

# **Reimagining Theological Education in the Anglican Church of Tanzania: Overcoming Institutional and Pedagogical Barriers to the Five Marks of Mission**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the institutional and pedagogical challenges to integrating the Five Marks of Mission into Anglican theological education in Tanzania. Data were collected from ten Anglican theological institutions using a convergent mixed-methods case study approach, including structured surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Bandura's Social Learning Theory provided the theoretical foundation, offering insights into how institutional culture, instructor behaviour, and social modelling influence students' ministerial development. Findings indicated that while the institutions offered intense doctrinal instruction, they faced significant challenges in delivering contextually relevant and mission-oriented education. These challenges included outdated curricula, inadequate faculty qualifications in contextual and applied theology, limited exposure to ecological and justice-centred pedagogies, weak collaborations with local communities, and bureaucratic resistance to curriculum innovation. Students often reported a lack of practical mission opportunities, few examples in areas like social justice and environmental

stewardship, and limited access to field-based learning experiences. The analysis confirmed long-standing critiques within African theological scholarship that theology education remains overly theoretical and disconnected from the lived realities of society. It also highlighted a gap between classroom teaching and the holistic ministerial formation promoted by the Five Marks of Mission. The study recommended strategic reforms in curriculum development, faculty capacity building, and institutional partnerships with churches and civil society organisations. It emphasised the importance of experiential learning, supervised ministry placements, and reflective practice in fostering missional competence among clergy-in-training. By aligning theological education more closely with the Five Marks of Mission, this study provides a roadmap for transforming clergy training in Tanzania. The findings offer valuable insights into missiological discourse in Africa and serve as a practical resource for theological educators, church leaders, and policymakers dedicated to preparing clergy for faithful and contextually relevant ministry.

## **Key Words**

Theological Education, Five Marks of Mission, Missional Formation, Social Learning Theory, Curriculum Reform, Contextual Theology

## **Introduction**

This article explores how theological education within the Anglican Church of Tanzania can be reimagined to align

more effectively with the Five Marks of Mission – evangelism, discipleship, social service, justice, and ecological care. Despite the broad missional mandate of these marks, many Tanzanian theological colleges continue to prioritise traditional, doctrine-based curricula with minimal emphasis on contextual relevance or practical engagement. This disconnection raises concerns about the adequacy of current training in preparing clergy to respond to the complex social, ecological, and cultural realities facing the church and society today.

Guided by Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the study examined how institutional culture, pedagogical methods, and faculty role modelling influence students' formation for holistic, mission-oriented ministry. Employing a convergent mixed-methods case study design, data were collected from ten Anglican theological institutions through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. The research identified five principal barriers to integrating the Five Marks of Mission: outdated and overloaded curricula, insufficient faculty capacity in contextual theology, weak partnerships with local communities, inadequate infrastructure for practical training, and institutional conservatism that impedes curriculum reform.

These challenges have constrained students' ability to internalise and apply the church's missional priorities, often resulting in graduates who are doctrinally grounded but underprepared for real-world ministry. In response, this study proposes reforms focused on curriculum development, faculty training, institutional systems, and community engagement. The goal is to establish a more

responsive model of theological education that equips clergy not only for pastoral responsibilities but also for transformative societal engagement.

To support the analysis that follows, the article also clarifies key concepts central to the study: theological education, the Five Marks of Mission, contextual theology, faculty development, and Social Learning Theory. Defining these terms provides a conceptual framework for interpreting the findings and understanding the theological, pedagogical, and institutional dynamics within the Anglican Church of Tanzania.

### **Definitions for the Keywords**

Theological education, as applied in this study, refers to the structured process of forming clergy through academic, spiritual, and ministerial training. Within the African context, it is expected not only to cultivate doctrinal depth but also to address social and contextual relevance. This study investigated the extent to which theological colleges in Tanzania prepare students for leadership and mission beyond traditional ecclesiastical roles.<sup>1</sup> This framing provided a foundation for exploring how theological institutions might become more missionally responsive in both form and content.

Building on that, the Five Marks of Mission – adopted by the Anglican Communion – offer a comprehensive

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1 Dietrich Werner et al., fueds., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 45–47.

missional framework that combines evangelism, discipleship, social service, justice, and care for creation.<sup>2</sup> This framework was employed as an analytical lens for evaluating whether theological training in Tanzania reflects the Church's broader commitment to holistic ministry.<sup>3</sup> It served as a benchmark for assessing the connection between academic instruction and practical ministry outcomes.

