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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MASTERLIFE DISCIPLESHIP
TRAINING COURSE AS A MEANS OF CHRISTIAN
SOCIALIZATION IN AN
AFRICAN CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

This work is an evaluatory study of the process and content of the MasterLife, the most intensive formal socialization (discipleship training) programme in First Baptist Church Kosofe. The work is also a descriptive study of both the faith types and congregational loyalty of all the thirty-five persons who have completed the MasterLife course in the same church.

The researcher adopted and adapted instruments used in similar studies to construct the data gathering instrument used for the study. Since the study involved categorizing and classifying subjects into various faith types and different facets of congregational loyalty the frequency method of data analysis was used for the study. A computer software programme, the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), was used for the frequency and cross-tabulation analyses of the data.

The results of the research revealed that about fifty four percent (54%) of the subjects possessed only the vertical faith type. Three percent (3%) possessed only the horizontal faith type; while only twenty percent possessed the integrated faith type (the indicator of a socialized christian). When congregational loyalty was viewed from the perspectives of frequent involvement in the educational/missionary organizations and the faithful giving of tithes only about sixty percent (60%) demonstrated loyalty to the church. However not less than seventy-eight percent (78%) demonstrated loyalty to the congregation, when loyalty was defined in terms of frequent attendance of worship and involvement in leadership responsibilities. The results showed

that less than twenty five percent (25%) of those studied possessed marks of well socialized christian.

The empirical analysis of the contents of the MasterLife curriculum materials revealed that they possess Bible studies and articles that have the tendency to promote the vertical faith type. They are however inadequate in cultivating and promoting indicators of the horizontal dimensions of faith. To correct the deficiencies noticed the researcher suggested the adaptation and the adoption of some formal socialization programmes by the church studied.

The study also implies that MasterLife curriculum materials are inadequate in cultivating the horizontal dimensions of faith. As a complement to the MasterLife the church should design and implement a small group 'collective project' approach to involvement in social issues that affect the community. A slight modification of Ralph Neighbour's, Journey into Discipleship¹⁴ should prove to be tremendously helpful. The recent discipleship training course, Experiencing God¹⁵, which emphasizes doing what God is doing may also correct the defects noticed amongst the MasterLife graduants studied.

III CONCLUSION

This study is more of a pilot study. It is supposed to clear the haze and provide leads for those who might be interested in studying either faith-types, congregational loyalty, or a means of socialization like the MasterLife.

The number of persons involved in the study and their geographical restriction makes generalization on the basis of this study empirically untenable. However, the process and content evaluation of MasterLife curriculum materials transcends geographical boundary.

¹⁴Ralph Neighbour, The Journey into Discipleship (Memphis: Broaderhood Commission, SBC, 1974),. This book emphasizes the 'Journey outward': Journey into participation in transforming individuals and society.

¹⁵Henry Blackaby and Claude King, Experiencing God (Nashville: Lifeway Press, 1990).

This study should motivate correlation and experimental studies. Researchers can study the relationship between MasterLife and Christian Living. The impact of memorization skills and Scripture study skills on the socializee can also be researched.

The Christian educator needs to continuously examine the teaching-learning philosophies and method of the church. He should regularly evaluate results of training as typified by people's life style; and must subject even eulogised curriculum materials to evaluation. It is in evaluation that weaknesses/strengths are detected and affirmed. The examination of a people and the evaluation of a curriculum with the purpose of identifying strength/weaknesses and proffering suggestions motivated and guided this research.