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BOOK REVIEW

Making connections: Integrative theological education in Africa

Naidoo, M. (ed.), (Stellenbosch: SUNPRes, 2021). xiv+180 pages. ISBN 978-1-991201-46-1.

A simple search on Google reveals that the Western world rests on an assumption that Western universities predated the origin and development of higher education globally. Yet, there were universities in Africa before the University of Bologna, recognised as the world's oldest university, was established in 1088. The first theological faculty was established at Alexandria before the end of the 2nd century CE. In terms of theological education, Africa does not need the West to inform us regarding how we go about formation for ministry, although, from the beginning of the colonial period, Western forms have been imposed on the African context on another assumption that the West is best. This is the context which integrative theological education seeks to challenge and replace outdated models. This is never a finished product but always a work in progress that aligns itself with the philosophy of lifelong learning.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part considers the conceptual issues related to integration along with the appropriateness of "Africanisation" and the theological education realities of the context. The second part deals with the changes that require to take place in the actual content of theological education. Part three engages with issues related to ministerial formation, moral education, gender awareness, and public theological issues. It also focuses on



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the hidden curriculum. The fourth part investigates two recent reports on the need for, and the value of integrative learning in the African continent.

One of the restraining features in the move towards integrated theological education in Africa is the global drive towards the ranking of institutions, because it will take time, resources, and much energy to establish a new African and integrative *modus operandi*. First, Africa cannot compete with historic European and American institutions, because they set the terms of the ranking process. Secondly, academic institutions in the West possess their massive historic resources. Thirdly, in order to become truly African, it must be acknowledged that we operate with vastly different epistemologies. Fourthly, prior to the imposition of Western Enlightenment informed thought forms, the African context already presented a holistic approach to life, of which education was an integral component. Related to this is the antipathy towards individualistic forms of expression (as distinguished by “isolation, individualism and competition”, p. 3) compared with the African commitment to a holistic communal approach marked by an inclusive “spiritual power” (Mugambi). It is possible to develop integrated theological education programmes. From the late 1970s, the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa introduced an integrated third year to its Diploma programme which was found to be helpful to those who were preparing to minister in a context still dominated by apartheid.

The book, which is the result of continentwide empirical research, auto-ethnography, and critical literature studies carried out by African scholars, stresses the need for theological education to emerge from the local context and to be communally led, for it is here that the needs are felt in their most acute form. Hence, transformation is essential in the design of curricula for the laity, the entire people of God, including the ordained.

It may be that African institutions of higher education will have to make a sacrifice, in order to re-establish their integrity as “African” without being pressed into a mould that defines African as only one form of representation. The move towards integrative theological learning can assist in this process, as long as we also do not expect all these forms to have the same form and structure, since no two contexts are identical. Although it is clear that such a move that is recommended for our theological education institutions will involve a great deal of time, energy, and enthusiasm, this collection of essays demonstrates that the effort expended will be well worth it in terms of the conscientised ministers that are produced. We must always remember that the nature of the ministry we are called to is integrated. We never sit down to study scripture without there being pastoral, theological, historical, missiological, or ethical implications. It is far better that our candidates for ministry learn an integrated methodology instead of being plunged into the multifaceted demands of ministering to God’s people with a disintegrated theology.