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Developing Curriculum for Urban Missions in Africa

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Abstract

Urban missions, in recent contexts, is the Christian mission's response to the shift in population from rural areas to urban centres. The phenomenal growth of urban centres, particularly in Africa, underscores the need to rethink how missions are conducted. Traditionally, missions have been considered a necessity in rural and underdeveloped places. However, with the massive movement of people into cities, there is a paradigm shift in how missions should be conceived and developed. In African theological institutions, mission studies have broadly categorised mission fields into rural contexts where emphasis has been laid on mono-cultural or cross-cultural missions. However, the contexts have changed with urbanisation and the growth of urban centres, as more people need to be reached with the gospel. This article shows the need for curriculum development to train gospel ministers for urban missions. The paper utilises the literature to provide an overview of urban missions, discuss the need to revise the curriculum, and contextualise it for the African context. The paper submits that curriculum development for African urban missions should prioritise raising mission practitioners to understand and adapt to city life and culture, proclaim the gospel appropriately to city dwellers, emphasise contextual theology of missions, equip mission leaders with skills that will help them mobilise and train others for urban missions, and emphasise the need for missional ecclesiology in city churches.

Introduction

Urbanisation has become a recurrent phenomenon in Africa since the mid-twentieth century. The phenomenon is not limited to Africa but is more pronounced due to internal migratory pressures fuelled by the belief that urban centres offer greater opportunities for a better life and a change in social status than rural areas. This influx of people to towns and villages indicates that most people targeted for salvation in traditional mission fields are now moving to urban centres and need the gospel. However, for a long time, mission studies curricula have apparently focused on designating rural and underdeveloped areas as mission fields, while cities have not been declared mission fields. There seems to be a shortage of scholarly work on how to engage with the reality of the world's changing landscape due to urbanisation, which could have helped some city churches that have been struggling to be missional in their immediate context reach people for Christ.

Therefore, the mission's curriculum in Africa must reflect the changing face of missions. It will equip mission practitioners to engage with the phenomenon of urbanisation and turn it to the advantage of Christian missions. This paper utilises the literature to provide an overview of urban missions, discuss curriculum development in missions, and develop a contextual missional curriculum for African theological institutions.

An Overview of Urban Missions

The world's landscape has been rapidly changing in recent decades, with people moving from agrarian communities (rural areas) to industrialised centres (towns and cities). This movement is common among youth as they pursue their dreams. Cities are rapidly expanding, a process known as urbanisation. Ali and Rahman (2024:153-155) define urbanisation as a pervasive and historical transformation driven by the population shift from rural to urban centres, fuelling the growth of cities and towns worldwide. Economic, political, and social factors resulting from globalisation have led to a shift in the population to urban areas. Industrial development, employment opportunities, migration, commercialisation, modernisation, improved transportation and communication, social factors, political turbulence, the growth of service centres, and market forces always influence urban pull.

Urbanisation has positive effects, including improved access to education and healthcare, enhanced communication, employment opportunities, recreational facilities, and generally superior infrastructure. Adverse effects include environmental pollution, global warming, overpopulation, homelessness, poverty, marginalisation, unemployment, rising crime, traffic congestion, overload of social amenities, and health problems. From Ali and Rahman's point of view, one of the main causes of urbanisation is people's movement from surrounding rural or underdeveloped areas into more developed regions, such as towns and cities, due to various reasons, known as migration. This migration presents both opportunities and liabilities to the evolving urban centres.

Furthermore, two major global migrations are identified: urbanisation, the movement of people from rural areas to urban centres, and international migration, the movement of people across state borders, which is changing the world's demographics. The overlap between the two migrations has posed a central concern for urban missions. These movements create opportunities for evangelism and other mission activities, such as church planting, social ministry, and cross-cultural and multicultural ministry. Also, these mission activities are structured in simple models for urban missions that factor in large congregations for worship and multiple small groups for discipleship and fellowship (Walters 2011:54-59). Thus, as urban centres rapidly expand, the church should also respond by strategically shifting its mission efforts. The spread of the gospel through evangelism and social ministry is about saving people's souls. If most of the people the churches target for missions in rural areas are moving to cities, the church should inevitably give more attention to missions in urban centres.

