

# A study to analyze the satisfaction of theological education curriculum in order to restructure the theological college curriculum

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## Abstract

**Research Objective** : The study aimed to investigate the satisfaction with the operation of theological university curricula from the perspective of learners experiencing the theological education curriculum in the field. The goal is to provide a basis for reflective introspection on the current theological education curriculum and for restructuring it to have influential impacts within the church and society.

**Content and Methodology** : A survey was conducted with 80 learners currently enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, master's, and doctoral programs at a theological university to analyze satisfaction with current theological education programs. To interpret the survey results progressively, in-depth interviews were conducted with a randomly selected group of 6 participants.

**Survey Results** : First, the satisfaction with the current theological education programs was found to be 60%, indicating a high level of satisfaction. Second, while 77.5% recognized the need for practical pastoral education, only 45.5% reported that practical pastoral education is currently provided in theological education programs, indicating a lower percentage than the perceived need. Third, 73.7% responded negatively regarding whether the current theological education programs can enhance pastoral competence for future society. Lastly, the areas identified as urgently requiring change for the restructuring of theological education programs were theological education content, methodology, and objectives, in that order.

**Conclusion and Recommendations** : In an era of great transformation, our society is changing rapidly. In the face of this wave of change, the theological education curriculum also requires adaptation to suit the new era. Traditional theological education courses have primarily focused on imparting theory-centered knowledge. However, theological education in the new era necessitates a curriculum that enhances the pastoral capacity of churches and pastors to dynamically navigate through this era of significant transition. To achieve this, it is imperative to restructure the curriculum to one that is more closely related to the pastoral field. This involves offering a variety of constructivist-based, learner-centered teaching and learning methods within a theory-centered curriculum and methodology. Additionally, it entails establishing a practice-oriented theological school that can actively address the evolving pastoral landscape in this era of great transition. Restructuring of the process is essential to meet these goals.

## Key Words

Theological education curriculum, future society, satisfaction, pastoral practice, pastoral competence

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This study was conducted using data collected through the 2023 academic project of the Korea Association of Christian Studies.

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## 신학교육과정 재구조화를 위한 신학대학 교육과정 운영 만족도 분석 연구\*

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### 논문 요약

**연구 목적 :** 본 연구는 신학교육과정 재구조화를 위해 현장에서 신학교육과정을 경험하고 있는 학습자의 입장에서 신학대학 교육과정 운영 만족도를 조사했다. 이를 통해 현재 신학교육과정의 반성적 성찰과 교회와 사회 속에 영향력 있는 신학교육과정 재구조화의 기초를 제공하고자 한다.

**연구 내용 및 방법 :** 현재 신학대학의 학부와 신학대학원, 신학석사, 신학박사 과정에 재학 중인 학습자 80명을 대상으로 현재 신학교육과정 만족도 분석을 위해서 설문조사를 실시했다. 설문조사 결과를 발전적으로 해석하기 위해 설문 참여자 중 무작위로 6인을 선정하여 심층면담을 실시했다. 설문결과 첫째, 현재 신학교육과정 만족도는 60%로 높은 것으로 나타났고, 둘째, 목회 실천적 교육의 필요성 인식은 77.5%인데 반해 현재 신학교육과정에서 목회 실천적 교육이 이뤄지고 있다고 답한 비율은 45.5%로 필요성을 인식한 비율에 비해 낮은 것으로 나타났다. 셋째, 현재 신학교육과정이 미래 사회를 위한 목회역량을 키울 수 있을지에 대해서는 73.7%가 부정적인 응답을 했다. 마지막으로 신학교육과정 재구조화를 위해 시급하게 변화되어야 할 것에는 신학교육내용, 신학교육방법, 신학교육목적 순으로 조사됐다.

**결론 및 제언 :** 대전환의 시대 속에 우리 사회는 빠르게 변하고 있다. 변화의 물결 앞에 신학교육 과정도 새로운 시대에 걸맞는 변화가 필요하다. 지금까지의 신학교육과정은 이론 중심의 지식 전달에 초점을 맞춰 왔다. 그러나 새로운 시대의 신학교육은 대전환 시대 속에서 교회와 목회자가 역동적으로 살아낼 수 있는 목회 역량을 향상시킬 수 있는 신학교육과정이 필요하다. 이를 위해 목회 현장과 맥락성을 가질 수 있는 신학교육과정으로 재구조화되어야 할 것이다. 이를 위해 이론 중심의 교육과정과 방법론에서 다양한 목회 문제적 상황에 적극적으로 대응할 수 있는 구성주의 기반의 학습자 중심의 다양한 교수학습방법과 대전환 시대 속에 변화되는 목회 현장에 적극적으로 적용될 수 있는 실천중심적 신학교육과정의 재구조화가 필요하다.