To deepen this assessment, the study applied the concept of contextual theology, which posits that theology must emerge from and address local realities – namely, culture, history, and lived experience.<sup>4</sup> By adopting this perspective, the study examined how Tanzanian theological colleges engage with their communities and whether local concerns are incorporated into theological curricula. Contextual theology was thus essential in assessing institutional responsiveness to socio-cultural dynamics.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory provided the central analytical framework for this study, highlighting how learning occurs not only through direct instruction but also through observation, imitation, and social interaction.<sup>5</sup> The theory's four key processes – attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation – explain how learners

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2 Anglican Consultative Council, *Mission in a Broken World: Report of ACC-6, Badagry, Nigeria, 1984* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 1984), 12–15.

3 Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 215–218.

4 Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. and expanded ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 7–10.

5 Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, Prentice-Hall Series in Social Learning Theory (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986).

internalise behaviours by observing role models. In theological education, this framework was crucial for understanding how students adopt mission-oriented values through the example of faculty, institutional culture, and relational dynamics. The study revealed that where positive role modelling and contextual engagement were lacking, students struggled to apply theological knowledge in practice. Thus, Social Learning Theory offered valuable insights into how theological institutions either facilitate or hinder the integration of the Five Marks of Mission, reinforcing the need for relational, participatory, and contextually grounded formation.

Faculty development was also highlighted as a central concern. It refers to the ongoing training and capacity-building of theological educators. While many lecturers in Tanzanian colleges possess strong doctrinal knowledge, the study found that they often lack exposure to pedagogical approaches that support applied theology in areas such as ecological justice, peacebuilding, and community transformation.<sup>6</sup> Enhancing faculty competencies emerged as a key strategy for equipping institutions to deliver missionally relevant education.

Lastly, the concept of holistic ministry – defined as Christian service that integrates spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions – was used to frame the desired outcome of theological education. Drawing from Katongole and Rice, the study used this concept to determine whether theological training equips students to serve in ways that

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6 Katie G. Cannon, “Teaching Theological Ethics: Black Women’s Voices,” *Teaching Theology and Religion* 4, no. 3 (2001): 148–157.

address the complex needs of contemporary Tanzanian communities.<sup>7</sup> The convergence of these keywords underlines the study's broader goal: to reimagine theological education as a formation process that is biblically grounded, contextually engaged, and missionally transformative.

Following the clarification of key terms, the following section presents a review of relevant scholarly literature to position this study within the broader academic context. It examines how curriculum design, teaching approaches, and institutional culture shape the formation of clergy, offering valuable insights that support the study's focus on theological education within the Anglican Church of Tanzania.

### **Theological Foundations and African Contextual Engagement with the Five Marks of Mission**

This literature review frames the theological and curricular landscape in which this study investigates the integration of the Five Marks of Mission within Tanzanian Anglican institutions. Missional theology has increasingly shaped contemporary theological discourse by redefining the Church not merely as a spiritual institution but as a participant in the ongoing redemptive work of God – *Missio Dei* – as revealed throughout Scripture. This concept is rooted in biblical theology, beginning with God's covenantal commissioning of Israel (Gen 12:1–3; Exod 19:5–6), fulfilled in

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7 Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 35–40.

the incarnate mission of Christ (John 20:21), and extended through the Church's calling to bear witness to the kingdom of God (Matt 28:18–20; Col 1:20; 2 Cor 5:18–20). The Church, therefore, does not possess a mission of its own but participates in God's mission, which encompasses spiritual renewal, social justice, and the reconciliation of all creation.<sup>8</sup>

Foundational thinkers such as Bosch and Guder significantly advanced this theological paradigm, portraying Christian mission as both personal and structural, engaging the spiritual transformation of individuals and the renewal of unjust social systems.<sup>9</sup> Their work helped shift the understanding of mission from ecclesiocentric expansionism to holistic participation in God's redemptive purposes. While these contributions emerged from Western contexts, they must not be dismissed as outdated. Instead, they provide an interpretive foundation that has informed and been reinterpreted by theologians across the Global South. The present study adopts a more nuanced approach that acknowledges the ongoing dialogue and interdependence between Western and Majority World scholarship, affirming that theological development is inherently relational and evolving.

Within the Anglican Communion, the Five Marks of Mission – proclaiming the Good News, teaching and nurturing new believers, responding to human need,

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8 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 11–15.

9 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*; Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Church's Sending to North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 50–55.



transforming unjust structures, and safeguarding creation – were formally adopted by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984.<sup>10</sup> These five marks provide a biblically grounded and theologically coherent vision of the Church’s vocation, reflecting the breadth of *Missio Dei* in action. In African contexts, they function as a practical theological tool for engaging both ecclesial and societal realities, including poverty, injustice, spiritual dislocation, and ecological degradation. Recent African scholarship has enriched this missional dialogue by affirming theology as contextually accountable and grounded in lived experience. Gerald O. West argues that African biblical interpretation is fundamentally postcolonial and emerges from the “life-world” of communities – a site of theological struggle rather than abstract dogma.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Andrew Mbuvi introduces African Biblical Studies as an emerging discipline that integrates scholarly rigour with grassroots Christian practice.<sup>12</sup> These scholars call for a theology that speaks directly to African realities, including gender inequality, cultural identity, land injustice, and economic marginalisation. This body of work reflects a growing consensus that theological education must form clergy not only for doctrinal fidelity but also for transformative public engagement.

