




Chapter 1

Doing practical theology and empirical research in the African context

Prof K. Joseph Pali 

Department of Practical and Missional Theology,
University of the Free State 
Bloemfontein, South Africa

1. Introduction

Practical theology has the responsibility to analyse the actions of believers in the praxes of God, church and society (Dames, 2014:49). According to Smith (2013:106), these actions of believers are analysed in the context of the scripture, tradition, and other authoritative documents to understand what they imply about Christian action in this context. Then from a theological perspective, practical theology develops a theory of action to guide believers in churches and society on how to live the values of the gospel as active disciples of Christ.

Is there enough development of relevant theories that guides Africans in churches and society on how to live the values of the gospel as disciples of Christ? On one hand, one can say that the development of theories like *Ubuntu*, African Humanism and communalism and others, is enough proof that there was some critical thinking applied by African Christians to theorise the validity of the received theological knowledge and practises from the Western missionaries. On the other hand, there is still a need for more critical thinking to review the relevance of available African theories and produce other theories that can guide African Christians through the contemporary challenges. The need is urgent if we consider the concern raised by Speckman (2007:xxvi), when he said that churches have no



theory of social intervention because of the received religion from Western missionaries and empowerment programmes that promote dualism and dependency. It must be noted that in African Christian context, the social intervention theories that are developed need to prioritise and embrace spiritual freedom if it needs to achieve true political freedom and authentic socio-economic transformation (Kakwata, 2022:5). Furthermore, it is the church's responsibility and theological institution's mandate to facilitate critical reflection on believers' actions and provide guidelines of a reflected practice for a spiritual freedom. But the tendency of the theological institutions and churches in Africa to focus on practice at the expense of intellectual reflection leaves the Christian religion in Africa with a stigma of religion with many believers but less social impact (Magezi, 2019:117).

This research focuses on conducting practical theology and empirical investigation within an African context, specifically in the townships of Mangaung, Bloemfontein, located in the Free State province of South Africa. The first objective of this chapter is to reflect on the contextual understanding of the nature, field and identity of practical theology in the township. The second objective is to identify methodological markers of conducting research in the context of the township.

The outline of this chapter is as follows: First, I discuss the methodology, theory, engaged and decolonised theological education, and context of Africa, with special reference to the township. Then, I reflect on the definition, nature, field and religious identity of practical theology. I conclude by identifying methodological markers of conducting practical theology in Africa through a discussion of the challenges of practical theology and the relationship between practical theology and empirical research.

1.1 The methodology and theory

The methodology followed in this chapter is an in-depth literature study of the current and previous literature on the study of practical theology and conducting research in the context of Africa. Data collection in this chapter was obtained through observation and analyses of documents

such as journal articles, scholarly books, online sources, dissertations, and general articles.

The main theory of this chapter is the hermeneutical theory which is about understanding and interpreting God's acts of salvation and the implication of salvation within the church and the world through history and trying to make sense to human beings through faith. Its purpose is to develop appropriate and relevant Christian practises that discern God's will and can engage in a given situation by interacting with the text, context, community and action (Van Gelder, 2007:105). First, in the hermeneutic activity, the scripture is essential, together with theology and historical confessions because they shape the life, choices, and practises of the congregation. Second, more significant is the social context of the congregations which could usually be clarified and analysed through social science research. The social context of this research is Africa, in particular congregations in South African townships. Third in importance is the community as Christian believers that has to discern God's will, confess and practise their faith. In this chapter, the community is the Christian community in South African townships. Fourth and lastly, are the strategic actions of the believers in each context that reflect their normative understanding of the scripture, insight into the context, wisdom from the shared practises within the community of believers, and in the end, transformation of the context. Strategic actions will be in the form of recommendations given within the discussion of the chapter.

1.2 Towards decolonised and engaged theological education

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to contribute to the holistic development of society by mobilising the intellectual and creative energies of all people towards addressing the challenge of societal transformation (DHET, 1997:3, 10). During the colonial era, higher education in Africa elevated the superiority of Western education at the expense of African values and knowledge. The consequence was a production of the indoctrinated black elites who were alienated from their own identity and culture but servants of the colonial masters (Michael, 2020:368; Smith, 1999:64). Practical theology as one of the theological disciplines taught at higher educational institutions even during the

colonised African and apartheid South African times perpetuated the superiority of Western education that alienated black elites from their own identity and culture. This was possible through a practical theological confessional approach and applied theological practises that lack a transformation agenda and radical social intervention methods and theories (Van Wyk, 1995:88). The confessional approach and applied theological practises promoted clergy-centred ministry that paralysed active lay ministry and ignored radical societal involvement by the lay people. To address the above concerns, practical theology must be concerned with the practises of the pastors and congregation members within and beyond the borders of the congregations. To be relevant in Africa, practical theological ontology, epistemology, methods and theories must be transformed to contribute to the holistic development of society.

Furthermore, this chapter contributes to engaged scholarship as required by the recent strategic plan of the UFS, Vision 130. According to the UFS (2022:1,3) engaged scholarship is the purposeful sharing of academic scholarly work and professional expertise for the mutual benefit of academics and members of the community beyond the academic institution. A few years ago, some academics from the UFS realised that there was a disconnection between the academics from the Faculty of Theology and congregations in the township. They established a partnership that led to the establishment of an NGO (non-governmental organisation) that serves to link congregations and pastors from the township with academics and the Faculty of Theology. The purpose was to share academic knowledge and professional competence and learn about ministerial experience and challenges of the pastors from the township. The partnership further led to an academic township research project that involved various scholars and aimed at the mutual generation of knowledge and learning and contribution to the transformation of the congregational ministry in the township. The research project was empirical and used mixed methodology for data collection and this chapter is the product of that partnership of the academics and congregations in the township.

This chapter contributes to the recognition and mobilisation of the African community towards facilitating the implementation of some of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (UN, 2015), African Union

Africa Agenda 2063 (AU, 2013) and South African National Development Plan 2030 (NPC, 2011). The discussion in this chapter of social justice, community development and education relate more to the programmes mentioned above.

