



“For building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12)



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

Lutheran World Federation Theological
Education and formation (TEF):
An Historical Overview and a Look Ahead

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Cover photo: 27 March 2022, Moshi, Tanzania: A 'Luther Rose' decorates the floor as Sunday service gathers several hundred congregants in the Moshi Lutheran Cathedral, in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania's northern diocese.
Photo: LWF/Albin Hillert

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...the people of the world...
 ...shall be saved...
 ...shall see with their eyes...

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

ROMANS

of Jesus Christ, separated
 and afore by
 (ures.)
 rist our
 ed of

Christ for you all, that your
 spoken of throughout the whole
 9 For God is my witness, who
 serve with my spirit in the presence
 Son, that without ceasing I make
 tion of you always in my prayers
 10 Making requests, if by any means
 now at length I might have a
 own journey by the will of God
 unto you
 11 For I had a great desire
 to have seen you, as I have
 often times, and have been
 hindered, so that I could not
 come. But now I have no more
 any business, and I desire to
 see you, as I have said, before
 I depart, that I may see you
 face to face, and I may bring
 you some gift, which I have
 brought with me, and I may
 receive of you. I will tarry
 at Philippi, until I have seen
 you, and then I will come to
 you, either to Corinth or to
 Rome. I desire to see you
 before I depart, that I may
 receive of you, and I may
 bring you some gift, which
 I have brought with me.

INTRODUCTION

This text was created by members of the LWF Theological Education and Formation (TEF) Steering Committee, and Communion Office Staff for the Thirteenth LWF Assembly.

- The first section of this document compiles 50 years of LWF statements, messages, reports and resolutions on the topic of Theological Education. These texts bear witness to the fact that theological education has been a consistent area of commitment for the Lutheran World Federation.
- The second section of this document contains recent reflections from members of the TEF Steering Committee on regional gifts, challenges and programmatic examples of theological education around the communion today. These contributions include the message from the 2022 Ecumenical TEF Consultation on Pandemic and Pedagogy, held in Accra, Ghana.
- Finally, based on our experiences in TEF from our diverse contexts, the third section suggests changes, challenges, and impulses for Theological Education and Formation in our day.

The book *From Federation to Communion, The History of the Lutheran World Federation* recalls that in 1947, the Lutheran World Federation was built upon four “pillars”. The first pillar was “Rescue for the needy”, which encompassed diaconal service, specifically to those displaced by the war. The second pillar was “Common Initiatives in Mission”. The third pillar was “Joint Efforts in Theology”. The fourth pillar was “A Common Response to the Ecumenical Challenge”. Joint theological efforts are the third pillar of the LWF.

The establishment of the LWF was an effort to regain the momentum towards unity that was begun by the Lutheran World Convention in 1923. But in addition to the goal of realizing Lutheran unity, there was a deep need to engage in critical reflection of the social and political forces that surrounded the Second World War. “Joint Efforts in Theology” were not only aimed at articulating ecclesial unity. Theological reflection was an important part of transforming the trauma of war.

In addition to the LWF’s engagement in diaconia, mission, and ecumenical solidarity, the first President of the LWF, Anders Nygren, felt that a return our Lutheran heritage and Luther’s theology would provide a critical lens to reflect on society as a whole, in addition to the church.¹ Theological research and education were the means of moving “Forward to Luther” as Nygren boldly envisioned.² Theologians informed and shaped the churches’ response to diverse needs and contributed to the reform of political and social systems. One significant example is the way in which Lutherans contributed to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, specifically article 18.

The “LWF saw itself as an international forum for common theological studies.”³

Theological research and reflection were drivers of the Federation’s engagement in civil society. Theology provided the critical framework to critique the dominant oppressive narratives and transformative alternatives. And in this movement “Forward to Luther”, we remind ourselves that theological reflection and education have always been sources of reformation and transformation within the church and in society.

The same impulse to reform church and society based was seen in the sixteenth century, when Lutheran commitment to liberation and transforma-

¹ *From Federation to Communion; the History of the Lutheran World Federation*, Jens Holger Shjorring, Prasanna Kumari, Norman A. Hjelm, editors. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1997. p. 27

² *From Federation to Communion*, p. 28

³ *From Federation to Communion*, p. 38

tion extended beyond the boundaries of the church, advocating political and civic reforms that including public education.

In his 1520 letter “To the Christian Nobility” Luther made various proposals about education aimed mostly at University level education. But in his 1524 treatise “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany, That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools” Luther gave a strong defence of the need to strengthen primary education. At a time when his theological perspective on the priesthood of all believers was being interpreted as devaluing classical education because of its association with preparation for the priesthood, Luther advocated for well-educated citizens who could fully and constructively contribute to the life of the church and the cohesion of a peaceful society. In his 1530 “Sermon on Keeping Children in School”, Luther was clear that the aim of education is not to develop certain skills that are useful for generating wealth. Rather, education serves to transform individuals regardless of social location, so that they can contribute to the public welfare and peace through whatever vocation they are called to serve.

Theological education was the driver of Luther’s reformation, and the goal of education was to transform individuals who would transform the world. Today, this remains the goal of theological education across our Lutheran communion.

The texts below are a record of statements, documents and consultations that reflect the LWF’s commitment to theological education. This commitment has manifested in several ways throughout the history of the LWF. Our methodology has evolved throughout our history as we have embraced different modes of engagement in the public sphere. In the course of 50 years the LWF has addressed different themes and issues that have arisen from the seven regions of our communion. The programmatic and thematic evolution recorded in these documents reflects our ongoing critical engagement with the diverse contextual, social and political realities in which Lutherans live. But one thing remains the same. The LWF stands firm on the pillar of joint theological efforts. Theological reflection and education will remain drivers of liberation, reformation and transformation into our shared future.

In 1998, the General Secretary’s Report states that theological education exists not only for preserving our tradition, but that it is always future oriented. 1999 and 2001 saw consecutive consultations and documenta-

tion that affirmed theological reflection should engage issues related to Biblical interpretation, spirituality, and transformative topics such as gender. A 2015 Department for Theology and Public Witness conference in Windhoek, Namibia proposed that transformative theology in our age ought to be contextual, creative, critical, and concrete. In 2017 LWF Twelfth Assembly and Youth pre-Assembly passed several resolutions and statements relating education to youth, health, climate justice, care for creation, gender equity, and full participation of all members. The Assembly also passed a Resolution on Theological Education calling for the LWF to create a strategy to ensure access to theological education for every lay and ordained member of our communion who feels so called. A Strategic Advisory Group has worked for more than a year to develop a strategy for creating a sustainable, participatory network of Member Churches, theological institutions, students and other partners in education. The strategy was endorsed by the 2019 LWF Council, and will be ready launched in 2020, thus fulfilling the mandate of the Twelfth Assembly Resolution.

While COVID restrictions drastically diminished our capacity to meet Lutheran commitment to seeing theological education and reflection as one of the pillars on which we will build the future of our communion and its vibrant, reforming witness in the world.

The purpose of this document is to gather and preserve the memory of the LWF’s work in theological education, so that our history can inform the future of our work. That is the spirit in which this document is offered. It is our hope that this shared history will inspire us to continue to develop new methods and modalities of educating our members, so that they will be transformed, and in turn be equipped to transform the world through contextual, creative, critical and concrete theological reflection on the Holy Trinity’s creative, liberating and reconciling Word.

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Program Executive for Lutheran Theology and Practice

Béatrice Bengtsson
LWF Archivist

SECTION I

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE LWF FROM 1950–2020

1958: Executive Committee meeting, Strasbourg:

Theological education in North America and in Latin America: Lutheran seminaries were discussed within the report of Dr Vilmos Vajta, director LWF Department of Theology.

1962: Executive Committee meeting, Geneva:

Dr Herman in his report to the LWF Executive Committee wrote “that the Committee on Latin America has continued to be deeply interested in theological education and scholarships. So far 23 students have been graduated from the seminary at José C. Paz and ten will enter. A theological faculty may be started in Mexico. (Executive Committee 1962 minutes, p. 23)

1966:

LWF Department of theology sent questionnaires to theological institutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As a result it published

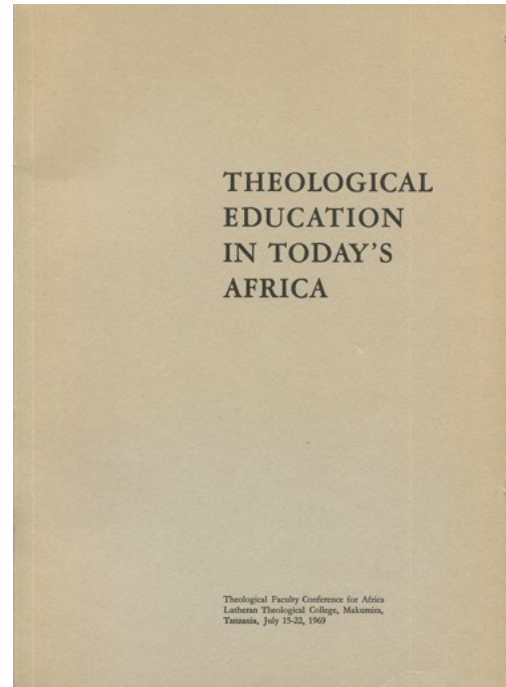
- A listing of the theological institutions related to the Lutheran churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America
- A summary of information on such institutions
- Comments on the information gathered by such means

Followed by visitations by the staff of the Department of Theology to get an insight into the problems faced by these schools and to try to think through possible ways of moving forward to meet both problems and opportunities in creative ways.

The training of possible future theological teachers has been singled out for high priority in the Scholarship program of the LWF.

1969:

The LWF Department of Theology sponsored the Theological faculty conference for Africa in Makumira, July 1969 and the consultation on the Lutheran Strategy in Theological education in India, Madras, October 1969.



1970:

After the LWF Évian Assembly

A desk was established within the LWF structure, which derived from the need for central exchange of information on programs of theological education, consultation services should be provided to the theological institutions and churches, and visitation of theological institutions. On the strategy finding level, theological education must be seen in the total context of education research and training and be specifically related to higher education and the scholarship and exchange program. The program would be directed to the churches and theological institutions especially in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the minority churches, drawing at specific points a connection to developments in theological and higher education in Central Europe, Scandinavia and USA. Theological education should not be seen in the narrow sense of training for the pastoral ministry but should be seen in the total context of education for ministry in diversity. Plans were made for consultations in theological education to be held in 1971 in North Sumatra, southern Africa, Ethiopia and West Africa. In 1972, the title of the desk changed from “higher education” to “theological education and scholarship strategy”.

1975:

Executive Committee meeting, Amsterdam:

Voted to request the commission on studies to retain the item of the theological education secretariat in the LWF priority budget. (Executive Committee 1975, minutes p. 20)

1980:

Executive committee meeting, Augsburg:

In Exhibit 9.1: Report of the Commission on Church Cooperation, it states that “the CCC decided to approve a five-year plan which is to facilitate joint planning among Lutheran churches in Africa for meeting their needs of theological education and to coordinate the use of necessary financial assistance. In preparing the plan the diverse needs of theological education in African churches shall be taken into account. This means that besides training for ordained ministry also training needs of catechists, evangelists and other types of church workers as well as theological education of laity shall be considered.

