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Markers and Tools to Facilitate Decolonisation of Theological Education in Africa

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Abstract: This article discusses the decolonisation of (theological) education in Africa, with special emphasis on South Africa. Colonialism is a complex power system that subjugated space, human beings and the minds of the colonised. Decolonisation has a responsibility to remove colonial governance, liberate the colonised being and decentre the colonial knowledge and recentre the indigenous knowledge of the native people. Furthermore, the most difficult form of decolonisation is the decolonisation of the mind because colonialism in this context tends to manifest itself into other forms of social structure. This study suggests that there is a need to relearn the meaning of decolonisation and its implications, as there are some students and academics who still do not know much about decolonisation, and this hinders the process. Furthermore, theological education needs to use engaged scholarship and community-based practical research (CBPR) methods as tools to facilitate decolonisation of theological education, as present studies indicate that the Christian religion is failing to make an impact in many African communities. Lastly, this article highlights markers of decolonised (theological) education in Africa. This article has two objectives. The first objective is to highlight markers of decolonised theological education. The second objective is to give special emphasis to the role of engaged scholarship and CBPR in the decolonisation of theological education. This article will use a literature review approach and highlight examples of the decolonisation of (theological) education. The decolonisation theory will underpin this literature review.

Keywords: decolonisation; engaged scholarship; theological education; Afrocentric education; colonisation

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1. Introduction

This article discusses decolonisation of (theological) education in Africa, with special emphasis on South Africa. The success or failure of theological education is determined by the quality of the lived Christian religion, in the ministry of churches and the impact of the Christians' life in society. Speckman (2007) argues that Christian religion has been used to keep Africans in a position of dependency for a long time, instead of empowering them to be active citizens. The Christian religion was used to propagate the ideology of a better life in heaven at the expense of African development. Christian faith received from the Western missionaries was described as promoting personal holiness at the expense of confronting injustices in one's own context. For example, Kumalo (2009, p. 247) argues that many of the white Afrikaner churches during apartheid South Africa had uncritical and cordial relationships with the apartheid government. In democratic South Africa, many of the churches led by black leadership have a comrade partnership with the state to such an extent that the prophetic standpoint of the church is obscured and undermined.

Furthermore, active involvement in the society of many South African churches is aggregated to a level of addressing immediate needs instead of confronting systemic evil and developing people to be agents of change in their own context (Bouwers-Du Toit 2010, p. 263; Swart 2010, p. 244). Who is to blame when the laity in the church and the pastors fail in their overall ministry of the congregation? Three factors can be blamed. One is the laity who are resistant to transforming the ministry of the congregation. Another one could

be the pastor who fails to use his theological knowledge and skills to bring about deep change in the ministry of the congregation. Lastly, it can be theological education that fails to provide appropriate skills and knowledge to empower the laity and the pastor for the transformation of the ministry of the congregation. The last is the one that will be the focus of this article.

Methodology

This article is mainly a literature review that highlights examples of decolonised (theological) and engaged education from the literature sources. The interdisciplinary approach of literature both from theology and other disciplines is used to learn about decolonisation and the role of engaged scholarship in enhancing the decolonisation of the higher education curriculum. The article uses observations and lived experiences of the author to contribute towards achieving the objectives of the article. The focus of this article is on the decolonisation of higher education in democratic South Africa, with a special focus on theological education within the higher education institutions of South Africa. The thesis of the article is that decolonisation of higher education in South Africa is urgent because the curriculum in the higher education institutions is still European-centred and irrelevant because it marginalises the incorporation of local knowledge systems, culture, and languages in the curriculum, thus serving the interests of those who were the apartheid beneficiaries and those who are post-apartheid manipulators claiming to represent the majority of the poor (Masoga 2023, p. 45). To address the above challenge, this article highlights that the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa should be reparative (Gopal 2021, p. 880) and must contribute to social transformation and be centred on the African Indigenous Knowledge System (Mekoa 2017, pp. 180, 187). This study suggests the tools that can facilitate the decolonisation of higher education are engaged scholarship and community-based practical research (CBPR) methods.

This article has two objectives. The first objective is to highlight markers of decolonised (theological) education. The second objective is to give special emphasis to the role of engaged scholarship and CBPR in the decolonisation of theological education. The decolonisation theory will guide the discussion in this article. Decolonisation theory is a theory that critically strives to reckon with indigenous practices and knowledge production and implementation of radical transformation in a socio-economic context that would be conducive to the holistic wellbeing of humanity and other creations. It strives towards the promotion of liberation from oppressive world systems intertwined into the social, educational, economic, political, and religious sectors of the society. In this article, decolonisation theory will be used to critique the perpetuation of Eurocentric knowledge production in South African higher institutions, reluctance by students and academics to embrace decolonisation, and lack of passion to live and participate in the debate and dialogue about the decolonisation of higher education. Lastly, the decolonisation theory will be used to analyse how the decolonisation process may be engaged in theological studies.

