

Curriculum design in theology and development: Human agency and the prophetic role of the church



Author:
Beverley Haddad¹

Affiliation:
¹School of Religion,
Philosophy and Classics,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Pietermaritzburg,
South Africa

Corresponding author:
Beverley Haddad,
haddad@ukzn.ac.za

Dates:
Received: 12 Apr. 2016
Accepted: 13 Aug. 2016
Published: 01 Dec. 2016

How to cite this article:
Haddad, B., 2016,
'Curriculum design in
theology and development:
Human agency and the
prophetic role of the church',
*HTS Teologiese Studies/
Theological Studies* 72(4),
a3432. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3432>

Copyright:
© 2016. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work
is licensed under the
Creative Commons
Attribution License.

The field of theology and development is a relatively new sub-discipline within theological studies in Africa. The first formal postgraduate programme was introduced at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, during the mid-1990s. In the early years, it was known as the Leadership and Development programme and, since 2000, as the Theology and Development programme. Over the past 20 years, this programme has graduated over 160 BTh Honours, 100 MTh and 15 PhD students. This article outlines the history of the programme, addresses its ideological orientation, pedagogical commitments and preferences in curriculum design. It further argues that theological reflection on 'development' must seek to understand the prophetic role of the church in responding to the complexities of the social issues facing the African continent. Key to this discussion is the contested nature of 'development' and the need for theological perspectives to engage this contestation through a social analysis of the global structures of injustice. This requires an engagement with the social sciences. It is this engagement of the social sciences with theological reflection, the article argues, that has enabled the students who have graduated from the Theology and Development programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to assist the church and faith-based organisations to become effective agents of social transformation.

Historical background

The Theology and Development programme at the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, is an interdisciplinary programme that attempts to reflect theologically on the social issues confronting the continent of Africa, with a particular emphasis on systemic injustices and the role of faith communities in addressing these injustices.

The beginnings of the programme lie in the wider theological project that developed at the School of Theology (now School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal during the 1980s. The *Kairos Document* became a 'significant tool' in constructing the theological project at the School which sought to 'provide forms of theological education that would equip African Christians to engage with their contexts, within a prophetic theological framework' (West 2013:920).

As the political landscape began to change in the early 1990s from pre- to post-liberation South Africa, issues of leadership and their relationship to 'development' emerged within the contextual theological paradigm of the School. A number of colleagues under the leadership of James Cochrane conceptualised a coursework Masters programme titled: 'Leadership and Development' in 1994. This programme was aimed at:

anyone who wishes to enhance her or his theological, theoretical and practical understanding of leadership and development in the Church. It is designed to increase capacity of church leaders, present or future, to work constructively in multiple contexts with many issues which are of importance for the Church today. (UKZN, unpublished course brochure, 'Programme in Leadership', 1994)

The programme was an attempt to challenge African church leaders to engage social issues from the perspective of prophetic theology and so bring about social transformation. It was staffed by existing colleagues in the School as well as those from other appropriate disciplines (UKZN, 'Programme in Leadership and Development', unpublished course brochure, 1994). It was a small programme that graduated no more than two Masters students per year in the initial stages. An Honours programme was introduced in 1997 which drew in around six students each year (UKZN, unpublished document, 'Programme in Leadership and Development', 1994).

At that time, the only other formal Masters programme in Theology and Development was being offered at the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh (Marcella Althaus-Reid,

Note: This article forms part of the special collection on 'Engaging development: Contributions to a critical theological and religious debate' in *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* Volume 72, Issue 4, 2016.

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

University of Edinburgh, pers. comm., May 1995). Ecumenical partners, such as the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, had been offering scholarships for African students to participate in this programme at enormous costs. Increasingly, the University of KwaZulu-Natal had been seen as an important alternative to the University of Edinburgh by organisations offering scholarships. But more importantly, African students themselves began to request that they be sent to the school which they believed to be a more relevant and appropriate training for addressing the social challenges they faced on the African continent.¹ In 1998, the leadership of the School began negotiating with the University to extend the programme (UKZN, 'Proposed Centre for Theology and Development', unpublished document, August, 1998). In order to do this, it was necessary to secure University funding for a full-time teaching post in Theology and Development. These negotiations were successful and in 2000, Steve de Gruchy became the first Director of the programme (UKZN, 'Theology and Development Programme', unpublished annual report, 2001).

In 2003 the vision of the programme was stated as 'the increased capacity of the church to be engaged in social development for the benefit of the poor and marginalised' (UKZN, 'Theology and Development Programme', unpublished annual report, May, 2003). Under de Gruchy's leadership, the vision of the programme was more clearly defined as dealing with issues of 'social development' with the explicit purpose of benefiting poor and marginalised communities. So while in the early years there was some focus on leadership skills, theological reflection, and some issues of social concern such as health and the environment, De Gruchy increasingly began to emphasise the need for the church to engage global processes of 'development'. These included the United Nations Millennium Declaration (De Gruchy 2001), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (De Gruchy 2002), and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) (De Gruchy 2005).

