

Equipping Pastors for Holistic Ministry: A Contextual Evaluation of Pastoral Training in Tanzanian Anglican Theological Colleges

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Abstract

This article examines the extent to which Anglican theological colleges in Tanzania prepare pastors with the practical competencies required for effective and context-responsive ministry. While pastors are expected to address both spiritual and societal challenges—including leadership, advocacy, and social transformation—existing training programmes have remained largely focused on doctrinal content. Drawing on the Five Marks of Mission and social constructivist theory, the study employed a mixed-methods design involving curriculum reviews, surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies from three theological institutions in Tanzania. The findings revealed a consistent gap between theological instruction and practical pastoral readiness. Although students reported confidence in biblical knowledge, many felt unprepared for the demands of real-life ministry, such as counselling, conflict resolution, or community mobilization. Notably, only one institution demonstrated a structured practicum model integrating field-based learning with academic content. The study recommends curriculum reforms that embed experiential learning, service-based training, and interdisciplinary engagement as core components of pastoral formation. It also highlights the importance of institutional support, faculty development, and sustainable partnerships with local communities and dioceses. The study concludes that a holistic, missionally grounded approach to theological education is necessary to equip pastors who are not only theologically competent but also capable of responding meaningfully to the needs of the Church and society in Tanzania.

Keywords: Curriculum Reform, Five Marks of Mission, Pastoral Training, Practical Competence, Social Transformation, Social Transformation and Theological Education.

1.0 Introduction

This article examines how Anglican theological colleges in Tanzania prepare pastors for practical ministry in response to both spiritual and societal needs. While pastors are increasingly expected to lead in areas such as community development, health, and social justice, most training programmes focus on doctrinal instruction. Scholars such as Osmer (2008) and Wright (2013) have advocated for a shift toward more practical and contextually responsive theological education, especially within Sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing on the Five Marks of Mission and guided by social constructivism theory, this study assessed the extent to which current curricula equip students with practical competencies for holistic ministry. Using a mixed-methods approach,

the research reveals a significant gap between theological education and the real-world challenges pastors face. It explores how interdisciplinary learning, structured fieldwork, and stronger community engagement enhance the relevance and effectiveness of pastoral training in the Tanzanian Anglican context. Building on the introduction, the next section provides key definitions and outlines the theoretical framework that guided the study. This will ensure conceptual clarity and establish a foundation for examining how theological education has prepared pastors for practical and context-responsive ministry.

2.0 Working Definitions and Theoretical Framework

Pastoral Training is a structured educational process designed to equip future clergy with essential theological knowledge and practical skills necessary for effective ministry within both church and community contexts. As articulated by Ian Randall, this training should encompass doctrinal understanding, spiritual formation, and practical skill development, framed within a missiological paradigm that fosters engagement in God's mission (Randall, 2007). This approach is particularly relevant in the Tanzanian context, where Kenokeno Mashabela emphasises the necessity for church leaders to navigate complex socio-cultural dynamics (Mashabela, 2023). Furthermore, Solomon M et al. (2020) underscore the need for collaboration between church leaders and theological institutions to address gaps in training. By integrating competencies such as community engagement and conflict resolution into the curriculum, Pastoral Training in Anglican Theological Colleges in Tanzania prepares clergy to meet the multifaceted challenges of modern ministry, empowering them to serve as both spiritual leaders and agents of social transformation.

The incorporation of practical skills into pastoral training is consistent with social constructivist theory, which emphasises real-world problem solving as a critical component of educational outcomes. According to this theoretical perspective, learning is most effective when contextualised within real-life scenarios, allowing learners to apply their knowledge in practical settings (Masrina, 2023). For example, the ability to engage in community advocacy and conflict resolution is not only beneficial but also required for pastors who want to promote social justice and effectively address community issues.

Moreover, the need for advocacy skills in pastoral training is increasingly recognised, as these competencies enable clergy to engage with broader societal issues and promote social change (Motulsky et al., 2014; Pearrow & Fallon, 2020). Research indicates that training programs must

actively incorporate advocacy as a core component of their curricula to prepare future pastors for the challenges they will face in their ministries (Beer et al., 2012; Asenjo Palma, 2019). This is particularly relevant in contexts where social issues, such as poverty and discrimination, require a proactive and informed response from church leaders (Neville et al., 2021).