Moreover, Santos (2014) notes that, historically, people lived in rural areas, relying on agriculture and hunting to survive. By 1800, 3% of the world's population lived in cities. This percentage increased to 14 per cent by 1900; since 2007, more than 50 per cent of the world's population has lived in urban areas. The United Nations further projects that by 2050, over 70 per cent of the world's population will be living in cities. These realities challenge the church to give serious thought to how to minister the gospel in urban centres, as the Church is God's "Plan A" for reaching the cities, with no "Plan B". The church is not the building but God's people who should reveal God to the world

(70-72). Therefore, city churches should realise that they are God's primary agency for Missions in their locality. They should see urbanisation as an answered prayer, as many people who spend so much time preaching the gospel in rural places are coming out in droves to the city. Also, city churches should be missional and strategic to ensure that those migrating to the town encounter the gospel, which transforms them into agents of transformation in the world.

Moreover, there are numerous opportunities for missions in urban centres. People moving from rural areas or from one nation to another experience an overwhelming change in their social lives, which creates immense opportunities for believers and churches to reach out to them with the gospel and the demonstration of Christ's love. Another opportunity is that these people, when they move into urban areas, do not disconnect from their home base, which provides added opportunity for missions because, when converted in the city, they can facilitate the movement of the gospel back to their people in the home base (Walters 2011:54). Urban missions then could exploit the gap created by the social change factor occasioned by migration, to connect with immigrants and present Christ's message and love to them.

Furthermore, Paul Hoffman (2017:10-11) notes that urbanisation is changing the world. It is the contemporary defining trait that represents the significant and final shift of humans out of rural and agricultural life into cities, suggesting that humans will end this century as a "wholly urban species." This assertion clearly speculates that by 2100, there may be no place called a rural area again. However, it should be noted that missiological studies in Africa seem fixated on traditional or nationalistic methodological frameworks that emphasise rural missions over urban missions. (Norton, 2016:81). Although awareness and sensitisation to urban missions have begun in Africa, a growing interest has been observed in the academic attention given to urban missions.

Furthermore, Alawode and Jangado (2023:12) corroborate Hoffman's observation that emphasis has often been on rural missions carried out in underdeveloped places, but that recently, attention is being given to urban missions, which is peculiar because urban residents are familiar with churches and Christian programmes, which made some people feel they do not need missionaries. There may be many people in the city, but several are yet to be

effectively engaged with the gospel. Some urban residents view the church from a distance and are not necessarily part of it. Santos (2014:75-80), when discussing how urban missions can be engaged, identifies five models useful for urban missions: small groups that emphasise discipleship; churches becoming missional communities; church planting; leadership development; and churches engaging in social ministries by establishing centres of influence. He concludes that cities are at the epicentre of "God's earth-shaking movements" in contemporary times, and that the principles from the models he developed can be contextualised in any part of the world. These models help to engage people in the urban community practically with the gospel and secure their commitment towards the Christian faith. Some may not be peculiar to urban missions alone, but can be adopted and adapted to meet the urban missional need of helping people believe in Christ.

The world at large is experiencing expansive urbanisation. Africa, in particular, witnesses urbanisation largely driven by migration from rural areas to cities due to the concentration of power and development in cities (Tomuseni, 2018, 78). People are in search of better opportunities and livelihoods, which is the main urbanisation driver being witnessed on the continent. Also, it was noted that Sub-Saharan Africa has been identified as the region with the fastest urbanisation relative to other continents, at an alarming pace. According to reports from 1950, it had no cities with populations exceeding 1 million, but now has over 40 cities with populations over 1 million, and 11 of the 25 growing cities in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa. With this reality comes the challenge of social invisibility, psychological overload, and social isolation for city dwellers (Abrahams-Appiah 2022:304). These challenges indicate that there is less communal interaction and a widening social gap in the cities.

