AFRICA'S UPWARDLY MOBILE AND THEIR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT: THE NEED FOR A BALANCED CURRICULUM AMONG GHANAIAN PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHURCHES

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Self-disclosure

- A Ghanaian Pentecostal
- Currently the Director of the Youth Ministry of one of the study churches (CoP)
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- This article is from my MTh research conducted in 2019

Theses

- The call for holistic development is an essential theme in reimagining African youth ministry.

- The interventions Christian youth ministries deploy must necessarily respond to the holistic needs of young people and contribute to their holistic development.

- Scholarship that advocates for need-based intervention deployment in youth ministry is generally scarce, more so in Africa. Such paucity, among other factors, is responsible for skewed intervention deployment in youth ministries in Africa.

- Skewed intervention deployment in youth ministry does not develop youth holistically.

Definition

- Needs: The range of things that are necessary for young people to live a healthy life. When needs are not met, dysfunction is inevitable, and holistic development is retarded.

- Youth: Young people aged between 15-35 years (African Youth Charter)

- Interventions: All programmes, support systems, policies, and strategies adopted to harness the potentials of young people and to develop them.

Introduction and Background

- Young people as every nation's topmost resource, their national development hinges directly on their development.

- The church has a role in their development.

- African Pentecostal/Charismatic churches (PCCs) have proven very attractive to the upwardly mobile, resulting in youth drift towards these churches. This places youth development responsibility on PCCs.

- PCCs have responded with well-intentioned youth ministries who are deploying various interventions for youth development

Introduction and Background

- Interventions abound and are diversified, especially in the urban space.

- What remains a concern is how the deployed interventions respond to the actual needs of young people to warrant the latter's holistic development.

The Problem

- What informs youth ministry intervention design in competitive multi-church urban context:

  a) Innovation

  b) The search for a 'competitive advantage' over other churches

  These are done without recourse to how interventions deployed respond to the actual needs of young people which are holistic in nature

- To help attract contemporary urban youth who have become more complex and choosy, youth ministries go every extent to deploy 'impressive' interventions without assessing how those interventions assure the holistic development of urban youth.
- Many youth ministry efforts are skewed towards the meeting of some particular needs to the neglect of the others.

The Literature

The Challenge:

- Contemporary youth ministry has been accused of having abandoned its core mandate of building up young people and instead occupied itself with a series of glamorous interventions that do not necessarily minister to the actual needs of young people.

- Yet no comprehensive provision has been made as a replacement.

The Literature

- **Western YM Scholars**

- Brian Crosby : Youth ministry has become success-driven and only concerns itself with 'whatever works best' and by so doing fallen into pragmatism. He calls for giving up gimmicks and reclaiming youth ministry from an entertainment culture

- His substitutionary intervention only caters for spiritual needs

- Rayne Rice: Calls for the urgent need to re-invent youth ministry.

The Literature

- Greg Stier: Youth ministry is suffering from 'competing programmes'.

- His proposed intervention, evangelism-based youth ministry, only caters for spiritual needs and neglects other needs.

- Sarah Ann Bixler: The image of the ideal youth worker being someone who is a superstar in entertainment, games, and painting has "lost its appeal and perceived effectiveness"

The Literature

Calls to reclaim and reinvent youth ministry from distraction:

- Chap Clark : Calls the church to be a responsible home and family to young people.

- His 'Adoptive Youth Ministry" however calls for responsibility without dissecting the peculiar needs of urban youth that must be ministered to.

The Literature

- Mark Devries: Calls for proper education for Christian families and the church so they can rise to their God-given responsibility of providing nurture for young people.

- He is absent on the detailed needs of young people.

- Doug Fields: Matches the purpose of youth ministry squarely to the five-fold ministry of the New Testament church and suggests interventions to be deployed based on those purpose without recourse to the pragmatic needs of the youth.

