

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AS A CATALYST FOR ETHICAL GOVERNANCE IN BAPTIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT: This article examined entrepreneurship education as a catalyst for ethical governance within the Baptist Church. In recent decades, Churches faced increasing scrutiny regarding financial accountability, leadership transparency, resource management, and moral credibility, while theological training remained central to ministerial formation with limited attention given to entrepreneurial competencies in ecclesiastical administration. The study argued that entrepreneurship education, when appropriately contextualised within Christian theological foundations, contributed significantly to ethical governance by promoting stewardship, accountability, innovation, sustainability, and responsible leadership. It adopted a qualitative and analytical methodology, drawing on recent scholarship in entrepreneurship studies, leadership ethics, and Church administration, and engaged stewardship theory and ethical leadership frameworks to demonstrate how entrepreneurial skills such as strategic planning, opportunity recognition, financial literacy, risk assessment, and performance evaluation enhanced

transparency and institutional integrity within Baptist congregations. Rather than commercialising the Church, entrepreneurship education was interpreted as the cultivation of disciplined, mission-driven, and ethically grounded leadership practices. The findings indicated that entrepreneurship education strengthened governance structures by improving financial systems, clarifying accountability mechanisms, fostering participatory decision-making, and encouraging sustainable ministry initiatives, particularly within Baptist congregational polity that emphasised shared governance and autonomy. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education, when integrated with biblical ethics and pastoral theology, served as a practical instrument for fostering ethical governance and institutional sustainability in the Baptist Church.

Keywords: *Baptist Polity, Entrepreneurship, Ethical Governance, Stewardship.*

Introduction

The moral credibility of the Church has, in recent years, attracted renewed scholarly and public attention. Questions surrounding financial transparency, leadership accountability, mismanagement of resources, and ethical lapses among religious leaders have compelled theologians and administrators alike to reconsider the structures that sustain ecclesial governance. Within Baptist congregations, where autonomy and congregational participation are foundational principles, the responsibility for ethical administration rests not only upon ordained ministers but upon the entire leadership structure. Ethical governance therefore cannot be reduced to doctrinal orthodoxy alone; it requires deliberate cultivation of administrative competence, transparency, and responsible stewardship.

Traditionally, ministerial formation within Baptist contexts has prioritised biblical exegesis, pastoral theology, homiletics, and spiritual formation. While these remain indispensable, contemporary church environments operate within increasingly complex socio-economic frameworks that demand additional competencies. Churches manage property, oversee financial systems, employ staff, coordinate community projects, and interact with regulatory authorities. In such settings, inadequate administrative capacity may unintentionally compromise ethical standards. Ethical failure is not always rooted in moral deficiency alone; it may also arise from structural weaknesses, poor financial literacy, and the absence of strategic oversight.

Entrepreneurship education, though historically associated with commercial enterprise, has expanded conceptually to encompass the development of innovation, strategic thinking, opportunity recognition, and sustainable resource management across diverse organisational contexts. Modern scholarship has emphasised that entrepreneurship is fundamentally about value creation and responsible stewardship of resources within changing environments. When interpreted within a Christian theological framework, these competencies resonate with biblical notions of stewardship, accountability, and wise management. Rather than introducing commercial ideology into the Church, entrepreneurship education may strengthen the ethical infrastructure necessary for responsible ministry administration.

The Baptist tradition provides a distinctive context for examining this relationship. Rooted in congregational polity, Baptist ecclesiology affirms the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of all believers. Decision-making authority often resides within congregational assemblies, church councils, and finance committees rather than in hierarchical episcopal systems. This participatory structure, while theologically rich, demands informed and ethically grounded leadership practices to ensure transparency and accountability. Without adequate organisational competence, congregational autonomy may become vulnerable to mismanagement or concentration of influence in informal power structures.

Ethical governance within the Baptist Church must therefore be understood as both theological and organisational. It involves fidelity to Scripture and Christian moral teaching, but it equally requires systems that promote clarity in financial reporting, participatory budgeting, strategic planning, and measurable accountability. Scholars in faith-based organisational studies have observed that sustainable ministry increasingly depends upon leaders who can integrate spiritual vision with administrative competence. The absence of such integration often results in mission drift, financial instability, or reputational harm.