Decolonisation of practical theology is the other area that this chapter is contributing to. Decolonisation in the African context is undoing the process of colonisation by liberating the African mind, spirituality and the body from the lingering forces of colonisation. Western education with its knowledge, methods and theories has been used as a tool to colonise the indigenous people (Porsanger, 2004:106). Many African theological institutions teach vast amounts of knowledge generated from this Western education system and we wonder why the products of such education suffer from dependency instead of being self-reliant. African theological education needs a radical change of theological knowledge, methods and theories to be culturally and ethically acceptable to the study of African people. Decolonising African theological education requires centring on the concerns and worldviews of Africans whilst striving to understand research theories and methods from African perspectives and purposes (Smith, 1999:39). Decolonised theological education must empower local people and engage their context and knowledge to address issues of social justice and transformation of the local people, societal structures and churches (Namsoon, 2010:39). The role of the higher theological institution in the decolonisation process must be to provide people with ideas, methods, habits of the mind to critically evaluate their societies, appreciate what makes life and of other valuable and reject whatever dehumanises them and others (Moulder, 1980:183)).

1.3 The context of Africa

Practical theology in Africa must make a deliberate decision to confront societal injustices and address the existential needs of Africans. This chapter engages with the context of Africa, which in many ways is distinct from other contexts like America, Europe, or Asia. The discussion on how Africa is externally and internally perceived cannot be adequately addressed in this chapter, but a brief discussion on this can be provided. Adeyemo (1995:3-4) states that there are three ways that one can view Africa and discuss its

context. The first one is a pessimistic view of Africa, which he associates with a view from below that takes as a point of departure the human undesirable socio-economic-political situation. Often those who adhere to this view are critical of religion. They view religion as a problem for Africans to be poor and a tool used by Western nations to control the minds of the gullible. They critique Christianity as a religion that describes God, heaven, and angels as white and the devil as black, thus inculcating low self-esteem and self-hatred of those with dark skin colour. Some of the adherents to the pessimist view of Africa describe life as better under colonial rule, but under the African nationalists, the development of Africa regressed, thus moving Africa from crisis to horror story (Sichone 1994:1, 2). The consequence of this worsening situation of Africa has earned it malignant labels such as a weak, dark, bleeding, and retarded continent as compared to others (Adeyemo, 1995:1). The blame for this worsening situation is attributed to religion characterised by dualism, development programmes that promote dependency and leadership conflicts in Africa (Speckman, 2007:xx; Koopman, 2022:343).

The second is an optimistic view of Africa which Adeyemo (1995:3, 4) associates with those who live in the past and are uncritical of the national faults and instead shift the blame to the outsiders like the colonial rulers. This view is associated with utterances that romanticise mineral wealth, political achievements, cultural and religious legacy of Africa and instead of blaming the national leadership for failing to use the wealth of Africa for the benefit of Africans they shift the blame to external actors like the colonial powers, and macro-economic policies.

The third view is a realist view, which Adeyemo (1995:6) states is where one confronts the context of Africa with faith, love and hope guided by the word of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit but does not romanticise the challenges of Africa or withdraw from them. On one hand, this view seeks to engage and understand the deplorable context of Africa regarding socio-economic-political context. On the other hand, it seeks to acknowledge the potential, and the wealth of Africa and use them to rewrite the history of Africa to reclaim its potential, transform the present context and prepare for the future of Africa that God wants. This view recognises the presence of God and the active participation of humanity as agents of transformation

in Africa. It is the goal of this chapter to align itself with the realist view of Africa.

1.3.1 Township in the context of (South) Africa

Apartheid South Africa was famous for its separate development ideology and from the period of apartheid we inherited a human settlement segregated into white suburbs and townships. White suburbs were well-developed human settlements for white people with well-developed infrastructure. In South Africa, township refers to a human settlement designated for black, coloured and Indian people during the previous apartheid regime and still exists in the new democratic South Africa (CoGTA, 2009:6)

The concept of township is very much controversial in South Africa and many of the intellectuals in democratic South Africa no longer prefer to use this concept. Briefly, a township in the context of pre-1994 and even beyond refers to a human settlement in South Africa that was an underdeveloped, racially segregated urban area designated for black, Indian and coloured people (Manyaka-Boshielo, 2017:3). The other common names that referred to townships were shanty towns or locations (CoGTA, 2009:5). The townships during the apartheid era were separated and often situated far from the white settlements which were more well-developed and with better infrastructures (Kabongo, 2019:1). In the township, the majority of the African tribes were placed according to their ethnic groups and language, meaning the Basotho, Venda, Xhosa and coloured people were separated into their ethnic group within the township.

The challenges in the township are that many of the townships in South Africa are underdeveloped and infested with high rates of crime, poverty and unstable socio-economic context. Township has been one of the neglected research areas in the previous regime (CoGTA, 2009:14). Most of the research conducted in the township by the previous South African regime was beneficial to that regime and did not bring any transformation for the black community in the township. However, presently there is a gradual increase in students and theologians conducting research in the context of the township issues. This chapter contributes to the research about the

township in South Africa. In this chapter, township is viewed as a situation within the context of Africa, both the township and Africa at large mutually influence and relate to each other.

The significance of this section was to highlight the impact of how Africa is viewed by others. Practical theology has a role in understanding this background and designing its knowledge, methods, theories to assist African people towards self-determination, self-reliance and self-actualisation.

2. Approaches, and definition and nature of practical theology in Africa

The academic, pastor and congregation members have various perspectives, and approaches to practical theology. There are various approaches to practical theology discussed by Don Browning, Louis Heyns and Hennie Pieterse, Jurgens Hendriks, Richard Osmer (Smith, 2020). However, I will engage the one discussed by Lartey as it relates more with the discussion in this chapter. Lartey¹ (2000:129-131), in his discussion of various approaches to practical theology, mentions the first approach to practical theology as a branch approach whereby practical theology is practised as a theological science with specific content and methods. The second one is the process approach which is concerned with generating viable and workable methods that will enable practical theologians to deliver their goals. Third and last is the way of “being and doing” approach, which strives to utilise faith to transform the practice and context. In my observation, the first two approaches have the privilege of being practised by practical theologians in higher theological institutions and the third one by pastors or lay leaders in congregations. It is possible that the practical theologian who either practises a branch or process approach integrates the “being and doing” approach in their approach to practical theology. In contrast, it is possible that the pastor may integrate the branch or process approach in the being and doing of practical theology. Furthermore, each of the above approaches must

1 Prof Emmanuel Lartey is leading African scholar in the field of practical theology and his home country is Ghana and he taught and held various academic positions in theological institutions in England and USA.

complement each other and their weaknesses need to be worked on for the sake of achieving transformed practice relevant to gospel values.