Furthermore, Alawode and Jangado (2023:3-4) presented about five main challenges to urban missions, namely secularism, postmodernism, pluralism, multiculturalism, and social stratification. The challenge of secularism centres on people seeing religion as a fallacy. Postmodernism centres on self-worship and relegates God to the background. Pluralism presents the challenge of a wide range of religious teachings and practices dotting the city's landscape, making Christianity seem just one of many religions through which humans can find spiritual reality. Multiculturalism, as a common feature of urban centres, can create space for ethnocentrism that may hinder gospel proclamation.

Then, social stratification, in which people classify themselves into castes based on their social status, poses the challenge of segregation and division along social status. These challenges show diverse ideologies, beliefs, identities and statuses that characterise urban missions' experience, which mission practitioners should be aware of and prepared for.

Additionally, there are other challenges like demography (diverse demographic representations in age, education or religion), politics - where political decisions affect livelihoods and make people imbibe city culture, transforming their worldview. There are also ecclesial challenges, in which churches have diverse versions of the gospel due to their denominational traditions, theological interpretations, and competition for membership (Bakke, 2002:33-35). Ortiz (2022: 58) also notes the challenge of dynamism by stating that cities are dynamic, like culture, and it is in constant fluidity, which places demands on the church to constantly evolve strategies for urban missions due to political, economic, technological and sociological systemic changes in urban centres. These challenges, however diverse and difficult they may seem, should reinforce the impetus for churches to declare cities as immediate mission fields. The reason is that several people groups the churches are targeting, who are far away to reach with the gospel, may have some representation in the cities. Meeting the people groups in the cities with the gospel, regardless of the challenges, will be a strategic move that makes world evangelisation more feasible. Those reached in the cities may then carry the gospel message back to their home base. Ishola and Ugbedima (2023:6-7) note that urban centres are strategic in transmitting cultural, social, and ideological changes to surrounding areas, and that they can also serve as bases for spreading Christianity. Cities can serve as a springboard for reaching wider regions with the gospel if city churches become more intentional about missions in their immediate localities.

Meanwhile, city churches often struggle to reach the urban population with the gospel, probably because they have held on to traditional concepts and strategies of missions that perceive missions as reaching remote, uncivilised places with the gospel. Thus, city churches must employ effective programmes and methods to carry out urban missions and embrace new, creative, and strategic ways to address contemporary trends in the urban environment. One way of achieving the above is the emergence of Public theology, a well-

established discipline in South Africa, spearheaded by Ignatius Swart and Stephan de Beers, two leading scholars in its advocacy. The discipline focuses on how the church can address challenging situations in urban contexts and be part of the discourse that shapes urban experiences (Tomuseni, 2018: 96-97). This innovative approach must start with training and engaging Christian leaders to equip them with a theological background that supports proactive engagement with urban phenomena in their missions. To achieve this, there is a need to develop a curriculum for Church pastors, Mission Pastors, and Missionaries in theological institutions that addresses the theological response to urbanisation and the demographic realities of contemporary times, making missions available and appropriate for multitudes in urban centres that need the gospel.

Curriculum Development in Mission Studies

In other disciplines, educational curricula have been upgraded several times to address changing circumstances and make learning more relevant to field realities. Theological education should not be left out, necessitating curriculum reviews and development in theological institutions to meet the changing face of missions. Santos (2014:70) observes that the world is rapidly changing, and educators must adapt their curricula and pedagogy to prepare students for occupations that do not yet exist, using technologies yet to be invented to solve difficulties yet to be encountered. Thus, theological studies also need to adapt their knowledge to engage current realities. In a narrow sense, curriculum is the list of subjects offered in a school setting, such as a syllabus, course of study, or field of study, which is regarded as the traditional, scholarly and theoretical view of curriculum. However, from a broader, more progressive perspective, it is the overall learning experience of individuals in school and society. It is not just scholarly and theoretical, but also experiential and practical. Thus, curriculum development is a dynamic process that must reflect this dynamism, as development connotes systematic and progressive change. Therefore, curriculum development should be purposefully planned and progressive (Bilbao et al, 2008:5-6). A relevant curriculum must reflect current realities and equip students with practical skills to make their training applicable beyond the school walls.