In summary, practical competence is a vital aspect of pastoral training that encompasses the application of essential skills in community engagement, conflict resolution, and social advocacy. By adopting a competency-based theoretical framework grounded in social constructivist principles, theological education can better prepare pastors to address social change effectively, ensuring that they are not only spiritually knowledgeable but also practically equipped to serve their communities.

Practical Competence is defined as the ability of pastors to apply essential skills—such as community engagement, conflict resolution, and social advocacy—in their ministry (Wahl, 2013, p. 272). This study adopts a competency-based theoretical framework, emphasizing the need for pastors to possess practical skills alongside spiritual expertise to effectively address social change, which encompasses ‘cognitive, affective, motivational, volitional and social dispositions’ (Nell, 2020, p. 4). This perspective is grounded in social constructivist theory, which highlights the importance of real-world problem-solving in educational outcomes.

Theological Education refers to the formal academic and spiritual formation of individuals preparing for ministry to enable them to effectively participate in God’s mission (Nell, 2020). This study explores theological education in Anglican colleges in Tanzania and advocates an integrated approach that combines doctrinal teaching with practical ministry skills. The theoretical foundation draws from curriculum design perspectives that promote the blending of theoretical and practical learning to meet both spiritual and societal needs.

Social Transformation refers to the process of fostering positive change within communities, particularly in areas such as poverty, mental health, and political instability (Wahl, 2013, p. 274). This study emphasizes the role of pastors as agents of social transformation, drawing on liberation theology, which argues that religious leaders have a responsibility to address social injustice through both spiritual guidance and practical action.

Curriculum Reform refers to the systematic review and enhancement of theological education to align with the practical demands of contemporary ministry. This study is grounded in competency-based education theory, advocating for the integration of practical skills with traditional theological instruction. The theoretical framework focuses on how curriculum changes can address gaps in practical training, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of pastoral education in Tanzania.

To conclude, this section has outlined the key concepts and theoretical foundation guiding the study, showing that effective pastoral training must combine theological knowledge with practical competence. Grounded in social constructivist theory and a competency-based approach, the study emphasises the importance of real-world problem-solving and community engagement in preparing clergy for modern ministry. Definitions of pastoral training, theological education, social transformation, and curriculum reform collectively highlight the need for integrated and context-sensitive learning models. Together, these insights provide a strong conceptual base for assessing how Anglican theological colleges in Tanzania can equip pastors to serve both the Church and society with relevance and impact.

Having established the key concepts and theoretical foundation of the study, the next section reviews relevant literature. This review explored scholarly perspectives on practical theological education, pastoral competence, and the integration of mission-oriented training within theological curricula. By engaging with both global and African sources, the literature review helped situate the study within broader academic debates and identified gaps that this research aimed to address.

3.0 Literature Review

The reviewed scholarship consistently shows that effective pastoral training must combine theological depth with practical competence in order to meet the complex demands of contemporary ministry, particularly within the Tanzanian context. As several authors emphasize, traditional models of theological education that prioritized doctrinal purity and biblical literacy (Bevans, 2002; Osmer, 2008) are no longer adequate for clergy who must minister in environments marked by poverty, social instability, weak institutions, and diverse community needs. Consequently, scholars such as Osmer (2008), Wright (2006, 2013), and Espinoza (2017) argue for a shift toward practical and mission-oriented theology that connects biblical principles to real-life issues while fostering skills in leadership, community engagement, and social responsiveness.

Moreover, developments in global theological education point toward a more holistic formation of pastors. Writers like Anderson (2013), Pandya (2022), and Leimgruber (2022) highlight the need for theological curricula that integrate community development, leadership, and justice-oriented ministry. At the same time, scholars such as Dreyer (2005), Curry et al. (2016), McCarroll (2022), and West (2016) note persistent gaps in key competencies—including emotional intelligence, counselling, and strategic leadership—which many clergy in Tanzania continue to experience.