The outline of the article will follow this pattern: First, forms of colonisation, followed by a general understanding of decolonisation and understanding of decolonisation in various contexts, will be discussed. Second, the discussion will address why theological education in Africa needs to be decolonised, what the markers of decolonised (theological) education in Africa are, and how theological institutions in SA engage in decolonisation. Lastly, the discussion will focus on engaged scholarship as a tool to facilitate decolonisation.

2. Forms of Colonisation

After South African students protested, demanding that "fees must fall" and the "Rhodes statue must fall" in 2015 and 2016, the decolonisation concept became a buzzword in many of the higher institutions (Vandeyar 2020, p. 1). Various higher education institutions in South Africa made efforts to engage and explore ways to decolonise the higher education system, including the curriculum. Studies conducted on decolonisation indicate that there is much confusion and resistance in making a deliberate decision to im-

plement the practice of decolonisation in higher education (Kumalo 2020, p. 22; Gopal 2021, pp. 874–79). To remedy the situation, perhaps it is wise to start from the point of asking, what is colonisation? What was colonised?

Colonialism in the context of Africa implies that Africa was conquered by foreign nations and subjected to European imperialism, which used forces like slavery, colonialism and apartheid. From 1652 to 1994, the black people in South Africa suffered from slavery imposed by the Dutch, colonialism by the British and apartheid by the Afrikaners (Loubser 1987, pp. 3, 125; Pali 2016, p. 215). Higgs (2008, p. 446) argues that colonialism in Africa created a framework for the subjugation of the cultural, scientific and economic life of Africans that adversely impacted the African people's way of viewing the world and life. Hence, colonialism is economic, political, and cultural expansion, or the subjugation of others in whatever form (Smith 1999, p. 21). The economic expansion was perpetuated through macroeconomic policies, political expansion through colonial laws, and cultural expansion via religion. There were three types of professionals who were entrusted with the implementation of the colonial expansions. According to Kane (1978, p. 247) and Malisa and Missedja (2019, p. 3), the first one was the colonist, who was a political representative of the colonial government, tasked with instituting colonial legislations that promoted domination of the natives' educational, cultural, and political systems to turn the native into a servant of the colonial administration. The second one was the merchant, representing the business interests of the colonial government, who was tasked with exploiting human and material resources at the expense of the colonised. The merchant provided inferior education that equipped the natives with menial skills that would enable them to be employed as cheap labour for the benefit of the colonial government. The last one was the Western missionary, indoctrinated with colonial ideology, who was tasked with manipulating the thinking, morality, and belief systems of the colonised. Malisa and Missedja (2019, p. 3) argue that the Western missionaries provided education to Africans for the purpose of helping during worship times. Hence, for a long time, many of the African pastors had no or low qualifications as compared to their white colleagues. Furthermore, African pastors were given theological training that helped them maintain the status quo and dependency, and imitate the white missionary instead of empowering them to be creative and self-reliant.

What was colonised in Africa was the land, African beings and the mind (Le Grange 2016, p. 4; Senekal and Lenz 2020, p. 147). In the context of South Africa, colonisation of the land occurred when the Dutch settlers arrived in the Western Cape and conquered the land. Later, it was permanently enforced by the apartheid South African government through the 1913 Natives Land Act, which led to thousands of black people being removed from their land and restricted to 13% ownership of the land (Land Reform 2023). The conquest of the African was followed when the European settlers (the Dutch, the British and the Afrikaners) in the former Cape colony in South Africa captured the natives for slavery and enforced their labour in the European settlers' plantation fields and farms (Morton 1994, p. 1). The last stage was the colonisation of the mind, which occurred through disciplines such as education, science, economics, and theology (Le Grange 2016, p. 4; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2022, p. 24). Colonisation of the African mind is a stumbling block to the decolonisation of the academy, knowledge, and facilitation of social transformation, political progress and economic development (Kaunda 2015, p. 75). This is because whenever one pushes against colonisation of the land and the African being, colonialism as a power structure continues as a metaphysical process that destabilises the mind, language and knowledge production of the colonised (Omanga 2019).

3. Understanding of Decolonisation in Various Contexts

Kumalo (2020, p. 25) gives a general description of decolonisation as a process whereby a nation frees itself from domination by another, in culture, language, norms and values. However, I will discuss decolonisation concerning the above-mentioned colonisation of the land, African beings and the mind. According to Mekoa (2017, p. 187), decolonisation in Africa is the undoing of colonial governance when colonial countries attain independence,

the end of rule by a foreign power, and the removal of domination by non-indigenous forces within the geographical space and different institutions of the colonised. Considering the above, one can understand decolonisation in the context of conquered space (land) as the undoing or the reversing of the process of colonial governance in a conquered geographical space.