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10 Anglican Consultative Council, *Mission in a Broken World*, 12–15.

11 Gerald O. West, “African Biblical Scholarship as Post-Colonial, Tri-Polar, and a Site-of-Struggle,” in *Navigating African Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. E. E. Ekblad (Bamenda, Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG, 2018), 15–38.

12 Andrew Mbuvi, “African Biblical Studies: An Introduction to an Emerging Discipline,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 15, no. 2 (2017): 149–178.

Earlier contributions from John Mbiti, Kwame Bediako, and Samwel Kunhiyop laid the foundation for African contextual theology.<sup>13</sup> These scholars emphasised that Indigenous cultural frameworks, communal worldviews, and local languages must shape authentic theology in Africa. They challenged the dominance of imported Western models, calling instead for theological reflection that is both biblically faithful and socially responsive. In East Africa, theologians such as Musimbi Musimbi and Emmanuel Katongole have expanded this vision, arguing that theological education must equip clergy to address contemporary challenges, including political instability, corruption, gender-based violence, and ecological crises.<sup>14</sup> Katongole, in particular, urges the Church to reclaim its prophetic identity – not only through proclamation but also through tangible public action that confronts systemic brokenness.

In the Tanzanian context, Fabian Mdolwa and Stephen Burns have critically evaluated how the Five Marks of Mission are reflected in theological institutions.<sup>15</sup> Although these

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13 John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 80–85; Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 110–115; Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 45–50.

14 Musimbi R. Musimbi, “Gender, Theology, and Development in East Africa,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30, no. 1 (2014): 85–104; Emmanuel Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa: A Political Theology for Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 120–125.

15 Fabian Mdolwa, “Theological Education’s Challenges in Tanzania,” *African Ecclesial Review* 53, no. 3 (2011): 211–225; Stephen Burns, “Challenges and

marks are officially endorsed by church leadership, their curricular integration remains limited and uneven. Burns noted that while traditional disciplines, such as biblical studies and systematic theology, are foundational, they are often prioritised at the expense of applied fields, including social ethics, ecological theology, and community development.<sup>16</sup> To be clear, this critique does not assume that core theological disciplines are inherently disconnected from contextual concerns. As Gerald West and Mbuvi demonstrate, African biblical and theological studies are actively engaging life-world issues such as creation care and justice.<sup>17</sup> However, in the Tanzanian institutions reviewed, these themes are not always embedded in course objectives or assessed through practical learning outcomes. The concern, therefore, lies not with the disciplines themselves but with how they are institutionally structured and taught.

Josephat Kinyashi added that many theological colleges in Tanzania still rely on Western-derived pedagogies that emphasise doctrinal transmission and cognitive learning, often with minimal emphasis on critical thinking, practical formation, or contextual application.<sup>18</sup> As a result, graduates tend to be well-prepared for liturgical

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Opportunities in Theological Education in East Africa,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 13, no. 1 (2015): 50–67.

16 Burns, “Challenges and Opportunities,” 60–62.

17 Gerald O. West, “African Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of African Theology*, ed. Elias Kifon Bongmba (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 233–245; Mbuvi, “African Biblical Studies,” 20–25.

18 Josephat Kinyashi, “Contextualization and Curriculum Transformation in Theological Education in Tanzania,” *African Journal of Practical Theology* 4, no. 2 (2018): 134–148.

and sacramental functions – an essential aspect of ordained ministry – but less equipped for leading their communities in addressing social and ecological challenges. This observation is not a call to diminish the importance of sacramental or liturgical training. Instead, it supports a more integrated model of ministerial formation that unites theological depth with practical engagement. Clergy, while not social workers or environmental scientists, hold a strategic role in shaping the theological imagination of communities, fostering ethical reflection, and promoting faithful responses to the pressing needs of society.

A further concern identified in the literature is the limited capacity of faculty to model contextual and missional engagement. Both Mdolwa and Burns observed that many lecturers in Tanzanian institutions have received little or no training in contextual theology or transformative pedagogy.<sup>19</sup> This is where Bandura's Social Learning Theory becomes particularly relevant. Students learn not only from what is taught but also from what is modelled in behaviour, attitude, and institutional culture.<sup>20</sup> In contexts where faculties are disengaged from missional theology or lack exposure to applied theological frameworks, students are less likely to internalise the values expressed in the Five Marks of Mission – even if those values are present in the syllabus. In such cases, the hidden curriculum may undermine the very goals of formal instruction.