In my observation, pastors from the township are performing practical theology from the “being and doing” approach. The reason is that few have formal training and undergraduate qualifications, whilst most of these pastors lack formal theological training and are from Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Hence, the majority do not have a conceptual understanding of practical theological content, methods and theories but in practise, they are performing a lot of practical theological activities like preaching, faith formation, mission and leadership. Hence, in this kind of context, the interaction of the pastor as religious practitioner and the theologian as an engaged scholar is indispensable to complement one another through critical reflection on practise and relevance of theory in the ministry of the church.

2.1 Definition and nature of practical theology

Various theological institutions in Africa do not use the specific concept of practical theology in their theological disciplines (Magezi, 2019:116). Some Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church institutions prefer to use pastoral theology instead of practical theology. Porumb (2017:1) argues that the pastoral theology in Orthodox institutions is still male-dominated, focusing on the empowerment of the clergy separate from the lay people. This chapter will focus on the practical theology rather than pastoral theology.

Ganzevoort (2009:3-7) defines practical theology as a hermeneutics of lived religion. By hermeneutics, he understands it as a discernment of interaction between text, doctrinal structures and the praxis of the studied religion. Concerning lived religion, Ganzevoort (2009:4) mentions that it is “the actions and meanings operant in the ways humans live, interact and relate to the divine”. In contrast, Ikenye (2010:38) understands practical theology as a theological discipline descriptive of African lived experience. African lived experience could be traditional narrative, influenced by the internal relations of African tribes, imperialist forces like slavery, colonisation, apartheid and interaction with religions such as Islam and Christianity. Considering the above, practical theology in Africa must acknowledge

and strive to understand the background of African Indigenous Religion, interreligious dialogue amongst African Indigenous Religion, Islam and Christianity, the history of imperial forces, and African culture if it intends to bring about genuine and relevant solutions to African problems. Practical theology in Africa must address domestic challenges of Africa through critical engagement of the social structures and institutions whether secular or ecclesial (Campbell, 2000:77).

Anderson (2001:22), states that “Practical theology is a dynamic process of reflective, critical inquiry into the praxis of the church in the world and God’s purpose for humanity and carried out in the light of the scripture, tradition and in critical dialogue with other sources of knowledge.” Dames (2013:9) says that practical theology is a critical, hermeneutical, participatory action and reflection study within the praxis of God for the missional praxis of the church within the praxis of society. Critical enquiry into the praxis of the church in the world implies relating to the context genuinely and asking honest, hard questions about the purpose of the church in the world (Frambach 2007:20). Practical theology as a hermeneutical discipline is about interpreting God’s acts and implication of salvation within the church and the world through history and trying to make sense to human beings through faith. Practical theology as participatory action involves collaborative action in the research that promotes social construction of knowledge and offers multiple ways of knowing (Mekoa, 2017a:181). Practical theology as a reflective study requires a deep thought of the theological and ethical validity of the practise within a specific situation. According to Dames (2013), the critical, reflective, hermeneutical and participatory action of the practical theological needs to be performed within the praxes of God, church and society.

Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) explain practical theology as an encounter between God and humanity concerned with actions that propagate the gospel and promote God’s coming to this world. In contrast, Magezi (2019:131) defines practical theology in Africa as about understanding, communicating and living out the Christian faith. The encounter between God and humanity relates well with lived religion and experience, as discussed above. The actions of believers that propagate the gospel may refer to acts of understanding, communicating and living out the Christian faith.

The description of practical theology discussed above implies that the nature of practical theology is a hermeneutical discipline of lived religion and experience; it is critical, reflective, communicative and participatory discipline of theology. Practical theology is inquisitive about the actions or experience of believers in a specific context. In the context of Africa, practical theology must be concerned with the struggles of the Africans regarding legacy of imperialist forces, holistic development of Africans and transformation of social structures. Because of the legacy of imperialist forces which distorted history, culture and identity of Africans, practical theology must help Africans to reconstruct their culture, identity and history. Holistic development of Africans is a historical problem, and it must contribute to the spiritual, social, behavioural and intellectual transformation that will facilitate physical restoration of Africans who can actively and creatively utilise societal structures for the well-being of the community.

Practical theology is essentially a subversive activity that applies theological reflection to solve real-life problems (Aldous, 2019:25; Smith, 2008:203, 204). This implies that practical theology is disruptive and confrontational to bring about a required deep change of the context. Practical theology as a subversive discipline must confront racism, violence and all injustices that transgress human dignity and rights. It must not only identify or highlight problems, but it must bring about relevant critical theories and pedagogies of intervention to transform the context and humanity. It must help people to be truth-tellers and seekers for justice, agents of change, and active disciples of their own context (Dames, 2020:305). Practical theology is a lifestyle; it is a way of communicating, being and doing as informed by human-divine experience within a specific praxis.

Practical theology has three elements: practice, theoretical reflection and returns to practice (Magezi, 2019:119). This implies that practical theology in its critical reflective practises has its point of departure as the practises or actions of believers then theological-theoretical reflection with an intention to bring about relevant, concrete and normative practise in line with the scripture, tradition, or ethics.

In this chapter I will approach practical theology as a critical inquiry into the praxis of the church (as believers) in the world (Anderson, 2001:22),

a study of the field of lived religion and experience (Ikenye, 2010:38; Ganzevoort, 2009:2-9). I understand practical theology as the study of the actions of believers and their faithful communication and demonstration of the gospel message in a specific context, by means of an inductive and critical approach (Schoeman et al., 2012:129, 131). Furthermore, I believe that practical theology in Africa is a theological discipline that must engage in the praxis of religions such as Christianity, Islam and African Indigenous Religion. As part of its mandate, practical theology must focus on the relations between the church and society, interaction of theory and praxis between human and divine being, and between lived religions and experiences and eventually contribute to the reconstruction of culture, identity and self-reliance of an African being.