Decolonisation in the context of conquered human (African) beings involves a process of resistance by the colonised people to oppose their marginalisation and oppression. It is a protest against the inhumane subjugation of Africans to foreign oppression by Europeans. The pertinent oppression that occurred in the conquered human being was in the form of slavery, whereby Africans were captured and subjected to forced labour.

Decolonisation in the context of the conquered mindset, thinking, and knowledge is the most discussed understanding of decolonisation. Conquering the mindset usually occurs through the teachings, training, and distribution of literature from the colonial state. It mostly occurred within the educational and religious sectors. The colonial education system used the classroom as the centre to unleash psychological violence against the African mind (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2022, p. 25), whilst the religion propagated through the church was used to undermine the spirituality and culture of the African people (Mekoa 2017, p. 187). The ultimate purpose of this kind of colonisation is that the colonised thinks, speaks, imitates and adopts the life, culture and religion of the colonial master. Decolonisation in this context implies critical engagement of the settled knowledge (whether scientific or spiritual) in which the processes of new theories, perspectives, and methods are employed to transform these colonial problems (Jansen 2017, p. 22). According to Du Preez (2018, p. 21), decolonisation of the mind involves a process in which colonial ways of knowing and doing are deconstructed and then reconstructed to include the history, culture, language, and identity of colonised peoples. It is a process of decentring hegemonic Western knowledge and re-centring the African knowledge system. It is a strategic response to challenge colonial practices perpetuating educational inequality and injustice in higher education institutions.

3.1. Decolonisation in the Theological Context

Colonisation involves the conquest of the land, being and the mind. The Western missionaries and theologians indoctrinated with the colonial ideology used Western literature and the Bible to facilitate manipulation of the thinking, morality, and belief systems of the colonised (Thobejane 2013, p. 8). For example, apartheid in South Africa was supported with Biblical text when the white Afrikaners claimed that God had ordained them as a chosen race and commanded them to maintain their purity, and that the separate development system of living was a divinely ordained way of life (Ritner 1967, pp. 25, 26). The implementation of apartheid in South Africa had a devastating impact on the lives of the black people in South Africa because it deprived them of ownership of land and economic development, and exposed black people to inhumane treatment which harmed the moral, psychological and spiritual life of many Africans (Ramphele 2008, pp. 15–18; Jansen 2011, pp. 38–42).

Decolonisation of the conquered space in the theological context should involve the removal of the symbols or systems of colonial governance. For example, the dominance of the Western missionaries in the leadership and ministerial structures of the native church should be challenged and replaced with the local counterparts. The church order, music and liturgy adopted from the Western missionaries must be reviewed to transform the natives and enable them to engage their context effectively. Decolonisation in the theological context must advocate against the inhumane subjugation of Africans to foreign oppression. This implies the church and theological institutions must oppose all practices that deride the dignity of humanity like enforced labour, human trafficking, and slavery. As part of the contribution to decolonisation, theology has a responsibility to investigate the role played by the church, theological institutions, theologians and missionaries in the perpetuation of slavery. Decolonisation of the mind in the context of theological

understanding implies that the church and the theological institutions need to critically engage the inherited knowledge and ministerial practices the Western missionaries and theologians imparted to Africans. It must involve deconstruction and reconstruction of theological and ministerial concepts and practices learned from the Western missionaries and theologians so that contextualisation, enculturation and liberation of Africans can be experienced in the practice of the Christian ministry. Decolonisation of the mind should lead toward rediscovering the lost knowledge from indigenous cultures and promote recognition of lived African spirituality and experience.

In my observation, decolonisation in a theological context is not about humiliating, rejecting and destroying others no matter whether they were victims or perpetrators of colonialism. Decolonisation is a reparative process to restore others to be who they are supposed to be and guide them to relate with others as equal human beings and treat them with love, compassion and care. Decolonisation is helping others to be human again, by living an exemplary life worthy of demonstrating the values of the gospel. Decolonisation in a theological context has a responsibility to target and oppose ecclesial, spiritual or doctrinal powers that hinder human development, equality, peace, justice, and reconciliation no matter whether those powers come from the native, missionary, or settler context. Decolonisation in the theological context should mobilise churches and theological institutions to be advocates for the rights of the poor and marginalised by challenging the status quo that perpetuates the existence of injustices and systemic evil. Decolonisation of the mind in a theological context needs to help churches and theological institutions to embrace indigenous knowledge, practices and values as part of the ministry of the church and theological education.

