannot be dismembered from each other – they co-exist. Spirituality is shaped by the operation of the Holy Spirit but does not develop in isolation. It develops out of engaging with others in community. The life of Jesus is the normative instance of life in the Spirit. The fruiting of the Spirit leads into the fruits of the Spirit. The study therefore, stressed the value of the college life and community for spiritual development and character formation.

The study proposed the Character Formation-Leadership Development Model (CF-LD) of theological education as the appropriate recommended model for character development that faithfully takes into account the principles and practices for character formation. The model has a bias towards character formation and leadership development but also works well in an integrated curriculum framework. The integrated nature of the CF-LD incorporates the notion that as the spiritual and the character dimensions are developing, other dimensions such as making the pastoral leaders develop economically, also unfold, thereby developing the whole individual. Such integration helps to have balanced ministry practices.

8.3.6 What role does theological education play in leadership character formation among prosperity churches in Zimbabwe

The study found out that the primary role of theological colleges is the leadership development for the church and para-church institutions and character formation of the ministerial leaders. More specifically, the role of theological education was to develop ministerial leaders in three dimensions: knowledge, spiritual/character growth and leadership. However, this is made possible through three fundamental processes: Theological reflection, community engagement and formation. Theological reflection deals with the training of the mind in mastering academic content or biblical knowledge. It is the ability to see realities through insights from biblical truths and theological constructs. The process of growth in theological reflection begins with investigation of scripture, exploration of the theology behind the scripture. These two are aided by a sense of historical awareness and realities obtaining in a real world of events. Community engagement focuses on training the hands (practical skills) in formulation of goals and solving

problems is fundamental for theological education. Figuratively, it is moving from ivory towers to the dirty streets of the community and be the salt and the light of the world. The success of community engagement is dependent on a clear vision, transformation, and competencies in practical skills. The third aspect, personal formation, focuses on training the heart. More specifically, it is focusing on character. The successful intersection and integration of these three components is the final product of the transformational leader. The transformative practitioner is the ideal leader that has wisdom and skill to lead and guide the churches through cultural and ideological clashes.

Wise and character formed leaders are those that are biblically obedient, transformational focussed, culturally cross-contextually adaptable, relationally engaged, intellectually curious, situationally aware and gifted. In the real practice of theological education what does this entail? The study underscored that, (1) theological education institutions have power over the curriculum matters. Integrative curriculum is the way to go in addressing character issues of prosperity church leaders. A theological model of theological education that has bias towards character formation and leadership development is the ideal program that addresses character formation problems of prosperity church leaders. Such is the nature of the Character Formation-Leadership Development model of theological education proposed in this study.

(2) Community engagement implies engaging those in the prosperity gospel fraternity into participating in the public church where they learn through collaboration and dialoguing with other churches and different categories of people in the public sphere. Their participation in the public church is critical to developing their image in the public square. As the community sees and assesses the participation of prosperity church leaders in public agenda issues, they assume respectable places in the public arena, and perceptions about their role and character expressions in the public affairs change subsequently.

(3) Theological reflection implies exposing prosperity church leaders to the truth of the Word of God. It is from the exposure to the Word of Truth that they produce fruits of the Spirit and model Christ-like behaviours.

8.4 Conclusion

The study set out to explore and understand the role of theological education in ministerial character formation among prosperity churches in Zimbabwe. The problem under study was that the character expressions of prosperity church leaders left a lot to be desired within their churches and communities. Review of literature revealed that challenges posed by prosperity

church leaders were astoundingly great and disturbing. Of great concern was the challenge that prosperity church leaders were taking advantage of the poor by swindling their congregational members of their hard-earned money. In the midst of influences that tended to encourage prosperity church leaders to perpetuate the same practices, were the factors related to the socio-economic meltdown in Zimbabwe. Backyard theological colleges emerged, as they appeared to prop the prosperity gospel agenda. The problems noted were not only of a theological nature but also a host of other problems such as general misdemeanours related to various crimes such as rape, theft, fraud and robbery.

