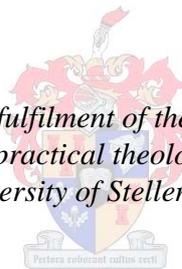


# **Intercultural teaching: A critical analysis of the African Bible College in Malawi**

by  
Robert W. Stauffacher

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Master of Theology in practical theology and missiology at the  
University of Stellenbosch*



Supervisor: Dr Ian Nell

Faculty of Theology  
Department of Practical theology and missiology

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## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2010

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to determine, in a practical theological way, (1) the impact culture is having on the *teaching* at the African Bible College, (2) to develop a revised praxis for the intercultural teaching at ABC, and (3) for ABC to become a more culturally relevant teaching institution as a result. Since *cultural differences* can often become a great barrier for any intercultural endeavor, and being that ABC is made up of mostly American professors and mostly Malawian students, there is a need to evaluate the challenges that are taking place in this mixed cultural institution.

The research questions, which this study addresses, are as follows:

1. What kind of intercultural teaching exists at ABC? What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of ABC's intercultural teaching? What are some of the current intercultural barriers existing at ABC? How do Malawian learning styles / cultural issues play into intercultural teaching? What kind of "cultural baggage" exists at ABC?
2. What does it mean to be culturally relevant and why is it important? In other words, what are some of the key elements of teaching interculturality? What are some of the common problems? What is contextualization? Interculturation? Westernization? Etc.
3. What is desirable intercultural teaching for ABC? In other words, what models in intercultural teaching would be more appropriate for ABC and why? What should effective intercultural teaching look like at ABC? How can ABC sustain long-term and effective intercultural teaching?

An introduction to the subject of *intercultural teaching* and an empirical investigation of ABC's teaching is the focus of chapter 2. Chapter 3 introduces several intercultural teaching models and theories that were then used to evaluate and interpret the teaching at ABC. Chapter 3 is mostly

devoted to the interpretation of ABC's teaching in light of these models. Chapter 4 has been devoted to laying out a theological and ethical basis (the *normative task*) for intercultural teaching. Chapter 5 focuses on the revised praxes for ABC, offering several suggestions for becoming a more culturally relevant teaching institution. In addition, several recommendations for further research and study were made at the end of this thesis.

## Opsomming

Hierdie tesis het ten doel om op 'n prakties-teologiese manier (1) die impak van kultuur op onderrig aan die African Bible College (ABC) te bepaal, (2) 'n hersiene praktyk vir tussenkulturele onderrig aan die ABC te ontwikkel, en (3) die ABC gevolglik in 'n meer kultureel tersaaklike onderriginstelling te verander. Aangesien kultuurverskille dikwels enige tussenkulturele poging verhinder, en aangesien die ABC voorts meestal uit Amerikaanse professore en Malawiese studente bestaan, is daar 'n behoefte om die uitdagings van hierdie kultureel vermengde instelling te beoordeel.

Die navorsingsvrae waarna hierdie studie ondersoek instel, is soos volg:

1. Watter soort tussenkulturele onderrig vind tans aan die ABC plaas? Met ander woorde, hoe vaar die ABC wat betref onderrig op 'n kultureel tersaaklike manier? Wat is die sterk en swak punte van onderrig aan die ABC? Watter tussenkulturele versperrings bestaan tans in die ABC? Hoe word Malawiese leerstyle/kultuurkwessies by tussenkulturele onderrig geïntegreer? Watter soort 'kulturele bagasie' is by die ABC ter sprake?

2. Wat beteken dit om kultureel tersaaklik te wees, en hoekom is dit belangrik? Met ander woorde, wat is sommige van die kernelemente van tussenkulturele onderrig? Wat is die algemene probleme? Wat is kontekstualisasie, interkulturasie, verwestering, ensovoorts?

3. Wat is die gewenste vorm van tussenkulturele onderrig vir die ABC? Met ander woorde, watter modelle vir tussenkulturele onderrig sou meer geskik wees vir die ABC, en hoekom? Hoe behoort doeltreffende tussenkulturele onderrig aan die ABC daar uit te sien? Hoe kan die ABC langtermyn- en doeltreffende tussenkulturele onderrig handhaaf?

Hoofstuk 2 bied 'n inleiding tot die konsep van tussenkulturele onderrig, en 'n empiriese ondersoek na die ABC se onderrigstyl. In hoofstuk 3 word verskeie modelle en teorieë vir tussenkulturele onderrig bekend gestel, wat vervolgens gebruik is om onderrig aan die ABC te beoordeel en te vertolk. Dié hoofstuk is dus hoofsaaklik aan die vertolking van die ABC se onderrig aan die hand van hierdie modelle gewy. Hoofstuk 4 bied 'n teologiese en etiese grondslag (die normatiewe taak) vir tussenkulturele onderrig, waarna hoofstuk 5 op die hersiene praktyke vir die ABC konsentreer, met verskeie voorstelle oor hoe dié onderriginstelling meer kultureel tersaaklik kan word. Die tesis sluit af met etlike aanbevelings vir verdere navorsing en studie.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis is dedicated first and foremost to the Lord, who has provided not only the insight for this research, but also the endurance and motivation to complete it. I would also like to acknowledge my wife Amy, who has lovingly stood by my side throughout my studies at Stellenbosch, as well as my two wonderful daughters, Nya and Analise, whom bring much joy and fulfillment to my life. I would also like to personally thank Dr. Ian Nell, my supervisor, who has given me the guidance and wisdom needed to finish this thesis.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

African Bible College (ABC) is located near the heart of Lilongwe, Malawi. ABC is an inter-denominational Bible college seeking to raise up Christian leaders whom will transform Africa for Christ. “The philosophy of African Bible College is based on the firm belief that quality education with God’s Word at the center cannot fail to produce quality leaders for the continent of Africa” (ABC Catalog & Prospectus 2007:8). ABC teaches Bible/Theology courses, general education courses, and various electives. All of these courses are designed to “broaden the world-view of the students and prepare them to be effective communicators, give them a purview of history, and understanding of the scientific method, an appreciation of cultural values, and a knowledge of human nature” (ABC Catalog & Prospectus 2007:8).

One of the things that make ABC unique is their teaching staff. Almost 70%<sup>1</sup> of the teaching staff at ABC comes from America. ABC hires qualified seminary graduates from America whom desire to go into the mission field as teachers. These missionaries raise their own financial support before coming to Malawi, which helps reduce the cost of tuition for the ABC students. As an institution, ABC believes that it is important to recruit trained and qualified teachers from America, not only to decrease the tuition costs, but also to provide the students with a high-quality education. The rest of the ABC staff is made up of Malawian seminary graduates. These graduates have proven to be very effective teachers and are considered invaluable to ABC, mostly because they are from the very same culture as the students and are able to relate to them on a very personal basis (ABC Catalog & Prospectus 2007:62).

Opposite to the culture of the American staff are the ABC students. All of the ABC students are African (99% Malawian<sup>2</sup>), and come from a considerably different culture than the American staff. Because of the mixed cultural environment this creates, it is important then to find out whether ABC’s teaching is culturally relevant. In order for ABC to succeed in its vision to train

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<sup>1</sup> There are currently 6 Malawian teachers and 12 American teachers as of the 2009/2010 academic year.

<sup>2</sup> There are currently 160 students from Malawi, 1 from Zambia and 1 from Zimbabwe as of the 2009/2010 academic year.

leaders in Africa, it must have a staff that teaches, relates, and ministers to its students in a *culturally relevant*<sup>3</sup> manner. The aim of this research project is to find out whether or not this is taking place.

*Intercultural*<sup>4</sup> teaching is a very important ministry, and must be performed with special care and consideration, because the act of *teaching* alone does not always guarantee *learning*. People can get on planes, travel overseas, land in foreign countries and teach natives, yet fail to actually translate or contextualize their message properly. “One can transport words across cultural boundaries (like bricks) but interpretation will depend on the context which their different interpreters bring to them. And that context will depend more on past experiences and present temper of the people to whom the words are addressed than on the good will of the persons who report them” (Park 1966:167). It is important then to recognize that true *learning* can never take place unless students can truly understand what they are being taught. Therefore, teaching must always translate into the culture of the learner. “Missionaries now understand that much more than a microphone and increased volume is involved in penetrating cultural barriers” (Hesselgrave 1991:97).

Learning how to teach in an intercultural context takes a lot of time, hard work and much patience. One must utilize appropriate intercultural teaching methods and models in order to fully succeed as an intercultural teacher. “It will take a great deal of work to master principles and practices of cross-cultural communication and to apply them in increasingly complex cross-cultural settings” (Mayers 1987:xi). The African Bible College (ABC) can only be as effective as it is culturally relevant, and without a proper analysis of the teaching at ABC in regards to its intercultural relevance, we may never know how effective or ineffective it really is. “Since missionaries have undertaken the responsibility of delivering the Christian message across cultural boundaries, the responsibility for achieving cultural understanding and initiating the process of contextualization rests on them” (Hesselgrave 1991:163-164).

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<sup>3</sup> I recognize that the topic of *cultural relevance* is a subjective one, and may be viewed very differently from one scholar to the next. And because of this, I have included in this study several models and theories in the field. See 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

<sup>4</sup> For the whole of this study, the word *intercultural* will be defined as “between or among people of different cultures” (Webster’s New World Dictionary 1980:734).

## **1.2 Research Problem**

### **1.2.1 Problem Statement**

The problem to be examined for this research revolves around whether ABC's teaching<sup>5</sup> is culturally<sup>6</sup> relevant or not, and to what degree thereof.

### **1.2.2 Problem Description and Research Question**

As stated above, ABC is made up of mostly American lecturers. And because of this, the question must be asked: Is ABC teaching in a culturally relevant way?

Empirical research methods were used for this study in an effort to properly investigate and analyze the intercultural theories and practices that are currently taking place at ABC, and to determine whether or not these practices are effective by comparing them with appropriate intercultural theories and models in the field.

### **1.2.3 Problem Outline**

The problems related to teaching interculturally at ABC will be embodied by some of the following questions:

1. What kind of intercultural teaching exists at ABC?
  - What are some of the current intercultural barriers existing at ABC?
  - How do Malawian learning styles / cultural issues play into intercultural teaching?
  - What kind of "cultural baggage" exists at ABC?

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<sup>5</sup> For this whole of this study, the word *teaching* will refer to, "the imparting of knowledge or skills (both inside and outside of class) and usually connotes some individual attention to the learner; implies systematized teaching, usually in some particular subject" (Webster's New World Dictionary 1980:1459).

<sup>6</sup> For the whole of this study, the word *culturally* or *culture* will be defined as "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of a given people in a given period; civilization" (Webster's New World Dictionary 1980:345).

2. What does it mean to be culturally relevant and why is it important?
  - What are some of the key elements of teaching interculturality? Common problems?
  - What is contextualization? Interculturation? Westernization?
3. What is desirable intercultural teaching for ABC?
  - What models in intercultural teaching would be more appropriate for ABC? Why?
  - What should effective intercultural teaching look like at ABC?
  - How can ABC sustain long-term and effective intercultural teaching?

### **1.3 Unit of Analysis, Design and Methodology**

#### **1.3.1 Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis for this study is: *ABC's teaching*; and in an effort to evaluate ABC's teaching properly, empirical research was conducted on ABC's (1) American Staff, (2) graduates, and (3) currently enrolled students.

For the purpose of this project, the term *intercultural teaching* will be dealt with from only a Christian perspective and will focus solely on the *missionary task* of intercultural teaching. Although there are many secular<sup>7</sup> ventures in the field of intercultural teaching, I will not be exploring any of these for this research, but will be assuming *Christianity* as the main motivation for intercultural teaching. As well, I will not be focusing on any specific courses at ABC, but will be focusing primarily on the methods in which the teaching at ABC is being transferred into the culture of the students.

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<sup>7</sup> secular: "*relating to worldly things as distinguished from things relating to church and religion*" (Webster's New World Dictionary 1980:1288).

### 1.3.2 Design

Both *qualitative* and *quantitative* data (a *mixed methods* approach) was collected for this study, using a *case study* strategy of inquiry. The idea of *mixed methods* research revolves around the idea of using both qualitative and quantitative data in a single research project. As seen in *figure 2*, one can see that the mixture of both strategies allows for a *triangulation* synthesis of the research data. Teddlie (2003:190) defines *mixed methods* as, “the conduct of two or more research methods, each conducted rigorously and complete in itself, in one project. The results are then triangulated to form a comprehensive whole”. For the *qualitative* analysis of this study, three ABC graduates, three ABC professors and three ABC students were interviewed (see 2.4.1). For the *quantitative analysis* of this study, an *intercultural survey* was conducted using the sophomore class at ABC.

### 1.3.3 Methodology

Firstly, various research methods (interviews, questionnaires, literature studies) were used in this study in an effort to properly examine the variety of intercultural teaching practices currently taking place at the ABC (the *Descriptive-empirical task*<sup>8</sup>). For the *qualitative analysis*, three ABC graduates, three ABC professors and three ABC students (see 2.4.1) were interviewed. For the *quantitative analysis*, an *intercultural survey* was conducted using the sophomore class at ABC (see 2.4.1.1).

Secondly, multiple theories and models in the field of intercultural teaching, specifically pertaining to the Malawian context, were utilized for this study (the *Interpretive task*). After a proper analysis of these various theories, the most common and widely accepted traits from each model were then chosen. These traits were then combined together to form a *joint model* (see 3.2.4.1). This model was then used to analyze and interpret ABC’s teaching, in an effort to determine the cultural relevance and impact of it.

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<sup>8</sup> See Osmer’s four tasks below (Osmer 2008:4).

I must also mention, that many of the current theories and models in the field of intercultural teaching, are often very generic and do not always pertain to just one specific situation, context or culture. In addition, there are many universal and transferable principles found in the field of *contextualization*<sup>9</sup> that can be applied to more than one situation, context or culture as well. Nonetheless, a major effort was made to include as much research and literature as possible that pertains specifically to the African/Malawian context.

Thirdly, a *theological interpretation* for what it means to teach interculturally, in relation to the Malawian context, was conducted (the *Normative task*). Additionally, suggestions that will enhance ABC's overall *effectiveness*, in the area of intercultural teaching, was outlined in chapter 4 (the *Pragmatic task*).

As mentioned above, I will make use of Osmer's (2008:4) research methodology as the framework for this project. Richard R. Osmer has laid out four critical tasks in the field of practical theology which should be considered whenever conducting any research in this field. These four tasks are described below:

### **1. Descriptive-empirical task**

The first task of practical theological interpretation asks the question "what is going on?". The purpose of this task is to find out as much information as possible about the situation before making any conclusions. This task will force the researcher to find out the full story rather than just making careless assumptions. Osmer (2008:4) puts it this way, "Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics is the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation". Without all the facts, we will never be able to fully interpret what is actually going on.

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<sup>9</sup> Contextualization is defined in Chapter 2

## **2. Interpretive task**

This second task asks the question, “why is this going on?”. The author explains that understanding the “why” of a situation can help the researcher better understand what is actually happening behind the scenes. Osmer (2008:4) explains that in order for a researcher to properly interpret a problematic situation, there must be a willingness on their part to get a little dirty in the process. This *Interpretive task* can take a lot of time, energy, and much patience. It may require a whole lot of research and a whole lot of listening. It may also require taking the time to study something that you may know nothing about. In addition, this task requires what the author calls a *sagely wisdom*. *Sagely wisdom* is not something that can be acquired by just sitting in a classroom or through reading a textbook, but is something that can only come after years of experience.

## **3. Normative task**

This task asks the question, “what ought to be going on?”. This task seeks to look at the situation from a theological and ethical point of view. This *normative task* allows one to see a situation from God’s perspective. Osmer (2008:4) explains that without this normative task, we will remain spiritually blind to our situation and will fail to solve the problem as a result. We must remember that this task is the most important of all the other tasks.

## **4. Pragmatic task**

This task asks the question “how might we respond?”. Osmer (2008:4) defines this task as, “Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation”. This final task can only be successful once tasks 1-3 are carried out properly. Osmer (2008:4) also argues that these four tasks of practical theology are not to be considered as fool proof solutions for every scenario, but should be considered as only guiding principles helpful for interpreting and solving various situations.

#### **1.4 Aim and Purpose of this Study**

The overall aim of this research project is to explore the various intercultural teaching factors currently hindering ABC from being culturally relevant. Once these factors have been established, a new practice for ABC can be determined. Therefore, the overall goal of this research project is to formulate a revised praxis that will enable ABC to become a more relevant intercultural institution.

This study is based on the premise that (1) teaching the Bible interculturally is a principle found in Scripture; (2) Jesus himself gave out this command (Matt. 28:16-20); (3) Jesus' disciples carried out this great commission. Therefore, it is imperative that one must learn the appropriate intercultural teaching techniques that are necessary for successful intercultural ministry.

It is worth mentioning, that Jesus himself was a missionary in the sense that he was sent by God into this world to rescue sinners. Jesus' *incarnation* is the ultimate example of what it means to be an intercultural missionary. John 1:14 describes this *incarnation*; "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". Andrew Walls (1996:26) states, "There is a history of translation of the Bible because there was a translation of the Word into flesh". Jesus did not speak in a foreign tongue, but spoke in the modern day language of the people, contextualizing his message accordingly. As Christians, and as missionaries, we too have the responsibility to *read* culture with the necessary hermeneutical skills, in order to contextualize the gospel message properly. This study is based on the premise that ABC can only be as effective as it is culturally relevant.

#### **1.5 Significance and Motivation of this Study**

Since I am a lecturer here at ABC, I thought it important to evaluate how we are doing as an institution regarding intercultural teaching. I have often wondered to what extent my own culture and background hinders my teaching ministry here at ABC. Throughout my studies at Stellenbosch, I have realized that the teaching ministry is a very vital part of practical theology, specifically within congregational ministry, and as a result of this research, I believe that ABC will become more aware of the issues surrounding intercultural teaching and adapt accordingly.

## **1.6 Delimitations**

Limitations of this study:

It is not possible to know how truly effective ABC has been in the past in regards to intercultural teaching, because this study really only captures the current picture. Previous professors could have been more or less effective at intercultural teaching.

## **Chapter 2 An Analysis of the Intercultural Teaching at ABC (Descriptive-Empirical Task)**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose and aim of this chapter is threefold: 1. to introduce and to define *intercultural teaching*; 2. to present a brief history of *intercultural teaching*; 3. and to research ABC in regards to its' *intercultural teaching*. These three steps play a very important role in the *descriptive-empirical task* laid out by Osmer (2008:79-128).

David J. Bosch (1991:421), the author of *Transforming Missions*, asserts, "From the very beginning, the missionary message of the Christian church incarnated itself in the life and world of those who had embraced it. It is, however, only fairly recently that this essentially contextual nature of the faith has been recognized." Bosch recognizes that when looking back through *missionary history*<sup>10</sup>, it is evident that the majority of Christian missionaries have struggled to properly transfer Christianity and the Bible from one culture to another. In other words, Christians have long struggled to be culturally relevant in their various intercultural endeavors. It is fair to ask the question then, why do some fail and some succeed in intercultural ministry? There are many contributing factors that cause such failures and successes, and it is these factors that must be determined before any successful intercultural teaching can take place in any ministry, vocation, or institution. This study seeks to determine such factors, in an effort to properly interpret the intercultural teaching methods taking place at the African Bible College in Malawi.

#### **2.1.1 African Bible College (ABC)**

As stated before, ABC is located in the city of Lilongwe, Malawi. ABC is an inter-denominational Bible college seeking to change Africa for Christ. Their aim is to raise up Christian leaders who can correctly handle the Word of God. ABC models itself after a

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<sup>10</sup> I will be analyzing a very small scope of Christian history since the aim of this project is not a historical analysis. I will though be looking into various instances in Christian History where the intercultural process (both negative and positive examples) can be evaluated. See 2.3.5

principle found in 2 Timothy 2:15, which states, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (NIV). In order to achieve these goals, ABC offers Bible, theology and general education courses, Christian service projects, and staff-student mentorship opportunities (ABC Catalog & Prospectus, 8:2007).

In light of ABC’s mission, and the fact that ABC’s American staff come from a completely different culture than the Malawian students, it is paramount then that the models and theories driving ABC’s teaching be analyzed. In order for ABC to succeed in their vision to *train leaders for Africa* (ABC Catalog & Prospectus, 8:2007), it is imperative that they have a staff that teaches, relates, and ministers in a culturally relevant manner. ABC can only be as effective as they are culturally relevant, and without a proper examination of ABC in regards to their intercultural teaching, one may never know how effective or ineffective ABC really is in this regard. This research project aims to find this out.

### **2.1.2 Intercultural Teaching**

For the purpose of this research, the subject of *intercultural teaching* will be dealt with from a Christian perspective only. Although there are many secular<sup>11</sup> ventures in the field of intercultural teaching, I will not be exploring any of these for this research, but will be assuming *Christianity* as the main motivation intercultural teaching. As mentioned earlier, I will not be focusing on any specific courses at ABC, but will be focusing primarily on the methods in which the teaching at ABC is being transferred into the culture of the students. The ministry of *intercultural teaching* will be dealt with as one of the sub-ministries that fall under the larger ministry of *intercultural communications*. There are many ministries that fall under the larger ministry of *intercultural communications*, such as preaching, counseling, psychology, evangelism, etc. *Intercultural teaching* on the other hand deals specifically with the educational side of communications (i.e., classroom instruction, curriculum design, teaching theory, etc).

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<sup>11</sup> secular: “relating to worldly things as distinguished from things relating to church and religion” (Webster’s New World Dictionary 1980:1288).