The Literature

- **African Writers**:

- Daniel Kwame Noble-Atsu: Discusses the physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, and moral growth characteristics of young people and how to empower them for successful living. He gives attention to the characteristics without discussing the needs of young people (*Handling Today's Youth: What Parents and Young People Should Know*)

- Andrew Adu-Amankwaa: Looks at the needs of the youth of the Church of Pentecost and the role of the Church's Youth Ministry in developing them. He concentrates on a few needs and does not suggest how to meet those needs ("The Role of the Youth Ministry of the Church of Pentecost," Unpublished MA Thesis)

The Literature Gap

- Most of the literature available on the subject either offer interventions without discussing their responsiveness to the needs of young people or cover just a few of the diversified areas of need of young people.

The Gap

- The scant literature however does include a few noteworthy ones. Fernando Arzola Jr.'s *Toward a Prophetic Youth Ministry: Theory and Praxis in the Urban Context,* for example, presents an excellent overview of a holistic approach to youth ministry in urban centers.

- This study used Arzola Jr. as a critical paradigm.

Fernando Arzola Jr.'s Six Basic Needs as a Critical Paradigm

- **Needs of urban youth:**

a) Spiritual needs (to be regenerated, discipled, for ministry, and for spiritual security)

b) Social needs (need for social interaction abilities, social empowerment (economic and leadership), and civic education)

c) Emotional needs (the need for a sense of meaning, understanding, and assurance)

Fernando Arzola Jr.'s Basic Needs as a Critical Paradigm

a) Intellectual needs (the need to have their knowledge and mental capacity widened, such as their general learning and academic needs)

b) Physical needs (the need for shelter, general health, balanced diet, exercise)

c) Personal needs (moral, intra-relational, and developmental needs)

- Arzola Jr. subsequently suggests interventions that urban youth ministries can be deploy to meet these needs.

Fernando Arzola Jr.'s Basic Needs as a Critical Paradigm

- **Limitations to Arzola Jr. as a Critical Paradigm:** His American inner city urban context may not apply verbatim to the African (Ghanaian) context. It cannot respond to the living issues that the African (Ghanaian) youth contend with.

- His work, thus, only provided the framework for the research.

- African contextual issues of religious worldview, communal living lifestyle, empowerment opportunities, and economic conditions were woven into the framework to make Arzola Jr.'s work applicable to the African (Ghanaian) context.

Pentecostal/Charismatic Youth Ministry Scholarship Gap

- Against their emphasised Pneumatological vision: "The Promise is for you and your children" (Acts 2:39), PCCs have done little in youth ministry scholarship.

- Even Harvey Cox's closest chapter to youth in his popular book *Fire from Heaven* titled "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy" concentrated on ecclesial feminine leadership rather than looking at the place of young people in Pentecostalism.

Pentecostal/Charismatic Youth Ministry Scholarship Gap

- The least said about works on Pentecostal/Charismatic youth ministry in Africa, the better.

- Yet the very interventionist orientation of Pentecostalism categorises it as a brand of Christianity that must be responsive to needs as epitomized in the early church (Acts 2:42-47; 4:33-35; 6:1).

- Johnson Asamoah-Gyadu (a leading African (Ghanaian) Pentecostal scholar): Among others, Pentecostalism's popularity and survival can be traced to its oral theology, and its response to the existential needs of people.

Pentecostal/Charismatic Youth Ministry Scholarship Gap

- Pentecostalism is interventionist and need-meeting in nature, and when it has attracted Africa's upwardly mobile, it must express itself in meeting their needs and developing them in a holistic manner.

- This is the thrust of this paper, and the main thesis of the study that produced it.

The Church and New Testament Christian Ministry

- The church as a Messianic community: A Theocratic society, a people of Christ under His rule (Jürgen Moltmann, Sharon Galgay Ketcham, Herbert Lockyer)

- The church as a human community: Made up of human beings with needs to be met. The church must respond to such needs (James Gustafson, Fernando Arzola Jr.).

- The church as a ministering community: The church must be given to its Master's service and his ministry ethos of meeting needs as the early church did (Howard Snyder; Craig L. Nessan).