In addition, the literature strongly underscores the value of contextual theology as a foundation for relevant pastoral formation. According to Bevans (2002), Schreiter (1993), Kritzing (2013), and Walls (1996), theological reflection must emerge from people's lived experiences and local cultures. This emphasis is especially important in Sub-Saharan Africa, where pastors often operate as community leaders in settings shaped by cultural diversity, economic hardship, and social inequality. Scholars such as Gunda (2016), Magezi (2018), Zink (2017), and Sakupapa (2020), therefore, call for training models that equip clergy to address issues such as environmental degradation, gender-based violence, and youth unemployment—challenges that are particularly visible in Tanzanian communities.

Furthermore, the literature highlights the central role of practical skills in preparing pastors for ministry. Osmer's (2008) framework for practical theology, together with the mission-oriented approaches proposed by Wright (2006) and Curnow (2017), illustrate the need for pastors to analyse community realities, respond to human suffering, and participate in transformation. Studies by Chatira and Mwenje (2018) show that Tanzanian clergy often lack competencies in administration and interpersonal communication, while research by Baruth et al. (2015) and Lin (2020) demonstrates the benefits of experiential learning strategies such as internships, service learning, and mentorship.

The theme of social transformation is likewise prominent, with Bosch (1991), Theoharis (2007), and Shields (2010) arguing that pastoral leaders must challenge oppressive systems and cultivate moral courage, critical consciousness, and community empowerment. These expectations are particularly significant in Tanzania, where civic institutions may be weak, and pastors often serve simultaneously as spiritual leaders, social advocates, and development facilitators.

As Forde and Torrance (2017) and DeMatthews (2016) note, this requires training in political literacy, advocacy, and systemic analysis.

Finally, Competency-Based Training (CBT) emerges as a practical and context-sensitive framework for restructuring pastoral education. Scholars such as Mwangi and De Klerk (2011), Lin (2020), and Sakupapa (2020) show that CBT aligns well with mission objectives and equips pastors with measurable skills in leadership, administration, community work, and adaptive ministry. Evidence from Chatira and Mwenje (2018) again indicates that such competencies are urgently needed in Tanzania. CBT's emphasis on outcomes, flexibility, and interdisciplinary learning positions it as a suitable model for producing well-rounded clergy capable of addressing both spiritual and social challenges.

Taken together, the literature reveals a strong scholarly consensus that pastoral training in Tanzania must move beyond doctrinal instruction toward a more integrated, contextual, and practically oriented model. By blending theological insight with hands-on competencies such as community engagement, leadership, emotional intelligence, and social advocacy, theological colleges can prepare clergy who are not only spiritual shepherds but also catalysts for holistic development. This body of scholarship, therefore, provides a solid rationale for investigating how Tanzanian Anglican theological colleges currently structure their training and how effectively these programmes equip pastors for contextually relevant ministry.

4.0 Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine how effectively Anglican theological colleges in Tanzania equip pastors with practical ministry competencies. The use of both numerical data and in-depth narratives allowed for a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the strengths and limitations of current training programmes.

4.1 Sampling and Selection Criteria

The study used purposive sampling to select institutions and participants. Ten Anglican theological colleges across Tanzania were included, ensuring representation from both urban and rural contexts, various diocesan affiliations, and differing institutional capacities. These colleges were

chosen based on their accreditation status, theological orientation, and the presence of active pastoral training programmes.

For the quantitative strand, a total of 149 participants were involved, comprising 105 final-year students and 44 faculty members. The participants were selected because they had substantial experience with the curriculum and could provide informed feedback on both theoretical instruction and practical training components.