3.2. Decolonisation and the White Community

How should we understand decolonisation in the context of the European higher education system? How do we help whites to embrace the practice of decolonisation? Gopal (2021, p. 880), a European scholar on decolonial studies, states that the fundamental task of decolonisation in the context of Europe is a reparative process of the European itself. It should be about understanding and extending knowledge about how cultures and communities beyond white and European communities have shaped European and white communities. Decolonisation here has a responsibility to enlighten European institutions and white communities to reckon with the economics of the empire; that is, European institutions like universities, businesses and others need to reckon with how they benefitted from labour, profits, and commodities from the colonised world (Gopal 2021, p. 879). Decolonisation must enable Europe to reckon with its self-constitution in the crucible of empire and engage with the legacies of colonialism both 'within' and beyond its colonial borders (Gopal 2021, p. 878).

Considering the above, the white community, whether in the form of academic, missionary or labourer, benefitted from the practice of slavery, colonialism, or apartheid; hence, many whites need to be educated and conscientious about the necessity of decolonisation. A study of some formerly white universities indicates that the presence of a white majority in strategic positions in higher education institutions in South Africa was responsible for the delay of decolonisation in its varied contexts (Le Grange et al. 2020, p. 37). To help whites to be decolonised, there is a need for them to embrace decolonisation as a reparative process that restores human dignity, amends relationships and seeks justice and shalom. Furthermore, the white community has a responsibility to acknowledge the legacies of slavery, colonialism and apartheid and find a way to contribute to the wellbeing and uplifting of those emasculated by the powers of white imperialism. The imposition of white cultural supremacy over indigenous people needs to be challenged because it harmed indigenous people to such an extent that many of them lost their identity and suffered from cultural and spiritual confusion (Buntu 2013, p. 2).

Many in the modern white and European community seem to have uneasy attitudes regarding decolonisation. According to Gopal (2021, pp. 874–79), whites and the European

community have a fear that decolonisation is about replacing the white man's work in university curricula. Moreover, there are claims by people of colour that equality and inclusion in Western polities are equated with the total annihilation and subordination of the white majority. Decolonisation is mistakenly assumed to be about adding some works by non-European or non-white authors to reading lists or tinkering with modules and courses in some humanities and social science disciplines without the deep interrogation of what counts as knowledge in the institutional curriculum (Gopal 2021, p. 877).

4. Why Does Theological Education in Africa Need to Be Decolonised?

The above discussion has to some extent indicated that colonisation has adversely affected the people's way of life by developing asymmetrical and colonial intersubjective relations between the coloniser and the colonised (Omanga 2019). The Western missionary, the merchant and the coloniser were the three main representatives one can mention that the colonial power used to pursue the agenda of colonisation.

Thobejane (2013, p. 8) argues that the Christian religion in Africa was viewed as the religion of the oppressor who used the Bible to colonise the minds of the indigenous people. Therefore, the Christian religion was at the centre of the colonial project and apartheid state (Ntombana et al. 2018, p. 398). For example, the Afrikaners' churches used the Bible and Christian religion to approve the separate development policy of apartheid in South Africa (De Villiers 2011, p. 6). According to Lynch (1712), fear of God was a strategy used by the enslavers and colonisers to perpetuate division and superiority of the white man. Furthermore, the Christianisation of Africans was used to emphasise personal holiness at the expense of radical social transformation (Kekana 2012, pp. 72, 73). For example, the research on congregations by Schoeman (2012, p. 5) and Swart (2010, p. 244) indicates that societal involvement by many congregations in South Africa is on the level of addressing immediate needs and survival skills rather than operating on the level of challenging policies of the state and systemic evils. This lack of radical societal intervention enabled and sustained legacies of colonisation and the westernisation efforts perpetrated on African people by the colonial powers.

Therefore, decolonisation has the responsibility to analyse the activities of the early missionaries and theologians, as most of them collaborated with the colonial government to oppress the Africans and undermine their values and culture. For example, some of the early missionaries influenced by Western enlightenment viewed Africans as pagans and objects of mission (Ntombana et al. 2018, p. 398). Hence, African cultural rituals and practices were viewed as evil, and Africans as subhuman in need of civilisation. According to Buntu (2013, p. 2), this led to cultural and spiritual confusion for many Africans, a historical and contemporary struggle of many Africans. Many African Christians are struggling with the question of how African culture should relate to the gospel. How should they understand their identity, and so on? For example, Ntombana et al. (2018, p. 399) argue that during the apartheid era, Africans were given Christian names on the pretext that they had received a new spiritual identity and that they were now civilised and adherents of the new religion of the Western people.