Consequently, the development of theological seminaries, departments of religion, programs of theological education in extension (TEE), Bible schools and other programs and institutions will be included in the plan. The plan is not limited either to Lutheran institutions or programs, as Lutheran churches are served by a number of inter-denominational seminaries and programs.

The plan will be established by a twelve member advisory committee which will consist of five representatives of LWF member churches in Africa, four theological educators from Africa and three members from other regions. At the staff level, the Department of Studies and Department for Church Cooperation will establish a Joint Staff Working Group. A preliminary goal of raising a project fund up to the amount of USD 3,000,000 in the time span of 1981-1985 was also approved.

1981:

The Meeting of Officers at its meeting in February approved the appointment of the advisory group for the development of a plan for theological education in Africa.

Executive committee meeting, Turku approved:

to list in the department of Church Cooperation's special project in Africa: Development plan for theological education for USD 400,000 (Minutes p.26)

First meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

1982:

Second meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa, Zomba, Malawi

The LWF in 1982 set up a small group to reflect and advise on theological education for Lutheran churches in Africa, for it has been recognised that theological education is the bedrock of the church. This advisory committee on theological education is related to two departments in the LWF: the department of church cooperation and the departments of studies. The Committee included non-Lutherans as well as women and men from the North, though Africans and Lutherans were in the majority. The themes addressed over the years reflect ecumenical and universal perspectives on theological education. The holding of meeting in different parts of Africa enabled to get a fee for the vastness and diversity of that continent and thus gave a sense of the multi-faceted nature of the task of theological education.

1983: **Third meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa, Yaoundé, Cameroon**

1984: **Fourth meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa, Antananarivo, Madagascar**

Executive committee meeting, Geneva: In Exhibit 9.4:

the Church and Cooperation director reported that the implementation of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee for theological education in Africa is well underway. The consultation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa on the future of its theological education permitting whites and blacks to study together is still to take place.

In Asia, which for Lutherans includes the Middle East and Australia, three important events have taken place. First, a working group met in Amman in September to consider the plans of the ELCJ congregation and possibilities for a broader Lutheran presence in the Middle East. It seems to have provided an opening for the ELCJ for significant outreach outside the Israel occupied territories. Secondly, an LWF evaluation team met in Jerusalem and the West Bank to assess the situation of Lutheran schools and to seek possibilities for financial stability. Some new hopes have merged concerning the viability of a unified schools system and of a coordinated support pattern for it. Thirdly, the last meeting of the Board of the Lutheran China Coordination office has taken place and it seems that a new chapter is being opened in the LWF role vis-a-vis China.

In Europe intensive conversations have continued between all concerned parties on the ministry of the scattered Lutheran congregations in the USSR. Informal coordination has been established to ensure unified support to the work of these congregations.

1985: **Fifth Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa, Tanzania**

From the 1986 report from Nelson Kirst, LWF secretary for theological education within the LWF/Department for Studies, he writes (*Theological education work within the LWF: where we come from, where we are going...* p. 36-39):

Theological/ecclesiological perspectives

“Our role and relation to one another, as theological institutions and educators of LWF member churches and as LWF staff, are most adequately understood through the image of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12)”

“The purpose of theological education...is to further in Church and society Christ’s mission through persons who by their education are better enabled to serve and minister to all people in the various relationships...in which they live – in family, community, congregations and Church, nurturing and challenging them with the Gospel to be the people of God, developing and using their full potentials, thinking and acting responsibly and serving in congregation and culture”.

The main goal to be pursued by the theological education desk

The main goal of the theological education desk may be described with the help of the following quotations, excerpted from responses to the 1985 survey:

“...to equip the constituent churches to fulfil God’s purpose for the world as revealed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ bearing in mind His Nazareth manifesto (Lc, 4, 18-19) (Tamilnadu 1985)”

“...awareness of sensitivity to, enhancement and enrichment of theological education around the world...regard all Lutheran theological education as one major organ to be used ad bonum ecclesiae (LSTC 1985)

“...facilitate the exchange of information between theological educators and institutions” (Concordia 1985).

“...to keep all parts of the Lutheran theological family in touch...provide avenues for people and ideas to cross continents and oceans...(Wartburg 1985)

Approach, tasks and methods:

Approach:

- To be realistic about LWF possibilities. What the LWF can do is – possibly quite relevant – selected tasks. Among other factors, the limitation in LWF staffing puts quite sober restrictions to whatever ideals or plans one may be tempted to develop.
- To cooperate in a partnership of solidarity
- The approach of cooperation in a partnership of solidarity is the opposite of a paternalistic one.
- The approach of cooperation in a partnership of solidarity expects those who are locally on the job to set the agenda, to identify problems and devise solutions.

Should then the theological desk not take any initiative? Should it act only upon request? On the contrary, the theological desk may take the following initiatives, which are compatible with the proposed approach:

- To exercise a networking role whenever more than one institution/church raise a same problem or feel the need to study a same issue; in these cases the networking may lead to exchange of personnel, joint workshops, joint consultations or even joint study programs;
- To promote through its programs those concerns which the member churches themselves have expressed through LWF Assembly resolutions, such as stronger participation of women and increased ecumenical involvement.

To cooperate for self-reliance

Interchurch cooperation projects are only legitimate when they contribute to self-reliance.

Tasks and methods

Tasks:	Methods:
Strengthening of self-reliance	Scholarships for doctoral studies, study and research programs, workshops and seminars, channelling of resource persons, financial assistance, etc. . .
Improvement of teaching	Study and research programs, special study projects, workshops for teaching personnel, channelling of resource persons, etc. . .
Networking and bridge building	Visitation programs, staff visits, workshops, consultations and conferences, joint study projects, publications, newsletters, directories, etc. . .
Special studies	Special study projects, joint study projects, workshops and consultations, publications, etc. . .

1986:

Executive committee meeting, Geneva

Page 11 of the Minutes states “it was recognized that perhaps the most far-reaching program carried out in the Department of Church Cooperation with other departments is the Special Project on theological education and church leadership development in Africa. The expansion of churches and the acute shortage of theologically trained church workers gives a sense of urgency to this program. Furthermore, the possibility of churches to act as a ferment in African societies in the midst of the present-day crisis depends much on the development of leadership. This project is entering into its second five-year phase. The need of continued interdepartmental cooperation in this concern was emphasized.”

The Executive Committee passed the following resolution regarding the funding: to request the General Secretary to study this problem and to ask the member churches to provide a significant increase in scholarships funds for advanced theological education . The increase should be located under the LWF Scholarship program (*Minutes* p. 14).

1987: **Executive committee meeting**

Appointed a new advisory committee on theological education in Africa and approved the provisional terms of reference EXH.9.3.3 with the amendment that it shall serve through 1990. Nelson Kirst, from Brazil, secretary for theological education in the Department of Studies, got his term renewed until 31 December 1990.

1988: **Executive committee meeting, Addis Ababa**

Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa (Exhibit 9.3.2)

The Executive Committee voted:

That the Terms of Reference of the Advisory Committee on Theological education in Africa be amended as follows:

The Committee shall be appointed by the Executive Committee from nominations submitted to the LWF by its member churches in Africa. The work of the committee shall be related to all LWF departments through the Staff Coordinating Group on Theological Education.

The self-understanding and role of the churches and theological education in the social, economic, political and cultural context of Africa today.

That the Rev. Shiferaw Sadi be appointed to the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa. (Minutes, p. 13)

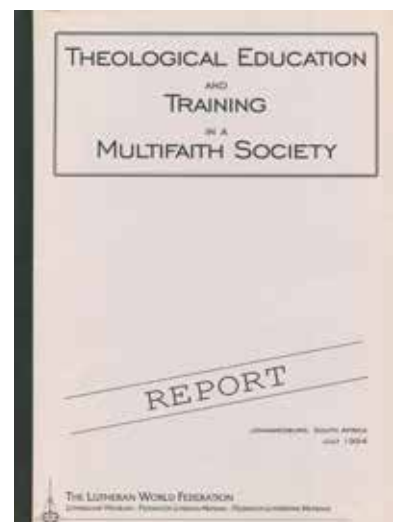
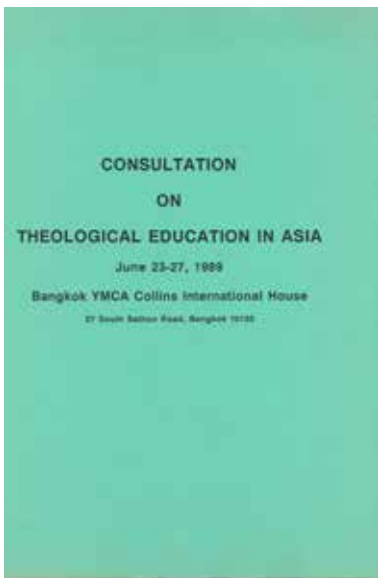
1990: Executive committee meeting, Geneva approved a theological education fund for Latin America and the Caribbean. A status report on the theological education fund established by the Commission for Church Cooperation in 1986 was presented. This fund appeared as of 1987 in the CCC Statement of Needs as a single amount and was administered by the Latin America Secretary in consultation with the Department of Studies secretary for theological education and according to priorities established at the 1985 workshop on theological education in Latin America. It is recommended that the fund be maintained in 1991 and that the Latin America desk be authorized to administer the funds and if the funds requested by the churches go beyond the amount available, a decision would be taken observing the following criteria:

- Preference be given to modest projects
- Preference be given to mission areas
- Preference be given to projects which include a provision of own resources



Conference of representatives from Lutheran theological faculties, academies and seminaries in Europe, Tallin 12-18 October 1990

- Preference be given to projects which involve the participation of more than one church
- Preference be given to projects which are meant to meet proven and urgent needs.



1993: Council meeting, Kristianstadt

“After a thorough discussion of the concern for theological education in different contexts, the Program Committee for Theology is convinced that analyses of the issue should be intensified.” No action was taken by the Council, it was considered only as issue for discussion. (Exhibit 12 of the Minutes)

1994: Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) 24-28 January, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**1995: Council meeting, Windhoek**

The Council shared the concern of the Program Committee for Theology and Studies to strengthen the role of theological education in and among the different contexts of the member churches of the LWF. It underlined the importance of such a consultation with the following purposes:

- To identify global issues in theological education
- To exchange experience and theological expertise
- To build up an ongoing information network
- To organise a group to develop a continuing strategic plan.

Theological education, within the LWF structure is lodged in the Department for Mission and Development but the Department for Theology and Studies shares the concern for theological education. An interdepartmental staff working team has been established to coordinate the efforts in the area of theological education. The possibility of consultation on global issues in theological education should be reviewed and if agreed upon, planned. This process should be reviewed and if agreed upon, planned. This process should be done with close cooperation between the two departments.