### 2.1.3 The Roots of Intercultural Teaching

It is important for this research to get to the heart of the problem of intercultural teaching. Without a proper understanding of the problem and how it all began, any attempts to fix the problem will prove to fail. The struggles related to communicating interculturally are ancient. Ever since the Tower of Babel crisis (Genesis 11), communicating interculturally has been a challenge for many. People have been struggling to communicate with those of other languages ever since that time. Genesis 11:1 says, “Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.” So, it wasn’t until God confused the languages that this crisis began. Genesis 11:7 says, “Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” Once the languages were confused, people simply couldn’t manage living together anymore. The burden to communicate was too difficult. They left their homes, their work, their friends, and even their families. People were more comfortable living only with those whom spoke their own language. Ever since that time and even up till now, language and culture have been one immense dividing force for mankind. Hesselgrave (1991:28) agrees by stating, “All students of communication can appreciate the conclusion of a man who has reflected as deeply on the human predicament as Kenneth Burke (1962) who said that “our problem is Babel!” And they can at least understand the concern of Sir Maurice Mawby (1972:26) for community when he says, ““You know, the greatest thing in the world would be a common language””.”

Thousands of years after the *tower of Babel* incident, a new movement was on the rise. Matthew 28:18-20 says, “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”. Christ gave his disciples a new command, requiring them to go and make disciples of all nations (emphasis mine). This mission would now require them to speak with, interact with, and disciple those of other cultures. Acts 1:8 says “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere – in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”. This was a revolutionary idea for the Jewish

Christians. They had assumed that the message of Christ was for the Jew only and not for the Gentiles<sup>12</sup>. It wasn't until Peter received a vision from heaven (Acts 10), that these Jewish-Christians began to reach out to the Gentiles. These early disciples finally came to realize that God has a heart for all people, no matter their nationality, religion, tribe, or tongue. This movement to reach *all the nations* began with just a few Christian converts, and two thousand years later, has multiplied into millions<sup>13</sup>.

It was this *tower of Babel* incident that had divided mankind centuries ago, and now it is this Christ who is uniting mankind once again, not under one common language, but under one common Lord. Intercultural ministry then must be one of the main priorities for all Christians, as it was for Christ<sup>14</sup>. In light of what Christ has done and is still doing, mankind must carry out Jesus' *great commission* (Matt. 28:19). Christians must be willing to work hard in order to properly communicate with those who do not speak their own language and who do not share their same culture. They must be willing to learn how to communicate and teach interculturally.

#### **2.1.4 Globalization and Intercultural Teaching**

As explained in 2.2.1, communicating interculturally is something that has been taking place ever since the beginning of human history. Nonetheless, as the world's population increases and mankind advances, communicating interculturally will become evermore the norm for mankind. Along with technological expansion and human achievement comes global integration. The world today is much smaller than ever in the sense that people can get on a plane and travel across the globe within hours. Phones, computers, television, radio and other communication mediums are also forcing people to interact with cultures other than their own.

Using the example of South Africa, Smit (2007:100) states, "It is indeed possible to argue that South Africa collapsed into modernity itself, almost overnight. Social, economic, cultural,

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<sup>12</sup> Gentiles: *a person of a non-Jewish nation* ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)). The Jews considered the gentiles to be outside of a covenant relationship with God. It wasn't until Peter, in Acts chapter 10, received a vision from God telling him to accept both Jew and Gentile alike.

<sup>13</sup> For a complete history on the growth and expansion of Christianity (including charts and numerical tables), see A.O. Van Lennep & A. F. Schauffler (1884:1-20). In regards to the estimated number of Christians worldwide as of 2001, see David B. Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2001 edition) which states that there are 2.1 billion Christians worldwide.

<sup>14</sup> Christ's *Incarnation*, otherwise known as *missio Dei*, is a model for intercultural missions (Bosch 1991:421).

educational, legal, intellectual, and indeed political transformations that took centuries to develop in some other countries, particularly in the West, have been happening here within just more than a decade.” Since the world is becoming more *globalized*<sup>15</sup>, people must learn how to communicate interculturally, there is no escaping it. Bevans and Shroeder (2004:315) state, ”In an age of one multinational economic system (capitalism) and one superpower (the United States), globalization is the context in which the church’s mission is lived and worked out.”

### **2.1.5 Defining Contextualization**

Translating a message from one culture to another in a relevant and effective manner (otherwise known as “*contextualization*”<sup>16</sup>) is a difficult task, and must be done with great care and patience. Language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, conflicting worldviews are just a few of the difficulties missionaries often face. Nonetheless, contextualization must be the ultimate goal for any intercultural pursuit. Hesselgrave (2000:1) states, “The missionary’s ultimate goal in communication has always been to present the supra-cultural message of the gospel in culturally relevant terms”.

Flemming (2005:19) defines contextualization<sup>17</sup> as follows:

I take contextualization, then, to refer to the dynamic and comprehensive process by which the gospel is incarnated within a concrete historical or cultural situation. This happens in such a way that the gospel both comes to authentic expression in the local context and at the same time prophetically transforms the context. Contextualization seeks to enable the people of God to live out the gospel in obedience to Christ within their own cultures and circumstances.

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<sup>15</sup> globalization: *growth to a global or worldwide scale; the globalization of the communication industry* (www.wordnetweb.princeton.edu).

<sup>16</sup> See 2.3.3.

<sup>17</sup> Other relevant sources defining “contextualization” are as follows: Eugene Clingman (2006: pr. 3); [www.africamissions.org](http://www.africamissions.org); [www.wesvanderlugt.wordpress.com](http://www.wesvanderlugt.wordpress.com); Carson, D.A. (1996:537-540); Van Rheenen, G. (2006:1-30); Hesselgrave (2000:1-2).

Although contextualization is a very important and necessary component for intercultural teaching, there must be some caution when attempting to contextualize any message. Not all contextualization methods are equally appropriate for every culture. Some methods can even damage the very *gospel*<sup>18</sup> itself. In the name of *contextualization*, some have even twisted the gospel in an attempt to syncretize their message to another culture. The results of this can be catastrophic, to communicate something that doesn't even resemble the gospel at all. It must be remembered then that anything less than the true gospel is not really the gospel at all (Clingman 2006: pr. 4).

In short, without proper contextualization methods, effective intercultural teaching cannot take place. Hendriks (2004:27) sums it up well by stating, “Western theologies had a tendency to apply their contextually formed views to all situations universally...However, if Christianity really wants to engage the hearts and minds of believers, it must seriously regard the context that shapes their lives and in which their communities are rooted.”

### **2.1.6 Popular Missionary Mistakes**

Below is a list<sup>19</sup> of some *popular*<sup>20</sup> mistakes made by various missionaries living abroad, according to one anonymous survey<sup>21</sup>. This survey was conducted specifically in response to American missionaries serving in Romania. I would like to note that the viewpoints mentioned below are just the opinions of a few people, and may or may not be shared by others.

At this point, I would like to also add a few disclaimers regarding this survey. Firstly, including this list was not an attempt to paint any unpleasant picture of Western missionaries; secondly, the mistakes listed are not necessarily true for all Western missionaries; thirdly, the purpose of this list was simply to shed some light on a number of possible problems occurring in intercultural

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<sup>18</sup> For this research, the term *gospel* will refer specifically to the saving message of Christ – See Romans 10:9.

<sup>19</sup> Adapted from the article entitled *Western Missionary Mistakes*. See [www.wemakedisciples.com](http://www.wemakedisciples.com).

<sup>20</sup> The word *popular* here means: within the means of the ordinary person; common; prevalent (Webster's New World Dictionary 1980:1109).

<sup>21</sup> Survey results can be found at [www.wemakedisciples.com](http://www.wemakedisciples.com). See *Western Missionary Mistakes* article.

ministry; fourthly, proper contextualization methods must always be utilized in order to avoid such mistakes.

A partial<sup>22</sup> list of these popular mistakes are as follows:

1. The first missionaries brought the gospel but then others came bringing their denominationalism and extreme doctrines.
2. Coming and making the Nationals (right word? Indigenous people? Natives?) sub-servient to their programs.
3. Being so strongly convinced about their own ideas that Nationals feel that taking advantage of missionaries and their budgets is justified by their own sense of rejection and resentment.
4. Saying many times that they came to serve but actually only functioning in the role of a supervisor, i.e. many missionaries become employers of nationals.
5. Passing on materialistic values through the example of the missionaries own life.
6. Expecting their native partners to live a long way below the level missionaries are living at has lead to a lot of resentment and bitterness. The natives have covered this up so that they don't lose the financial benefits that they are getting. This has lead to a lot of distorted relationships and ministry partnerships.
7. Missionaries coming with unbending ideas and philosophies. Not listening to Nationals.
8. Superior attitude toward nationals
9. Isolating themselves from Nationals. Having their own churches and attempting to remain exclusive
10. Sensationalizing the ministry. Throwing bibles and other materials out to people in church while taking pictures of people scrambling to catch something.

### **2.1.7 Summary**

The above list was included in this research for several reasons: 1. to help identify similar mistakes occurring at ABC; 2. to make the point that intercultural mistakes can be common amongst missionaries; 3. to show what kind of damage these mistakes can make.

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<sup>22</sup> The complete list includes a total of 30 mistakes.

Assuming that the above list accurately reflects common Western missionary mistakes, I will make a few comments thereof.

1. It seems that most of the mistakes described above are a result of Westerners simply not being able to break free from their Western ways of thinking. This list demonstrates how Westerners often struggle with a sense of superiority and pride; feeling at times better than the nationals. This feeling of superiority can be common amongst those who grow up in more advanced societies and for those who are well educated.

2. This list clearly demonstrates the great need for Westerners to lay down their pride and to learn how to assimilate into their respondent's culture; and if they cannot, it is possible that the Westerner may only serve to do more damage than actual good. This list and others like it may actually help Westerners wake up to the reality that intercultural ministry is very complicated endeavor and must be carried out with great care and consideration.

3. In order to become an effective intercultural teacher, one must be willing to listen to criticism and to accept sound advice from others. One cannot let their pride get in the way and to assume that their way is the *right* way. Learning from the mistakes and successes of others can help us grow and become even better than we had ever imagined. We can be sharpened by others, allowing them to chisel away our rough edges.

## **2.2 A Brief History of Intercultural Missions**

For this research, it is necessary to explore some of the history of *contextualization* and *intercultural missions*. Without a proper understanding of the past, in regards to the successes and failures that have been made, how can one move forward to succeed? Lewis, Crossman & Hoke (1994:6-14) state the following, "In formulating our own strategy, it is important to see how mission strategy has developed and to note success factors as well as action which have led to failure. This evaluation should help us determine what to attempt, as well as what to avoid in our mission strategy. A naïve urge to "reinvent the wheel" will only lead to a repetition of past mistakes out of ignorance or simplistic optimism."

This overview includes only a sampling of missionary history and does not attempt to cover all of missionary history. This sampling includes history from all around the world and covers several centuries of Christian missions. The purpose of this overview is to reveal some of the positive and negative intercultural methods used by various missionaries throughout the centuries.

### **2.2.1 Boniface (8<sup>th</sup> Century)**

According to Lewis, Crossman & Hoke (1994:14), towards the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, English missionaries were sent out all over Germany to evangelize the *heathen*<sup>23</sup> natives. These missions were conducted under the leadership of St. Boniface. Unfortunately, these missions were often very unproductive and even destructive at times because the missionaries focused more on destroying paganism rather than on sharing the message of Christ. Temples were destroyed, idols were smashed, and shrines were desecrated as a result.

It was the vision of Boniface, to civilize and to educate the natives. He believed that the natives should give up their culture in order to become *true* Christians. Tragically, Boniface carried out his mission without considering the cultural ramifications of his methods.

Another tragedy that took place during this time was the association of the missionaries with the colonizers and imperialists. The missionaries often worked alongside the colonizers and imperialists - whose only mission was to exploit the natives and their land. This confused matters a bit, causing the natives to grow suspicious of the missionaries. The natives eventually lost their trust in the missionaries, and the gospel message was lost somewhere in the mix (Beaver 1970:7-26).

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<sup>23</sup> non-Christian

### 2.2.2 The Crusades (1095-1291 AD)

For nearly 200 years, European Christians were picking up their swords, fighting horrific battles, traveling great distances and killing Muslims all in the name of Christ. These *crusades* were commissioned by many of the European states, in an attempt to retrieve the Holy Lands<sup>24</sup> back from the Muslims. These *crusades* can hardly be called *missions* in the sense that they did not bring the message of Christ to the Muslims in a peaceful manner. Pierson (2009:104) asserts to this by stating, “the *crusades*...were perhaps the worst example in history of a perverted understanding of Christian mission. They illustrate how bad theology leads to distorted and ineffective mission.” The *crusaders*, as they called them, believed that the Holy Lands were being defiled by the Muslims and needed to be returned (mainly by force) back to the people of God. The *crusaders* believed that they were on a mission from God and that killing Muslims in the name of Christ was justifiable. This *crusade* era was a vulgar misrepresentation of what true missions is all about. Even to this day many Muslims are still bitter towards Christians for what had happened back then.

### 2.2.3 17<sup>th</sup> Century Missions

During the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, European Jesuits were being sent out all over the world to be missionaries. These Jesuits were unique in that they were able to properly contextualize their message by means of learning the culture, the language, and the heart of the natives. These missions constituted the first real sign of true contextualization. The Jesuits lived closely amongst the people and learned their native tongue. They translated their literature and even taught the Bible using visual aids and drawings. The Jesuits even trained the natives to be priests and church leaders. These missionaries eventually lost their European support because the European States could not yet handle the concept of missionaries assimilating and adapting into foreign cultures. The Europeans expected the Jesuits to *civilize* and to *westernize* the natives as a part of their missionary task (Lewis, Crossman & Hoke 1994:15-16).

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<sup>24</sup> The *Holy Lands* refer to the nation of Israel or Palestine.

#### **2.2.4 Puritan Missions (17<sup>th</sup> Century)**

As Protestantism spread throughout North America during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Puritan missionaries were reaching out to the Native Americans in various forms. These missionaries used methods at times that were very destructive to Native American culture. Some would go as far as saying that the Puritans committed what they describe as *cultural genocide*. Tinker (1993:6) defines cultural genocide as “the effective destruction of a people by systematically or systemically (intentionally or unintentionally in order to achieve other goals) destroying, eroding, or undermining the integrity of the culture and system of values that defines a people and gives them life....It destroys a people by eroding both their self-esteem and the interrelationships that bind them together as a community.” Although these missionaries may have been sincere in their efforts, the results of their efforts were nowhere near what Christianity should be. The Puritans felt that in order for the Native Americans to become *true* Christian, they would have to dress differently, govern differently, approach religion differently and conduct business differently. The Puritans misunderstood and misused their Christian beliefs, serving only to erode the Native American culture rather than uplifting and supporting it (Tinker 1993:6).

#### **2.2.5 The Danish-Halle Missions (18<sup>th</sup> Century)**

According to Lewis, Crossman & Hoke (1994:16), in 1705, European missionaries, led by a man named Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, were being sent to India to evangelize, educate, and to translate the Bible. These missionaries were successful because they were willing to learn the Hindu religion and culture. They were also successful because they learned how to assimilate and to adapt into the Indian culture. Because of their efforts, many of the missionaries were loved and revered by the Indian natives. Fredrick Schwartz, one of the great European missionaries, went as far as living, looking, and speaking like one of the Indian gurus.

### 2.2.6 The Moravian Missions (18<sup>th</sup> Century)

According to Dana Lee Robert (2009:101-103), the Moravians were a very special group of missionaries. They were seen by many as self-sacrificing and noble. The Moravians were also well known for their anti-slavery agenda. The Moravian church was the first church to introduce the concept of *self supporting* missions. Their missionaries learned how to survive in the field without any financial backing. They learned how to support themselves by starting small businesses and through other financial enterprises. It is also known that the Moravians missionaries targeted the most impoverished places on earth. These missionaries sought to reach those who were the most destitute and deprived. They went as far as selling themselves as slaves in order to reach other slaves for Christ, especially throughout the West Indies. Their ministry strategies included preaching, teaching, and leadership training. Their aim was not to teach the natives rigorous theological concepts, but to teach them only the simple message of Christ. The Moravians were not forceful with their message; they just trusted in the Holy Spirit to do His work in the people. The Moravians were very successful missionaries and they converted many people to Christ. They were known to never leave their mission posts, except under heavy persecution (Lewis, Crossman & Hoke 1994:16-17).

### 2.2.7 Colonial Expansion (19<sup>th</sup> Century)

As European States began to discover new lands outside of their own borders, fresh opportunities for missions arose. As new colonies took shape, a call to *Christianize the heathen*<sup>25</sup> arose. Bevans and Shroeder (2004:214) state, “Beginning in the late 1870’s Germany, Belgium, England and France aggressively expanded their colonial domains, initiating a period of high imperialism”. Churches and mission organizations in Germany, Belgium, England and France also showed a dramatic growth at this time. Unfortunately, the *colonization* and *Christianization* mission of these countries became one and the same. Sanneh (1989:88) states, “At its most self-conscious stage, mission coincided with Western colonialism, and with that juncture students of the subject have gone on to make all kinds of judgments about the intrinsic bond between the

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<sup>25</sup> This phrase was common amongst early missionaries and colonizers. See (Lewis 1994: ch. 6).

two forces”. This *two-headed* mission ended up complicating the missionaries’ message as well as compromising the missionary task. Bevans and Schroeder (2004:179) describe this colonization period, from the side of the Spanish missions, in the following way, “To carry on the colonization process, the Spanish crown...ordered the indigenous peoples to be gathered into settlements or reductions – to “humanize,” “civilize” and eventually “evangelize” them.

Fortunately during this time, there were many god-fearing Christians who had a true heart for bringing the gospel to the natives. There was confusion though amongst these missionaries regarding what kind of methods should be used in order to convert these natives; because they had been taught that *civilizing* the natives was a key part of the missionary task. They were taught then that it was a necessary component of evangelization - to civilize, educate, and strip them of their *old ways* (in other words, strip them of their culture). Bediako (1999:227) states, “The missionary enterprise thus became part of a much wider benevolent movement in Africa: to elevate the peoples of Africa to “assume their place among civilized and Christian nations.” Without having their own culture and their own identity, the natives were not able to fully embrace the Christian message, considering it unfamiliar and undoubtedly European. The message of Christ was not properly contextualized during this time, and similar to Boniface, destructive and aggressive methods were used in an attempt to *save* the people (Lewis, Crossman & Hoke 1994:15).

### **2.2.8 The Great Century of Protestant Missions (19<sup>th</sup> Century)**

According to Bevans and Schroeder (2004:206), the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought forth a whole new era of missions. They state,

...a new missionary movement was on the horizon – a moment marked with such vitality and optimism that Latourette labeled it the “Great Century”. Protestant Christians were the initiators and primary agents of this period of mission. The foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in 1792 marked the beginning,

the World Mission Conference of Edinburgh of 1910 its culmination, and the beginning of World War I in 1914 its end.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, numerous mission organizations throughout America finally saw the need to send missionaries overseas. Van Gelder (2007:15) states, “The development of a formal discipline of *missiology* finally began to emerge during the nineteenth century”. As a result, hundreds of missionaries were being recruited, trained, educated, and sent out. Special handbooks and instructions were given to these missionaries in order to assist them for their work abroad. Unfortunately, those who actually wrote and prepared the training materials, most often had never even been overseas themselves. It was only later realized that the best teachers and trainers for overseas missionary work were the ones who had been serving overseas the longest (Lewis, Crossman & Hoke 1994:17).

It is also known that many of these mission organizations during this time were far too focused on the *civilization* agenda, considering the primitive ways of the natives to be a hindrance to Christianity. It was difficult for these organizations to separate the idea of *civilizing* and *evangelism*; they considered the two inseparable and necessary. These organizations put too much emphasis on just getting the message out rather than actually contextualizing the message. They considered *culture* to be an irrelevant part of sharing the gospel. Lewis, Crossman & Hoke (1994:6-18) state, “During the early decades there was never debate about the legitimacy of the stress on the civilizing function of missions. Debate was only about priority; which came first, Christianization or civilization?”

Another problem during this time, was the dependence of the new converts on the missionaries. When the people converted to Christ, they were often rejected by their families and had no one else to turn to other than the missionaries. The missionaries did their best to provide jobs, ministry opportunities, etc., but soon ran out of resources, both for themselves and their new converts. This was a major problem for many of the mission stations around the globe.

## 2.2.9 Mission Strategies of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Many mission strategies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century revolved around the *fostering* and *development* of indigenous<sup>26</sup> churches worldwide. This led to what is known as the *church-planting* movement. The goal of the church planting movement was to create indigenous churches that were “self-governed, self-supported, and self-propagated” (Lewis, Crossman & Hoke 1994:6-19).

Rufus Anderson was a major advocate for the church planting model. He protested against efforts to civilize the natives as a necessary step for *Christianizing*. Anderson believed that the gospel would do its work in the people, eventually transforming them into civilized people. So he refused to dictate how a native should act or dress in order to become a Christian.

### 2.2.10 The Colonialist Mentality

According to Lewis, Crossman & Hoke (1994:21), West Africa became a target for many British missionaries during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These missionaries decided to create indigenous churches in West Africa that would remain independent from British rule. As a part of this new endeavor, they created what was known as the *African Elite*. This *African Elite* was made up of West Africans who were trained, educated, and modernized by the British missionaries. As a result of their training, these Africans became very rich and powerful.

