



Lekgotla and Magadi: Ubuntu oriented Practical Theology Research Methods

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Abstract

Practical theology has evolved from emphasising pastoral ministry to addressing contemporary issues facing local churches so that they can bring about transformation within the communities in which they operate. In addition, efforts and proposals to support practical theology as interdisciplinary have progressed and are considered to be transformative. This article explores the *Lekgotla* and *Magadi* processes by leveraging the African Indigenous Knowledge System (AIKS), with the aim of presenting two *Ubuntu*-based research methods for practical theology to engage and contribute to the transformational agenda. It combines social constructivism and the *Ubuntu* worldview to propose the *Lekgotla* method and the *Magadi* methods.

Keywords: Lekgotla, Magadi, Ubuntu, research method, African Indigenous Knowledge System.

Introduction

Practical theology focuses on the practical concerns or questions related to a faith community and explores ways to resolve the situation by either changing action or explaining the action (Heitink 1996:6). To this end, practical theology begins by first interpreting human actions in view of Christian tradition (**Action**), analysing them based on factuality and potentiality (**Reflection**), and suggesting some actions/strategies to enable transformation (**Action**) (Heitink 1999:165). Two empirical practical theology approaches flow from this intent, namely, Heitink's (1999) three-steps process of: the empirical perspective (**Action**), the hermeneutical perspective (**Reflection**) and the strategic perspective (**Action**); and Osmer's (2008) four-step process of: the descriptive-empirical stage (**Action**), the interpretative (**Reflection**), the normative stage (**Reflection**) the strategic stage (**Action**). A third approach follows Zerfass' (1974) five-step process: theological tradition, praxis, situation analysis, practical theological theory, and the redefined praxis. Zerfass' first step involves **theoretical reflection**, the second and third involves **reflections on praxis** whilst the fourth and fifth involves **re-imagined praxis**. These practical theology approaches reiterate some processes identifiable in two African Indigenous Knowledge Systems of *Lekgotla* and *Magadi* among the *Ubuntu* worldview of the Batswana. This article uses *Lekgotla* and *Kgotla* interchangeably.

Using a hybrid of social constructivism and the *Ubuntu* worldview, this article explores the **Action, Reflection and Action** approach of practical theology to propose two alternative research methods for practical theology based on the *Ubuntu* worldview. It begins by first discussing social constructivism, defining *Ubuntu*, and discussing its related problem-solving approach. Second, it presents the background of *Lekgotla* and *Magadi* and their associated processes. Third it proposes the *Lekgotla* research method and the *Magadi* research method and associated steps. Finally, it locates the two methods in practical theology.



Social constructivism

Piaget (1953) conceptualised the theory of constructivism and argues that individuals must not be given information but be encouraged construct their own knowledge while Vygotsky (1962) conceptualised social constructivism and argued that social interaction and cultural influences are an integral aspect of learning. Social constructivism then highlights that culture and context helps to understand what is happening in the community and assist to construct knowledge. Hence, Amineh and Asl (2015:13) states that: “Social constructivism is a theory of knowledge in sociology and communication theory that examines the knowledge and understandings of the world that are developed jointly by individuals. This theory assumes that understanding, significance, and meaning are developed in coordination with other human beings.”

Ubuntu and the problem-solving process

Ubuntu is an ancient worldview that exists among most sub-Sharan communities. It is considered as holistic because it does not separate the physical from the meta-physical. Gathogo (2008:46) describes *Ubuntu* “[a]s a spiritual foundation of African societies, *Ubuntu* is a unifying vision or worldview enshrined in the Nguni maxim *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, that is, ‘a person is a person through other persons’”. Broodryk (2002:17, 27), Sebidi (1998:62) and Wilhelm (1998:40) explains that various communities use different terms for *Ubuntu*: *Botho*, *Vhuthu*, *Vumunhu*, *Utu*, *Abantu* (in the isiNguni, Sesotho, Xitsonga, Vhenda, Swahili, and Ugandan). Additionally, *Ubuntu* promotes care, sharing and mutual concern (Ramosé, 2006:15) and is often translated as “humanness”. Nicolaides and Shoji (2021) and Nicolaides (2014; 2015) stress that it is the duty of society to support initiatives to enhance the perceived and real value of all people, the disabled as well as the able. All people serving in any capacity such as in a workplace, have worth and should be treated with fair-mindedness, deference and dignity.

Although earlier proponents of *Ubuntu* indicated that it is not easy to translate into English (Mokgoro 1998, Tutu 1999); some definitions have surfaced. Discourses on *Ubuntu* also show that *Ubuntu* is critiqued for dehumanising women (Gabaitse, 2012: 66-69; Moloko-Phiri, 2015:185,219; Mzondi, 2015:132-251). Nicolaides (2015) states that *Ubuntu* has a schema to “...comprehend the nature and contrivance of male oppression and the way in which the fairer-sex experiences this oppression. The experience of African women in an *Ubuntu* oriented society, such as South Africa, is particularly important to understand, since this is a suppressed discourse requiring greater analysis.”

Just as other communities on earth, Africans have always been engaged in problem-solving or addressing pressing matters or answering questions or concerns related to life experiences. The Batswana follows the following general phases or steps in problem-solving. First, is identifying the problem or concern. This is identified by asking: “*matsapa di a tsa kae?*” translated “what is the problem?” or “what is the matter/concern?”. The matter or question may or may not involve consulting the ancestors or indigenous healer. Once a problem or concern is identified, the second step then, kickstarts by following the correct procedures. Third, appropriate people are engaged in problem-solving (Masiangoako, n.d. b). Finally, the ancestors, always viewed as part of the community, are involved in the conclusion.

The common approach of seeking for consensus among people through a flexible and participatory process, form the underlying problem-solving principle (cf Anifowoshe, 2010; Mabovula, 2011; Muruthi, 2006). This underlying principle function in the context of a *Lekgotla* (Setswana for community gathering the king has convened) or an extended family process of resolving a problem or matter. Usually, males dominate this domain (Masiangoako, 1939b: 4). A gender inclusive *Lekgotla* may also be called where everyone attending such gatherings is afforded an opportunity to express their views or say something regarding the matter at hand (Ghebretikle & Rammala, 2018: 337).