Upon the recommendation of the Program Committee, the Council

VOTED that a consultation on theological education in the Lutheran communion be held. The interdepartmental staff working team on theological education be urged to plan and set date and place for such a global consultation. (Minutes, p. 16)

1998:

Council meeting, Bratislava

From the report of the LWF General Secretary (p. 70 and 71):

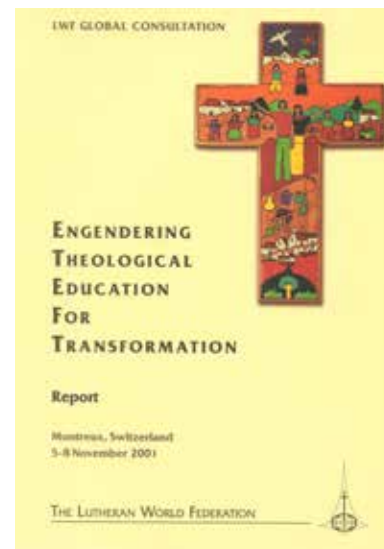
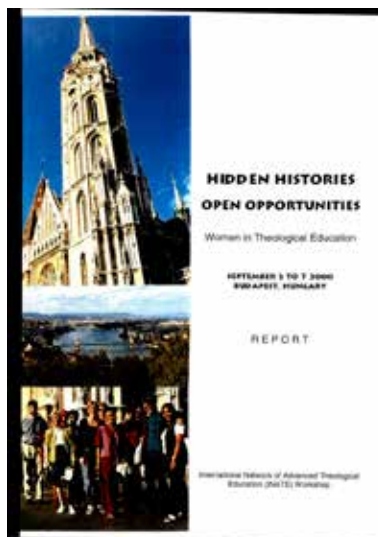
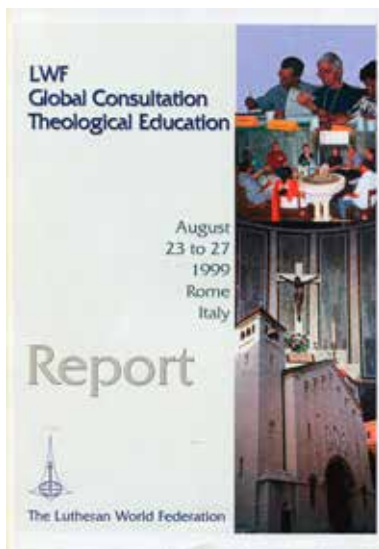
“Revising theological education: Theological education continues to be important for LWF member churches in every region. Its primary orientation has been towards developing leadership for the churches, thus largely aimed at future clergy and professional theologians. Today, theological education is at a crossroads. Many believe that what is needed is a review of its fundamental tenets, not simply a revised version of its delivery system. Questions are being raised in many parts of the communion about the purpose, content and method of theological education – all of which are of course inter-related.

In a post-modern, post Christian, secular and globalized world, what is the purpose of theological education? The usual view – that it is for maintaining the tradition, for interpreting and articulating faith in an ever new situation – no longer seems satisfactory. There is a tendency to see the purpose of theological education in more future-oriented than traditional oriented terms. Thus, it is said, theological education is for mission. It can be argued that doing theology – as an effort to decipher and interpret reality and provide an intelligible language for faith – is already in itself an engagement in mission, but mission understanding and practice tend to go far beyond this. But if theological education is for mission, providing theological basis for the church’s being and action in the world, what does mission entail today?

The content of theological education has also been under challenge for some time. Contextualized, liberation and feminist theologies have noted that theological education has largely conveyed the ideas of European “Fathers” along with their patristic, patriarchal and paternalistic values. Over the centuries this has built and sustained church systems and structures that exclude a large section of the church from participation. How would the insights of women, youth and people of other cultures affect the content of theological education?

Regarding the methods of theological education, it has been argued that the approach which views theology primarily as a response of faith divorced from praxis, is bankrupt. There are calls for theological education to be dialogical and participatory, allowing a learning-transforming process to develop. At the same time, theological education is reminded that an emphasis on contextual learning should not become provincial, neglecting the reality and challenges of global issues. All these aspects of theological education will be discussed at the LWF global consultation on theological education to be held in Rome Italy, in August 1999.”

**Meeting of the Advisory Committee on
Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA)
18-22 April, Yaoundé, Cameroun**



1999:

LWF Global Consultation on Theological Education, 23-27 August 1999, Rome, Italy. Under the theme: **Revisoning theological education**, theologians from 33 countries throughout the world were invited to begin a process of revisoning and re-thinking theological education. This was the second global consultation on TE among LWF member churches since 1970. Although there have been numerous national and regional consultations in the last 30 years.

2000:

Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) 20-25 August, Nairobi, Kenya

Women in theological education: “Hidden histories, open opportunities”, 2-7 September 2000, Budapest, Hungary

2001:

“Engendering Theological Education for Transformation” is a follow up of the Second Global Consultation on Theological Education organized by the Department for Mission and Development, Lutheran World Federation in Rome, from 23–27 August 1999, under the theme “Re-visioning Theological Education.” It is also a once in ten-year gathering of theologically trained women organized by the Desk of Women in Church and Society (WICAS). Message from the Rome Consultation to the member churches states “Going into the next century, curriculum development should be especially attentive to issues of contextualization, spirituality, the insight provided by feminist and other liberation perspectives, transformation and ecumenics.” This consultation therefore is not only a continuation of the process that began in Rome but is also a response to the specific request of some of its

participants. In the past few decades, feminist theologies have made tremendous impact in the following areas:

- A broadening of perspective in the field of Biblical theology that includes a re-reading of scriptures, feminist exegesis and hermeneutics.
- Excavations of the existence of women without history and an enlarging of their participation in church history, documentation of their diverse contributions despite their invisibility in history, using extra canonical texts and other resources.
- Theological anthropology, Christology, images of God, language about God, symbols by which God is presented have all been freshly analyzed in systematic theology. Emphasis has also been given to start with ones' experience and then relating them to others and to doctrines.
- Issues of spirituality, new ways of worship and issues of women have been analyzed in practical theology enabling networks to be forged across boundaries and alliances on issues.
- Women have forged great alliances across boundaries and worked ecumenically.

2012:

Global Consultation on Theological Education and Formation held in Wittenberg, 18–23 October 2012

On the theme of “Secure foundations of the past and aspirations for the future: Lutheran Theological Education for Communion Building towards 2017”, the aide memoire for this consultation stated that:

“There is a need to find creative ways of adapting their pedagogical and theological approaches, not only to address these contextual challenges, but also to articulate the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that seeks to be faithful to the reformation spirit. New approaches should also be open to engage with theological innovations com-



ing from the global south where Christianity is fast growing. This requires rethinking theological education in terms of content, the infrastructure of learning and teaching theology that equips ministers with skills and tools for social analysis and social engagement. The new approaches will also require global, inter and trans-cultural engagement without losing the urgent need for renewing of local congregational spiritual vitality so that the local churches can witness to the Kingdom of God in a world hungering for meaning.”

2015: Council meeting, Geneva

MEETING OF THE LWF COMMITTEE FOR THEOLOGY AND ECUMENICAL RELATIONS LWF Department for Theology and Public Witness, *90-2005 Theological Education and Formation Program Plan 2016*

Context:

This LWF program of theological education and formation brings together all the LWF initiatives to support member churches in their mission through effective, relevant and efficient delivery of formal and informal theological education and formation. It has been observed that the “quest for theological clarity has motivated all movements for the reform of the church since Martin Luther began his struggle for renewal. His contribution to church renewal, it is to be remembered, began only after a passionate and lengthy debate concerning the theological interpretation of Holy Scripture.

As the LWF together with its ecumenical partners commemorate 500 years of the reformation, the focus must be put on theological education and formation as catalysts for the renewal of the church.

Since the beginning of the LWF, theology has informed and underpinned the faith and work of the communion. From the earliest period, LWF theological work “was seen as constituting an essential part of the general consensus reached within the Federation.”² As more and more theologians from the global South became involved in the life and work of the LWF, theological approaches with a contextual focus sought to relate traditional and classical categories of theology to contemporary concerns. This new concern came to shape how theological education and formation was conceived in the LWF.

In the context of decolonization, churches in the global South sought to develop local theologies that contextualized local cultural perspectives to the life of the churches beyond the missionary categories. The LWF organized several consultations to facilitate this process. The latest consultation that directly informed this new direction in theological education and formation in the LWF was the Global Consultation on Theological Education and Formation held in Wittenberg, 18–23 October 2012. The consultation recommended the establishment of Lutheran

theological education networks (LUTEN) at global and regional levels which, among other issues, are to facilitate mutual sharing of experiences and resources for developing modules that enrich theological education to strengthen member churches in their mission. The recommendation was submitted to the LWF Council which endorsed the proposal.

Existing problem to be addressed

It was realized that the establishment of the theological network did not, alone, address all the theological education and formation challenges the churches faced. It was recommended that theological education and formation will be comprehensive and focused on the following interrelated issues facing the church and society today:

- the relevance of formal and informal theological education and formation in helping the local church fulfil its holistic mission;
- the contribution of such theological education and formation in building leadership for the strengthening of the communion;
- the cost effective use and sharing of human and financial resources to strengthen theological education and formation across contexts

Overall goal 2016-2018: LWF member churches have increased the relevancy and effectiveness of their theological education and formation.

Objectives

- Sharing of relevant theological resources among the member churches has increased.
- Engagement of regional meetings related to the theological discernment of communion self understanding.
- Evidence of commitment among member churches and regions to joint communion
- Initiatives on theological formation, gender and climate justice, worship life and ecumenical as well as interfaith relations
- A network of theological institutions and Lutheran theologians working in the field of theological formation has been established.

2015:

Global Perspectives on the Reformation: Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics, Safari Court Hotel, Windhoek, 28 October – 1 November, 2015

“There is a glaring need to engage theology with other sciences and with an interdisciplinary approach to construct knowledges and to grasp again the creative, constructive and critical energy that comes from theological reflection and theological engagement and the contribution of theology in shaping public discourse. Martin Luther not only gained specific theological insights, with the justification by grace at the centre, but he, together with the reform and reformation theologians before, next to and after him, gave theology itself a new and deep meaning and relevance which in turn shaped society permanently in many ways. How do we capture this prominence of theology as we commemorate 500 years of the Reformation in the situation where Reformation has become a global citizen? Which are the questions relating to politics and economics that are asked in different contexts where Lutheran churches are living today? How do we raise awareness about the fact that most changes brought about by the Reformation in terms of social and societal developments are deeply rooted in central theological insights grown out from Reformation; insights, which are as relevant today as they were during the times of Reformation? How do we understand the principle of on-going reformation in the light of all these aspects?

DTPW intends to offer a space for a global dialogue discussing the issues mentioned above.”

The short-term outcomes of this conference included reflection on the themes leading up to the 2017 Assembly, and the production of the document *Global Perspectives on the Reformation*. But the medium-term outcomes aimed:

- To continue to articulate what it means to be Lutheran today
- To welcome the understandings and contextual insights and “knowledges” of LWF member churches from all parts of the world as gifts and bring them into conversation to shape and deepen the theology, spiritual life and joint work
- To contribute to the LWF as a reliable and effective voice for justice, peace and human rights
- To define some common theological agenda for the communion (keeping the diversity however defining the joint concerns and commitments)

To this end, the conference resulted in an evaluation that stated **Transformational Theology** today must be **Contextual, Creative, Critical and Concrete**.