The purpose for building this *African Elite* was to provide financial and political backing for the British missionaries. They produced many of these independent churches so that they could operate them as they saw fit without having to answer to Britain. Unfortunately, these churches were never handed back over to the Africans. The missionaries believed that the Africans were inferior and incapable of running churches by themselves. These mission strategies were also implemented in other parts of the world, and it wasn't until the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 that these kinds of strategies were finally discussed, evaluated and eradicated.

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<sup>26</sup> Indigenous: *produced naturally in a region or country* (Webster's New World Dictionary 1980:716).

### **2.2.11 Evangelism, Education, and Medicine**

The idea for conducting missions through educational and medical means was something new for the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Doctors and teachers were now considered to be key players in world missions. Missionaries began carrying around medical packs; teachers started teaching Christianity in public schools abroad. Missions through these unconventional vocations proved to be very effective. Missionaries were meeting both the physical and spiritual needs of the people. People were more willing to accept the gospel once they could see the actions of the missionaries actually matching their words, hence the phrase, *actions speak louder than words* (Lewis, Crossman & Hoke 1994:21-22).

### **2.2.12 Since World War 2**

Since World War II, Christian missions have definitely taken some positive steps for the better. Missionaries and mission organizations have begun to learn from their mistakes, challenging old methods and introducing new ones. Ronald Allen was at the forefront of this change. He introduced many new missionary models that soon transformed missionary history. He wrote the book entitled *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (1962). In it he states,

The Western boards and societies initiated very little that was new in the way of strategy, but much to develop new methods: agricultural missions or rural development, some urban industrial work, mass media communications, more effective literature. This was the final stage of a mission which had been in progress for 300 years. Now the world was no longer divided into Christendom and heathendom. There could no longer be a one-way mission from the West to the remainder of the world. The base for a mission was established in almost every land, for a Christian church and community with an obligation to give the gospel to the whole world existed there. The moment for a new world mission with a radical new strategy had arrived. The revolution which swept the non-Western portions of the

world during and after World War II unmistakably put an end to the old order of Protestant missions.

### **2.2.13 Summary**

As previously stated, the purpose of this brief historical overview was to reveal some of the positive and negative intercultural methods used by various missionaries throughout the centuries. The past can be a great help for interpreting our present. Therefore, this historical overview will serve as a great tool for evaluating ABC's teaching. It will be interesting though to see whether or not the intercultural teaching methods currently being used at ABC actually coincide with any of the methods used throughout history. In other words, this historical overview will help interpret ABC's current teaching methods, to see whether or not they resemble those methods used in the past. It is important then to ask a few questions -- is ABC's teaching methods old, outdated and centuries behind? Are they on the cutting edge? Or, are they somewhere in between? This historical overview will help find the answers to these questions. The next section reveals the empirical data uncovered from the research/interviews conducted at ABC.

## **2.3 The (Qualitative) Analysis of ABC: Interviews**

The following questions were used to interview lecturers, students, and graduates from ABC. These interviews were conducted in order to get a more succinct understanding of ABC's teaching in regards to its cultural relevance. I will be conducting this qualitative research by using a *case study*<sup>27</sup> strategy of inquiry. These questions were all formed from the *joint model*<sup>28</sup> seen in chapter 3.2.4.1. The answers to these questions will help interpret the teaching at ABC in regards to its cultural relevance. The full interpretation and evaluation of these answers will be conducted in 3.3.

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<sup>27</sup> Case study research, according to Osmer (2008:51), "focuses on a single case or a limited number of cases, studied in depth for a specific period of time. Often a single individual, program, relationship, or practice within a community is studied intensively, though sometimes the community as a whole is studied. To explore a particular case in depth, researchers must rely on multiple sources of information, using a range of methods like interviews, participant observation, focus groups, or brief surveys. They develop detailed descriptions of events and activities to provide a richly textured picture of the case.

<sup>28</sup> See 3.2.4.1

The three different interview groups mentioned above were selected because they represent the three main types of people who have been directly involved with the teaching at ABC in some way, shape or form. Having these three different perspectives has allowed for a more objective study.

The interview data from these interviews is available in both written and audio form. The field notes that were conducted are also available in written form (see addendum).

Several semi-structured *focus group*<sup>29</sup> discussions were conducted with Rev. Sam MacDonald (see interview transcripts), in order to analyze and interpret the content of the interviews that took place for this study. Rev. Sam MacDonald is a professor of Anthropology and Theology at the ABC. The main questions that must be asked during a proper content analysis, according to Lasswell (1951:525), is “who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect?.” And these were the very questions that revolved around these discussions.

### 3.3.1 Interview Questions<sup>30</sup>:

1. Why do you think *teaching* in a culturally relevant way is important?
2. Do you see any theological basis for teaching in a culturally relevant way?
3. In what aspects do you think ABC’s teaching is culturally relevant?
4. In what aspects do you think ABC’s teaching is not culturally relevant?
5. Do you think ABC’s American staff have a good understanding of Malawian culture... The Malawian language? Explain.
6. What types of *teaching mediums* (ways of channeling the teaching) are being used at ABC?
7. What are some of the common expectations ABC students might have of their teachers (i.e. conduct, appearance, grades, discipline, involvement, etc.)?
8. How do ABC students view interpersonal relationships with the American staff?

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<sup>29</sup> According to table 11.6 entitled “Strengths and Weaknesses of Focus Groups”, Teddlie (2003:310) claims that focus groups “allow good interpretive validity”.

<sup>30</sup> These interview questions were conducted using audio recording. Field notes were also taken during the interviews. The interviews took place at ABC in Lilongwe, Malawi between Dec. of 2009 and February of 2010.

9. What factors would further help ABC to teach in a culturally relevant way?

In the following section, the answers to the above questions will be summarized and then later interpreted in 3.3.

### **2.3.1.1 Why do you think *teaching* in a culturally relevant way is important?**

Generally, all three interview groups agreed that teaching in a culturally relevant way is very important. Whether or not the actual teaching at ABC is culturally relevant or not is another question, which this research attempts to answer.

Most of the ABC students and graduates believe that culturally relevant teaching is very important, because unless the teaching content connects with the way students understand life, true learning cannot take place. The material being taught only becomes alive and tangible when it connects with the worldview and culture of the students. They also explained that when the American staff teaches in a culturally sensitive way, it makes them feel valued and respected as Africans.

The American staff also agreed that their teaching must be culturally relevant in order for maximum understanding and application to take place amongst the students. One of the lecturers even described the skill of contextualization, as teaching in a way that increases the chance of being understood and minimizes the chance of being misunderstood. Another lecturer explained that without a cultural connection in their teaching, the students will simply not understand the material and there will be no impact all.

### **2.3.1.2 Do you see any theological basis for teaching in a culturally relevant way?**

All three interview groups agreed that there is a theological basis for teaching in a culturally relevant way. Most of them referred to 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. In the passage Paul describes himself as “becoming all things to all men”. Two of the ABC students described Paul as being a

culturally relevant missionary and referred to his encounter with the Greeks in Athens in Acts chapter 17 and with the Ephesians in Acts chapter 19.

All three American lecturers and two of the ABC graduates referred to the *Incarnation of Christ*<sup>31</sup> as the prime example of what it means to be culturally relevant. They explained that the idea of God becoming a man (Jesus) clearly portrays God as being a contextual God. Jesus spoke the language of the people, dressed like the people, told stories that connected with the people and spent time with the people. One of the American lecturers used John 20:21, which says “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” He explained that this verse shows how Jesus expects all Christians to follow in his footsteps, to be culturally relevant.

### **2.3.1.3 In what aspects do you think ABC’s teaching is culturally relevant?**

According to the interview results, ABC’s teaching is culturally relevant in the following:

Firstly, the fact that ABC is located in Malawi and not in America, is a good sign that ABC understands that in order to reach Malawians, they must reside within the Malawian culture.

Secondly, the fact that the ABC staff live on campus together with their students is also a good sign. This gives the staff and students the ability to interact with one another on a regular basis. This interaction allows the staff to better understand Malawian culture and relate with their students at a deeper level.

Thirdly, the ABC students and graduates explained that many of the American lecturers are trying to learn their culture and often use Malawian stories, poetry, music, articles, and examples in their teaching.

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<sup>31</sup> Stott (1992:A-7) refers to the *Incarnation of Christ* by stating “The Word became flesh. The divine was communicated through the human. He identified with us, though without surrendering his own identity. And this principle of “identification without loss of identity” is the model for all evangelism, especially intercultural evangelism”. Hiebert (1992:C-29) also describes the *Incarnation of Christ* by stating, “A sense of oneness with the people creates in us an interest in learning more about them, and in sharing in their culture. Our example is Christ who, because of His love, became incarnate among us in order to bring us God’s good news”.

Fourthly, the outreach programs at ABC, which require the students to minister outside of campus once a week, allows the students to actually practice and apply what they have learned from the classroom into a Malawian context.

Fifthly, the fact that ABC actively employs qualified Malawian lecturers, demonstrates their interests in becoming a more culturally relevant institution. Many of the students and graduates that were interviewed explained how ABC's Malawian lecturers teach in a way that really helps them understand and apply the material more than many of the American lecturers can. It was also expressed that the Malawian lecturers were much better at relating the material to real life (Malawian) situations.

Sixthly, the radio program at ABC broadcasts both Malawian music and Malawian sermons, both in English and in Chichewa (the Malawian language). This was considered by several students and graduates to be very culturally relevant to the hearers of the program.

#### **2.3.1.4 In what aspects do you think ABC's teaching is not culturally relevant?**

According to the interview results, ABC's teaching is not culturally relevant in the following:

Firstly, several graduates and students complained that most of ABC's library books and text books come from America, and were written mostly by American authors. They explained that there are only a few books at ABC that were written by Malawians or even Africans.

Secondly, it was expressed by a few graduates that there are not enough Malawian lecturers at ABC and that more should be hired.

Thirdly, some students expressed that the American staff should use more Malawian examples and stories and less American examples and stories in the classroom.

Fourthly, there are many differences between the way American lecturers and Malawian lecturers mark tests, discipline, dress, lecture, and relate with students. One of the American staff members explained that Western education tends to be very rational, scientific, and systematic. This type of education is much different from traditional African education, which tends to be more abstract, holistic and non-linear. These cultural differences can frustrate both the American teacher and the African student when it comes to classroom learning.

Fifthly, the language barrier between staff and student was mentioned by many as a major cause for cultural misunderstanding and frustration.

#### **2.3.1.5 Do you think ABC's American staff have a good understanding of Malawian culture...The Malawian language? Explain.**

All of the American staff who were interviewed, described their understanding of the Malawian culture as being mediocre. Many expressed their desire to grow in this area and even suggested that going to Malawian funerals, weddings, and events really help. Most felt that they had a long way to go though in their understanding of the Malawian culture.

The students and the graduates on the other hand felt that the American staff was doing a great job at learning the Malawian culture. They mentioned seeing the staff at funerals, weddings, and other events, and that this showed a real sensitivity and respect for their culture. The students were very gracious in their depiction of the American staff and appreciated that the staff was even trying to learn their culture. They did mention though that the staff did have a very poor understanding of their language and that this created a real communication gap between them.

#### **2.3.1.6 What types of teaching *mediums* are being used at ABC?**

According to the three groups interviewed, the teaching mediums being used at ABC include: lecture, radio, video, internet, field trips, posters, tapes, CD's, recordings, PowerPoint, charts,

whiteboard/chalk, group work, practicum's, visitations, books, presentations, drama, oral presentations, examples, stories.

Some of the students and graduates that were interviewed mentioned how much they really appreciate the practical nature of ABC. They explained that ABC uses so many teaching mediums, helping them to really understand and apply what is being taught. They really appreciated in particular the group work, presentations, and off-campus visits.

It was mentioned though, by several of the interviewees, that many of the library books and classroom textbooks are not culturally relevant, because most of them come from America and are written by American authors. The interviewees expressed their desire to have more library books and textbooks that were written by African authors.

#### **2.3.1.7 How do ABC students view interpersonal relationships with the American staff?**

According to the graduates and students of ABC, interpersonal relationships in general are very important to Malawians. They explained that ABC students truly desire to get to know their teachers, to understand their western culture and to be mentored and helped by them. Malawians want to be cared for, respected and loved. They want to feel valued and accepted by the American staff. One student explained that a teacher will not be effective at ABC if they just teach their material and that is all. A teacher must be a role model, a mentor, and a friend of those whom they are teaching. Without this kind of interaction outside of the class, they will not be as effective inside of the class. In general, they felt that the American lecturers were fairing well in being intentional with the students outside of the classroom.

Some of the American staff explained that Malawian students in general tend to have very low expectation of their teachers when it comes to interpersonal relationships. They claimed that Malawian teachers are known to be somewhat distant when it comes to relating with their students, and that Malawian teachers are to be respected as well as feared. Therefore, they deduced that ABC students feel the same way about the American teachers on campus. The fact

that they get anything from the American staff when it comes to relationships is considered by them to be above and beyond.

### **2.3.1.8 What factors would further help ABC to teach in a culturally relevant way?**

The following suggestions for ABC were compiled from the three groups that were interviewed:

1. The American staff should spend more time discipling and mentoring their students.
2. More African/Malawian textbooks, library books, etc. should be available for students.
3. Hold regular meetings to brainstorm ideas on how to become more culturally relevant as an institution. ABC could invite special Malawian lecturers, speakers or pastors to lead these discussions.
4. Encourage or even require the staff to spend time outside of campus among the Malawians. This could include going to funerals or weddings; preaching; traveling with students to their home villages; outreaches; etc.
5. Conduct intercultural training for the staff. This training could include studying the New Testament culture and how it relates to the Malawian culture; studying the way in which Jesus related to his culture – through parables, stories and examples.
6. Hire more Malawian lecturers.
7. The American staff should become more fluent in Chichewa (The Malawian language).
8. American lecturers should hold more debates in their class in order to find out what Malawian students are really passionate about.
9. Do not only *lecture*.
10. Spend more time listening to, relating with, and learning from the Malawians.

### **2.3.2 The (Quantitative) Analysis of ABC: Survey Questionnaires**

An intercultural *survey*<sup>32</sup> was given to the Sophomore class (thirty-five in all) at ABC in order find out how the students viewed the intercultural teaching at ABC. This survey was conducted

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<sup>32</sup> See survey questions and results in the addendum.

in a controlled classroom environment. PowerPoint instructions were given to help the students fill out the survey in the proper manner. A brief description and explanation of the project was given to the students before they conducted the survey in order to help them fully understand the context purpose of the survey. The survey questions<sup>33</sup> were assembled in light of Johnson & Christensen's (2000:308) *Principles of Questionnaire Construction*.

These questions were all formed from the *common model*<sup>34</sup> seen in chapter 3.2.4.1. The answers to these questions will help interpret the teaching at ABC in regards to its cultural relevance. The full interpretation and evaluation of these answers will be conducted in 3.3. The complete questionnaire can be found in the *addendum* of this study. The results of this survey can be found in the *addendum* as well.

### 2.3.2.1 Survey Questions

1. How well do you think the American lecturers at ABC understand the Malawian culture?
2. How well are the American lecturers at ABC teaching in a culturally relevant way?
3. How well do the American lecturers at ABC speak the Malawian language?
4. How often do the American lecturers use words and phrases from their own culture that are not familiar to Malawian students?
5. How important is it for you to have a teacher that is culturally relevant?
6. How often do the American lecturers at ABC teach in a culturally relevant way?
7. How well do the American staff members relate with their students on a personal level (inside and outside of the classroom)?
8. How much more culturally relevant are the Malawian lecturers at ABC than the American lecturers?
9. How often do the American lecturers at ABC use teaching mediums that are helpful for Malawian learners?

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<sup>33</sup> The survey questions were evaluated by a research expert, via my promoter Dr. Ian Nell, on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at 11:30am in Stellenbosch, SA. The research expert deemed my questions both scientific and adequate for this research.

<sup>34</sup> See 3.2.4.1

10. Since ABC is an American run institution, how culturally relevant do you consider ABC as a whole.

### **2.3.2.2 Summary**

The information that was gathered for this research has proven to be very helpful for determining a *combined data interpretation* (see figure 2). After conducting all of the interviews and surveys, as well as organizing all the data, it is obvious that there are many opinions and viewpoints on the issue of intercultural teaching, specifically pertaining to the ABC/Malawian context. The models presented in chapter three will help assist in the interpretation process and help clarify the most relevant aspects of this empirical data.

It is worth mentioning, that the results and interpretations of the questionnaire both parallel and support the findings of the interviews. It is clear that the questionnaire fully corroborates the data collected from the interviews. Thus, for the sake of monotony and due to the limited scope of this research, the interpretation of the questionnaire will be limited to the visual graphical charts found in the addendum.

## **Chapter 3 An Analysis of Several Intercultural Teaching Models (Interpretive Task)**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is twofold. 1. To introduce several models and theories for intercultural teaching. 2. To use these models and theories to help interpret the teaching of ABC. These two steps play a very important role in the *Interpretive task* laid out by Richard Osmer (2008:79-128). Without a proper understanding of the most recent and accepted theories, one cannot suitably interpret their own research.

Regarding the research context, I will be analyzing current theories and models especially pertaining to the Malawian context. After analyzing these various theories, I will then choose the most common and widely accepted traits found in each. I will then combine these traits together to form a *joint model*<sup>35</sup>. This model will then be used to analyze and interpret the teaching at ABC, determining its' cultural relevance and impact.

After previewing the literature available on intercultural teaching, I noticed that many intercultural teaching theories and models are generic and do not always pertain to just one specific context or culture. There are many universal and transferable principles in the field that can be applied to more than one context or culture. Regardless, a major effort was made to include as much research as possible pertaining to the Malawian context.

### **3.2 Intercultural Teaching Models**

Since there are a number of intercultural teaching models in the field<sup>36</sup>, I have chosen only a sampling of them for this study. It is not within the scope of this project to include every theory and model in the field, but to include only those that are considered the most modern, relevant,

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<sup>35</sup> A "*joint model*" refers to a model that was formed from the common traits of various theories in the cross-cultural teaching field. See 1.3.2

<sup>36</sup> Examples of intercultural teaching models can be found in: Mayers (1987) title, *Christianity Confronts Culture*; Banks (1999) title *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*; Walls (2002) chapter entitled *The Ephesian Moment*.

and widely accepted. After performing a thorough examination of many models, I have established the following to be the most fitting for this research on the basis that these models deem to be: 1) widely accepted by many scholarly missiologists and theologians worldwide 2) and are widely used by many prominent missionaries from around the globe.

### 3.2.1 The Model of David J. Hesselgrave

The following model was designed by David J. Hesselgrave (1991), and can be found in his book *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (1991:161-174). This book has been revised several times and is considered by many<sup>37</sup> to be one of most practical works on intercultural ministry. Hesselgrave served as a missionary in Japan for twelve years and is now serving as the Professor of Missions and the Director of the School of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Hesselgrave calls his model the *Seven Dimensions of Cross-cultural Communication* (1991:163).

These *seven dimensions*<sup>38</sup> are outlined as follows:

1. **Worldviews:** ways of perceiving the world.
2. **Cognitive Processes:** ways of thinking.
3. **Linguistic Forms:** ways of expressing ideas.
4. **Behavioral Patterns:** ways of acting.
5. **Social Structures:** ways of interacting.
6. **Media Influence:** ways of channeling the message.
7. **Motivational Resources:** ways of deciding

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<sup>37</sup> Kenneth S. Kantzer, the director of the Ph.D. Program at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, states in his forward of Hesselgrave's (1991: Back cover) *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*: "This revised edition of Dr. David Hesselgrave's great work *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* updates the original edition and interacts with the most recent literature on this increasingly important topic. The original edition went through fifteen printings and, very deservedly, has come to be one of the most widely used textbooks on Christian cross-cultural communication. The revisions in this new edition are extensive and carry on the high level of discussion maintained throughout the original edition, taking into account, for example, the current discussion on the relationship between form and function and the enormous body of literature that has sprung up recently on contextualization".

<sup>38</sup> Hesselgrave (164:1991)

In reference to the above model, Hesselgrave (1991:164) states,

“the missionary needs to learn to communicate Christ to respondents in terms of their (the respondents’) way of viewing the world, their way of thinking, their way of expressing themselves in language, their way of acting, their response to media, their way of interacting, and their way of deciding future courses of action. These dimensions interpenetrate and impinge upon one another. They are separable for pragmatic purposes, but, of course, combine to form one reality.

Hesselgrave’s (1991:164) *Dimensions of Cross-Cultural Communication* diagram (see figure 2 in *addendum*), illustrates the complex communication process that often takes place from one culture to another. This diagram demonstrates how the *message source* (culture X) transfers into the *respondent’s culture* (culture Y), and how there is always a communications gap between the two. Hesselgrave explains that in order for a message to be properly contextualized, the *messenger*<sup>39</sup> must always consider the worldview, cognitive process, linguistic form, behavioral pattern, social structure, media influence, and motivational resource of their respondent’s culture. In other words, when these 7 dimensions are applied properly, there is a greater chance for contextualization to occur (Hesselgrave 1991:163-165).

### **3.2.1.1 Dimension 1: Worldviews**

Regarding the topic of *worldviews*, Downs (1971:36-37) states, “Men living in coherent groups, define the world around them, deciding what is real and how to react to this reality. Failure to grasp this simple fact about culture – that is, culture, not rocks or trees or other physical surroundings, is the environment of man – dooms any attempt to work in a cross-cultural context.” In such a diverse world, one cannot assume that everyone interprets life the same way. Understanding the worldviews of others is imperative for effective intercultural teaching, and the more you can understand, the more relevant your ministry will be. Once you can learn how your respondent’s see the world around them, you will be better equipped to reach their needs, their

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<sup>39</sup> *Messenger*: refers to the source of the message (i.e. missionary; teacher). See Hesselgrave (1991:163).

hearts and their beliefs. Taber (2003:32) says it best, “Each culture is unique and sui generis, not truly comparable to any other.

