

## **Decolonization Agenda at the Seminary Level: Emancipating Theological Education in Africa**

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### **Abstract**

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This paper explores the process of decolonization within African theological seminaries to emancipate theological education from underlying colonial influences. It examines the historical context of colonialism and its impact on African theological education, highlighting the need to challenge and dismantle colonial biases embedded in the curriculum and pedagogical approaches. The paper emphasizes the importance of contextualization and indigenization in reshaping the theological curriculum and explores case studies of decolonization initiatives in African seminaries. Furthermore, it examines the challenges and opportunities arising during decolonization. The findings of this paper contribute to a deeper understanding of how decolonization can lead to a more inclusive and liberating future for African theological seminaries.

**Keywords:** Decolonization, Theological Curriculum, Theological Education in Africa, Eurocentric, Colonial and Missionary Era

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### **Introduction**

During the colonial era, the curriculum and overall approach to theological education in African seminaries were heavily influenced by Western perspectives. Western theology was used to equip the local clergy, thus leaving them with minimal chance to reflect on contextual issues. This theology was presumed to be normative, universal, and superior. The Western missionaries taught theology as they knew it from their own formation, with all its denominational differences (Ross, 2022). The content and concerns that the education raised were largely Western. These influences, which were often rooted in the agendas of colonial powers, have had numerous lasting effects on the development of theological education in



Africa. First, the structure of African seminaries reflects the hierarchical nature of colonial institutions. Many theological seminaries were established during the colonial period with a top-down organizational structure mirroring the administrative frameworks of colonial administrations. This hierarchical structure often perpetuated power imbalances, with European missionaries and administrators occupying leadership positions while African students and faculty were relegated to subordinate roles. This colonial legacy has had an enduring impact on these institutions' governance and decision-making processes.

Second, European theological traditions and perspectives heavily influenced the curriculum of African seminaries. European missionaries, the primary agents of theological education during the colonial era, brought their own frameworks based on Western Christianity. As a result, African theological seminaries emphasized European theological doctrines, theories, and perspectives while marginalizing or neglecting indigenous African religious traditions and theological perspectives. This Eurocentric curriculum perpetuated biases and hindered the development of a more inclusive and contextualized theological education in Africa.

Third, the overall approach to theological education in African seminaries during the colonial era focused on conversion and assimilation. European missionaries saw theological education as a means to propagate their own religious beliefs and practices among Africans, often to eradicate or suppress indigenous African spiritual traditions. Consequently, the pedagogical methods employed in these institutions prioritized transmitting European theological knowledge and molding students into Eurocentric theological frameworks. This approach ignored the rich diversity of African religious traditions. It hindered the development of a more liberating and empowering theological education that could address African societies' specific needs and challenges.

Therefore, there is a need to reconfigure the curriculum, content, pedagogy, and methodology in the theological curriculum for effective ministerial formation and contextual theology. Thus, recognizing and addressing these historical influences is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and contextually relevant theological education that empowers African theologians to engage with their unique social, cultural, and religious contexts.



## **The Importance of Contextualization and Indigenization in the Curriculum**

Contextualization and indigenization are essential aspects of decolonizing the curriculum in African theological seminaries. Bosch argues that contextualization in theological education involves adapting and integrating theological content, methods, and resources to resonate with African communities' specific cultural and social contexts (Bosch, 1991). By contextualizing the curriculum, students can engage with theological concepts in a way relevant to their lived experiences. This approach challenges the notion that theological education should be detached from local realities and encourages students to see the connections between theology and their everyday lives.

Gyekye's research on indigenization calls for incorporating African theological perspectives, voices, and traditions into the educational framework (Gyekye, 1995). It recognizes the richness and diversity of African religious and theological heritage, countering the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems. Indigenization encourages African students to embrace their cultural identity and engage with theological discourse from their contextual standpoint. This process promotes students' sense of agency, cultural pride, and theological empowerment. By embracing contextualization and indigenization, African seminaries can create a curriculum that reflects the realities and aspirations of African communities. It fosters a more inclusive and liberating theological education that acknowledges and affirms African cultural identities, values, and theological traditions. Musopole (2022) believes that decolonizing theological education involves rewriting statements of faith, catechisms, and hymns, a process that starts with the African worldview.