Furthermore, Abdelbaki (2023), *A Guide to Curriculum Development: Purposes, Practices, Procedure. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370441134* describes and defines a curriculum as a structured document that clearly states the philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources, and assessments that encompass an educational programme. It is a guide intended to establish the philosophy and overarching goals and objectives the program is set to achieve. It establishes a sequence within and between levels of the programme and outlines a basic framework showing what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and how to know if it has been achieved. It allows flexibility and encourages experimentation and innovation in the programme implementation. Curriculum also promotes interdisciplinary approaches and suggests methods for assessing the programme's goals and objectives, and provides means for its revision and improvement. It also provides guidance on securing human, financial, and administrative resources for program implementation. Its development process includes planning, articulation, implementation and evaluation. Abdelbaki's position gives an exhaustive description of a curriculum as an all-encompassing directory for acquisition and implementation of knowledge and skills to solve existential problems.

Thus, Barron, (2025), *Theories and Models of Curriculum Development," https://www.start-teaching.com/theories-and-models-of-curriculum-development/* opines that the definition of curriculum varies in relation to "scope, structure and the breadth." He also notes that curriculum can be broken down into five areas, namely the official, actual, formal, informal, and hidden curriculum, and that it can be developed using several models. For example, the product model developed by Tyler (1949) and Bloom (1956) focuses on end results, the process model developed by Stenhouse (1975) focuses on procedures rather than product, the thematic model focuses on implementing themes within the learning environment, and the spiral model developed by Bruner (1960) focuses on learning through building up on previous knowledge. These models show that the curriculum focuses on knowledge acquisition, its methodology, and outcomes that prepare a student to implement what has been learned. Therefore, the curriculum is the key to making knowledge relevant to real-world societal experiences. Missiology is not left out in being relevant to societal realities; if the gospel is to bring people of the world to the saviour, those being prepared in theological schools must

be keen to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to reach human souls with the gospel adequately and appropriately.

Moreover, curriculum development is also described as a planned, purposeful, progressive, and systematic process that produces positive improvements in the education sector. Societal changes necessitate that the educational sector be updated and addressed (Mohanasundaram 2018:S4). Thus, the primary curriculum is a purposive design that connects knowledge acquisition to practical realities for its implementation. Consequently, curriculum design is defined as the positioning of curriculum components. Irrespective of the curriculum model of design, there are four components of the curriculum: the rationale for initiating instruction or the aims; what to teach (content) to realise the set aims and objectives; the interconnected target learning experiences; and evaluating and recommending actions to correlate instructional programs, learners, and teachers. Thus, to design a curriculum, the following considerations should be given attention: communication, personality development, environment, field preparation, pluralism, ease of teaching and learning, learning to learn, curriculum planning activities, initiatives and self-direction, flexibility and adaptability, social and cross-cultural interaction, technological skills, constructivism and leadership and responsibility (Mohanasundaram 2018:S4-S6). These considerations will help guide the design of the curriculum to focus on its intended purpose. Therefore, curriculum design should connect students' learning experiences with the practical realities of the world to prepare them to respond to emerging trends in ministry.

Furthermore, Bilbao et al. (2008:35-37) highlight different models of curriculum design, such as the subject-centred model, which comprises subject design, discipline design, correlation design, and interdisciplinary design. There is also the learner-centred model, which includes student-centred, experience-centred, and humanistic design. A third model is the problem-centred model, which supports life-situation design and core design. Theological institutions, however, should consider which model is most appropriate for their mission's curriculum design to best prepare gospel ministers for the task ahead. It would be best if the mission's curriculum were designed with a combination of models to help students minister contextually to the world, mostly in contemporary cities. Therefore, the curriculum, the

medium through which codified knowledge is transmitted, should be suited to enable the next generation to become progressively knowledgeable and take control of situations rather than be at the mercy of prevailing conditions.