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19 Mdolwa, "Theological Education's Challenges," 218–220; Burns, "Challenges and Opportunities," 63–65.

20 Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*.

In summary, the literature reveals a shared concern across both African and Western sources: theological education must be reformed to align more closely with the Church's missional identity. While doctrinal fidelity remains central, it must be complemented by pedagogical approaches and curricular content that engage the realities of contemporary African life. This study builds on these theological and educational insights by empirically examining how the Five Marks of Mission are integrated – or neglected – within Anglican theological institutions in Tanzania. In doing so, it seeks to contribute toward a vision of theological education that is biblically grounded, contextually responsive, and holistically missional. The literature review revealed a consistent gap between the Church's commitment to *Missio Dei* and the current practices of theological education in Tanzania, where curricula often lack integration of the Five Marks of Mission. To address this, the study conducted an empirical investigation using a convergent mixed-methods case study design, which enabled both a broad institutional analysis and an in-depth exploration of lived experiences. This methodological approach, outlined in the following section, was chosen to ensure that the findings are theologically grounded, contextually relevant, and practically helpful in strengthening theological education within the Anglican Church of Tanzania.

## **Research Methodology**

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods case study strategy to investigate how Anglican theological

institutions in Tanzania incorporated the Five Marks of Mission into their curricula and teaching practices. The method enabled the simultaneous collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, providing a holistic view of the institutional dynamics that influence missional formation.<sup>21</sup> Data were collected from ten institutions across Tanzania's five zones, involving 181 participants: 106 final-year theology students, 59 educators, and 16 church leaders. Structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis (including the ACT Education Policy 2002) were used to gather insights into curriculum content, institutional priorities, and teaching practices.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory provided a framework for assessing how faculty behaviour, institutional culture, and relational interactions influenced students' internalisation of mission values. The theory illuminated how observation and modelling – beyond formal instruction – shaped students' capacity to apply theological knowledge practically.<sup>22</sup> To enhance credibility and limit bias, the study used inductive thematic analysis, peer debriefing, and triangulation across all data sources. Patterns emerged organically, ensuring alignment with participants' genuine

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21 John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 10–15; David L. Morgan, "Paradigms Lost and Pragmatism Regained: Methodological Implications of Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods," *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, no. 1 (2007): 48–76.

22 Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*.

experiences.<sup>23</sup> Ethical protocols were rigorously followed, including obtaining informed consent, preserving confidentiality, and ensuring that all participation was voluntary. Ethical approvals were secured from St. Paul's University and the ACT Education Department. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymised data and secure digital storage. Questions were neutrally phrased, and participant engagement was fostered through a respectful, non-directive approach. Internationally recognised ethical standards, including the Belmont Report and Declaration of Helsinki, guided all research stages.<sup>24</sup>

## Findings and Discussion

Following the research procedures outlined in the previous section, this part of the study presents and discusses the main findings concerning the central objective: to identify the institutional and pedagogical barriers that hinder the integration of the Five Marks of Mission into theological education within the Anglican Church of Tanzania. The analysis utilised both quantitative and qualitative data and was interpreted through the lens of

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23 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101.

24 National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html>; World Medical Association, "World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects," *JAMA* 310, no. 20 (2013): 2191-2194, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.281053>.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which offered insights into how observed behaviours, role modelling, and learning environments influence students' ministerial formation. By emphasising the interaction between institutional culture and pedagogical practice, the theory provided a strong framework for analysing how mission-oriented values were either internalised or resisted.<sup>25</sup> The discussion is organised around key themes emerging from the data, each supported by statistical results, participant interviews, and institutional documents.

### *Demographic Profile of Respondents*

The study included 133 participants from ten Anglican theological institutions across Tanzania, comprising 87 final-year theology students and 46 educators. This broad distribution ensured that findings captured diverse institutional cultures, regional contexts, and theological emphases.

Among the 46 theological educators, only 13% held doctoral degrees, 28% had master's degrees, and 59% held bachelor's degrees. This indicates a reliance on educators with foundational qualifications, which may limit theological innovation and the integration of interdisciplinary or missional content. As illustrated in Table 1, the majority of educators with bachelor's degrees also had limited teaching experience, which can weaken the modelling of advanced theological reasoning crucial for internalising complex ministerial values. The term "Educator" is used instead of

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25 Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*.



“Lecturer“ to reflect their teaching roles, given the accurate distribution of qualifications.