## **The State of Theological Curriculums**

The existing curriculums in African theological institutions face several challenges that necessitate the process of decolonization. These challenges are rooted in the historical legacies of colonialism and the perpetuation of Eurocentric perspectives within theological education. In this context, decolonization refers to a transformative process that seeks to dismantle colonial influences and biases and to center indigenous African religious traditions and perspectives in the curriculum and pedagogy of theological institutions. It involves retrieving these best traditions sanctified by the gospel as the means for theologizing. It has been recognized that churches need to be self-theologizing apart from growing the church to be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating (Hiebert, 1994).



One of the primary challenges of the existing curriculums is the marginalization and exclusion of indigenous African religious traditions and theological perspectives (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). During the colonial era, these traditions were often denigrated or suppressed in favor of European Christianity. Consequently, the curriculum of theological institutions predominantly focused on Western theological perspectives and theories while neglecting the rich diversity of African religious and cultural expressions. Chirwa suggests a remedy for this as “epistemological decolonization,” challenging the hegemonic Western claim of universality and legitimization of knowledge (Chirwa, 2022).

Another challenge is the lack of contextual relevance in the existing curriculums. Theological education should equip students to address their contexts’ specific social, cultural, and religious challenges (Mugambi, 2000). However, the Eurocentric curriculums often fail to address the pressing issues African societies face, such as poverty, inequality, and social justice. This lack of contextual relevance hinders the transformative potential of theological education in Africa. The existing curriculums often prioritize transmitting knowledge over critical thinking and engagement, as students are often expected to passively receive and reproduce theological doctrines and concepts rather than be encouraged to critically analyze and apply them to their own contexts (Mbiti, 1991). This pedagogical approach limits the development of students’ critical thinking skills, their ability to engage with complex social issues, and their capacity to contribute meaningfully to theological discourse. The decolonization process in theological education is essential to address these challenges and promote a more emancipated approach.

### **The Decolonization Task**

Decolonizing African theological seminaries necessitates a transformative journey to dismantle the colonial legacies and power dynamics that have shaped these institutions. This process involves acknowledging and challenging the underlying assumptions, biases, knowledge systems, and structures inherited from the colonial era and actively working towards creating a more inclusive and contextually relevant theological education system. Scholars such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) highlight the importance of recognizing and addressing the coloniality of power in shaping development studies and social structures.



Further, Asamoah-Gyadu (2004) emphasizes the need to critically examine and challenge the dominant Eurocentric perspectives within African theological education. Magesa (1997) and Masenya (2005) contribute to this understanding by advocating for integrating African religious traditions and the voices of African women in theological discourse. These studies highlight that decolonizing African theological seminaries requires a multifaceted approach that confronts historical injustices and promotes inclusivity and contextual relevance. This paper explores the background and significance of decolonizing African theological seminaries. By examining the historical context and understanding the impact of colonial legacies on these institutions, we can better comprehend the need for decolonization as a transformative process. The sections below will examine the influence and impact of colonial legacies on the curriculum, pedagogy, and power dynamics within African theological seminaries. It will explore the significance of decolonization as a transformative process in dismantling Eurocentric biases, exclusionary practices, and power imbalances in African theological education and investigate the potential strategies and approaches for decolonizing African theological seminaries, including integrating indigenous African religious traditions, contextual relevance, and critical engagement. Finally, it will assess the implications and benefits of decolonization for creating a more inclusive, emancipated, and contextually relevant theological education system in Africa.