From a practical perspective, Issifu (2015:67) provides five similar stages observed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings and the *Lekgotla* in solving a conflict or wrongdoing. These are: (a) establishing the facts, (b) the offender is asked to show genuine remorse or show a sign of true repentance, (c) then is allowed to plead for forgiveness and the victims in their turn are encouraged to show mercy and forgive the offender, (d) the offender is then expected to pay an appropriate compensation or reparation for the wrong committed and (e) lastly, is to encourage all the parties involved to become part of a joint commitment.

Furthermore, the voice and views of the elders, including the ancestors, are always given priority in discussing the matter at hand. This renders *Lekgotla* to be a consultative, collective, inclusive process that promote consensus. Moumakwa (2010:11) describes a Botswana context of *Lekgotla* as “a forum for policy formulations, decision making, including political and economic developmental activities and judiciary on litigations”. It is also necessary to indicate that *Lekgotla* is not rigid and uniform but take different forms from community to community and the matter at hand determine its nature. With this view mind, *Lekgotla* should be distinguished from *makgotla* (plural for *lekgotla*) established in South African townships in the former Transvaal during the era of apartheid to address crime and unwanted behaviour (Rakgoadi, 1995).

It is also observed that a family problem or concern between a wife and a husband is referred to *rakgadi le malome* (aunt and uncle) from one family, who will engage their counterpart from the other family. Masiangoako (1939a:1) provides the following process among Batswana:

Monna a ka se ke a kgaogana le mosadi oa gagoe, fela ba sekile ba ea koa pele ga batsoadi ba bona. Pele ge ba tla tlhalana ba ise kang koa pele ge batsoadi ba bona.

English translation

A husband may not separate from his wife before the matter is presented before the parents. The matter must first be brought before the parents before they divorce

Rakgadi le malome (aunt and uncle) from two families will engage until they find common ground or reach consensus. The same parties also play a significant role in beginning and concluding the marriage process and arrangements and the groom's payment of *Magadi* (plural for *bogadi*) (bridal price). The parties must be considered skilled enough to handle the process in consultation with both parents. One trusted elderly individual or two trusted elderly individuals outside the family, considered to be skilful in the process, is or are often requested to accompany them and lead the process to achieve the desired outcome.

The marriage process and the *Magadi* (bridal price) negotiation is a complex system that requires acquaintance with African Indigenous Knowledge System linked to the clan or ethnic group. It has its specific language, metaphors, and symbols that the delegates, with assigned different roles during the negotiation process, should know, and understand. The process becomes more complicated when negotiations occur across different clans or ethnic groups.

The Lekgotla process and the Magadi process

Lekgotla is an ancient oral African Indigenous Knowledge System that continue to be practiced in various communities in South(ern) Africa. The process of *Lekgotla* involves calling the members of the community to address a community concern that might either be something positive or something negative or to resolve a community problem. A problem might be caused by an individual or few individuals or natural cause or some suspected spiritual source.



Some non-African scholars confirmed the practice of *Lekgotla*; first were Schapera (1957) and Thompson (1975) and later were Coplan and Quinlan (1997) Pienaar (2005). Ghebretsele and Rammala (2018:336-337) mentions the existence and functioning of *Lekgotla* among the modern *Bakgatla ba Mosetlha* of Makapanstad, Bokone-Bophirima (North-West) Province, South Africa. Its ontological, epistemological, and practical aspects, which varies from community to community, are grounded in the involvement of the community in resolving socio-economic and political issues. Hence, the national government of Botswana and the current ruling party in South Africa, the African National Congress-ANC, continues to practice this approach.

The marriage and the *Magadi* process do not focus on the problem, but on how to negotiate and conclude the payment of *Magadi* to enable the children from two families to marry and to build family relationships by presenting the suitable number of cattle (lately expressed in monetary term) to the girl's parents. The process usually begins by the boy's delegation expressing deep appreciation of the girl sought to be married, her parent's role in raising her, identifiable in her conduct that reflect *seriti* (moral standing) (Goba, 1998:64; Tutu, 1999:4-5).

Regrettably, both the *Lekgotla* and *Magadi* systems are not female friendly as *Magadi* is usually perceived as a through which means a man and his family use to own his wife and control her reproductive rights (Gabaitse, 2012:64-68, Moloko-Phiri, 2015:185,219; Mzondi, 2015:234-235;). Some type of *Lekgotla* primarily marginalises women because it is essentially a male gathering (cf Masiangoako, 1939b:1-3). Lastly, the process of calling any form of *Lekgotla* involves males only and only the king and the appointed elder(s) led the proceedings.

Understanding the Lekgotla and the Magadi processes

In both instances, the process begins by identifying the matter or objective or cause of concern/problem. The *Magadi* process focus on achieving the set objective while the *Lekgotla* process focus on problem-solving. Uniquely, both processes display a theistic view as they assume the presence of a supreme being and conclude by presenting the outcome to a supreme being.

The Lekgotla process

The following process is noticed during a *Lekgotla* gathering among the *Batlhako* tribe of Pilansberg of the former Transvaal Province, the current Bokone-Bophirima (North-West) Province of South Africa, convened to address a community problem or concern (Masiangoako, 1939b). **First**, the problem or concern may emanate from an individual or from the king/queen (Masiangoako, 1939b: 5-6). The *Lekgotla* will be called following the view that "*kgosi ke kgosi ka morafe*" translated "a chief is a chief because of the tribe".

Masiangoako demonstrate this view by providing examples of two chiefs of the *Batlhako* tribe, chief Moetlo and chief Molopyane. The former did not consult with the headmen and councillors in his decision making and ruling the community while the later always consulted the headmen and councillors in his decision making and ruling the community (Masiangoako, 1939b:1-3). Masiangoako continue to explain that, among the tribe of the *Batlhako*, the king, in consultation with the headmen and councillors, usually summon a meeting of the community (Masiangoako, 1939b:5). Communalism and interdependence are linked to this emphasis of the community. Utrecht University Sociologist of Rights Barbara Oomen (2000: 80) succinctly states that in traditional politics and governance among the Northern Sotho communities, the:

moral fibre of the whole society rests on bokgôši [North Sotho term for chieftaincy]. Bokgôši encompasses religion, tradition, governance, customs, and all else, which is why a kgôši [chief] should be a symbol of unity... chieftaincy ought to serve as "an institution of local justice, of



public debate, and of an emerging civil society based on the traditions of African politics and institution.