It was noted in the problem identification stage that the rise in the number of prosperity churches consequently meant exponential growths in the number of problems associated with prosperity church leaders. The diversity of the identified problems demanded that problem identification be streamlined to character issues only. In the context of problem identification, the study focused only on character problems of the prosperity church leaders. Other research questions were formulated in relation to the primary research questions as follows:

- What are the practices of prosperity church leaders within their churches and in communities, they belong?
- What is the theological understanding informing the prosperity church leaders' practices?
- How do the prosperity church leaders view their practices from a Biblical understanding and ministry practice in light of practical life of their congregation members and community people?
- What theological understanding can be discerned in Scripture regarding prosperity and wealth that should inform church leaders?
- What theological education recommendations can be made to inform prosperity church leaders' character formation in order to have balanced ministry practices contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the church

These research questions prompted the formulation of objectives. It was decided that a qualitative approach to the study be employed. The sample consisted of students and leaders of theological colleges, and prosperity gospel preachers/leaders. The research was two-pronged – literature review and field study. The literature explored various concepts on prosperity theology, character formation and theological education. The data collected was presented and

analysed and findings presented. The theological and biblical examination of these concepts explored to investigate and understand the normative views of scripture regarding theological education and character formation. The study proposed a model of theological education, the Character Formation – Leadership Development (CF-LD) Model of Theological Education– that effectively deals and engages with the undesirable character expressions of the prosperity preachers/leaders. The model draws insights from other models of theological education, public theology and theology of contexts as it deals with the character issues. The study concludes and underscores the pivotal role played by theological education in leadership development and ministerial character formation among prosperity churches.

8.5 Recommendations

The study recommends the following for future research:

1. The need for continuous dialogue regarding prosperity theology. The fluid nature of the concept, challenges in definitions, controversies regarding prosperity hermeneutic and homiletic all point to the need for further research so that there is a balanced understanding of the practice;
2. The diverse nature of problems of prosperity gospel as indicated in chapter one indicates the diverse nature of opportunities created in research. Theologians need to expose themselves to these research areas and find answers to the problems noted;
3. The need to develop models of theological education that challenge prosperity theology remains valid. The study noted the various debates that arise out of disagreements premised on ‘what is theological about a theological school’. These debates are evidence that consensus is far from being reached. More research is needed in these areas;
4. There is need to do further research to identify instruments that measure the character traits for theological students. More insight in such instruments would assist theological colleges in selecting suitable students who have gone through successful character formation within the home. Such students would be entrusted to lead congregation such as those in the prosperity fraternity; and
5. Theological education has a vital role in the fulfilment of God’s purpose for man. They are encouraged to rise up to the challenge to participate purposefully in the fulfilment of God’s agenda for the world.

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10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1: Interview schedule for theological leaders

CATEGORY 1: THEOLOGICAL LEADERS

1. What is your view of the role of theological education in character formation?
 - a. What is the place/role of a theological educator in society?
 - b. What is the role of theological education in the church?
 - c. What role does the theological educator play in forming the character of the students they produce?
2. What is the nature of preparation (the nature and process) of students to form positive character?
 - a. What in your view constitutes character formation?
 - b. How (process) do you prepare students for good character formation?
 - c. What is the nature of student character formation at this college?
3. What is your view and perspective (evaluation) on character of prosperity preachers?
 - a. In your view, does your college train students to adopt a particular type of theological orientation? (e.g., reformed theology, or prosperity theology or evangelical theology or charismatic theology).
 - b. What are your views about the practices of prosperity churches or prosperity preachers?
 - c. What are your views about prosperity gospel?
 - d. Do you think the way you train students has an impact on the character of prosperity church leaders in Zimbabwe? Explain and justify your answer.

10.2 Appendix 2: Interview schedule for theological students

CATEGORY 2: THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS

1. What is/are your view(s) on prosperity practices?
 - a. What do understand by prosperity gospel
 - b. What are the key beliefs/practices of prosperity gospel churches/preachers?
 - c. What are your views about these beliefs and practices?
 - d. What are the characteristics/behaviours of prosperity gospel preachers?
 - e. What are your views about these characteristics and behaviours?
2. How do you view these practices from a character formation perspective?
 - a. In your view what does it mean to be prepared or character formed for ministry?
 - b. In your view do you think the practices of prosperity gospel churches are good?
 - c. What general comments can you give about the characters of prosperity gospel preachers/leaders
3. To what extent do you feel theological education is helping students to be ministers/Christian workers of high positive character?
 - a. In your view how does your theological college help in character formation?
 - b. What particular things/issues are in the teaching/learning program of this college that help in character formation of its students?
 - c. In your view, how committed are theological colleges in preparing students to be ministers/Christian workers of high positive character?