Consequently, curriculum development within a Christian system should be value-driven and reflect the missional nature of the Christian vocation (Du Preez 2013:32-33). Malau et al. (2024:252) also note that curriculum development involves compiling and adapting mutually binding curriculum components that support a particular profession and the community's needs. They further define missiology as the science of proclaiming the gospel of God's gifts of salvation to humankind and note that a missiology-based curriculum must prioritise students' involvement in the Great Commission Jesus entrusted to His disciples. Therefore, there must be a radical shift from a traditional missions curriculum to a more relevant one that teaches gospel ministers new methods for disseminating the gospel in a changing world. The principles remain the same, but the procedures should be reviewed to address current challenges and mission terrains.

Urban Missions' Contextual Curriculum Development in Africa

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that Africa is at the forefront of urbanisation. Meanwhile, Western theological education has been discussing and developing a curriculum for urban missions since the 1970s; however, it appears that African theological mission education has not fully developed an educational framework that engages with city mission. Stephan De Beer (2022:214) notes that there is a dearth of religious or theological scholarship engaging African cities, aside from sporadic contributions; nevertheless, there is no coherent body of knowledge on theological engagement with African urban centres. Also, Jeff K Walters (2011:53), citing Conn and Ortiz, notes that in Africa, Asia, and Latin American cities are growing as more people migrate to seek better life opportunities and that only a few churches have been able to respond, with many others overwhelmed and slow in their response to the urban challenge. These assertions clearly show that in Africa and other Global South regions, relevant scholarly materials for engaging in city missions remain in short supply.

Moreover, Du Preez (2013:20), in researching curriculum development for African theological institutions, notes that curricula need to be relevant to the African context and foster students' spiritual and character formation, without sacrificing academic excellence. He also asserts that the curricula should be missional and contextualised to the African experience in the field. Adopting a Western curriculum is seen as counterproductive for African theological institutions, depriving them of the opportunity to take full ownership and train their students to be relevant in the field (Du Preez, 2013:20-22). The curriculum through which gospel ministers are trained will then largely determine how churches respond to the urban challenge. Therefore, the following areas need attention in developing a contextual curriculum for African urban missions.

Engaging the city life and culture with the gospel

The curriculum relevant to African urban missions should be contextual, taking into account African city life and culture. Alawode and Jangado (2023:4-5), in discussing principles guiding urban missions' context in Nigeria, point out that the missionary must know and understand the urban environment, which involves understanding the life and culture of the city people, their dressing, language, relationships, way of thinking, general worldview, family structure, social and economic life, to reach them appropriately with the gospel. Also, the missionary must know that an urban centre is a place of anonymity where communal living is apparently non-existent. People are on their own, with no particular binding cultural standards. African cities have their own peculiarities: most are amalgamations of indigenous communities with strong cultural ties, while many people from other cultures also migrate to them (Alawode and Jangado 2023:5). Thus, African cities are noted for their strong multicultural and heterogeneous character. Therefore, the urban missions curriculum should reflect the city's diverse outlook and be tailored to equip students with ministerial skills suitable for a multicultural and pluralistic environment.

Ministering Christ's love through Sound Relationships and Social Action

To be prepared to minister effectively in urban centres, one must understand the dynamics of relationships in urban settings. Urban residents live isolated lives because they do not want to get bogged down with relational

responsibilities, a fallout from Westernisation. City dwellers struggle to build trusted relationships due to the diversity of urban centres. The missionary needs to cultivate a trusting relationship with the residents to lead them to Christ (Alawode & Jangado, 2023:5). These isolationist lifestyles are significant impediments to Christian mission. They are sometimes aided by advancements in digital technology that limit physical social interactions. Thus, the curriculum must address the situation by integrating how Information Technology can be used for missions to meet people in their privacy and impart relational skills appropriate for reaching out to people living with isolationist principles.