In the qualitative component, 18 theological educators, 10 recent graduates (within two years of completing their studies), and 5 diocesan church leaders were interviewed. Additionally, four focus group discussions were held with final-year students, each comprising 6 to 8 participants. This approach ensured a diverse range of perspectives, reflecting both institutional practices and lived student experiences.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through a combination of methods to enhance triangulation and validity:

- Structured questionnaires were administered to students and faculty. These were designed to assess perceived competence in key pastoral areas, including community leadership, counselling, worship administration, and church governance.
- Semi-structured interviews provided deeper insights into how theological educators and church leaders perceive the strengths and gaps in current training models.
- Focus group discussions with students allowed for collaborative reflection on their preparation for ministry, especially in fieldwork and internships.
- Case studies of three institutions were carried out to examine their curriculum structure, pedagogical strategies, and institutional support systems for practical training.
- Document analysis was conducted on syllabi, field placement manuals, internship reports, and course outlines. This helped to evaluate how practical competencies are embedded in formal curriculum documents.

4.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. These included frequency distributions, mean scores, and cross-tabulations to explore trends in perceived competence levels across institutions and between student and faculty responses.

The qualitative data—gathered from interviews, focus groups, and documents—were analyzed through thematic analysis. Transcripts were first coded manually and then refined using NVivo software to identify recurring themes related to curriculum relevance, practical skill development, mentorship, and institutional challenges. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of how various colleges approach practical pastoral formation.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

High ethical standards were followed in this study. The St. John's University of Tanzania Research Ethics Committee approved the study. Comprehensive informed consent forms explaining the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity were provided to each participant. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any stage without penalty, and that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in a respectful and non-judgmental environment. Digital and physical data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher in accordance with institutional data protection protocols.

Conclusively, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of how Anglican theological colleges in Tanzania prepare students for practical ministry. By combining surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, and document analysis, the research captured both quantitative patterns and rich qualitative insights. The purposive sampling of diverse institutions and participants ensured that findings reflect the realities of pastoral training across various contexts. Data analysis using statistical and thematic techniques enabled a balanced interpretation of strengths and gaps in curriculum implementation. Ethical standards were diligently followed throughout the study, ensuring participant safety and research integrity. Together, these methods provided a solid foundation for assessing the alignment between theological education and practical pastoral competence. Based on this methodological foundation,

the following section presents the research findings. It identifies significant patterns and insights into how existing pastoral training programmes equip students with the practical skills needed for effective, contextually responsive ministry in Tanzanian communities, and evaluates the effectiveness of current training practices.

5.0 Findings

This study aimed to assess how effectively Tanzanian Anglican theological colleges equip students with the practical skills needed for ministry. Analysis of curriculum documents, student survey data, faculty interviews, and graduate focus group discussions reveals a consistent gap between what theological programmes teach and the practical skills clergy require upon entering parish ministry. While students graduate with strong doctrinal foundations, many find it difficult to apply theological knowledge to real pastoral situations involving poverty, family conflict, youth issues, and broader social instability.

Overall, the evidence suggests that the current training model does not adequately support the kind of contextual and community-focused ministry outlined in the theoretical framework. Constructivist theory posits that learners develop competence through guided practice, interaction, and reflection; however, the programmes examined rely heavily on classroom instruction rather than hands-on experience. Similarly, the Five Marks of Mission emphasize responding to human need and transforming unjust structures, yet the existing training approach does not fully prepare students for these missional tasks.

The following sections present detailed findings illustrating this misalignment.

5.1 Curriculum Review: Strong in Doctrine but Weak in Practical Skills

All three curricula reviewed mainly focus on doctrinal and academic content. Courses in biblical studies, theology, ethics, and church history are well-developed and highly valued by faculty and students. This doctrinal emphasis is a positive aspect of Anglican theological education.

However, a key finding from the analysis is that these curricula fail to convert their theological aims into practical, measurable learning outcomes. Courses such as Christian Ethics, Pastoral Theology, Church Administration, and Mission have broad, theoretical objectives or are disconnected from real ministry tasks. Consequently, students are not guided to develop skills such

as counselling, applying ethical reasoning to real cases, mediating family or community conflicts, or designing local development initiatives.

From a constructivist perspective, this gap is even more pronounced. Constructivism states that competence develops through structured practice and reflection, yet the syllabi reviewed offer few opportunities for students to build pastoral skills via experience. Instead, students are expected to infer practical skills from content-heavy teaching, leaving major gaps in their ministry readiness.

