

Theological Education in the Changing Context of World Christianity – an Unfinished Task

Translatability of the Gospel and Ecumenicity of the Church as imperatives for the future

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1. Theological Education as ecumenical laboratory for inter-cultural translation of the Gospel and for strengthening the ecumenicity of the church

Having been honored to give a public lecture to this esteemed occasion of this year's OMSC Mission Leadership Forum in New Haven I want to bring you warm greetings on behalf of the WCC which currently prepares itself to work for the 10th assembly which is to be held in Busan, Korea, in 2013. I also bring you specific greetings on behalf of its program on Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE)¹, which since 1958 has a history of more than 60 years in assisting theological colleges and churches around the world in terms of resources for ministerial formation, missionary education and ecumenical learning, interregional networking and strengthening of interdenominational dialogue on theological education in all six continents.

I take the chance of starting my journey with a reference to the „father of modern mission“ and the historic interrelatedness of two important developments which are very obvious both in his biography as well as in mission history in general: The interrelation between Bible translation and the beginning of the concern for theological education. William Carey, whose name today is held in high esteem and commemorated not only in Indian theological colleges² but also in universities outside India³, was an extra-ordinary English missionary who contributed much more than what is traditionally known as “mission” work in India. William Carey with his team some 200 years ago was a pioneer both of social and educational initiatives as well as Bible translation initiatives that continue in their impact in various forms until today.

Although coming from a background educationally unqualified as he had left school at twelve to become a cobbler's apprentice he became one of the most respected scholars of Indian cultures and languages. Appointed in 1801 to teach Bengali, Sanskrit, and Marathi at Fort William College in Serampore, Carey translated the Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese, and Sanskrit. He also translated parts of it into 29 other languages and

¹ Program on Ecumenical Theological Education of WCC (ETE), see: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education.html>

² See the website of Senate of Serampore college: <http://www.senateofseramporecollege.edu.in/>

³ <http://www.wmcarey.edu/>

dialects.⁴ Very closely connected to these pioneering work in Bible translation in 1818, William Careys mission founded the *Serampore College* in order to train indigenous ministers for the growing church in India and to provide education in the arts and sciences to anyone regardless of caste or country. The Serampore College in West Bengal, India, was the first degree-granting institution in Asia and after having been granted a royal charter in 1827 to provide education in the arts and sciences by the King of Denmark, this college until today serves as the umbrella organization of all mainline churches theological education in India with the Senate of Serampore System.⁵

The historical coincidence and interrelation between the beginnings of Bible translation⁶ and the beginnings of organized forms of theological education is not characteristic only for the Indian context, but also is a common feature in the mission history of other parts of Asia, for instance Korea⁷ and China⁸, and also for Africa⁹ or for countries in Eastern Europe¹⁰.

Historians well remember the influence of the King James Bible's on the English-speaking world or the impact of Martin Luther's Bible on German speaking countries. The first Bible translations in Bengali culture, in Korea or in China had a similar profound impact on the development of Christian culture and thought in these countries. Bible translations all over the world played an important role for forming, preserving and shaping cultural identities of

⁴ See: <http://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/bibles/translation.htm>; and: http://www.wmcarey.edu/carey/bib/works_bible.htm

⁵ See: Wati Longchar: The history and development of theological education in South Asia, in: Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja, Handbook on Theological Education in World Christianity, Regnum Publisher 2010, p. 404ff, here 406ff

⁶ See the exhibition: Eight centuries of the Bible in translation <http://www.smu.edu/Bridwell/Collections/SpecialCollectionsandArchives/Exhibitions/EightCenturiesoftheBibleinTranslation/Asian>

⁷ In Korea the British and Foreign Bible Society had established its Seoul Bible House and an official Board of Translators by 1893 was appointed. In 1900 that they managed to get the four Gospels and Acts published in Korean. It was only after another ten years of hard work, that the first complete (Protestant) Korean Bible was first published in 1910 (or 1911), which later was revised in 1937 (all of which printed entirely in the Korean alphabet, Hangeul) (see the website of the Korean Bible society: <http://www.koreanbible.or.kr/koreanbible/>). In the same period the first Presbyterian theological seminary was founded in Seoul in 1911, the Seoul Presbyterian Seminary; also Ewha university started with its college courses around 1910 in the same period. For details see: Choong Koo Park, Theological Education in South Korea, in: Dietrich Werner and others (eds): Handbook on Theological Education in World Christianity, Regnum Publishers Oxford 2010, p. 437

⁸ In China working on the Mandarin Union Version Bible using Mandarin began in 1890 — the language used across China and taught in schools. It was completed almost 30 years later in 1919. In the same period in 1911 steps were taken to merge the mission schools of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Methodist Episcopal Church, and Presbyterian Church into an interdenominational seminary in China which then adopted the name Nanking Theological Seminary in 1917.

⁹ See for example the case of Nigeria where the famous Bishop Crowther – himself a Yoruba – has published the so-called Crowther's Yoruba Bible between 1850 and 1851, which was followed by the first complete Bible in Yoruba language to appear in 1884, some 130 years ago today. The Yoruba Bible became the catalyst for several other Nigerian languages to follow, like Igbo and Hausa, then several other African languages, see: Lamin Sanneh, Renewed and Empowered: The Christian Impact, in Ogbomoso Theological Journal, Vo. 15 (1), 2010, p. 11ff

¹⁰ The main reformed university in Budapest is named after the 16th century Reformed Pastor Gáspár Károli who published the first complete Hungarian Bible in 1590, the so-called KÁROLI BIBLE which had a profound influence on Hungarian language and culture as THE KING JAMES BIBLE'S impact was on the English-speaking world. See: <http://www.kre.hu/english/>

Christians and influencing the general language development as such. At the same Bible translations always were going hand in hand with providing access to literacy and education. Therefore the historical beginnings of Bible translation and the theological education systems often coincide. It was with Bible translation that in Reformed Christianity a historic alliance was building up between faith and education (or between spirituality and critical reasoning) which to a great extent then has marked the historical journey of protestant cultures both in Europe as well as in Asia. It is no arbitrary coincidence that historically the first Asian Bible translations happened in the same time as the emergence of the first institutions of theological education.