### 〈 주제어 〉

신학교육과정, 미래사회, 만족도, 목회 실천, 목회 역량

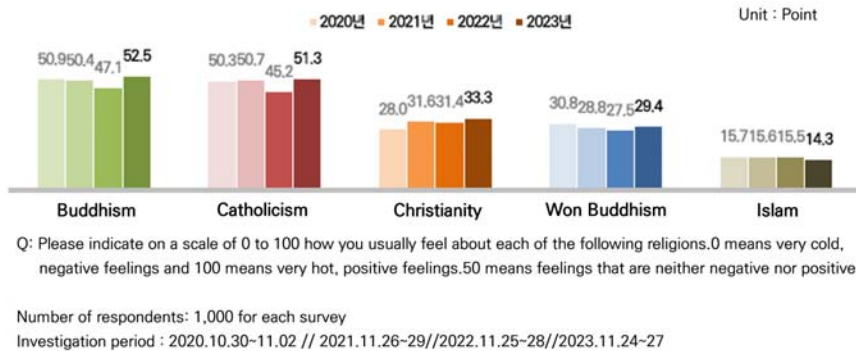
□ 2024년 3월 7일 접수, 2024년 3월 28일 심사완료, 2024년 3월 29일 게재확정

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## I. Introduction

After the COVID-19 pandemic, we are living in an era of great transformation. The era of great transformation is characterized by the advent of the artificial intelligence era, which began with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, leading to the restructuring of all industrial structures in society, including the economy, industry, and education. The era of great transformation had already begun with the onset of restructuring in industries and societal changes through the foundational technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, namely ICBM (Internet of Things, Cloud Computing, Big Data, Mobile). The pandemic further accelerated the pace of change. Moreover, the significant advancement in artificial intelligence technology is transforming the existing face-to-face society into a hyper-connected network society (Kim, 2023; Lee, 2021).



[Figure 1] Favorability Ratings of Major Religions

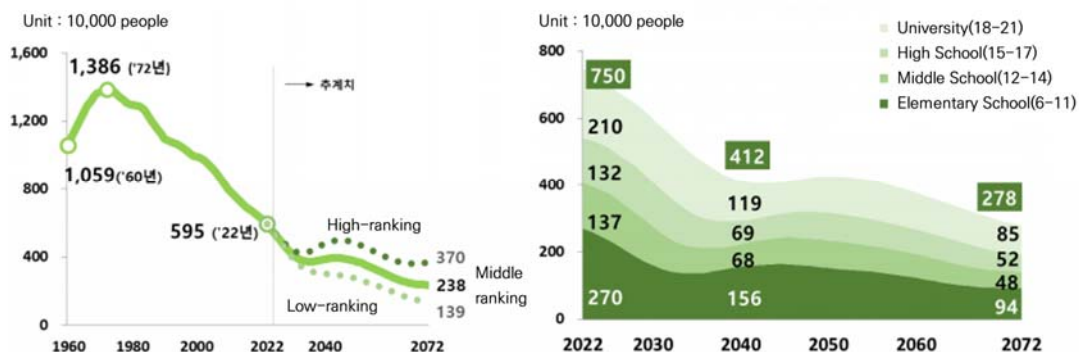
Source: Korea Research (2023). Public Opinion Survey: 2023 Survey on Religious Perception. Korea Research Weekly Report, 259-3, p. 4.

The wave of change is also significantly impacting churches without exception. Particularly, according to a survey conducted in 2020 during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the favorability rating of Christianity was 28 points, lower than Buddhism at 50.9 points, Catholicism at 50.3 points, and Won Buddhism at 30.8 points. 54% of respondents evaluated Christianity as “very negative” (Korea Research, 2020). Fortunately, after the recent passage of the COVID-19 pandemic, the favorability ratings for Buddhism increased to 52.5 points, Catholicism to

51.3 points, Won Buddhism to 29.4 points, and Christianity to 33.3 points. However, Christianity is still evaluated as “very negative” by 49% of respondents (Korea Research, 2023).

This widespread negative perception of Christianity is manifesting as a crisis for churches. The slowdown in church growth and the negative spread of perceptions about pastors are also adversely affecting students who wish to major in theology.