Table 1: Faculty Qualifications by Years of Teaching Experience

Academic Qualification	0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	Above 15 years
Bachelor’s Degree	2	9	2	0
Master’s Degree	6	7	3	0
Doctoral Degree	1	2	1	0

Figure 1: Faculty Qualification Distribution

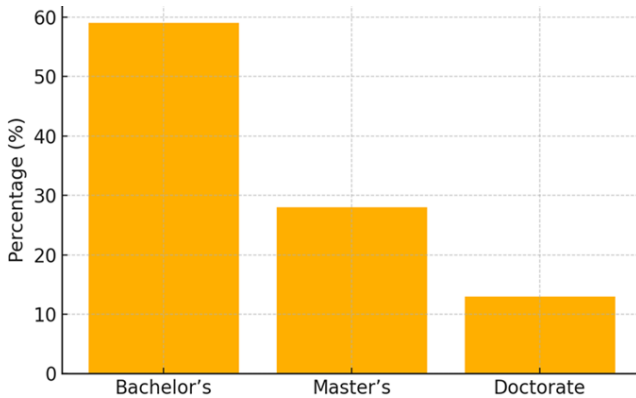


Figure 1 illustrates that theological education in many Tanzanian Anglican institutions is predominantly delivered by educators with bachelor’s degrees (59%), followed by

those with master's degrees (28%) and a small proportion holding doctoral qualifications (13%). This distribution highlights a significant gap in academic depth and signals the urgent need for institutional investment in faculty development to enhance both scholarly engagement and pedagogical effectiveness.

To avoid overstating academic rank, the term "Educator" is used throughout this study instead of "Lecturer". While "Lecturer" is an official designation typically requiring a doctoral qualification within Tanzanian higher education structures, the majority of participants in this study did not meet this threshold. The use of "Educator" reflects their actual role in teaching, mentoring, and facilitating curriculum delivery.

A balanced combination of positively and negatively worded items was purposefully included in the questionnaire to reduce the risks of confirmation bias and response bias. By encouraging critical reflection on each topic, this method decreased the possibility of reflexive or acquiescent agreement. For instance, although statements with a deficiency framing, such as "The curriculum does not adequately prepare me for ministry," were included, they were balanced by statements with a positive frame, such as "The curriculum strengthens my ability to serve in my local context." In addition to upholding the ethical norms of impartiality and equity in study design, this methodological balance facilitated the collection of more complex and trustworthy data, especially from student respondents.

The sample consisted of 133 participants drawn from ten Anglican theological institutions across Tanzania's five

major geographical zones: Northern, Central, Southern, Western, and Eastern. This broad distribution ensured that findings captured diverse institutional cultures, regional contexts, and theological emphases within the Anglican Church of Tanzania. Of the total participants, 87 were final-year theology students and 46 were educators. Among the students, 66% were male and 34% were female, with most being aged between 26 and 35 years. The majority were enrolled in diploma or bachelor's programmes, indicating that the responses reflect formative stages of theological training. The geographic and cultural diversity of the student body added depth to the data, offering varied perspectives on theological education and mission readiness. The educator group consisted of 74% males ( $n = 34$ ) and 26% females ( $n = 12$ ). All had formal theological qualifications. Despite many educators having more than five years of teaching experience, qualitative data revealed that few had received updated training in missional theology, contextualisation, or applied pedagogy. This gap highlighted the tension between experience and continuing formation. These demographic insights provide essential context for interpreting the study's findings. The presence of experienced faculty indicates institutional continuity, while the shortage of postgraduate-level educators suggests limitations in advanced theological engagement. The diversity among students underscores the broad reach of Anglican institutions, but gender and age imbalances highlight the need for more inclusive recruitment strategies. Understanding the educational backgrounds and institutional roles of both students and educators is crucial

for assessing the challenges and opportunities related to implementing the Five Marks of Mission. These findings form the basis for the thematic analysis presented in the next section.

### Quantitative Analysis

Following the demographic profile, this section presents the quantitative findings on institutional and pedagogical barriers affecting the integration of the Five Marks of Mission into theological education. Participants were asked to evaluate a series of challenges using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated “Not a challenge at all” and 5 denoted a “Major challenge”. This structure provided valuable comparative insights into perceptions among both students and educators across participating institutions.

Table 2: Key Reported Challenges and Statistical Outcomes

<b>Reported Challenge</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Lack of resources for field-based mission training	4.36	0.77
Overcrowded curriculum with doctrinal focus	4.12	0.91
Inadequate faculty training in missional pedagogy	3.98	0.89
Institutional resistance to curriculum reform	3.81	1.03

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Weak partnerships with local communities	3.47	1.08
Absence of assessment tools for missional competence	3.21	1.14

The highest-ranked challenge was the lack of resources for field-based mission training ( $M = 4.36$ ), reflecting substantial logistical and financial constraints across theological institutions. Students noted that many outreach programs were either cancelled or never initiated due to a lack of transportation, accommodation, or funding for field placements. These limitations hindered the experiential learning necessary for integrating theological principles into community-based mission practices, thereby narrowing students' ministerial readiness.