This weakness was also evident in the BA in Theology Fieldwork Manual, which lacked specific learning outcomes, supervision guidelines, or reflective prompts. As a result, field education did not serve as a platform for applied learning and did not meet the community-responsive aims of the Five Marks of Mission.

5.2 Practical Preparedness: Insights from Students, Faculty, and Graduates

Survey data showed a notable imbalance: 87% of students felt confident in their scriptural and doctrinal knowledge, but only 60% felt prepared to lead or initiate community activities. This highlights a key issue—students are trained as theologians but are not adequately prepared as pastoral leaders capable of addressing real community issues.

Faculty interviews corroborated this pattern. Lecturers acknowledged ongoing challenges in linking classroom theory to parish realities. They cited limited teaching hours, large classes, and insufficient institutional support for experiential learning. Their observations align with constructivist views that pastoral competence cannot develop without structured practice, guidance, and supervision.

Graduate testimonies further support this conclusion. Many reported that in ministry they faced complex social issues—domestic violence, land disputes, addiction, and chronic poverty—and felt unprepared. These experiences reveal that graduates struggle to fulfill their missional responsibilities of responding to human need or tackling unjust structures, not due to lack of commitment, but because their training had not equipped them for such responsibilities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the gap between theological knowledge and pastoral competence is systemic rather than incidental.

5.3 Case Study: College C Demonstrates That Practical Formation Is Possible

College C offers a contrasting example, showing that such a gap is not inevitable. Through its Community Pastoral Initiative, the college integrated structured service-learning, guided supervision, and reflective practice into its field education programme. Students were required to design community-focused projects and receive feedback from faculty and parish supervisors.

This case provides strong empirical support for the theoretical framework. First, it proves that constructivist learning methods can significantly enhance practical skills. Students at College C reported greater confidence in communication, leadership, and community engagement. They also demonstrated a more integrated understanding of how theology connects to real-world pastoral challenges.

Second, the model aligns well with the Five Marks of Mission. By engaging directly with local communities, students learn to respond to human needs and participate in community transformation. The success of this approach offers concrete evidence that practical, mission-focused formation is achievable when colleges intentionally embed experiential learning and structured reflection into their training.

5.4 Summary of Findings: A Case for Competency-Based, Mission-Driven Reform

In summary, these findings present a clear and compelling argument: while Tanzanian Anglican colleges provide valuable doctrinal education, they fall short in equipping students for community-responsive ministry. This weakness mainly stems from a lack of structured practical learning in curricula, fieldwork supervision, and assessment.

Drawing on the theoretical framework reinforces this conclusion:

- Constructivist theory explains how limited experiential learning results in weak pastoral competence—students cannot develop skills they have not practiced.
- The Five Marks of Mission emphasize that current training does not fully prepare future clergy for acts of service, justice, and community change.
- The example of College C shows that practical, mission-oriented training is possible when institutions intentionally redesign their teaching, supervision, and assessment methods.

Therefore, these findings strongly support the need for comprehensive curriculum reform across Anglican theological colleges. Such reforms should balance doctrinal depth with practical skills, community involvement, and mission-focused leadership.

6.0 Discussion

The findings of this study clearly show that practical competence remains a major weakness in the training of pastors at Tanzanian Anglican theological colleges. Although students reported a strong grasp of doctrinal and theological content, the evidence demonstrated that this knowledge does not translate easily into the skills required for community-based ministry. This gap directly answers the central research question and confirms that the current model of theological education does not fully prepare students for the complex social, pastoral, and leadership responsibilities they encounter in parish settings.

A key objective of the study was to assess whether theological training equips students to address real-life challenges. The results showed that while doctrinal formation is strong and remains a core strength of Anglican theological institutions, students often leave college without sufficient preparation to address poverty, family conflict, youth problems, health crises, and community disputes. When interpreted through social constructivist theory, these findings make sense. Constructivism argues that competence grows when learners are exposed to guided practice, reflection, and real-life interaction. However, the reviewed curricula relied heavily on classroom teaching with limited opportunities for supervised experiential learning. As a result, students were unable to construct the practical knowledge needed for active and responsive ministry.