The ongoing process of translating the Christian message into other languages also provided the key motive and energy factor behind the missionary spread of Christianity in later centuries.¹¹ What is at the heart of the process of the rapidly changing landscape of World Christianity in the 20th century is the miracle of trans-lation¹², the deliberate attempt to relate the story of God's love and liberation as accounted in the Holy Scriptures to new cultures and social horizons beyond western Christianity. Lamin Sanneh has reminded us that translating the message is far more than creating a technical word-to-word- equivalence in the target language. It is about the re-creation of the essence of the original meaning of a biblical story, text or faith statement into an often completely different mind-set of another culture with different idioms, connotations and cultural symbols. The art of translation - as the art of theological education - has to do something with a deeper hermeneutical attempt to relate to the world-views, to the idioms and the customs of a receiver culture. In essence Biblical translation – as theological education - is a missionary process, a process not just of technical transmission of a given set of knowledge, but a creative process of re-inventing, re-reading and re-appropriation of essential elements of meaning into a new world, a process of a new incarnation of the Word of God, a new inculturation of the Spirit. The translatability of Christianity and the biblical tradition therefore provide the basis for theological education as well as the secret and distinctive mark behind its missionary success and its communication to changing local cultures.

If theological education in its deepest meaning could be understood in analogy if not as a direct continuation of the process of creative translation of the Christian message, much can be gained to move beyond false alternatives between the cognitive, spiritual and social dimensions of education or any tendency to put theological education, missionary training and ministerial formation in opposition to each other. If theological education is about the task to allow future generations to develop understanding, re-appropriation and spiritual wisdom in relating the Gospel to contemporary life today, then theological education is one of the most important, precious and indispensable missionary tasks of the church.

There are about 6.500 spoken languages around on the globe today. From around 2,426 languages we have some or all of the Biblical books translated into them, while another 1,144 languages have translations of only the New Testament. Thus the process of translation is far from being completed. Theological Education is continued translation and has to do with the art of translating and communicating the Gospel both to our contemporary society and to different and constantly changing cultures. The translation process of the Gospel is continued in the inculturation process of Christian mission. As somebody said it is not enough to have Christianity in Asia (Africa) (much of which still regarded as extension of western

¹¹ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (American Society of Missiology Series, 1995)

¹² The Wikipedia article defines translation as “the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text”, see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translation>

Christianity) but we need Asian Christianity in Asia, Christianity properly translated and inculturated in Asian (African) cultures.

The historic result of the translation of the Gospel in diverse cultures from its early beginning was the emergence of a very diverse and multifaceted church. This is linked to the second major historic reference point which presents the other pole of our deliberations. Edinburgh 1910 with its world missionary conference presents the beginning of the second major transformation process of World Christianity (after the first major historic transformation process which was about the gradual transition from Hebrew-Palestine culture to Hellenistic-Greek culture). This second major ecumenical transformation process led from Western Christianity to a polycentric Global Christianity of the South in just two hundred years. It is an unprecedented process of constant change and transition – and WCC constantly is faced with its dramatic consequences. What has emerged is a new shape of the church universal, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church which is confessed in the ancient creeds of the undivided church. When WCC in October 2013 will bring representatives of all sectors of World Christianity to Busan in Korea this will make visible some facets of this fundamental transformation process of World Christianity which is as diverse and vibrant in terms of missionary dynamics as never before in world history. It is my conviction that we are only at the beginning of a process to learn what new forms of theological education, missionary training and ministerial formation are adequate and needed for the new realities of the changing landscape of World Christianity in the beginning of the 21st century. The implications of the second major transformation process of World Christianity of the South for theological education are far from being spelled out. Much of what is happening in the area of theological education is still a reflection of dominant models which had been inherited from the earlier phase of dominant western Christianity.

Thus the Busan assembly will also be an occasion to remind churches around the world on both the translatability of the Gospel (or the unending process of new steps in the inculturation process) as well as of the ecumenicity of the universal church, i.e. the dynamic reality of the Spirit of God which keeps the churches together in their central calling and spiritual reality beyond all denominational divides, ecclesial power politics and human divisive factors at work in World Christianity.

While theological education always needs to enable future pastors and church workers to translate the Gospel to their contemporaries in today's culture theological education at the same time and with the same urgency has to strengthen and train the ability of church pastors to communicate with the universal church both in its ancient apostolic tradition as well as with its ecumenical contextual shapes in today's world. Ecumenicity is imperative for theological education in its vertical and in its horizontal dimension.

When secular experts today talk a lot about the need for globalization of higher education in universities both in Asia and in Europe today Christian churches should not forget that they have their own distinct understanding and mandate of being global or becoming globalized from their very beginning. This is because all theological education is under the mandate to take into account the essential four marks of the Christian church, namely its apostolicity, its catholicity, its holiness and its unity (which can be summarized in its ecumenicity). Rightly understood this presents a huge potential to give shape to the special Christian way of being

globalized: the conciliar model of globalization¹³ which consists of mutual solidarity, respect, counseling and mutual listening, unity in diversity. This is an alternative model of globalization and not identical with the dominant patterns economic globalization which shapes our world today.

Both the translatability of the Gospel and the ecumenicity of the church are related to each other, both are reinforcing and complementing each other. Both constitute two equal requirements for theological education in the 21st century. The following deliberations are meant to highlight some of the implications of this conviction in more detail.

Just to summarize some five basic convictions which have inspired the work of the ETE program in past decades. WCC through its ETE program affirms

- that theological education is one of the most important tasks and integral dimension of the mission of the church as it prepares future priests, pastor, religious educators, in short those who are entrusted with providing continuity in transmitting the holy tradition of Christian faith through the centuries;
- that women have a particular priority and role in processes of empowerment and capacity building for theological education as often they bear the greatest burden in the missionary and education tasks in local communities and in families;
- that both clergy and lay people in their training for ministry and missionary tasks of the church need to be exposed and introduced to the realities of World Christianity in the 21st century with all its rich and diverse denominational traditions, expressions of Christian faith and different emphasize in understanding the one Gospel of Christ. No church can stay apart from other churches. No church can stay isolated and just focus on itself. All churches in every national context have to relate to other members of the universal body of Christ and to realize the ecumenical dimension of being the church in today's fragmented world. We have to prepare ministers that are ready to give credible witness to the prayer of Christ, that all shall be one so that the world may believe;
- that ecumenical formation and learning in theological education is nothing new or something to be artificially added from the outside to the existing curriculum. On the contrary it is rather about unfolding and actualizing the fundamental dimension and perennial question of what it means to be the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church under the complex conditions of World Christianity today;
- that we have to overcome stereotypes and mutual estrangement between so-called 'ecumenicals; and so-called 'evangelicals' as both come from the same roots in the one missionary movement and all share the same basic challenges for the future of strengthening theological education in World Christianity. Evangelical churches have been a vital part of the ecumenical movement from the beginning. The history of Evangelicalism as well as the bilateral dialogues between different denominations have a crucial relevance for the theological education curriculum in all WCC member churches;
- that churches and institutions of theological education in the South (Asia, Africa, Latin America) have a strategic role and contribution to make for the ongoing international dialogue on theological education and ecumenical formation and for the

¹³ See: Conciliarity and the future of the ecumenical movement, Faith and Order Papers from Louvain, 1971: The Ecumenical Review, Vol. 24, Issue 1, pages 88–91, January 1972

discourse on quality in theological education, as it is the churches of the South which will have the key role for developing new curriculum content, new styles and new ways of sharing resources in theological education with younger emerging churches in the South.