Second, the proceedings of a *Kgotla* may only begin when every expected adult in the area is present (Masiangoako, 1939b:4). This principle ensures that people are given ample time to arrive at the *Kgotla* because of travelling distances. Once it is ascertained that everyone has arrived then the king or a *kgosana* (elder) will officially open the *Kgotla* (Masiangoako, 1939b:4) by shouting “*tsialala*” (Setswana for attention) to call for everyone’s attention. Once the appropriate attention is gained, he will then continue to explain the purpose of the *Lekgotla*.

Third, he will further provide everyone attending an opportunity “*go latlhela la motla pitsong kgotsa go latlhela tlhware legonyana*” that is, “to air one’s views or present one’s opinion” (Masiangoako, 1939b:5-6; Ghebretkle & Rammala, 2018: 337). This is the longest process of the *Lekgotla* as it allows for suggestions and/or possible ways to solve the problem or the concern before the *Lekgotla*. The perceived nature of the problem or concern determine and influences the presentation of suggestions or possible ways/solutions. Perceived norms and traditions learned from past generations and passed orally to next generations will be raised as attendees mention how previous generations resolved similar problems or addressed similar concerns. Common Setswana phrases used during discussions are:

<i>O opile kgomo lonaka</i>	you are spot on
<i>Ntwa kgolo key a molomo</i>	fighting should not be physical
<i>O ratha sekgwa</i>	you are off tangent
<i>Mabala a kgaka/ke se e game yotlhe/ go baa mabala</i>	
<i>a nkwe</i>	to be concise
<i>Go garela</i>	to summarise

A common phrase on a consensus point during the discussion process will be, “*ke la me leo*” that is, “I concur”. Once consensus is reached the *Lekgotla* will be concluded by the responsible person summarising the points of consensus and then in a loud voice, shout, “*pula*” that is “rain”. The corresponding response from the attendees will be “*a ene*” that is “let it rain,” to invoke the blessing and sealing of *Ramasedi le badimo* (the supreme being and ancestors) on the reached resolution.

Where appropriate, a suitable ritual or sacrifice linked to the type of the identified problem will be offered to appease *badimo* (ancestors). A *ngaka* (an indigenous healer) or at other times *kgosi* (king) will be asked to preside over the ritual and process. This constitutes the **fourth and final step/phase** of a community problem-solving.

The *Magadi* process

The *Magadi* (singular for *bogadi*) process, provides an interesting approach by not focusing on a problem that need to be solved, but begins by the son communicating to his parents his wish and intention to get married. The parents will first obtain more information about the girl’s family or clan to establish *seriti* (moral standing) of the family. Finally, the parents will check if the son has enough cattle (money) to pay *Magadi*. Once the matter of the girl’s family background is ascertained and the son’s ability to pay *Magadi* is confirmed, the matter is handed to the uncle and the aunt who will begin the process to engage the girl’s family. Masiangoako (1939a: 4, ¶ 7) describes an example of such process among the Batswana:

*Monna o mongoe o bidioa Ntladi o kile a rata go nyala mosadi a bidioa
Motsei a mo inyadisa fela bagolo bagagoe ba sa rate. Ntladi a bolela fela*



gore ene oa mo rata. Batsoadi ba gagoe ba mmolela gore batsoadi ba Motsei ke sika le le sa siamang, ba loa thata, ga ba utloane le batbo ba bangoe.

English translation

A certain man named Ntladi married a lady named Motsei regardless of his parents' objection because he maintained that he loved her. His parents indicated to him that she is raised by a family that is always fighting with other community members.

On the other hand, the daughter's parents, uncle, and aunt also want to ensure that the girl is married to suitable son by establishing his parents' background to determine their *seriti*. On the day both delegates meet, the following process begins. **First** the girl's uncle begin the process by playing difficult and unresponsive. This requires the boy's delegation responding by presenting some gifts and tokens to appease him so that he may allow the *Magadi* process to begin.

Once the uncle has determined that he has been appropriately appeased, he will then allow the boy's delegation to enter the premises and sit at an appropriate place, if they were refused to enter before appeasing him. In the case where the visiting delegation was allowed to enter the premises (and in some instance the house), the uncle will do the same until he has determined that he is appropriately appeased.

After being appeased, the uncle will then leave the boy's delegation to report to the girl's delegation and family. After some time, the girl's delegation will then enter the room or meeting place. The process enters the **second** step. This begins by boy's delegation introducing themselves by mentioning their clan's name and/or totem before the negotiation process begin. The intention is to determine family relations before discussing the intention of the boy's delegation. The **third** step involves the boy's delegation appreciating the daughter and her family moral standing; and then communicate that they have been assigned to request them to allow their daughter to marry their son. This request is followed by some calculated tough process the girl's delegation initiates and the boy's delegation using their indigenous knowledge to find their way through that process.

Once they have found their way and reached consensus, some formalities that include the exchange of gifts is observed to conclude the proceedings. The daughter's family members, normally not forming part of the proceedings, are notified about the positive outcome by the women from the girl's family delegation ululating to communicate that the two delegates have reached consensus on the number of cattle (representing an agreed amount of money) the boy will finally present as *Magadi*. In some cases, this is accompanied by some brief praise singing and dancing.

The next and **final** step is deciding on a ceremony to present the marriage before the ancestors called, *go tlhabela Magadi* (this is a process to announce the marriage to the ancestors of both families that show that the two families entered a blood covenant). On the set day, the boy's delegation will present two sheep and some gifts to the girl's family. Each delegate will slaughter the sheep and later exchange the right side of the carcass to communicate that the families are joined spiritually; sorghum beer is normally prepared to enable the official presentation by either family delegates communicating to their ancestors that the two families are now one.

The proposed *Lekgotla* research method and the *Magadi* research method

Flowing from the above two processes, I now propose two research methods, namely, the *Lekgotla* research method and the *Magadi* research method. The *Lekgotla* method is discussed first and the *Magadi* method is discussed last.