In 2004, I was appointed as the second staff member to the programme and took over as Director of the programme in 2008; a position I held until 2012. De Gruchy had been appointed as Head of the then School of Religion and Theology in 2008, but he continued to teach in the programme until his untimely death in 2010. In 2007, just prior to me taking over as Director, we agreed that the emphasis on 'church leadership' and 'social transformation' which were the antecedents of the Leadership and Development Programme needed to be re-introduced. The revised statement of the programme continues today and reads: 'The vision of the programme is the increased capacity of church leadership in Africa to reflect on and be engaged in social transformation for the benefit of the poor and marginalised' (UKZN, 'Theology and Development Programme', unpublished annual report, 2007).

1. At the time, I was functioning as a Graduate Assistant in the Leadership and Development Programme. I taught a course and was part of the leadership team under James Cochrane and was thus party to these discussions.

Central to the growth and success of the programme has been the scholarship funding provided by the British non-governmental organisation (NGO), *Christian Aid*, which began during the 1990s and increased dramatically between 2001 and 2011 (UKZN, 'Theology and Development Programme', unpublished Annual Reports, 2001–2011). During the mid-2000s, the programme was graduating around 20 Honours and 10 Masters students per year (UKZN, 'Theology and Development Programme', unpublished annual reports, 2005–2006). These numbers have since tapered off as bursary funding has ceased, but in total to date the programme has graduated over 160 BTh Honours, over 100 MTh, and 15 PhD students.²

Ideological orientation of the programme

Many of the students registered in this programme come to South Africa from other parts of Africa having worked in situations of desperate need throughout the continent as ordained religious leaders or as staff of NGOs. This is in keeping with the wider view that South Africa is a dominant economic power in the region and plays an important role in regional integration. It is estimated that each year more than 40 000 students from other African countries, especially from the countries belonging to the Southern African Development Community (SADC),³ study at South African universities (Mbeki 2009:149). The nature of the role of South Africa in the affairs of the continent economically, politically, and socially is fiercely debated, but it undeniably exerts enormous influence in the region. Given this influence, a constant question confronting the staff of the programme is the extent to which the South African theological experience can be normative for the diverse African students within the programme.

This is so because the South African experience has been shaped by the struggle against *apartheid* which was a particular form of colonialism not experienced by other nations of Africa. Parts of the faith communities and some religious leaders were deeply engaged in this struggle for liberation which resulted in the publication of the landmark *Kairos Document* in 1985 (Kairos Theologians 1985). As indicated earlier, the *Kairos Document* became a 'significant tool' in constructing the theological project at the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics. It was this document that defined the theological landscape as we engaged in the liberation struggle.

The *Kairos Document* was signed by participants, including ordinary Christians as well as some church leaders and theologians, in a process that sought to understand what God was saying in the midst of the political crisis facing South Africa. It was 'vividly and dramatically contextual' having been borne out of the experience of suffering and

2. Figures calculated from unpublished Annual Report, 'Theology and Development Programme', 2012 and subsequent graduation brochures, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013–2015.

3. For SADC member states, see <http://www.sadc.int/member-states/>

repression in the South African townships of 1985 (Nolan 1994:213). The document was an attempt to 'read the signs of the times' and 'to challenge the churches *from below*' (Nolan 1994:213). It came to fruition through a process of reflection that was as important as the product. The process enabled a wide range of people from various marginalised communities to reflect theologically on their situation. All participants became '*Kairos* theologians' (Nolan 1994:213). This was the first significant lesson of the *Kairos Document* that the starting point of all theologising needs to take seriously the experience of the poor and oppressed. To do this means that we acknowledge that the poor are the prime interlocutors of our theology, and therefore, we need to understand God and God's work in the world from their perspective (Frostin 1988:6).

The second lesson that the *Kairos Document* taught us was the importance of social analysis. In dialogue with those on the margins of society we are to begin our theologising by doing a thorough social analysis drawing on the resources of the social sciences in order to analyse the social, economic and political forces that are at work in our society and so understand the systemic nature of injustice. This is what it means to 'read the signs of the times' and only then can we begin to interpret this analysis through a theological lens. We must do this in order to understand God's judgement on the situation; to understand God's perspective on the situation. It is only once we have completed these two steps that we can then begin to put a plan in place that leads to action that transforms oppressive social structures. In the South African context, this has come to be known as the 'See-Judge-Act' method of theologising (De Gruchy 2015a). This method has drawn on the work of Latin American liberation theologians of the 1970s where the process was known as the 'Pastoral Circle' (Holland & Henriot 1980).

The third lesson that the *Kairos Document* taught us was that to bring about radical social transformation our theology must by nature be prophetic. This means that we do not only read the signs of the times through social analysis, but we also need to publicly interpret the time from God's point of view (Nolan 1994:216). This prophetic warning becomes a *kairos*, a moment of truth that calls the church to conversion (Nolan 1994:216). When this call is heeded, social transformation can take place.