Ntombana et al. (2018, p. 398) further argue that during the colonial era, education was used to promote Christian religion and to colonise the mindset of Africans. Colonial education amongst the African community was used to divide the African community into different ethnic groups and races and into those who were uncivilised, uneducated and unconverted and those who were Christianised and civilised. Thobejane (2013, p. 2) says Bantu education, which was viewed as Christian by apartheid South Africa, was an inferior type of education for South African blacks, and it was practised by the apartheid government from 1953 until 1992. It was designed to maintain the subordinate and marginal status of blacks. It perpetuated hierarchical views of society as white and non-white and promoted an ideological consciousness of whites as superior and blacks as inferior (Sempija et al. 2017, p. 194). It limited blacks to occupational structures suitable for unskilled

labourers so that they did not compete with their white counterparts (Molope and Mekoa 2017, p. 176).

Colonial education promoted gender inequalities where women (especially black women) were regarded as a weaker species in all facets of South African socio-economic life (Thobejane 2013, p. 10). This inequality is evident in the religious sector; even though women are in the majority in churches, women have been segregated and marginalised with Biblical text like 1 Corinthians 11:5, 6; 14:34, 35; 1 Peter 3:7. Hence, Malisa and Missedja (2019, pp. 1–2, 8) claim that colonial education was sexist because it provided different and unequal vocational skills for boys and girls. Boys and girls were given the minimum standards of vocational education necessary for menial labour like gardening and plumbing, and for girls, sewing and cooking. These vocational skills failed to empower Africans to develop and uplift their living standards because colonial education did not allow Africans to master scholarly subjects, thus preventing them from competing for positions with their white counterparts. The academic curriculum, if given, was offered from a colonial perspective, and often English was the medium of instruction, not the local language. The colonial perspective of the curriculum portrayed Africa as traditional and backward, and extracurricular activities were segregated, as some were made available to Africans while others were available only to white students.

According to the study by Senekal and Lenz (2020, pp. 148, 153–54), the following challenges could be considered as delaying the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa. The first one is the lack of content and human resources. There is a concern that the information and knowledge that Africa has produced is not sufficient to compete on a global scale or to inspire Africans. There are not enough Africans to replace the present western-indoctrinated staff and implement an Afrocentric curriculum. The second challenge is time (Senekal and Lenz 2020, p. 154). For example, there is a concern about how long it would take to replace a Eurocentric educational system with a system that draws on both home-grown and international theories and science. The third challenge is the perception that Western knowledge is superior (Senekal and Lenz 2020, p. 156). There is a perception by parents that a Eurocentric qualification at a westernised institution will improve their children's chances of entering the global arena. There is a biased view from some academics that decolonising higher education will make the students' world smaller; that decolonising the curriculum could dilute the content and meaning attached to it; that Afrocentric curriculum and scholarly knowledge are inferior and lack theory and evidence-based research from which to draw contemporary knowledge. The fourth and last challenge is resistance to change. According to Senekal and Lenz (2020, pp. 156–57), this resistance on one hand stems from some of the academics who are resistant to let go of the familiar content of the curriculum and lack confidence in curriculum innovation. On the other hand, it is from some students and their parents as mentioned above, who have a fear that decolonisation with its focus on local knowledge will limit students' global opportunities and dilute the quality of curriculum content because of their belief that what works in Africa may not work in other parts of the world.

According to Thobejane (2013, p. 10), colonial education promoted colonial languages like English and French, and many students favour them because they open global opportunities for them. In addition, many academics support the use of colonial languages because they view indigenous languages as unscientific and lacking in the expression of other kinds of knowledge. However, the publication of theological knowledge in colonial languages hinders the process of contextualisation of theological knowledge and the scientific development of African languages. There is a need for African theological institutions to develop their own publishing houses and publish in local African languages.

According to Mekoa (2017, pp. 187–88), Africans are the majority in African higher education institutions, and they must generate knowledge reflective of African culture and values. Research epistemologies and methods used in higher African institutions continue to prioritise Western cultural and knowledge systems at the expense of promoting African cultural and knowledge systems. Since there are many African theological institutions and

churches dominated by Africans in numbers, there is a need to have a locally produced theologically researched knowledge using indigenous methods relevant to local contexts.