The recent decline in the school-age population has posed a crisis for the education sector as a whole. Local universities experiencing a decrease in enrollments must prepare for possible closures. According to Statistics Korea’s data from 2023, the population of children (aged 0-14) is projected to decrease to 5.95 million (11.5%) in 2022, 3.88 million (7.7%) in 2040, and 2.38 million (6.6%) in 2072. Additionally, the school-age population (aged 6-21) is expected to decrease from 7.5 million in 2022 to 3.37 million by 2040, while the youth population (aged 19-34) is forecasted to decrease from 10.61 million in 2022 to 4.5 million by 2072, reaching only 42.5% of the 2022 level (Statistics Korea, 2023). The decline in the school-age population is likely to affect not only the natural decrease in the Christian population but also the reduction in the number of prospective theology students.



[Figure 2] Age Structure of Children (Aged 0-14) and School-Age Population

Source: Statistics Korea (2023). Population Projection: 2022-2072, p. 14.

As evidenced by data from the Korea Educational Development Institute’s Education Statistics Service, the number of students entering university programs

in the field of religious studies decreased by 44.4%, from 3,517 in 2013 to 1,953 in 2023, over a period of ten years. Additionally, the number of students entering master's programs in the field of religious studies decreased by 19.3%, from 5,762 in 2013 to 4,647 in 2023 (Table 1). While these statistics represent the total of religious studies programs, including Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism, it is worth noting that Christianity, particularly theology, likely constitutes a significant portion of these programs. Therefore, even though these figures may not exclusively represent statistics for Christian studies, considering that Christianity tends to have the largest enrollment numbers within religious studies programs, it can be inferred that the trend applies to Christian studies as well.

〈Table 1〉 Trend of Entrants in Religious Studies Programs

Sort	Undergraduate			Master's		
	2013	2018	2023	2013	2018	2023
admission	3,517	2,825	1,953	5,762	5,455	4,647
enrollment	18,924	15,726	10,786	17,665	16,525	13,925

In addition, when looking at the statistics of admissions for major theology graduate schools in Korea, the acceptance rate has sharply declined. With only a few theology graduate schools barely avoiding under-enrollment, most are experiencing an exacerbation of the phenomenon of under-enrollment (Table 2).

〈Table 2〉 Trend of Applicants and Admissions in Major Theology Graduate Schools

Sort	2021			2022			2023		
	Applicants	Admissions	Freshman Enrollment Rate	Applicants	Admissions	Freshman Enrollment Rate	Applicants	Admissions	Freshman Enrollment Rate
Chongshin	557	405	100	448	395	98	367	318	78.6
Presbyterian	591	272	100	450	272	100	362	268	100
Koshin	191	145	105.2	165	121	76	157	122	78.6
Baeksek	351	297	98.7	345	295	97	383	303	100
Methodist	124	109	74.7	128	109	74.7	114	101	69.2
Mokwon	73	66	53.3	71	64	52.5	82	55	45.8

Seoul Theological	154	127	78.1	161	136	84.4	175	140	103
Baptist	183	162	76.2	221	192	92.2	198	181	87.8

Source : University Informant(<https://www.academyinfo.go.kr>)

The decline in favorability towards Christianity (churches) and the decrease in the school-age population have led to a decrease in student participation in theological education, causing a crisis for both Christianity and theological education. This resembles a situation where Christianity (churches) and theological education are trapped in a vicious cycle. As an alternative to this phenomenon, viewing Christianity and theological education in a complementary relationship, Oh (2015) argues that while general universities' competitiveness is determined by societal popularity and job preferences, theological colleges are determined by faith experiences and dedicated decisions in church settings. To secure the competitiveness of theological colleges, it is advocated to strengthen faith education in church settings. In other words, to overcome the crisis facing Christianity and theological education and break out of the vicious cycle, it is imperative for churches to regain positive influence in society and for theological education to undergo necessary changes. However, existing theological education programs are not well-equipped to adapt to the upcoming future society (Kim, 2023; Kim, 2023; Koh, 2021; Lee, 2021; Shin, 2021). Therefore, restructuring the theological education curriculum is an urgent task to break the vicious cycle and establish a virtuous one.

In this regard, this study surveyed the satisfaction of learners experiencing theological education programs in the field to explore the restructuring of theological education curricula. Through this, we aim to provide a foundation for reflective contemplation on the current theological education curriculum and for restructuring influential theological education curricula within churches and society.