2. Where are we with theological education at the beginning of the 21st century? – signposts of crisis and new opportunities

Edinburgh 2010 had provided a first chance to reflect on the dramatic global changes in the landscape of World Christianity which hundred years ago nobody would have dreamt of. The new Atlas of Global Christianity which was published by Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth Ross¹⁴ provided a chance to have more details on the well known shift of the center of gravity in Christianity:

- a) While 66% of all Christians lived in Europe in 1910, by 2010 only 25.6% of World Christianity today are represented by Christian churches in Europe. By contrast, less than 2% of all Christians lived in Africa in 1910 skyrocketing to almost 22% by 2010. The Global North (defined as Europe and Northern America) contained over 80% of all Christians in 1910 falling to under 40% of all Christians by 2010. However the overall percentage of Christians in World Population did not change much.
- b) Seen as Christian percentage of the population per region the shift becomes even more obvious in Africa: While Africa had less than 10% Christians in 1910, its population was nearly 50% Christian in 2010, with sub-Saharan Africa well over 70% Christian.
- c) While Christianity remains a minority religion in most of the Asian countries there still has been is an overall increase of Christian population in Asia between 1910 and today from 2,4% to 8,5 % which pushed the Asian Christian population to over 292 million today, with a particular increase of Christian populations in South East Asia (from 10,8% to 21,8%) (but also a sharp decrease in Western Asia from 22,9% to 5,7%).
- d) It is predicted that Christianity in Asia will grow to reach 595 million (or 11,3 % Christians of the total Asian population) until 2050.¹⁵ The most significant increases of Christianity are expected in Eastern Asia (251 million Christians or 15,8% in 2050) and in South Eastern Asia (197 million Christians or 25,7% in 2050). More specifically Christianity in Asia will grow particularly in countries like China, India, Nepal and Cambodia. Increasingly inner Asian missions play a major role in spreading the Gospel (examples: some 40.000 to 80.000 Indians working as missionaries and evangelists to other ethnic groups and 250 mission organizations within India or 15.000 foreign missionaries sent out by South Korean churches to other Asian countries).¹⁶
- e) However there is a striking imbalance between different missionary dynamics and demographic trends in different regions of World Christianity. And this has a bearing on the ratio between demand and supply for theological education programs in and between the regions, which is further aggravated by a considerable imbalance between percentage of Christians and percentage of the wealth owned in today's world: Christians in the global South which represent 60% of global Christianity own only 17% of the Christian financial resources in this world. This also means that Christians in the growing majority churches of the South have only a diminished and

¹⁴ Atlas of Global Christianity, ed. By Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth Ross, Edinburgh University Press, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2009

¹⁵ Atlas of Global Christianity, p. 107

¹⁶ Dana Robert, Christian Mission, p. 78

unequal access to relevant programs for theological education, scholarships and theological library resources.

In order to provide us with some reliable global empirical data on the availability and number of theological colleges or faculties and Bible schools worldwide (there was no chapter on theological education and higher education in the Global Atlas of Christianity to provide updated global data on this dimension of World Christianity) the WCC has started the “global survey on theological education project”¹⁷ which makes available an extended research questionnaire. The WCC encourages as many as possible theological educators, institutions of theological education and associations of theological schools worldwide to fill in and answer this research questionnaire which is also available in several other languages. As we believe that theological education is the backbone of integral Christian growth and churches development worldwide we do think that it might be worth for global mission leaders to cooperate with this global empirical research project, which is supported by three institutions, namely the Gordon Conwell based Institute for the Study of Global Christianity in New Haven, the Institute for Cross-Cultural Theological Education in Chicago and ETE in WCC.

Some of you might know that the WCC in the Edinburgh 2010 process has embarked on a global study process on theological education¹⁸ which – under the leadership of ETE and based on some earlier publications and papers from ETE¹⁹ - produced some important publications on theological education in world perspective which include

- the 100 pages global study report on theological education: “Challenges and Opportunities in Theological Education in the 21st century. Pointers for a new International debate on theological education” which was published in November 2009 and introduced during the session on theological education in Edinburgh June 2010²⁰;
- the 800 pages “Handbook on Theological Education in World Christianity” which was released during the Edinburgh 2010 centenary conference²¹;
- a report on the two thematic sessions during the Edinburgh 2010 centenary conference which was published in the final conference volume²²;

In summarizing some of the findings of these recent studies we have identified six major trends and challenges in the global landscape of theological education in World Christianity²³ out of which we would briefly highlight five:

¹⁷ Access to the global questionnaire which should be answered by at least 2000 theological educators and theological institutes by autumn 2012 is given at the following website:

<https://www.research.net/s/globalsurveyonthotheologicaleducation>

¹⁸ The group was moderated by Dietrich Werner and Namsoon Kang, composed of representatives both from historical churches and their institutions of theological education, evangelical organizations and Pentecostal educators. It developed a substantial listening and reviewing process of recent major challenges and trends in global theological education - a first attempt of this kind since decades.