The second-ranked challenge was an overcrowded curriculum overly focused on doctrinal content ( $M = 4.12$ ). Curricula in most institutions prioritised traditional disciplines such as systematic theology and church history, with little space for courses on practical mission, social justice, or community engagement. Lecturers observed that efforts to revise or expand syllabi were often blocked by institutional conservatism and concerns over preserving theological orthodoxy. This rigidity restricted the institutions' ability to offer holistic, mission-oriented formation.

Closely following was the inadequacy of faculty training in missional pedagogy ( $M = 3.98$ ). Although the

educators were qualified in theology, many lacked training in pedagogical methods or practical experience in topics such as ecological theology and peacebuilding. This limited their ability to guide students in applying theological knowledge to contextual challenges. Where role models were lacking, students struggled to internalise missional values, highlighting the importance of faculty modelling within the learning environment, as suggested by Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Institutional resistance to curriculum reform ( $M = 3.81$ ) emerged as another significant challenge.

Faculty noted that bureaucratic systems and adherence to longstanding traditions slowed academic content revisions. Even where reform was supported in principle, implementation was often delayed. This lack of responsiveness weakened the alignment of education with changing ministerial and social realities. The remaining challenges, weak partnerships with local communities ( $M = 3.47$ ) and the absence of assessment tools for missional competence ( $M = 3.21$ ), exposed systemic gaps in practical ministerial preparation.

Limited engagement with grassroots organisations deprived students of exposure to real-world mission. At the same time, the lack of tools to assess missional competencies meant such learning outcomes were often neglected in academic planning. Without structured frameworks to evaluate leadership, community engagement, and ecological responsibility, mission themes remained peripheral in many institutions.

Additionally, the perspectives of academic administrators were examined to capture an institutional

governance viewpoint. Administrators acknowledged that while curricular reforms were needed, implementation was often hindered by limited resources, staff shortages, and misalignment between institutional policies and theological innovation. Their voices helped clarify the bureaucratic inertia frequently cited by faculty and confirmed the lack of institutional mechanisms for evaluating mission-related learning outcomes.

Administrators further noted the absence of strategic partnerships with external organisations and emphasised the importance of developing assessment tools and mentoring frameworks that reflect the Five Marks of Mission. Together, these findings underscore the strength of theological education in academic theology but its weakness in contextual application. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated reforms in curriculum, faculty development, institutional governance, and external engagement. Such reforms are essential for aligning theological education with the holistic vision of the Five Marks of Mission and equipping clergy to respond to both ecclesial and societal demands.

### *Qualitative Analysis and Emerging Themes*

To complement the survey findings, sixteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of church leaders and theological faculty members. These interviews provided more profound insight into the institutional culture, pedagogical practices, and contextual realities that shape how theological education is delivered. Thematic analysis was applied inductively to uncover

patterns in participants' experiences and observations. Through this process, five interrelated barriers were identified as key constraints to the effective integration of the Five Marks of Mission in Anglican theological institutions in Tanzania.

### Theme 1: Resource Limitations and Infrastructure Gaps

One of the most persistent and significant challenges highlighted by participants was the severe limitation of financial and physical resources. These constraints directly impacted the capacity of institutions to implement practical and mission-oriented learning. Respondents commonly reported the absence of essential infrastructure – such as vehicles, fuel, and accommodation – to support fieldwork, internships, and community outreach.

Educator Respondent 5 explained, “We frequently lack the transportation required to get students into the field. Most of our activities take place on campus.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Student Respondent 13 stated, “We had intended to conduct a community outreach, but it had to be cancelled due to lack of transportation and fuel.”<sup>27</sup> These comments highlight the disparity between theological instruction and the practical application of ministry. Without adequate investment in infrastructure, institutions are unable to provide the experiential learning environments necessary for the internalisation and practice of the Five Marks of Mission. The

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26 David Mdabuko, interview with a theological educator, February 2024.

27 David Mdabuko, focus group discussion with theology students, February 2024.



lack of exposure to practical mission settings reduces the effectiveness of formation processes. It undermines the development of clergy who are expected to lead transformational ministry in resource-constrained communities. This calls for a reimagining of institutional strategies that prioritise resource mobilisation and partnerships aimed at supporting field-based learning.