2.2 Field of practical theology in Africa

In the first half of the 20th century, the field of practical theology was confined to the religious actions of the clergy and the Christian church (De Roest, 1998:19; Ganzevoort, 2009:7, 8; Miller-McLemore 2012:511). According to Dames (2013:5) these paradigms promoted systemic and hegemonic leadership practises within the congregational ministry. In the course of time, the scope of practical theology expanded tremendously from clerical and ecclesiastic paradigms to Christian practises in society, known as praxis (De Roest, 1998:19; Cilliers, 2000:33; Dreyer, 2010:3; Miller-McLemore, 2012:511). In the context of Africa, practical theology has a responsibility to critically reflect on the knowledge of the culture, the experience of African spirituality and the impact of the traditional cosmology of Africans in their spiritual and public life (Kasambala, 2005:321-320). By contrast, Ganzevoort (2009:7-9) mentions that the field of practical theology ranges from Christian phenomena to a broader view of religions and worldviews. Therefore, the field of study in practical theology involves the study of ordained ministry, Church, Faith, Religion, Culture, and Society.

Although there is a shift in practical theology from clerical and ecclesial paradigm, there is a concern about the lack of transforming and concrete evidence to justify and celebrate that shift. Dames (2013:5) states that evidence from empirical research that he had conducted indicates that

there is little evidence of the reality and impact of the shift from clerical and ecclesial paradigm. This lack of shift or lack of concrete evidence of this shift is confirmed by other scholars. Naidoo (2015:172), in her study of theological institutions in South Africa, confirmed that many theological institutions still engage in clerical paradigms to provide skills relevant for ministers to practise ministry in their own different denominations. Magezi (2019:130) laments that it seems that in many African countries, scholars in practical theology predominantly prefer to utilise clerical and ecclesial paradigms, rather than lived religion approach. If the above is true, practical theology in Africa, including South Africa, is still trapped within the figure of the pastor and the walls of the congregations, despite the calls that it must mobilise both the pastor and the congregation members to be active disciples in society.

2.3 Religious identity of practical theology

Ganzevoort (2009:3-70) and Dreyer (2010:3) state that practical theology has shifted its religious identity from a reformed and Christian-oriented discipline to a more ecumenical and multi-religious discipline. This implies that it is now studied and researched by students from other denominations like Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Furthermore, being multi-religious practical theology has moved in some countries to incorporate other religions and cannot be limited to Christian religions as in the past. For example, countries like United Kingdom, and Netherlands, scholars already explore the possibilities and experience of doing practical theology from other multi religious perspective (Ganzevoort 2009) non-religious (Lynch 2024) and non-confessional (Stuerzenhofecker, 2016) perspectives to shape their students' orientation and future actions regardless of their position in religion. In South Africa, I observed that there are already students from African Indigenous Religion and Islam who enrolled for practical theology studies in Faculty of Theology and Religion. Some of these students while preparing for assessment approached me to enquire if they can use their own faith background to do academic assessments in practical theology. This kind of experience made me enquire about whether practical theology as it is offered in many of the universities in South Africa, is it ready to accommodate students from non-Christian background? In

light of the above, there is an urgent need to find out how this shift affects teaching, research and practise of practical theology. Since the establishment of theological institutions in the late 19th century, practical theology in Africa has gradually taken the form of African identity through the design of contextual analysis approaches and implementation of critical pedagogics and theories to reconstruct the culture, spirituality and traditional cosmology of Africans to direct the way that practical theology should be shaped and applied in every context (Kasambala, 2005:321–320).

Emmanuel Lartey (2000:132) and John S. Klaasen (2014:4) designed contextual practical theological approaches named “pastoral cycle” and “Critical engaged practical reasoning.” More recognition must be directed to African scholars who designed Afrocentric practical theological approaches rooted in the African world, values and culture. The first one is the African theology of reconstruction of the life of an African who suffered slavery, colonisation and apartheid (Gathogo, 2007:99). The second one is deep grassroots African theology that strives for human empowerment, development and transformation (Sales & Liphoko, 1982:167). Third and lastly, is the quest for wholeness which involves holistic human development for the purpose of promoting new Christendom (Ngong, 2006:519). The above contextual and Afrocentric approaches to practical theology are relevant to contribute to the reconstruction of African consciousness, identity and culture (Mekoa, 2017b:190). These contextual and Afrocentric approaches need to be tested and applied within the African context for the sake of their improvement and contribution.

Anderson (2001:39) argues that within the Christian context, the identity of “Practical Theology is grounded in the Trinitarian ministry of the Father towards the world, the Son’s ministry to the Father on behalf of the world and the Spirit empowering the disciples for ministry.” Venter (2005:340), in his studies on Trinitarian Theology remarks that our understanding of the Father as the Creator, influences humanity to develop ecological sensitivity, which encourages good relations with other creations such as plants, animals, and land. Son motivates and influences the attitude of humanity, to embrace self-gifting and self-donation. Holy Spirit (Ac 1:8, 2:4) endows humanity with charismata, known as the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:8-10), which make believers more spiritual and missional, with the

mandate to proclaim the kingdom of God and point people to the kingdom of God, not their own. In adopting and adapting the above understanding of Venter within practical theology, I understand the Trinitarian identity of practical theology should enlighten believers about ecological sensitivity, self-gifting and discovering our spiritual gifts to serve the Kingdom of God and his creation.

3. Challenges of the contemporary practical theology

The wider field of practical theology has created enormous challenges for the practise of practical theology. I shall address only those challenges that relate with this chapter. Dreyer (2010:3, 5) raises concern about the minimum use of empirical methods in practical theological research or adaptation of empirical studies from other disciplines. In my observation, the majority of the theology students do not have relevant knowledge of research epistemologies, theories and methods. Hence, UFS and other theological institutions introduced research method modules both for undergraduate and postgraduate students. My observations reveal that the epistemological theological discussion of the researched knowledge lacks integration of the understanding of the African indigenous knowledge system. There is a limited engagement of critical theories and pedagogics and engagement of participatory action research methods. Hence, I conclude that most of the empirical research conducted in practical theology highlights the societal problem without an in-depth discussion of the theory of action that will be used to guide the kind of social intervention that needs to be implemented.