### **Background of Decolonizing African Theological Seminaries**

During the colonial era, European missionaries established theological institutions in Africa to spread Christianity and convert the local populations to European denominations (Adamo, 2012). These institutions became centers for theological education, but their curriculum and pedagogy primarily reflected the priorities and perspectives of the colonial powers. European theological traditions, doctrines, and theories heavily influenced the curriculum of African theological seminaries. European theological texts, such as systematic theology and biblical studies, were prioritized, while indigenous African religious traditions and theological perspectives were marginalized or ignored (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). This Eurocentric bias perpetuated the notion that European Christianity was superior to African religious expressions, contributing to the denigration and suppression of indigenous knowledge systems.



Furthermore, the pedagogy employed in African seminaries often emphasized rote memorization and passive reception of knowledge rather than critical thinking and engagement. Students were expected to uncritically accept European theological formulations and reproduce them without questioning or contextualizing them within their African realities (Mbiti, 1991). This approach hindered the development of independent thought, critical analysis, and exploration of the social, cultural, and religious challenges specific to African contexts. Colonial powers also influenced the institutional frameworks of African theological seminaries. Missionary societies and colonial governments had substantial control over these institutions' administration, funding, and governance (Adamo, 2012). This control allowed them to shape the direction and priorities of the seminaries, often aligning them with the interests of the colonial powers.

The imposition of Eurocentric perspectives and the suppression of indigenous knowledge systems in African theological education during the colonial era had long-lasting effects. It perpetuated a hierarchy of knowledge that devalued African religious and cultural expressions, creating a sense of inferiority and cultural alienation among African theologians and students (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). It also limited the development of contextualized theological frameworks to address African societies' specific social, cultural, and religious challenges. The colonial biases that have permeated African theological seminaries have perpetuated unequal power dynamics and hindered the full expression of African cultures and theological traditions within the educational landscape.

Thus, decolonization emerges as a transformative process that seeks to challenge and dismantle these colonial legacies. African theological seminaries can embrace a more inclusive and liberating theological education that reflects the continent's diverse voices, experiences, and theological perspectives by critically examining and reimagining the curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and institutional structures. Scholars such as Asamoah-Gyadu (2013) emphasize the importance of decolonizing African theology and theological education, advocating for recognizing and integrating African theological traditions and the empowerment of marginalized voices. This nature of decolonization paves the way for a theological education system that promotes cultural affirmation, social justice, and theological liberation in Africa.



## **Historical Context of Colonialism and its Impact on Seminary Education**

The historical context of colonialism in Africa had a profound impact on seminary education, as missionaries and colonial powers played a significant role in shaping the structure, content, and pedagogy of African seminaries. Johnson (2010) argues that the establishment of mission schools and seminaries served to spread their cultural and religious influence in Africa. These institutions, knowingly or unknowingly, became vehicles for disseminating Western theological frameworks and Eurocentric points of view. Mugambi notes that the curriculum of African seminaries during the colonial era predominantly focused on Western theological traditions while neglecting the rich diversity of indigenous African theological perspectives. It marginalized and suppressed indigenous African knowledge systems, perpetuating a sense of inferiority and cultural disempowerment among African students (Mugambi 2013).

Nyamiti highlights the hierarchical power dynamics between Western missionaries and African students within the context of colonial-era seminaries that further reinforced the marginalization of African perspectives and contributed to a limited understanding and appreciation of African cultures and theological traditions. (Nyamiti, 1994). These influences in African seminaries resulted in the dominance of Western theological frameworks, the marginalization of indigenous African perspectives, and the perpetuation of unequal power dynamics.

## **Identification and Critique of Colonial Biases in the Curriculum**

The curriculum of African seminaries prioritized Western theological texts and doctrines, often at the expense of African theological thought (Bediako, 1995). This Eurocentric focus limited the representation and recognition of indigenous African religious experiences and perspectives (Mbiti, 2015). Bosch's work highlights the erasure of African theologians and scholars from the curriculum (Bosch, 2011). The omission of African voices and perspectives reinforced an imbalance of power and authority, marginalizing African contributions within the theological discourse. This exclusion perpetuated the narrative that African theological thought lacked intellectual rigor and theological depth.