¹⁹ See: theme issue: Theological Education in Mission, IRM Vol. 388, April 2009; Jubilee Issue of Ministerial Formation on 50 years of work of PTE/ETE in the WCC, MF No 110, April 2008

²⁰ Paper available from: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education-ete/edinburgh-2010-international-study-group-on-theological-education.html>

²¹ Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (eds): “Handbook on Theological Education in World Christianity”, Regnum Publishers 2010

²² Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, Edinburgh 2010 Vol II, Witnessing to Christ Today, Section on Theological Education and Formation, Edinburgh 2010, p. 148-174; Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, Mission Today and Tomorrow, Final Report on the Session on Theological Education and Formation, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series, Oxford 2011, p. 158-165

1) Accessibility gap in theological education (the challenge of unequal distribution)

The *absolute majority of resources for theological education – both teaching staff, scholarship funds, theological libraries and publications – are still located in the North*, whereas the majority needs and demands for theological education, in a situation marked by a remarkable shift of the center of gravity of world Christianity, are in the Southern hemisphere. There is a tremendous gap between the availability of resources and programmes for theological education and the growth of Christianity in various regions of the world. Both do not correspond properly.²⁴ The dramatic *increase in demands for general higher education* due to younger and dynamic populations in Asia and Africa which is reflected also in *growing demands for theological education* and theological study programs is not answered yet by a similar increase of opportunities in theological education. In Nepal for instance where the number of Christians has grown from zero to 900.000 only within the past fifty years, many pastors have only a rudimentary 5-month training program which enables them to read the Bible and to pray, but no common BD course is offered yet. There is an enormous zeal to serve God, but an enormous lack of well-trained pastors and theological educators and still no M.Th. course is available within that country. More than 50% of all Southern African church leaders (African Instituted Churches included) do not have any formal theological degree because degree programmes of theological education are not accessible or affordable for them. The crisis of world economy in past years has deeply affected theological education systems, both in endowment based theological colleges as well as in state funded departments for theology or religious studies. There is a widening gap between state-funded or endowment driven theological colleges in the North and the smaller, highly vulnerable church based theological colleges in the South. In contexts where the monthly average salary is below 30 USD it is difficult to come up with expenses for a “normal” theological book of 60USD or for access fees of electronic theological journals which are demanded by some commercial providers. There is a grave lack of scholarships and grants available for higher studies in theological education in almost all theological colleges of the South and several churches in the South are facing increasing difficulties to fund their institutions of theological education. The predominant bilateralism of donations for funds supporting theological education has weakened international or centralized regional structures to support faculty development in theological education.

One of the crucial challenges for theological education in Asia as well as Africa for the 21st century is to explore the most appropriate forms of inner- and inter-regional solidarity between institutions of theological education. How can the stronger parts (churches) really assist the weaker parts while avoiding to use their influence and power to impose models of theological education from outside which are not properly rooted within a given cultural context? With reduced funds available in future from western and north-Atlantic partners the issue of inner Asian and African solidarity, resource sharing and complementarity between the different sectors of Asian and African Christianity will become an imperative which is vital for the 21st century Christianity. The newly created regional forums of associations of theological schools (FETLAC in Latin America, The

²³ The following points are also referred to in: Edinburgh 2010 and the future of theological education in the 21st century. Report of parallel session on theological education – Edinburgh 2010 (will be published in final Edinburgh 2010 conference volume)

²⁴ Global Study Report on Theological Education, a.a.O., p. 82, Section 24) Bridging the divide in terms of unequal accessibility of theological education

Asian Forum for Theological Education (AFTE) in Asia and the AACC related Forum of African associations of theological schools are important platforms to work out related mechanisms of regional solidarity and mutual support in theological education.

2) Contextualization gap in theological education (the challenge of cultural dominance)

The plea of Edinburgh 1910 to develop *contextualized forms of theological education* in the Asian churches until today is *only gradually and very incompletely fulfilled*. Western patterns and concepts of theology continue to be exported throughout the Global South. Recent voices from Africa and Asia point to a decline in the commitment for contextualized theologies and declining numbers of books published on Asian or African theologies.

There are important instruments and networks for instance in Asia which have promoted not only contextualization of theological education (according to the use of this term in the Third Mandate period of TEF by Shoki Coe and others), but also followed the invitation to move ahead in doing theology with Asian resources. The Programme for Theologies and Cultures (PTCA) was given birth in 1983 as a joint program collaborated by Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Association for Theological Education in Asia (ATESEA), South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST), Tao Fong Shan and Kansai Seminar House in Hongkong and others. But there is also a generational gap in terms of who will provide future leadership for this movement. It will be very important therefore to strengthen this theological movement aiming to serve contextual theological formation and theological education in Asia. We do hope that the seventh congress of the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) which is going to take place from 30 June to 6 July this year at Methodist Theological University in Seoul on the theme “Embracing and embodying God’s hospitality today” can contribute towards new forms of Asian theology which respond to rapidly changing dynamics of migration as well as Christian mission.

Visiting theological libraries in smaller theological colleges in Asia or Africa and checking what is available in terms of theological books written from indigenous perspectives sometimes also is a revealing experience. The challenge for contextualization also holds true for centralized theological colleges in Asia or Africa which operate in English medium: Do they really serve the contextualization of the Gospel and of church ministries or do they – unintentionally – also serve the de-contextualization and westernization of theology in Asian or African contexts? Do candidates who have benefitted from their programs, often located in urbanized areas with different modes and chances of communication, feel motivated and equipped to go back to parishes in rural areas where different needs are at stake? Looking around one cannot but state that many urgent needs remain for culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and resources of theological education. The plea of Edinburgh 1910 to establish theological literature and education programs in vernacular languages was overshadowed by the historic development which has given preeminence to English as the new global colonial language outside the realm of which it is still difficult to find international recognition and chances for communication for indigenous theological knowledge production and related publications.

3) Diversification gap in theological education (the challenge of migration and pluralization)

While contextualization of theological education is at stake also *trans-contextuality and diversification of theological education* have become an issue in many contexts both of the South as well as in the North. As the world is shrinking and global migration brings different cultures, religions and denominational identities from isolated pockets into close and vibrant neighborhoods the need of theological education to address different identities, cultural milieus and social spheres within one context has become imperative: Malaysia having to address thousands of Philippino and Chinese immigrants, African nations like DRC or South Africa having to cope with thousands of refugees or migrants from war-driven neighboring states, American colleges having to open up for Hispanic or Afro American communities as a result of decades of immigration. The fundamental implications of global migration and changing and increasingly diverse constituencies for programmes of theological education are probably not yet fully spelled out. There is a need not only for higher degree programmes of theological education, but often also for diversified, informal and extension type programmes of theological education which can address the different needs of new populations and migrants. Which type of theological education answers the actual needs of emerging Asian churches most properly? In several churches there is a greater need for informal theological education for catechists, Bible women, lay preachers and lay preachers than for formal theological education as Bible catechists and Bible women often bear the greatest burden for mission and evangelism.

Therefore diversification of theological education²⁵ is needed in terms of affordable and accessible courses for theological education for the new bearers and agents of missionary witness in Asia today.