The findings also demonstrated that essential pastoral skills—such as counselling, conflict resolution, advocacy, and community mobilization—are treated as secondary rather than integral to theological formation. Faculty and graduate testimonies made it clear that many pastors enter ministry feeling unprepared to lead community projects, mediate disputes, or support vulnerable groups. This situation highlights a structural gap: practical competencies are expected in ministry but are not systematically developed during training.

Furthermore, the findings showed a misalignment between institutional claims and actual outcomes. Many colleges state that their training reflects the Five Marks of Mission, yet the study found limited emphasis on the marks that concern service, justice, compassion, and community

transformation. This gap suggests that the missional identity of these institutions remains theoretical rather than lived out in their pedagogical practices. A mission-oriented curriculum should prepare students to respond to human need and challenge unjust structures; however, current models do not consistently support these aims.

The case of College C demonstrated that practical formation is possible even within the resource constraints of the Tanzanian context. Its structured community engagement model showed that, when students are guided, supervised, and required to reflect on their ministry activities, they develop confidence and competence more effectively. This example strengthens the argument that reform is feasible and that institutions can adopt context-appropriate service-learning approaches without abandoning their theological priorities.

The results, therefore, point to an urgent need for a context-driven and competency-based model of theological education. This approach should integrate doctrinal knowledge with structured practice, reflective supervision, and community engagement. While international models offer useful insights, the study suggests that Tanzanian colleges should adapt these ideas to local realities rather than simply adopting external frameworks. Pastors in Tanzania serve both the Church and the wider community, and they are expected to function as spiritual leaders, counsellors, educators, mediators, and social advocates. Theological education must therefore respond to this broad pastoral identity by balancing academic knowledge with practical competence.

Overall, the discussion highlights that Anglican theological colleges in Tanzania are at a critical point. Strengthening practical training will not only support the Church's mission but also enhance the Church's ability to respond to emerging social and spiritual needs. The findings clearly demonstrate that reform is necessary and achievable, especially when guided by the principles of constructivist learning and the missional vision reflected in the Five Marks of Mission.

7.0 Recommendations

The results of this study show an urgent need to strengthen the practical formation of pastors in Tanzanian Anglican theological colleges. Although doctrinal instruction remains essential, the evidence demonstrated that theological knowledge alone does not prepare clergy for the complex social, pastoral, and leadership responsibilities they face in their communities. The recommendations below respond directly to the findings and are informed by the reviewed

curricula (Diploma in Theology – Provincial Syllabus; Diploma in Applied Theology – Msalato; BA in Theology – SJUT), the Five Marks of Mission, and the principles of social constructivist theory.

1. Integrate Practical Competence into the Core Curriculum

Curricula should be revised so that practical skills—such as counselling, advocacy, conflict mediation, and community mobilization—are embedded within major theological subjects rather than treated as supplementary. Courses such as Christian Ethics, Pastoral Theology, and Leadership should adopt methods that include case studies, role-play, and problem-solving exercises. These strategies would enable students to practice ethical reasoning, engage with realistic pastoral scenarios, and apply theology to community challenges. Such an approach reflects constructivist principles, which emphasize learning through interaction, guided practice, and reflection.

2. Strengthen Structured and Supervised Field-Based Learning

All programmes should require students to complete supervised field placements that include clear learning outcomes, supervision guidelines, and assessment tools. These placements should expose students to a variety of ministry contexts—urban, rural, and marginalized communities—and allow them to work directly with issues such as public health, gender-based violence, poverty, and youth unemployment. To support deeper learning, institutions should make reflective practice compulsory through field journals, mentoring sessions, and theological reflection groups. This would help students connect their parish experiences with classroom learning.

3. Promote Contextual and Collaborative Learning Approaches

Theological institutions should introduce seminars and workshops that bring together students, faculty, clergy, and community leaders to discuss pressing social issues. These collaborative forums would help students recognize the broader social responsibilities of pastoral ministry and develop skills for community engagement. Such initiatives would also strengthen the colleges' commitment to the Five Marks of Mission, especially the call to serve human need and challenge unjust structures.

