

EFFECTIVENESS OF INTEGRATIVE APPROACH AS  
AN ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING  
NEW ATTENDERS INTO COMMITTED MEMBERS  
OF THE CHURCH

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## ABSTRACT

The subject of this dissertation "Effectiveness of Integrative Approach as an Administrative Strategy for Developing New Attenders into Committed Members of the Church" is of great relevance to the church in Nigeria. The church faces the problem of how to retain the numerous people that come in to worship on a weekly basis through the front door but cleverly sneaks out through the back door without anybody taking note of them. The purpose of the study was to design, validate and establish a membership training programme for new attenders into a local Baptist church. The objective of the study was to develop a package for membership training that can help new attenders to become committed members of the church and to test the effectiveness of the package in making new attenders share the responsibility, serve the ministry, support the mission and protect the unity of the church. The effect of likely intervening variables on the use of the approach such as gender, age, marital status, employment status and baptismal status were also examined.

The study was conducted among the 19 organized Baptist churches of Ibadan North Baptist Association, Ibadan. A quasi experimental pretest post test control groups was designed for the study. There were 198 subjects who were randomly divided into experimental (101) and control (97) groups. Three instruments were used. One was the Integrative Approach Manual for developing new attenders. Its preliminary qualities were approved by the team of supervisors and its entire validity was tested in the study. The second

instrument was a questionnaire for church practitioners/professionals to assess the design, content and language of the integrative approach manual. The third instrument was a questionnaire for new attenders. This served as their pre and post tests to determine their level of participation and commitment to church life. The latter two instruments were validated by expert's judgments of their contents. The reliability was established in a pilot study conducted at Oke Ado Baptist Church, Ibadan. The stability of the test through test by test was found to be 0.88.

Two research questions and eight hypotheses were generated and tested. Findings showed that:

1. The manual possessed focus, it is biblically relevant and contemporarily applicable.
2. The manual was mostly approved to be structurally satisfying.
3. The language of the manual was rated to be highly simple and non-technical.
4. There was a significant difference in the ratings of the adequacy of planning and designing of the manual among different church administrators. The practising pastors rated the adequacy low.
5. The experimental group who were exposed to integrative approach performed significantly higher than the control group in the general level of participation and commitment to church life ( $t = 10.60 > p = .05$  level)
6. In terms of participation, giving, church growth, unity of the church and spiritual formation, the experimental group significantly performed better than the control group after the training session.

7. None of the intervening variables tested was found significant in terms of their influence on the experimental group who received the integrative approach.

It was therefore concluded that integrative approach has a great potentiality not only in retaining the new attenders, but also in developing their level of participation and commitment to church life. On this basis it was recommended that the Publications Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention or the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso or the practising pastors be encouraged to come up with a manual on membership training and that prospective members to the church should be carefully nurtured and encouraged to show signs of growth in their Christian lives before they are enlisted into the ministries of the church.

## Conclusion

The integrative approach manual has the potentiality of promoting membership training in a local church. It would also improve new attenders level of participation in church life, giving back to God the resources endowed the new attenders, increase their zeal for evangelism, unite the church in the bond of love and make each new attender seek to develop self spiritually. The integrative approach programme would equally be useful for male and female, employed and unemployed new attenders to church.

The integrative approach needs to be well planned and structured to enhance its usefulness for the purpose it is meant to serve. To make the manual useful and relevant for all participants, length of training is important.

The church administrators found the manual adequate in terms of planning and designing and the language could be understood. The practicing pastors found it very adequate possibly because it meets their demands on how to retain new members.

The integrative approach manual presents a pattern of its adequacy in the training of new attenders in the following order: most effective in giving, highly effective for church growth and fairly effective for unity in the church, participation and spiritual formation. The manual was found to be effective in developing new attenders to mature and committed members of the church.

The integrative training manual is effective in developing new attenders to mature members irrespective of age, gender, marital status and employment status. The integrative approach is equally effective in developing new attenders in spite of their previous baptismal experience.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of this study the following recommendations are made to boost membership retention in the local church.

1. That the Publications department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, Ibadan or the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso or the practicing pastors be encouraged to come up with a manual on membership training that will have the following:

- a. The church and her purposes.
- b. The meaning, value and benefits of being a member.
- c. The requirements for church membership.
- d. The responsibilities of members
- e. The church as an organized society and
- f. How each can get involved in the ministry of his church.

2. Prospective members to the church should be carefully nurtured and encouraged to show signs of growth in their Christians lives before they are enlisted in the ministries of the church

3. All churches must be encouraged to have training sessions for their new attenders.

4. The training should focus on knowledge, attitude and skills of church life. It should also focus on such areas as participation, giving, church growth, unity in the church and spiritual formation.

5. For the training to be meaningful, it is recommended that it should be considerably long enough possibly not less than one month intensive training.

6. The training of new attenders should be focused on all types of new attenders, that is first time visitors, persons gained as a result of the church's evangelistic efforts, members on transfer from another church and worshippers admitted into the church through baptism.

7. The integrative approach training manual should also be used for all categories of people such as the young, old, male or female.

8. In particular, the training session should also include those who have been baptized before, but who are new to their present church as the findings of the study showed that such members equally benefited from the programme.