2017:

LWF Twelfth Assembly Resolution on Theological Education

1) Theological education is central to our theological heritage and identity. “We know that without proper theological education questions around identity and unity of the church grow exponentially complicated” (General Secretary Martin Junge)

2) The LWF and its member churches must take steps to ensure that theological education also takes account of different contexts and is open to all.

3) Our contextual readings of the Bible must be connected to our theological identity. The contextual readings must hold sola scriptura, sola Christus and sola fide as interrelated.

4) Pastoral formation must integrate the social, political and economic dimensions and the changing landscape of theology.

5) The Assembly calls upon the LWF Communion Office to develop and publish a strategy by 2020 for collaboration to provide greater access to theological education. This increased access may occur through scholarships, shared teaching, online resources, and by facilitating concrete partnerships among theological schools, including faculty exchanges. This strategy should ensure that anyone called to lay or ordained ministry can access and participate in theological education, even if they do not have a theological school in their home region or country.

6) Further, the Assembly calls upon member churches to:

a) Support women in theological education with attention to the accessibility of that education

b) Strengthen efforts at increasing local resources for scholarships

c) Practice transparent procedures in the selection and awarding of scholarships, and
d) Critically re-examine their models and systems of theological education and ministerial formation in order to bring contextual realities in contemporary issues into theological training and ministerial formation of future church.

2019:

TEF Strategic Advisory Group Terms of Reference, 2018-2019

Rationale for the TEF Strategic Advisory Group

Lutheran identity within the LWF Communion is closely linked to the strength of formal and informal theological education and formation within its member churches. Growing out of the LWF’s self-understanding, the program for Theological Education and Formation (TEF) aims to strengthen Lutheran education and formation throughout our



communion. In the light of LWF Twelfth Assembly resolutions related to education, a Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) will be appointed to advise the Communion Office (CO) in the process of developing the TEF Program. The advice of the SAG will help the CO to better identify current needs and gifts related to theological education and formation across the communion, and develop a sustainable methodology to strengthen Lutheran theological education and formation among our member churches.

Key responsibilities of the Strategic Advisory Group

- To advise the CO in identifying current global/regional trends and emerging topics in the field of Lutheran theological education and formation.
- To advise the CO on how the LWF can best equip member churches to respond to those emerging trends and topics through a Communion level TEF Program.
- To advise the CO on developing TEF Program methodologies for participatory processes between member churches and institutions at the Communion level.
- To help the CO develop methods of cooperation across regions that would better serve the gifts and needs of theological institutions and member churches.

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- To provide periodic feedback about of the TEF Program.

Terms of service

- Membership: The advisory group will consist of 10 members, comprised of: one representative of a member church or theological institution from each of the 7 regions of the LWF communion, and three theological students (youth). Gender and youth representation quotas will be observed.
- Staff support: One representative of DTPW (the Study Secretary for Lutheran Theology and Practice) and one representative of DMD will sit as ex-officio members. Members of the CO leadership may attend the meetings if needed.
- Length of service: The advisory group will serve for a two year period (2018-2019).
- Methodology: At the beginning of its term, the AG will meet one time in Geneva in order to establish the group and inaugurate its work. Subsequent meetings will occur online, via Adobe Connect through the Learning Lab platform, unless physical reunions are deemed necessary.

2020:

LWF Theological Education and Formation Network Strategy, TEF Strategic Advisory Group, Geneva, Switzerland, January 2019

Strategy for the creating the LWF Theological Education and Formation (TEF) network.

I. PREAMBLE

The Twelfth LWF Assembly in Windhoek Namibia passed a resolution on theological education. The resolution calls for the LWF to establish a strategy to ensure access to theological education for every lay and ordained member of our communion who feels so called. While ambitious, this resolution reflects the historic and continuing commitment to theological education and reflection as one of the pillars of the Lutheran communion.

Lutheran identity within the LWF is linked to the strength of formal and non-formal theological education and formation within its member churches. Growing out of the LWF's self-understanding, the program for Theological Education and Formation (**TEF**) aims to strengthen Lutheran education and formation throughout the LWF communion. While member churches and theological institutions have the strength and expertise to provide theological education, the Assembly has called the LWF Communion to engage its facilitative role to support theological education across the communion. The LWF Communion Office offers a multilateral platform to

convene theological institutions, member churches, and existing networks and initiatives within the communion into trans-contextual educational dialogue. The aim is to analyze the context of theological education, mapping resources and needs, and planning for future needs in developing theological leaders and educators.

In the light of the LWF Twelfth Assembly resolutions related to education, the LWF Meeting of Officers appointed a TEF Strategic Advisory Group to advise the Communion Office (CO) in the process of developing the TEF Network. The Strategic Advisory group gathered in March 2018, and held a series of virtual meetings between May and December of that year, and developed the following guidelines for a long-term process of strengthened theological education among LWF member churches, theological institutions, and other partners engaged in theological education. The purposes, activities and outcomes outlined below provide a strategy to realize the goals of the Resolution on Theological Education.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE TEF NETWORK:

(a) Purpose of the Network

Theological education plays a significant role in supporting the presence and vibrant witness to the Gospel in the World. The TEF Network will provide a structure to enhance theological education and formation across the LWF communion. The Network will be a platform to encourage joint, trans-contextual theological reflection, that aims to build relationships among institutions and member churches, develop a shared understanding of the theological identities of LWF member churches, discern and address issues that represent theological challenges to churches today in order to witness in diverse contexts and express the call to live in communion.

(b) Network Principles

- **Historical rootedness** – the Network should clearly reflect the LWF history and identity, and make good use of archived materials, identity, and learnings from past initiatives in theological education, and those of its member churches
- **Ownership** - the Network should encourage sustained commitment from a variety of institutions for:
 - Resource sharing (including mobilizing human capacity and financial resources)
 - Publications and translations
 - Faculty exchanges and global pooling of educators
- **Mutuality** – the Network should address power imbalances that exist in education, accessibility to pedagogical methods or platforms and the dynamics between funding and theological content development, with special reference to global north/south dynamics. This dynamic of power imbalances is also at work within regions and within member churches. It is necessary to cultivate

and sustain various diversities within the network's composition and work in order to serve the whole communion. These practices are based upon the LWF's commitments and policies (such as the Gender Justice Policy, Code of Conduct, the youth/gender quota) that flow from the common confession related to Christian freedom in Christ to serve the neighbor.

- **Enthusiasm** - The Network should seek to create Memoranda of Understanding with each committee member in order to ensure the commitment of institutions and people in positions related to theological education to serve as multipliers, participate in the network, communicate and relate Network programs and outcomes to their institutional interests
- **Participation** – the Network should promote processes that:
 - come from the grassroots (local and regional) so that networking evokes a dialogue about educational resources and the needs of member churches for education in ordained, diaconal and lay ministries
 - facilitate full and meaningful participation with respect to gender, age, language, culture, race, etc.
 - safeguard transparent, just relationships among educators, students, and the leadership of church, theological institutions and funding partners.

(c) Goals for TEF network

1. Provide a platform to develop trans-contextual theological content and theological reflection through mutual exchange and dialogue among LWF member churches, theological institutions and other partners in theological education
2. Promote interactive and long-term partnerships among Lutheran theological institutions, member churches, and other partners in theological education in order to map educational resources, surpluses and needs
3. Provide a platform for joint theological projects among Lutheran theological institutions and member churches as well as exchange of students, faculty and educators who are qualified to teach and train.
4. Provide a multilateral platform to convene institutions and LWF member churches in order to analyze contexts, map needs and strategically plan for future needs in theological education

(d) Network outcomes

1. A task-focused, institution-based global network aimed at real sharing that convenes expertise, visioning and strategizing from local and regional levels
2. Increased access to:
 - a. Shareable content (written and digital)
 - b. Open, accessible online platforms for mapping, interaction and trans-contextual learning

3. Curricular reinforcement:
 - a. Shared content that bridges theory and praxis, and can be contextually adapted across Lutheran institutions
 - b. Strengthened Lutheran identities and theologies through trans-contextual theological engagement
 - c. Strengthened ecumenical commitment through trans-contextual theological engagement
 - d. Established links to the LWF's ongoing theological processes and commitments, so that TEF is transformative (critical contextual, concrete and creative)

4. Facilitated trans-contextual cohorts of learners across the LWF that:
 - a. strengthen Lutheran identities
 - b. deepen reflection on the global/local or catholic/contextual dynamic, and the mutual recognition of convergence and divergence
 - c. strengthen vocational identity and connect theological education with contextual practices to meet the needs for ministerial formation of member churches

5. Reinforced bilateral, multilateral, regional, or trans-regional partnerships among Lutheran theological education institutions from different contexts

6. The promotion of lay and ordained vocations (the priesthood of all believers) across disciplines

7. Accompaniment of theological students in the LWF including spiritual support (e.g. vocational discernment) and encouragement to produce contextual, relevant transformative theology

8. Increased connectivity among member churches, theological institutions and networks, related to curriculum development, strategic planning for needs in formation and education of current and future leaders

(e) Network Activities

1. Provide a digital collection of Lutheran theological education resources including access to the GlobeTheoLib/Globethics system;

2. Arrange for faculty exchanges, and recruitment of independent scholars that promote dialogical engagement between member churches and institutions

3. Host regular online meetings or webinars for students and theological educators

4. In dialogue with the LWF Communion Office, develop mechanisms whereby TEF Network Members are actively engaged in and supportive of theological processes.

5. Offer biennial global and regional conferences for theological educators

6. Create and host open, online platforms for
 - a. facilitating trans-contextual online learning

- b. maintaining a current database of member churches, theological institutions and teaching theologians in order to facilitate engagement
- c. mapping theological initiatives
- d. conducting context analyses of current states of theological education

III. COMPOSITION OF THE TEF NETWORK:

1. Organization

The TEF Network will be organized into two levels of membership: The **Steering Members**, who will provide the leadership and planning of the Network, and the **Participants**, who will come from a variety of institutions and situations.

a. Steering Members:

- i. The Steering Members of the TEF Network should be composed of representatives from:
 1. 2 member churches from each region of the LWF (appointed via regional/sub-regional nomination process of someone who relates to TEF in their church and region) (to serve 3 year terms)
 2. at least 1 theological institution from each region that can serve as a Network Hub (church related seminary, university faculty or pastoral training institution) (to serve 3 year terms)
 3. 1 representative each from the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg and the Wittenberg Center
 4. Theological Students (the number shall be calculated so that 20% of the Steering Committee is comprised of youth, as per LWF policy) (to serve 2 year terms)
 5. Partners (WCC ETE, and one representative from among related mission agencies)
- ii. The composition of the steering committee will reflect the 40/40/20 gender/youth participation quota as per LWF policy
- iii. The steering committee should appoint from among its members, a moderator and a secretary who will work with the LWF Program Executive relating to the Network

b. Participants

- i. Participants are defined as representatives of LWF member churches, any student, faculty, or member of a theological institution, LWF member church or related mission agency who would like to participate in any activity (online or physical gathering) of the TEF Network.
- ii. The Network will promote the participation of theological students and theological educators (encouraging those who are youth, women, and first nations) from existing networks as well as independent theologians and educators from LWF member churches.