The marginalization of African theological traditions and the perpetuation of cultural inferiority and dependence had some effects. One was prioritizing Western theological frameworks and perspectives in the curriculum. The dominance of European theological traditions meant that African theological perspectives and contributions were undervalued and





marginalized. Additionally, the selection of textbooks and reading materials often centered around European authors and theologians, neglecting African theologians' rich intellectual heritage and theological insights. This reinforced the misguided thought that African theological thought was less significant and unworthy of study. Moreover, the pedagogical approaches employed in African seminaries often discouraged critical engagement with African contexts and theological realities. Rote memorization and uncritical acceptance of European theological doctrines were emphasized, limiting the development of independent thought and critical analysis of African theological perspectives. Addressing these colonial biases requires a deliberate effort to decolonize the curriculum, incorporate African theological perspectives, and empower African voices within the theological discourse.

### **Exploration of Power Dynamics and Eurocentric Influences**

Eurocentric influences in African theological seminaries significantly impacted power dynamics and pedagogy. Kalu's work emphasizes how Western missionaries and educators held positions of authority and control within African seminaries, shaping the curriculum according to their perspectives (Kalu, 2018). This power imbalance created a hierarchical structure that favored Western theological frameworks and marginalized African voices and perspectives. The dominance of Eurocentric views perpetuated a sense of cultural and intellectual inferiority among African students.

Mugambi argues for exploring Eurocentric influences in the pedagogy of African seminaries (Mugambi, 2013). The emphasis on rote memorization and uncritical acceptance of Western theological ideas limited critical thinking and independent theological exploration. This pedagogical approach hindered the development of African theological scholars who could engage in robust theological discourse from an African perspective. Eurocentric influences in African theological seminaries resulted in power imbalances favoring Western theological frameworks and limiting African voices and perspectives. The pedagogical approach employed further stifled critical thinking and independent theological exploration.

### **Decolonization and its Implications for Theological Education**

Several aspects of African seminaries were affected by colonial influences during the colonial era. First is the curriculum. The curriculum of African seminaries was heavily influenced by colonial powers, resulting in the dominance of Western theological frameworks and the marginalization of indigenous African theological perspectives. The focus was primarily on





European theological traditions, while African contributions were often overlooked or excluded. Musopole observes that courses critical to understanding the African cultural and religious context in universities offering theological education in Africa continue to be relegated to the peripheral. He proposes that the African worldview should be at the heart of theological studies because theological education must be rooted within an African worldview.

The second issue is that pedagogical approaches in African seminaries during the colonial era tended to discourage critical engagement with African contexts and theological realities. Third, colonial powers and Western missionaries often controlled African seminaries' administration, funding, and governance. This control allowed them to shape the direction and priorities of the seminaries, aligning them with Eurocentric perspectives and reinforcing power imbalances. Fourth, the hierarchical power dynamics between Western missionaries and African students within colonial-era seminaries further marginalized African perspectives. The authority and influence of Western missionaries overshadowed the voices and contributions of African theologians and scholars, perpetuating a sense of cultural inferiority and dependence.

Decolonization in African seminaries should, therefore, seek to challenge and dismantle these colonial legacies by critically examining and reimagining the curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and institutional structures. Doing so promotes a more inclusive and liberating theological education that recognizes and embraces Africa's diverse voices, experiences, and theological perspectives. Kwok's work highlights the significance of reclaiming and restoring African theological traditions, knowledge systems, and voices within the seminary context (Kwok, 2019). Decolonization seeks to challenge the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives and create space for the full expression of African cultures and theological traditions.