### **3.2.1.1.1 The Tribal Worldview**

In an intercultural context, understanding your own worldview and the worldviews of others is critical for effective and relevant intercultural teaching to take place. Communicating Christ from a Western perspective into a tribal<sup>40</sup> worldview, much like what is taking place at the African Bible College, can be truly complex without one having a proper understanding of how tribal people may see the world around them.

Regarding differing worldviews, Harries (TBP by 2011:3) states,

Whatever Western man sees happening in rural Africa, he can explain using his own worldview. Someone being spirit possessed he calls emotion. A rain maker’s producing rain he assumes to be coincidence. Someone’s being healed through prayer he considers to be placebo. Attempts at manoeuvring mystical forces through animal sacrifice he finds to be motivated by a desire to eat meat. Hence Westerners can make a close study of Africa life, as many anthropologists have done, without in the least compromising their Western scientific worldview!

So how can a Westerner teach effectively within a tribal<sup>41</sup> context? As mentioned above, a rich understanding of the tribal culture and their worldview is imperative for successful intercultural teaching. It is important to recognize though, that a rich understanding of the tribal worldview alone does not always ensure successful intercultural teaching. There are several other dimensions that must be considered as well. The next dimension we will be looking at is what Hesselgrave (1991:164) calls the *cognitive process*.

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<sup>41</sup> For this research, a *tribal worldview* or a *tribal context* can be best defined as those (people) who relate to one another and the world around them from a view point that has been formed from living in a tribal or indigenous environment. Merriam-Webster (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tribal>) defines a *tribe* as being: *as of, relating to, or characteristic of a tribe* <tribal customs.

### 3.2.1.2 Cognitive Process: Ways of Thinking

The *cognitive process* refers to the way in which people come to know what they know. This process of *knowing* is influenced by many different factors: 1. how a person was raised; 2. the environment they grew up in; 3. their education; 4. their culture; 5. their struggles, etc. When discussing this issue of how people think, one might become rightly overwhelmed when taking into account the billions of people around the world who do not always think the same way they do. Lindsell (1955:193) comments on this issue of *cognition* by stating, “The mind of a people differs from the mind of all other peoples. No two races or groups of people think exactly alike. An understanding of the mind is another prerequisite to effective evangelism.”

Western thinking tends to be very conceptual, logical and abstract. Although there is nothing wrong with logical thinking, theologians from the west frequently get too caught up in formulating theological arguments and systematizing the Bible, while forgetting the more practical and life changing messages of Christianity. Western theologians who teach in Third World<sup>42</sup> cultures are often considered by the natives as confusing, dull, and irrelevant. Logical concepts are somewhat foreign to Third World people, and an effort needs to be made to teach the Bible in a way that is both conceptual and practical at the same time; otherwise the teaching may become irrelevant as a result (Hesselgrave 1991:305-310).

According to Hesselgrave (1991:325), tribal people all around the world are predominately *concrete-relational*<sup>43</sup> thinkers, while Westerners are predominately *conceptual*<sup>44</sup> thinkers. When Westerners teach tribal people, they must realize that tribal people process information much differently than they do. If the westerner does not become familiar with these differences, their hearer’s may have a difficult time learning and comprehending the teaching. Hesselgrave asserts

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<sup>42</sup> Third World: *the developing nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, generally less economically advanced than the industrialized nations but with varied economies. Originally the Third World was contrasted with the First World, the capitalist industrial nations, and the Second World, the industrialized Communist nations* (See: Encarta Dictionary: English (U.K.) MS Word 2007.

<sup>43</sup> According to Hesselgrave (1991:325), the *concrete-relational* thinker “tends to express, inform, and persuade by referring to symbols, stories, events, objects, and so forth, rather than to general propositions and principles. But he is especially prone to rely on nonverbal communications of all types – gesture and sign language, music and the plastics arts, ritual and drama, and image projection.”

<sup>44</sup> Hesselgrave (1991:306) describes conceptual thinking with the following, “it must yield itself to logical ordering and analysis.”

to this by (1991:332) stating, “It is, for them, too deep, too dogmatic, too definite, and too difficult. It is too abstract, too ideological, too conceptual, too formalistic, too “unnatural,” and too “unfeeling.”

Hesselgrave (1991:333-339) offers several practical suggestions, if not guidelines, for teaching concrete- relational thinkers in the following:

1. *Teach the Bible as a “treasure house of truth communicated indirectly and in concrete thought forms”* (333). “The missionary then should be able to distinguish and use metaphors, similes, symbols, types, parables, allegories, and emblems. The missionary will find material for this type of concrete communication all around him – in the Book he holds, the life he lives, and the experiences he observes” (Hesselgrave 1991:334).
2. *Emphasize the Biblical ordinances.* Hesselgrave (1991:335) states, “The ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper had a large part to play in the communication of the faith of the early church.”
3. *Use drama and ritual.* According to Hesselgrave (1991:338), drama and ritual “have special appeal in concrete relational cultures and should be used in missionary communication. Concrete-relational thinkers think *dramatically*. Truth is perceived by them in terms of life experiences.”
4. *Verbal communication should start with the illustration, moving to the principle.* Hesselgrave (1991:338) states, “proceed from the illustration to the principle, not from the principle to the illustration as is characteristic of Western preaching”.
5. *Teach Biblical truth using visual aids.* Hesselgrave (1991:339) states, “The art of communicating Christian truth by means of, and in conjunction with, diagrams, pictures, and artifacts of various kinds needs much greater development in the training and practice of cross-cultural Christian workers.”

### **3.2.1.3 Linguistic Forms: Ways of Expressing Ideas**

When speaking of *linguistics*, we are speaking of language. Language allows us to communicate our thoughts, ideas, and feelings to one another. Without language, we would not be able to express our deepest thoughts, feelings, and aspirations. When living in a foreign culture, it is imperative then that one learns the language of the people. If we truly want to *know* the people, we need to learn their language. If we truly want to make an impact on a culture, we must be willing to learn their native tongue. According to Hesselgrave (1991:349-355), what is usually lost when communicating interculturally is for the most part due to language. He states (1991:385), “The use of the respondent language is a part of the credentials of the missionary communicator. It is part of the process of winning a hearing. This missionary who gives due consideration to language will also find that scales will fall from his own eyes as they did from the eyes of Paul in answer to the prayers of Ananias.”

### **3.2.1.4 Behavioral Patterns: Ways of Acting**

Behavioral patterns and nonverbal communications make up a large percentage of how we communicate. We do not communicate with one another through words only, but through our actions and behaviors as well. Nonetheless, verbal and nonverbal communications work together as one (Hesselgrave 1991:389-401).

Therefore it is vital to learn how to communicate in a intercultural context in a way that our nonverbal cues properly translate into the respondent’s culture. Nonverbal cues may differ from one culture to the next, so we cannot assume that we are being understood simply because we are speaking. A different message may be communicated without ever knowing it. According to Hesselgrave (1991:399-401), some of the nonverbal cues or behaviors we use can be divided up according to one of the following categories. 1. *Physical characteristics*: such as our clothing, hair style, facial hair, stance, body odors, height, weight, etc. 2. *Body language*: involving our gestures, bodily movements, eye contact, facial expressions, etc. 3. *Touching behaviors*: such as holding hands, hugging, kissing. 4. *Spatial Relationships*: deals with space or proximity

between people - during funerals, weddings, conversations, boy/girl friendships/relationships, etc. 5. *Paralanguage*: “includes such factors as pitch, rhythm, rate of speaking, articulation, resonance, pauses, voice inflection” (Hesselgrave 1991:400).

Every culture has different expectations in regards to the five categories listed above. For example, one culture may consider hugging the opposite sex as an appropriate greeting, while another culture may consider it offensive. It is therefore imperative that every intercultural communicator understands the nonverbal cues and behaviors of their respondent’s culture. A proper understanding of these behaviors will only serve to enhance their communication efforts. Hesselgrave (1991:450) adds, “The missionary should make every effort to understand, adapt, and utilize indigenous behavioral patterns for the cause of Christ. Persons with less lofty ideals than the missionary espouses have recognized the importance of this.”

### **3.2.1.5 Social Structures: Ways of Interacting**

How can a proper understanding of a cultures’ *social structure* be helpful for intercultural communication? This section attempts to answer that question. Hesselgrave (1991:453-524) asserts that social structures can differ tremendously from one culture to the next, and without a proper understanding of a cultures’ *makeup*, communication may suffer as a result. Once we can identify how a society operates socially and how they interact with one another according to their valued roles, we can then communicate more effectively.

In an attempt to simplify, Hesselgrave (1991:453-524) divides tribal people into one of three categories: 1. *Marginals*: people who are on the fringe of society; people who do not have a voice in their culture; people who are considered less significant members of society. 2. *Influential individuals*: people who occupy the leadership roles of their culture (i.e. elders, religious leaders, chiefs, etc.); people who have a voice in their culture. 3. *Orators*: spokespeople; individuals who always make the final decisions; people who usually win arguments; motivational speakers. According to Hesselgrave (1991:454), “numerous missionaries have entered their respondent cultures without any attention whatsoever to the

social structure, evidently assuming that the new culture would be a carbon copy of their own or that the differences would prove to be unimportant.” It is very important then for missionaries to take into account their assumed roles in the respondent’s culture.

There are several matters which missionaries must consider when living outside of their own culture. Firstly, it is important for missionaries to remember that they are foreigners of that culture. What they say and what they do will be analyzed and interpreted according to that culture. One cannot just stomp right into a culture and just preach the gospel without considering the social structures of that culture. Tribal cultures can be easily offended when certain individuals within their sphere (i.e. chiefs, influential citizens, etc.) are not properly recognized when foreigners appear (Hesselgrave 1991:453-524).

Secondly, missionaries must also remember that they are *guests* of that host culture. Guests in Third World countries are often treated much differently than guests in most western countries. It is normal for people to place much honor and respect on guests of Third World countries. According to Hesselgrave, there are certain behaviors worth learning as a guest in a Third World country. 1. One should never offend or be rude. 2. One should also refrain from appearing arrogant or overconfident. 3. A Guest must always follow the social rules of their hosts. 4. Guests must be respectful and polite. According to Hesselgrave, western missionaries are often considered prideful, rude, and offensive by many Third World cultures, simply because they do not often take the time to learn the social structures and societal norms of that culture (Hesselgrave 1991:453-524).

Thirdly, missionaries must bear in mind that they are considered to be *experts* in religion by their respondents’ culture. This becomes a great responsibility for the missionary; because what they teach will be considered *orthodox* or *biblical*, even if it is not. Missionaries then must always teach the Bible with both skill and humility (Hesselgrave 1991:453-524).

### **3.2.1.6 Media Influence: Ways of Channeling the Message**

There are many ways to channel a message and not all of them are equally effective. As well, the impact of media differs from one culture to another. Therefore, one cannot assume that every successful teaching medium used in the west will have the same impact on those of the Third World. Hesselgrave (1991:527) affirms this by stating, “It seems that some delusions will never die. One such delusion is the notion that messages can be put into any available medium of transmission at one end and come out the other end as the same message – unscathed, untainted, untouched. The idea has no basis in fact. It has been dealt sever wounds that should have proved fatal. But it lingers on with no indication of an imminent demise.”

Using a variety of communication mediums is a vital and necessary means for effective intercultural ministry. Third World countries especially value numerous forms of media, such as: music, radio, books, magazines, film, etc. Hesselgrave (1991:527-570) lists the following *media forms* especially helpful for *concrete-relational thinkers*<sup>45</sup>: books, magazines, drama, ritual, music, dance, pictures, symbols, journals, booklets, tracts, radio, television, mass communications, film, group dialogue, projectors/slides, computer, and mail/email.

### **3.2.1.7 Motivational Resources: Ways of Deciding**

The final dimension of Hesselgrave’s model deals with the issue of *decision making*. Every culture views decision making differently. Some cultures may consider quick decisions impulsive and reckless, while others may consider them sensible and prudent. Understanding the way people make decisions is a very important aspect of intercultural ministry.

As Christians, we are all called to share the message of Christ in a way that implies a response from others. Therefore, we are duty-bound to understand the cultural implications behind a person’s decision, especially when they are making a decision to follow Christ. Many *concrete-relational* thinkers feel obligated to make a decision for Christ right away, and then process that

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<sup>45</sup> See 3.2.1.2

decision later. These types of decisions most often are superficial and shallow, not resulting in any kind of long-term commitment. Missionaries may think they are converting hundreds of people to the Lord simply because people are saying *yes* to their message, but it may be that people are saying *yes* only to be gracious and polite. Without any kind of follow up with these alleged converts, it would be really hard to know what kinds of decisions are being made. This is why it is of great importance to understand the decision making process of any given culture. Hesselgrave (1991:613) drives the point home by stating, “As has been noted, however, the ways in which societies look upon decision making and are predisposed actually to make decisions vary widely from culture to culture. In the nature of the case, Christian evangelists and missionaries are required to emphasize the necessity of making a decision. Unfortunately, it has not been required that they study the philosophy and methodology of decision making from a cultural perspective.”

#### **3.2.1.8 Summary and Critique**

Hesselgrave has put forth a lot of effort for determining the most appropriate intercultural teaching techniques for intercultural ministry. I appreciate the practical nature of Hesselgrave’s work. Rather than getting caught up in endless theories and hypothesis, Hesselgrave has offered practical suggestions and helpful insights that can be applied to most intercultural situations. I also chose to introduce Hesselgrave’s model first because it is in my opinion the most practical and well researched model available on intercultural communications.

To offer a critique of Hesselgrave’s (1991) work, I have observed the following:

Hesselgrave offers many theories and practices in the field of cross-cultural communications that are very imperative for intercultural teaching. Most, if not all of his theories and practices are undisputable and have been accepted by most scholars of intercultural studies. Hesselgrave unfortunately though does not spend much time dealing with the problem of *over-contextualization*. Over-contextualization, in Hesselgrave’s case, would be to take the principles

he offers to the extreme, to contextualize so much, that you fall prey to *syncretism*<sup>46</sup>. Rheenen (2006:79) asserts to this by stating, “Both the under-contextualization and the *over-contextualization* of the Christian faith constitute open invitations to syncretism”. For example, in *Western* cultures, such as my own, Christians are often becoming so much like their own culture (the *secular* culture that is), that they are too often bending to social (*secular*) norms rather than living by Biblical mandates. Evidently, without a careful application of the methods Hesselgrave offers, one could fall prey to becoming so relevant that they end up losing or watering down the Christian message as a result. *Syncretism* is just one of the ills of many that can result from an over-contextualized message.

I will now introduce a second model, one created by Dr. Dorothy Bowen and Dr. Earle Bowen. This teaching model is very significant for this research because it is the most relevant model I have found pertaining to the ABC context as well as to the African context in general.

### **3.2.2 The Model of Dr. Dorothy Bowen and Dr. Earle Bowen**

Dr. Dorothy Bowen and Dr. Earle Bowen are both former faculty members at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology in Kenya, East Africa. Dr. Dorothy Bowen is currently an associate professor at Eastern Kentucky University and Dr. Earle Bowen is currently an adjunct professor at Indiana Wesleyan University. Dorothy and Earle worked as educators and writers in Kenya for almost 30 years. They specialized in *African Adult Theological Education* and have conducted much research in the area of *African learning styles*. In their article entitled, *Contextualization of Teaching Methodology in Theological Education in Africa*, they have laid out a detailed model for western educators teaching in theological schools in Africa. Their model was first presented to the Accrediting Council for Theological Education Conference of Theological Educators in Limuru, Kenya - June 16-19, 1988, and was then later published by the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* on July of 1988.

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<sup>46</sup> *syncretism* is the blending of Christian beliefs and practices with those of the dominant culture so that Christianity loses its distinctiveness and speaks with a voice reflective of its culture (Rheenen 1997, 173).

In regards to this article (Bowen, 1988), I would like to clarify, that although Bowens' research is a bit dated, the context of their study is amazingly akin to the context of my own, that I deemed it necessary to use their model for interpreting the intercultural teaching at ABC. The research for this model was conducted by both Dr. Dorothy Bowen and Dr. Earle Bowen, using several research tools, and testing a total of 205 students in four theological colleges and three government secondary schools throughout Africa. Bowen (1988:4-5) states, "We conducted research in both West and East Africa to identify the predominant African learning styles and then to propose those teaching strategies which are most appropriate in higher education on the continent."

The abstract for their publication reads as follows,

Differences between the learning styles of Western and African students are highlighted in this discussion of theological education in African schools. Since many of the teachers in theological institutions are either westerners, or have been educated in the West, Western learning styles is the one most rewarded in the classroom, and those students who do best in the schools are those who have a Western learning style. The traditional American learning style is *field independent* while the African student has a *field dependent* learning style. Eighteen teaching strategies, specifically designed to address the field dependent learning style are described, with the suggestion that these strategies will be most successful in theological instruction in African countries (1988: Abstract).

For the remainder of this section, I will refer to both Dr. Dorothy Bowen and Dr. Earle Bowen as just *Bowen*. This will reduce the monotony of writing both of their names for each reference.

Bowen (1988:3) asserts that proper *contextualization* techniques must be implemented and considered by any westerner teaching in African theological schools - in areas such as governance and administration, staffing and finance, library resources and student services, teaching instruction and classroom management. Regarding *teaching instruction* specifically,

there must be a variety of teaching methodologies used by intercultural teachers in order for them to accommodate the many different *learning styles* present in that culture. *Learning styles* differ from one culture to the next, and without a proper knowledge of the specific *learning styles* within that culture, communication may be hindered as a result (Bowen 1998:3).

It is evident then that many intercultural teachers find themselves familiar only with the learning styles of their own culture, and not with the learning styles of their respondents. Westerners tend to use traditional teaching methodologies that are only familiar to them, without considering that they may not be as familiar to others. Traditional western teaching methods usually involve a lot of lecturing. Exclusive lecturing has proven not to be a very effective method for African learners. Bowen (1988:3) asserts that teaching in an African context must include methodology relevant for all African learners. Bowen offers eighteen teaching strategies specifically designed for western teachers of theological schools in Africa. These strategies were compiled in an attempt to meet the particular learning styles of most African learners (1988:6-11). These eighteen strategies will then serve as a model for evaluating the teaching methods at ABC.

Before submitting these eighteen strategies, I would first like to define a few terms. Bowen (1988:2) uses the terms *field dependent* and *field independent* when describing adult learning styles. According to Bowen (1988:2), *field dependent* people tend to learn holistically/globally; not seeing the parts, but the whole. They tend to rely on *external references* to interpret information. *Field dependent* people see life from a *social orientation* rather than a *non-social orientation*. Most Africans are considered to be *field dependent* learners. *Field independent* learners on the other hand are quite different. They tend to be very analytical and systematic in their learning, seeing only the parts but not the whole. They also tend to rely on *internal references* when interpreting information. *Field independent* people often see life from a *non-social orientation* rather than a *social orientation*. Most westerners are typically *field independent* learners; this is why the western education system tends to favor this type of learning (Bowen 1988:2-5).

Bowen (1988:4) quotes Bishop Tutu in the following,

It is an important digression to note the differences in the African perception and that of the westerner. As we indicated, the westerner is largely analytical, whereas the African tends to be synthetical. The one – the westerner – breaks things up and the other tends to see things as a whole...The westerner will tend to be cerebral whereas the African gives great play to feelings...The westerner emphasizes the individual person, whereas the African will give an important place to the community.

Bowen's (1988:6-11) eighteen teaching strategies are summarized in the following:

1. A course outline is essential. Field dependent persons must be able to see the planning for the whole course at one time because their thought processes are global.
2. Along with the written outline, an oral preview of the entire course needs to be given.
3. A preview of the material to be learned in each individual lesson should be given.
4. Since Africans are more visual than auditory, they function best with a textbook or duplicate notes.
5. Visual aids of all kinds are essential.
6. The African student needs to see models and examples.
7. The total lecture method is the weakest teaching method to use with the African student.
8. Because the field dependent student is not analytical, the teacher needs to identify the important points in a lesson.
9. Small units of work are to be preferred over larger ones.
10. The field dependent student prefers structure and direction in doing a project.
11. Coping strategies for dealing with teaching methods other than those which cater to a given learning style must be learned.
12. The field dependent student is reinforced by external rather than internal motivators.
13. The field dependent student needs frequent feedback and reinforcement.
14. The African student will work best in a group.
15. Field dependent students are much more sensitive to the praise or criticism of others, both peers and authority figures, than are field independent students.
16. The African student will learn best the material which is socially oriented.

17. Criterion-referenced grading should be used. This means that the grading is based on the student's own performance in relation to previously set standards rather than in competition with others.
18. The field independent student would prefer to do things in his/her own way. The field dependent student would prefer to be told how to do a thing and then do it in the way he/she has been told.

### 3.2.2.1 Summary and Critique

It is important to notice that Bowen's teaching strategies 1-7 coincide with Hesselgrave's *dimension six*; 8-11 coincide with *dimension two*; 12, 14-17 coincide with *dimension five*; 13 coincides with *dimension three*; 18 coincides with *dimension seven*; and all 1-18 coincide with *dimension one*. This distinction will be helpful for determining a *joint model*<sup>47</sup> for this project.