2. Tasks of the Steering Members

The Steering Members of the TEF Network will meet in online digital conferences two times per year in order to:

- a. Develop annual TEF Network working plans in cooperation with member churches and other participants, including a plan for financial support.
- b. Assist in planning and facilitating virtual meetings/conferences of the network at relevant levels;
- c. Oversee responsibility for content development, quality control, in relationship to existing institutional mechanisms for content or accreditation
- d. Participate in a self-assessment every three years, to evaluate achievements, impacts and outcomes.

3. Role of the LWF Communion Office

The LWF Communion Office Staff shall support the TEF Network in the following ways:

- a. Facilitate global and regional/sub-regional virtual meetings and/or conferences of the TEF Network;
- b. Promote effective coordination; connectivity; mutual support; facilitate ways and means through which key theological perspectives and practical recommendations from the network can be shared across the LWF Communion;
- c. Provide a space in the LWF website and other online platforms to share outcomes, learning platforms and resources from the network and facilitate mutual engagement;
- d. Explore opportunities to mobilize financial resources to sustain the TEF Network.
- e. Assist the network to apply relevant communion commitments, such as the Code of Conduct, the Gender Justice Policy, and LWF Assembly messages and resolutions.

IV. TEF NETWORK RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER PARTNERS ENGAGED IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The TEF Network shall establish relations and procedures for working together with major regional ecumenical platforms and forums on theological education (e.g. Asian Forum on Theological Education (AFTE), Ecumenical Theological Education Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean (FETELAC); and All Africa Forum for Theological Education (AAFTE).



The TEF Network shall also explore collaborative relationships with the WCC-Ecumenical Theological Education's (ETE) international working group in view of securing more regular interaction, particularly through active participation in future ecumenical efforts to strengthen leadership of young theologians through WCC Global Ecumenical Theological Institute - (GETI).

2020-2021:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, meeting in person was not possible. But as COVID restrictions sent theological institutions into various degrees of online, hybrid and distance learning modes. And many programs and institutions were not able to function due to these technological and financial restrictions.

But LWF continued to facilitate spaces for online learning and fellowship around various theological themes. The Steering Committee of the TEF Network held regular online meetings throughout the year. Work continued among three working groups: (1) exchanges and resource sharing, (2) online resource contributions (LWF Learning), (3) consultations for theological educators. Working group 3 was involved in an ecumenical pedagogical seminar taking place in hybrid format (at Trinity Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana and online via Zoom) in December under the title 'Pedagogy and Pandemics'. The seminar, which was organized in

collaboration with WCC, WCRC and EMW, covered learnings and good practices for online theological education, as well as the role of networks for theological education in shaping theological discourse in online spaces. It was attended in person by 15 local and 23 international participants while 59 people from around the world followed online.

The program supported the Asian Lutheran Identity Seminar in collaboration with three theological institutions in Asia (Lutheran Study Center Sabah, Lutheran Study Center Indonesia and Lutheran Theological Seminar Hong Kong) and contributed to the Al Mowafaqa Ecumenical Institute of Theology in Rabat, Morocco in December by co-teaching an ecumenical course on Family and Sexual Ethics. Support was moreover provided to a small-scale project on theological education by ELCSA Youth League (South Africa).

At this time, the groundwork was laid for the Hélèn Ralivao Fund for theological training and leadership development for women in Africa, which was launched in 2022. The fund has initiated a coordination function for research activities on gender justice, located at Tumaini Makumira University in Tanzania and a dedicated scholarship mechanism with the aim of preparing women theologians for taking on leadership roles within African member churches.

More than 50 recipients of regular theological scholarships were accompanied by LWF in 2021 and 2022, as well as seven-member church projects in that area.

2022:

When COVID restrictions were lifted, the LWF wanted to take the time to reflect on what the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic could teach us about our Christian faith which is grounded in “the trauma of the Cross?” How has theological education been transformed by the unprecedented experiences of isolation and lockdown? How can seminaries and other places of learning harness new opportunities offered by online and hybrid technologies?

These were the key questions discussed during a three-day ecumenical consultation, based at Trinity Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana, entitled ‘Pedagogy and Pandemic’. Over 80 theologians and academics took part in the hybrid event in December, organized by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the World Council of Churches and Evangelische Mission Weltweit.

Participants from six of the seven LWF regions agreed that the pandemic highlighted both the advantages, but also the limitations and inequalities of in-person theological formation. As such, they said, COVID-19 served as a kind of wake-up call and catalyst in the pre-existing crisis of residential seminary education.

Rev. Dr Chad Rimmer, LWF Program Executive and co-facilitator of the consultation, commented: “The LWF emphasizes the link between theological education

and formation because learning involves our whole being – body, mind and soul. While the COVID-19 pandemic revealed this reality in many painful ways, it also revealed the promise of new opportunities to decolonize the content and methods of learning.”

In a concluding communiqué, participants stressed the importance of transformational teaching and learning in the post-pandemic world. “We are not merely challenged to translate established models of learnings, spiritual and ministerial formation into new formats,” they said, but “to rethink what theological education is about, for whom it is, to which ends and what it requires.” The Ecumenical Communiqué follows:

Pandemic and Pedagogy: Ecumenical Consultation on Theological Education

Theological education has benefited from online modalities for many years. Good pedagogical practices and difficulties are well chronicled. However, COVID-19 restrictions challenged most institutions with a choice to go online or close their doors indefinitely. Many theological institutions around the world were either pedagogically unprepared, or lacked infrastructure for online learning. Some students and faculties adapted well to the online format, but for many the lack of residential fees and ancillary institutional support exacerbated the existing crisis of sustainability, equity, and formation.



In order to deepen ecumenical fellowship in prayer, theological reflection, and mutual learning, the *World Communion of Reformed Churches*, the *Lutheran World Federation*, the *World Council of Churches* and *Evangelische Mission Weltweit* hosted a hybrid conference. From 5-7 December, 2022, 81 participants were hosted by *Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana*. The modality was hybrid, with presenters and participants joining on campus and online.

At the consultation, we explored educational methods related to pandemic trauma and sketched pedagogical promise in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the multiple interlocking pandemics it has revealed and produced. Particular reflection was dedicated to asking how networks of theological institutions and ecumenical cooperation can shape the content and methods of theological discourse in digital space with new forms of online education that broaden the experience of global fellowship and spirituality and reconceptualize the scope, reach and aims of formal and informal theological education as a question of equity. Main insights that emerged can be grouped along the lines of trans-contextual insights, theological insights, and insights related to pedagogy.

Trans-contextual insights

The Covid-19 pandemic has been accompanied by public health, economic, and political crises on a global scale. It has revealed the ongoing and interlocking nature of multiple pandemics of inequality, violence, and marginalization. It has also been a time in which we have recognized God's activity among us in new ways. The drastic shift to theological education online has partially afforded more access to constituencies that were previously marginalized (e.g. disabled people, people with care responsibilities, and those geographically bound), but it has at the same time also increased the burdens that those groups carry. It has revealed and increased the diversity of learners and produced compassion and solidarity, but also by and large further exacerbated existing inequalities as well as created new ones, as health risks, isolation, domestic violence, and racism have proliferated. The shift to theological education online has set some of these issues into sharp relief while invisibilizing others.

The pandemic has shaken certain privileges. Global experiences of (temporary) disablement, confinement, isolation, insecurity, and vulnerability have proliferated. These experiences have led to a loss of white, male, colonial, able-bodied naivete and point all of us to the insights and resources of communities who have long grappled with and survived such conditions. While some have hoped that such shared experiences might lead to new forms of solidarity, we recognize that they can just as easily lead to doubling down on entitlement, and to the reification of hierarchies and power structures due to perceived and real threats.

The pandemic has served as a catalyst in the crisis of resident seminary education that has long been building up globally. It has also revealed many of the hidden costs of residential education, for individuals, families, and communities. While academic formation can be translated into new media with more ease than spiritual

and ministerial formation we are not merely challenged to translate established models of learning, spiritual and ministerial formation into new formats. Between “form follows function,” and “the medium is the message,” we are reminded that pedagogy, design, and technology are never neutral. We are challenged to rethink what theological education is about, for whom it is, to which ends, and what it requires.

The pandemic has inflicted trauma on a global scale, for individuals, communities, and whole societies, which we already know will have effects for generations to come. It also affects generations of learners as well as instructors. Those who serve in ministerial formation, mentoring, and instruction are often impacted by multiple layers of pandemic trauma: by the trauma in our own lives and communities, as well as by the trauma inflicted from carrying, accompanying and making space for the trauma of our students and their communities. Instructors, administrators, and counselors experience higher levels of burn-out, depression, and anxiety than other professions, which compound the challenge that is in front of us to transform theological education but also remind us of the unsustainability of “pastor-centric models” in pedagogy as much as in ecclesiology.

The multiple crises that the pandemic introduced lead to needs for learning as well as unlearning. Time, energy, and resources are required to master new media, technologies, cultures of communication, as well as their necessary infrastructures, with differential effects for different communities. Time, energy, and resources are required to unlearn assumptions, privileges, and biases.

Contexts differ. Access to theological education was not universal or equitable in pre-pandemic times, nor was its shape. The pandemic has affected different communities in different ways and along different timelines. The push to online learning presents vast challenges as different communities have vastly different conditions in terms of access to the various infrastructures that are needed for online education (electronic equipment, internet bandwidth, electricity, this is particularly pronounced in Africa, but also in other parts of the globe), different pre-conceptions with regard to what counts as “real” education and formation (formal and informal), political dynamics and surveillance that impact the safety and integrity of online learners both on- and offline, as well as logistics such as compromising on “central” time zones, and so on. Accessibility as well as safety are logistical and technological issues, they are also ethical as well as justice issues, for individuals and communities, locally and on a global scale.

As most of us have been forced and pushed to embrace online education as a sheer necessity for survival and as a “new normal,” we also recognize that online education might not be the future for everyone, everywhere, and all purposes. For many communities, the standards of highly tech-rich societies are painfully out of reach. Those of us who come from tech-rich locations with stable infrastructure and broad access to intellectual resources are challenged to find new ways of sharing with, as well as advocating for those who do not, in the diverse ecclesial, national, and international bodies we inhabit as well as across urban-rural divides. We also have to ask critically why new technological standards should be the telos

and whose resources count, which economic, colonial, and imperial interests they serve, and whether some communities cannot fulfill their educational aims more effectively in other ways, cultivating their own resources and practices rather than scrambling to “catch up” with an imposed technological ideal. We need to recognize that all of this is not only in the hands of teaching institutions, churches and communities which seek to be empowered. Governments and state education administration impact by accreditation procedures and demands to comply to standards and requirements.

It is also already clear today that the energy- and resource-intensity of the requisite technologies are not sustainable in the long-term or on a global scale. While a return to “the before times” and their own deep inequalities is neither realistic nor necessarily desirable, we thus have to be prepared for further cultural, ecological, technological, political, and ecclesial shifts in the future. Online might neither become nor remain the primary model of education. Our reflection on theological education and pedagogy cannot be one-sidedly about taking online learning for granted and investing everything into adapting to it. Instead, we are called to reflect on the ways in which digital transformations and the “move online” affect the dynamics of theological education, we are called to develop theological frameworks for their assessment, to cultivate intentional practices of mitigating their weaknesses as well as leaning into their promise, and to reflect on what can be learned from online experiences for theological education in general.