The *Lekgotla* research method and related steps

The *Lekgotla* process reflect a methodology that begins with an identified problem or concern in the community and concludes by invoking the supreme being to bless the outcome of meeting. The king (*kgosi*) and the community elders (*dikgosana*) are key principals in resuming the process that includes:

- A. Identifying the problem and calling the elders or community to attend the gathering to address the problem or concern.
- B. The process allows for maximum participation by allowing everyone to attend and resume the meeting once everyone has arrived.
- C. Once the matter is explained, the community members are allowed to contribute to resolving the problem or concern. As noticed above, the cause may be an individual or individuals or natural causes or what is deemed a spiritual force. No contribution is disregarded even if some members may feel that it is beside the point or irrelevant.
- D. The goal of the discussion is to reach consensus after allowing members to present their views during the discussion.
- E. Once consensus is reached and the outcome is summarised, the blessing of the supreme being is invoked at the end of the *lekgotla*.

The above process is consolidated into the following steps called **Describing the situation, Participation, Consensus, and Presentation**. The method assumes the acronym, **DPCP**.

Describing the situation – This step involves describing and explaining the issue before the elders or the community.

Participation– This step allows maximum participation by ensuring everyone has attended and is given a chance to contribute to resolving the matter.

Consensus – This step ensures that those who attended reach consensus regarding resolving the matter or concern.

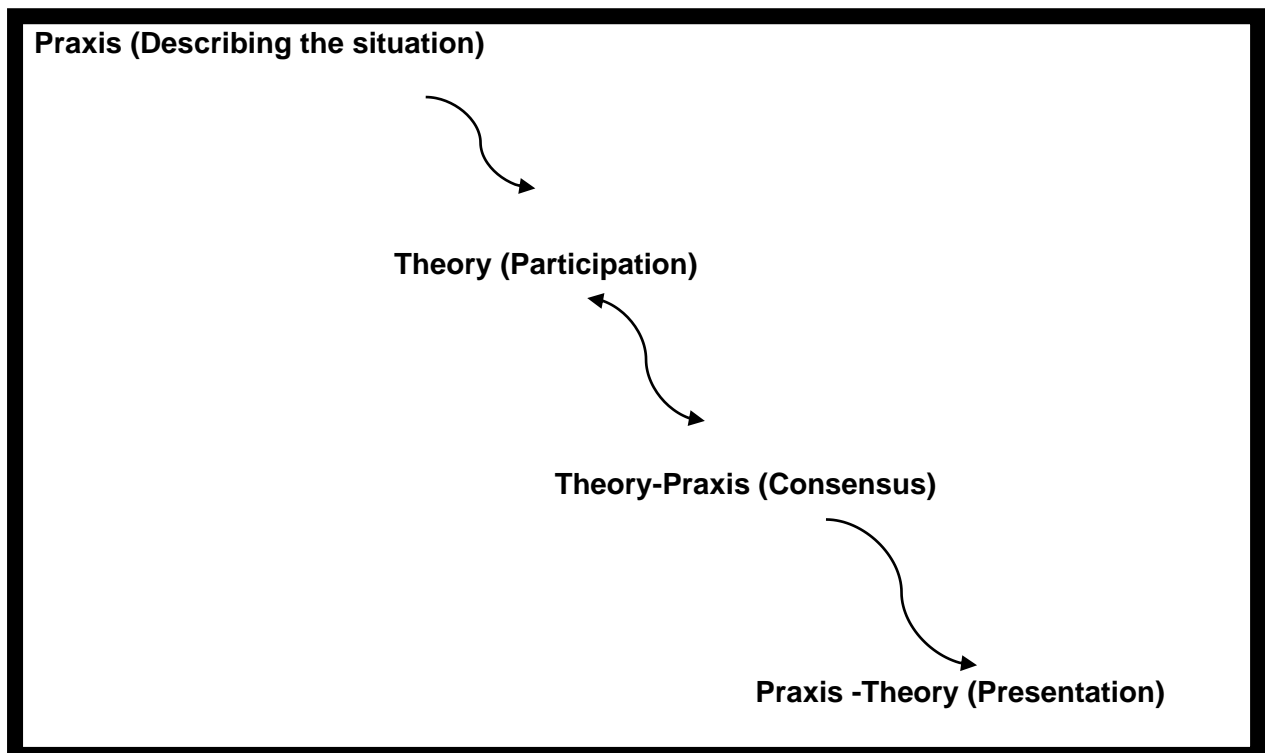
Presentation – This final step is taken after reaching consensus, the *lekgotla* concludes by invoking the supreme being to bless the outcome.

From these steps, it is possible to point out that the *Lekgotla* method follows a four-step process of: praxis, theory, theory-praxis and praxis-theory.

The method begins with what is practised, **Describing the situation**, moves to theory, **Participation**, to theory-praxis, **Consensus**. At this point, it is essential to indicate that there is an interrelated back-and-forth movement between **Participation** and **Consensus** with a strong emphasis on reflecting on and ascertaining oral traditions, norms, and praxis passed from generation to generation. Once conformity to oral tradition, norms, and praxis is ascertained and there is mutual agreement on how to conclude the matter(s) before the *Kgotla*, the participants will have reached the step of **Consensus**. The *Lekgotla* process concludes with praxis-theory, **Presentation**, that anticipates that the supreme being will bless the outcome of the *Kgotla*. Diagram 1 shows the *Lekgotla* method with the thick black rectangle representing the holistic view of *Ubuntu* that form the foundation the *Lekgotla* method.

Diagram 1. The Lekgotla method (DPCP)

Ubuntu worldview



Lekgotla resonates with Healey's (2011) "transformative dialogical approach" and Bujo's (1998) "palaver"—an indigenous approach practiced in Congo to address community issues. Healy (2011: 295) advocate for "the need to expand the operative conception of deliberation in a more inclusive, egalitarian and, indeed, dialogical direction through the transformative dialogue" while Bujo (1998:36) posit that palaver involves a "process of finding solutions, does not manoeuvre or trick or force people but discusses issues by sharing of experiences, taking into consideration history of the community clan and interests of the living and the living dead". Both approaches emphasise the importance of the community and equal participation in addressing community issues.