To offer a critique of Bowen's (1988) work, I have observed the following:

Both Dorothy and Earle Bowen have spent many years teaching and ministering in Africa, specifically Kenya. The teaching strategies they have offered have come from their vast experience as teachers and from their extensive experience as missionary teachers. While it is evident that the Bowen's have come up with a very solid teaching model for African theological students, it is unclear if these teaching strategies have been endorsed by or even utilized by other theological teachers, specifically African theologians themselves. While it is helpful to get the opinions and theories of Western theologians, such as the Bowens, on this topic, it would have helped support their findings if they had incorporated the ideas and practices of several African theologians who have not only observed but have also experienced the struggles that are taking place within the intercultural teaching arena themselves. Were the Bowen's *learners* of their respondent's culture; *observers* of their respondent's culture; listeners of their respondent's culture? Or was their work only a product of their own thinking, of their own making, and of their own culture? Hoke and Taylor (2009:119) asserts to this by stating, "...approaches to crosscultural effectiveness place more emphasis on an individual's need to be a humble learner

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<sup>47</sup> See 1.3.2

when moving across cultures. This kind of training focuses on the importance of humility and being a learner.”

I will now introduce the model of Judith and Sherwood Lingenfelter. Their model focuses specifically on the *teaching* aspect of intercultural ministry, like none other I have seen. Their experience as teachers and missionaries overseas also adds a personal touch to their research as well as authenticates their findings as well.

### **3.2.3 The Model of Judith & Sherwood Lingenfelter**

Judith Lingenfelter (Ph.D. - University of Pittsburgh) is the Associate Professor of *Intercultural Education* at Biola University. Sherwood Lingenfelter (Ph.D. - University of Pittsburgh) is Provost/Senior Vice President and Professor of *Anthropology* at Fuller Theological Seminary (Lingenfelter, J&E 2003: back cover). In their book, *Teaching Cross-Culturally - An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching*, they have laid out several principles for teaching in an intercultural context. These principles can be applied in a variety of intercultural environments, although a special emphasis was put on the African context. These principles will become very useful when analyzing the intercultural teaching taking place at ABC.

#### **3.2.3.1 The Hidden Curriculum**

According to Lingenfelter (2003:16), intercultural teachers must learn how to adapt their teaching in such a way that they do not impose their own culture on their students. Lingenfelter explains that there is a *hidden curriculum* that every teacher carries; to every classroom and to every school. Lingenfelter (2003:28) states, “The *hidden curriculum* is the cultural learning that surrounds the much smaller *stated curriculum* of schooling. This *hidden curriculum* is “caught” rather than “taught”. In their diagram (see figure 3), one can see that every teacher transmits their own cultural viewpoints when teaching. It is this cultural viewpoint that is often conveyed to the students unintentionally by the teacher. So when a missionary teaches in a intercultural environment, their *hidden curriculum* often conflicts with the culture of their respondents.

Lingenfelter (2003:32) states, “Every teacher has been nurtured in a specific culture and has a specific cultural bias about teaching and learning. This cultural bias is useful and effective in the setting that nurtured it, but as hidden *curriculum* it creates blindness, error, and conflict when used in a different culture.” Therefore, it is only when a teacher realizes their own *hidden curriculum* that true contextualization can occur. If a teacher really wants to be effective in their intercultural environment, they must learn more about their respondent’s culture in order to avoid imposing their own. Once they are able to accomplish this, they will be able to speak the *cultural language* of their students (Lingenfelter 2003:28).

In reference to learning this *cultural language*, Lingenfelter (2003:28-29) states,

The first thing a new teacher should do, therefore, is spend time absorbing the surrounding culture. It provides clues to behaviors and values that will be reflected in the classroom. Often, however, a teacher assumes his or her duties within days of arrival into a new culture, and the opportunity to observe and learn, if it comes at all, occurs too late to be of help... To be an effective teacher cross-culturally, one must learn how to apply the insights gained from cultural observations to practical issues in the classroom.

### **3.2.3.2 Jesus as the Master Teacher**

According to Lingenfelter (2003:21), Jesus was the master teacher, and one we must seek to model our teaching around. Jesus was also the ultimate intercultural missionary, in that he came to a culture other than his own. This *incarnation* of Christ serves as a powerful model for guiding us towards effective intercultural teaching. The first thing intercultural teachers must realize about Jesus was that he was a learner of his culture. Jesus spent much of his time learning as well as listening to others. Lingenfelter (2003:21) states, “If Jesus felt it necessary to begin his career listening and asking questions, how can we do less.”

Lingenfelter (2003:21-22) describes the teaching of Jesus in the following,

The teaching phase of Jesus' life shows that he indeed mastered the cultural ways of the people around him. His lessons were filled with quotations from Scripture, stories based on local economic and social life, and parables that drew on a deep understanding of their way of life. His classroom was everywhere – in a house, on a boat, on the seashore, on the plains, in the hills, or on the road. He taught his lessons using the contexts of work, family, community, and religious life. Using practical demonstrations, he healed the sick, cast out demons, and addresses people in the midst of broken relationships or family crisis. Jesus engaged his students during their work, on the Sabbath, and in public debate. He met them at any place where he could effectively teach them to think in new ways about their relationship with him, God, and the world.

### **3.2.3.3 Teaching Strategies**

According to Lingenfelter, many teaching strategies used by non-western teachers are very unfamiliar to western teachers, and vice versa. Lingenfelter (2003:45) states, “non-western learners do what they have learned by doing! Western teachers often prefer a step-by-step explanation of a process, a guidebook.” Non-western students usually learn best when they are able to observe, imitate, and visualize what they are learning. Rote memorization, trial and error, real-life activities, storytelling, relationship building, and context-specific settings are just a few learning strategies used by non-western teachers. Conflicting teaching strategies can become a source of tremendous frustration and confusion for both the intercultural teacher and the native student. Therefore, it is imperative for western teachers to learn the teaching strategies their students are most familiar with (Lingenfelter 2003:35-43).

### **3.2.3.4 Group learning**

While western education tends to focus much on the *individual*, non-western education tends to focus on the *group*. Lingelfelter (2003:56) states, “Western teachers have incorporated group-oriented learning in western schools with mixed success. When faced with a grade that depends

on the contributions of others, the most competitive students become frustrated, intense, and fearful that their grades will suffer because of weaker students in the group.” Western teachers often steer away from group work because of this problem. Lingenfelter (2003:56) explains that African students in particular love working in groups, and for the most part do extremely well in these types of environments. It is in these types of settings that they are most suited, and truly flourish as a result (Lingenfelter 2003:56).

### **3.2.3.5 Learning Styles**

Every person has his or her own *learning style* (the way in which they process information), and a person will either flail or flourish depending on how they are being taught according to these styles. There are visual learners, verbal learners, kinesthetic learners, auditory learners, just to name a few. According to Lingenfelter, western learners tend to interpret information very differently than non-western learners. He states, “The difference between these two styles lies in how people sort new information. Relational or global learners see the whole first, whereas analytical or dichotomous learners see the parts first, then relate them to the whole.” Their table (see Table 1) represents the different learning styles common to *traditional learners* (most often non-western) and *formal schooling learners* (most often western). This table also reveals the *valued intelligences*<sup>48</sup> for each learning style (Lingenfelter 2003:66).

### **3.2.3.6 Teacher Roles**

Every culture has different expectations on how a teacher should act or conduct themselves in a classroom environment. Some cultures value a very formal, strict and authoritarian type of teacher while other cultures value a more informal, laid back and facilitator type of teacher. For example, a western teacher in an African classroom might be considered too informal and too nice, while an Asian teacher in an American classroom may be considered too formal and too strict. Therefore, intercultural teachers must always consider the roles that are expected of them. Lingenfelter (2003:76) puts it this way, “The expectations of students who see the teacher as an

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<sup>48</sup> See Lingenfelter (2003:66)

authority figure contrast sharply with the expectations of students who see the teacher as a facilitator. Students who see the teacher as an authority figure do not value independent thinking; they merely want the teacher to tell them what will be on the test so they can memorize it. When the teacher tries to encourage questions and interaction, the students often feel it is a waste of time. Every classroom has its distinctive social game, and conflicts arise when students and teachers bring different social game expectations to the classroom.”

In regards to the African context, Lingenfelter explains that the typical African student (*client*<sup>49</sup>) sees their teacher as a *patron*. He states, “The *patron-client* relationship expresses an alliance between two persons of unequal status, power, or resources, each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally, someone superior or inferior”... “Dell Chinchon (a professor at the African Bible College in Liberia), found that the African students he taught relied constantly on patron-client relationships” (Lingenfelter 2003:79).

### **3.2.3.7 Communication Mediums**

There are a variety of communication mediums that must be utilized when teaching interculturally. The mediums chosen must be considered in light of the audience, the context, the lesson, and the culture. A medium that may work well for one audience, for one culture, or for one lesson, may not necessarily work well for the next. It is imperative then that any intercultural teachers use mediums that accommodate the particular learning styles of their respondents. For example, non-western learners do not usually perform well using western-type tests, western-type curriculums, western-type technologies or western-type resources. And because of the cost and availability of such mediums, options may be limited in some intercultural situations. For a listing of teaching mediums that are most effective among African students, see 3.2.1.6. (Lingenfelter 2003:100-104)

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<sup>49</sup> See Lingenfelter (2003:79).

### 3.2.3.8 Language

Learning the language of your respondent's culture is one of the most important steps for bridging cultural divides. *Language* houses a person's most intimate beliefs, thoughts, and feelings. Intercultural teachers will gain access to a culture through their language. This access will help the teacher communicate more effectively and develop interpersonal relationships with their students. Lingenfelter (2003:120) states, "We cannot emphasize enough the importance of learning the local language. Anyone who truly desires to learn the culture of the students he or she is teaching must commit to learning their language..." "In the process of learning the language, the culturally sensitive western teacher can ask questions that will aid his or her understanding of the way in which institutions work and people relate to one another."

### 3.2.3.9 Summary and Critique

The Lingenfelter's have offered a very helpful model that can be easily used for interpreting the current teaching practices taking place at ABC. I appreciate the Lingenfelter's specific focus on the *teaching* aspect of intercultural communications. As an intercultural teacher myself, I have found their model to be both challenging and revealing. Having now the ability to grasp what the Lingenfelter's call the *hidden curriculum*, I can now detect areas where my own culture is hindering my ability to teach in a culturally relevant manner.

To offer a critique of Lingenfelter's (2003) work, I have observed the following:

In their writings (2003), the Lingenfelter's often refer to Jesus as being the ultimate teacher-model, and his *incarnation* as being the ultimate missionary-model. Referring back, Lingenfelter (2003:21-22) describes the teaching of Jesus in the following, "The teaching phase of Jesus' life shows that he indeed mastered the cultural ways of the people around him." It seems that Lingenfelter might be loosely interpreting and applying Jesus' teaching into a model that fits their own theology. One must be careful not to read their own ideas into a doctrine, especially when their ideas might be suspect. In other words, the event of the *incarnation* as well as the events of Jesus' teaching, are much more than just models for cross-cultural teaching, and are not

just limited to the field of missiology, but are much broader and all encompassing in their understanding, interpretation and application. For example, one could say that the *incarnation* is an example of Jesus becoming a missionary in a foreign land; therefore, everyone must become a missionary in a foreign land. This type of reasoning is ludicrous. Wyatt (1890:2) asserts to this type of misinterpretation by stating, “it is necessary to everlasting salvation that we believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

### **3.2.4 Forming a “Joint Model” (6 Common Attributes)**

As a result of researching the above models, it is important now to choose several intercultural teaching methods and attributes common to all three models. These attributes will then serve as a *common model*<sup>50</sup> for this research. This *joint model* will be used then to analyze and interpret the teaching at ABC, determining its cultural relevance and impact.

#### **3.2.4.1 The “Joint Model”**

##### **3.2.4.1.1 Attribute 1 Understanding the Culture** (Hesselgrave 1991: 3.2.1.1; Bowen 1988: 1-18 and Lingenfelter 2003: 3.2.3.2)

The first attribute intercultural teachers must possess in order to be effective, is a growing understanding of their respondent’s culture. Before a teacher can be truly effective in a foreign culture, they must first understand the people, how they relate to one another, how they think, and how they see life. In order for a person to fully understand any culture, they must be willing to observe that culture, get to know the people of that culture, study the culture, ask a lot of questions, visit the homes of the people and spend a lot of time listening to them. Intercultural teachers should take every opportunity they might have to broaden their understanding of their respondent’s culture.

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<sup>50</sup> See 1.3.2

**3.2.4.1.2 Attribute 2 Understanding the Learning Styles** (Hesselgrave 1991: 3.2.1.2; Bowen 1988: 8-11 and Lingenfelter 2003: 3.2.3.5)

As stated before, every culture and every person has a different *learning style*, and recognizing these when preparing for and teaching lessons is critical for effective communication to take place. Learning styles can vary from one culture to the next, so it is imperative for any intercultural teacher to identify the learning styles of that particular culture. In regards to the African context, most African students tend to be *relational learners*<sup>51</sup>. *Relational learners* are most often visual, hands-on, global and auditory learners. Stories, examples, demonstrations, and drawings are very accommodating for a typical African learner.

**3.2.4.1.3 Attribute 3 Learning the Language** (Hesselgrave 1991: 3.2.1.3; Bowen 1988: 13 and Lingenfelter 2003: 3.2.3.8)

As stated earlier, learning the language of a respondent's culture is one of the most important steps for becoming culturally relevant. Lingenfelter (2003:120) nails it on the head by stating, "We cannot emphasize enough the importance of learning the local language. Anyone who truly desires to learn the culture of the students he or she is teaching must commit to learning their language."

**3.2.4.1.4 Attribute 4 Understanding Social Structures** (Hesselgrave 1991: 3.2.1.5; Bowen 1988: 12,14-18 and Lingenfelter 2003: 3.2.3.4)

Most African's tend to be very relational. This is because most of them grow up in tribes, villages, and groups. They work together, learn together, think together, and live together. This type of group interaction is a very important aspect of African culture, and must be understood by the typical western teacher if they truly want to be an effective communicator. Bowen (1988:14) states, "The African student will work best in a group. Group projects, group discussion, and working in pairs are suggested. The student does not do the best work possible when the work must be done on an individual basis. Students should, in fact, be encouraged to

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<sup>51</sup> See Table 1

work together, to study together, and to do class assignments together. Tests, however, can still be conducted individually.”

**3.2.4.1.5 Attribute 5 Using Appropriate Mediums** (Hesselgrave 1991: 3.2.1.6; Bowen 1988: 1-7 and Lingenfelter 2003: 3.2.3.7)

Most African students tend to learn best when a teacher uses visual, hands-on and auditory mediums - such as music, radio, books, magazines, film, drama, dance, pictures, symbols, journals, booklets, tracts, radio, television, mass communications, film, group dialogue, projectors/slides, computer, and mail/email.

**3.2.4.1.6 Attribute 6 Understanding Classroom Roles and Behaviors** (Hesselgrave 1991: 3.2.1.4; Bowen 1988: 18 and Lingenfelter 2003: 3.2.3.6)

Regarding classroom roles, the first question a western teacher must ask themselves is: how do the students of this culture view my role as a teacher? The second question should be: what are appropriate classroom behaviors in regards to body language, gestures, dress, paralanguage, touching behavior, spatial relationships, discipline and authority? These are very important questions because every culture has different rules and expectations regarding teacher roles and classroom behaviors. Without a proper understanding of these roles and behaviors, a teacher may communicate something very different than what was originally intended.

### **3.3 Interpreting ABC's Teaching**

In the following section, the *teaching of ABC*<sup>52</sup> will be interpreted<sup>53</sup> through the answers to the *surveys* and *interview* questions that were conducted for this project (see 2.4). The survey and

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<sup>52</sup> The *teaching of ABC* is solely represented from the answers to the survey and interview questionnaires in section 2.4.

<sup>53</sup> Several semi-structured *focus group*<sup>53</sup> discussions were conducted with Rev. Sam MacDonald (2009), in order to analyze and interpret the content of the interviews that took place for this study. Rev. Sam MacDonald is a professor of Anthropology and Theology at the ABC. The main questions that must be asked during a proper content analysis, according to Lasswell (1951), is “who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect?.” And these were the very questions that revolved around these discussions.

interview questions were formed from the *joint model* described in 3.2.4.1. At this stage, it is important to find out to what degree ABC's teaching is culturally relevant or not and to evaluate the positive and/or negative effects of this teaching. The six attributes of the *joint model* will be used as the framework for this interpretation.

### **3.3.1 Interpretation 1: Understanding the Culture**

What does it mean to truly understand a culture? Can anyone truly understand a culture other than their own? *True* understanding would require experience, experience would require time, and time would require much patience and dedication. I have discovered through my research that most of the American staff are just scratching the surface when it comes to understanding the Malawian culture. Most of them have only been in Malawi for less than 10 years. How can one truly understand the culture of Malawi within just ten years? As described earlier, the Western worldview is so much different than the African worldview, that it would take a lifetime of living amongst the Africans, in both rural and urban settings, to truly understand what it means to be Malawian. It is fair to say that the staff is making some good efforts to learn the culture -- going to funerals, weddings, student's homes, etc.; and this is a good start, but there is so much more. Most of the staff members expressed their desire to be more culturally relevant in the classroom, and understood that in order to do this; they would have to spend more time studying Malawian culture.

An interesting observation I was able to make through my interviews with the American staff, was their tendency to be very hard on themselves in regards to their ability to understand the Malawian culture; while the students on the other hand tended to be very gracious in their depiction of the staff. It seems that the staff has the ability to be more objective on this issue than the students. This is because the staff can more readily identify their own cultural differences much quicker than the students can. This is because the staff are the ones immersed in a culture other than their own, and for them, everything is quite different. For the students though, they only have the ability to observe some of the basic cultural quirks of the American staff, but are not able to fully comprehend how truly different they are from one another.

### 3.3.2 Interpretation 2: Understanding the Learning Styles

Firstly, it is evident from the interviews conducted that most of the American staff are struggling to teach in a way that connects with the learning styles of their students. It seems that the staff is just teaching “the way they know best” and hoping to hit the mark. This is happening partly because the staff has had no special training when it comes to understanding the *learning styles* of Africans.

Secondly, some of the ABC students mentioned that it becomes very difficult when the American lecturers test, mark and lecture so much differently than the Malawian lecturers do. For example, one of the students mentioned that a Malawian lecturer may use a ✓ when an answer is right and a ✗ when the answer is wrong, while the American lecturer uses a ✗ when an answer is wrong and a ✓ when the answer is right. These types of differences can be very confusing for the students, especially when the lecturers are completely unaware of them.

Thirdly, the American lecturers at ABC tend to teach more scientific, rational, and logical in their teaching, while the Malawian lecturers tend to be more holistic and relational in theirs. The American lecturers are very product oriented in their teaching while the Malawian lecturers are very process oriented in theirs. In other words, the American staff teaches to reach conclusions, while the Malawian staff teaches to reach agreements.

Fourthly, the American staff at ABC tend to mostly lecture in class, making it difficult for the Malawian learners, who instead are used to a lot of group work and classroom interaction. As mentioned before, this issue of *lecture* is a difficult one. It has been so ingrained in American teachers to lecture, that in a sense it has become a thorn in their side. The American staff at ABC must be able to break this mold or they will continue to struggle to be culturally relevant.

### **3.3.3 Interpretation 3: Learning the Language**

When it comes to learning the Malawian language (Chichewa), the American staff is really struggling. All of the American lecturers admitted that their efforts to learn Chichewa were very little and that they had a very low proficiency of the language. This was also confirmed by the Malawian students and graduates. They agreed that the Americans were only able to communicate in Chichewa using simple greetings and phrases. This much they appreciated, but expressed their desire for the staff to know more. Some of the students' mentioned that it makes them feel valued and respected when the Americans use their language. It was also mentioned by one of the students that the Americans will never truly understand Malawian culture unless they speak their language.

Language can either separate or unite, and currently it is separating. Unless the American staff at ABC makes more of an effort to learn the language, they will not be able to be as culturally relevant as they must be.

### **3.3.4 Interpretation 4: Understanding Social Structures**

When it comes to social structures, it can be difficult to fully understand how these may actually play out in a classroom setting. For example, an American lecturer who might be used to teaching independent (Western) students may find it hard to adapt their teaching style to the relational (African) student. As mentioned before, Africans are used to working together in groups and making group decisions. Africans are very social and tend to rely on one another for advice and for decision making. Since most of the American staff rely heavily on lecturing (which is the method of choice amongst Western educators), the African student struggles to pay attention because of their lack of involvement. American lecturers find it difficult to involve the classroom as a whole. They want to see individual work in order to give an individual grade. To allow the students to work together on a homework assignment or to even give a group test is considered to be a classroom taboo for many American lecturers.

Another observation regarding *social structures* has to do with the way Malawian students view their interpersonal relationships with the ABC lecturers. Traditionally they may not be used to close relationships with their teachers, but since the ABC staff come from America as *missionaries*, this makes them different. There is sort of an expectation from the students that since these missionaries have come from such a far off place and have given up everything just to be with them, that it is alright to approach and befriend them. In other words, the staff is expected by the students to be relational, friendly, and loving simply because they are missionaries. So how are the American lecturers at ABC fairing in this regards?