Also, Tiersma (1994:22-23) notes that Christian missions in the city should respond to social issues like poverty and injustice and must not just deal with the powerlessness of the people but also the injustices and evils that cause it, without increasing the feelings of powerlessness, turning the people into dependents when they could also do some things for themselves. It is not enough for the curriculum to teach how to preach a sound gospel message in the city without practically imparting to gospel ministers the ideology of holistic missions, which combines the message of Christ's love with its practical demonstration to city dwellers to validate the message.

Urban Missions Theology and Praxis

Theological institutions should consciously develop a missional curriculum grounded in Trinitarian Mission theology. Du Perez et al. (2014:1-6) note that if theological institutions can be changed to be truly missional, there will be a notable impact in sub-Saharan Africa. Missional curricula will eventually lead to missional congregations, and Trinitarian missiology, which stresses *Missio Dei* as its theology of missions, serves as the foundation for an all-encompassing missional curriculum in theological institutions. The authors further note that all theology should be regarded as fundamentally missional because God is revealed as a missionary God in the scripture. They also opine that the theology of the laity should be incorporated into the curriculum so that pastors can involve them in the missional church. Gospel ministers in training need to have the proper theological perspective on urban missions and impart it to their congregation.

Kim Kirsten (2004:3) also advocates for contextual theologies in missiology, noting that the missionary context in which the gospel is proclaimed in new cultures and traditions will lead to the development of theological reflections peculiar to those cultures and to the use of methods incongruent with classical theologies. These new theologies use social analysis as the starting point for Christian praxis and reflection, or use different philosophical or cultural frameworks to express the gospel. The dynamic approach of contextual theologies, if utilised by mission practitioners, will help city dwellers to understand the gospel in their immediate context and respond correspondingly.

For African urban theological education, Stephan de Beer (2021:240-242) notes that there may be a need for some shifts in curriculum development for urban missions in Africa, namely epistemological shifts that emphasise the need for students to be exposed to diverse and experiential knowledge of the factors that shaped urban centres, beyond their classrooms. Disciplinary shifts that focus on equipping mission workers with skills to engage cities in transdisciplinary ways to proffer solutions to real-life problems. Location shifts, where the appropriate way of learning should be more practical and students learn on the streets rather than in the classroom environment. Theological shifts in which theological assertions shift from confessional to contextual and ecumenical theologies that emphasise liberation and the fusion of theological, conceptual, and theoretical horizons, giving them a global appeal. These shifts help African ministers to relate classroom knowledge to their ministerial contexts. Likewise, Naidoo (2024:226-228) asserts that curriculum development in African theological education should promote a theology that is contextually relevant and demonstrates the progression of theological education in Africa by engaging with African realities, attending to world Christianity, and decolonising theological education. Thus, urban theological education should contextualise the African experience in theological training and, at the same time, globalise its theological stance to achieve universal appeal and unique application.

Historically, Conn notes that since the inception of formal theological education, Missiology, unlike Theology, has often been treated as a marginalised discipline and not recognised as a central one in theological education. It was treated as an appendage to other theological disciplines,

grouped as practical theology, treated as a theological discipline in its own right, or incorporated into other theological disciplines, not taught as a separate subject, particularly in Britain. Mission and theology remain "distant cousins in the theological encyclopaedia." Missions has been treated severely as a colourful extra, still finding its way to take its place in the theological ecosystem, so that missiology can be recognised as a contextualised global response to the evolving urban ministry that churches need to give. He then advocated for a theological education curriculum that reflects global solidarity in its totality and prioritises mission and justice for urban missions (Conn 2002:15-16). Therefore, developing a contextual, missional curriculum for urban centres in Africa should have global appeal, enabling cross-fertilisation of theological concepts among African theologians and missiologists and their colleagues from other parts of the world.