This ideological orientation gave birth to the Theology and Development programme. These lessons learnt from the *Kairos Document* have remained central to the ideological commitment of the programme with a strong emphasis on doing theology *from below*, on the importance of social analysis in all our theologising, and the need for theology to be prophetic if social transformation is to take place. The students from diverse backgrounds have always been encouraged to reflect on these particularities wrought from the South African experience and apply them into their own contexts.

Pedagogical commitment of the programme

The students bring to the classroom an interest in a number of wide ranging socio-political, economic and environmental concerns, including areas of my particular expertise, gender and development and the response of the faith community to HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. As a teacher and scholar, I have self-identified as an activist-intellectual (see Haddad 2000) and as such, 'theorize and theologise for the express purpose of changing oppressive social structures, as opposed to simply better understanding these structures for the sole sake of scholarship' (De la Torre 2015:85). This has been a fundamental pedagogical commitment which has led me to ensure that social concerns brought to the classroom by the students are not simply theorised, but are acted upon once they graduate.

One of the exercises that I undertook at the beginning of the first semester of the BTh (Honours) year was to take time to allow the members of the class to get to know one another through the sharing of their personal stories. The exercise required that each student in turn move to the middle of the empty classroom (as the rest of the class gathers around) and physically identify their geographic location on an imaginary map of the continent and begin to tell their life story. As part of the telling of the story they physically move to different locations either within their home country or across countries as their personal journeys dictate until they arrive in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, the location of the University. While there are many South African students in the programme, many are not and have gone to extraordinary lengths to move to South Africa in order to study. Some have come as political and economic refugees and their stories reflect a hazardous journeys across a number of countries in order to reach South Africa where they hope to receive what they see as superior postgraduate study as compared to what they could receive in their home country.

This exercise demonstrated my commitment to a pedagogy that takes seriously the life experiences of the students and their contribution to the learning experience. As De Gruchy (2015b) has pointed out:

We have to create a learning environment that balances the lessons that can be learnt through books and the insights of scholars, with the lessons that students have already learnt through their life and ministry. We have to balance the value that we place on the 'expert' knowledge, with that which we place upon their insights as practitioners. (p. 117)

The pedagogical commitment of the programme has drawn extensively on the work of Paulo Freire. As De Gruchy (2015b:116) points out, if we want to promote social transformation through 'dialogical action', then 'dialogue' needs to occur. 'In other words, there has to be congruence between our theological vision for development, and the way we teach' (De Gruchy 2015b:116). This theological vision for development includes a focus on participatory action, an asset-based approach, and an understanding that we need to

speak prophetically against the dominant economic and political structures of the globe. We thus have attempted to ensure that we create students who are 'conscious of their own dignity and power' (De Gruchy 2015b:116).

The example of the exercise given above is but one of the many creative ways in which this challenge has been taken up. There was much emphasis on a seminar rather than lecture format as students were divided into groups to work on seminar papers which they had to present. In addition, group work was used as students engaged theoretically and practically on particular issues of social concern. This included issues of gender, HIV and AIDS, unemployment, refugees and migration and so forth. Students were asked to provide case studies from the local Pietermaritzburg experience and then theorise these in groups. What became clear is that many of the issues were prevalent in immigrant communities from which the students themselves were drawn and the topics were later taken up in greater depth in their Honours Research Projects or Masters dissertations. The process of encouraging the students to engage the particularities of their context theologically was, thus, strengthened in the supervisory relationship as they carried out their research.

In addition, drawing on principles of adult education the programme sought to provide structured opportunities for experiential learning. One of the electives that I taught on the Church and HIV and AIDS⁴ for many years included a component whereby students had to undertake 15 hours in a faith-based organisation that dealt with HIV and AIDS. This experience then formed the basis of a class presentation and their final term paper. In addition, field trips were conducted to local development projects. Opportunities were then provided to reflect theologically on the issues the community exposure generated.

Underlying this pedagogical commitment is the question of recruitment and the kind of student we attracted into the programme. This commitment meant that we needed students 'who have a vocation for community engagement, a passion for justice, and a capacity for working for poor people in a dialogical manner' (De Gruchy 2015b:118). As De Gruchy (2015b:118) points out, there is no point in simply offering degrees in order for the graduates to further their own professional life, nor to teach about gender injustice to a classroom of male students. There had to be a careful and active recruitment and selection process 'that pulls in the same direction as the programme itself' (De Gruchy 2015b:118).

Part of the tension in recruiting students for a programme in Theology and Development is the question of 'how much' theology and 'how little' development experience. In the early years of the Leadership and Development programme under the leadership of James Cochrane, only students with some theological training were recruited (UKZN,

⁴This elective was offered to all postgraduate students in the School and so included those beyond the Theology and Development Programme.

