

CONTINENTAL LINKAGE AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR TEE IN AFRICA¹

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The historical origins of theological education by extension are familiar. Based on in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of their past endeavors in a residential seminary, Ralph Winter, James Emery and Ross Kinsler of the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary in Guatemala in 1963 inaugurated a new mode of theological education, widely known today as theological education by extension--or TEE. The concept of TEE soon spread to other countries and continents, including Africa, to such an extent that it has been termed "the largest non-governmental voluntary educational development in the world" and "the most significant development in theological education in the twentieth century." After nearly a quarter century of existence, TEE is now maturing as a world movement. As Mulholland has recently said, "the 'storm and stress' of adolescence is abating" and TEE is coming of age.²

The focus of this paper is on Africa. TEE was introduced to Africa during a workshop on TEE held in Kenya in 1969. In less than ten years there was a rapid spread of TEE programmes across Africa. The chronicles of the expansion and development of TEE programmes in the various African countries have yet to be written. The TEXT-AFRICA project was organised in 1972 under the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) to prepare TEE textbooks written for Africa in a linear programmed instruction format. These texts have been produced in English and in more than 30 African languages. Evangel Publishing House has so far published 31 titles in English and 22 in Swahili, with a total print run of 291,036 copies in English and 157,181 in Swahili. This is phenomenal. Three or four manuscripts are now with the publishers, four more are being written, and seven titles are yet to be assigned to writers.

To describe the extent of TEE in Africa today is impossible, since the data is not available. I was embarrassed recently when I gave a report on TEE in Africa to the TEE Association of Nigeria (TEEAN) and had to use figures from 1979 and 1980. Embarrassment is again experienced with this paper, since data is still not available. One urgent task before us is to document the growth and development of TEE on our continent.

On the basis of 1979/1980 figures drawn mainly from the book *Theological Education in Context*,³ over one hundred TEE programmes exist in

more than 23 countries of Africa. Only 15 programmes are administered interdenominationally. Twenty-seven programmes have a multi-denominational student body. Seventy-one programmes work only within their respective denominations. The 82 programmes on which data was available have 23,900 students enrolled. Of this enrollment, 93% (over 22,000) were at the lower academic levels, of which the majority were using a vernacular version of the AEAM TEE texts. Less than 5% of the enrollment were at a post-"O" level. Only 2% of the students were studying at the tertiary level.

It is noteworthy that 36% of all full-time and part-time TEE staff in Africa were African. Of the 82 programmes surveyed, only 28% functioned in conjunction with an institution, while 72% operated independently. The pros and cons of a TEE programme operating independently rather than in conjunction with a school deserve further attention.

More recent data collected from individual programmes shows similar patterns. The TEE programme of the Evangelical Church of Zambia, begun in 1971, by August 1986 had 1,260 students who had taken at least one course. Of this total, 50-60% are currently active. Seventeen of the AEAM TEE texts have been translated into the local language (Kikaonde), and work has begun in two other languages. During my visit to the office of TEE of Malawi (TEEM) several years ago, I learned that of their 255 students enrolled, 52 were studying in the vernacular Chichewa and 203 were doing their studies in English up to and including "O" level. The TEE Association of Nigeria (TEEAN) has twelve denominations listed as members. The current number of TEE students enrolled by the various members of TEEAN is nearly 6,000. Within TEEAN, the TEE programme of the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) is the largest with over 2,000 students, followed by the Church of the Brethren with 800 students, the Anglican Church with 700, and the Lutheran Church of Christ with 600 students.

With this brief overview of the development of TEE in Africa, let us turn to the question of linkage and support services for TEE on the continent. How can we find practical ways to address together some issues which face all of us in our TEE programmes? Can we envisage some type of network that will join us together in mutual fellowship, encouragement and assistance, information exchange, coordination with residential programmes, promotion of TEE, material and curriculum development, training programmes, workshops, evaluation, grants, library assistance, and research? Let me make some practical suggestions.

1. Linkage. First, in African TEE we need to consider some form of continental linkage, a simple structure that will bind together those of us who are TEE workers across Africa. Most of our TEE programmes in

Africa operate in isolation from one another. Very few TEE associations have been established for cooperation among programmes. A simple mechanism must be found which will give us a common continental identity and opportunity for mutual fellowship.