4) Unity and credibility gap of theological education (the challenge of fragmentation of World Christianity and morality failures of Church leadership)

The single most remarkable trend however in World Christianity today is, that the degree of *denominational fragmentation in the international and regional landscape of theological education networks* and institutions is as high as never before in the history of Christianity. The number of different Christian denominations has climbed to astronomical numbers²⁶ which in 1910 nobody possibly would have dreamt of – particularly due to the rise of the so-called Independent Churches from 1,5% in 1910 to 16,1% of all Christians in the world in 2010 which is only one of the indicators.²⁷ Every major denominational family nowadays tends to have its own theological college or Bible school, tends to build up for its own Christian universities and undertakes strong efforts to strengthen its own denominational identity (and less associations of schools with interdenominational character). But what is this leading to? Is the competitiveness of different denominational schools actually serving the Gospel and God's Kingdom on earth? The past decades have seen the emergence of different denominational world

²⁵ See Ross Kinsler, *Diversified Theological Education: Equipping All God's People*, William Carey International University Press, 2008

²⁶ The World Christian Data Base lists 9491 Christian Denominations on 380 pages, see: <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/esweb.asp?WCI=Results&Query=211>

²⁷ *Atlas of Global Christianity*, a.a.O., p. 70

families of associations of theological schools (WOCATI/ETE as the ecumenical family, WAPTE as the Pentecostal family, ICETE as bringing together schools from evangelical background). Financial streams of support do not any more join together into one global or one regional programme like it was the case with TEF in the 60ies and 70ies of the 20th century, but follow denominational and bilateral lines of funding and support thereby creating complex parallel and often rivaling systems of theological education, accreditation and degree-giving.

Another dimension of the credibility of theological education has to do with the integrity and leadership competences theological education produced for the churches. In contexts where almost everybody can plant churches individually and new church leaders come from both accredited and non-accredited theological schools and sometimes with very minimal biblical and theological training often conflicts, scandals and break ups occur which are caused by rivaling groups or also moral and ethical failures of appointed church leaders. How come that sometimes senior pastors, apostles or prophets in Asian or African churches earn 10 times as much as local pastor in rural field having to cope with very similar needs and challenges of pastoral ministries thereby creating a lot of imbalances, tension and greed? The perennial question returns to theological education institutions: How should theological education be organized in order to prevent candidates later to run into problems of credibility, accountability and proper moral standards which could have been addressed earlier in courses on Christian ministry and Christian spirituality? How can we avoid that access to ministry and leadership is seen as a means to build up small kingdoms, unaccountable power structures or personal wealth? Should character formation, spiritual formation and a proper curriculum on church, mission and money gain more weight in formal academic theological teaching and in missionary training?

The WCC global study report on theological education from 2010 had addressed the same issue in stating:

“In situations where accountability, transparency and patterns of governance in Church leadership are low, questions regularly arise such as: What went wrong with the theological education which all Church leaders received, when later in responsible church positions they fall prey to corruption, misuse of ministerial power and violation of any standards of proper responsibility and accountability in church ministry? While not all failures in the performance of later church leadership positions can be attributed to earlier failures or shortcomings in theological education it is still a valid question to explore how more emphasis can be given to character and spiritual formation, good governance and management principles and a code of conduct or a basic ethics of integrity for Church leadership in theological education curricula. This report is convinced that character and spiritual formation, preparation for good governance, proper management principles and a code of conduct for church leadership should become a key factor to be put forward in curriculum development in order to reach a radical transformation in the formation of the leadership of the church and the ecumenical movement.”²⁸

4) Ownership gap of theological education (the challenge of long-term viability of theological institutions and associations of theological schools)

Financial viability of theological education after the world’s financial meltdown is an issue not only within the US, but even more so with many theological colleges in the South. The support and financial commitment of churches to their institutions of

²⁸ Global Study Report on Theological Education, WCC-ETE 2010, p. 26

theological education has not increased but instead even crumbled in several regions – a perennial problem particularly in Asia²⁹. Growing churches and struggling Christian communities are facing increasing difficulties to get a sufficient number of well-trained ministers and pastors and to financially maintain their theological colleges. Sometimes difficulties of churches to pay their pastors and ministers in turn have led to a decreasing number of students enrolled for ministerial formation programs (South Africa). Enrolment numbers for theology students decrease not only in Europe, but even in Korean churches. Although it might be argued that unlike hundred years ago the majority of financial resources for theological education are today raised from local sources in the South, there still remains a large number of theological colleges in Asia and Africa which continue to depend on external support from partners. The fragility of financial support and threatened long-term stability of interdenominational as well as some denominational theological colleges is a topic which needs to be discussed almost everywhere.

Thus the *sense of ownership* and the *interlinkedness of Church, Christian mission and theological education* which was highlighted by many authors and studies in the 20th century, seem to be endangered and even threatened at the beginning of our century.

Several churches in the South had to reduce or withdraw their support to interdenominational theological colleges, others have put a lot of hope in becoming part of Christian universities or transforming former church related theological colleges into departments of Humanities in larger Christian universities and getting them financed by state resources – which reduces the influence and sense of ownership of churches and also can diminish the role these institutions can play for ministerial formation. Thus the concrete implementation of this vital interrelatedness remains a constant task for all churches and institutions of theological education. The global study report on theological education therefore has called for improved Churches support and sense of ownership for institutions of theological education.³⁰

5) The plausibility gap of theology within post-modern university trends (challenge of a new kind of secularism in politics of science)

A last and often underestimated factor are the *changing political and university related structural conditions of theological education* which are becoming obvious in several contexts: While the academic discipline of “theology” and its role for theological education historically belonged to the formative elements of medieval universities in Europe in the Middle Ages and “theology” could for centuries present itself as the “crown of all science” times have changed tremendously in post-Enlightenment and post-Christendom societies in Europe as well as in several other regions: The plausibility and legitimacy of ‘theology’ (as a confession bound distinct academic discipline) in a secular university context is questioned. In several contexts there is a trend to move away from theological faculties and to give priority to departments of religious studies in state-funded universities. Reports from both