Furthermore, *Lekgotla* involves Hammersly's (2010) aspect of cultural transmission regarding the praxis of a community; and Erickson's (2010) view of ethnography as a thorough and comprehensive description of the situation on the ground. It is essential to mention that the primary objective of ethnographic research is to establish how members of the community resolve their own issues (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). Consequently, Pienaar (2015:58) posit that *Lekgotla* flow from an "indigenous practise of problem resolution" and is an authentic research methodology leading to authentic research outcomes in African contexts."

The collection, analysis, and interpretation of information (raw data)

The elderly in the community plays an essential role in this process since they are perceived to possess the necessary wisdom. The steps, describing the situation, participation and consensus allows for data collection processes through participant observation as participants engages in a thorough and contextual description of the situation as it unfolds. The researcher or someone identified may assume the role of the king (*kgosi*) and *dikgosana* (elders) to describe the situation, after which the *Lekgotla* may begin to engage (Masiangoako, 1939b: 4-5). The three steps (describing the situation, participation, and consensus) point to African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) the community apply in resolving community issues or matters by allowing everyone who has attended the *Lekgotla* to participate until consensus is reached (cf Anifowoshe, 2010, Mabovula, 2011 & Muruthi,



2006). Such indigenous systems form essential oral information (raw data) from the community passed on to one generation to the next, orally. This is like obtaining information (raw data) from the interviewee as s/he orally responds to open ended or close interview questions during an interview session with necessary probing techniques. Furthermore, the three steps allow the participants in the *Lekgotla* to engage in the process of analysing and interpreting information (raw data) as they listen and contribute to the discussion with the aim of reaching consensus.

Selecting the participants

As noted in the *Lekgotla* process above, *kgosi* (the king) in consultation with the *dikgosana* (elders) determine who should attend the *Lekgotla* and a subsequent announcement is communicated throughout the village (Masiangoako, 1939b:4). *Lekgotla* is attended by a either *dikgosana* (elders) (Masiangoako, 1939b: 4) or is open to the community (Ghebretkle & Rammala 2018: 337). Masiangoako (1939b:4) emphasises that those who do not attend are only reprimanded without facing serious action. This praxis points that participant's selection criteria is either purposeful or random.

The *Magadi* research method and related steps

Usually, real life revolves around resolving problems in different contexts. However, not every matter in life is a problem. In fact, some matters in life are about achieving an objective like a change in social status or building family relationships within the community. Efforts to build family relations between two different families in the community are reflected in the process of *Magadi*. This process is usually associated with the son's desire to get married and concludes with the outcome of *Magadi* process communicated to the ancestors of both families. As observed, the appointed delegate from both families engages in a dialogue or negotiation process on the day the son's delegates meet the girl's family delegates. The objective of the meeting is to arrange a marriage between the son and the daughter. Achieving the objective follows the following a prescribed process:

- A. The uncle demonstrating that he needs to be appeased before the son's delegation can enter the premises if they were not allowed to enter the premises or before calling the other members of the girl's delegates if they were given access to the premises and assigned to sit at an appropriate place. Once appeased with relevant gifts and tokens, the uncle calls the delegation to begin the negotiations.
- B. The next step involves both families finding each other. The son's delegation begins by introducing themselves using the clan's name or totem. Similarly with the daughter's delegation. Then the son's delegation continues to appraise the family and point to their daughter as a sign of good upbringing and *seriti*. This is followed by a request to allow their son to marry their daughter.
- C. This is then followed by the girl's delegation playing difficult and making some demands. The son's delegation will also use their skill and knowledge to navigate themselves through the set of demands. This process usually takes several start-stop rounds until there is a mutual agreement that consider the demands met. Usually, the demands are the number of cattle (cash) the family demand as *Magadi*. Once this stage is reached and confirmed, the women from the daughter's delegation will confirm the reached consensus by ululating.
- D. The last process involves determining a day go *tlabela mogadi* (this is a process to announce the marriage to the ancestors of both families). Two sheep and sorghum beer are needed to perform the task. The sheep are slaughtered, and the right portion of each carcass are exchanged to symbolise that the two families are now joined and to seal the marriage covenant.

This above process is consolidated into the following four steps called, **Appreciating, Accessing, Announcing, and Presenting**. The acronym **AAAP** is used for this method.

Appreciating – This step allows to appreciate the role of parents in raising the daughter and in turn her reflecting *seriti*,

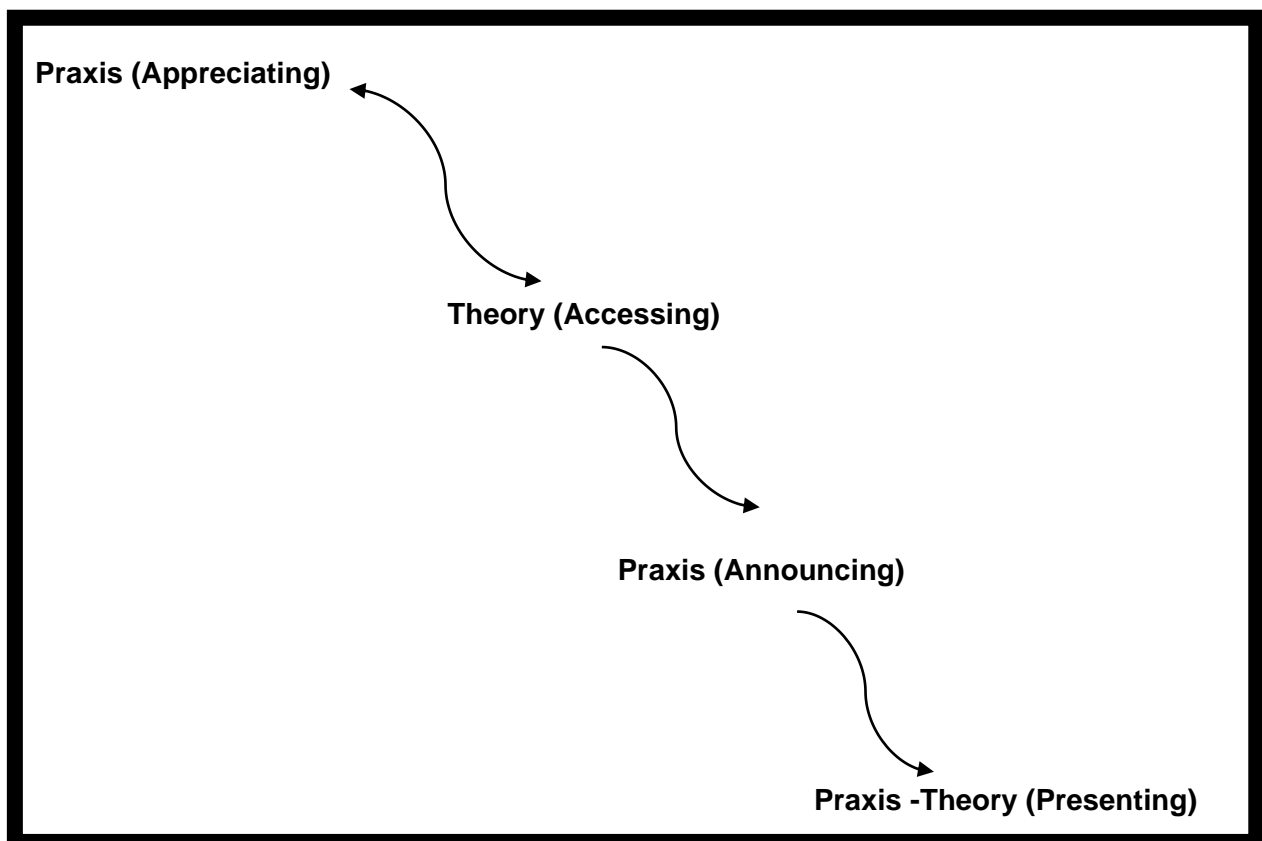
Accessing – In this step, the son’s delegation uses indigenous knowledge to meet the demands set to marry the daughter,

