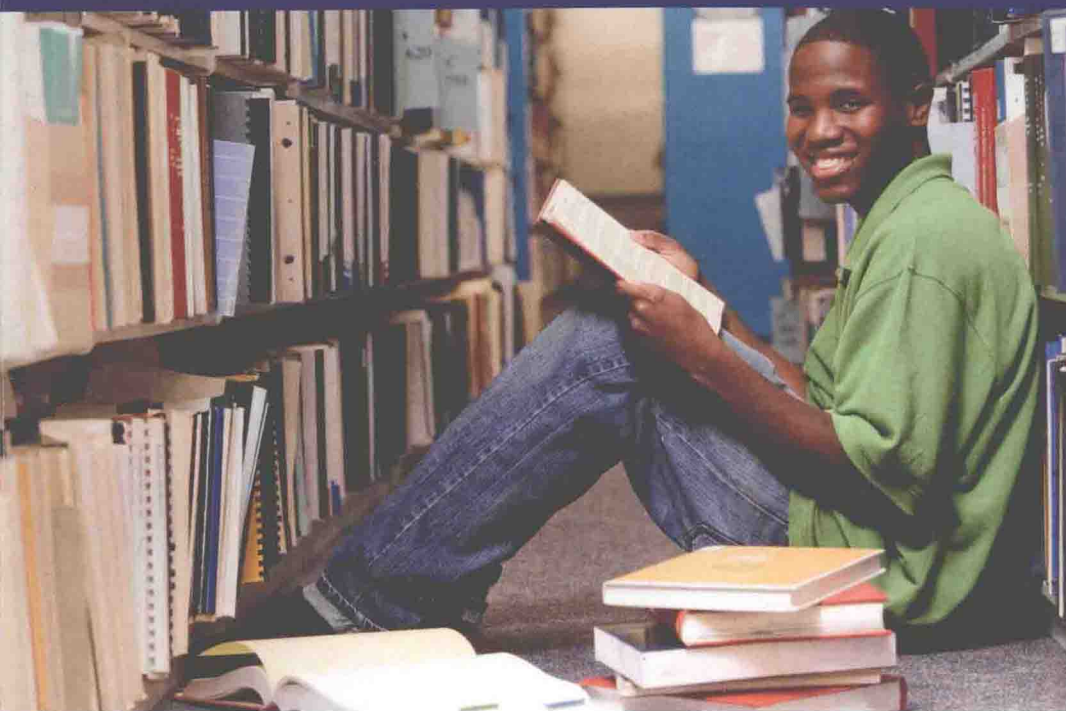




Richard Starcher

Africans in Pursuit of a Theological Doctorate

Doctoral Program Design in a Non-Western Context



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AFRICANS IN PURSUIT OF A THEOLOGICAL DOCTORATE:
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF
THEOLOGICAL DOCTORAL PROGRAM DESIGN
IN A NON-WESTERN CONTEXT

by

Richard L. Starcher

A DISSERTATION

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The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
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For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Nebraska, 2003

Adviser: Sheldon L. Stick

Within the milieu of higher theological education in Africa there is a great demand for highly educated nationals to staff a growing number of theological colleges and seminaries. Due largely to a dearth of other opportunities, Africans desiring theological doctorates have pursued higher studies in Europe and North America. The same pattern is common in other non-Western contexts. However, this practice is perceived as producing certain undesirable “side-effects” (e.g., brain-drain, reintegration difficulties, contextually inappropriate training).

Theological graduate schools in numerous non-Western settings (e.g., Latin America, Korea, India, and Singapore) are launching doctoral programs. Some schools appear to adopt, uncritically, Western models or, worse, simply facilitate transplanted Western programs.

The Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) has published plans to offer theological doctorates in the near future. How should this seminary proceed

when designing a doctoral program appropriate to its context? This dissertation proposes a theory, “Contextual Pragmatism,” for guiding design decisions. The theory proposes the ideal theological doctoral program for “black Africa” has practical value in and for the African context. It facilitates Africa-relevant research and provides relevant preparation for the “real” work awaiting African doctoral graduates. It is achievable because it is affordable, not overly long, and utilizes delivery systems that permit students to manage the realities of life in Africa. It recognizes the practical importance of international credibility by being duly accredited and by striving to conform to globally accepted standards of quality in terms of faculty resources, research capacity, and student excellence.

The theory is grounded in data collected from 33 stakeholders, identified as African theological doctoral students (past, present and prospective) and leaders of institutions of higher education likely to hire NEGST’s future doctoral graduates. Four “profiles” (student, graduate, program, and institutional) emerging from the data identify important aspects of theological doctoral program design in a non-Western context and enhance comprehension of Africans in pursuit of a theological doctorate.

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