After conducting all the interviews, it is obvious that the American staff is a very diverse bunch. Some of the staff members are very relational and outgoing with the students, inviting them into their homes, visiting their families, spending quality time with them. While some of the other staff members are not very relational and do not put forth much effort at all to get to know their students. The students are very aware of which teachers are available and which ones are not. They expressed much appreciation towards the teachers who were and less appreciation to those who were not. There can be no question that the interpersonal relationships between ABC lecturers and their students can either increase or decrease their cultural connection.

### **3.3.5 Interpretation 5: Using Appropriate Mediums**

I was impressed by the amount of mediums being used at ABC. With more mediums being used, the greater chance the learning styles of the students will be met. One of the lecturers mentioned that over the past five years, ABC has employed a very diverse faculty, more than ever before. He described that the current staff is much more innovative, creative, and even culturally sensitive. As stated before, the ABC staff is making use of lecture, radio, video, internet, field trips, posters, tapes, CD's, recordings, PowerPoint, charts, whiteboard/chalk, group work, practicum's, visitations, books, presentations, drama, oral presentations, examples, stories, etc.

It was mentioned though, by several of the interviewees, that many of the library books and classroom textbooks are not culturally relevant, because most of them come from America and are written by American authors. The interviewees expressed their desire to have more library books and textbooks that were written by African authors.

### **3.3.6 Interpretation 6: Understanding Classroom Roles and Behaviors**

According to the interviews with the students and graduates, ABC students expect their teachers to dress very formal, be respectful, considerate, helpful, and somewhat strict. They expect their teachers to not embarrass them, to speak slowly, and to be fair. They also expect their teachers to call on the married students by their surnames. As well, the students expect their teachers to be spiritual leaders, models, and examples of the Christian faith. They also expect regular feedback from their teachers in the form of either criticism or praise, and they also expect their teachers to have much patience.

In light of all the interviews and surveys conducted, the American teachers in general are doing a pretty good job at meeting all of the above expectations mentioned by the graduates and students of ABC. For example, the American staff usually dress very nice, often wearing ties and coats. They try hard to be considerate in class, not trying to embarrass anyone, speaking slowly, and praise the students whenever they can. And according to most, the American staff often show a great deal of spiritual leadership and Christian example. The only thing that the students considered to be disrespectful of the Americans was the fact that they call married students by their first names and not by their surnames. According to Malawian culture, it is very disrespectful to call a married person by their first name and not by their surname. And after having a few discussions with the American staff, it was obvious that most of them had no idea that this was disrespectful.

### 3.3.1 Summary Discussion

After critically analyzing the teaching at ABC in order to determine whether or not its teaching is culturally relevant, I have found ABC to be proficient in some areas and also deficient in others (see 3.3 results). I am sure that with a broader investigation of ABC's *teaching*, more discoveries could be made that would shed some more light on the subject.

Although this research has been limited in its scope to a certain degree, I believe that most of the problems pertaining to the teaching of ABC have now, to some extent, been uncovered. And this is where ABC must begin in their process of change. No institution is perfect, and those who are diligent in tackling their most obvious and blatant problems, will become even a greater institution as a result.

For the next step of this research, it is important now to consider the theological foundation or framework for what it means to *teach interculturally*; this step is otherwise known as the *normative task* (Osmer 2008:4). This *normative task* asks the question: is there a theological basis for intercultural teaching?

In the next chapter (chapter 4) I will be constructing this theological basis and interpretation for intercultural teaching. In order to do this, I will be asking questions such as: 1. what Biblical or theological models support *intercultural teaching*? 2. What is God's heart on the issue? 3. What does the *Incarnation* have to do with intercultural teaching? The answers to these questions and more will represent the *normative task* of this research.

## **Chapter 4 Theological Foundations for Intercultural Teaching (The Normative Task)**

### **4.1 Introduction**

It is important now for this research to construct a theological foundation (otherwise known as the *normative task*) for what it means to *teach interculturally* (Osmer 2008:4). In order to properly interpret what is actually taking place at ABC in regards to its teaching, it is necessary to investigate what the Bible actually has to say about *contextualization*. In order to accomplish this task, I will be asking questions such as: 1. What biblical/theological models support *intercultural teaching*; 2. What does the *Incarnation of Christ* have to do with intercultural teaching; 3. In what ways does the Biblical model for contextualization apply to the ABC context? The answers to these questions and more will be embodied in the *normative task* of this research.

In order to begin this *normative task*, I will now conduct a Biblical investigation of *intercultural communication*, otherwise known as *contextualization*.

### **4.2 Contextualization in Acts**

#### **4.2.1 Acts Itself as a Contextual Document**

According to Flemming (2005:26), the book of Acts itself is a contextual work. This is demonstrated in Acts 1:8 when Jesus said “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the *ends of the earth*” (emphasis mine). This theme, to *witness to the ends of the earth*, and to reach both Jew and gentile, runs throughout the entire book of Acts (i.e. the story of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11:18); the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15); the missionary journey’s of Paul (Acts 13-28)). It is obvious that one of Luke’s main intentions in his writing was to expose the ethnocentrism gripping the church at that time. Luke wanted his hearers to understand that Christianity is not just limited to one culture-- but is available for all people of all cultures.

Luke writes specifically to an ancient Mediterranean audience. The literary style and rhetoric Luke uses supports this notion. The examples, stories and illustrations he uses clearly indicates his desire to be culturally relevant to his hearers. For example, when Luke tells the story about Paul's encounter with the Roman tribune (Acts 22:22-29), a typical Greco-Roman audience would have known that the tribune bribed someone to receive his Roman citizenship. Another example, is Luke's reference to a *revolt* that took place during Felix's (a *Roman* governor) reign (Acts 5:36-37). Those living in Greco-Roman world at that time would have been very familiar with this story. Luke purposely contextualized his writings in an effort to connect with his hearers. Flemming (2005:26) asserts to this by stating, "Like all New Testament writings, Acts is a "cultural product" in that it participates in the particular first-century cultural and literary world that Luke shares with his readers. This is nowhere more apparent than when we view Acts in light of the typical forms of literature of the ancient world. Although the debate over the specific literary genre of Acts goes on, it is likely that Luke's readers would have recognized this book as an example of ancient Hellenistic historical writing."

#### **4.2.2 Cornelius and Peter**

Since most of the early Christians were first Jews before they were converted to Christianity, it was hard for many of them to consider the *gospel*<sup>54</sup> as being something for both Jew and Gentile alike. This was a revolutionary idea for these Jewish-Christians. They had assumed that the message of Christ was only for them.

Winter (2008:149) alludes to this by stating,

Peter is a very reluctant missionary. The cultural obstacles immediately loom very, very large. His ethnocentrism would lead him to believe that you cannot be acceptable to god if you eat the wrong kind of food. In any event, you have a distinct change of mood and pace. This is a momentous moment!

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<sup>54</sup> *gospel*: "the church's proclamation of God's salvation through Jesus" (Flemming 2005:240).

These early disciples finally came to realize, that God has a heart for all people, no matter their nationality, religion, tribe, or tongue. There are many stories in the book of Acts alluding to this *transformation* of the early church in regards to their cultural prejudices.

Luke wanted his audience to know that God is not just partial to one particular race, but calls all men to himself. The story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10-11 is a prime example of this. The story starts out with Peter receiving a very perplexing vision from heaven. The Lord said to Peter “do not call anything impure that God has made clean” (Acts 10:15). Although Peter did not know exactly what that meant at the time, it became much clearer later. It wasn’t until Peter’s encounter with Cornelius that he finally understood what God was trying to say. Peter said “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (Acts. 10:34-35).

The conversion of Cornelius had revealed something very important to the church at that time. No longer would culture divide mankind because God was not playing favorites. The conversion of Cornelius changed everything. No longer was the gospel something only for the Jews, but was for the gentiles as well. After this one event, it became apparent to the church that their *Christian task* was much greater than they had originally thought. The church would now have to abandon their Jewish ethnocentrism and embrace an all-encompassing intercultural movement.

#### **4.2.3 The Jerusalem Council**

The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) was a major turning point for the church when it came to how they were supposed to evangelize the gentiles. The church up to this time was requiring gentile converts to follow certain Jewish laws and practices. For example, the Jewish-Christians were requiring the gentiles to be circumcised as a part of their Christian duty. Peter stood up and addressed the council regarding this issue and explained that it would not be right to force the gentiles to follow certain Jewish regulations that were not a part of the gospel. Peter recognized that it was alright to accept a gentile as a gentile and not to impose their Jewish culture on them.

In reference to the gentile believers, Peter states, “God who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?” Although the outcome of the Jerusalem Council proved to be a great victory for intercultural evangelism, the issue of ethnocentrism is something that still plagues the church today. As displayed in 2.3, many missionaries throughout the centuries have put *yokes of culture* (if you will), on the backs of their converts, assuming that their own cultural practices were actually *Biblical*. It will take many more *Jerusalem Council* moments in order to see intercultural ministry break free from its ethnocentric tendencies (Flemming 2005:43-46).

#### **4.2.4 Paul’s Sermons in Acts**

##### **4.2.4.1 Preaching in Antioch**

Paul spent most of his Christian life traveling throughout the Mediterranean world as a missionary. Paul preached to both Jews and gentiles from many different backgrounds, cultures, and tongues. When Paul was with the Jews, he spoke like a Jew; when he was with the gentile, he spoke like a gentile (1 Cor. 9:20-21). Paul became *all things to all men* in order to win some of them to Christ. For example, Paul’s first sermon in Antioch (Acts. 13) was to a mostly Jewish crowd. In his sermon, he used Jewish scriptures to bridge the gospel to what was already accepted theology amongst the Jews. In doing this then, he identified with the audiences history, their Scripture and their covenants. Fleming (2005:66) asserts to this by stating, “Paul does not tell a brand new story, but rather proclaims a new, defining chapter in a story his hearers already know and participate in. Paul’s Jewish listeners hear the good news within a familiar cultural and religious framework. It is a language that strikes home.”

#### 4.2.4.2 Preaching in Lystra

Paul's first encounter with a fully pagan audience was in Lystra (Acts 18:8-20). This was a pivotal moment for Paul as a missionary, and Luke captures it well. In his writing, Luke demonstrates how Paul was able to contextualize his message to an audience who had very little background in Jewish culture. Paul did not preach like he did in Antioch (Acts 13), with a Jewish audience in mind, but preached in a way that accommodated a very pagan culture. In order to connect with these Lystrians, Paul could not quote from Jewish scripture, refer to the Law or the prophets, nor relate his message to Israel's history. Paul would now have to share the gospel in a unique and contextual way. And that is exactly what he did. Paul was able to find a common ground with the Lystrians. For example in his sermon, he described God as being a *living* God (Acts 14:15), the *creator* of all things (Acts 14:15), the God of all *nations* (Acts 14:16), the *provider* and *sustainer* of human life (Acts 14:17) and the one that provides the rains from heaven and the crops in their seasons (Acts 14:17). Paul's starting point with the Lystrians was not with the message of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, but with an appeal to God's *general revelation*<sup>55</sup>. The gospel was still a very important part of his message, but it would not have made sense to his hearers without the foundation (Flemming 2005:66-71).

#### 4.2.4.3 Preaching in Athens

Paul's second encounter with a solely pagan audience was in Athens (Acts 17:16-34). Again, Paul spoke to the Athenians in their very own *cultural* language. Paul worked very hard to incorporate stories, examples, rhetoric and theology that would be somewhat familiar to his hearers. It is evident that Paul did not *syncretise*,<sup>56</sup> or water down his message in an attempt to contextualize it, but simply tore down the barriers that existed between his culture and theirs.

Braswell (2000:155) asserts to this by stating,

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<sup>55</sup> General Revelation: "The knowledge of God's existence, character, and moral law, which comes through creation to all humanity" (Grudem 1994:122).

<sup>56</sup> syncretise: an "attempt to assign culturally defined meanings to terms that have much different meaning in their proper Christian context" (Hesselgrave 1994:185).

The apostle Paul said he had become all things to all men that he might win some. He went into the marketplace in Athens, mixed with the merchants and philosophers on their home turf, affirmed that they were very religious, and then told them of Jesus and the resurrection.

There are several key aspects to Paul's culturally sensitive sermons to the Athenians that are worth mentioning here. Firstly, Paul was not rude or offensive to his audience. He treated them with respect. He did not condemn the Athenians, but made an effort to befriend and to affirm them. For example, Paul began his sermon in Acts. 17:22 by complimenting the Athenians and identifying with their culture. "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious". Paul's approach was very different from those who just stand on street corners, lash out and condemn their audiences; quote scriptures out of context and carry on in a very critical and judgmental manner. He did not shame them, but shared the gospel in a way that did not put them on their defense.

Secondly, Paul had the ability to *disarm* his audience. Paul made an effort to connect with his audience in areas that were very familiar to them. This helped Paul open up the door for the gospel to be heard. For example, his description of God would have been both familiar and acceptable to his Athenian audience. He started simple, describing God as being the creator of both heaven and of earth (Acts. 17:24-25); the provider and sustainer of all mankind (Acts 17:26-27); the God who desires to have a relationship with his creation (Acts 17:27-29). This was a great starting point because it was not controversial theology. They could both agree on most of these ideas. Paul knew that in order to win his audience, he first had to find a common ground between them.

Thirdly, one of the most effective tactics Paul used with the Athenians was his reference to their *unknown god* (Acts. 17:23). Paul knew that relating his *known God* to their *unknown god* would really get their attention. And in the most beautiful way, he used their culture as a springboard for sharing the gospel. Paul was able to take an icon from Athenian culture and use it to share the message of Christ. This was an extraordinary example of intercultural communication at its

best. Was Paul traveling down a dangerous road of *syncretism* when he related the Christian God to one of the Athenian gods? It is obvious that Paul did not compromise here, but was simply finding a point of contact with his hearers in an effort to bridge the gospel to his hearers (Flemming 2005:76).

### 4.3 Contextualization in Paul's Writings

Paul was a master at contextualizing his message to his hearers, without ever watering down the gospel itself. In his writing's we see Paul using a variety of stories, examples, and illustrations that would have been very familiar to his audiences. For example, when writing about the issue of *salvation*, he used words that would have made sense to his hearers (i.e. inheritance, putting on the armor, citizenship, first fruits, washing, cleansing, redemption, birth, adoption, marriage, death, new creation, etc.). He drew upon images from their everyday culture.

Another example of contextualization in Paul's writings was the fact that he wrote his letters in Greek. Aramaic, which was the common language of the Jews at that time, was not the common language of the Greco-Roman world. So writing in Greek allowed Paul to use words, phrases, and illustrations which were familiar to his hearers. For example, Greek philosophers and religious sophisticates at that time would have related with Paul when he used words like *wisdom, knowledge, conscience, reconciliation* (Rom. 2:15; 1 Cor. 8:7-12). Common Greek citizens would have appreciated the sporting words Paul used also, like *race, running, win, prize, training, goal, compete, athlete, fight* (Gal 2:2; Phil 3:13-14; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; 2 Tim 2:5).

Flemming (2005:130) asserts to this by stating, "Whereas Jesus had spoken to Galilean villagers using pictures of fields and fig trees, foxes and fishermen, Paul had to adopt a whole new set of symbols for the city dwellers of the Roman Empire."

In summary, although Paul was born and raised a Jew, he did not allow his Jewish culture to effect the way he interpreted and shared the gospel. Paul had such a great understanding of the gospel that he was able to explain it in so many wonderful ways and to so many different types of people. Paul did not ever compromise the truth of the gospel in an attempt to contextualize it,

but seamlessly communicated the Christian message in a way that both connected with his hearers, and retained its key components all at the same time.

The church today needs people like Paul, who can communicate the gospel in a very unique and creative way. We need people who can speak the *language*<sup>57</sup> of their audience. Without a cultural connection, the gospel may not be fully understood as a result. Paul has given us a great example of what it means to be culturally relevant. Flemming (2005:151) sums it up well by stating, “Like Paul, we must critique our own culture without rejecting it, and transcend our culture even while remaining in it. Likewise, we must be willing to identify with another’s culture without uncritically accommodating to it; we must let the gospel speak transformingly to that culture without imposing a foreign culture upon it. This is the calling of the missional church in every place and every generation.”

### **4.3.1 Corinthians**

#### **4.3.1.1 Food Sacrificed to Idols (1 Cor. 8-10)**

In first Corinthians 8-10, Paul deals with the issue of eating *foods sacrificed to idols*. The Corinthian church at this time lived amongst a pagan community who regularly offered their foods to false gods. Twenty-first century - *Western* Christians - may find this part of scripture hard to apply to their lives, because in the West, most Christians do not face these kinds of situations. In fact, a pastor in the West would have a hard time connecting with his audience if he preached on the issue. In short, the issue of *eating foods sacrificed to idols* is limited to a cultural and situational context. Not every culture will identify with what Paul is trying to say here. Therefore, it is evident that Paul is contextualizing the Christian message by using an issue that was common amongst these Corinthian believers.

As a result of Paul dealing with the issue of *foods sacrificed to idols*, the doors were then open for him to tackle the more potent theological issues that existed within that larger issue (i.e. idols

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<sup>57</sup> *Language* can be the literal language (English, Spanish, German, Swahili, etc), or the cultural language (stories, words, etc.)

do not exist (1 Cor. 8:4); foods cannot affect your relationship with God (1 Cor. 8:8); keeping a clear conscious is important (1 Cor. 8:7); protecting a weak believer is a Christians' duty (1 Cor. 8:9-11) (Flemming 2005:182-184)

#### **4.3.1.2 The Resurrection (1 Cor. 15)**

In this part of scripture, Paul confronts the Corinthians, regarding some of the Hellenistic doctrines that were creeping into the church. The issue at hand was whether or not there is going to be a *bodily* resurrection of the dead. The Hellenists believed that their souls are in constant bondage to their (sinful and weak) bodies, and that when they die, they can finally free from them. The idea of a bodily resurrection would actually have been bad news for these Hellenists, because as far as they were concerned, the body is a hindrance (Flemming 2005:201).

Again, it is apparent that Paul is dealing with a cultural situation and not a universal one. Paul knew that the Corinthian believers were being influenced by Hellenistic ideologies, so he contextualized his message accordingly. Paul did not just blast the Corinthians with systematic *resurrection* theology, but met them on their own turf. He lovingly reminded them of what he had first preached to them (1 Cor. 15:2), and then gently walked them through an old creed (1 Cor. 15:3-8). This was Paul's way of reminding them about the truths of the resurrection without coming across as a dictator. As he unraveled the creed, Paul made it clear that the resurrection was a non-negotiable part of the gospel and that their very own faith was at stake if they denied it.

In short, it is evident that Paul was not just trying to hide from the issue of the *resurrection*, but was willing to tackle it head on. He did not just say *thus says Paul*, and that was it, but referred back to a creed that was universally accepted by most of the Christians at that time. Paul was able speak into the lives of his hearers because he took the time to learn their culture and to relate to them as a father and not a tyrant.

## 4.4 The Gospels

According to Flemming (2005:234), the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) work together as one, to communicate the complete gospel of Jesus. In other words, it took four writers from four very different vantage points to share the one complete story of Jesus. This variety of gospel accounts allowed for varying audience's to read the gospel in a way that connected with their culture the best. For example, one culture may not have connected well with Mark's story, but may have connected better with Matthews', or vice versa. Depending on the particular culture, one gospel account may be more culturally relevant than the other. Since Matthew wrote to a more Jewish audience, the Jews would have connected well with Matthew's gospel. Similarly, since Mark wrote to a more gentile audience, the gentiles would have found Mark's gospel to be relevant. The fact that the gospel writers had a particular audience in mind reveals their motivation to adapt their writings to a particular culture. Therefore, it is evident that the four gospels themselves work together as one contextual work. As Flemming (2005:234) suggests, "We might even say that the four Gospels are four *contextualizations* of the one story".

### 4.4.1 Mark

The gospel of Mark has been somewhat of a mystery when it comes to deciphering the *target audience*. Most scholars now believe that Mark was writing primarily to a gentile audience. Although Mark was a Jewish-Christian and wrote his gospel account from a very Jewish perspective, it is clear that Mark was careful to explicate certain Jewish words, customs, beliefs, titles, symbols, etc. As well, Mark wrote his gospel in Greek, which would have been the language of choice for his gentile audience.

In an attempt to be culturally relevant, Mark clearly wrote his gospel in a manner that connected with his audience. His hearers were obviously undergoing tremendous suffering, persecution and affliction. Flemming (2005:242) affirms this by stating, "the striking emphasis on suffering, persecution and the cost of discipleship in the Second Gospel implies that Mark was writing to

people who were facing times of testing for their allegiance to Christ and their mission to proclaim the good news.”

#### **4.4.2 Matthew**

Matthew on the other hand wrote to a very Jewish audience. This is made clear by the fact that he did not take the time to explain any of the Jewish words, customs, beliefs, etc. he used. Matthew just assumed his readers already understood Jewish culture. This is evident by the fact that he used a lot of un-translated Aramaic words (Mt. 5:22; 6:24; 27:6); he also made references to Jewish customs, festivals, laws, etc. without ever interpreting or explaining them (Mt. 15:2; 23:5). Matthew was clearly contextualizing his writing to a Jewish audience (Flemming 2005:241).

Another example which reveals Matthew’s contextual concerns is found in his portrayal of Jesus. Matthew’s depiction of Jesus is very *Jewish* in nature. He focused more on the *Jewishness* of Christ more than any of the other gospels. For example, Matthew dedicated most of his first chapter, to a lengthy genealogy, following Jesus’ lineage clear back to Abraham, the father of Judaism himself. This would have been very significant for his Jewish audience. According to Flemming (2005:246), another way in which Matthew contextualized his story to his Jewish audience was in his references to the Old Testament (Jewish scriptures). Jesus’ fulfillment of these scriptures was undoubtedly a very controversial, yet relevant topic for the Jews. Therefore, Matthew was speaking their cultural language. He was obviously contextualizing his story by using theological themes already familiar to his audience.