Furthermore, conducting empirical research study is time-consuming. In my previous empirical research that I conducted within the congregations in the township of Mangaung, Bloemfontein, there were some congregations that cooperated well and appreciated empirical practise as it helps them to understand the context. In contrast, others still treated the empirical approach with suspicion of fear of exposing the weakness of leadership and sensitive information of specific congregations. As a result, the leadership of the congregation delayed granting permission to perform an interview with their leader. This happened in one of our township research projects when the church council refused an interview with the senior pastor on the pretext

that he is a holy man of God and can't be interviewed; instead, a junior pastor was recommended.

One more challenge for practical theology is the grounding of practical theology as the critical, reflective enterprise in the distinctive identity of the Christian community without eliminating its scholarly contribution and relevance to the common good (Osmer, 2010:13). It is the privilege of the theological education institutions to practise critical reflection on the ministry and amongst the Christian community members. It is the mandate of theological education institutions to empower pastors with critical thinking through the engagement of critical pedagogies and theories. The remaining challenge is that practical theologians of a more reformed background are still dominant as compared to those with other backgrounds like the African Independent Churches (AIC) and Charismatic Churches.

Magezi (2019:117, 119, 120) discusses the following practical theological challenges: practical theology has three moves; that is, practise, theory, and practise. Both practise and theory have the significance of refining and informing each other for the purpose of improving the quality of each other. However, the situation in Africa tends to emphasise practise over reflection. The consequence is an unreflected practise which is a result of a gap between the faith and the action of the believers and how theory failed to inform and refine the praxis.

Furthermore, Magezi (2019:130) states that the other challenge of practical theology in Africa is that because of enormous societal challenges in Africa, many practical theological scholars have opted to adopt social science theories to address societal challenges in Africa at the expense of quality theological reflection. If this practise pervades it will make practical theology become a bad theological science and a bad social science at the same time.

The other challenge is about the societal impact of the Christian faith. Christian faith is experiencing numerical growth in Africa, but the impressive numbers of Christians fail to act as agents of change to transform their context (Adeyemo, 1995:5). Speckman (2007:xxvi) attributes this failure to make societal impact to a lack of transformative theory of social intervention. Practical theologians as well as higher theological institutions in collaboration with pastors and congregations need to develop means

of inspiration and mobilising believers to be active disciples who seek to transform their own context. The designed societal intervention theories must be shared with the African pastors, or revised to be easy to use and implemented. Some academics at UFS through the engaged scholarship initiative and as part of the contribution of the township congregations research project, have regular workshops with the township pastors to share knowledge, skills and challenges of how believers may be mobilised towards active discipleship.

The last challenge is the problem of human development. On one hand, Speckman (2007:xxvi) mentions that modern development policies focus on economic growth and technological development instead of holistic development. On the other hand, Ramphele, (2008:18) states that material freedom without spiritual freedom is meaningless. Because of misguided human development in Africa, Africa is now struggling with dependency, loss of morality and lack of intellectual freedom to come up with creative solutions to African problems. Because of the adverse impact of imperial forces and macro-economic policies in Africa, true development is when scientific thought and technological development contribute to the reconstruction of the African culture (Mekoa, 2017b:189). Through its knowledge production, theories and methods, practical theology has the responsibility to ensure that it contributes to holistic human development.

4. Practical theology and Empirical research

It is more than half a century since empirical methods were introduced in practical theology but there is still minimum use of empirical research in practical theology. This has the potential to affect the quality concrete contribution of practical theology to address the challenges of Africa. The empirical approach is used with the intention to describe and explain what really happens in a specific context to avoid subjective projections or unrealistic speculations of the situation (Van der Ven, 1993:20, 78). It helps to support a realist view of Africa with facts that can be used to develop concrete solutions to the challenges of Africa. In most of the African churches, including the township congregations, the use of empirical methods to analyse the congregations is still a new and difficult process that needs specific skill and patience. Nel and Schoeman (2015:86, 87) argue

that the significance of congregational analysis is to help congregations to discover their missional identity and integrity. The use of empirical methods in congregational analysis helps to bring the voice and context of the local religious congregation into play. My recent Congregational attender survey is part of data collection method in a research project called Congregation vitality research project. The above mentioned research project focused on congregations and church leaders in the township. The first round of this research project started in 2018 and 28 Congregations in Mangaung (Bloemfontein) participated in the research project and the second round in 2023-2025 whereby 25 township congregations participated. This research project will close at the end of 30 November 2025. The information was used by the participating congregations to develop a strategic plan to transform their ministry.

Mekoa (2017a:169-182) performed an intensive study about indigenous knowledge in Africa and its relations to Western scientific research and knowledge. Mekoa (2017a:169, 170, 178) argues that indigenous knowledge in Africa is acquired in the context of one's relationship with the spiritual and natural world and human interaction and is reflected in the language, social organisation, values, institutions and laws. For empirical methods to be relevant and useful for African people, the empirical research methods must value Africans and their indigenous knowledge. African indigenous knowledge is developed through experience of the natural and spiritual world and interpersonal relationships. Considering the above, I learnt that to conduct empirical research in the township congregations, one needs to establish a relationship with the relevant leaders of the congregation. The knowledge that you will acquire from the township congregation is spiritual, practical, and experiential. This I realised when I observed that in the African Independent Churches, healing is addressed through active participation of the body, mind, and human spirit that are integrated in the process of running, clapping hands and prayer. Furthermore, African indigenous knowledge is integrated within the language, social organisations, values, institutions and laws. Hence, it is important to conduct interviews in the local language, know the protocol to follow to meet the leader, and enquire about institutional laws and cultural

customs that one needs to observe before one can conduct interviews with the leadership and members of the congregation.

Mekoa (2017a:170, 177) states that African indigenous knowledge is transmitted to generations through oral traditions and cultural practices such as rites and rituals, unlike Western science, which is academic and transmitted through the literature. It must be noted that many African phenomena are not yet documented but are still transmitted orally. Many township congregations do not have a documented history of their church, the life and ministry of their founder, the church order, and the teachings of their church. I have several congregations that approached me to assist with documentation of the above information and that is an enormous project that one needs to seek funding for and perform it either as a formal research project or an engaged academic citizen project.