'Programme in Leadership and Development', unpublished course brochure, 1994). Later, under the leadership of Steve de Gruchy, there was a greater emphasis on students with some development training, even if this meant that some students were not formally trained in theology. For some of the years of the programme (2002–2006), he developed a system of 'block release' teaching which enabled mature students who were not able to take up the residential option of study, to participate (UKZN, 'Theology and Development Programme', unpublished course outlines, 2002–2006). He actively recruited people of faith working in the field of development either in NGOs or within national church structures. In this way, students already had some development experience to bring to the classroom. It was during these years that the numbers in the programme grew exponentially resulting in my appointment as the second staff member (UKZN, 'Theology and Development Programme', unpublished annual reports, 2002–2004).

However, it was also during these years that the programme became increasingly criticised by some colleagues that there was just too little theology and too much 'development', a discussion I will return to later. I, for one, felt that some of the strong ideological commitment of the programme to prophetic theology was being lost and began to reintroduce an emphasis on the 'See-Judge-Act' methodology. We also decided to return to a fully residential programme with a greater emphasis (although not solely) on recruiting of students with formal theological training. Of course these types of quandaries impact the curriculum choices that are made and this too ebbed and flowed as the programme matured.

Preferences in the curriculum design

The shift in emphasis in the vision statements alluded to earlier also reflects the shift in emphasis in the content of the programme over the years. Prior to the appointment of a full time Director of the Programme in 2000, the teaching staff of the then School of Theology shared the load amongst themselves as well as drawing on colleagues from other disciplines in the University such as Adult Education and the Institute for Natural Resources (UKZN, 'Programme in Leadership and Development', unpublished course brochure, 1994). In the early years the curriculum drew on existing theological courses that related directly to the programme as well as using additional courses on leadership skills. To some extent the programme was designed around common existing ideo-theological interests associated with the contextualisation project referred to earlier which enabled the teaching staff to manage their workloads.

When De Gruchy was appointed as a full time staff member to the programme, he had greater freedom to design a programme from scratch. Designing a programme in Theology and Development is fraught with complexity as has already been acknowledged – how much theology, what development?

In a plenary address given to the Missiological Society conference in 2002, De Gruchy in outlining what he saw as preferences within the curriculum design argues that the new emerging discipline of Theology and Development has a leg within each of four theological disciplines namely, Missiology, Social Ethics, Practical Theology, and Systematics (De Gruchy 2015b:110). Theologically speaking, De Gruchy (2015b:110) argues, involvement in development issues is the church's response to the call of *missio Dei* to reach out in love and justice to the world. As the church does this it is engaged in 'social agency' requiring the church to become involved in debates on church-state relationships, power, economics and gender justice, the environment and so forth. This requires the 'moral discipline' of the ethicist (De Gruchy 2015b:110). But, says de Gruchy (2015b:110), the discipline of Theology and Development goes beyond Social Ethics into the field of Practical Theology as students in the discipline seek to understand how to act on their social concerns. While the above three disciplines engage directly with issues that concern 'development', the fourth leg of Systematic Theology reinforces the fact that Theology and Development is a theological discipline and therefore issues of development must be brought into 'critical dialogue' with the 'Biblical and Christian tradition of the Christian faith in a systematic way' (De Gruchy 2015b:111):

The field of Theology and Development is at its most basic a critical dialogue between 'theology' and 'development' – in which development theory and practice can challenge the Christian faith, and the Christian faith can in turn challenge development theory and practice. This much is clear – that there is no need for theological schools to simply duplicate what is taught in schools of development studies. What is needed is a sharpening of theological insights, so as to be of benefit to both church and society. (De Gruchy 2015b:111)

The way in which these four legs of Theology and Development were integrated into our theological curriculum varied. It was dependant on who was teaching the core and elective courses at an Honours and Masters level each year and how the particular courses were located in 'traditional' disciplines. It was also dependant on the composition of the classes each year as their training in theology and/or development was taken into account. These were some of the factors that influenced the preferences in curriculum design. In my experience, the design of the curriculum was constantly being evaluated by the staff of the programme and debated more widely with colleagues in the School as we wrestled with the question of 'how much theology-what development'?