Theological insights

Technology is part of creation, with its blessings and its curses. Theological education has always used a variety of tools, practices, and media for its intents and purposes. Just like residential learning, online learning has to critically ask the questions, for what and for whom is theological education? Who is able to access our spaces? Who is invisibilized by their shape? Who sets the agenda? Who is absent, left behind, or excluded? Online learning poses distinct challenges for infrastructurally disadvantaged, tech-poor, and less literate communities, and it calls us to reflect what responsible modes of stewardship and intercession look like.

Ecclesial communities, whether local or ecumenical, have always been partially “virtual” and remote: their visible and invisible unity constituted of bodies not all of which are ever physically co-present because they are ill, disabled, elderly, young, immobile, spread out geographically, or bound by other responsibilities. Theological education, too, has always been partially “virtual” and remote: interacting with interlocutors that are only present on parchment, paper, or screens, keeping conversation not only with those physically distant, but also with those long temporally departed. The disruption and intensification of relationships that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about challenges us to re-ground our understanding of theological education in ecclesiology.

As communities of faith, we thus recognize that degrees of presence and absence are indelible markers of the incarnational reality of the body of Christ, and have

in all times been mediated differently. Online media poses distinct technological, infrastructural, economic, pedagogical and cultural challenges, but it is just another modality that attends all embodied, incarnated, social, translocal, transtemporal, and spiritual communion. The Covid-19 pandemic challenges us to reground our understanding of theological education in liturgical and eucharistic theology.

Online spaces are also “spaces” which come with their own structures of access and visitability. We are challenged to recognize them, too, as “holy ground” of encounter with God and one another. A theology of hospitality can remind us of the need to make space for one another and for God’s presence among us in whichever medium, and of the porous and temporary nature of the roles of host and visitor, instructor and learner. It can ground us in a eucharistic and liturgical theology as it draws our attention back to Christ as the host and the bread of theological education in whichever space. It encourages us to recognize that just like in other liturgical spaces, our transitory attendance of online and offline spaces of theological educations is also to edify and commission, nourish and send us into the world.

The pandemic has displaced and scattered learning communities into theological diaspora of online “spaces” while also creating cross-contextual proximity. As in all diasporic situations, there is trauma and pain, which require trauma-sensitive pedagogies and labor of grief. As in all diaspora situations, there is a temptation to romanticize the places of origin and to neglect to “seek the good of the city” (Jer 29) in which we find ourselves in the meantime. As in all diasporic situations, there is a temptation to replace identity construction by way of place with identity construction by way of particularities of our communities, as well as to forget the physical and spiritual discomfort of the traditional classroom. Rearticulating our situation through a theology of diaspora can allow us to avoid such temptations and instead root ourselves in the body of Christ into multi-centered and networked modes of learning.

The pandemic has disrupted embodied co-presence in ecclesial communities as well as in theological education. In doing so, it has drawn attention to the embodied condition of all theological education as an inherent task, and one that the Christian tradition has tended to underemphasize or devalue. It therefore offers us the opportunity to attend to the needs of embodied existence on both sides of the screen as well as outside of the (physical or virtual) classroom, including the embodied nature of our intellects and spirits as well as the embeddedness of our individual bodies into local communities of intentional and incidental co-learners, to the blurred lines between instructors, learners, peers, and human as well as more-than human support systems and disruptions. The Covid-10 pandemic challenges us to reground our understanding of theological education in the incarnation.

Trauma is nothing new to communities of faith. Our faith is rooted in the trauma of the cross. From it, we learn to cultivate practices of grief and lament, care and solidarity. From it, we also learn that redemption never lies in violence, but in God’s resurrection of the dead. Such hope re-orient us from what is possible to the reality and necessity of a different world. The Covid-19 pandemic challenges us to reground our approach to theological education on theologies of the cross.

Built on the cross, theological education is called to acknowledge and articulate trauma, and to work in a space of Holy Saturday: articulating lament, doing grief work, practicing humility, forgiveness, and prophetic witness, while carrying on in a “minor key” pointing to resurrection hope.

Pedagogical insights

Scrambling to adjust to the disruption of theological education due to the pandemic has revealed that our inherited models of education pay relatively little attention to the formation of academics as teachers and pedagogues. For pedagogy to be transformative, we not only have to transform our pedagogy, we also have to educate educators and capacitate institutions for empowering, expansive, and liberative pedagogies.

In and through the theological frameworks explored, the multiple pandemics of our time encourage us to learn from the ecumenical experience of decentralized membership in the communion of saints, from diasporic experiences of dislocation, from contextual experiences of embodied and communal cognition. It directs us to the particular expertise which disabled and neuro-diverse communities, as well as indigenous and communal pedagogies have to offer. We are encouraged by the innovative learning and experiential models for spiritual theology and ecumenism that we have found in the transformative pedagogies of EDAN, GETI, and creation care; in the IMC study process and in the WCRC’s curriculum development by indigenous communities, in established distance learning models in Mekane Yesus and UNISA, as well as in the witness of many more institutions and networks of our members across the globe.

We commit to holding to the irreducible but creative tensions between theory and practice, online and offline, intellectual and spiritual, mind and body, individual and community, the global and the local, academy and church, the priestly and the prophetic, the private and the public, innovation and tradition, catholicity and contextuality, universality and particularity – in the distinct shapes in which these tensions manifest in online spaces.

All learning is attended by modes of physical and intellectual dislocation and relocation. Just like residential learning, online learning decontextualizes and decenters, albeit in different ways. Models of blended and multi-modal learning, which combine phases of physical co-presence with remote/online phases as well as a variety of media/tion, are best poised to negotiate the distinct challenges of both modalities, build intentional community, sustain it over time and space, and allow for transcultural as well as contextual immersion.

Just like residential learning, online learning has to balance privacy and safety that allow for vulnerability, transformation, and growth on the one hand, and publicness that allow for critical engagement, witness, and impact on the other hand. Online learning poses distinct challenges with regard to the transformation of people’s homes into teaching spaces as well as different levels of vulnerability to surveil-

lance and discipline in different contexts. It also has the promise of bringing the richness and challenges of the students' contexts into our classroom spaces in unprecedented ways, open space for emotional intimacy and care.

Just like residential learning spaces, online spaces have to negotiate between contextuality and catholicity, averting the ever-present dangers of abstraction on the one side and domestication on the other. Not only does all learning depend on social and communal support systems, theological education is also always aimed at the transformation of communities, not just individuals. Online learning poses distinct challenges for communal and contextual learning. It can also help us to resist the temptation to create self-sufficient students, attend to their communal embeddedness and the “peripheral learners” around them.

All learning comes with equalizing effects *and* with structures of authority. All learning requires the intentional cultivation of pedagogies to counter and undo power structures. Theological education online is called to recognize students as subjects rather than objects of learning, collaborate with them on curriculum and assessment design, and to diversify our pedagogies. We embrace and celebrate the democratizing, participatory, inclusive and collaborative potentials of digital technologies. We also recognize the need to attend to new hierarchies they create, the need to attend to differential burdens of precarity, risk, and vulnerability as they affect students, faculty, and institutions, and the need to cultivate digital literacy and best practices across generations and cultures.

Just like residential academic settings, online spaces require the intentional cultivation of spiritual discipline, liturgical and ritual practices, and eco-theological grounding. Online learning poses additional challenges on each of these counts, hence requiring even more intentional attention. Practices of care and listening, habits of relating to the human and more-than-human ecologies in which we are embedded, and new rituals of prayer, orientation, and reflection have to be cultivated.

Our own consultation is an instructive case study for the promises and limitations of online mediation of theological learning processes. The hospitality of our Ghanaian friends and the physical space at *Trinity Theological Seminary* allowed for an encounter that went far beyond facilitating intellectual exchange. But on-site participation was costly - financially, temporally, socially, as well as in terms of personal risk and energy. The hybrid model allowed us to bring voices, experiences, and communities into our conversation which would otherwise not have been part of the process. In our conversations, we time and again were confronted with different contextual conditions, factors, and issues, while also learning from one another across experiences. On-line and on-site siblings participated in different modes and faced different challenges: Audio and visual transmission issues at times hampered full access of online participants, but there was also a moment when “on-site” participants were cut off from power and thus dropped out of the “on-line” space. On-line participants struggled with screen fatigue, on-site participants with the heat. But overall, the hybrid model allowed for sharing of experiences and for

intensive discussion in order to learn from and with one another in ways that neither the on-site or on-line alone would have permitted.

Grateful that the body of Christ can be mediated in a variety of ways, and invested in its ever greater unity, we will continue to work toward theological education that is equitable, sustainable, nourishing, and transformative as it is oriented by God's incarnated presence among us, within us, and beyond us.

December, 2022
Trinity Seminary
Accra, Ghana

SECTION II. REGIONAL REFLECTIONS

The following reflections were shared from among the members of the TEF Steering Committee. They represent snapshots of the current gifts, challenges and strategies for theological education and formation in each LWF region.

Africa Region

In the Africa region, theological institutions struggle with ongoing challenges related to financial sustainability and access to relevant theological content. COVID has highlighted the slow response of churches at the very time that churches needed to respond to various issues that the pandemic unmasked.

Gifts:

LWF member churches across the Africa region are growing. However, the increased numbers of young people and new members are not being matched by a growth in the numbers of church leaders who are theologically trained and formed in ministerial practices. The life and theological traditions of African churches are enriched by their vibrant history in their contexts and their contributions to the global Lutheran communion, and rooted in a deep spirituality and rich theological traditions that have emerged from the continent since the time of the early church until today.

Challenges:

The Africa region expresses an increased need for theological education and formation in every sub-region.

There are 9 theological institutions that LWF member churches currently sustain. They are comprised of three institutions within the Lutheran Communion

of Southern Africa (LUCSA), three within the Lutheran Communion in Central and Eastern Africa (LUCCEA), and three within the territory of the Lutheran Communion in Central and West Africa (LUCCWA).

Financial support is the greatest challenge to sustaining these institutions. There is a great need to support infrastructure, materials, and faculty salaries, which are difficult to mobilize in the current funding climate. Scholarships for students are more readily available, especially through the LWF Scholarship Program, and bilateral scholarship programs with LWF member churches from other regions. However, there are not enough scholarships, and the direct student support is not enough to sustain the institutions themselves.

Theological institutions in the Africa region also face the challenge of securing language and culturally appropriate resources, which complicate our efforts to decolonize education, and create new avenues for transformational learning.

Our institutions in the region continue to have a need for more educational infrastructure and materials such as library resources, books, laptops, and internet access, as well as basic access to utilities on some of our campuses.

Strategies:

- Some LWF churches have opted to establish their own local programs of pastoral formation, or sought partnerships with ecumenical institutions in their country or sub-region. In some cases, member churches have established their own seminary or universities. While this is a hopeful sign, it calls us to consider our capacity to sustain individual institutions, in light of bilateral or multilateral partnerships across the region or within sub-regions.