#### **4.4.3 Luke**

Similarly to Mark, it is likely that Luke was writing to a mostly gentile audience as well. According to Flemming (2005:250), Luke’s gospel was written in a very Greco-Roman literary style. This indicates that Luke had a *gentile* audience in mind. For example, he spent more time than any of the other gospels, narrating the birth and infancy story of Jesus. This type of literary style was very common amongst Hellenistic biographies. Another factor indicating that Luke

was contextualizing his message to a gentile audience can be found in his genealogy, which goes clearly back to the time of Adam. If Mark was writing to a Jewish audience only, his genealogy would have been similar to Mark's, going back only to Abraham.

Luke was unique in the fact that he wrote a sequel to his gospel: the book of Acts. His gospel was only the first part of a larger story; a story which his gentile audience would have wanted to hear. Luke wanted the gentiles to know that God was including them in his redemptive plan. As Flemming states, "only Luke amongst the gospel writers connects his story of Jesus to a sequel – the story of the early church in Acts. This connection enables him to more fully demonstrate that it is part of God's ancient plan to include the Gentiles in the people of God." In addition, Luke uses various stories in his gospel, which foreshadow God's *redemptive* plan for the gentiles; a plan that was later revealed in his second book. For example, Luke includes in his gospel the prophecy of Simon, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). He also retells the story of the (gentile) Roman centurion, and includes what Jesus said to him, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (Luke 7:9). All of these factors suggest that Luke was contextualizing his message appropriately to a very gentile audience.

#### **4.4.4 John**

John's gospel is very different from all the other gospels. One thing that makes John's gospel so unique is his literary style. He wrote in such a way, that it makes it difficult to pin down whom he was actually writing to. This perhaps could mean that John was writing to a multiple of audiences and that he was contextualizing his message to a number of cultures, all at the same time. For example, John uses Jewish themes (Jewish culture, customs, traditions, etc.) in his writings, indicating that he was writing to a Jewish-Christian audience. He also addresses *non-Christians*, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ..." (John 20:31)). There is also reason to believe that he was writing to a gentile-Christian audience as well, because he took the time to define words such as *Messiah* and *rabbi*. These words would have been unfamiliar to a gentile audience.

In addition, Flemming (2005:259) suggests that John may have been writing to a fourth audience as well: *second-generation* Christians. These *second-generation* Christians had not been eye-witnesses of Jesus' miracles and teachings. This makes sense then why John would write, "'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed". Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book" (John 20:29-30). It is clear then that John was contextualizing his message to this fourth audience as well.

#### **4.4.5 Summary**

As seen from above, the examples of *contextualization* in the New Testament are plenty. These examples reveal that not only is *contextualization* and *intercultural teaching* important, but are foundational and paramount for transferring the gospel message from one culture to the next. And as much as these New Testament examples are foundational for establishing the *normative task* of this study, the *Incarnation model*, which will be discussed next, is as equally foundational, if not more.

#### **4.5 The Incarnation Model**

According to Grudem (1994:543), the word *incarnation* comes from the Latin word *incarnare*, which means *to make flesh*. The *incarnation* then refers to the fact that Jesus became God in human flesh. In short, God became man. The *incarnation* is a fundamental doctrine when it comes to the Christian faith. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The fact that God became man, tells us that God is very interested in the welfare of mankind. He is not a distant God, as the Deist's suggest, but a God who lived among us. God is a personal, loving God. God is a contextual God. What better example could we use then, when it comes to learning what it means to teach interculturally, than the example of Christ? It is important to investigate the implications of the incarnation when it comes to intercultural ministry. Lingenfelter (2003:16) states "We seldom ask, however, what the implications of this incarnation are. What did it mean for God to become flesh? How did God plan and choose to

live among us? In what manner did he come? Does his example have any significance for us as we are sent to others? In this section, I will be analyzing several characteristics in the life of Christ, which serve as a model for doing intercultural ministry today.

The following describes several important aspects of the *incarnation* as a model for intercultural ministry (Lingenfelter 2003:16-17):

Firstly, Jesus came as an infant. Infants cannot talk, walk, or doing much of anything except eat, sleep and cry. Jesus did not come as a full grown man, as a professional, or even as a ruler. Jesus was born into a very humble family, during a very arduous time for the Jews. Jesus' birth was not accompanied by large celebrations and parades, but was only witnessed by only a few humble shepherds, some distant astrologers, and a few animals. So, what can Jesus' birth teach us about intercultural ministry?

1. When ministering interculturally, we must first lay down our pride. There is a tendency amongst Western missionaries, to think that they know everything when it comes to ministry. There is no room for this kind of attitude in missions.
2. We must be willing as missionaries to enter the field as mere infants. We must claim to know nothing, except how to eat, sleep, and cry. We must not seek to be recognized by the masses, but seek to serve with a humble heart. Jesus depended on his parents to take care of all his needs, to feed him, bathe him and protect him. It is not easy to depend on other people when serving in ministry.
3. As people, we want to take the lead, we want to have it all together and we want to be in total control. The irony of Jesus is the fact that although he was God, he chose not to take the lead, he chose not to have it all together, and he chose not to be in total control. What is interesting is that he set aside all of these things in order to serve, and not to be served. As Philippians 2:7 says "but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." We must be willing as well, to give up our rights as people, to set aside our pride and to humble ourselves, allowing God to work in and through us, to serve and not to be served.

Secondly, Jesus came as a learner of the culture. Jesus was not born knowing everything. Jesus learned like most children do. He learned the language of his parents, played with other children, learned the norms of his culture and even participated in the festivals, traditions, and religion of his culture. Also, Jesus learned how to work hard, by learning the trade of his father Joseph. He also studied the Scriptures and prayed just like other young men did. Luke 2:41-52 tells the story of Jesus when he was just a little boy, sitting with the teachers of the law inside the temple. It is amazing to think that Jesus was willing to learn about God from human teachers. Jesus was humble enough to learn from those who, compared with himself, knew nothing about God. Jesus was not a *know-it-all*. He did not elevate himself above his culture (although he could have, and had the right to do so), but made himself *nothing*, for the sake of his calling. So, how can the example of Jesus, being a *learner* of his culture, teach us about intercultural ministry?

1. We must first be listeners of our respondent's culture. We cannot just assume we know everything about the culture we are living in. To be a listener and learner, we must spend a lot of time with the people of that culture. Learning a culture does not take place within a day, or a week or even a year. As seen in the life of Jesus, he immersed himself in a culture other than his own. He did not even begin his public ministry until he was 30 years old. That is 30 years in a foreign culture. If it took Jesus thirty years to learn that culture, we should not expect ourselves to learn a culture within just a few months. Learning takes time. Time that is dedicated to learning the language, traditions, values, fears, and heart of the culture you are living in.

Lingenfelter (2003:16-17) asserts to this by stating,

“The implications of Jesus’ status as a learner are seldom discussed, let alone understood or applied. God’s son studied the language, the culture, and the lifestyles of his people for thirty years before he began his public ministry. He knew all about their family lives and problems. He stood at their side as learner and as coworker. He learned to read and study the Scriptures in his local synagogue and earned respect to the point that the people called him Rabbi. He worshiped with

them in their synagogues and observed the annual Passover and other feasts in the temple in Jerusalem. He identified totally with those to whom he was sent, calling himself the Son of man.”

2. Although Jesus knew more about God than his peers, teachers and elder, he did not flaunt his knowledge. Jesus was not bent on proving everyone wrong, but was motivated to hear what other people had to say, even if what they said was not always correct. Intercultural ministers must also be willing to keep quiet and listen to the Christian leaders of that culture. The tendency for some missionaries is to just quickly spit out all the *right* answers, without even allowing the respondents to offer their own ideas. Missionaries feel the need to just teach, teach, teach, because that is why they were *sent to do*. The danger comes, when missionaries start to think that they are, the only ones with the *true* knowledge of Scriptures, the only ones who have had proper training, the only ones who can better articulate the word of God and the only ones who can be *used by God*.

The following describes several important aspects of the *incarnation* as a model for intercultural ministry (Flemming 2005:20-23):

Firstly, Jesus used the *cultural language* of his people. He made use of parables and illustrations that were a part of everyday life. For example, first century Palestinians would have identified with Jesus when he told parables about fishermen, farmers, wineskins, weeds, soil, salt, etc. He was able to contextualize his message by using stories, examples and parables that were familiar to his audiences. This type of contextualization is not always easy for missionaries. In order to speak the *cultural language* of the people, we must be willing to learn the *cultural language* of the people. And this will require learning their stories, identifying with their surroundings and listening to their hurts and pains. We cannot expect to identify with a culture if we are not willing to first embrace that culture. People want to be understood, they want to be heard and they want to be respected. Jesus knew how to do all three. He was always teaching in a way that met the spiritual needs of his audience in a contextually specific way. In this way, Jesus was the master teacher.

Secondly, Jesus spent a lot of his time with the *weak* and the *lowly*. Jesus was not a status driven individual. He did not care who he was hanging out with, as long as he was doing the Father's will. Jesus made no distinction between the rich or the poor; the oppressed or the powerful. He came for only one purpose, and that was to bring the *good news* to all mankind. He did not judge anyone based on the role they played in society. He was only concerned about people's relationships with God.

Jesus' example serves as a great challenge for any intercultural minister seeking to make a difference within another culture. I will offer a few examples below.

1. He challenges us to go outside of our own comfort zones and venture into uncharted areas of life. It can be so easy to get stuck in a rut or a routine simply because we are too scared to try something new.

2. Jesus also challenges us to fully integrate ourselves into the culture which we are serving. As Kraft (1979:175) says, "God in Jesus became so much a part of a specific human context that many never even recognized that he had come from somewhere else."

Thirdly, Jesus contextualized his message in different ways for different audiences. Jesus did not just speak to every group of people in the same way. I will offer a few examples of this below.

1. When Jesus was with the masses, he contextualized his message to the masses. This can be seen in Matthew 13:1-10, when Jesus spoke to a large crowd alongside the lakeshore and used illustrations that would have made sense to that farming community.

2. When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, he contextualized his message accordingly. This can be seen in Matthew 12:38-45, when the Pharisees were demanding a *sign* from Jesus. Since Jesus knew their (*Pharisee*) hearts, he rebuked them instead of giving them the miracle they wanted.

3. When Jesus spoke to the Romans, he contextualized his message to them as well. This can be seen in John 18:34-37 when Jesus had a discussion with Pilate about what it meant to be a *king*. Being that Pilate was both a king and a Roman, he would have understood what Jesus was trying to say.

4. When Jesus was with his disciples, he contextualized his message to them. This can be seen in John 13:18-21 when Jesus predicted his own betrayal. Jesus would not have discussed the issue with a large crowd, or with the Pharisees, or with anyone else. He spoke about only with his disciples because it related only to them.

Fourthly, Jesus was not *confined* to his respondent's culture. Although Jesus was living within a particular culture, he was not bound to that particular culture. Inasmuch as Jesus was very sensitive to his culture and spoke in ways that made a lot of sense to his hearers, he still at times broke the rules and became very *counter-cultural*. This becomes a very important aspect of intercultural communications, which must be analyzed further. I will offer a few thoughts on this below.

1. Jesus did not just accept every cultural practice as *okay*, but also confronted the ones that were not *okay*. This teaches us, that just because something may be *cultural*; it doesn't mean that it is necessarily Biblical. For example, the Jews considered it a sin to hang out with the prostitutes and the drunkards. It was also considered a sin to share a meal with a gentile, or do a miracle on the Sabbath.

2. Jesus knew that some of the things he was going to do would offend certain people, but this did not stop him. He was more interested in doing the Fathers' *will*, than the peoples. In this way, Jesus went against his culture. Intercultural ministers must also be willing to confront the issues within their respondents' culture that do not line up with the gospel; but this must be done with great gentleness and respect, and also with much prayer.

Fifthly, Jesus' *great commission*, found in Matthew 28:19, reveals God's heart, to reach *all* people of *all* nations. Although Jesus lived amongst a particular culture, ministered amongst a particular group and was born within a particular point in time, his vision went beyond just that one culture, that one group and that one point in time. Flemming (2005:22) says it well, "while Jesus in his earthly life functioned primarily within a Palestinian cultural setting and ministered to his own Jewish people, his sacrificial death and in particular his resurrection from the dead gave the incarnation a universal and intercultural thrust. Through the spirit of the living Lord and his body the church, he can be present with people of every time and culture and nation."

#### **4.6 Old Testament Contextualization**

I would now like to turn our attention to the prophet Jonah from the Old Testament. So far in this chapter I have incorporated only the accounts of those who have served as good examples of cross-cultural ministers, and yet there is much to learn from those who have failed in cross-cultural ministry. The story of Jonah portrays such a story, of a reluctant missionary running away from his calling, to bring the message of God to an ungodly nation (Nineveh). After encountering a great storm, a giant fish, and a moment of repentance, Jonah inevitably is re-routed back to Nineveh to fulfil God's purpose for him. Fortunately, the author of this amazing story went to great lengths to disclose Jonah's true feelings, his biased intentions and his prejudiced heart toward the Ninevites. It helps the reader see how Jonah's biases and cultural prejudices actually disabled him from performing God's mission whole heartedly. It is obvious that Jonah's culturally conditioned heart hindered him from being a successful intercultural minister altogether. His need to see *culture* through God's eyes can become a great lesson for any intercultural minister today. John MacArthur (2010:1) says it well, "In great contrast to Jesus, the seeking Savior, Jonah illustrates what a missionary should not be. He was prejudiced, selfish, and disobedient. Yet the book named after him is instructive: it contrasts what Jonah was with what a missionary should be, representing God's concern for the lost versus Israel's indifference. It also shows that God's people can be reluctant or unconcerned about obeying God's call to make disciples."

#### 4.7 Summary Discussion

The Biblical support for intercultural teaching is immense. The Bible is chalked full of examples, teachings and illustrations that point to a God who is interested in specific contexts and cultures. Cross cultural contextualization, in all its forms, must not be considered as just, *another nice idea for ministry*, but must be considered as a mandatory practice for any foreign ministry endeavor. As Flemming (2005:21) states, “The incarnation of Jesus makes contextualization not just a possibility but an obligation.”

ABC also has an obligation, to be a contextual and relevant teaching institution. In light of the above discussion related to intercultural teaching, I will suggest the following for ABC.

Firstly, Paul demonstrated, that in order to win your audience, you must first deny certain aspects of your own life and your own culture. Paul was a servant. He did not consider his own life to be worth anything. He gave up all his rights and all his freedoms; all for the sake of the gospel and of Christ. He wrote, “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from god’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

ABC’s American staff must be also willing to deny certain aspects of their own lives and their own culture, in their efforts to embrace the lives and the culture of their respondent’s. This will take much time, dedication and personal sacrifice; but in the end, it will make all the difference in the world.

Secondly, Paul demonstrated his great ability to speak the *cultural language* of his hearers. For example, in his sermons to Lystra and Athens, Paul used illustrations and words that were familiar to his audience. Paul was only able to do this because he had taken the time to learn his respondent's culture. It is obvious then, that being a learner of culture, is the key to contextualization.

ABC's American staff must also be learners of their respondent's culture. Without learning the culture, there will be no connection between the teacher and the student. As a result, the message will be lost somewhere in the mix. In order for ABC lecturers to acquire the attention of their students, they must first be able to speak in a way that connects with the everyday lives of their students; this kind of teaching which will require a growing knowledge of their culture.

Thirdly, the life of Jesus serves as a great model for Christians, for what it means to live contextually. Jesus became fully immersed in a culture that was not his own. In order to win his audience, he learned their language, he adopted their customs and he lived openly among them. Jesus loved them, healed them, prayed for them and accepted them. Jesus did not try to erase their culture, but tried to embrace their culture. At the same time, Jesus did not always accept every aspect of their culture, but used their culture as a tool to refine their culture.

ABC's American staff must also be willing to embrace the culture of their respondents. They must be willing to come alongside their students and immerse themselves into the very culture of their students. As Christians, we are called to contextualize the gospel and imitate Christ, through our actions and through our deeds; and in doing so, we become like Christ, fulfilling the *will* of our Father in heaven.

## Chapter 5 Strategies of Action for ABC (The Pragmatic Task)

### 5.1 Introduction

The goal of this research has been fourfold: 1. to develop an appropriate and relevant model for intercultural teaching at ABC. 2. To analyze ABC in regards to its intercultural teaching. 3. To interpret ABC's teaching in light of the suggested model. 4. To offer ABC a revised praxis for intercultural teaching. A *revised praxis* in other words, is not just doing business as usual sort of speak, but moving towards a reform. A *revised praxis* can also be referred to as the *pragmatic task*. Osmer (2008:4) defines this task as, "determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation".

In this chapter, I will be suggesting several practical strategies of action for ABC in regards to their intercultural teaching. Without this *pragmatic* step, the research that was gathered for this project would be somewhat insignificant. Research, without the intent to change the situation, is nothing more than just information on paper. Therefore, this research has exposed several areas of ABC's teaching that are in need of this change. This does not mean that ABC is not a relevant intercultural institution, nor does it mean that ABC has failed in their vision to reach African students for Christ. Like every institution, ABC is not perfect, and has areas that are in need of improvement. And from my perspective, ABC's intercultural teaching is currently adequate, but has the capacity to become even exceptional. The suggestions that are offered in this chapter are based on the research<sup>58</sup> that was conducted in and outside of ABC.

### 5.2 Six Practical Strategies of Action for ABC

**5.2.1 Strategy 1: Immersion** (Hesselgrave 1991:193-288); (Bowen 1988: strategies 1-18); (Lingenfelter 2003: 21-24)

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<sup>58</sup> Refer to chapters 2 and 3.

In order for any intercultural minister, to truly identify with any culture, they must first be willing to immerse themselves into the culture in which they are living. This will require spending a lot of time with the people of that culture. This can be done in a variety of ways, including visiting their homes, going to weddings, funerals, etc., sharing a meal, or even participating in a sporting event. In order to gain the respect and appreciation of a particular culture, there must first be a willingness to contribute and to participate in that culture. My suggestion for ABC is to require a period of immersion for every American staff member before they begin teaching. This time period should be long enough to learn the basic culture of Malawi. This *orientation* to Malawian culture may include:

1. Hiring ABC graduates to train the new American staff members. This training could include, visiting several areas of Malawi in order to get a lay of the land; spending time visiting various churches, pastors, and graduates throughout Malawi; participating in both rural and urban ministry outreaches; studying the traditional religions of Malawi; visiting other academic institutions in Malawi; etc.

2. ABC should require all incoming American Staff members, to learn the Malawian language (Chichewa). This is one of the most important strategies of action for ABC. As seen from the research conducted at ABC, most of the American staff members do not even have a working knowledge of the Malawian language. ABC staff members will not be able to be relevant and culturally effective teachers amongst their students without a working knowledge of their language. This strategy will require the staff to undergo language training, either before they arrive, once they arrive, or both. This will allow them to both interact with their student in a deeper way and understand their *heart language*. This requirement to learn the language should not be done in conjunction with teaching at ABC full-time. This type of training can be easily neglected when life gets too busy. It is important then for the administration to set aside special time for their staff to learn the language.

### **5.2.2 Strategy 2: Training** (Hesselgrave 1991: 104-113); (Lingenfelter 2003: 22-24)

The second strategy I am recommending for ABC involves *in-house* cultural training. ABC administration must set aside time each year to train their staff. This training must seek to answer questions like: 1. how can we as a staff become more effective and relevant intercultural teachers? 2. What does it mean to teach interculturally? 3. What specific learning styles are common amongst our Malawian students? 4. What are some of the struggles we are currently facing when it comes to intercultural teaching? These types of questions and more will help uncover the issues that need the most attention.

Another suggestion in regards to *in-house* staff training is to invite special guest speakers to help facilitate these training sessions. ABC has dozens of connections throughout Malawi that could be utilized. They could invite various ABC graduates, Malawian pastors, college lecturers, missionaries, etc. This would give the ABC staff a variety of perspectives, on the subject of teaching interculturally. It is always a good practice to listen to others who are finding success at doing the things you are seeking to do better.

### **5.2.3 Strategy 3: Books and Curriculum** (Hesselgrave 1991: 527-572); (Bowen 1988: strategies 1-7); (Lingenfelter 2003: 99-112)

As mentioned before, several of the interviewees, expressed their concern in regards to ABC text books and library books. The complaint was that ABC did not have a sufficient amount of books that were written by African authors, or books that were more relevant to the African context. In light of this, ABC needs to acquire more culturally relevant books for both their library and their courses. I will suggest the following:

1. Organize a committee, of both African and American teachers, missionaries, lecturers and pastors. Have this committee compile a large list of Christian books that they think would be culturally relevant for ABC students. Once this list is compiled, the committee would then be

responsible for raising the necessary support to purchase the books. The books would then become an integral part of the library and curriculum of ABC.

2. Organize another committee of both Malawian and American ABC staff, who would be willing to sift through the books that are currently in the library. Many of the books in the library have been donated to ABC throughout the years, by many different churches and individuals throughout America. Because of this, there are a percentage of books in the library that are, either, very outdated, culturally irrelevant, or theologically inept. This committee would be responsible for sifting out the books that fit into one of these three categories. This committee could also compile a list of culturally relevant books, raise the necessary support, purchase the books and then replenish the library shelves with these.