Addressing our critic

In an article titled, 'What theology? Whose development? – Interrogating Theology and Development in the secular academy', Tony Balcomb (2012) argues that the Theology and Development programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal:

gives rise to the anomaly of people who associate Christian faith with development coming to do theology and development at an advanced level in a secular institution where the relationship

between faith and development is tenuous at best and non-existent at worst, and they are thus destined not so much to learn about theology as they are to learn about social science – something that they might better have done in a school designed for this purpose. (p. 7)

Balcomb (2012) continues to argue that the secular nature of the University puts pressure on the theological disciplines to justify their existence by conforming to the:

standards and norms of the modern university which means it will have to be intellectually relevant in terms of modern (read Enlightenment) definitions of rationalistic thought. It will thus have to be expurgated of any serious references to the transcendent, shown to be socially relevant, and find some just cause for its existence other than those decreed by church or deity. (p. 9)

For Balcomb, it seems much of what has been done in Theology and Development was as a result of seeking to conform to the pressures of the modern university and its secularised ethos. For him, we have been under pressure to 'make the subject of theology socially relevant' and secondly, 'to make it intellectually acceptable as defined by Enlightenment values, which, by definition, means finding some just cause for its existence other than the existence of God' (Balcomb 2012:20). Those designing the Theology and Development programme have been forced to lose the transcendent. Instead, Balcomb contends that our brand of theology reduced the church to a social institution that 'has assets' in an instrumentalist fashion and ignores the 'life-worlds' (or later he uses the term the 'enchanted universe') of those we sought to serve.

These arguments are supported through a 'brief investigation' into the Masters and Doctoral research work of students in the Theology and Development programme between 1995 and 2009. Much of this analysis of the 90 theses Balcomb identifies is based on the titles of the theses as he maintains he was only able to find 13 of these on the shelves of the University library (Balcomb 2012:10–11). His interest was to ascertain the extent of theological reflection and the nature of the development discourse that was evident in the student's research work. Balcomb sums up his argument from this limited and cursory analysis of the student's work that 'not much theology is being done in the Theology and Development programme', that a few 'perennial theological themes' such as *missio Dei* and *shalom* are being addressed, that the church is viewed as a social institution, and crucially that 'most of this research could have been done in any social science department of a university since there is nothing uniquely theological about it' (2012:11–12). He goes onto suggest that much of the work focuses on the 'assets of the church' in relation to development in an instrumentalist fashion. Yet, a number of De Gruchy's doctoral students included sustained theological work in their theses (see, e.g. Alokwu 2009; Holder-Rich 2003; Muriithi 2008; Warmback 2005).

Balcomb is also ignoring the strong influence of the African Religious Health Assets Programme (ARHAP) on the

curriculum of the Theology and Development programme.⁵ ARHAP, of which de Gruchy was a founding member, has argued that the church offers both 'tangible' and 'intangible' assets to communities seeking health and healing. Religion offers both tangible material assets such as hospitals to public health systems, but also offers intangible assets that are often unquantifiable such as 'resilience', 'spirituality', 'faith' and so forth (ARHAP 2006). De Gruchy worked extensively with the ARHAP framework of assets in both the classroom and with students under his supervision. As the debate on the role of religion in development discourse gained momentum (see, e.g. TerHaar & Ellis 2006), ARHAP was increasingly drawn into these discussions (Olivier, Cochrane & Schmid 2006; Schmid, Cochrane & Olivier 2010).

Furthermore, as referred to earlier, Balcomb also argues that the Theology and Development curriculum gives into the pressure of the secular university by negating the life worlds of the African students it seeks to attract. This claim can be refuted in two ways. Firstly, a closer investigation into the research work of students will show that there were a number who have attempted to address issues such as HIV and gender-integrating local indigenous concepts with development discourse (see, e.g. Chirongoma 2013; Mhaka 2010; Murage 2006; Paulo 2010). Admittedly, these students all graduated under my supervision outside of Balcomb's period of investigation. But the point is made. Secondly, there has been substantial work done by ARHAP in the area of the 'healthworlds' of communities which encompasses a broad definition of 'well-being' that embraces understandings of health from both a Western and an African world view (see Germond & Cochrane 2005; Germond & Molapo 2006). ARHAP's work on 'healthworlds' was used extensively by de Gruchy in the classroom, in supervision of student research work, and in his publications (de Gruchy 2007). For Balcomb, the idea of the 'enchanted universe' of the African is foregrounded in his critique of the Theology and Development programme. So much so that it seems to impact the development discourse to the exclusion of all else. But, much of postcolonial work has shown that communities in Africa are impacted by modernity in complex ways even though the 'enchanted' persists (see Comaroff & Comaroff 1997). Balcomb (2012) seems to resist this understanding of African post-coloniality in his discussion of the place of theology in the secular academy.

However, in a later publication, Balcomb (2013) does give a more nuanced argument on this matter. Employing the work of Liz Parson, a doctoral graduate in the Theology and Development programme (supervised by Balcomb), Balcomb posits his argument that it is impossible to engage development discourse without giving recognition to this 'enchanted universe' of the African. Through her work on the Zambian Copperbelt, he shows how multinational corporations neglect this 'enchanted' universe leading to a

⁵ARHAP was founded in 2002 by James Cochrane together with Steve de Gruchy amongst others. It was one of the first programmes in Africa to engage the intersection between religion and health, and has over the years made a significant contribution to this debate through extensive research on the nature of the 'assets' that religion contributes to health and well-being of communities.

clash of value systems between the expatriate and local communities. Previously, Balcomb would close his arguments at this point and in so doing romanticise the extent and impact of the enchanted world without giving due recognition to the influence of the values of modernity on the lives of ordinary Africans. Here, in this later publication, he goes further by recognising the influence of modernity. He draws on the work of Birgit Meyer who asserts that Africans 'have not jettisoned their enchanted worldview but have, in fact, integrated it with modernity' (2013:11). Of course, this is precisely the tension that a programme such as Theology and Development is attempting to address. But perhaps there has been insufficient emphasis within the curriculum design of the programme on postcolonial analysis which offers additional resources in dealing with this tension.