5. Markers of a Decolonised (Theological) Education in Africa

In the process of decolonising education in Africa, what are the markers of an ideal type of decolonised education needed for the African people? According to Mekoa (2017, p. 188), Afrocentric education is an ideal decolonised education for Africa. The first marker of Afrocentric education is an education that centres around African ideals, values, concepts, behaviours and issues. It does not blindly limit itself to the locality of knowledge nor ignorantly glorify Western knowledge systems but goes beyond the Western knowledge system to enrich itself and its beneficiaries. The second marker of Afrocentric education is integration of spirituality, as it strives to build morals and transform the mind and heart of the African into those of a servant of the community and the spiritual world. The third marker of Afrocentric education is accommodation of political knowledge to enhance local governance, to confront injustices, and to address people's social realities and felt needs. The fourth marker of Afrocentric education is being social with the purpose of mobilising individuals, communities, families and other sectors of society to learn and teach each other about social responsibility and respecting the relationships amongst humanity, the spiritual world and the environment. The fifth marker of Afrocentric education is being practical to help Africans gain appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to surviving in a specific context. The sixth marker of Afrocentric education is being holistic because it strives to build one spiritually, intellectually and physically to serve the community in various dimensions. The seventh marker requires that Afrocentric education should reshape the African educational and research agenda to focus on Africa and African educational thought (Ajani 2019, p. 105). It should guide research performed in Africa to provide solutions for African nations by developing curricula based on the best knowledge, skills, morals, beliefs and traditions from Africa, as well as the global context. The eighth marker of Afrocentric education in a theological context is about developing interest in contextual theologies like African Women's Theology, African Theology, Black Theology, Reconstruction Theology and others (Mashabela 2017, p. 2). The ninth marker of Afrocentric education within a theological context strives towards understanding the interaction of African indigenous knowledge, African lived spirituality, experience and values with the gospel and the Bible to transform African being and context. The tenth and last marker of ideal Afrocentric theological education within the South African institutions of higher education must promote dialogue across various religions, denominations and other societal structures and organisations to explore and identify ideal solutions to urgent social challenges.

6. How Theological Institutions in South Africa Engaged in Decolonisation

This discussion will focus on how the Faculty of Theology and Religion at UFS and Seth Mokitimi, Methodist Seminary reflect on the experience and understanding of decolonisation. UFS Decolonisation (UFS 2022b, p. 16) reports that UFS is a former white institution and has changed from being a predominantly white institution towards becoming a majority black university. In terms of decolonisation, UFS (2022b, p. 21) indicates that the institution needs to have clarity on the conceptualisation of decolonisation and transformation. The institution has a narrow focus on decolonisation regarding the Africanisation of the curriculum.

According to the UFS Decolonisation (UFS 2022b, p. 47) report on how theology students view and experience decolonisation of the curriculum, the findings were as follows: Theology students do support decolonisation, but their feedback does not provide a clear definition of decolonisation. At least half of the theology students participated in the discussion on decolonisation of the curriculum. Students said the practice of Afrocentric theology is pertinent and needs to be applauded, as many of the students in theology are black. Students must be involved in the decolonisation process of theological education by collaborating with the academic staff in discussing the in-depth conceptual understanding

and implications of the decolonisation of the theological curriculum. Due to the increase in the number of black students enrolled in the UFS, the Faculty of Theology and Religion (FTR) academic staff is faced with a challenge to take the decolonisation of the curriculum very seriously and integrate most of the African-related themes, experiences and practices into the renewed curriculum. In response, the UFS FTR in 2023 used a creative approach to renew its Bachelor of Divinity (BDiv) programme that will be implemented in 2025. Student reflections on module evaluations in the previous years were integrated into the BDiv recurriculisation plan for 2025. Some of the students' contributions from interactions with academic staff were reducing the number of modules and assessments, requests to enlighten students about career opportunities in theology, and integrating spiritual experience and practices of the local people into the theology curriculum. Local pastors from different denominations were asked to participate in a pilot study that intends to find out what needs to be integrated into the new BDiv curriculum. The results of the pilot research were discussed with the broader academic staff and students. The findings from the pilot research led to a proposal that academics need to review the pedagogical approach and review the list of prescribed sources to incorporate African context. The assessment approach integrates graduate attributes. The curriculum must reflect on strategic development goals, and teaching and learning must strive to contribute to engaged scholarship. The above is still in progress and further details will be discussed in a future publication.

The other example of decolonising theological education comes from Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS). According to Kumalo (2020, p. 24), students from this institution joined the student protests of 2015 and 2016, demanding that the curriculum must integrate the cultural and spiritual experiences of their congregants. From this incident, Kumalo's (2020, pp. 26–27) research suggests that a decolonised theological education in an institution like the above should do the following: First, it should prioritise African culture and African experiences during recurriculisation. Secondly, students must be introduced to a module on the indigenous people they are going to minister to. Thirdly, studies on Afrikology must be taught alongside Wesleyan theology. Fourthly, the curriculum must encourage dialogue between the teacher and the learner in theology studies. Fifth and lastly, to decolonise theological education, there is the need to produce more African academics who will take the responsibility of developing research and disseminating it to African students in African seminaries.

7. How Does Engaged Scholarship Facilitate Decolonisation of Education?

According to the UFS Decolonisation report (UFS 2022b, p. 66), UFS uses engaged scholarship as a tool to facilitate community development and social justice. Again, it uses the engaged scholarship to enrich the curriculum, research, learning, teaching and students' attributes. Engaged scholarship helps to facilitate decolonisation by maintaining the relevance of the academic curriculum and linking the real local needs to the global project and democratising knowledge. To achieve the above, the institution intends to increase the number of academic staff who are involved in engaged scholarship and increase opportunities for students to engage in community-based education.