Furthermore, missiology, the systematic study of all aspects of mission, should have a curriculum that reflects intercultural theology, emphasising evangelism as the heart of mission. Missiology is not just the study of mission practices but also the explanation of underlying theories and their representation within the broader perspective of mission studies, serving as the scholarly voice of Mission (Paas 2016:37-52). However, Keelan Cook (2017:7-10) suggests a theological rubric to evaluate urban mission methods, which are: the priority of cities in missional engagement, the right presence of churches (making themselves visible) in cities, a prophetic voice towards culture to transform it, and a focus on gospel proclamation. He also notes that the missiology curriculum in Africa should be conscious of reflecting African philosophy and worldview in its development in a contextual manner. Cook's recommendation is necessary to equip the missionaries to respond to the peculiar existential realities of Africans, such as misgovernance, indigenous beliefs, widespread corruption, political and elite impunity, and ethno-religious violence, through social action and gospel proclamation.

Leadership Development

Leadership training and development are necessary for effective urban missions. The missionaries should be equipped to train others as leaders in assisting in spreading the gospel in the city (Alawode & Jangado, 2023:6). A primary purpose of a missionary or a Christian mission worker, according to Alawode (2022:3), is to raise local church leaders who can lead the new

congregations formed, which will ensure the continuous production of missional disciples. Urban missions leaders should also be trained to overcome challenges and hindrances to urban missions, including rapid growth, limited theological knowledge, cultural barriers, competition, financial constraints, and a lack of hope in urban communities (Ishola & Ugbedinma, 2023:6-11). The curriculum should equip mission practitioners in the city with leadership skills to mobilise and train other Christians and the entire church congregation to develop a passion for missions in their urban localities.

Missional Ecclesiology for Urban Missions

The church also has a role to play in the city and must engage in missions. Christianity in Africa is growing phenomenally, but the church has not done enough to impact the public life of the continent positively (Bitrus & Kinison, 2021:141). Haney (1994:70-73) notes that the mission of the church in the city is to transform the town by serving God faithfully, touching lives in the pluralistic city, affirming hope, sharing love, and engaging in unified gospel action as God's agent of salvation. It should also be noted that defining the city's mission is not just about transforming individuals; it involves the transformation of the town itself, through the formation of faith communities (church planting) (Tiersma 1994:22). Viv Grigg (2017:5-9), in his works, advances new paradigms and fields of knowledge in Urban missiology that help the missional church transform the city. They are: incarnational missions (empathetic identification with the needy), Protestant apostolic orders (servanthood, missional approach), city-wide transformation leadership (developing city leadership teams for transformation), transformational conversations (grassroots relational networks for holistic missions), and urban poor missiology (missions in the slum). These domains are critical for developing an urban missiology curriculum that is both theological and practical, equipping missionaries and urban ministers in the field, particularly within churches.

Furthermore, Abraham-Appiah (2022:308-209) suggests that churches that will function in urban missions must diversify their personnel and intentionally train and mobilise their members in the following training tracks: leadership, evangelism, ministry equipping, age-group ministry, music development, women's enrichment, men's ministry, missions education, special interests and special needs. Appiah, citing Van Engen and Guder, also means that a

missional church should be conscious of being contextual, intentional, proclaiming, reconciling, sanctifying, unifying, and transforming. It should also be noted that many forces contend for control of the city space, including social institutions, criminals, civic organisations, businesses, governments, and private interests, which strive to push the church out of the mix.