This work examined entrepreneurship education as a catalyst for strengthening ethical governance within the Baptist Church. It argued that entrepreneurial competencies, when shaped by biblical ethics and ecclesial values, enhanced institutional integrity by fostering transparency, participatory leadership, innovation in ministry delivery, and sustainable

stewardship of resources. By situating entrepreneurship education within Baptist theological identity rather than in opposition to it, the study demonstrated that ethical governance is reinforced when spiritual formation is complemented by disciplined organisational skill.

Conceptual Foundations of Entrepreneurship Education and Ethical Governance

A careful examination of entrepreneurship education within the context of the Baptist Church requires conceptual clarity regarding both entrepreneurship and ethical governance. Entrepreneurship education, in its contemporary academic usage, extends beyond the creation of commercial enterprises. It refers to the intentional development of cognitive, behavioural, and managerial competencies that enable individuals to identify opportunities, mobilise resources, innovate responsibly, manage risks, and sustain organisational vision. At its core, entrepreneurship education cultivates disciplined initiative and accountable resource management within dynamic environments.

Scholars have increasingly distinguished between profit-driven entrepreneurship and social or mission-oriented entrepreneurship. The latter emphasises value creation for communities, institutions, and social systems rather than financial gain alone. Within non-profit and faith-based settings, entrepreneurial thinking often manifests through strategic planning, financial literacy, adaptive leadership, and innovative ministry design. These competencies enable leaders to align institutional mission with practical sustainability. Thus, entrepreneurship education may be understood as a structured process through which leaders acquire tools necessary for responsible and forward-looking governance.

Ethical governance, on the other hand, refers to the framework of policies, practices, values, and accountability mechanisms that ensure institutional decisions are consistent with moral principles and organisational integrity. In ecclesial contexts, ethical governance encompasses financial transparency, participatory decision-making, conflict resolution processes, clear reporting systems, and fidelity to doctrinal commitments. It ensures that authority is exercised responsibly and that institutional resources are managed as sacred trusts rather than personal entitlements.

Within Baptist ecclesiology, governance is neither episcopal nor centrally hierarchical. Congregational polity affirms that each local church is self-governing under the lordship of

Christ, with decision-making authority residing in the gathered membership. This structure provides theological affirmation of shared responsibility, yet it also necessitates informed administrative competence. Without clear systems and trained leadership, autonomy may inadvertently weaken accountability structures. Ethical governance in Baptist congregations therefore depends not merely upon spiritual sincerity but upon organisational clarity and structured oversight.

Entrepreneurship education contributes to ethical governance by strengthening three interrelated domains: stewardship, strategic oversight, and transparency. First, stewardship in biblical theology reflects responsible management of entrusted resources. Entrepreneurial training enhances this stewardship by equipping leaders with budgeting skills, financial controls, performance evaluation methods, and long-term sustainability planning. When church leaders understand financial systems and risk assessment, opportunities for mismanagement are significantly reduced.

Secondly, strategic oversight is essential for preventing mission drift and administrative confusion. Entrepreneurial competencies encourage the articulation of clear objectives, measurable outcomes, and structured evaluation processes. Such clarity supports congregational participation by enabling members to assess ministry effectiveness against defined goals. Ethical governance is thereby reinforced through structured accountability rather than informal authority.

Thirdly, transparency is strengthened when governance processes are systematic rather than personality-driven. Entrepreneurship education promotes documentation, delegation, role clarification, and performance review mechanisms. In congregational settings, these practices foster trust between leadership and membership. Trust, once institutionalised through transparent systems, becomes a stabilising factor in ethical governance.

Importantly, the conceptual integration of entrepreneurship education and ethical governance must remain theologically grounded. The objective is not to commercialise the Church but to cultivate disciplined leadership capable of safeguarding its spiritual and material resources. Entrepreneurial thinking, when detached from ethical and theological anchoring, may prioritise growth over integrity. However, when shaped by Christian moral teaching, it strengthens institutional faithfulness and responsible administration.