The Church and New Testament Christian Ministry

- Lukan Theology:

a) Jesus' ministry was need-meeting. He met needs such as healing and feeding people(Lk. 4:38,39; 9:10-17 - physical need), cast our demons (spiritual need), restored the mad to sanity (Lk. 8:26-38 - physical and emotional needs).

b) The early church was a need-meeting/ministering community. Through the daily ration of food (Acts 6:1-7 – physical needs were met), through the teaching of the apostles and prayers (Acts 2:42 – spiritual needs were met). Through doing everything together (Acts 2:44 – social needs were met)

The Church and New Testament Christian Ministry

- Pauline Theology: Selected Pauline metaphorical presentations of the church

  a) The church as the household of God (Gal. 6:10)

  b) The church as the family of God (Eph. 3:15)

  c) The church as the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12)

  d) The church as the people of God (1 Pet. 2:9-12)

All these themes come together to illustrate the church as one body that serves each constituent part.

Description of the Study

- An explorative and evaluative qualitative case study that sought to explore the youth ministry interventions deployed by the Church of Pentecost (CoP) and the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), two typical PCCs (CoP – Classical Pentecostal, ICGC – Charismatic) in urban Ghana (Accra), and how those interventions respond to the holistic needs of urban youth as outlined by Arzola Jr., and to the demands of New Testament Christian ministry.

- For each church two (2) congregations were studied, and the study covered both their campus ministry and 'home' youth ministry paradigms.

Description of the Study

- Methodology: Interviews and documentary analysis were used to explore the youth ministry interventions deployed by the study churches to meet the spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual, social, and personal needs of urban youth as identified by Arzola Jr.

- Youth ministry leaders at the highest level of the study churches and the immediate leaders at the sample congregations were interviewed, making the interviewees six (6) at this level. In addition, five (5) youth ministry experts, both academics and practitioners, were interviewed on what else churches could do to help meet Arzola Jr's needs.

Description of the Study

- The interview guide covered questions on programmes, social support systems, and potential harnessing strategies. Data garnered from the interviews was colloborated with data gathered from the documentary studies of the youth policies of the study churches.

- The interventions were then analysed by content analysis, and evaluated in light of how responsive they were to the six areas of need of urban youth outlined by Arzola Jr., as well as how they dialogue with New Testament Christian ministry.

Findings

- **The CoP:**

- Programmes: The programmes mounted by the CoP in urban youth development were observed to be skewed towards the meeting of spiritual and social needs, and somehow, physical needs to the possible neglect of intellectual, emotional, and personal needs.

- Policies: The documentary analysis revealed that the youth ministry policy provisions were skewed towards the meeting of spiritual, social, and physical needs.

Findings

- **The CoP:**

- Potential Harnessing: In campus ministry potentials were harnessed and developed by participatory learning at the technical departments. In the 'home' youth ministry context the harnessing and development of potentials depended their chances of being spotted in church.

- Social Support Systems: Loans were given only in the campus context, there was a concrete welfare system as well as a structured counselling system in place. Scholarship opportunities were given in the 'home' context, and the national level administration of the ministry gave out shcolarships as well.

Findings

- **Summary and Analysis for CoP:**

- This orientation identifies CoP Youth Ministry somehow with the traditional youth ministry paradigm which primarily places a lot of emphasis on spiritual formation. However, social needs were met along spiritual needs, and to an extent, physical needs were met as well in the programming. This makes the CoP move beyond the traditional paradigm to a new burgeoning youth ministry type that meets spiritual needs without failing to empower young people for their social and physical lives.

Findings

- **ICGC:**

- Programmes: Programmes mounted across board by ICGC met social, spiritual, and personal needs, and thereby skewed towards the meeting of social, spiritual and personal needs more than any other needs of young people.

- Policies: The policy provision of the ICGC was more in favour of the meeting of social, spiritual, and personal needs though the church has a demonstrated commitment to the holistic development of young people.