Mekoa (2017a:158) states that research in Africa needs to value the local people and their knowledge by embracing Afrocentric paradigms, contributing to the emancipation of Africans and involving collaborative action to bring about new knowledge and societal solutions. Research in Africa needs to engage the research paradigms that promote human dignity, insight and responsibility. Shawn (2001:175) mentions paradigms that can accommodate indigenous knowledge as critical theorists and constructivist theories because they are context-based, work on ethics of research and strive for social change and participation. By adopting collaborative research approaches, empirical research in Africa must develop Afrocentric societal solutions that contribute to healing, reconstruction of African culture and consciousness, and transformation of African lived experience of ideas and struggles for communal development and self-determination (Rigney, 1999:118, Smith, 1999:116; Mekoa, 2017b:189).

Research methods like qualitative, quantitative or both are still relevant as tools to generate new knowledge provided that they do not undermine and dominate African values and knowledge systems. Mekoa (2017a:180, 181) says that when conducting empirical research in Africa the qualitative methodologies preferred are such as narrative enquiry, storytelling, face-to-face interviews, and focus groups. Qualitative methodologies collaborate well with African indigenous knowledge because they create opportunities for personal relationships, conversations and observation. The quantitative

method does not fit well with indigenous methodologies (Shawn, 2001:178) but Meko (2017a:180) suggests that it can be used to create numerical empirical data. In our township research project, we used qualitative methods by conducting individual and focus group interviews. The qualitative interview questions were asked in the language preferred by the participants. The quantitative method was used through an attender survey conducted in various township congregations. To avoid many challenges related to the survey, the participants were allowed to fill in the survey form immediately after the worship service and the research assistant provided leadership on how to fill in the survey form.

Data collection is an essential process in research because the quality of data collected has an impact on the quality of research, analyses and applications. Meko (2017a:180, 181) mentions that relevant data collection methods in African indigenous knowledge can be through human experience of the spiritual and natural world and building relationships with people. The second one is through conversation (interviews) with people through storytelling and interactions. The third one is by empirical observation within the natural setting where the interconnectedness of the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental aspects is maintained. Lastly, in the modern era, one may include consulting archive documents which may include written primary sources, photos, art and archaic tools.

Some of the empirical research design methodologies preferred are ethnographic and participatory action research or practise-oriented research. The choice of these research design methodologies is attributable to their nature to develop insight of culture, and participatory nature and encourage mutual relationship of both the researcher and the participants towards the contribution of the solution to the research problem. These empirical methodologies are essential because they promote the social construction of knowledge and change, offer multiple ways of knowing, and align with axiological beliefs (Shawn, 2001:178).

Empirical research in practical theology must take leadership in intra-, inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches to the production and learning knowledge (Schoeman et al., 2012:129). The implementation of empirical methods in theology is not anything new; it has been in use since the mid-20th century (Van der Ven, 1993:1). However, the way that the empirical

methods were implemented in theology was gradual and cumbersome. It was gradual in the sense that the process of implementation developed from mono-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary to intra-disciplinary (Van der Ven, 1993:89-102). It is not that the process was linear, but these were the developmental stages that could be observed through the history of empirical methods in practical theology. Various higher theological institutions in South Africa encourage scholars to practise interdisciplinary research for the purpose of generating integrated knowledge that can be useful to various sectors of society. The research conducted so far in township congregations is more of an intra-disciplinary nature but we are open to other scholars' input and we hope in the future to conduct inter- and multi-disciplinary research.

Some of the African mainline churches have the advantage of pastors trained from higher institutions and some of these pastors are theologians and researchers recognised by the church and are helpful to guide and advise the church with their skill and research. However, most of the pastors from African Independent Churches and Charismatic churches whom I work with do not have formal training. In pursuit of qualifications, many of them are victims of bogus and unregistered theological institutions that offer unaccredited qualifications. In short, I observed that many of the congregations in the township do not have recognised theologians and researchers as part of their leadership to help and guide the leadership of township congregations to make appropriate decisions in the ministry of the congregations. Furthermore, they do not have partnerships with relevant higher institutions like Faculties of Theology to train their pastors and share resources and skills concerning ministerial challenges and research.

Considering the above, the partnership of UFS academics and pastors from the township led to some of the township pastors developing an interest in studying with the UFS's Faculty of Theology and Religion (FTR), other pastors were co-opted to be part of the advisory board members of the FTR, and most importantly some participated in the township research project and re-curriculisation of an undergraduate degree. This partnership has grown to benefit congregations beyond Bloemfontein to other parts of the Free State.

In my observation I realised that congregations in Africa, in particular township congregations, are under-researched. Lack of investment in research in congregations in Africa, in particular township congregations, will lead to new theories not being developed for the township congregations' ministerial challenges and conventional ministerial practises not being questioned. This will confirm what Speckman (2007:xxvi) mentioned when he said that many churches (in Africa) lack a transformative theory of social intervention; hence, churches cannot engage many of the societal challenges. There are various theories developed for social intervention within practical theology and social sciences, but are they relevant to congregations in Africa and township congregations? Are they shared with the pastors and congregations in the township? Some of these social intervention theories are complicated and many of the pastors in the township do not have formal education to understand such complicated theories. It was mentioned above that the situation of practical theology in Africa tends to emphasise practise over reflection. There is a need to challenge some ministerial practises to enhance the ministry of the congregations in Africa, in particular, the township. For example, many congregations in the township have been established by African pastors and these congregations do not have church order to guide in matters of discipline and leadership succession plans. Often, when a leader commits an offence, or the founder passes away, there is much conflict and division which could have been resolved through the church order.

Lages et al. (2015:10) mention that other challenges encountered with research in Africa are low participation rates, respondents' suitability, and quality of primary and secondary data. The above is also a challenge to many of the congregations in Africa, in particular township congregations. In our initial stages of the township congregations research project a few years ago, we encountered reluctance of congregations willing to partake in our research. Some pastors could not be interviewed because of their apparent status as holy men of God. Other congregations wanted to be paid for the data collection in their own congregations. Some participants were not suitable for interviews as they could not offer relevant and required information. Lastly, other congregations were suspicious of research and viewed it as invasive in their ministry whilst others delayed giving

permission for research in their congregations. Many of the challenges above can be resolved by forming partnerships and building quality relationships with congregations to share the significance of research for the enhancement of ministry. To resolve the issue of suitability of the participants, one must understand that many of the pastors in the township have no formal education and may not understand the theological concepts as perceived in higher theological education institutions. It is better to use simplified wording of the academic concepts or perform observations of the phenomenon that you intend to research.