## II. Research Method

### 1. Subject of research

This study surveyed 80 learners who have experienced theological education programs to analyze their demands. Additionally, considering pastoral experience among the survey participants, six individuals with more than one year of ministry experience were randomly selected for semi-structured in-depth interviews.

〈Table 3〉 Classification of Survey Participants

Category	Undergraduate Theology Major	Graduate School of Theology	Master's Program in Theology	Doctoral Program in Theology
Personnel	23	51	3	3

〈Table 4〉 Personal Information of In-depth Interview Participants

Category	Program	Age	Ministry Experience	Gender
A	Undergraduate	20s	2 years	Male
B	Undergraduate	20s	2 years	Male
C	Graduate School of Theology	30s	1 year	Male
D	Graduate School of Theology	20s	2 years	Male
E	Graduate School of Theology	20s	2 years	Male
F	Graduate School of Theology	30s	2 years	Male

## 2. Research tools

The survey on satisfaction with the operation of the theological education curriculum and demands for restructuring the theological education curriculum was conducted by dividing it into areas of background, perception, and demands. Firstly, two multiple-choice items were used to investigate perception, and two items were used to assess the importance of pastoral practice in the area of perception regarding the demand for improvement in the theological education curriculum. Additionally, two items were included to inquire whether the current theological education curriculum is appropriate for adapting to future society. Secondly, a single item with multiple responses was constructed to identify the most urgently needed improvement in the theological education curriculum. The specific items are as follows:

〈Table 5〉 Survey Items for Demand Assessment

Area	Tools
Background	1. Where are you currently enrolled? ① Undergraduate Theology Major ② Graduate School of Theology ③ Master's Program in Theology ④ Doctoral Program in Theology  2. Please select your gender. ① Male ② Female  3. Please select your age. ① Teens ② 20s ③ 30s ④ 40s ⑤ 50s ⑥ 60s and above  4. How many years have you been involved in ministry in the field?
Perception	5. Are you overall satisfied with the theological education curriculum you are currently enrolled in? ① Strongly disagree ② Disagree ③ Neutral ④ Agree ⑤ Strongly agree  6. Do you think the content of the theological education you are currently enrolled in can be useful for the ministry of the church and the ministry you are planning for the future? ① Strongly disagree ② Disagree ③ Neutral ④ Agree ⑤ Strongly agree
Demand	7. Do you think it is most important to deeply study practical areas (homiletics, education, counseling, etc.) to acquire pastoral expertise? ① Strongly disagree ② Disagree ③ Neutral ④ Agree ⑤ Strongly agree  8. Do you think you can deeply study practical areas (homiletics, education, counseling, etc.) in the current theological education curriculum? ① Strongly disagree ② Disagree ③ Neutral ④ Agree ⑤ Strongly agree  9. Do you think it is most important to learn practical and specific ways of interpreting societal changes (4th industrial revolution, artificial intelligence, etc.) and biblical responses for acquiring pastoral expertise? ① Strongly disagree ② Disagree ③ Neutral ④ Agree ⑤ Strongly agree  10. Do you think you can learn practical and specific ways of interpreting societal changes (4th industrial revolution, artificial intelligence, etc.) and biblical responses in the current theological education curriculum? ① Strongly disagree ② Disagree ③ Neutral ④ Agree ⑤ Strongly agree  11. What do you think is the most urgent improvement needed in the current theological education? (Please select the top two priorities.



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	Select "No improvement needed" if you think there's nothing to improve. Do not select other options when selecting.) ① Content of theological education (curriculum) ② Purpose and objectives of theological education ③ Methods of theological education (moving away from lecture-centric) ④ Theological education system (undergraduate-graduate-professional degrees) ⑤ No improvement needed ⑥ Other
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### 3. Data Analysis

The data collected for the survey on satisfaction with the operation of the theological education curriculum and demands for restructuring were analyzed using the following methods:

Firstly, a cross-analysis was conducted using the current program enrolled in as a variable to analyze perceptions of the current theological education curriculum in terms of satisfaction and usefulness. Secondly, for the analysis of the importance perception of pastoral practice areas, a cross-analysis was performed using the current program enrolled in as a variable. Thirdly, a multi-item analysis was conducted to determine whether the current theological education curriculum can cultivate the capability to successfully minister in future society and identify areas needing urgent improvement, using the current program enrolled in as a variable. Lastly, satisfaction with the theological education curriculum and demands for restructuring were analyzed through semi-structured interviews with six randomly selected participants. The analysis results underwent semantic interpretation by two educational technology majors and one Christian education major for validation.