Findings

- **ICGC:**

- Potential Harnessing: In campus ministry, the harnessing of talents depended on how a gift was spotted through involvement in small group meetings. In the home youth context, the ministry required that every youth learnt one out of a large range of skills, and the range of gifts included learning to play any of the musical instruments, painting, decoration, etc.

- Social Support Systems: In the campus situation, it was observed that emotional needs were met by what leaders at the small group level provided. In the home youth ministry context, they were provisions for counselling provided by the youth pastor who had had some training in counselling.

Findings

- **Summary and Analysis for ICGC:**

- Both the programmes and policies of ICGC in urban youth development were skewed towards the meeting of social, spiritual, and personal needs. Social support and good potential harnessing strategies were in place, especially in the 'home' context. This orientation places the ICGC somewhere between the traditional youth ministry paradigm which is primarily committed to the spiritual formation of young people, and the liberal youth ministry paradigm which is particular about the personal needs of young people.

Discussion and Evaluation with Arzola Jr.'s Needs

- When placed on Arzola Jr.'s scale as individual churches, the CoP is deficient in terms of meeting emotional, personal, and intellectual needs whilst the ICGC is deficient in meeting physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

- Altogether, the study churches were noted to be doing well in meeting spiritual, social, physical, and personal needs, with spiritual and social needs leading. On the other hand however, they were found to be deficient in meeting the emotional and intellectual needs of the urban youth.

Discussion and Evaluation with Arzola Jr.'s Needs

- The extreme commitment of the study churches to meeting spiritual needs among Africans about whom John Mbiti has remarked as being notoriously religious is not inappropriate. It is such commitment, among other factors, that probably makes Pentecostal/Charismatic churches most attractive to young Africans.

- In line with their spirit world cosmological orientation, African youth are in search for spiritual security. Owing to this, there is the need for the assurance of enough spiritual power that can ensure their protection from evil spirits. PCCs seem to be meeting this need so well.

Discussion and Evaluation with Arzola Jr.'s Needs

- Social needs came along spiritual needs as the top needs met by the interventions deployed by the study churches.

- This is rightly placed as social needs ranked first among the needs of young people pointed out by the youth ministry experts interviewed in this research. All five experts saw this as a top need in ministry among a communal people such as Africans (Ghanaians).

Discussion and Evaluation with New Testament Christian Ministry

- To meet pastoral care needs the study churches had detailed pastors to be in charge of young people in both contexts and to supply leadership just as is evident in the early church.

- The study churches were seen to be making various efforts to respond to the felt needs of its members such as putting in place social support systems, putting in place scholarship opportunities, etc. Interventions were mounted to meet spiritual needs as well, just as the early church built its members spiritually.

Discussion and Evaluation with New Testament Christian Ministry

- The study churches compare quite favourably in Christian ministry efforts to the early church.

- Though variations exist, it is clear that the churches demonstrated commitment to the development of its members, here the young people, as the New Testament advocates.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- **Conclusions**

- The urban youth development efforts of the CoP and the ICGC, typical of African (Ghanaian) PCCs, did not satisfactorily meet Arzola Jr.'s basic needs which demand balance in meeting of needs to ensure holistic development.

- The urban youth development efforts of the CoP and the ICGC, typical of African (Ghanaian) PCCs, compare quite favourably with New Testament Christian ministry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- **Recommendations**

- A curriculum that ensures balance in intervention deployment for urban youth development among African (Ghanaian) PCCs, typified by the study churches, is needed.

- Intervention deployment in urban youth ministry must be informed by the right theories.

- Biblical notions that advocate holistic development, can be used alongside social science researched information on the nature and needs of young people, as important theories that can inform the design of interventions in urban youth ministry.

Limitations

- Observations made from two PCCs generalized for all African (Ghanaian) PCCs. Though PCCs share a lot in common, they are not necessarily a monogenous group. Further research will be needed in distinct African PCC denominations.