There is a concern that not much is done to engage with the production of knowledge beyond universities, and this has led to a wide distinction between what African scholars know and experience of their world and what they learn in the academy and its applicability to their societies (Mkandawire 2005). The higher education institutions in South Africa have the responsibility to promote and develop social responsibility by creating awareness amongst students of their role in socio-economic development through community service programmes and sharing expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes. In democratic South Africa, the mandate of universities to be involved with societal transformation and justice was initiated by the government when it called on all public higher education institutions to implement community engagement (RSA 1997a, 1997b). This was to be implemented in three ways; the first one was being engaged in the community for the common good by sharing its resources, infrastructure, and expertise. The second was to

co-create relevant and responsive knowledge with and for the community towards solving socio-economic challenges. Lastly, the third was to educate and groom staff and students to develop citizenship and social responsibility committed to the common good.

In the UFS Engaged Scholarship (ES) Strategy (UFS 2022a, p. 1), initially, community engagement was carried out as a voluntary service in the community; later, it was integrated into the curriculum. Since 2022, the UFS has shifted from community engagement as a volunteering service to engaged scholarship that integrates community engagement but is broader than community engagement. Engaged scholarship is now compulsory for every student and academic staff member and has been made a significant part of key performance areas to be evaluated for promotion.

Engaged scholarship can be achieved in at least three ways. The first is engaged research (UFS 2022a, p. 3), which contributes mostly to the dissemination of knowledge by incorporating reciprocal community engagement practices into the discovery, teaching, integration, application, development, and mobilisation of knowledge to the mutual benefit of community and academic interests. Examples of engaged research are; contract research, internal corporate ventures, associate companies and technology licensing, etc. (NWU 2021/2022, p. 11). This is a crucial part of engaged scholarship where new knowledge is created in partnership with the community and integrated into teaching and learning and applied to societal problems.

The best example one can name of engaged research is the Beyers Naudé Centre (BNC) at the Faculty of Theology in the University of Stellenbosch. According to the BNC annual report (BNC 2017, p. 3), the BNC has three units: the Gender Unit, Bonhoeffer Unit and Unit for Religion and Law that host conferences, initiate research projects and produce high-quality research outputs. The Gender Unit collaborated with international and local partners to conduct research and offer a Master of Theology (MTh) and develop a PhD degree in Gender and Health for effecting change in perceptions in terms of gender, race, poverty and sexual orientation, employing education and research. The Bonhoeffer Unit arranged various Bonhoeffer consultations like "Bonhoeffer and the Reformation", "Bonhoeffer and the Anthropocene" and "Bonhoeffer and Barth", and public lectures like memorial lectures on healing memories, Russel Botman and discussions on radical economic transformation and land ownership in SA. Concerning teaching and learning, the BNC offered winter schools for the local and international communities. BNC has partnerships with local institutions like the Ecumenical Foundation of South Africa (EFSA) and the Synodical Commission for Doctrine and Current Affairs of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (SKLAS), with international institutions like the Church of Sweden, Faculdades EST (Sao Leopoldo, Brazil), and with leaders and activists from Papua. The projects of the BNC focused on issues of social concern that invite and challenge the churches and theologians in their work and witness. The critical evaluation through research, teaching and learning and engagement with theology practised by the BNC was informed by various publics in society. The impact of the collaboration of BNC and the public involved led to sustainable activities that benefit mutual partnership.

Engaged Teaching and Learning (UFS 2022a, p. 3), as another way of practising engaged scholarship, involves the transmission, transformation and extension of knowledge, which includes learning with various audiences through either formal or informal arrangements. The transmission of knowledge happens through a collaborative learning platform to learn with and from the communities. In engaged teaching–learning, students are broadly prepared with in-depth knowledge and professional skills and attributes required for the world of work. Students learn to think and act on local as well as global issues of real importance by engaging in outreach and service-learning practicals. At UFS, the Practical and Missional Theology Department is engaged in teaching and learning through service-learning modules from the Pastoral Care discipline that formed partnerships with institutions like children's homes, schools for students with disabilities and rehabilitation centres. These modules assist students with learning and pastoral care and provide counselling for various members of the community experiencing various challenges. The other

modules from practical and missional theology disciplines perform activities like outreach and visits to historical and religious sites, visits to religious institutions like churches, mosques, and synagogues to observe the liturgical rites and worship services of other religious institutions, experience participating in the ministry of the church with the poor, youths and marginalised people, and interact with people of other faiths and traditions. The impact of these activities is that they bridge the knowledge gap between academia and community members, promote the sharing of knowledge, skills and resources, and lastly, help students develop their responsibility of citizenship.