5. Conclusion

This chapter was about conducting practical theology and empirical research in the context of Africa, and in particular, the township in South Africa. Africa, and in particular, churches in Africa, including those in the township are under-researched. There are many African phenomena, practises and theories that need to be researched and subjected to theoretical analysis for continuation or discontinuation within the African context. Practical theology as a critical, hermeneutical, participatory and practise-oriented discipline has the potential to empower Africans and engage their context through its methods, theories and knowledge that it produced. But for practical theology to contribute to the well-being of Africa, it needs to view Africa and its citizens as potential agents of transformation, co-producers of knowledge, and partners in the research that strive to integrate African culture, values, indigenous knowledge, identity in its research agenda.

Practical theological research in Africa must prioritise ethical protocol and its initial stages must plan for when to perform report-back after collection and analyses of data has been conducted (Porsanger, 2004:109, 111). Many of the workshops that we conducted with the township congregations were in the context of report-back of what was learnt from collected and analysed empirical data. The understanding of the African indigenous knowledge is imperative if research in Africa, in particular, the township, has to be relevant and authentic. Although both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to research African indigenous knowledge, qualitative methodologies collaborate well with indigenous methodologies rather than the quantitative method. Not all research theories fit well with indigenous

research, but critical and constructivist theories relate well with indigenous methodologies. Since indigenous knowledge is practical, relations and spiritual, data collection procedures do require relevant approaches like personal conversation, human experience, empirical observation, and consulting archival material. Data analyses and interpretation of research data from African indigenous people is valid when it integrates the views and participation of the local people who participated in the research.

In conclusion, practical theology as one of the theological disciplines that perpetuated the Western research and knowledge that undermined African people, their indigenous knowledge and culture, has the responsibility to embrace engaged scholarship and the decolonisation process that provides African people with ideas, methods, habits of the mind to critically evaluate their societies, and reconstruct their culture and consciousness for the well-being of African communities.

Bibliography

- ADAMO, D.T. 2018. 'The portrayal of Africa and Africans in the book of Jeremiah.' *In die Skriflig* 52(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v52i1.2259>
- ADEYEMO, T. 1995. *Reflections on the state of Christianity in Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya: Christian Learning Materials Center.
- AU (African Union). (2013). *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. AU. [Online]. Available at: <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>
- ALDOUS, B. 2019. How can we sing when we're in a strange land? Practical theology as performance and improvisation in a post-colonial context. *JTSA*, 165(2019):24-49.
- ANDERSON, R. 2001. *The shape of practical theology: Empowering ministry with theological praxis*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.
- BOWERS, P. 2002. African theology: Its history, dynamics, scope and future. *African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, 21(2002):109-125.
- CAMPBELL, A. 2000. The nature of practical theology. In: Woodward, J. & Pattison, S. (eds.) *The Blackwell reader in pastoral theology and practical theology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 77-88.

- CILLIERS, J.H. 2000. The beauty of imagined meaning: Profiling practical theological aesthetics. *Practical Theology in South Africa*, 24(1), 32-47.
- CoGTA (Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs). 2009. *Township transformation timeline*. [online] Available at: https://www.sacities.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/township_transformation_timeline.pdf [Accessed: 1/8/2025].
- DAMES, G. 2020. Scaffolding leadership dispositions for being radically truthful in the civitas dei and the civitas mundi: An imaginative educative ethical-justice praxis. *STJ* 2, 6(1), 305–318. <https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2020.v6n1.a16>
- DAMES, G.E. 2013. Knowing, believing, living in Africa: A practical theology perspective of the past, present and future. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 69(1), a1260. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.1260>
2014. *A contextual transformative practical theology in South Africa*. Parow: AcadSA Publishing.
- DE ROEST, H. 1998. *Communicative identity: Habermas perspectives of discourse as a support of practical theology*. Kampen: Uitgewerij Kok.
- DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training). 1997. *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation on Higher Education (PTHE)*. DHET. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.dhet.gov.za/Part%20C%20%20Policies/WHITE%20PAPERS/2.%20Education%20White%20Paper%203%20Programme%20for%20the%20Transformation%20of%20Higher%20Education.pdf>
- DREYER, J. 2010. *Practical theology in South Africa. Recent developments and new challenges*. Unpublished paper read at Practical Theology in South Africa at Pretoria, 1-6.
- FRAMBACH, N.C.P. 2007. *Emerging ministry: Being a church today*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress.
- GANZEVOORT, R.R. 2009. *Forks in the road when tracing the sacred. Practical Theology as hermeneutics of lived religion*. Presidential address to the Ninth conference of the International Academy of Practical Theology, Chicago 2009. <http://www.ruardganzevoort.nl/pdf/2009Presidential.pdf>, [Accessed: 5/9/2023].
- GATHOGO, J. 2007. African theology of reconstruction as a practical theology for all. *PTSA*, 24(2), 99-121.

- HEYNS, L.M. & PIETERSE, H.J.C. 1990. *Eerste tree in die praktiese teologie*. Pretoria: Gnosis.
- IKENYE, N.J.B. 2010. *Modelling servant leaders for Africa: Lessons from Paul*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery.
- KABONGO, K.T.L. 2019. From victimhood to hubs of (trans) formation and local agency: Re-imagining poor urban communities. *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 40(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1998>
- KOOPMAN, N. 2022. The trinity in African public theology. In: Van der Westhuizen, H. *Reader in trinitarian theology*. Johannesburg: UJ Press, 339-360. <https://doi.org/10.36615/9781776419494-19>
- KAKWATA, F. 2022. Spiritual freedom and development in Africa: A theological perspective. *In die Skriflig*, 56(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v56i1.2855>
- KASAMBALA, A.E. 2005. The impact of African spirituality and cosmology on God's images in Africa. A challenge to practical theology and pastoral ministry. *IJPT*, 9(2005), 300-323. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt.2005.9.2.300>
- KLAASEN, J.S. 2014. Practical theology: A critically engaged practical reason approach of practice, theory, practice and theory. *HTS*, 70(2), 1- 6. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i2.1950>
- LAGES, C. PFAJFAR, G.& SHOHAM, A. 2015. Challenges in conducting and publishing research on the Middle East and Africa in leading journals. *International Marketing Review*, 32(1), 52-77. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-12-2014-0374>
- LARTEY, E. 2000. *Practical theology as a theological form*. In: J. Woodward & S. Pattison, eds. *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 128-134.
- LYNCH, G. 2024. Practical theology for the non-religious. In: G. Smith & A. Todd (eds.) *Future faith: Public and practical theologies for the contemporary world*, 24-36. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003389743-4>
- MAGEZI, V. 2019. Practical theology in Africa: Situation, approaches, framework and agenda proposition. *IJPT*, 23(1), 115-135. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2018-0061>
- MANGAYI, L. 2016. *Mission in an African city: Discovering the township church as an asset towards local economic development in Tshwane*. Doctor of Theology in Missiology with specialisation in Urban Ministry. University of South Africa (UNISA).