- LUCSA has re-established its theological advisory committee, with the goal of focusing on Lutheran theology and training in the sub-region.
- Many LWF member churches have engaged in partnerships with institutions that offer online and refresher courses in basic theology. Many partner churches within the LWF and across the ecumenical family have made various attempts at creating an online institution, with varied degrees of success. This strategy addresses some short term needs, but may create other long problems in terms of equitable access to content and resources.
- The LWF has offered targeted approaches such as the Helene Ralivao Fund for building the capacity for leadership and theological education of women across the Africa region, and men studying in the area of gender justice. While these initiatives greatly contribute to the region's capacity, these targeted approaches do not address the sustainability of institutions as such.
- One strategy that needs to be explored relates to the ongoing education and formation of clergy and lay leaders after their ordination or consecration. One aim will be to establish networks of intergenerational mentoring and accompaniment for spiritual care, ecclesial accompaniment and professional development, particularly for women in the ordained ministry.

Asia Region

Changes

Postcolonial theology is one of the leading themes of theological education in Asia. We also struggled with the ways of doing hermeneutics and epistemology of doing theology amid diversity. When we talk about diversity, it means different church mission bodies, different theological backgrounds, histories, cultures, and even the focus of learning theology.

The second leading theme in theological education is contextual theology. As Asians, we have to learn not only the “traditional” theologies and theologians such

as the church fathers, the reformers, and modern theologians. We also have to read Asian, African, and Latin American theologies, and moreover, our local theologians and theologies too. We have been focusing more and more on finding wisdom in our culture and local insights.

The internal and external push of accreditation, by the government and/or regional accreditation institutions such as ATESEA, have pushed theological institutions to better education quality and institutions.

Strengths

- Christianity is a growing religion in Asia. The interest in studying theology is quite high in several countries. There are several big theological education institutions. Indonesia for instance, has more than 300 seminaries.
- The fluidity of theological doctrinal discussion is fruitful. The churches are not divided much over confessional differences as much as regional, cultural/tribal, and historical differences.
- There is a growing realization of the need for a strong network among Asian theological education institutions and theologians. Many have had the opportunity of experiencing the Western University's education system and tried integrating their experiences with the local Asian wisdom of interpersonal relationships.

Challenges

- The ability to recognize and understand the evolution of theological education. Theological education needs to engage in interdisciplinary conversation and intercultural theology in order to construct post-colonial theological content and methods of teaching.
- The Asian regional challenge of interreligious dialogue, the plurality of the Asian context, conflicts, poverty, and climate change are so multifaceted, that coping with one issue in a specific context require a different answer at another.

- The seriousness and limits of theological education institutions in equipping their curricula and resources, in terms of financial, faculty availability, infrastructure, and commitment to developing their education system.
- The legacy of colonialization is still seen in the current curricula. There is a need for a decolonizing theology and listening to indigenous knowledge and interpretation. Theology should have epistemological foundation that listens to the voices from the periphery, and the oppressed communities at the margins.
- There is also a need for recognizing the difficulties in discerning contextual theologies and historical legacies of the colonial past. In a conference for Asians for theological education, the participants realized the need for academic publications or exchange of materials.

Strategies:

- Establishing a shared-regional network of theological seminaries/colleges for the exchange of resources and syllabus, teaching materials, and field experiences. Preferably online exchanges to start with.
- Establishing a shared wisdom of accreditation through a joint accreditation network or institution.
- South to South faculty development program plan, faculty exchanges, and sharing of inter-library e-books and e-resources.
- Providing a platform for publication of articles in reputed academic journals.

Central and Western Europe

Regional Gifts

In central Europe, theological education developed in close connection to universities founded and funded

by state authorities since the Middle Ages. This includes advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, dependencies between church and state often have been rather strong, sometimes too strong. On the other, institutions and financial means for theological education are provided by the state so that the churches are free to spend their own money for other purposes. Today, Theological Faculties as part of state universities are rather well equipped with stuff and libraries, including digital facilities, to conduct teaching and research on a highly academic level. More important, they belong to academic networks interdisciplinary and international. This leads to a way of doing theology as part of contemporary scholarly communities that is not too much constricted by inner church circles and interests. Nevertheless, relations between state and church in Europe are often tight and regulated by treaties, depending on the constitutional position of the churches in different countries. This becomes more important in view of a growing secularization of European societies that leads to big losses of cultural education related to the contents and traditions of Christian faith. Therefore, religious education in schools public or private has become highly significant. A good and deep theological training for schoolteachers will become a great challenge for the churches as for the state in Europe.

Strategies

Strategies and programmatic suggestions to shape a future consultation Institutions of theological education in Central and Western Europe are part of international academic institutions and networks. They can claim for their students and staff to participate in exchange programs like ERASMUS or ERASMUS+ which would enable them to be part of international research programs or summer and winter schools. The LWF member churches should be encouraged to look for options to participate in such activities via Professors or students who teach or study at Theological faculties. Local LWF member churches may contact their closest partner faculties to reach agreements about teaching or research collaborations in areas of common interest. A future consultation hosted by the LWF TEF Network should look for partnership in

theological education beyond their own, LWF related institutions.

In terms of the future of TEF in the communion today, we should point to the interaction between theology as a science and the contemporary humanities altogether. Churches in Central and Western Europe are becoming smaller and weaker on the face of it. However, from a political point of view they often are valued highly positive by their societies and state authorities. There seems to be a danger for churches becoming smaller and weaker of withdrawing themselves from the society into inward 'circles of the pious', often conservative minded, that try to survive for better times. Theological education should strengthen self confidence of the churches as bearers of cultural and religious traditions that will be vitally important for any modern societies.

Central and Eastern Europe

Contextual Lutheran theological education in Central and Eastern Europe is specially linked to the political and social changes that characterized the second half of the 20th century. Both being churches in post-communist societies and living in minority situations still describe the possibilities, boundaries and challenges for theological educational institutions. In post-communist Central and Eastern European countries theological education was purposefully restricted, thus the scope of curriculum, competence-building and capacity building for social justice awareness was narrowed down to a theoretically approached theological education and preparation for restricted areas of pastoral ministry. Thus a traditional focus remained prevalent in these countries in order to provide an academic training for the pastors based on the traditional needs of the churches.

The minority situation in most Eastern European Lutheran churches also meant and still means small-sized theological higher education institutions along with the challenges of resourcing, financing and establishing sub-regional and wider contacts within the Lutheran community. Together with the concern for a declining number of church membership and the effects of rural demographic social changes, theological institutions, especially the academic ones preparing for the pastoral ministry, experience the downward

trend of enrollment numbers. The effects of the decades of the communist era when church attendance had been in many cases highly disapproved, are still felt today in the attitude of more than one generation who have hardly had any Christian socialization. Theological educational institutions must also prepare themselves for the task of strengthening Christian socialization and Christian identity formation. In this instance, it is worthwhile to mention that the role of denominational education is especially important for churches living in minority situations, because confessional identity is a hope and trust-building component for the future of the churches and the congregations.

Despite the hardships churches had had to endure during the second half of the 20th century, a remarkable and creative openness towards changes characterized the coming years. The churches had to take stock of the new possibilities and of the urgent tasks to accomplish in the new democratic environment. These developments had deep impact on theological education as it was opened in its curricular scope to provide education for catechists and religious education teachers. This resourceful capacity and adaptivity from theological education still today carries a great value and hope to continue the renewal of theological education.

Current trends and challenges

Curricular challenges

- To respond to the needs of the development and implementation of various ministry fields, churches need to widen the scope of their educational programs. In the field of pastoral ministry, distance programs need to be developed to ensure the access for all age groups to ministerial education and formation.
- The need for religious teacher training programs are on the increase to be able to fulfill the needs of state and church educational institutions for teaching religious education.
- Diaconal programs should also be further developed for educating deacons, supervisors, mentors for diaconal ministries.

- Developing programs for academic and postgraduate levels, and continuing education courses.
- Strengthening lay education in new and challenging ministries.
- Strengthening access to academic theological research, building cooperation with research teams from the wider Lutheran family, and identifying contextual questions, e.g. eco-theology, justice, peace, ecumenical studies. Strengthening ties with other fields of humanities is a new and challenging way for theological education institutions to pave paths for interdisciplinary cooperation.
- Identifying ways the educational institutions could enhance their curriculum with a greater emphasis on theological reflection, integration of theoretical and practical competence-building.
- Through the religious socialization process seek ways for responding to spiritual needs and provide inclusive means for its expressions.

Institutional challenges

- Securing the resources and the finances of church-owned theological institutions and state-run theological faculty departments.
- Many theological institutions are part of the Erasmus Project, but mapping the institutions without this access means securing their possibility to become part of the wider Lutheran theological network.
- Making the Lutheran scholarship program even more visible and accessible for member churches within the sub-region.
- Assisting churches in establishing digitalization centers and developing coordinated digitalization plans.
- Assisting theological educational institutions with the acquisition of books, journals, and databases, as they are often beyond institutional capacities and hinder fair access to academic resources.

- Enhancing institutional cooperation within the sub-region and also with the wider Lutheran family.

The task of incorporating tradition and contextuality

Coming closer to the Assembly and to a new era in the history of the Lutheran World Federation, we also need to move forward from the critical stance to a creative, maybe bold vision-making, taking into account that because of our differences, what might be creative for some, could already be a praxis for others. Accompanying each other on this road is also our vocation.

The results of secularization and the sociologically proven indifference towards traditional Christianity that characterizes our sub-region as well should transform our theological education into a contextual, outreach-based and dialogue-initiating forms of education. When there is a need, we need to practice greater flexibility in educational models. We need to rethink our traditional patterns and seek new ways to create viable forms of education for those who are called to serve God.

Within our sub-region there is a strong need to strengthen partnership and cooperation. We are not a huge region of the LWF, but yet we have language barriers, we have members and non-members of the European Union in the countries where we belong to, and most importantly, there is a war, huge suffering and a resulting refugee situation in this part of the world and it affects our member churches and our witness to peace significantly.

We need to ask ourselves whether there is a vision among ourselves to critically study together the context we are all sharing and develop a common theological reflection not only in the face of secularization, but also in the face of a terrible war that challenges us not only in our denominational but also in a contextual ecumenical setting.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Collaboration and coordination has been a hallmark of theological education and formation across the Latin America and Caribbean region for many years. One of the challenges across this region is the linguistic

diversity between Spanish, English and Portuguese, in addition to many local languages and diverse cultural contexts. The following are examples of programs of participating institutes in the LAC regional TEF Network.

SEMLA:

- SEMLA is part of the theological community of Mexico.
- SEMLA hosts regular curricular activities.
- SEMLA provides theological training and ministerial support to the Lutheran churches of Bolivia, El Salvador, Chile, among others.
- SEMLA students are international.
- The intensive course on Reformation and Mission is one programmatic highlight, as well as the certification in Climate Justice that is carried out in conjunction with the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.

IPC (Institute of Contextual Pastoral Care)

- The IPC belongs to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina.
- The objective of IPC is to prepare and build the capacity of “middle ministries”. It has no long-term degrees or accreditation.
- To this end, IPC hosts regular curricular courses, including the ANCOM (Animando Comunidades)
- IPC is open to all churches that want to participate and has enrolled a significant number of students.

Sustainability Institute

- The Sustainability Institute is a regional tool for both the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB) and all churches in the region.

Structurally the Sustainability Institute is linked to Faculdades EST.