### **Theoretical Frameworks and Discourses on Decolonization**

Theoretical frameworks and discourses on decolonization provide valuable insights into the power dynamics and cultural transformation necessary for decolonizing theological education. Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, offers a postcolonial perspective exploring power dynamics, cultural hegemony, and resistance within colonial and neocolonial contexts (Fanon, 1963). This framework encourages a critical examination of the structures



and assumptions that underpin theological education, aiming to challenge and dismantle colonial legacies. It highlights the importance of including marginalized perspectives and deconstructing Eurocentric frameworks. Similarly, Maldonado-Torres contributes to the discourse on decolonization by emphasizing the need to address the colonality of power and knowledge within theological education (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). His work underscores the importance of critically examining theological education's epistemological foundations and structures to challenge and subvert the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives. This discourse calls for including diverse voices, attitudes, and knowledge systems in the curriculum.

The Afrocentric and indigenous frameworks further contribute to decolonization efforts by advocating for centering African experiences, epistemologies, and theological traditions (Asante, 2003). These frameworks emphasize recognizing and valuing African cultural and historical contexts within theological education. They highlight the need for an indigenous curriculum reflecting the richness and diversity of African theological thought. These theoretical frameworks and discourses guide the decolonization of theological education, encouraging critical examination, including marginalized perspectives, the deconstruction of Eurocentric frameworks, and the centering of African experiences and knowledge systems.

### **Case Studies of Successful Decolonization Initiatives**

St. Paul's United Theological College in Kenya and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa are selected case studies of how they have attempted the decolonization initiative.

#### **Examination of Specific African Seminaries that have Embraced decolonization**

Gathogo looked at the decolonization efforts at St. Paul's United Theological College in Kenya (Gathogo, 2017). The seminary reviewed its theology curriculum to integrate African theological perspectives and cultural practices into teaching and learning. It also incorporated African theologians' works as reading resources. Below are some courses that the university listed in an attempt to develop a curriculum that is relevant to its context.

First, the course on African Theologies explores the theological contributions of African theologians, examining their works, perspectives, and theological frameworks. It covers African Christologies, pneumatology, African soteriology, and other theological



themes from an African perspective. Second, the course on African Contextual Theology focuses on critically engaging with African social, cultural, and political contexts and exploring the contextualization of theology to African realities. It covers topics such as African traditional religions, African ethics, liberation theology in the African context, and theology of inculturation. Third, African Church History delves into the history of Christianity in Africa, highlighting the contributions of African Christians, early African theologians, and the growth and development of the African church. It explores the impact of colonization on African Christianity and the subsequent emergence of independent African churches and theological movements.

Fourth, African Worship and Spirituality examines African worship practices, rituals, and spirituality, emphasizing the integration of African cultural expressions into worship and liturgy. It explores the role of music, dance, storytelling, and other forms of artistic expression in African worship and spirituality. Fifth, African Ethics and Social Justice focuses on ethical issues and social justice concerns within the African context. It deals with poverty, corruption, gender inequality, environmental justice, and the church's role in promoting social transformation and addressing systemic injustices.

These are just a few examples of courses that could be part of the decolonization efforts at African seminaries. The specific courses and their content would need to be developed in collaboration with the seminary's faculty, theologians, and stakeholders, considering the local context and the goals of decolonization. Also, local terminologies must be identified for some theological concepts (Musopole, 2022). Africans must go back to their epistemological traditions to have them retrieved and engage them with Western epistemologies and in critical dialogue with modern epistemologies.

The second case study is by Dube, who investigated the decolonization approaches at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa (Dube, 2000). The first initiative was incorporating African theological literature into the curriculum to expose students to diverse African theological perspectives, ideas, and voices. This can involve assigning readings and texts written by African theologians and scholars, which allows students to engage directly with African theological thought. Second, engaging with African Religious Rituals by providing opportunities for students to learn about and engage with African religious rituals can deepen their understanding of African religious traditions. This may involve organizing



field visits to places of worship, inviting guest speakers who can share their knowledge and experiences, and facilitating discussions on the significance of rituals within African religious contexts.