Balcomb (2012:20), in critiquing the Theology and Development programme, concludes his analysis of the place of theology in the secular academy by suggesting that in attempting to make theology socially relevant, there is a 'lure' towards social scientists such as Marx, Habermas, Foucault and so forth. In so doing, suggests Balcomb, the theological enterprise is undermined, and theologians are taken away 'from the particular genius associated with their craft' (2012:20). What Balcomb here implies is that theology is ideologically neutral. I would argue that theology as a discipline is a contested terrain incorporating the competing ideological interests of various groups and that the church is a social institution that has been used for good and for evil. In the words of Audrey Lorde (2007), 'the Masters tools can never dismantle the master's house'. So, I argue, for prophetic theology in the spirit of the *Kairos Document* to be an integral part of the Theology and Development discourse, the tools of the social sciences are crucial to dismantling the unhelpful structures of injustice both within the church itself and within the global structures of economic and political power. Our craft as theologians requires us to speak truth to power without negating the importance of the transcendence of God but embracing a transcendence that takes into account that God makes a *political* choice in siding with the poor. Indeed, the antecedents of the Theology and Development programme, as discussed earlier, did not choose to embrace the social sciences out of pressure from the secular institution to do so. Rather, the leaders of the programme made a choice out of a conviction that the prophetic theological tradition of the *Kairos Document* was crucial to preparing church leaders for engaging the world. This choice unashamedly stood in continuity with liberation theologians around the world, particularly Latin American Liberation Theology that employed the social sciences to analyse and speak theologically to contexts of oppression (see Frostin 1988; Gutiérrez 1974).

Development or liberation?

This article would be incomplete without problematising the notion of development and thus giving some account as to why the Theology and Development programme continued to embrace the notion in its title.

During the 1960s, the World Council of Churches was embroiled in a number of debates around how the church should or should not be involved in 'international development' (Cooper 2007:28–32). This resulted in a consultation in 1969 that brought together 28 theologians out of which a report was produced titled, 'In Search of a Theology of Development' (Cooper 2007:32). This consultation did not seem to bridge the gap between 'formal theologies and practice of development on the ground' (Cooper 2007:32). If anything, it exposed the deficiencies in the term 'development', particularly for people from the South.

It was Latin American liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez who first problematised the notions of 'development' within the theological realm. In his landmark publication, *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez (1974) first addresses the question of development versus liberation. He argues that while the term 'development' initially expressed the aspirations of the poor, it increasingly was used solely in economic terms and became associated with modernisation theory (Gutiérrez 1974:25–26). Furthermore, it was promoted by 'international organizations closely linked to groups and governments which control the world economy' (Gutiérrez 1974:26). Thus, in the Latin American context, the term 'liberation' came to be seen as the more appropriate alternative because it spoke of radical structural change that sought to bring freedom to the poor and the oppressed. Theologies of development gave way to theologies of liberation.

While liberation theologies formed the foundational framework of the Theology and Development programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a strategic decision was taken during the 1990s to retain the term 'development' in its title. As mentioned earlier, there was an existing programme in Theology and Development at Edinburgh University. African students were increasingly sourcing scholarships from ecumenical partners to study in Edinburgh. However, they recognised that many of the issues they were dealing with would be better served in an African context appropriating African contextual theology. The Leadership and Development Programme was thus being asked by African church leaders around the continent to offer a programme in Theology and *Development* which would take into account their contextual realities. A programme in Theology and *Development* was strategic because it would encourage funders to provide scholarships given the then current debates in theological circles on the need for Africa's reconstruction (see Mugambi 1995; Villa-Vicencio 1992). Furthermore, the post-apartheid South African context gave impulse to the need for the church to rebuild the society and to work with the newly elected government in order to do so (De Gruchy 2015b:106). 'Development' not 'liberation' was the focus (see Swart 2010). Since then, the South African Government (2012) has outlined a National Development Plan 2030 which asserted the need for the country to be 'a capable and developmental state'. What this means theologically for South Africa's social transformation is an issue that the Theology and Development programme needs

to address in the future. What we need is not 'development' or 'liberation', but 'development *as* liberation'.