## III. Results and Interpretation

### 1. Perception of Satisfaction and Usefulness of the Theological Education Curriculum

A survey was conducted among learners enrolled in the theological education curriculum to assess their satisfaction with the current program they are studying. Among the 23 undergraduate students surveyed, 6 (26.1%) responded positively, while 5 (21.7%) showed negative reactions. And, 12 learners (52.2%) expressed a neutral position. When surveyed among 51 graduate students, 39 (76.5%) responded positively. Due to the small sample sizes of the master's and doctoral programs, they were utilized for comprehensive analysis rather than individual interpretation. It can be concluded that learners who are satisfied with the current theological education curriculum account for 48 out of the total 80 survey participants (60%), indicating an overall high level of satisfaction.

〈Table 6〉 Satisfaction with the Curriculum

Program Level		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Undergraduate	Frequency	1	4	12	2	4	23
	%	4.3%	17.4%	52.2%	8.7%	17.4%	100.0%
Graduate School	Frequency	1	3	8	24	15	51
	%	2.0%	5.9%	15.7%	47.1%	29.4%	100.0%
Theological Master's	Frequency	0	1	0	2	0	3
	%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	100.0%
Theological Doctoral	Frequency	0	2	0	0	1	3
	%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	2	10	20	28	20	80
	%	2.5%	12.5%	25.0%	35.0%	25.0%	100.0%

Furthermore, in the survey regarding the usefulness of the current theological education curriculum for ministry, it was found that among 14 undergraduate students (60.8%) and 37 graduate students (72.6%), there is a high level of perceived usefulness. When considering all programs collectively, out of the total of 80 participants, 53 (67.6%) responded positively. However, it cannot be overlooked that there are 26 learners (32.6%) who hold negative (9 individuals, 11.3%) or neutral (17 individuals, 21.3%) opinions.

〈Table 7〉 Perception of Curriculum Usefulness

Program Level		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Undergraduate	Frequency	1	3	5	9	5	23
	%	4.3%	13.0%	21.7%	39.1%	21.7%	100.0%
Graduate School	Frequency	1	2	11	23	14	51
	%	2.0%	3.9%	21.6%	45.1%	27.5%	100.0%
Theological Master's	Frequency	0	1	0	1	1	3
	%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	100.0%
Theological Doctoral	Frequency	0	1	1	0	1	3
	%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	2	7	17	33	21	80
	%	2.5%	8.8%	21.3%	41.3%	26.3%	100.0%

In-depth interviews conducted with current students also revealed high satisfaction and perceived usefulness of the current theological education curriculum.

“I believe I am sufficiently educated theologically. Therefore, I think I am learning enough methods to research on my own after graduating from the theological graduate school.” (Student C, Interview)

“I appreciate being able to learn academic subjects such as methods of interpreting and studying the Bible, methods of sermon preparation, etc., which are not taught in the church. Also, it's great that professors teach us with students in mind.” (Student D, Interview)

“I feel like the pieces I partially knew are coming together to form a complete picture. Most importantly, I can reaffirm my faith, so I feel like I'm spending the best time of my life.” (Student E, Interview)

It was evident that there is confidence among students that the current theological education curriculum adequately progresses theological education and that it will be useful in ministry settings after graduation. Furthermore, there were positive responses regarding the opportunity to redefine theological knowledge holistically. However, some students also expressed negative opinions regarding

the current theological education curriculum.

“In ministry, it’s important to understand and skillfully quote the Word of God, but I feel a slight disconnect between the theological knowledge gained and the practical needs of the ministry.” (Student A, Interview)

“While we are learning about the details of theology, we aren’t deeply discussing how to apply it in ministry settings. The school classes are thorough, but it seems they don’t translate well into practical application in ministry. It’s a master’s program in ministry, so theology is necessary, but it would be better if it were centered around ministry.” (Student F, Interview)

The negative or neutral opinions about the current theological education curriculum were attributed to the perceived disparity between the curriculum and the practical needs of ministry settings. While the classes are thorough and satisfying, there seems to be difficulty applying them practically in ministry settings.

## **2. Perception of the Importance of Practical Ministry Areas and Provision of Curriculum**

A survey was conducted among current students to assess their perception of the importance of practical ministry areas and whether they are adequately educated in these areas in the current theological education curriculum. Firstly, regarding the importance of practical ministry areas, undergraduate students indicated the importance and necessity of education in practical ministry areas within the theological education curriculum, with 20 students (86.9%) emphasizing its importance. Among graduate students, 37 (72.5%) also acknowledged its importance and necessity. Overall, out of 80 respondents, 62 (77.5%) recognized the importance of education in practical ministry areas within the theological education curriculum.