Third is the critical reflection on culture, religion, and society. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on the intersections of culture, religion, and society, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexities and dynamics within African contexts. This can be done through class discussions, research projects, and assignments that prompt students to analyze and question the cultural, social, and religious dynamics. Fourth is facilitating dialogue and integration between Western and African theological frameworks, allowing for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to theological education. This can involve creating open discussions and debates where students and faculty from diverse backgrounds can share their perspectives and engage in respectful dialogue. It is important to note that the specific strategies and approaches employed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal or other institutions may vary. The decolonization initiatives would likely involve a comprehensive and ongoing curriculum review process, faculty development, and stakeholder consultation to ensure the meaningful integration of African religious traditions and perspectives within the theological education context.

A similar study looking at decolonization initiatives was conducted in the Malawi context. Mapala (2022) sampled three universities in Malawi to ascertain whether the textbooks used were Eurocentric or African by considering the author, content, and non-African authors writing on African themes. The study also examined the course outlines to determine whether the prescribed and recommended textbooks contained works of African theologians. Mupala argues that curricula should be responsive to African needs, challenges, and aspirations. In his study, he observed that students were not introduced to books written by African theologians. Elsewhere, Phiri gives some possible reasons why this is the case. First, the content of some textbooks does not correspond to the course content for the prescribed syllabi; second, most of the books in the market are written to address individual areas of interest and not curricular needs. Third, students may be unaware of these books by African theologians because lectures do not list or bring these materials to the attention of the students (Phiri, 2013).



Mapala (2022) also discusses the role of libraries in decolonization. He argues that failure to incorporate indigenous knowledge in curriculums triggers negative attitudes toward local content, causing libraries to stock few local books. He adds that putting African knowledge systems at the periphery of curricular activities is a disservice to the whole enterprise. A survey of library collections in the selected universities indicated that most books used are Western, with few African authors featured. Yet, the relevance of education is centered on the suitability of skills, competence, and content of knowledge being transmitted and acquired to meet the needs of African societies. Equally, Ocholla (2020) remarks that if decolonization has to be realized, access to information resources representing local content and context is crucial. Sakupapa (2018) concurs with this assertion, noting that decolonization can only make significant progress if the theological education curriculum puts all the issues that the African continent is grappling with at the center as curricular activities and learning experiences in light of global trends.

### **Lessons Learned and Potential Transferability to Other Seminaries**

The lessons from these case studies can be applied to other seminaries seeking to embark on decolonization initiatives. Duncan's research emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to decolonization (Duncan, 2019). It is not enough to make superficial changes to the curriculum; seminaries should also address power dynamics, faculty training, and institutional structures. This comprehensive approach ensures that decolonization efforts are embedded in the entire educational system, leading to lasting transformation. Seminaries should critically examine their power dynamics, promote inclusivity and diversity among faculty and staff, and create spaces for marginalized voices.

Gathogo highlights the significance of collaboration and dialogue with local communities and religious leaders (Gathogo, 2017). By actively involving diverse stakeholders in the decolonization process, seminaries can ensure that the initiatives are rooted in the lived experiences and aspirations of the communities they serve. It also fosters a sense of ownership and relevance, enabling the curriculum to reflect the needs and aspirations of the broader society. Partnerships with other decolonization initiatives and international networks can also provide valuable support and resources for seminaries undertaking decolonization efforts. These partnerships can facilitate knowledge sharing, exchange of best practices, and access to funding and expertise. Collaborating with other institutions or



organizations with experience in decolonization can help seminaries navigate the challenges and complexities of the transformative process. By considering these lessons and engaging in collaborative efforts, seminaries can effectively embark on decolonization initiatives that promote inclusivity, empowerment, and contextual relevance in theological education.