Announcing – This step involves celebrating the mutual agreement, and

Presenting – In this final step, the families slaughter two sheep to seal the covenant and announce it to the ancestors.

The *Magadi* epistemology follow four steps: praxis, theory, praxis and praxis-theory. It begins with what is practised, **Appreciating**, move to theory, **Accessing**, to praxis, **Announcing**, and concludes with praxis-theory, **Presenting**. The **Appreciating** and **Accessing** steps involve an interrelated back-and-forth movement as the two delegates negotiate. Just like the *Lekgotla* method, the thick black rectangle represents the holistic view of *Ubuntu* that form the foundation of the *Magadi* method. Diagram 2 shows the *Magadi* method:

Diagram 2. The *Magadi* method (AAP)



The collection, analysis, and interpretation of information (raw data)

The essential information needed in the *Magadi* process is the background of the girl’s and the boy’s families gleaned from each family’s clan’s name or totem and the moral standing of each family (cf Masiangoako (1939a: 4, ¶) 7). Alongside the information gathering process, the boy’s parents double check if he can pay *Magadi* and what are the daughter’s clan requirements and process to marry the daughter. This process points to the **Appreciating** step which naturally lead to the **Accessing** step that depends on the boy’s ability to pay *Magadi* and understanding the daughter’s clan process to marry her. On the day of negotiating *Magadi*, the boy’s family delegation applies African Indigenous Knowledge



Systems to demonstrate that they appreciate the daughter's family and her; and to skilfully analyse and interpret the language and tactics of the daughter's delegations as they navigate themselves through some barriers based on their African Indigenous Knowledge Systems. The objective of this step is to convince her family delegation to accept the negotiated *Magadi* and then agree to release her to be marry the boy. Once they have convinced the girl's delegation to accept the negotiated *Magadi* and the required *Magadi* is presented, then the girl's women delegation will announce the positive outcome by ululating. This joyous stage set the stage to exchange some gifts from both delegations and the daughter's family to be officially informed that the two delegations have reached a conclusion.

Selecting the participants

Not everyone may be part of the *Magadi* negotiation process, as the process require some skill and understanding of the *Magadi* process. Naturally, the boy's uncle, who is supposed to be the chief negotiator, and the aunt are the most important participants in the *Magadi* process. Should the uncle not be a skilled and trusted negotiator, some male from the family or community may be asked to be part of the delegation and be the chief negotiator. One or two elderly people are added to the delegation. A similarly approach applies with the girl's delegation.

Applying the *Lekgotla* and the *Magadi* research methods in practical theology

Over the centuries practical theology has been grounded on the praxis-theory-practice approach as it attempt to listen to the word and the Word at the same time (Stott, 1993). Key questions asked are: what is going on? why is it going on? what is the norm? and how to resolve the question or condition at hand? Influential practical theologians (Browning, 1993), Heitink (1989), Osmer (2008), and Zerfass [1974]) have worked around these questions by suggesting some steps/phases to follow. Except Osmer, they have emphasised an interdisciplinary approach with the Bible as norm. Zerfass (1974) places theological reflection before analysing the context/situation. Browning (1993) has systematic theology as pivotal while Heitink (1999) promotes a theological theory of action. Osmer (2008) departs from these approaches by suggesting that the normative step/phase should lean heavily towards human and social sciences. As noticed above, the *Lekgotla* and *Magadi* processes are theistic because they are based on an *Ubuntu* worldview that does not separate the physical from the meta-physical. Similarly, the *Lekgotla* and *Magadi* research methods take the presence of the divine serious as it emphasises on checking the process and outcome against the Bible.