I would like to suggest, as a concrete forward step, that the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) allow TEE programmes to relate within its structures. Perhaps a special category could be devised within ACTEA for such programmes, such as an "ACTEA TEE correspondents" category. More than 150 residential schools are now related to ACTEA, but only a sixth of these are involved in accreditation. The majority relate to ACTEA for its numerous popular non-accreditation services, under the category of "ACTEA correspondents." Many of these same ACTEA services could be offered to TEE "correspondents," along with additional services specially designed for TEE. ACTEA's structures are already in place and could easily accommodate the TEE category. In addition, a simple administrative structure within ACTEA could be set up to handle TEE concerns. For example, an ACTEA assistant administrator for TEE could be appointed, or someone could be appointed as chairman of a small ACTEA TEE committee to handle TEE administrative matters, to follow through with practical proposals for cooperation, and to create the needed momentum for the TEE movement across Africa.

2. Information exchange. A system also should be developed for the free flow of information related to TEE. How can we communicate in a general way with one another? How can we learn of and from each other? I would suggest that we produce a bulletin which would be circulated to all interested TEE people, especially to the ACTEA "TEE correspondents." ACTEA produces the ACTEA BULLETIN, a two-page leaflet which is mailed out at least twice a year to more than 300 schools and individuals on the continent. Similarly ACTEA could produce and distribute an ACTEA TEE bulletin. This could include, among many things, news of various developments in TEE, reports on available TEE materials and research documents, special book offers, and announcements of consultations and workshops.

We also need to canvass the African continent to learn of all functioning TEE programmes. I would suggest that we undertake to produce a Directory of TEE Programmes in Africa. ACTEA was amazed to discover the number of residential theological schools in Africa. The first edition of the ACTEA DIRECTORY OF THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS IN AFRICA in 1982 listed 435 schools. We thought we had done well! But we soon learned of many more. Three years later the 1985 edition listed 742 schools, and even that figure is now out of date. Much is going on in TEE across Africa, and this should be documented both for us in Africa and for the larger Christian world. A questionnaire securing basic data on TEE programmes should be circulated as widely as possible, and the results published.

3. TEE materials. Cooperation in the development and production of TEE materials is essential. The TEXT-AFRICA project has provided the backbone of TEE materials in use in Africa. TEE leaders and teachers in Africa may need to find an avenue into the TEXT-AFRICA project, to be able to have some input in the design and content of the material. Several denominations either supplement the AEAM TEE books or produce their own. The production of TEE texts is a colossal undertaking, and for most groups it is an impossibility. Cooperation in material production is therefore essential. While I do realize that each group may have its own particular denominational distinctives, nevertheless ways must be found to cooperate where possible in development and production of TEE materials.

We also need professional help in curriculum development. Many of us have experienced the frustration of not having TEE texts available in the right sequence of subjects. For example, the "Letter to the Corinthians" was studied before the "New Testament Survey" course was available. I suggest that work should begin in the near future on the development of suggested TEE curriculums for the different levels of education, with attention given to titles, sequence, and number of courses, and then that we seek to secure or develop the materials for each course. Presently we develop a curriculum around the availability of books. Development of an orderly curriculum is obligatory if credibility is sought for our TEE programmes.

Another area deserving our consideration is supplementary material related to our TEE programmes. For example, TEE Teacher's Handbooks, Prospectus, Student Handbooks, and Administrative Guides are rarely found. We need assistance in producing such supplementary tools for TEE in Africa.

4. Development and renewal. Ways and means need to be found for encouraging the development and renewal of the TEE movement across Africa. TEE should again be promoted in some church/mission groups as a viable option for theological training. How can we "sell" TEE to others? Also within our existing programmes evaluation is urgently needed. Is TEE conducted today in the most effective way? Are there deficiencies in our materials and methods? What improvements can be made? How can renewal be encouraged within TEE in Africa? I would suggest that we study the document MANIFESTO ON THE RENEWAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION,⁴ and carefully and prayerfully relate this to our TEE programmes. Such an exercise would give a fresh sense of direction to our programmes, and a stimulus for positive change. The MANIFESTO may be new to some within TEE, but among residential schools it is being used around the world as an instrument for stimulus and renewal. How the MANIFESTO can be put to use in evaluating TEE demands our utmost attention.