²⁹ Wati Longchar had stated: “Many theological schools in Asia continue to depend, until today, on external sources – mission agencies, ecumenical partners and evangelistic associations in North America and in the West for the construction of buildings and development of other infrastructure, and the implementation of master and doctoral programs. In some cases even teacher’s salaries come from abroad. The ecumenical schools are facing more problems in terms of management and support. Many schools suffer from the “everybody’s baby-but-nobody’s baby” syndrome. Theological colleges are often left alone or churches extend little support for theological education programs”, in: *Partnership in Training God’s Servants for Asia. Essays in Honor of Marvin D. Hoff*, ed. by Sientje Merentek-Abram, A. Wati Longchar, ATESEA 2006, Jorhat, p. 54f

³⁰ Global Study Report on Theological Education Section, Section 26) Churches support and sense of ownership for institutions of theological education, p. 84f

Great Britain, Scandinavia and Germany as well as from African countries indicate a decline in research projects and teaching positions in theology proper and a shift towards projects and positions in the field of religious studies.³¹ The Third Consultation of Theological Faculties in Europe which met in Graz, Austria July 2010 therefore made a strong plea to recognize the validity and importance of theology within the European university context and stated:

“The move to Religious Studies is in part a response to a decrease in student numbers, in part a reflection of an interest in the religious pluralism of Europe. However, the inevitable result is a decrease in the number of faculty in traditional theological disciplines. We recognize that Theology and Religious Studies can be complementary disciplines in a faculty.”

The final statement therefore emphasized the *“urgent need to make the case for the importance of theology in the context of universities in Europe. The case for theology taking its place amongst the humanities (and indeed the sciences) needs to be made by University teachers, church leaders and Christians with influence on the authorities. Reasons for the ongoing significance of theology include the rich history of theology in the Universities from their birth, the growing importance of religion in European and world politics, and the postmodern critique of any claim to an ultimately non-confessional worldview”*³²

Referring to the same trend towards Departments of Religious Studies in global Scale the Global Study Report on Theological Education from ETE had stated before:

“In several cases Theological Faculties which were closely related to churches and serve both ministerial formation programs as well as general religious education programs were being transformed into mere Departments of Religious Studies which are integrated into larger Faculties of Humanities (for example in UNISA, South Africa). While also new opportunities can be implied within these new scenarios (more openness and potential for interdisciplinary research and academic recognition, more financial stability, overcoming of one-sided dependency from one major denominational tradition) this also poses some questions: How is the inner coherence and church-related responsibility of theological education exercised if the structural framework does not any longer allow staff to emphasize ministerial formation? How are churches enabled to continue to formulate their own

³¹ Vidar Hannes from MF Norwegian School of Theology reports: “Several of the theological faculties in Scandinavia have gone through external evaluations and benchmarking processes and some have merged with other faculties and institutes. The threats are not so much on quality as of economy, resources and critical size. There is a great need for research and education in religion and society, but this – on the other hand – is a threat to research and education in theology proper. There is a growing interest in the study of Religion in general, but no parallel interest in the study of Theology. In most of the Scandinavian faculties, positions in classical theology are replaced by positions in religious studies. It is difficult to fund theological projects, while in all the Scandinavian countries there are research programs in Religion and Society, funded by research councils.”(Vidar Hannes, *Academic Theology in Scandinavia: Research – Education – Formation*, p. 2. Contribution to the Third Consultation of Theological Faculties in Europe, Graz, Austria, 7-10 July 2010, unpublished paper). In a similar way Peter Stilwell from Portugal describes the situation of theological education in Latin Countries in Europe: “How can we justify the existence of Theology in a university setting? We are under fire from those who think the study of religion should be handed over to Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, Psychology, History, Philosophy and possibly even Literature, supposedly neutral in their methodologies and with identifiable epistemologies. Only these are considered to raise the study of religion above ‘mere catechetics.’”(Some Notes on the situation of Theological Education in Latin Countries”, p.2)

³² THE 3RD CONSULTATION OF THEOLOGICAL FACULTIES IN EUROPE 7TH – 10TH JULY 2010, GRAZ, AUSTRIA “Jeopardised or in demand? Academic Theology in Europe between Education, Science and Research”, see: http://www.uni-graz.at/grazerprozess/tagung2010/Final_Statement_2010_en.pdf

priorities and directives for theological education if they are structurally no longer related to the institutional framework of theological education in their countries? ”³³

In a similar direction also the concluding report of the session of Edinburgh 2010 conference observed:

“There is a move from denominational seminaries to studying in university faculties of religion. This means that many of the theological seminaries are at risk of closure or the dimension of ministerial formation has been weakened. This also risks a disconnect from the international communions of various Christian traditions. Also inter-denominational theological seminaries have been closed or are threatened in some contexts. While the insights of “secular” education are of their own value to the theological enterprise and theological education should not be isolated from other realms of human knowledge, emphasis should be given to the need to bring theological perspectives to bear on the task of defining the distinctive goals and character of theological education. Increasing tendencies of universities to integrate on theological education under Philosophy and Religion departments put pressure on churches to look for their denominational oriented training centers. In some cases denominational houses of studies within university contexts have proved a good alternative and complement. Ecumenical institutions find it hard to survive both due to the monitory expectations of the universities and also due to the increasing secularization of theological education in university contexts. While working under a lot of academic and financial pressure ecumenical theological colleges need to deliver the ministerial training expectations of the churches without losing their contextual emphasis. In this sense such ecumenical institutions of theological education need to be encouraged worldwide ”³⁴

To conclude this abbreviated analytical sketch on the state of art in the field of theological education in World Christianity at the beginning of 21st century we can state:

- The vision and hope of the fathers and mothers of Edinburgh 1910, that cooperation in Christian mission would also lead to more unity and solidarity in theological education, still is not fully fulfilled. Unity and proper cooperation in theological education still is lacking in major segments of World Christianity hundred years later.
- The famous statement of the Tambaram world mission conference from 1938: ***“The weakest element in the enterprise of Modern Missions is theological education ”***³⁵ which two decades later had led to the formation of the TEF programme, to some extent still holds true in the context of World Christianity in the 2^{1st} century. Issues of theological education often do not receive the kind of common and broad attention and strategic support from churches and related mission and development organizations which they would deserve.
- The concluding report of the session on theological education from Edinburgh 2010 had rightly stated: *“The concern for Christian education, theological education and*

³³ Global Study Report on Theological Education, Section 12) Changing context for theological education in the 21st century p. 56

³⁴ Edinburgh 2010 and the future of theological education in the 21st century. Report of parallel session on theological education – Edinburgh 2010, p. 5

³⁵ Shoki Coe, Director’s Report for the last TEF Committee Meeting Bromley, July 1977, TEF Archives, Box 35 (1977), WCC, p. 15

*ministerial formation which has been a key task throughout the history of Christian mission from its very beginning, needs to be reaffirmed and identified as a strategic task of common action for all Christian churches in the 21st century.*³⁶

- The process preparing for the Busan assembly therefore provides the chance to explore new ways of forming working alliances and bringing the needs of theological education to the attention of the forthcoming global Christian assembly in Asia.