Lastly, engaged citizenship is an educational platform to prepare and help staff and students play a leading role through building sustainable partnerships with other stakeholders and respond to pressing societal challenges by deploying human intellectual and other resources for the development of communities (UFS 2022a, p. 3). Engaged citizenship can happen in three categories such as on the academic staff level, student level, and institutional level. Engaged citizenship activities for academics can be the facilitation of workshops, community leadership roles or serving on expert panels. Student engaged citizenship activities can include participation in student voluntary associations, residence programmes, and leadership roles in student formations. Lastly, university engaged citizenship activities can be those activities that a university as an institution engages in with professional business, cultural or educational bodies to develop the community. Academics in the FTR and UFS practice engaged citizenship by participating in church leadership, church councils, worship services, various church commissions and seminaries. In the community, some academics are involved in the minister fraternal practice of pastoral care and counselling and in sharing skills and knowledge through workshops to empower community members in addressing urgent social challenges. In the academic field, many of the academics perform engaged citizenship through leadership activities in academic associations of their discipline, faculty and university committees.

According to UFS ES Strategy (UFS 2022a, p. 4), the benefits of being an engaged scholar are as follows: An engaged scholar has the passion to engage with the communities beyond the universities; they relate their thoughts and actions to the situation of the community and strive to develop knowledge towards the wellbeing of society. They challenge the status quo of traditional forms of scholarship by venturing into collaborative research with members of the community to co-produce diverse knowledge. In performing research, they strive to address the local societal challenges through collaboration with the community and application of knowledge for global thinking.

The research method is an essential tool to produce knowledge and determine the trustworthiness of the knowledge produced (Ajani 2019, p. 108). In contrast, it can be a tool of epistemic domination and cognitive injustices (Omanga 2019). To avoid epistemological injustices, decolonisation of the research method compels one to build relationships and observe ethical practices. The methodologies that have been used in research most often are capable of highlighting problems but have failed to provide solutions because of the unilateral approaches used to seek societal solutions. The Christian church lacks a transformative theory of social intervention because the methodologies used for social intervention are not appropriate for the African context. There is a need for research methodologies that bring about social intervention by partnering with community members as knowledge co-creators.

Community-based practical research (CBPR) is a methodology rooted in the principles of action research, which involves fact finding, reflection, and steps that lead to social action. Other related methodologies are participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) and practice-oriented research, which is mostly used in theological studies. These methodologies will not be discussed in-depth here due to lack of space. Molosi-France and Dipholo (2022, pp. 113, 116) relate that CBPR is a methodological tool that helps students to relate theory with practice. It recognises community members as valuable partners in knowledge production through collaborative research approaches. Molosi-France and Dipholo (2022, p. 117) note that CBPR has the potential to contribute to transformative

educational strategies of teaching and learning and help students develop civic leadership skills to facilitate social change and social action research. Molosi-France and Dipholo (2022, p. 112) say community engagement is less prioritised as compared to teaching and research. This has led to students who are unable to apply what they learnt in real-life contexts, or to engage what they learnt so that they can internalise and transform it into their own context. In summary, the CBPR methodology and other related methodologies like the PALAR and practice-oriented research are relevant methodologies that theological institutions need to embrace and teach to students to facilitate decolonisation of the curriculum, teaching and learning, research, and the transformation of society. The recent research of Hermans (2014) "*From Practical Theology To Practice-oriented Theology*", and Hermans and Schoeman (2015) "*Practice-oriented research in service of designing interventions*" are some of the examples of how one may use practice-oriented research methodologies to transform research in theological studies to focus on community-based solutions to many societal problems.

8. Conclusions

Decolonisation is complex and involves the decolonisation of the space, being and mind. The most difficult form of decolonisation is that of the mind because colonisation in this instance tends to manifest itself in other forms of social structures. Decolonisation in theological education must target spaces like the church and theological institutions, and human beings subjected to various forms of enslavement and enforced labour. Furthermore, decolonisation in theological education must target settled knowledge that affects the mindset, spirituality and culture of the colonised to transform and liberate them from the forces that hinder their freedom and abundant life.

The markers of decolonised theological education in Africa imply that theological education must prioritise the needs of Africans by integrating into the curriculum African values, experiences and spirituality and addressing the societal, political and cultural challenges of Africa to promote the human dignity of Africans. Theological education in Africa tends to be European-centred and irrelevant to the context of Africa and lacks social impact because of the marginalisation of local knowledge and indigenous or community-based research methodologies. In conclusion, to achieve decolonised theological education, we need an Afrocentric approach to theological education. Furthermore, it is the practice of engaged citizenship, integration of engaged scholarship and research, learning and teaching, and implementation of community-based practical research (CBPR) methods. The above ES and CBPR methods are essential tools for the decolonisation of theological education because they help one develop a community consciousness by encouraging both students and scholars to share their skills and knowledge and value the community's members as potential co-producers of knowledge.

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