### Theme 2: Doctrinal Rigidity and Overloaded Curricula

Another significant theme to emerge was the dominance of doctrinal and historical subjects in the curriculum, often at the expense of practical or contextually relevant mission studies. Several educators voiced concern that curriculum design continued to prioritise inherited academic frameworks over evolving pastoral and social needs. Educator Respondent 3 noted, “The current programme includes many traditional subjects, which makes it difficult to introduce new mission-related content.”<sup>28</sup>

Student Respondent 17 added, “We learn a lot about mission in theory, but we are rarely given chances to practise it.”<sup>29</sup> This quotation captures the concern that students are not being adequately prepared for ministry beyond doctrinal understanding. This perceived gap between academic content and real-world application echoes many other voices in this study. The consequence of such rigidity is the underdevelopment of holistic pastoral leaders who are grounded in both theological understanding and the lived

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28 David Mdabuko, interview with a theological educator, February 2024

29 David Mdabuko, focus group discussion with theology students, February 2024.

realities of the communities they serve. The findings point to the urgent need for curricular reform that integrates doctrinal rigour with mission-oriented, interdisciplinary courses. Institutions must strike a balance between fidelity to theological tradition and responsiveness to the social, ecological, and cultural contexts in which ministry is practiced.

### Theme 3: Faculty Limitations and Pedagogical Gaps

While many faculty members were academically qualified, respondents noted a gap in their preparedness to teach mission-related subjects grounded in contextual realities. Most lecturers were well-versed in doctrinal content but lacked training or lived experience in fields such as community development, ecological theology, or peacebuilding.

Student Respondent 6 remarked, “Our lecturers teach about mission, but some may not have had the opportunity to practise it directly.”<sup>30</sup> Church Leader Respondent 12 added, “Our lecturers are strong in doctrine, but there is a need for more who can mentor students in practical mission work.”<sup>31</sup> These statements highlight the disparity between formal instruction and experiential guidance. Drawing on Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, which emphasises learning through observation and modelling, the findings suggest that students benefit most when faculty themselves

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<sup>30</sup> David Mdabuko, focus group discussion with theology students, February 2024.

<sup>31</sup> David Mdabuko, interview with a church leader, March 2024.

exemplify mission-oriented practice.<sup>32</sup> Without such role models, theological formation risks remaining abstract and ungrounded. The findings advocate for deliberate investment in faculty development programmes that emphasise contextual engagement, mentoring, and interdisciplinary teaching. Doing so would equip educators not only to convey content but also to model the Church's commitment to holistic mission.

#### Theme 4: Institutional Conservatism and Bureaucratic Resistance

Theological institutions in Tanzania have often adopted a cautious approach to curriculum reform, primarily driven by the desire to maintain doctrinal integrity and ecclesial tradition. While such conservatism helps to maintain theological continuity, it also hinders timely adaptation to contemporary missional needs. Participants frequently pointed to an institutional culture that favours tradition over innovation, thereby limiting the integration of the Five Marks of Mission into theological education. Multiple respondents described how bureaucratic processes for curriculum revision were slow, centralised, and administratively burdensome.

Educator Respondent 9 explained, "Introducing a new course can take several years because of the many steps required for approval. This slows innovation, even when there is agreement on the need for change."<sup>33</sup> Church Leader Respondent 4 noted, "There is genuine concern that

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<sup>32</sup> Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*.

<sup>33</sup> David Mdabuko, interview with a theological educator, February 2024.

adding courses on current social issues might lead us away from our theological roots.”<sup>34</sup> A concrete manifestation of this inertia is the continued reliance on the 1997 provincial syllabus for the Diploma in Theology. Educator Respondent 7 commented, “The 1997 provincial syllabus has guided us for many years, but it now needs revision so it can include important themes like justice, environment, and community transformation.”<sup>35</sup> The longevity of this syllabus points to stability, but its outdated content fails to address current ecclesial and social challenges. This has resulted in theological programmes that inadequately reflect the Church’s evolving mission priorities. Even reform-minded faculty expressed frustration with institutional systems that lack flexibility and inclusiveness. Proposals for curricular updates were often delayed or rejected due to unclear procedures and limited faculty participation. Such constraints stifle innovation and demotivate educators who are committed to aligning theological training with the Church’s missional vision.

To address these issues, participants recommended a set of practical strategies: streamlining approval procedures, fostering transparent communication between faculty and church leadership, and encouraging innovation within established doctrinal frameworks. These measures were viewed as essential for ensuring that theological education remains both faithful to its confessional roots and responsive to the pressing needs of the Tanzanian context.

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<sup>34</sup> David Mdabuko, interview with a church leader, March 2024.

<sup>35</sup> David Mdabuko, interview with a theological educator, February 2024.