4. Pointers and possible priorities for joint action for theological education in the 21st century

In this concluding part we intend to restrict ourselves to five pointers and priorities with regard to strengthening international cooperation for theological education in the changed contexts of World Christianity today:

a) “God of Life, lead us to Justice and Peace” – the invitation to develop a life-centered, mission-oriented and ecumenical theological education

The theme of the forthcoming WCC assembly in 2013 takes up the deep sense of prayer for peace and justice which is also very deeply rooted in Asian Christianity facing the ongoing realities of a injustice, violence and division (like the division of the Korean peninsula). For our reflection on the future of theological education this proposes a deep reflection on how our ways of doing and communicating theology are related to the deepest aspirations and religious feelings of common people today. What form and content of theological education is a proper reflection of the promises of the God of Life and a proper response to the realities of ‘han’ (the Korean term for suppressed suffering and bitterness) in the world of today?

In reflecting on this theme four core dimensions of theological education and ecumenical formation come to our mind which could be regarded as quality markers for the kind of formation and training programs which are needed for 21st century Christianity:

a) we need to more deeply explore a *life-centered and mission-centered theological education* which relates the Gospel of Christ to all dimensions of life, body, mind and spirit, reflects the missionary calling of the universal church.³⁷ We also need to be sensitive with regard to ecological life-styles in churches as well as in educational institutions which deeply influence our teaching. This is because the prayer-theme is addressing the God of Life in all creation as the source of all healing, peace and justice for humankind and beyond and therefore is about a holistic missionary approach to theological education³⁸;

b) we need a kind of *theological education which is deeply integrated with spiritual formation*, as the theme is formulated as a prayer. And Christian prayer probably is the

³⁶ Edinburgh 2010 and the future of theological education in the 21st century. Report of parallel session on theological education – Edinburgh 2010, p. 2 (will be published in the final Edinburgh 2010 conference report)

³⁷ See the new WCC mission statement from 2012 which is prepared for the WCC assembly: Together towards life. Mission and Evangelism in changing landscapes, Manila 2012; <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes.html>

³⁸ See: Dietrich Werner, Mission and theological education, in: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education-ete/wcc-programme-on-ecumenical-theological-education/mission-and-theological-education-suggestions-for-possible-priorities-in-cec-for-the-future.html>

deepest energy for mission and ecumenism today and reaches deeper than theological textbooks and theological statements;

c) we need a form of *theological education which is deeply interwoven with peace education* today, with healing and reconciliation ministries in contemporary church life; Peace education is not just an added systematic or historic topic, it is an integral dimension affecting the very style and methodology of theological education: To contribute to a culture of overcoming violence between parents and children, between men and women, between immigrants and natives, between our generation and the generations to come is one of the most urgent imperatives for theological education in today's contexts which has so much violence and violation of rights, of minds and identities both in its history and in its present;

d) finally we need an *integration between theological education and alphabetization for sustainable economies*. The present course of global economic development which emphasizes unlimited growth at the expense both of the individual psychic condition as well as at the expense of natural resources cannot be sustained for much longer. The oikotree-movement which due to initiatives taken by WCRC in 2010³⁹ has become a worldwide movement of churches, individuals and networks that share a common commitment to just and sustainable economies has an important relevance for theological education as well.

All these four dimensions are essential for the future of theological education in World Christianity.

There is an exciting project of WCC which can provide a testing ground for an innovative model of theological education alongside the assembly in South Korea: It is explored and in the process of being planned, to have a *Global Ecumenical Theological Institute* (GETI) prior and during the WCC assembly in Korea which would offer some 150-180 advanced theology students from all over the world the chance of spending a period of two weeks of intense teaching and ecumenical immersion and dialogue together in Seoul and in Busan in October 2013. GETI will be led by a special international group of teaching staff which will accompany the assembly process with key lectures and public teaching occasions of leading theologians. We would very much welcome support and cooperation of other partners in this promising project which can only be achieved if many partners join hand and contribute quality time and resources.

b) Attention to the needs of newly emerging churches in the contexts of poverty – avoiding a new apartheid in theological education

Mission agencies and churches worldwide in the context of the forthcoming assembly in Korea will be called to be more attentive to *newly emerging churches and their needs for theological education, particularly with churches which are growing in contexts of poverty and in societies which see rapid changes, marginalization and poverty*. Nobody could have imagined hundred years ago the changes and political openings which have come about in countries like China, Nepal, Cambodia, Laos and growing churches in several African countries. We live in different stages and epochs of church history in the context of World Christianity in the 21st century. For those churches which are in a very early stage concerning their short history of unfolding careful attention, support and accompaniment is needed to develop contextualized systems and resources for theological education without which an organic growth and holistic Christian mission in their context cannot take place. Churches which have some 500 or 100 years of history need to listen

³⁹ See: <http://www.wcrc.ch/node/483>; see also: <http://www.oikotree.org/default.aspx>

carefully to the authentic needs of churches which have only 80 or 50 years of history and are in a quite different stage of development. Churches in a context of affluence need to overcome their cultural captivity and develop a sensitivity for newly emerging churches which come from completely different backgrounds. There are several emerging churches in Africa as well as in some regions of Asia, which have grown significantly during the past two decades numerically, but could not grow theologically for lack of resources and this is insane in long-term perspective. The unity and inner coherence of World Christianity in the 21st century to a large extent is dependent from joint international efforts to make theological education accessible, affordable and meaningful for all.

c) International cooperation for strengthening regional associations of theological schools and regional funds for faculty development

In the preparatory process towards Busan we also have learned that the unprecedented denominational fragmentation and isolation between the different networks of theological education is not viable for the future and for the common witness of Christianity. Therefore on the way towards Busan we need to explore the creation of *proper new mechanisms of international cooperation between agencies and churches of different denominational orientation both on the international and on the regional level* to be more effective and to respond to the needs of theological education both structurally and theologically while moving beyond the traditional divides between Evangelicals and Ecumenicals, Pentecostals and historic Protestant Churches.⁴⁰ The most important tool and platform for transformation in theological schools are the regional associations of theological schools, but unlike ATS in America these entities in other contexts are often very fragile, dependent on external support or not really active. ETE is interested to explore chances to bring about a new global platform of cooperation within the area of theological education to mobilize more support for associations of theological schools in networking with REOs. Without dominating or intending to recreate one monolithic global instrument (like TEF was in the past) a more inclusive and structured global strategic cooperation in developing theological education would be advisable, in which also a greater role of evangelical mission partners in international cooperation within WCC-ETE and more support for the development of theological education in different regions would be appreciated. We have had some official encounters with Lausanne movement, Overseas Council and the leadership of ICETE which point to possibilities for more intentional cooperation in this regard for the future.