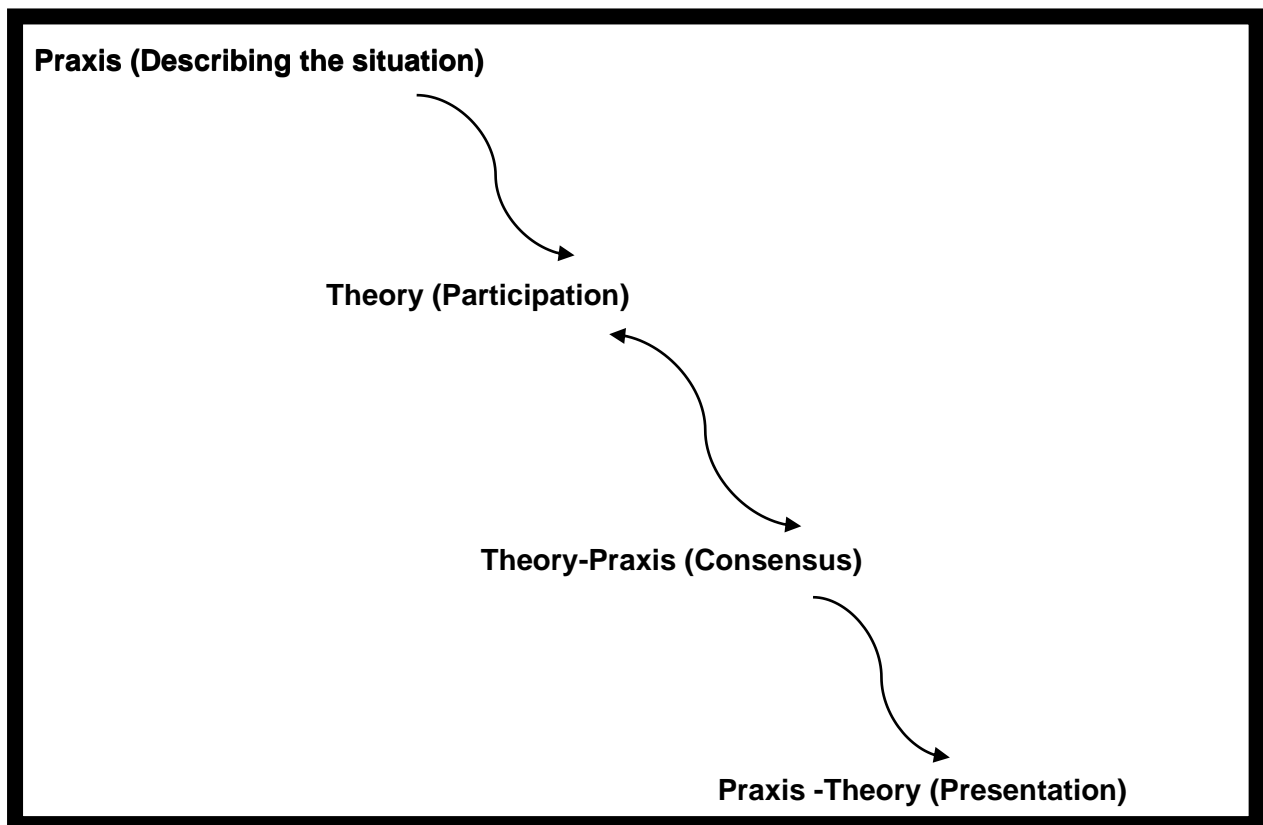
This approach is like the principle of consulting God for direction and for seeking his approval. A principle observed in the following passages of Scripture: (a) in Samuel's view when the nation of Israel wanted a king (1 Samuel 8:6-7); (b) Daniel seeking God to interpret the king's dream (Dan 2:17-19); (c) the advice in Proverb 16:3,9 and 19:21 to present one's plan to God; (d) Christ's approach of praying before choosing the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-16); (e) the apostles casting lots and praying choose who was to replace Judas (Acts 1:15-26); (f) the leadership at Antioch fasting and praying before releasing Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3); and (g) Paul's advice to present prayer, supplication, request and thanksgiving to God (Philippians 4:6-7).

Henceforth, the *Lekgotla* and the *Magadi* research method elevates invoking the divine, in this case, the Triune God before undertaking the task of describing or appreciating the situation and intentionally seek that the outcome should please and glorify God. The two methods intent to echo what Jesus taught the disciple when they pray "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9-10, ASB). They promote the attitude of asking God for wisdom, understanding and insight like Solomon who asked wisdom to rule the nation (1 Kings 3:1-9).

The primary focus of practical theology is to address ministry related issues or problems to bring transformation in the local church. This focus finds space in the *Lekgotla* and *Magadi* research methods applied to address a problem or question by first **Describing the situation**, in the case of the *Lekgotla* research method; or first to find out/look for positive aspects, **Appreciating**, in the case of the *Magadi* research method. These research methods are positive attempts to bring transformation in the local congregation. Furthermore, the interrelated back-and-forth *Lekgotla* steps of **Participation and Consensus** ensure maximum participation while the latter pointing to using available skills and knowledge to resolve the matter or problem so that consensus is reached. These steps resonate with placing value in using relevant natural and human sciences and other forms of knowledge promoted in practical theology epistemologies, as well as promoting an interdisciplinary approach to resolve ministry issues. Finally, the **Presentation** step moves further by invoking the presence the Triune God to assist in addressing and resolving matters or problem in the community, in this case the local congregation. Consequently, a practical theology compliant *Lekgotla* method (**DPCP**) encapsulate the following four steps based on diagram 3 with the thick black rectangle representing the biblical worldview:

Diagram 3. The Lekgotla method (DPCP)

Biblical worldview



Describing the situation – The current or normative faith community praxis is identified by obtaining information using means like interviews, questionnaires to be able to describe and explain the issue facing the church. Alternatively, participant observation is another means to obtain data about the current situation.

As noticed in the above *Lekgotla* process, the king and council of elders determines who should attend *Lekgotla*. Participants could be certain council members or all council members or selected men in community or all member of the community. This enables one to use different criteria to select participants in the study.

Participation– Allowing maximum participation by ensuring a reasonable representative of participants in the study. Purposeful sampling or random sampling or snowballing can be used to identify the participants. The researcher can also be a participant observer and take notes or audio/video record the proceedings after seeking permission. Another form of participation can be gathering the relevant data using diverse literature to understand the situation at hand.

Consensus – Ensuring that everyone contribute to the process of reaching a consensus. In this case, relevant literature, social and human sciences, and African Indigenous Knowledge System are considered in resolving the matter with the aim of suggesting a suitable solution. This process also involves applying data analysis and interpretation methods available from social and human sciences and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Presentation – Viewing the suitable solution through the lens of the Bible and critical theological reflections. The step allows to use Mburu’s (2019) African hermeneutics to engage the Scripture.

