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Review

Priest, Felicia C., Schafroth, Verena, & Naidoo, Marilyn, (eds.), *Empowering Voices: African Women in Theological Education*, Langham Global Library, Carlisle: 2025, ISBN 9781786410825, 224pp.

Reviewed by Simbarashe Munamati¹

Empowering Voices: African Women in Theological Education advocates for greater inclusion of women in theological education in Africa. It achieves its objective in three parts. The first part offers a biblical rationale for the inclusion of women in theological leadership and focusses on the changing roles of women in the African society vis-à-vis their experiences in theological education, unpacking how African theological institutions can be critical in undoing epistemic injustice against women. The first contributor, Sophia Chirongoma utilises African women's leadership as a lens for unpacking the status of women in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Africa. The second, Marilyn Naidoo, engages the theological task in unpacking hindrances to inclusivity and equitable opportunities for women and men in theological education. The third, Mecry Uwaezuoke Chukweudo, proffers the Bible as a panacea for women in leadership, presenting them as a critical part of the pool of leaders for both the church and society. The fourth, Kevin Muriithi Ndereba, advocates for a mutual reading the cardinal human creation text Genesis 1:26-28 to correct the interpretive quandary of several New Testament texts on women and men.

The second part of the book deals with issues of gender equity, work-life balance among women faculty, and lessons that societies can learn from biblical women who transformed the course of history. In this section, Verena Schafroth identifies the maleness of African theological institutions that make it difficult for women to fit in and advocates for tailor-made, gender-inclusive

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mentoring opportunities for women in theological institutions. Victor Priest Chukwuma and Felicia Chinyerer Priest explore the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction among female faculty in theological education in Africa, identifying teaching and research, achievement and recognition, and autonomy and responsibility as some of the stressors, which are often exacerbated by workplace issues to do with salaries, tenure, and promotion, creating an imbalanced work-life for women faculty. John K. Jusu recommends an objective support mechanism for women in theological education that includes social life, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and reflective and cognitive skills.

The third and final part of the book concludes the argument by focussing on career development opportunities for female faculty in theological education, policies and guidelines that will support women faculty, publication challenges women faculty face, and opportunities available for women faculty in theological education. Nathan Chiroma conceptualises mentoring in institutions of higher learning as aimed at fostering enduring relations between faculty members, cultivating career knowledge, self-identity, and professional transformation of individuals. Chiroma identifies mentorship as a great resource that should be utilised in theological institutions for female faculty members to achieve their full potential. David Tarus and Elkanah K. Cheboi argue that the continued underrepresentation of women in theological institutions in Africa is exacerbated by a lack of policies and guidelines for their inclusion for the purpose of achieving gender equity and inclusion. The contributors proffer the crafting of women-friendly policies to support of the flourishing of women in Africa's institutions of theological education. These can be brokered through the establishment of boards tasked with superintending efforts on the continent. Sibonokuhle and Martine Audeoud conclude that African female theologians face numerous challenges in unlocking publishing opportunities. These include finding publication venues, the lack of computers and reliable internet, the need for academic resources, a lack of finances, a lack of contextual themes, and the need for balance between work, family, and other tasks. The contributors identify mentorship, networking, multimedia opportunities, collaborations, advocacy, institutional support mechanisms, and targeted funding opportunities as some of the many ways African women theologians can utilise to leverage themselves in publishing their works.

The book singles out a tradition, evangelicalism. A more comprehensive account of African women in theological education would include other traditions, such as Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Pentecostalism, and African initiated churches. The book identifies available tools for the empowerment the African women's voices in theological institutions. These tools include utilisation of gender equity, exploring the relationship between work balance and job satisfaction among female faculty, and lessons from women in the Bible who managed to transform the course of history. Part 3 of the book is critical for it focus on the impact of mentoring, policies and guidelines for support of women, as well as challenges and opportunities for African female theologians regarding publications. The crafting of policies and guidelines in support of women is critical in creating a conducive environment for women flourishing in publications. The book is a critical advocacy tool for the promotion of gender equity and inclusion in African theological institutions. It is a welcome resource for a critical conversation.