I would like to think that despite the term 'development' being retained in the title of the programme, this did not mean that the liberatory antecedents were lost in the design of the curriculum. 'Development' as a neo-liberal modernisation paradigm was foregrounded although at times, perhaps not sufficiently. Some would argue that de Gruchy's extensive use of the 'SLF' in his engagement with students in the programme was problematic. This framework was taken up by global development agencies such as the British government's Department for International Development (DIFID) and the United Nations Development Programme and therefore could be seen as buying into the tools of global capital. De Gruchy refuted this claim and in his article on the importance of engaging with the SLF, he outlines some of the aspects of the framework that offer helpful insights but also lists a number of 'theological concerns' (de Gruchy 2005). For him, it was important that Christian students became aware of international development processes affecting their lives and were able to critically respond to them.

In my own teaching I brought to the classroom texts on theories of development, using neo-Marxist theories to critique neo-liberal perspectives. Globalisation as a process was debated extensively using the experience of the students' own contextual realities. Prophetic theological reflection was brought to bear on this discussion. I would use these sessions to encourage students to begin to engage with how 'development' needed to encompass 'social transformation' which required that structures of injustice be overturned. For me, Theology and Development, was and remains as much a discipline about the transformation of society as it is about the transformation of the church itself. Students were challenged, as leaders of the African church, to recognise that engaging in Theology and Development meant that they were embracing a prophetic task within the context of their church and of society. It required theological acumen *and* an understanding of processes that empowered the poor to become agents of their own transformation.

Conclusion

Over the past two to three decades South Africa has been through a number of tumultuous socio-political changes. These changes have brought huge social challenges to the post-liberation government. But equally important is the challenge they have brought to the way in which the theological enterprise is carried out in South Africa. The emerging discipline of Theology and Development has been one attempt to respond to this challenge and to broaden its scope to include the wider continent of Africa. As outlined in the article, the Theology and Development programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has been at the forefront of defining the discipline by foregrounding the ideological importance of prophetic theology. Out of the liberation trajectory, a programme has emerged with a history of a commitment to a pedagogy that enables students not to simply theorise the

social challenges they confront but to become active agents in social transformation once they graduate and return to their communities. Furthermore, the article has provided a shape to the preferences adopted in curriculum design stressing the interdisciplinary nature of this theological discipline. How this interdisciplinarity is retained in curriculum design remains a vexed question, both for the programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and in other institutions around the continent. But it is crucial that all curriculum design in Theology and Development must constantly evaluate the extent to which it is adopting an interdisciplinary approach. As has been argued, the interdisciplinary nature should not be restricted to the theological disciplines but should include the social sciences. In so doing, students are enabled to carry out appropriate social analysis which informs their theological reflection and leads to an appropriate action that brings about social transformation. Development must remain a process of liberation from social injustice. As we seek to do the theological work around issues of development, our ultimate goal must be the liberation of communities from all forms of oppression. The Theology and Development programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has been one attempt to do this.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that she has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced her in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