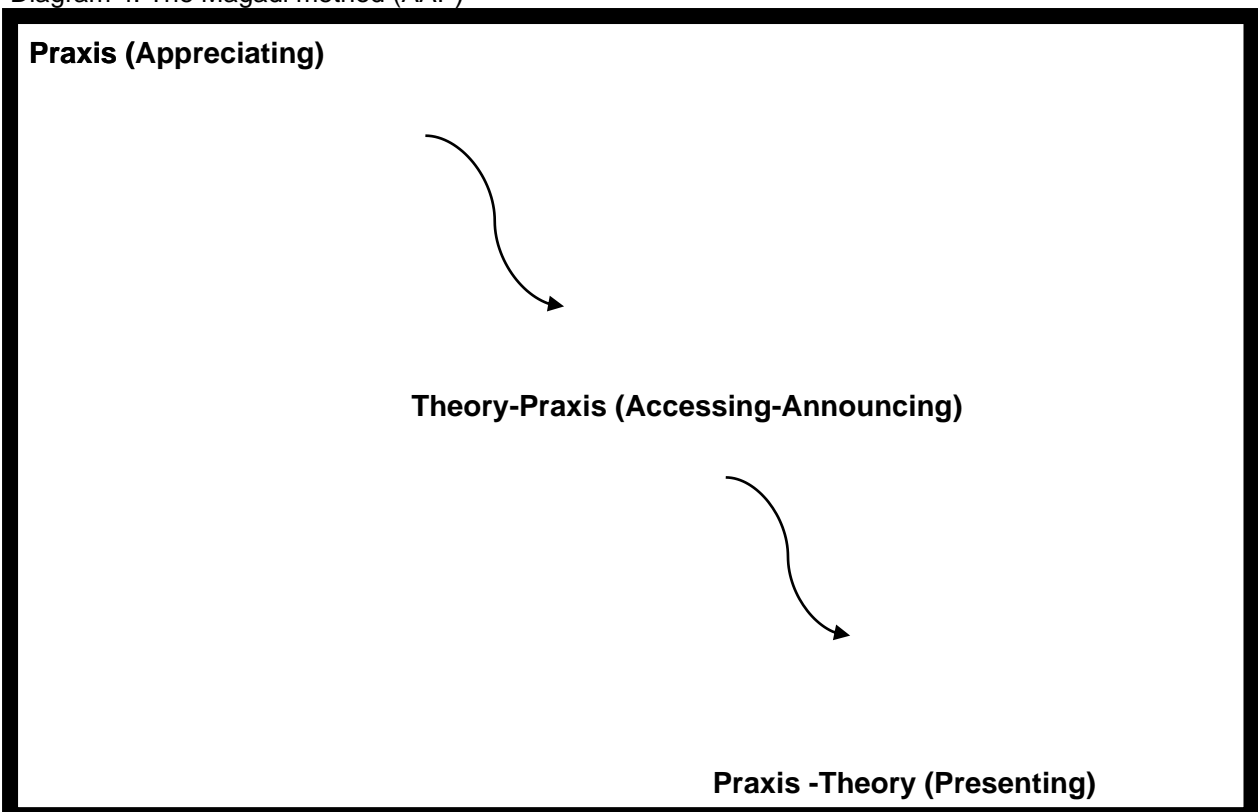
The associated relevant four questions of the *Lekgotla* method are:

- A. What is happening?
- B. What could have caused the situation?
- C. What is the recommended approach to resolve the situation?
- D. Is the recommended approach theologically and the biblically sound?

Regarding the *Magadi* method, the interrelated back-and-forth second and third steps, **Accessing and Announcing**, also point to using available skills and knowledge to navigate through the set of obstacles and to reach consensus after considering diverse opinions covering the study. While the last step, **Presenting**, introduces measures of checks and balances before presenting the process and its outcome to the Triune God, for divine favour and blessing. Hence, the *Magadi* method (**AAAP**) revolves around the following three practical theology steps in diagram 4 showing the biblical worldview represented in the thick black rectangle.:

Diagram 4. The Magadi method (AAP)

Biblical worldview





Appreciating the situation– Appreciating the positive elements in the study. This involves using means like interviews or questionnaires to identify positive aspects of the studied phenomenon or incident or religious praxis. Participant observation can also be used to gather positive aspects in the phenomenon or incident or religious praxis. Alternatively, positive aspects can be obtained from studying diverse or specific literature relevant to the phenomenon or incident or religious praxis.

Only selected individuals from the boy's family and the girl's family participate in the *Magadi* process. Similarly, purposeful sampling or random sampling or snowballing can be used in the phenomenon or incident or religious praxis. Again, the researcher can request that the interviews be audio or video recorded.

Accessing-Announcing – Here the two steps are fused to enable the use of an interdisciplinary approach by applying skills and knowledge acquired from social sciences, human sciences, African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, the Bible and theology to critique positive aspects of the studied phenomenon or incident or religious praxis. The use of Mburu's (2019) African hermeneutics also applies in this step.

Presenting – Designing ways to present a theological and biblical solution to the faith community with Mburu's (2019) African hermeneutics in mind.

The associated relevant three questions of the *Magadi* method are:

- A. What is positive in the current situation?
- B. How are the positive aspects in the situation biblically accessed and celebrated?
- C. How might the accessed positive aspects be presented to the faith community?

Conclusion

The article outlined that practical theology can focus on providing solutions to current faith praxis. This is achieved by first focusing on human actions of the faith community or first using a hermeneutical approach that first look at the literature. Similarly, the oral worldview of *Ubuntu* addresses human actions through its Indigenous Knowledge Systems. The focus of this article is to contribute to ongoing discourses in practical theology by proposing two alternative research methods based on the *Ubuntu* worldview, namely, the *Lekgotla* method and the *Magadi* method. The two methods revolve around several steps narrowed to four each. The *Lekgotla* method uses the following steps: Describing the situation, Participation, Consensus and Presenting (DPCP) while the *Magadi* method uses: Appreciating, Accessing, Announcing and Presenting (AAAP).

Although different from traditional practical theology approaches, the two methods show the intrinsic practical theology elements of Action-Reflection-Action (praxis-theory-praxis). These manifest in alternative ways in four steps of Praxis, Theory, Theory- Praxis and Praxis-Theory (the *Lekgotla* method) and three steps of Praxis, Theory-Praxis and Praxis-Theory (the *Magadi* method). The *Lekgotla* and the *Magadi* methods hold a high view of the divine. The two alternative methods also introduce the use of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the interdisciplinary orientation of practical theology. Finally, the holistic *Ubuntu* worldview that influences the *Lekgotla* and the *Magadi* methods position them to apply the principle of holding a high view of the Bible.

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