Therefore, entrepreneurship education and ethical governance are not competing paradigms within Baptist ecclesial life. Rather, they are complementary dimensions of responsible leadership formation. Ethical intention requires structural competence, and structural competence requires disciplined training. In this regard, entrepreneurship education functions as a formative instrument through which ethical governance becomes operational rather than aspiration within Baptist congregations.

Theological Compatibility of Entrepreneurship Education with Baptist Principles

The integration of entrepreneurship education into Baptist ecclesial life requires careful theological reflection to ensure that administrative innovation does not displace doctrinal fidelity. Within the Baptist tradition, Scripture remains the supreme authority for faith and practice, and all ministerial strategies must be evaluated in light of biblical teaching. Consequently, entrepreneurship education can only be considered compatible with Baptist principles if its underlying assumptions align with Christian theology, particularly regarding stewardship, vocation, accountability, and communal responsibility.

One foundational theological concept that supports such compatibility is stewardship. The biblical narrative consistently portrays human beings as trustees of resources entrusted by God. This stewardship extends beyond personal morality to include responsible management of material possessions, time, influence, and institutional responsibilities. Baptist theology, with its emphasis on personal accountability before God, reinforces the expectation that leaders manage church resources faithfully and transparently. Entrepreneurship education strengthens this stewardship framework by equipping leaders with practical competencies for budgeting, risk assessment, and long-term planning. Rather than introducing secular values into church governance, it operationalises biblical stewardship within contemporary organisational contexts.

Another Baptist distinctive that supports compatibility is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. This principle affirms that every member of the congregation bears spiritual responsibility and participates in the mission of the Church. In congregational governance, this doctrine manifests in collective decision-making and shared oversight of church affairs. Entrepreneurship education complements this structure by fostering participatory leadership models, collaborative planning processes, and distributed responsibility

systems. When members possess organisational literacy and strategic awareness, congregational autonomy becomes more informed and ethically grounded.

Furthermore, Baptist ecclesiology emphasises covenant community. Local churches are understood as voluntary assemblies bound together by shared confession and mutual accountability. Ethical governance within such communities depends upon trust, transparency, and clearly defined roles. Entrepreneurial competencies, particularly those relating to strategic communication and performance evaluation, enhance the functioning of covenant relationships by reducing ambiguity and strengthening institutional clarity. Clear financial reporting, defined ministry objectives, and documented policies protect both leaders and congregants from misunderstanding or abuse of authority.

The Baptist commitment to mission also provides theological space for entrepreneurial thinking. The Great Commission has historically inspired Baptists to establish educational institutions, missionary societies, and social initiatives that required administrative creativity and resource mobilisation. Innovation in ministry has therefore never been foreign to Baptist identity. Entrepreneurship education, when shaped by theological vision, equips leaders to pursue mission effectively in changing social environments without compromising doctrinal integrity.

Nevertheless, theological caution remains necessary. Entrepreneurial discourse sometimes prioritises numerical growth, competitive advantage, or institutional expansion as ultimate goals. Such emphases may conflict with Christian understandings of humility, servanthood, and faithfulness. Baptist theology insists that spiritual transformation, not organisational size, constitutes the primary measure of ecclesial vitality. Therefore, entrepreneurship education must remain subordinated to theological ethics. Its purpose is not commercial success but faithful stewardship and sustainable ministry.

In balancing these considerations, it becomes evident that entrepreneurship education is not inherently secular or incompatible with Baptist theology. Its moral character depends upon the framework within which it is interpreted and applied. When grounded in Scripture, guided by covenant accountability, and directed toward mission rather than profit, entrepreneurial competencies become instruments that strengthen ethical governance. They provide structural support for theological commitments rather than replacing them.

Thus, the theological compatibility between entrepreneurship education and Baptist principles lies in their shared emphasis on stewardship, accountability, communal participation, and mission-oriented leadership. Properly integrated, entrepreneurship education enhances rather than undermines the ethical and spiritual foundations of Baptist congregational life.