4. Address Institutional Constraints Through Partnerships and Faculty Development

Because many colleges face financial and staffing limitations, strategic partnerships with dioceses, NGOs, government bodies, and development agencies could provide additional resources, training opportunities, and mentorship. At the same time, faculty development programmes should be introduced to build capacity in competency-based education, participatory teaching methods, and curriculum design. Establishing curriculum review committees that include academic staff, diocesan leaders, and community representatives would encourage ownership and ensure that reforms remain relevant and context-sensitive.

5. Establish Dedicated Field Education Units

Each institution should create a field education unit responsible for planning, coordinating, supervising, and evaluating all practical training activities. This unit should develop standardized tools for assessment, including supervisor reports, student portfolios, reflective essays, and peer evaluations. Staff with experience in community development or pastoral counselling should be involved to ensure students receive adequate guidance. Centralizing these responsibilities would promote consistency, accountability, and long-term sustainability of field-based training.

6. Institutionalize Service-Learning and Long-Term Monitoring

Colleges should adopt service-learning models that combine academic study with structured community service. Students could participate in parish-based literacy classes, youth mentorship groups, counselling initiatives, or public health campaigns as part of graded coursework. To ensure sustainability, institutions should develop monitoring systems that collect feedback from current students, alumni, parish supervisors, and community partners. This information would support the continuous improvement of curricula and strengthen institutional effectiveness.

Overall, these recommendations address the central challenges identified in the study and provide a realistic pathway for aligning theological training with the pastoral and societal demands of the Tanzanian context. By embedding practical competencies in the curriculum, enhancing supervised field experiences, and building institutional capacity, Anglican theological colleges can prepare pastors who are not only doctrinally strong but also missionally responsive, socially engaged, and able to support community transformation.

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that Tanzanian Anglican theological colleges provide strong doctrinal and theological grounding but are less effective in equipping students with the practical competencies required for contemporary pastoral ministry. While graduates demonstrate solid knowledge of Scripture and theology, many struggle to address social, leadership, and community challenges in their parishes, including poverty, youth unemployment, gender-based violence, and public health crises.

Interpreted through social constructivist theory, the findings suggest that pastoral competence develops best through experiential engagement, guided practice, and reflective learning. Classroom instruction alone cannot cultivate the relational, leadership, and problem-solving skills necessary for ministry. Similarly, a gap exists between the training provided and the principles of the Five Marks of Mission, particularly in responding to human need, promoting justice, and facilitating community transformation. Evidence from the case of College C demonstrates that structured service-learning, supervised field placements, and reflective practice can significantly enhance pastoral competence, suggesting that competency-based and mission-focused training is both feasible and effective.

Based on these findings, the study recommends the following:

Embed Practical Competence in Core Curriculum: Incorporate skills such as counselling, advocacy, conflict resolution, leadership, and community engagement into core theological courses using case-based and experiential approaches.

Expand Structured Field-Based Learning: Make internships and supervised placements compulsory, with clear learning objectives, reflective exercises, and structured feedback to ensure practical skill development. **Promote Contextual and Collaborative Learning:** Facilitate interdisciplinary forums and problem-solving workshops involving students, faculty, clergy, and community stakeholders to address local challenges and connect theology with societal realities. **Strengthen Faculty Capacity and Partnerships:** Train faculty in competency-based and participatory teaching methods, and establish partnerships with dioceses, NGOs, and development agencies to support mentorship and practical placements.

Establish Field Education Units: Create dedicated offices to manage placements, monitor supervision, and standardize assessment of practical competencies, ensuring consistency and sustainability. Institutionalize Service-Learning: Integrate community-based projects with academic coursework and reflective practice, and implement monitoring systems to evaluate outcomes and guide curriculum improvements.

In conclusion, Tanzanian Anglican theological colleges can produce pastors who are both theologically grounded and practically competent by adopting a holistic, mission-driven, and contextually responsive approach to pastoral formation. This model ensures clergy are prepared not only to preach and teach but also to lead, serve, and transform their communities with competence, compassion, and integrity.

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