References

- Alokwu, C., 2009, 'The Anglican Church, environment and poverty: Constructing a Nigerian indigenous *oikothology*', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- ARHAP, 2006, 'Appreciating assets: The contribution of religion to universal access in Africa', Unpublished report, viewed 18 January 2016, from <http://repository.berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/061000ARHAPAppreciatingAssets.pdf>
- Balcomb, T., 2012, 'What theology? Whose development? – Interrogating theology and development in the secular academy', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 142, 6–20.
- Balcomb, T., 2013, 'Theology, the enchanted universe, and development – Reflections around a Zambian case study in the light of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*', *Scriptura* 112(1), 1–12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/112-0-40>
- Chirongoma, S., 2013, 'Navigating indigenous resources that can be utilized in constructing a *karanga* theology of health and well-being (Utano): An exploration of health agency in contemporary Zimbabwe', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Comaroff, J.L. & Comaroff, J., 1997, *Of revelation and revolution: The dialectics of modernity on a South African frontier*, vol. 2, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Cooper, T., 2007, *Controversies in political theology*, SCM Press, London.
- De Gruchy, S., 2001, 'Introducing the United Nations Millennium Development Declaration', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 110, 57–76.
- De Gruchy, S., 2002, 'Some preliminary theological reflections on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)', *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Africa* 8(2–3), 64–68.
- De Gruchy, S., 2005, 'A Christian engagement with the sustainable livelihoods framework', *Missionalia* 33(1), 56–72.
- De Gruchy, S., 2007, 'Re-learning our mother tongue? Theology in dialogue with public health', *Religion and Theology: A Journal of Contemporary Religious Discourse* 14(1–2), 47–67.
- De Gruchy, S., 2015a, 'Tentative reflections on religion, rationality and research in social theology', in B. Haddad (ed.), *Keeping body and soul together: Reflections by Steve de Gruchy on theology and development*, pp. 122–136, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.
- De Gruchy, S., 2015b, 'Theological education and social development: Politics, preferences and praxis in curriculum design', in B. Haddad (ed.), *Keeping body and soul together: Reflections by Steve de Gruchy on theology and development*, pp. 105–120, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.
- De la Torre, M.A., 2015, 'Identity cross-dressing while teaching in a global context', in K.P. Lan, C. González-Andrieu & D. Hopkins (eds.), *Teaching global theologies: Power and praxis*, pp. 75–89, Baylor University Press, Waco, TX.
- Frostin, P., 1988, *Liberation theology in Tanzania and South Africa: A first world interpretation*, Lund University Press, Lund.
- Germond, P. & Cochrane, J., 2005, 'Healthworlds: Ontological, anthropological and epistemological challenges on the interface of religion and health', Unpublished paper presented at Conference, Reasons of Faith: Religion in Modern Public Life, Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), viewed 18 January 2016, from http://www.academia.edu/665947/Healthworlds_Ontological_anthropological_and_epistemological_challenges_on_the_interface_of_religion_and_health
- Germond, P. & Molapo, S., 2006, 'In search of *Bophelo* in a time of AIDS: Seeking a coherence of economies of health and economies of salvation', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 126, 27–47.
- Gutiérrez, G., 1974, *A theology of liberation*, SCM Press, London.
- Haddad, B., 2000, 'African women's theologies of survival: Intersecting faith, Feminisms and development', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Natal.
- Holder-Rich, C., 2003, 'An ecclesiology for freedom as development for the protestant churches of Madagascar', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Holland, J. & Henriot, P., 1980, *Social analysis: Linking faith and justice*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY.
- Kairos Theologians, 1985, *Challenge to the church: The Kairos Document: A theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa*, Kairos Theologians, Braamfontein.
- Lorde, A., 2007, 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house', in A. Lorde (ed.), *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*, pp. 110–114, Crossing Press, Berkeley, CA.
- Mbeki, M., 2009, *Architects of poverty: Why African capitalism needs changing*, Picador Africa, Johannesburg.
- Mhaka, V., 2010, 'Becoming Christ for your neighbour: Exploring Luther's notion of neighbourliness in light of *Ukama* and *Ubuntu* in the Zimbabwean Lutheran Church', Unpublished MTh thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Mugambi, J.N.K., 1995, *From liberation to reconstruction: African Christian theology after the cold war*, East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi.
- Murage, J.K., 2006, 'Harambee as an indigeneous lived philosophy: Empowering the poor in the Kenyan Anglican Church', Unpublished MTh thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Muriithi, S., 2008, 'Vulnerability and capability in Kenya: Towards an African women's public theology', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Nolan, A., 1994, 'Kairos theology', in J. de Gruchy & C. Villa-Vicencio (eds.), *Doing theology in context: South African perspectives*, David Philip, Cape Town.
- Olivier, J., Cochrane, J. & Schmid, B., 2006, 'ARHAP bibliography: Working in a bounded field of unknowing', Unpublished report, viewed 18 January 2016, from http://www.academia.edu/665959/African_Religious_Health_Assets_Programme
- Paulo, E., 2010, 'Women and food security in Mozambique: Introducing theologies of *Okala*', Unpublished MTh thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Schmid, B., Cochrane, J. & Olivier, J., 2010, 'Understanding religious health assets: Health as a lens on religion and development', in I. Swart, H. Rocher & J. Erasmus (eds.), *Religion and social development in post-apartheid South Africa: Perspectives for critical engagement*, pp. 137–152, Sun Press, Stellenbosch.
- South African Government, 2012, 'National Development Plan 2030: Our future-make work', viewed 18 January 2016, from <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Executive%20Summary-NDP%202030%20-%20Our%20future%20-%20make%20it%20work.pdf>
- Swart, I., 2010, 'Networks and partnerships for social justice? The pragmatic turn in the religious social development debate in South Africa', in I. Swart, H. Rocher & J. Erasmus (eds.), *Religion and social development in post-apartheid South Africa: Perspectives for critical engagement*, pp. 15–36, Sun Press, Stellenbosch.
- TerHaar, G. & Ellis, S., 2006, 'The role of religion in development: Towards a new relationship between the European Union and Africa', *European Journal of Development Research* 18(3), 351–367. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09578810600893403>
- UKZN, 1994, 'Programme in Leadership and Development', unpublished course brochure.
- UKZN, 1998, 'Proposed Centre for Theology and Development', unpublished document.
- UKZN, 2001-2011, Theology and Development Programme, unpublished annual reports.
- UKZN, 2002-2006, Theology and Development Programme, unpublished course outlines.
- Villa-Vicencio, C., 1992, *A theology of reconstruction: Nation building and human rights*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Warmback, A., 2005, 'Constructing an *oikothology*: The environment, poverty and the church in South Africa', unpublished PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- West, G., 2013, 'The School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics: Doing contextual theology in Africa in the University of KwaZulu-Natal', in I.A. Phiri & D. Werner (eds.), *Handbook of theological education in Africa*, pp. 919–926, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.