Practical Implications of Entrepreneurship Education for Ethical Governance Structures within Baptist Congregations

The practical value of entrepreneurship education within Baptist congregations becomes most evident when examined through the lens of governance structures and administrative processes. Ethical governance is sustained not merely by doctrinal affirmation but by systems that ensure responsible leadership conduct, financial transparency, participatory oversight, and sustainable ministry planning. Entrepreneurship education equips church leaders and members with competencies that translate theological commitments into operational frameworks.

One significant implication concerns financial accountability. Baptist churches, operating under congregational polity, typically entrust financial oversight to committees elected by the membership. However, without adequate financial literacy and structured budgeting procedures, such committees may struggle to maintain effective oversight. Entrepreneurship education strengthens this area by training leaders in budgeting systems, financial forecasting, internal controls, and transparent reporting mechanisms. Clear accounting procedures, periodic financial disclosures, and documented expenditure approvals reduce opportunities for mismanagement and reinforce congregational trust. Ethical governance thus becomes embedded within institutional practice rather than dependent solely upon personal integrity.

A second implication relates to strategic planning and mission alignment. Churches frequently initiate ministries in response to immediate needs without long-term evaluation of sustainability or impact. Entrepreneurial competencies encourage leaders to define measurable objectives, assess available resources, and evaluate ministry outcomes against clearly articulated goals. This structured approach prevents mission drift and ensures that programmes remain aligned with theological purpose. Within Baptist congregations, where

decision-making authority resides with the members, clearly presented strategic plans facilitate informed deliberation and collective responsibility.

Leadership development constitutes another area of practical impact. Entrepreneurship education fosters adaptive leadership, delegation, and team-based management. In many congregations, excessive reliance on a single pastor or dominant figure can create governance imbalances and weaken accountability structures. By promoting distributed leadership models and capacity-building among lay members, entrepreneurial training reinforces the Baptist principle of shared responsibility. Committees function more effectively when members understand role clarification, performance expectations, and evaluation processes. Ethical governance is thereby strengthened through collaborative competence rather than centralised control.

Risk management also assumes practical importance. Churches face legal, financial, and reputational risks that require proactive oversight. Entrepreneurial education introduces tools for risk assessment, compliance awareness, and contingency planning. Policies regarding safeguarding, property management, financial audits, and conflict resolution can be systematically developed and periodically reviewed. Such preventive structures protect both leaders and congregants while demonstrating institutional integrity to the wider community.

Transparency in communication represents an additional implication. Entrepreneurial training emphasises clear documentation, reporting cycles, and stakeholder engagement. In Baptist congregations, where congregational meetings serve as primary decision-making forums, structured reporting enhances participation and reduces suspicion. Regular presentation of financial summaries, ministry evaluations, and strategic updates cultivates a culture of openness. Ethical governance thrives where communication is consistent, accessible, and accountable.

Furthermore, sustainability in ministry initiatives becomes more attainable when entrepreneurial thinking informs resource mobilisation and innovation. Churches are increasingly called to address social needs within economically challenging environments. Entrepreneurial competencies enable leaders to design income-generating initiatives, partnerships, and community programmes that support mission without compromising

doctrinal commitments. Sustainable planning ensures that ministry expansion does not exceed available capacity or create financial instability.

Importantly, these practical implications do not substitute spiritual formation but complement it. Ethical governance requires moral conviction; however, moral conviction must be supported by structured competence. Entrepreneurship education provides tools that enable Baptist congregations to implement their theological commitments effectively. By strengthening financial systems, clarifying leadership roles, institutionalising transparency, and promoting sustainable planning, entrepreneurial training contributes directly to the integrity and resilience of governance structures. In this way, entrepreneurship education functions as a practical catalyst that transforms ethical aspirations into operational reality within Baptist congregational life.