- MANYAKA-BOSHIELO, S.J. 2017. Social entrepreneurship as a way of developing sustainable township economies. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(4), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i4.3830>
- MEKOA, I. 2017a. The ethics and politics of doing research on indigenous knowledge systems in Africa. The challenge of western scientific scholarship. In: Mekoa, I. (ed.) *Re-imagining Africa. Perspectives on African culture, education and development*, 158-185. Cape Town: The Incwadi Press.
- 2017b. In response to the call for the decolonisation of the curriculum: Mapping a way forward at North West University. In: Mekoa, I. (ed.) *Re-imagining Africa. Perspectives on African culture, education, and development*, 186-209. Cape Town: The Incwadi Press.
- MICHAEL, M. 2020. Christianity and the church in Africa. In: Agang, S.B. (ed.) *African public theology*, 367-377. Bukuru, Nigeria: Hippo Books.
- MILLER-MCLEMORE, B.J. 2012. *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to practical theology*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444345742>
- NAIDOO, M. 2015. Ministerial formation and practical theology in South Africa. *IJPT*, 19(1), 164-188. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2015-0004>
- NAMSOON, K. 2010. Envisioning postcolonial theological education: Dilemmas and possibilities. In: Dietrich, W., David, E., Namsoon, K. & Joshva, R. (eds.) *Handbook of theological education in world Christianity: Theological perspectives - regional surveys - ecumenical trends*. Oxford: Regnum Books International.
- NEL, M. & SCHOEMAN, W.J. 2015. Empirical research and congregational analysis: Some methodological guidelines for the South African context. *Acta Theologica*, Supplementum 22, 85-102. <https://doi.org/10.4314/actat.v21i1.7S>
- NGONG, D.T. 2006. In quest of wholeness: African Christian in the new Christianity. *Review and Expositor*, 103(3), 519-540. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003463730610300305>
- NPC (National Planning Commission). (2011). *National Development Plan 2030: Our Future - Make it Work*. Pretoria: National Planning Commission. Found at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/ndp-2030-our-future-make-it-workr.pdf

- OSMER, R. 2010. *Practical theology, an introduction*. Unpublished article read at Practical Theology in South Africa conference in 2010 in Pretoria.
- PORSANGER, J. 2004. An essay about indigenous methodology. *Nordlit*, 15(July), 105-120. <https://doi.org/10.7557/13.1910>
- PORUMB, R. 2017. An orthodox model of practical/pastoral theology. *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 21(1), 127-154. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2017-0006>
- RAMPHELE, M. 2008. *Laying Ghosts to rest. Dilemmas of the transformation in South Africa*. Tafelberg: NB Publishers.
- RIGNEY, L.I. 1999. Internationalisation of an Indigenous anti-colonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenist research methodology and its principles. *The Journal for Native American Studies*, 14(2), 109-121. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1409555>
- SALES, R. & LIPHOKO, J. 1982. Emerging grassroots theology in Botswana. *International Review of Mission*, 71(1982), 161-171. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1982.tb03135.x>
- SCHOEMAN, K., LAUBSCHER, M., PALI, J. & VAN DEN BERG, J.A. 2012. Practical theology at a public university: The road travelled and the road ahead at the University of the Free State. In: Venter, R. & Tolmie, F. (eds.) *Transforming theological knowledge: Essays on theology and the University after apartheid*. Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 127-143.
- SHAWN, W. 2001. What is indigenous research methodology? *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(2), 175-179.
- SICHONE, O.B. 1994. Africa in global perspective. Will Africa enter the 21st century? In: Sichone, O.B., Turok, B., Mbeki T., Sejanamane, M., Kanda, K.D. & Venter J.J. (eds.) *Africa and the new world order*. Institute for Reformational Studies. 1994., Series F, study pamphlet 320, 1-6
- SMITH, K.G. 2008. *Academic writing and theological research: A guide for students*. Johannesburg. SATS press.
2013. *Integrated theology: Discerning God's will in our world*. Johannesburg: SATS.
2020. *Integrated Theology: A Key to Training Thinking Practitioners*. South African Theological Seminary. [Online]. Available at: <https://sats.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Integrated-Theology.pdf> [Accessed: 1/8/2025].

- SMITH, L.T. 1999. *Decolonizing methodologies research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- SPECKMAN, M.T. 2007. *A biblical vision: For Africa's development?* Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications
- STUERZENHOFECKER, K.S.B. 2016. *Transforming practical theological education in the changing context of non-confessional higher education*. Doctoral dissertation. University of Chester, United Kingdom.
- UFS (University of the Free State). 2021. *Engaged Scholarship Strategy (ESS)*. UFS. [Online]. Available at: https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/librariesprovider20/engaged-scholarship-2021/strategy-of-engaged-scholarship-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=819f7720_2
- UN (United Nations). (2015). *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. UN. [Online]. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- VAN GELDER, C. 2007. *The ministry of the missional church: A community led by the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- VAN DER VEN, J. 1993. *Practical theology: An empirical approach*. Kampen: Kok.
- VAN WYK, A.G. 1995. From “applied theology” to “practical theology.” *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 33(1), 85-101.
- VENTER, R. 2005. What is the character of leadership in relation to a postmodern society? The post-modern condition, leadership and Trinitarian echoes: 16 theses, 331-378. In: The Reformed Ecumenical Council. *The Netherlands 2005: Agenda*. Madison: Printing Plus.