Likewise, urban missiology curriculum should then be developed for equipping leaders to strategically make the gospel contextual and relevant to existential realities of the people by training them in Social Advocacy, to identify with the plight of the community through; resisting adverse programmes and policies, participating and contributing towards development of programmes, policies and projects that makes the community better, making alternative proposals to adverse policies, and disciple making efforts with the congregation to become good representative of Christ in public places (Stephan De Beer, 2008:183, 191-198). All these qualities must be incorporated into curriculum development to equip gospel ministers to apply them in the field. Susan Baker (2002:64-65) also notes that in the training curriculum for urban ministers, there are troublesome areas that need to be included, namely: the shaping power of culture, the need for incarnational living, the danger of neglecting ministers' spirituality, and the need for regular evaluation of the curriculum. The inclusion of these areas will help raise a thoroughly prepared urban minister who understands the dynamics of urban missions. Therefore, the academic sector of missions must lead in changing its practice by preparing and equipping leaders attuned with urban missions in churches. If the roles and functions of urban ministers are well captured in the missional curriculum for theological institutions, they will be thoroughly prepared to turn cities into mission fields.

Pedagogical Approach for the Curriculum

Pedagogy concerns the relationship between teachers and learners that facilitates learning; it emphasises the strategies by which teaching and learning occur. According to PsychologyFor. (2025), *The 5 Fundamental Pedagogical Models" https://psychologyfor.com/the-5-fundamental-pedagogical-models/* there are about five pedagogical models (theoretical frameworks that guides how learning is designed and delivered), these include, Traditional Model (Teacher-Centred), the Constructivist Model (Student Centred), the Collaborative Model (Social Learning), the Inquiry- Based Model (Exploratory

Learning), the Personalised Learning Model (Adaptive and Student-Led). For a missiological curriculum, a combination of the highlighted models should be utilised to train missionaries. There should be a blend of learner-based models, such as student-centred learning, social learning, exploratory learning, and adaptive and student-led learning, to construct a pedagogy that suits ministerial training. It is assumed that missionaries in training are adults and that missiology is a practical discipline; a model designed for younger students may not be applicable. Nevertheless, the combination of the listed models will help urban missionaries and ministers gain the knowledge needed to minister effectively in urban contexts.

Moreover, a study conducted in Uganda found that theological institutions in Kampala remain predominantly didactic (classroom-based), failing to equip students with the critical, adaptive, and relational skills needed to engage with the dynamic realities of urban life. Also, limited field experience and minimal integration of interdisciplinary and professional input into the theological education framework are other pedagogical gaps identified within the institutions, despite growing awareness and innovation in urban ministry (Akatukunda and De Beer, 2026:5-6). It is also discovered that most theological educational models for urban ministry reflect a disconnect from the city in their presence, content, and pedagogy. Therefore, theological education in Africa is encouraged to provide tools, languages, and networks that will equip a new generation of missional urban leaders through intentional ministerial formation in urban calling, from personal, pastoral, professional, and theological perspectives, in their curriculum development (Stephan de Beer, 2022: 219). Thus, a fusion of the highlighted pedagogical approaches will help address de Beer's concerns and entrench urban missions as a distinct vocational calling, preparing students for such a calling.

Conclusion

Urbanisation results from massive population migration from rural and underdeveloped places into big towns and cities, and this phenomenon is changing the world's landscape. As more people flock to more developed settlements, settlements expand to accommodate more people, businesses, services, and socio-cultural activities. People from diverse cultural, religious and social backgrounds move into urban centres for various reasons, mainly to

pursue a better standard of living. Traditionally mission fields have been categorised to be rural or underdeveloped places and mission efforts have been directed at such places. With the influx of people into the cities there is now a possibility of having more unreached people in the towns, who though seeing church structures, have not been effectively engaged with the gospel due to the hustling and bustling of the city environment with its attending inequalities and injustices.

Therefore, there is a need for an alliance between mission educators and practitioners to see urban centres as mission fields that require particular strategies to reach cities for Christ. This response to urban needs for the gospel needs to start, or be supported by, the development of curriculum that trains mission practitioners to respond to the urban trend. Such curricula needs to prioritise theological understanding of the import of missions in the city, be contextual to effectively train mission practitioners to effectively and adequately minister to urban dwellers, teach holistic missions to make Christ's love known in preaching and practice and emphasise the need for churches in the city to be mission centres that reproduce themselves by having missional leaders that can mobilise and train their congregations how to be involved in urban ministry.

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