### **Challenges and Opportunities in the Decolonization Process**

African seminaries have faced various challenges in their decolonization efforts. One common challenge is resistance from entrenched institutional structures and individuals who are reluctant to change. Some faculty members may hesitate to let go of Eurocentric paradigms or lack the necessary knowledge and understanding of African theological perspectives (Gathogo, 2017). The deeply ingrained legacy of colonialism has left a lasting impact on the structures, mindsets, and power dynamics within seminaries (Magesa, 1997). This legacy can perpetuate Eurocentric biases and marginalize indigenous knowledge and perspectives. Resistance to change from individuals and institutions benefiting from the status quo can pose a significant obstacle to decolonization efforts. Overcoming this resistance requires a collective commitment to challenging and transforming entrenched colonial paradigms.

Kwok's research highlights the resource and support challenges seminaries face in decolonization initiatives (Kwok, 2019). Limited funding can impede the implementation of comprehensive decolonization strategies, including faculty training, curriculum development, and the acquisition of relevant indigenous resources. Inadequate faculty training on decolonial methodologies and pedagogies can hinder the effective integration of African perspectives into theological education. Furthermore, the scarcity of accessible African theological literature and scholarship due to Eurocentric dominance in academic publishing and knowledge production can present a barrier to incorporating diverse voices and perspectives.

These challenges in the decolonization process underscore the need for concerted efforts to overcome them. Seminaries can seek external funding, engage in partnerships with organizations supporting decolonization initiatives, and advocate for resources to support their efforts. Faculty development programs and workshops can be implemented to enhance educators' understanding of decolonial methodologies and pedagogies. Additionally, promoting and expanding the production of African theological literature and scholarship can



help address the scarcity of accessible resources. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, seminaries can seize the opportunities presented by the decolonization process to foster a more inclusive, contextual, and empowering theological education that reflects African communities' diverse realities and aspirations.

By integrating African theological perspectives, they have created a more inclusive and empowering learning environment for students. African students have reported a sense of cultural affirmation and increased confidence in their theological contributions (Dube, 2000). Graduates from these seminaries have played influential roles in their communities, advocating for social justice and engaging in contextual theological reflection.

### **Exploration of Potential Opportunities for Transformative Change**

Mugambi's work emphasizes the opportunities for transformative change presented by decolonization within African theological education (Mugambi, 2013). Decolonization offers a chance to reclaim and celebrate indigenous knowledge systems, theological traditions, and cultural practices. By centering African perspectives and experiences, seminaries can foster a deeper understanding of their theological heritage and engage with theology from a place of cultural authenticity. This enriches the educational experience for students and contributes to the broader process of cultural revitalization and empowerment.

Kalu's research highlights the potential for critical dialogue and collaboration with other decolonization movements and institutions globally (Kalu, 2018). African seminaries can connect with scholars, organizations, and initiatives engaged in decolonization efforts in various contexts. This exchange of ideas and experiences can provide valuable insights and resources for seminaries embarking on their decolonization journey. It enables them to learn from successful initiatives, share best practices, and navigate the challenges of decolonization in a globalized world. Through decolonization, African seminaries have the opportunity to transcend the limitations of colonial legacies, challenge Eurocentric dominance, and foster a more inclusive and holistic approach to theological education. By embracing diverse perspectives, engaging with indigenous knowledge systems, and collaborating with global decolonization movements, seminaries can create transformative spaces that empower students, promote cultural revitalization, and contribute to the broader project of decolonization.





### **Strategies for Overcoming Challenges and Maximising Opportunities**

Gathogo emphasizes the importance of raising awareness and fostering a collective understanding of the need for Decolonization (Gathogo, 2017). Seminaries can organize workshops, seminars, and ongoing discussions that explore the implications of colonial legacies and the potential benefits of decolonization. These platforms provide spaces for critical engagement, reflection, and dialogue among faculty, staff, and students. By increasing awareness and understanding, seminars can build a shared commitment and a sense of ownership toward decolonization. Bediako highlights the significance of partnerships and collaborations with African theologians, scholars, and practitioners (Bediako, 1995). Seminaries can invite guest lecturers, organize conferences, and establish networks that promote exchanging ideas, experiences, and resources. Collaborating with African scholars with expertise in decolonization and contextual theology can enrich the educational experience and guide the curriculum's integration of African perspectives. These partnerships also contribute to developing a vibrant community of scholars committed to decolonization efforts.