ETE has initiated processes for the setting up of regional ecumenical funds for theological education which are established in Africa, in Asia and in Latin America in cooperation with the REOs and we are inviting other partners to join. A new strategic global alliance of mission partners could be envisaged to support regional funds for theological education and to coordinate work on faculty development programs and theological scholarships.

d) Defining ecumenical standards for quality in theological education

⁴⁰ The concluding report of Edinburgh 2010 session on theological education noted: “*An international working group for theological education should be considered - or explored to be established as working group within IAMS - which would bring together representatives of all Christian confessions beyond all present divides and which would serve as a continuation committee of this session of Edinburgh 2010 to explore common synergies and joint action in support of theological education for the mission of the Church.*”

The Busan assembly might be confronted with the need of churches to be in more dialogue both with accredited as well as non-accredited theological seminaries and faculties in order to come to some common guidelines for *understanding quality of theological education*⁴¹. As governmental national and international accreditation agencies continue to question theological institutions which cannot give sufficient answers with regard to their quality standards it will be important for churches to come together in order to define some common standards for quality theological education and for minimum requirements for entering into the ministry (as Protestant churches in Europe and also a network of theological educators in Latin America have worked on already⁴²). The last thematic conference of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Schools (WOCATI) in Johannesburg in July 2011 has dealt with this issue by staging a dialogue between different standards and mechanisms to define quality in theological education - and KAATS was visibly present and actively involved there.⁴³ A “Common Charter on quality in theological education”⁴⁴ was proposed and later worked out which intends to bring Christian denominations together on some core elements and common theological principles of theological education.

e) Joining forces in supporting the one global portal for a multilingual digital theological library system

Theological knowledge transfer had taken the shape of theological text book programmes and projects of theological literature distribution within the period of TEF some 40 years ago. While the need for proper and contextualized theological textbooks continues today the means of communication have changed in the 21st century. The digital era has opened up possibilities for complementary (not substitutional) ways of sharing theological knowledge. An immediate priority for today has been about working out new systems for a more just and participatory model of theological knowledge transfer between North and North, East and West which makes use of internet facilities. WCC with its program on ETE for some three years has worked on a “*Global Digital Theological Library*” – *Project* which led to the launch of the Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib)⁴⁵ Project in September 2011. It uses proper software and technical tools for harvesting made available by the existing Globethics.Net Library system⁴⁶. This new project should be available also in Korean language and is very eager to cooperate with Korean theological schools in terms of getting more digital theological journals, theological thesis articles scholarly essays from theological professors in all major fields of Christian theology. Since the first weeks of its existence almost 5000 new registrations of users (500 per week) were received, many also from remote areas. The digital library project presents a major quantum leap in sharing theological knowledge and making available resources for theological education particularly South – South, East

⁴¹ See: Towards International Standards of Quality in Theological Education - ETE Reference Document 2009, in: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education-ete/wcc-programme-on-ecumenical-theological-education/towards-international-standards-of-quality-in-theological-education-ete-reference-document-draft.html>

⁴² See Michael Beintker, *The Study of Protestant Theology in Europe*, in : D. Werner et.al., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, p. 556ff

⁴³ <http://wocati.oikoumene.org/en/resources/2011-wocati-consultation/communique.html>

⁴⁴ See the revised version for a Common Charter on quality in theological education from November 2011: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education-ete/wcc-programme-on-ecumenical-theological-education/towards-a-common-charter-on-quality-in-theological-education-dietrich-werner.html>

⁴⁵ <http://www.globethics.net/web/gtl/globetheolib>

⁴⁶ See website: <http://www.globethics.net/>

- West and South to North. These modern communication technologies open up better chances for programmes of theological e-learning and a global digital theological library networking but they also need more international support, financial help and actual provisions of valuable theological contents in order to prove vital for the future.

f) Developing common guidelines or standards for international ecumenical partnerships between institutions of theological education

A final point: Busan will also raise the issue of what will inform future relations between different partners in the global landscape of theological education. WCC and its programme on Theological Education since Mexico City 1963 stood for a six-continent approach in theological education which – however one is counting the continents – implies that all regions of the inhabited earth should be in vital contact and proper partnership relations with other regions with regard to enabling each other for the task for theological education. We do think that we could benefit from a *new understanding and new models of authentic and participatory cross-cultural partnership in theological education worldwide*.⁴⁷ What are our standards, our expectations and our criteria for proper and authentic ecumenical partnership in theological education with institutions and networks from other regions of this world? Are there specific experiences or guidelines on standards for ecumenical partnerships in theological education in evangelical networks and in ATS which can be shared with others? It would be beneficiary for many associations of theological schools like ATS or those from other continents if some guidelines based on recent expectations and experiences could be worked out which would pave the way for a more participatory, broad and future-oriented approach to international partnerships in theological education. Guidelines for international ecumenical partnerships in theological education should safeguard and enable both the translatability of the Gospel and its continued inculturation as well as the ecumenicity of the church. We need all our commitment and we need evangelical schools and mission training seminaries to work together as it has become very clear: **Theological Education in the changing context of World Christianity today is an unfinished agenda.**

⁴⁷ The Concluding Report of the Edinburgh 2010 session on theological education had some provocative phrases on this issue : “*We also need new and authentic models of international partnerships between institutions of theological education in the North and the South, East and West. As it is a known fact that most of the Christians are in the South and most of the educational resources are in the North it is not acceptable that those who are in control of the inequity should attempt to solve this crisis with “tokenism” by making unilateral decisions about who comes and who does not, rather than giving up some of their privileges and developing models of mutual sharing and decision-making. The richest seminaries of this world, rather than becoming the “experts” on the communities of the South and importing select southern students to kneel at the altar of accredited education, should contribute to credible and authentic models of authentic partnership with theological colleges and faculties in the South.*”