Entrepreneurship Education and Institutional Sustainability in Baptist Congregations

Beyond immediate governance structures, entrepreneurship education carries significant implications for the long-term sustainability of Baptist congregations. Ethical governance cannot be sustained by reactive measures alone; it requires forward-looking leadership capable of anticipating institutional challenges and responding with structured foresight. Sustainability in this context refers not merely to financial survival but to the preservation of mission integrity, leadership continuity, and organisational resilience across generations.

Many Baptist churches operate within fluctuating economic and social environments that influence membership patterns, giving capacity, and ministry engagement. Without strategic planning and adaptive leadership, congregations may experience stagnation, financial strain, or gradual decline in participation. Entrepreneurship education cultivates opportunity recognition and proactive planning, enabling church leaders to evaluate demographic shifts, assess ministry relevance, and design programmes that address contemporary needs while remaining theologically faithful. This disciplined foresight supports ethical governance by preventing crisis-driven decision-making, which often compromises transparency and accountability.

Leadership succession represents another dimension of sustainability. In numerous congregations, institutional stability is closely tied to the tenure of a single pastor or influential leader. When succession planning is neglected, transitions may generate

uncertainty or internal conflict. Entrepreneurial competencies encourage structured succession strategies, leadership mentoring, and capacity-building among emerging leaders. Such preparation strengthens congregational confidence and reduces vulnerability to personality-centred governance. Ethical continuity becomes embedded in institutional culture rather than dependent upon individual charisma.

Resource mobilisation also contributes to sustainability. Baptist congregations frequently rely on voluntary giving to sustain ministry operations. Entrepreneurship education provides tools for responsible fundraising strategies, project evaluation, and diversified resource development consistent with ethical standards. Transparent stewardship practices reassure members that contributions are managed wisely, thereby reinforcing trust and long-term commitment. Sustainable financial practices, grounded in clear policy frameworks, protect the church from indebtedness and reputational harm.

Moreover, institutional sustainability involves cultivating an ethical culture rather than merely implementing ethical policies. Organisational culture shapes informal norms, expectations, and behavioural patterns within the congregation. Entrepreneurial training emphasises systems thinking, performance measurement, and continuous improvement. When these practices are aligned with Christian moral teaching, they reinforce habits of accountability and responsibility. Ethical governance thus becomes an embedded culture sustained through regular review, documented procedures, and shared ownership of mission objectives.

Importantly, sustainability must remain subordinate to spiritual purpose. Growth or institutional longevity, in isolation from theological fidelity, does not constitute success within Baptist ecclesiology. Nevertheless, sustainable structures enable congregations to fulfil their mission responsibly across time. Entrepreneurship education, properly contextualised, equips leaders to steward both spiritual and material resources in ways that safeguard integrity and continuity.

Therefore, entrepreneurship education contributes not only to present governance effectiveness but also to enduring institutional resilience. By strengthening strategic foresight, succession planning, resource stewardship, and ethical culture formation, it

provides a framework through which Baptist congregations may sustain faithful witness and accountable leadership in changing contexts.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that entrepreneurship education serves as a vital catalyst for ethical governance within Baptist congregations. By equipping church leaders and members with practical competencies in financial management, strategic planning, risk assessment, and participatory leadership, entrepreneurial training translates theological principles of stewardship, accountability, and communal responsibility into operational structures. Far from introducing commercialisation into ecclesial life, entrepreneurship education complements Baptist theological commitments by reinforcing transparency, fostering sustainable ministry practices, and institutionalising ethical decision-making. Entrepreneurship education enables congregations to anticipate challenges, plan for succession, mobilise resources responsibly, and cultivate an enduring culture of accountability. This alignment of practical skills with biblical ethics strengthens congregational autonomy, safeguards institutional integrity, and promotes mission continuity.

In conclusion, the integration of entrepreneurship education into Baptist ecclesial formation offers a transformative approach to church leadership. By bridging the gap between spiritual vision and organisational proficiency, it ensures that ethical governance becomes both a lived reality and a sustainable practice. The study affirms that when entrepreneurial competencies are contextualised within Christian moral and theological frameworks, they become indispensable tools for nurturing transparent, responsible, and mission-driven leadership in the Baptist Church.

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