- The website describes the regular courses, which are offered in Portuguese, Spanish and English.
- The Institute is working on preparing of two long courses for 2023: Diakonia (in conjunction with ELCA) and Ecumenism (in conjunction with CONIC)
- Work is under way to develop short-term courses, including a course on conflict mediation.

Ecumenical Network for Theological Education

- REET is an institution of theological education based in Argentina, and supported by the Evangelical Church of the Río de la Plata, the Waldensian Church of the Río de la Plata and the Disciples of Christ Church.
- REET offers a curriculum in various theological disciplines and fields.
- Interdisciplinary seminars are offered on a variety of topics.
- REET is preparing a series of virtual lectures on Care for Creation and Ecodiakonia with Stellenbosch University in South Africa and the Waldensian Faculty of Theology in Rome.
- A two-year continuing education course is currently being offered for pastors already in ministry, and a community ministry school is being prepared for 2023.

Lutheran School of Theology

- ELT is an institute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia.
- ELT offers the regular theological curriculum.

- ELT has an articulation agreement with UNIBAUTISTA (Fundacion Universitaria Bautista) to obtain an official degree.
- ELT offers lay training and continuing education.

LAC Theological Education Network

Under the coordination of the Theological Education and Formation Network in the LAC Region, theological institutions make their academic offerings available to the churches of the region. In practical terms, this is done through the LWF LAC Regional Secretariat, in relationship to the members of the TEF Network. The partnership aims to grassroot education and formation in local churches, and seeks to utilize the region's website and Facebook as an instrument for this work.

One of the fruits of the TEF network is the sharing and distribution of resources. Across the region, teachers from the different participating educational institutions are invited by churches to offer courses, workshops and conferences.

The network continues to improve the socialization and exchange of theological bibliographic material produced in the region.

The certification in Climate Justice offered by the LWF, ELCA, IPC, SEMLA and the Salvadoran Lutheran University under the auspices of the Center for Climate Justice and Faith of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary is one example of a multilateral partnership that serves as a shared resource for building capacity for ecotheology and climate justice across the region.

Nordic Region

In the Nordic region and its five countries Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden, the Lutheran churches are majority churches. Even though the Nordic countries are known for being highly secularized, the Lutheran churches still have a high number of members. Moreover, the long history of Lutheranism has influenced the development of Nordic society and culture in significant ways.

Thanks to the large extent of Lutheranism in the Nordic countries, many of the Nordic theology students are becoming co-workers in the Lutheran

churches. In that sense, the Lutheran churches have a great presence in Nordic theological education at universities and colleges. However, if turn to academic theological education in my home country Sweden, some additional perspectives come into view. Here, the role of the Lutheran churches, and the churches generally, can also be seen as marginal since theology is questioned as a subject in the universities. In all institutions of academic theological education, state owned or not, theology is not allowed to be taught from a confessional perspective. It has to be taught in ways that makes it available to and inclusive of students from any religious or non-religious background. When it comes to the part of the theological education that is pastoral and liturgical, it is organized by the churches themselves, such as in the Church of Sweden Institute of Education.

The questioning of theology in the academy on the one hand creates a challenging situation for theological education. On the other hand, there are gifts that emerge from the same situation. Thanks to that theology must be taught in an inclusive way, theological education is usually carried out in a heterogeneous classroom, where different traditions and worldviews coexist. Lutheran students of theology in other words study in dialogue and cooperation with students who have a different background than themselves. This prepares them for a life of service in a church that seeks dialogue and cooperation with other churches, other faith communities, and society.

For example, at the University College Stockholm, most of our students come from various Protestant and Orthodox backgrounds. Taking this into view, our work for theological education implies a continuous development of strategies for creating and sustaining understanding across differences, both in the way we organize pedagogic activities in the classroom, and how we arrange the social environment at campus. The larger the differences are, the more important it is that our study environment paves the way for accompaniment and the building up of friendships. The new post-pandemic situation, where parts of the studies are still located to the screen, has created new challenges with which we struggle for finding ways to manage in creative and socially sustainable ways.

Nordic Lutheran students are not studying in isolation from other church traditions, but in dialogue with them. Still, the historical background of the Nordic

Lutheran churches as national churches creates yet another challenge. Nationalism can easily get foothold in a church that is geographically defined, like the Church of Sweden. Even though marginal, the tendency towards nationalism exists. While it is counteracted from the side of the churches themselves, theological education can contribute to preventing that it emerges at all. Here, Lutheran theological education needs to create awareness of how the Lutheran church is a worldwide communion and a part of global Christianity. At University College Stockholm, we are developing strategies for making this awareness even larger as we are about to launch an “international track” which makes it possible for the students to choose internationally oriented theology courses in every semester throughout their study program. From the side of the Church of Sweden, there is also an active support of students who wish to make parts of their studies abroad at one of its many partner institutions, like the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem and Bossey Ecumenical Institute.

A programmatic suggestion I would like to make, and which responds to the need for dialogue and international awareness accounted for above, is to make an effort for theological education in connection to the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Life and Work movement in Stockholm 1925. The Christian Council of Sweden is preparing for events in the ecumenical year of 2025. An event of theological education could, for example, take shape as a “Stockholm Ecumenical Theological Institute”, in other words as a daughter initiative to the WCC Global Ecumenical Theological Institute. In our “Nordic Network for Ecumenism and International Relations”, which gathers lecturers and researchers of ecumenism in the Nordic countries, there is an interest in contributing to an event of this kind.

The initiator and host of the conference in Stockholm in 1925 was Lutheran, and still today the Nordic Lutheran churches are actively engaged in the ecumenical movement. A programmatic effort for theological education in the ecumenical year of 2025 would in other words follow a long tradition of Nordic Lutheran engagement in the building of international relations and dialogue among the churches. As a network hub for Theological Education and Formation at the LWF, University College Stockholm could provide the academic venue for such an event of theological education.

North America

Between the two LWF member churches in North America (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC)), there are 9 seminaries that train candidates for ordination through advanced post-secondary education. In addition, there are 27 ELCA/ELCIC colleges or universities that provide undergraduate education, which includes but does not require theology classes.

About half of the seminaries have experience with international students from Europe, Asia, and Africa. A smaller number have exchange agreements with specific theological institutions in other countries. For seminaries that do not, there is a desire to serve as a resource to those outside of North America, but financial and time limitations are preventative. In the United States there are significant challenges navigating the bureaucratic complexities of obtaining visas for international students. However, in Canada, one seminary is offering scholarships to students from LWF member churches.

Financial and personnel shortages in the ELCA and ELCIC are realities that also impact international engagement. Most seminaries are in precarious financial situations, in addition to not having full faculty complements. The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Another factor inhibiting engagement is an awareness of the damage inflicted by colonial systems that wedded theology and the church with economic expansion. Seminaries are unsure of how to support international students without engaging in recolonization. This is an important conversation that has not yet been addressed in North-American-wide joint conversation. A programmatic suggestion might be for LWF to host a global conference of LWF theological education institutions on this topic, with the aim of helping resource-rich institutions learn more about decolonizing theology and education and identify appropriate ways of being helpful.

Gifts identified in North American seminaries include experience with and capacity for online teaching, long histories of theological education, and experience with SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) training, anti-racism training (in the ELCA) and learning Indigenous forms of decolonizing theology and education (in the ELCIC). Another gift is the relationships of “Companion Synods” between ELCA and ELCIC

Synods and international LWF churches. These official relationships can be utilized to develop seminary/theological education relationships internationally.

Current relationships between seminaries in the ELCA and ELCIC rest on individual relationships between seminary faculty/executive in networked bodies. When one faculty member or president leaves their position, that relationship must be reestablished (and is often not). One strategy for building a global network may be to keep a running, updated public

list of seminaries and contact information that will accommodate transitions in personnel, as well as a database of what courses can be offered or faculty willing to guest teach in other institutions. This would, however, need administrative support from LWF to keep the list updated. (Self-updating such lists do not seem to work...) A connected resource might be an email distribution list where institutions could send information about upcoming online courses and events that are accessible internationally.

SECTION III. WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Global Context analysis

As a global theological network, we are called to engage in theological education that focuses on contextuality, pedagogical strategy and methodology and begins with the objectives of theological education for each region. Our vocation as theological educators compels us to pay attention to the contexts and circumstances that condition and shape what we do. From a global perspective, having one strategy is difficult, but a polycentric approach would make theological education grounded in our shared Lutheran tradition relevant to our ministry in our diverse contexts. Two key elements in this polycentric approach are equity or pedagogical justice and content.

1. Equity

What is the equity we seek?

The pandemic unmasked the inequities that may have been previously hidden from sight. We live in an increasingly digital world that creates an illusion that everyone has access. However, the pandemic revealed otherwise. While digital education is desirable in that it connects people across time and space, not everyone has access or resources to sustain access. This inequity is particularly true with regard to the infrastructure in many countries in the global south as well as institutions in rural or economically disadvantaged areas of the global north. In the context of this imbalance, attention to pedagogical justice calls us to seriously consider the questions: How do we support those that have limited access or no access as well as resources? Who is left behind in any joint initiative that we take as a communion?

Reviewing paradigm changes in education is an important first step. For example, online approaches to content delivery in the LAC region currently reach

many more students, church leaders and members in a context where residential learning is not feasible due to financial costs and the social costs of students leaving families and work for full time residential studies. In this scenario, partnerships between institutions and churches can play a crucial role in finding creative options to extend learning that does not sacrifice the gifts of learning in residential community. How can the theological institutions representing each region to the TEF network serve as a hub in each region that promote and host discernment as well as resource sharing so that all institutions and churches are brought along in these changing times? Paradigms shifts require attention to pedagogical changes, and constant evaluation of the consequences for theological education and formation. The 2022 ecumenical consultation on Pedagogy and Pandemic released a common statement, which offers helpful questions and suggestions to guide us as this conversation unfolds across the LWF communion.

The LWF TEF can serve as a hub for mapping resource sharing and scholarship needs, in order to build our theological capacity in a consultative, inclusive and strategic manner befitting a global communion of churches.

2. Content

What is authentic, contextually relevant, content in theological education?

Authentic, and contextually relevant content must emphasize decolonization of theological content and pedagogies, with attention to indigenous education and resources for trans-contextual, intercultural theological learning. Contextualization and decolonization calls us to consider the power dynamics involved in identifying the shape of curricula and course content. This dynamic is addressed in the TEF Strategy.

It also requires creating constructive approaches to emerging forms of theological education that resist the pushback among our seminaries and churches by offering compelling programs. This in turn requires us to ask two questions that may guide future work of the TEF Network:

- Can LWF member churches agree on a global framework of disciplines or focus areas that would constitute a rubric for Lutheran theological education that could be adapted for a diversity of ministries?
- What would be the ecumenical and Lutheran dimensions for such a shared rubric that could be contextualized, particularly in minority contexts?

So, where are we going? What is our primary task as TEF?

“When we had almost all the answers, the questions were changed!” This graffiti on the wall of the University of Bogota, Columbia, succinctly puts into perspective where we are headed and what we are called to do. The primary task of TEF is to **discern** the nature of theological education in the ever changing and evolving contexts and to determine the strategic role of theological institutions as partners with churches and communion. This makes it imperative that LWF in its capacity continues to convene discernment on the global level that equips each region to continue the work of engaging in theological education and formation.

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