〈Table 8〉 Perception of the Importance of Practical Ministry Areas

Program Level		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Undergraduate	Frequency	0	1	2	9	11	23
	%	0.0%	4.3%	8.7%	39.1%	47.8%	100.0%
Graduate School	Frequency	1	2	11	22	15	51
	%	2.0%	3.9%	21.6%	43.1%	29.4%	100.0%
Theological Master's	Frequency	0	1	0	0	2	3
	%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	100.0%
Theological Doctoral	Frequency	0	0	0	1	2	3
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	4	13	32	30	80
	%	1.3%	5.0%	16.3%	40.0%	37.5%	100.0%

However, when it comes to whether the current theological education curriculum allows for in-depth learning in practical ministry areas such as preaching, education, counseling, etc., 38 out of 80 respondents (45.5%) provided positive responses, while 10 (12.6%) gave negative responses. There were 32 respondents (40%) who held a neutral stance. Considering that 62 respondents (77.5%) previously acknowledged the need for education in practical ministry areas, it can be concluded that while learners recognize the importance of practical ministry areas, they feel that the current theological education curriculum does not adequately meet this need.

〈Table 9〉 Perception of Education in Practical Ministry Areas within the Theological Education Curriculum

Program Level		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Undergraduate	Frequency	0	4	9	5	5	23
	%	0.0%	17.4%	39.1%	21.7%	21.7%	100.0%
Graduate School	Frequency	1	4	21	15	10	51
	%	2.0%	7.8%	41.2%	29.4%	19.6%	100.0%

Program Level		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Theological Master's	Frequency	0	1	0	0	2	3
	%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	100.0%
Theological Doctoral	Frequency	0	0	2	0	1	3
	%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	1	9	32	20	18	80
	%	1.3%	11.3%	40.0%	25.0%	22.5%	100.0%

During in-depth interviews conducted with current students, it was found that although they recognize the importance of practical ministry areas, they feel that the current theological education curriculum falls short in meeting their needs.

“Many of the things I learned in school aren’t really applied in the church setting. Aside from preaching, I don’t feel like I’m getting much help from my classes. I find more support from local pastors and attending various seminars.” (Student D, Interview)

“The curriculum is too theoretical and focuses on elder ministry, making it difficult to immediately apply in real-life situations. I wish we could learn various ministry application methods, especially for the next generation.” (Student F, Interview)

“As a pastor, it’s important to cultivate qualities and capabilities, but with the current curriculum, I’m afraid I’ll just stay stuck in knowledge.” (Student B, Interview)

One common cause identified for this phenomenon is the theoretical emphasis in the theological education curriculum. While the current curriculum is beneficial for in-depth theological study, it presents challenges in transitioning to and applying knowledge in ministry settings.

### 3. Survey Results on Acquiring Competencies for Successful Adaptation to Future Society and Improvement of Theological Education Curriculum

**a. Opinion on Acquiring Competencies for Successful Adaptation to Future Society  
in Current Theological Education Curriculum**

We conducted a survey to gauge perceptions regarding whether the current theological education curriculum adequately prepares students for successful pastoral responses to future societal changes. To this end, we initially investigated whether practical and concrete learning about theological interpretation and biblical responses to societal changes is deemed important for attaining pastoral professionalism. Among undergraduate students, 16 out of 23 (69.5%) expressed the opinion that learning about responses to societal changes in a practical and concrete manner is important. Similarly, among graduate students, 37 out of 51 (72.6%) shared this sentiment. Overall, 57 out of 80 respondents (71.3%) indicated that learning practical and concrete responses to societal changes is essential for pastoral professionalism in the face of future societal transformations.

〈Table 10〉 Perception of the Importance of Pastoral Competencies for Future Society

Program Level		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Undergraduate	Frequency	0	1	6	9	7	23
	%	0.0%	4.3%	26.1%	39.1%	30.4%	100.0%
Graduate School	Frequency	0	7	7	21	16	51
	%	0.0%	13.7%	13.7%	41.2%	31.4%	100.0%
Theological Master's	Frequency	0	0	2	0	1	3
	%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
Theological Doctoral	Frequency	0	0	0	2	1	3
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	0	8	15	32	25	80
	%	0.0%	10.0%	18.8%	40.0%	31.3%	100.0%

However, contrary to the previous findings, in the perception survey of whether the current theological education curriculum is sufficient to learn pastoral competencies for future society, 10 undergraduate students (43.4%) and 21 graduate students (41.2%) responded negatively. Particularly, if we include the 26 learners (32.5%) expressing a neutral stance as part of the negative opinions, then com-

prehensively, out of 80 respondents, 59 (73.7%) indicated that the current theological education curriculum is inadequate for educating pastoral competencies to prepare for future society.