10.3 Appendix 3: Interview schedule for prosperity church leaders

CATEGORY 3: PROSPERITY CHURCH LEADERS/ PREACHERS

1. Nature/process of theological preparation: What is the nature of your theological preparation for ministry that informs your prosperity practices?
 - (a) What is/was involved in preparing/equipping you for the work of ministry? (process). How did you become involved to become a pastor (process)? The criteria that your church/leaders use to engage you as a trainee pastor?
 - (b) How do/did you come to learn and understand the work/practice of ministry?
 - i. Knowledge of The Word of God (the Bible)-
 - ii. The art of preaching the Word
 - iii. Handling the congregation that you minister to
 - (c) How does this process of ministry preparation help you to understand what the church believes in (e.g., wealth)?
2. Character Formation: How does the system prepare prosperity preachers in character formation?
 - (a) What do you believe is the meaning of character?
 - (b) What things/qualities constitute character?
 - (c) Do you believe your character today is a result of any input from anyone? (college/person/church/elder?)
 - (d) In what way does the system of your preparation for ministry help to form the character of their pastors?

3. Perceptions about their character/behaviour in practice: How do you you're your behaviour/practice from the perspective of good or bad character?

(a) What are your views about you becoming rich as a result of your practice in ministry?

(b) What are your views about pastoral leaders becoming rich as a result of giving by congregants?

(c) What comment can you give about the character of prosperity church leaders/preachers in general?

10.4 Appendix 4: Participant information leaflet and consent form for research participants



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY: The Prosperity churches in Zimbabwe: The role of theological education in ministerial character formation.

ETHICS REFERENCE NUMBERS:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof. Vhumani Magezi

POST GRADUATE STUDENT: Walter Sandirai Madimutsa

ADDRESS: 397 New Adylinn Park, Westgate, Harare, ZIMBABWE.

CONTACT NUMBER:(+263) 0771139300 / +263 719544144)

You are being invited to take part in a research study that forms part of my PhD research. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully

understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you might be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

This study has been approved by the **Faculty of Theology Ethics Committee of the North-West University** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Theology Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (DoH, 2015) and other international ethical guidelines applicable to this study. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or other relevant people to inspect the research records.

What is this research study all about?

The research aims to evaluate the role how theological education in ministerial character formation among prosperity churches in Zimbabwe

Why have you been invited to participate?

Prosperity church leaders and, students and staff at theological institutions are key informants to this study and hence you have been chosen to participate purposely in this important study

What will be expected of you?

You are expected to share your experiences, comments thoughts about the practice of prosperity church leaders, the churches they lead and the participation of theological institutions in ministerial formation

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

You will gain insight into the practice of theological institutions vis-a-vis prosperity gospel churches and their leadership practices and contribution to the ecclesia community in Zimbabwe. There are no costs involved or any form of remuneration. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Are there risks involved in you taking part in this research and what will be done to prevent them?

The risks in this study are very minimal. In the event of emotional disturbance, a professional counselor will be on standby to give help and guidance where it is needed. The interviews and discussions benefit the participants more than the risks.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see your findings?

Anonymity of your findings will be protected by using pseudonyms. Your privacy will be respected by not sharing what I discuss with you outside these contact sessions.

What will happen with the findings or samples?

They will be kept in a lockable cabinet and will be destroyed as soon as the research study is completed.

How will you know about the results of this research?

Only the general findings will be shared with you through the academic public domain and relevant channels.

Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs for you?

No, you will not be paid to take part in the study because this is voluntary participation without any funding attached to it. There will thus be no costs involved for you, if you do take part in this study.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

You can contact Rev Walter S. Madimutsa (Researcher) at +263 771139300 or +263 719544144 (waltermadimutsa@gmail.com) or Prof. V. Magezi (Research Promoter) at +27 82 921 0847 (vhumani.magezi@nwu.ac.za) if you have any further questions or have any problems.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: *The prosperity churches in Zimbabwe: The role of theological education in ministerial character formation*

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

.....

.....

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I clearly and in detail explained the information in this document to

.....

- I did not use an interpreter.
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.

- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I gave him/her time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

Signature of person obtaining consent

Signature of witness

.....

.....

Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I did/did not use an interpreter
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them or I was available should he/she want to ask any further questions.
- The informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as described above.
- I am satisfied that he/she had time to discuss it with others if he/she wished to do so.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

Signature of researcher

Signature of witness

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