Kwok's research emphasizes the importance of developing African faculty members who deeply understand African theological perspectives (Kwok, 2019). Seminaries should prioritize faculty training and support, providing opportunities for them to engage in research, publishing, and curriculum development from an African context. This includes offering workshops and mentorship programs that equip faculty members with the necessary knowledge and skills to integrate decolonial methodologies and pedagogies into their teaching. Seminaries ensure a sustainable and ongoing commitment to decolonization by investing in faculty development. Implementing these strategies enables African seminaries to navigate the challenges of colonialism while maximizing the opportunities for transformative change in theological education. By raising awareness, fostering partnerships, and developing African faculty members, seminaries create an environment conducive to decolonization, empowering students and promoting the inclusion of diverse perspectives and indigenous knowledge systems.



## **Conclusion**

Decolonizing theological education in Africa is an ongoing and transformative journey that challenges the profoundly ingrained legacies of colonialism and seeks to reclaim indigenous knowledge systems, perspectives, and cultural practices. African seminaries can navigate the complexities of decolonization by exploring the challenges, such as resistance to change and limited resources, and opportunities, such as reclaiming indigenous knowledge and engaging in global decolonization movements.

Seminaries can adopt strategies that include raising awareness, fostering partnerships, and developing African faculty members to overcome these challenges. By promoting awareness and understanding of the need for decolonization, seminaries can foster a collective commitment to transformative change. Collaborating with African theologians, scholars, and practitioners allows for exchanging ideas and resources, enriching the educational experience, and contributing to a vibrant community of decolonial scholars. Additionally, investing in faculty training and support enables seminaries to integrate decolonial methodologies and pedagogies into their curricula, ensuring a sustainable commitment to decolonization.

By embracing decolonization, African seminaries have the opportunity to create inclusive and empowering learning environments that celebrate African knowledge systems and theological traditions. This journey requires breaking free from colonial legacies, challenging Eurocentric dominance, and fostering a theological landscape that reflects the diversity and richness of African cultures and traditions. Through this commitment to decolonization, seminaries can promote justice, equality, and holistic theological education, empowering students and contributing to the broader project of decolonization in Africa.

## **Recommendations for Future Action and Research**

Below are practical recommendations for research and action in support of decolonization in African seminaries:

**Fostering student engagement:** Seminaries should prioritize student engagement in the decolonization process by creating spaces for student voices to be heard through student-led organizations, forums, and feedback mechanisms. Involving students in curriculum



development, research projects, and community engagement initiatives empowers them as active participants in the decolonization journey.

**Establishing networks and collaborations:** Seminaries should actively seek opportunities to collaborate with other decolonization movements, institutions, and organizations within Africa and globally through partnerships, joint research projects, and exchange programs. Sharing experiences, resources, and best practices with like-minded institutions can strengthen the decolonization efforts and foster a sense of solidarity.

**Supporting research on decolonization:** Further research is needed to deepen the understanding of decolonization within African theological education. This includes exploring the experiences and perspectives of students, faculty, and local communities in the decolonization process. Research can investigate institutional structures and policies that support or hinder decolonization efforts.

**Promoting inclusive pedagogies:** Seminaries should explore and implement pedagogical approaches that promote inclusivity and student-centered learning. This can involve incorporating participatory methods, interdisciplinary systems, and alternative assessment methods that value diverse forms of knowledge and expression. Creating inclusive learning environments that honor various learning styles and cultural backgrounds enhances the transformative potential of decolonization.

**Advocating for policy changes:** Seminaries can actively engage in advocacy efforts to influence policy changes at the institutional and national levels. This can involve advocating for recognizing and integrating indigenous knowledge systems, allocating resources for decolonization initiatives, and revising accreditation standards to include decolonial perspectives.

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