〈Table 11〉 Perception of the Current Theological Education Curriculum's Adequacy for Learning Pastoral Competencies for Future Society

Program Level		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
Undergraduate	Frequency	1	9	8	4	1	23
	%	4.3%	39.1%	34.8%	17.4%	4.3%	100.0%
Graduate School	Frequency	8	13	15	10	5	51
	%	15.7%	25.5%	29.4%	19.6%	9.8%	100.0%
Theological Master's	Frequency	0	0	3	0	0	3
	%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Theological Doctoral	Frequency	1	1	0	1	0	3
	%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Total	Frequency	10	23	26	15	6	80
	%	12.5%	28.7%	32.5%	18.8%	7.5%	100.0%

In-depth interviews conducted with current students revealed a consensus similar to the survey results, indicating a recognition of the necessity for pastoral competencies in the context of future society, yet a perceived inadequacy in the current theological education curriculum to adequately address their needs.

“When observing the pastoral field, theology learned in school felt abstract. Even though we learned, it wasn't clear what we were learning. In theology major courses, I wish there were times to contemplate how we can apply what we learn in theology to the future society, or at least think about the mindset that can integrate with all disciplines as our seniors and professors mentioned. But I didn't learn about the mindset to integrate while studying.” (Student A, Interview)

“Most of what we learn in theology schools is focused on the Bible or history, so there seems to be a lack in addressing social trends. Since the focus is on the Bible, it might be helpful for preachers or pastors, but when thinking about application in society, it seems a bit lacking.” (Student D, Interview)



“There is a lack of realism, and the current classes are too academic and theoretical. Given that society is changing rapidly, discussions on concrete measures that can be practiced in real life need to be emphasized.” (Student F, Interview)

“In a nutshell, what I’ve learned in theological education so far doesn’t seem helpful. When it comes to future society, skills like technology will be needed, but it seems we haven’t learned how to incorporate and utilize them.” (Student B, Interview)

Students recognize that the pastoral field is evolving within the changing landscape of future society. They also acknowledge the need to cultivate pastoral competencies suitable for this changing context. However, the current theological education curriculum primarily emphasizes theoretical learning, which does not actively integrate the evolving pastoral landscape. Therefore, participants in the in-depth interviews expressed a demand for a revised theological education curriculum that can be more effectively applied to the changing pastoral environment.

## **B. Survey Results on Improvements Needed in the Current Theological Education Curriculum**

The survey investigated the most urgently needed improvements in the current theological education curriculum. Among learners of theological education, 40 individuals (33.1%) identified the improvement of theological education content as the most pressing issue. Following that, 36 individuals (29.8%) indicated the need for improvement in the methods of theological education. Thirdly, 25 individuals (20.7%) expressed the necessity for enhancing the purpose and objectives of theological education. Other opinions highlighted the importance of courses that can be applied in pastoral settings. These additional responses align closely with the need for changes in the content of theological education. Therefore, considering these perspectives, it can be inferred that 44 individuals (36.4%) viewed improvements in the content of theological education as the most urgently needed aspect.

〈Table 12〉 Cross-Analysis Results of Response Samples for Improving  
the Theological Education Curriculum

Program Level		Content	Purpose & Objectives	Methods	System	Nothing	Others	Total
Undergraduate	Frequency	15	7	15	3	0	1	41
	%	36.6	17.1	36.6	7.3	0	2.4	
Graduate School	Frequency	22	17	19	5	6	3	72
	%	30.6	23.6	26.4	6.9	8.3	4.2	
Theological Master's	Frequency	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
	%	66.7	0.0	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	100
Theological Doctoral	Frequency	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
	%	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	100
Total	Frequency	40	25	36	9	7	4	121
	%	33.1	20.7	29.8	7.4	5.8	3.3	100

In-depth interviews with current students revealed specific areas in theological education that urgently need improvement, consistent with the earlier survey results.