5. Conferences. Various types of meetings need to be arranged, similar to the TEE seminars held across Africa in the early 1970s. We need

TEE workshops on the concept and benefits of TEE, on writing TEE materials, on administration of TEE programmes, on TEE teaching methods, and on staff training. Consultations, similar to our meeting here, would be of great value to the progress of TEE in Africa. Consultations should be scheduled in the future on the development of TEE, the renewal of TEE, TEE and resident schools, curriculum design, material development, and accreditation. Arrangements can also be made for traveling consultants to visit and advise individual programmes, as Dr Lois McKinney and Dr Jim Plueddemann have done in the past. Also we need to encourage more national and regional associations to be formed, which can meet on a regular basis. And perhaps in some cases these need to be formed on a larger geographical scale, such as a West Africa TEE Association, or a Francophone TEE Association, or a Swahili TEE Association.

6. Relations with residential schools. The relationship between TEE and residential programmes, though a sensitive issue, has to be examined. The majority of TEE programmes in Africa function independently of any residential theological school. Other important TEE programmes are part of a residential school system. We may wish to examine and address this relationship. In the future more of our TEE students will wish to continue theological studies at a higher level in a residential school. But major questions of transfer of credit and equivalency arise.

7. Accreditation. In light of the above questions we come to important issues of evaluation, recognition, and accreditation of TEE programmes. Matters of quality, credibility, and equivalency of programmes have to be evaluated. This is not an easy task. The integrity of the TEE concept and methodology will have to be kept intact, while at the same time wrapping it in terms of accreditation that residential schools can recognize and evaluate.

8. Finance. Part of our agenda must include matters of funding, scholarships, grants, and library assistance. Financing the vernacular edition of an AEAM TEE text is a major problem we all face. Paying the salaries and travel costs of African TEE leaders and teachers by the local Church is difficult. Practical means for funding current expenditures locally need to be found. Continued reliance on overseas funding is not healthy for our programmes, nor for the national churches. Various scholarships are available to the teaching staff of residential institutions. A similar scheme should be established for TEE teachers and directors. Grants are probably available for TEE projects, but how can we tap these resources to fund workshops, consultancies, and the initial development and production of TEE materials?

9. Research. Lastly, the whole area of research related to TEE requires much thought and work. I have already mentioned the need for up-to-date data on TEE in Africa. Other areas needing research would include evaluating the effectiveness of (i) the TEE programmes in spiritual and

vocational training, (ii) the unique teaching process built into the TEE method, and (iii) our current TEE programmed textbooks. It would also be helpful to survey systematically the opinion and attitudes towards TEE within our local churches.

The purpose of this paper is to stimulate thinking and enthusiasm for progress in TEE in Africa. The ideas presented are only a beginning. The challenge before us is to formulate ways and means for strengthening the many TEE programmes in Africa. This is our task. May the Holy Spirit endue us with His special grace and wisdom to complete this task.⁵

ENDNOTES

¹An address delivered at the ACTEA All-Africa TEE Consultation held July 1987 in Nairobi, Kenya. Reprinted with adjustments from TEE IN AFRICA Occasional Papers 1 (Nairobi: ACTEA, 1989), by permission.

²K B Mulholland, "TEE Come of Age: A Candid Assessment after Two Decades", in Cyprus: TEE Come of Age, ed. by R L Youngblood (Exeter: Paternoster, [1985]), p 24.

³J Hogarth, K Gatimu and D Barrett (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1983).

⁴Published by the International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education (ICAA) in 1983, the MANIFESTO subsequently appeared in Theological Education Today (16:2 [April-June 1984] 1-6), and in the Evangelical Review of Theology (8:1 [April 1984] 136-43). The document has also been issued in French and Spanish.

⁵Since this paper was given, ACTEA has launched the ACTEA Commission for TEE, in order to provide networking and support services for TEE throughout Africa. More than twenty-five major TEE programmes and associations throughout the continent have formally joined. The ACTEA newsletter "TEE in Africa" has completed its second year of publication, and publication of the ACTEA Directory of TEE Programmes in Africa is expected shortly. For further information write to: ACTEA, PMB 2049, Kaduna, Nigeria.