## Theme 5: Inadequate Community Connections and Contextual Disconnection

Another significant barrier identified was the limited interaction between theological institutions and the communities they are intended to serve. Respondents consistently reported that many colleges operated in isolation from local churches, civil society organisations, and grassroots initiatives. This disconnect weakened students' opportunities for contextual learning and practical ministry.

Student Respondent 18 stated, "Our college feels quite isolated; we rarely have structured opportunities to engage with the broader community."<sup>36</sup> Church Leader Respondent 10 added, "Our institutions do not currently have formal partnerships with local NGOs or community-based initiatives, which limits students' practical exposure."<sup>37</sup> This gap has several implications. First, it deprives students of opportunities to apply theological concepts in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Second, it discourages initiative and leadership development among students, who are often restricted to theoretical learning. Third, it perpetuates a form of theological education that remains abstract and detached from the complex realities facing Tanzanian communities.

Participants strongly recommended the establishment of institutional partnerships with churches, non-governmental organisations, and grassroots community groups. Such collaborations would provide

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<sup>36</sup> David Mdabuko, focus group discussion with theology students, February 2024.

<sup>37</sup> David Mdabuko, interview with a church leader, March 2024.

platforms for experiential learning and foster theological reflection rooted in lived experiences. These partnerships should be integrated into the formal structure of academic programmes.

### **Synthesis of Barriers and Strategic Recommendations**

This study identified five key barriers to integrating the Five Marks of Mission into theological education in the Anglican Church of Tanzania: inadequate resources for practical training, rigid doctrine-focused curricula, limited faculty competence in contextual theology, institutional conservatism, and weak community partnerships. These constraints hinder the formation of holistic, mission-oriented clergy. In response, the study recommends strengthening partnerships with churches and civil society, integrating applied mission courses, investing in faculty development, streamlining curriculum approval processes, and enhancing logistical support for fieldwork. Addressing these areas will realign theological education with the Church's missional mandate and better prepare clergy for effective ministry in Tanzania's complex social context.

### **Interpretation in Light of Theory and Literature**

The findings of this study confirm long-standing critiques within African theological scholarship, which suggest that theological education often remains disconnected from local socio-cultural realities. Scholars such as Mbiti and Maluleke have noted its overly theoretical nature and limited engagement with pressing contextual

issues.<sup>38</sup> This study affirms such concerns by identifying institutional rigidity, limited faculty capacity, and weak community engagement as barriers to contextually responsive formation. Bandura's Social Learning Theory provided a helpful framework for interpreting how modelling, observation, and relational learning shape students' internalisation of missional values.<sup>39</sup> The absence of supervised placements and reflective practice further hindered students' ability to apply theology in real-life settings. These results support broader scholarly calls for participatory, praxis-based theological education rooted in the "life-world" of students and communities. The study employed triangulation and inductive analysis to minimise confirmation bias and ensure balanced interpretation. While exploratory, the findings highlight the urgent need for theological models that integrate instruction with experiential learning and community engagement. For the Anglican Church of Tanzania, this means developing a contextually grounded formation process that remains faithful to Anglican tradition while addressing the complex realities of contemporary ministry.

### **Implications of the Study**

The study's findings highlight critical implications for theological education in the Anglican Church of Tanzania and similar African contexts. To fulfil the Church's missional

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38 Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 51; Tinyiko S. Maluleke, 'Black and African Theologies in the New World Order: A Time to Drink from Our Own Wells', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 52, no. 96 (1996): 12.

39 Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action*.

mandate, institutions must shift from traditional doctrine-focused models toward a holistic framework that integrates theological depth with contextual engagement – socially, ecologically, and culturally. This calls for curricular reforms that prioritise contextual theology, interdisciplinary learning, and applied mission practice.<sup>40</sup> Such changes require structured implementation strategies, including revised institutional policies, continuous faculty development, and mechanisms for evaluating progress. By embedding these elements, theological education can more effectively prepare clergy for ministry that reflects the Five Marks of Mission and responds meaningfully to the realities of Tanzanian society.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the extent to which the Five Marks of Mission are integrated into theological education within the Anglican Church of Tanzania. It identified significant barriers, including limited faculty capacity, outdated curricula, weak community engagement, and institutional rigidity. While doctrinal instruction is intense, practical missional formation remains underdeveloped. The reliance on underqualified educators and the absence of structured internships and assessment tools further hinder student readiness. Drawing on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the study emphasised the importance of modelling and experiential learning. To address these challenges, theological institutions must adopt a more flexible,

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40 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 426–427.



contextually engaged approach – updating curricula, enhancing faculty development, and strengthening community ties. Embedding ethical practices and feedback systems will further support reform. Ultimately, the study calls for a holistic, mission-driven model of theological education that equips clergy to serve faithfully and effectively in today’s Tanzanian context.

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