“Education methods feel too rigid and theory-centered, creating a divide between theological academia and practical ministry. While theoretical classes are important, I wish there were more profound spiritual exchanges with professors regarding ministry contexts.” (Student E, interview)

“While having many Bible classes is great, I feel there’s a lack of education focused on practical ministry needs. I don’t want the school to be just about theory; I want to learn in ways that can directly impact souls in ministry… Some professors teach deeply, but sometimes their discussions are too disconnected from the realities of ministry.” (Student F, interview)

“While we delve deeply into theological specifics, we don’t often explore how to apply them effectively in ministry contexts. The classes are deep, but they don’t always translate well into practical ministry. Even though it’s a master’s program in ministry, it seems to be operated more as a theological education program, and there’s a need for a clearer delineation of the purpose of theological education.” (Student F, interview)

Students undergoing theological education expressed the need for education that goes beyond theory and can be directly applied in ministry settings. They also expressed a desire for deeper teachings and interactions with professors regarding ministry contexts. Additionally, limitations were observed due to the large number of students each professor has to handle and the lack of practical ministry experience among some instructors. Furthermore, it was noted that despite being a graduate program for ministry training, the curriculum operates more as a theological education program, highlighting the necessity for a clearer understanding of the purpose of theological education.

## V. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study conducted an analysis of satisfaction with the operation of theological college curricula for the purpose of restructuring theological education. It targeted current students enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, master's, and doctoral programs at theological colleges. To analyze satisfaction with the operation, a survey was first conducted. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with randomly selected six participants to further interpret the survey results. A synthesis of the survey and interview results is as follows.

Firstly, it was found that students in theological education programs generally have high satisfaction and perceive the current curriculum as highly beneficial. They particularly expressed satisfaction with the depth of theological education and the opportunity to acquire new knowledge. However, they expressed dissatisfaction with the gap between academia and practical ministry.

Secondly, regarding the perception of the importance of practical ministry and the provision of education in this area, students showed a heightened awareness of the importance of practical ministry. While 45.5% stated that they are well-educated in practical ministry in the current curriculum, considering the 77.5% who positively responded to the need for education in the practical ministry area, it was revealed that students recognize the importance of practical ministry but find that the current curriculum does not adequately provide for it. This

is attributed to the curriculum's emphasis on theoretical theology, making it difficult for students to apply their learning to practical ministry.

Thirdly, regarding the acquisition of skills for successful adaptation to future society and demands for improving theological education curricula, students empathized with the need to acquire skills for successful adaptation to future society but indicated that they cannot acquire relevant skills within the current curriculum. When asked about urgent improvements needed in theological education, students prioritized improvements to the content of theological education, followed by the methods and the objectives of theological education.

In the era of great transition, variously termed as the era of digital transformation, the era of "With Corona," or the Fourth Industrial Revolution era, society is rapidly advancing. Students in theological education are seeking changes that align with the rapidly changing societal trends. This is consistent with the research findings presented by Pastor Kwon Yong-seop and Dr. Lee Eun-chul at the Fall 2023 The Korea Christian Religious Education Association conference. Their research showed that current pastors also recognize the need for changes in theological education to adapt to the changing ministry landscape (Kwon & Lee, 2023).

Moreover, there is a demand for changes in theological education methods. Students consistently request theological education that can be applied in practical ministry contexts. Ministry contexts are situational and dynamic, yet current theological education methods primarily focus on knowledge transmission through lecture-based teaching. Therefore, innovative teaching methods, including constructivist teaching-learning methods, should be introduced into theological education to cultivate practical ministry competencies that are relevant to ministry contexts.

Furthermore, the next most common demand is for improvement in the objectives and goals of theological education. Survey participants, who are students enrolled in theological education programs with the aim of becoming pastors, perceive the current objectives of theological education as focused more on training theologians rather than pastors. This issue has been consistently raised through in-depth interviews and should be given significant consideration in the

restructuring of theological education curricula.

In the era of great transition, society is rapidly changing. In the face of these changes, theological education curricula must also evolve to suit the new era. Traditional theological education has primarily focused on theory-centered knowledge transmission. However, this approach alone is no longer sufficient. Churches and pastors are surviving in a changing era through dynamic movements. Therefore, theological education curricula that enhance pastoral competencies adaptable to the changing ministry landscape are needed. New theological education curricula should emphasize contextual relevance. In other words, they should be centered around practical ministry competencies that enable pastors to flexibly address various situations and challenges. Continuous efforts and innovation are required to achieve this goal.

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