3. Another strategy in regards to the books and curriculum at ABC is to hire a person who is trained in *curriculum development*. This person must have a firm understanding of the African culture as well as keen knowledge of college level academics. They would be responsible for both evaluating and interpreting ABC's curriculum in regards to its cultural relevance. After the initial evaluation, a plan for enhancing the current curriculum could be made.

#### **5.2.4 Strategy 4: Discipleship** (Hesselgrave 1991: 453-526); (Lingenfelter 2003: 42-43).

As Bonhoeffer (1995:64) says, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth which has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son. ... There is trust in God, but no following of Christ." The same holds true for ABC. ABC staff members must be willing to disciple their students in order to connect with them at a deeper level. This will allow the staff members to get close enough to their student, so that they might better understand Malawian culture. Several of the students that were interviewed mentioned their desire to form closer relationships with the staff. They were frustrated by some of the staff members who just taught their lessons and went home each day without any student interaction. They suggested that the staff should spend more time outside of class mentoring and discipling them.

For ABC to become a more culturally relevant teaching institution, the staff must be willing to mentor and disciple their students. Their actions will always speak louder than their words. The students won't care what the teachers know, until they first know that the teachers care. Relationships always come first in the African culture, and the sooner the staff realizes that, the sooner they will become culturally relevant educators.

My suggestion for ABC is to implement a discipleship training program that would allow the students to be mentored and disciplined by the staff. This program would be mandatory for the staff, but voluntary for the students. Every staff member would be required to disciple two students each semester. Students who would like to be disciplined would then sign up with a teacher at the beginning of each semester. This system would allow many of the students be disciplined within a very short amount of time. This would also allow the staff to get to know their students better.

#### **5.2.5 Strategy 5: An Increase of Malawian Staff (refer to 2.4.4)**

Several of the students that were interviewed, expressed their desire for ABC to hire more Malawian staff members. They explained that there are only a few Malawian teachers at ABC, and that there is a need to have more. According to them, the Malawian staff members are more in touch with the basic needs of their students and are able to teach in a more culturally relevant way. They appreciated having the American staff members, but felt that many of them were out of touch with Malawian culture.

My suggestion for ABC, is to sponsor various ABC graduates who have proven to be exceptional teachers. ABC would then send these graduates to various graduate schools, in and outside of Africa. ABC would financially support these graduates, with the promise that they will come back to ABC and teach college courses for several years.

### **5.2.6 Strategy 6: Personal Development** (Hesselgrave 1991: 104-113); (Lingenfelter 2003:22-24)

The topic of *personal development* is a broad one. There are so many ways in which a person can develop themselves further (i.e. physically, spiritually, mentally, etc.). The type of *personal development* I am suggesting for ABC staff members involves becoming more culturally adept. In order to achieve this, I am suggesting the following:

1. As a part of their *personal development*, ABC staff members must spend more time reading books written by African's themselves. It can be so easy to turn a deaf ear to people living outside of your own culture, and thinking that your own culture has all the right answers. Ethnocentrism is a very common problem amongst people and can have very harmful effects. With that being said, it is necessary then for the ABC American staff to read books that would allow them to think outside of their own cultural boxes. This will allow them to get into the minds of different people who think much like their students think.
2. Spend time studying Scripture. The Scripture is full of examples of intercultural teaching (see chapter 4). The Bible is our best tool and resource for learning what it means to live like Christ in the midst of a different culture.

## **5.3 Conclusion**

### **5.3.1 An Insider's Perspective**

Being that I am also a lecturer at ABC, I thought it would be appropriate for my conclusion, to share my experience and perspective of ABC.

I have been an ABC lecturer now for almost three years. My wife, two daughters and I moved to Malawi from America as missionaries in August of 2007. Our experience at ABC has been very rewarding and fruitful. We have spent a lot of time getting to know the students at ABC, which has been both a pleasure and a delight for us. Inasmuch as we have gotten to know our students,

it has become apparent that our American culture is quite different from the Malawian culture. In fact there has been many times in which we have become quite frustrated in our efforts to communicate interculturally with our students. This has led us to the conclusion that we must be willing to learn the Malawian culture at a much deeper level if we ever want to connect with our students better. And in our quest to learn the Malawian culture, we have been challenged time and time again, by our own cultural misconceptions and stereotypes that have hindered our communication with the students.

After becoming very aware of our own intercultural struggles, I could see other American staff members struggling in the same way. I began to notice things I hadn't seen before. I saw the staff struggling to communicate with their students; I heard their stories of frustration; I noticed the distance between them and their students; I noticed the language and cultural barriers between the staff and their students. I observed many intercultural struggles that I had never even knew existed at ABC. And after much reflection and observation, I decided that further research was necessary if ABC wanted to become a more relevant intercultural institution. The topic of, *Cross Cultural Teaching in a Malawian Context: A critical analysis of the African Bible College*, was chosen out of my own personal desire to become a more relevant intercultural teacher, as well as my desire to help ABC become a more relevant intercultural institution. I believe that this research has accomplished both of these tasks.

As a part of this *pragmatic task*, I would like to offer one last strategy of action for ABC that involves me personally. I would like to sit down with the director and president of ABC and organize a seminar for the faculty and staff. This seminar would cover the topic of *intercultural teaching*, and would be based on the research that I conducted. I could condense my research into several 1-hour-long sessions that would be discussion and lecture based. The goal of these seminars, would not be to put down the staff or focus on the faults of ABC, but would be to encourage the staff to become more culturally relevant in their teaching. I believe that this research would be a great tool to begin the process of change at ABC and would benefit both staff and student when it comes to intercultural teaching. There is no greater tool than the tool of self-examination when it comes to creating change.

Therefore, in regards to *change* and *self-examination*, I conclude this research with a quote from David J. Bosch (2007:9).

“Missiology, as a branch of the discipline of Christian theology, is not a disinterested or neutral enterprise; rather, it seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith. Such an approach does not suggest an absence of critical examination; as a matter of fact, precisely for the sake of the Christian mission, it will be necessary to subject every definition and every manifestation of the Christian mission to rigorous analysis and appraisal.”

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

Although the research conducted at ABC was sufficient enough for gaining a basic understanding of their intercultural situation, further research must be conducted in the following areas.

1. Historical trends related to ABC's *intercultural teaching* approaches.
2. The impact of the Malawian lecturers versus the American lecturers at ABC.
3. ABC's American lecturers and their contribution to the *globalization* problem.
4. A comparative study between ABC and other Christian colleges in Malawi.

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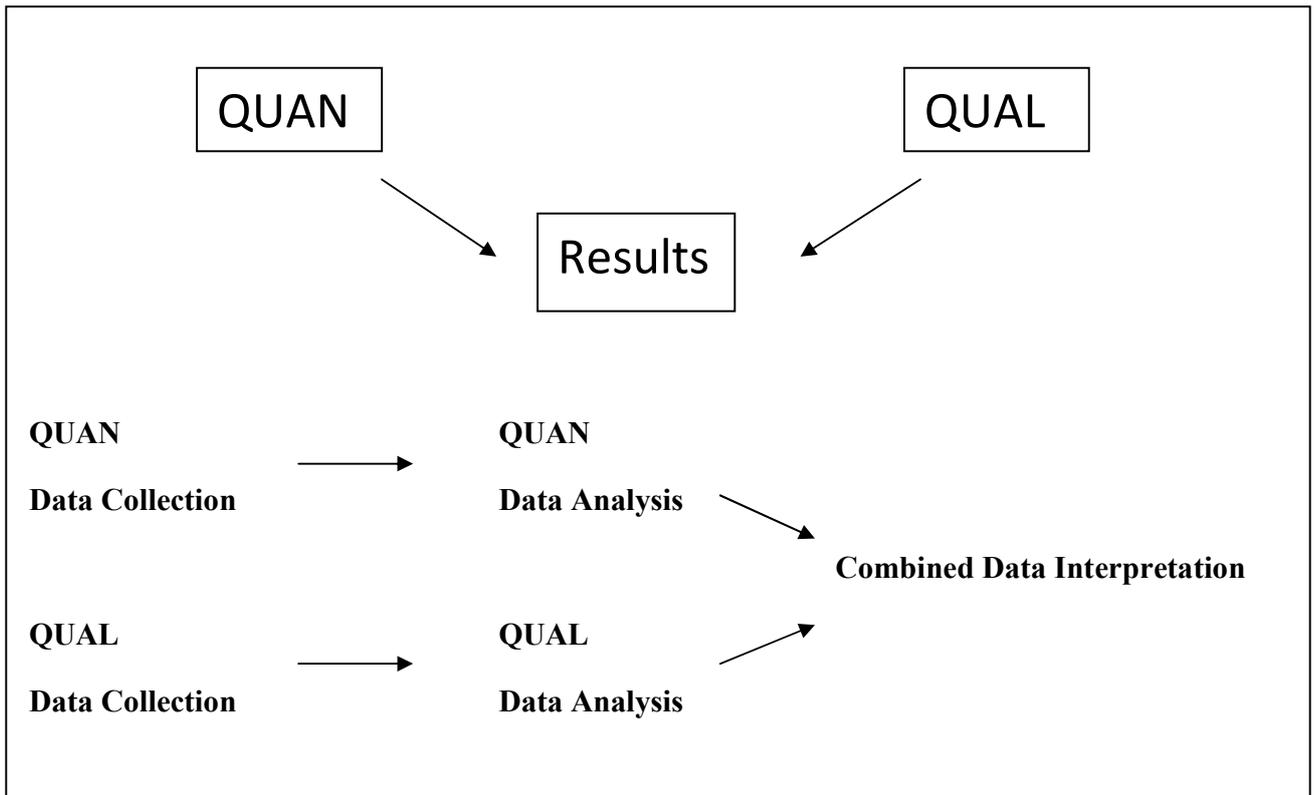
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# ADDENDUM

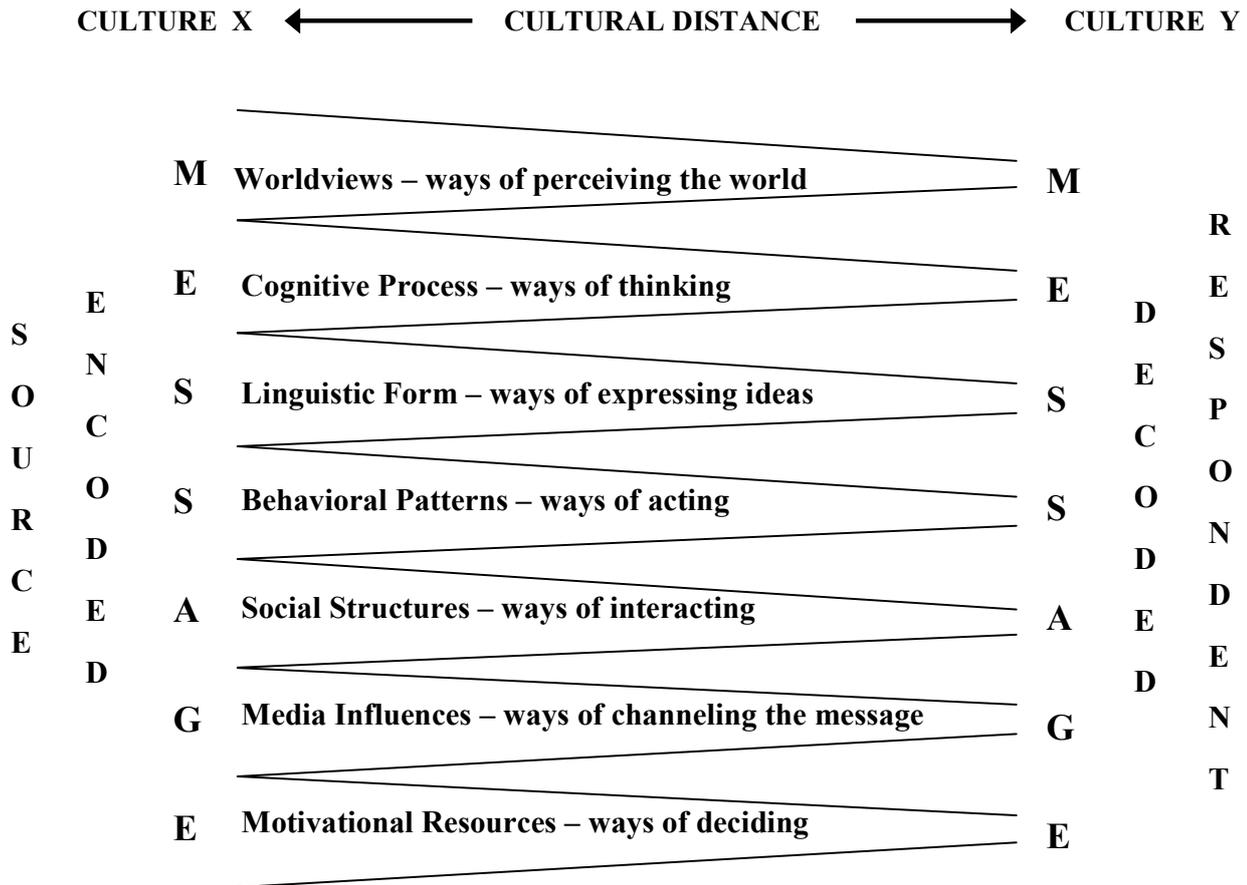
Figure 1



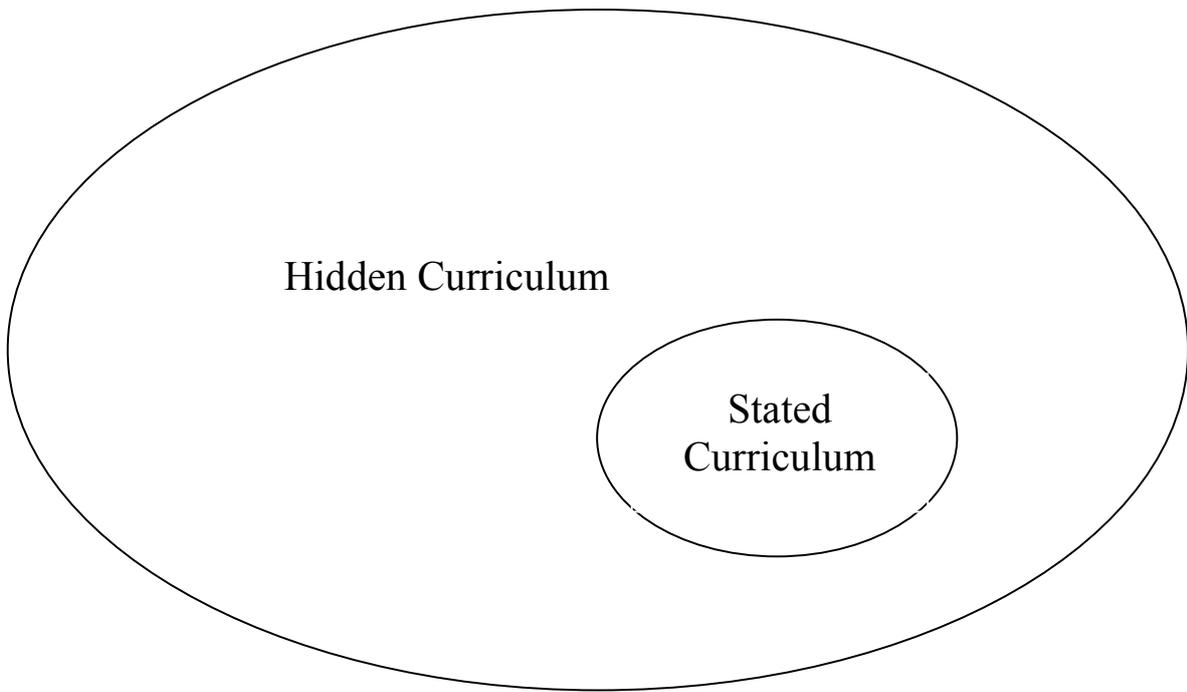
*Visualization for the Triangulation (Mixed Methods) research design. (Cresswell & Teddlie 2003:236).*

Figure 2

**DIMENSIONS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**



**Figure 3**



**Table 1**

**Learning Styles and the Intelligences Valued**

<b>Traditional Learning</b>	<b>Formal Schooling</b>
<b>Relational Learning Style</b>	<b>Analytical Learning Style</b>
Visual Global Example Narrative	Verbal Dichotomous Question Proposition
<b>Valued Intelligences</b>	<b>Valued Intelligences</b>
External personal Spatial Bodily kinesthetic	Linguistic Logical/mathematical Musical Internal personal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

10. Why do you think *teaching* in a culturally relevant way is important?
11. Do you see any theological basis for teaching in a culturally relevant way?
12. In what aspects do you think ABC's teaching is culturally relevant?
13. In what aspects do you think ABC's teaching is not culturally relevant?
14. Do you think ABC's American staff have a good understanding of Malawian culture... The Malawian language? Explain.
15. What types of teaching *mediums* (ways of channeling the teaching) are being used at ABC?
16. What are some of the common expectations ABC students might have of their teachers (i.e. conduct, appearance, grades, discipline, involvement, etc.)?
17. How do ABC students view interpersonal relationships with the American staff?
18. What factors would further help ABC to teach in a culturally relevant way?

# ABC (SOPHOMORE) SURVEY

For: Professor Bob Stauffacher on 23/3/2010

**Instructions:** Circle the letter or number that is appropriate for each questions:

11. How well do you think the American lecturers at ABC understand the Malawian culture?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Low)      ←—————→      (High)

12. How well are the American lecturers at ABC teaching in a culturally relevant way?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Low)      ←—————→      (High)

13. How well do the American lecturers at ABC speak the Malawian language?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Low)      ←—————→      (High)

14. How often do the American lecturers use words and phrases from their own culture that are not familiar to Malawian students?

- a. Never
- b. rarely
- c. Sometimes
- d. Often

15. How important is it for you to have a teacher that is culturally relevant?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Not important)      ←—————→      (Very important)



# ABC (SOPHOMORE) SURVEY RESULTS

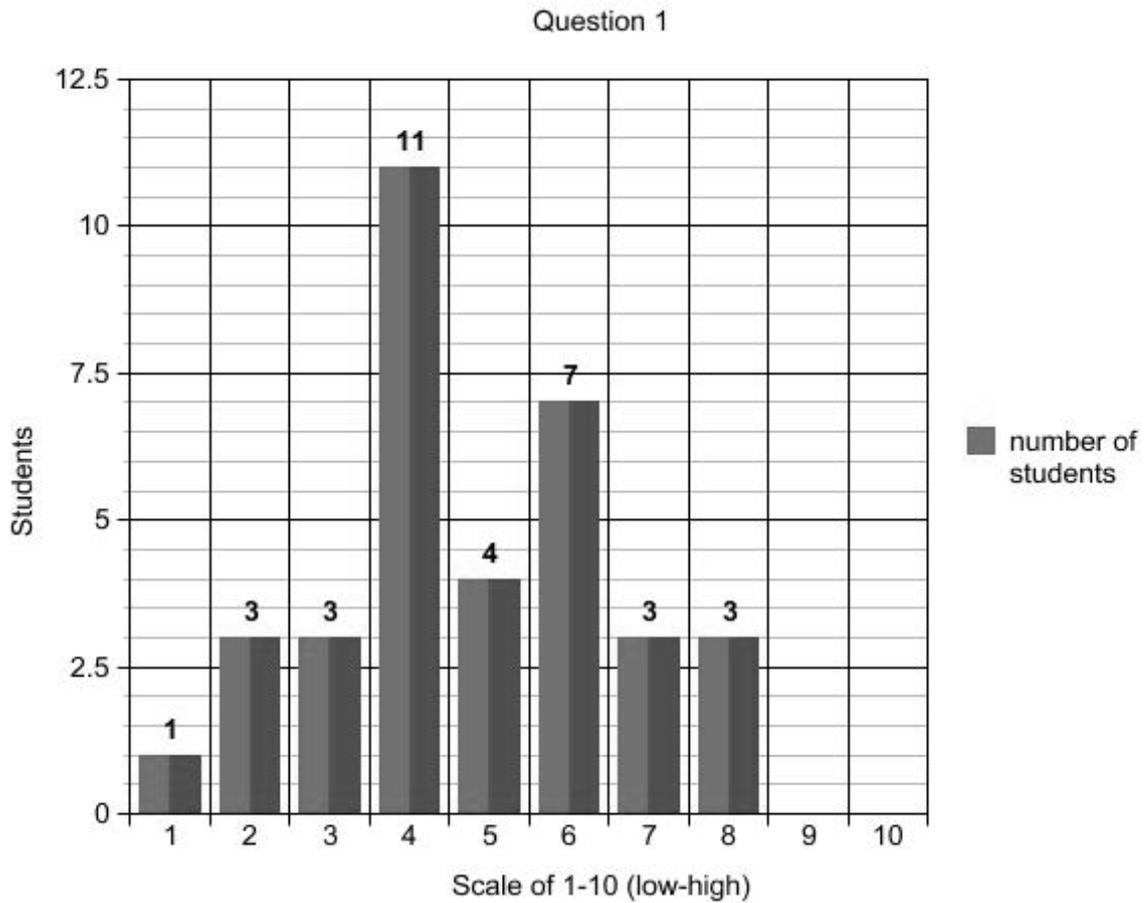
For: Professor Bob Stauffacher on 23/3/2010

**Instructions:** Circle the letter or number that is appropriate for each questions:

21. How well do you think the American lecturers at ABC understand the Malawian culture?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Low)      ←—————→      (High)

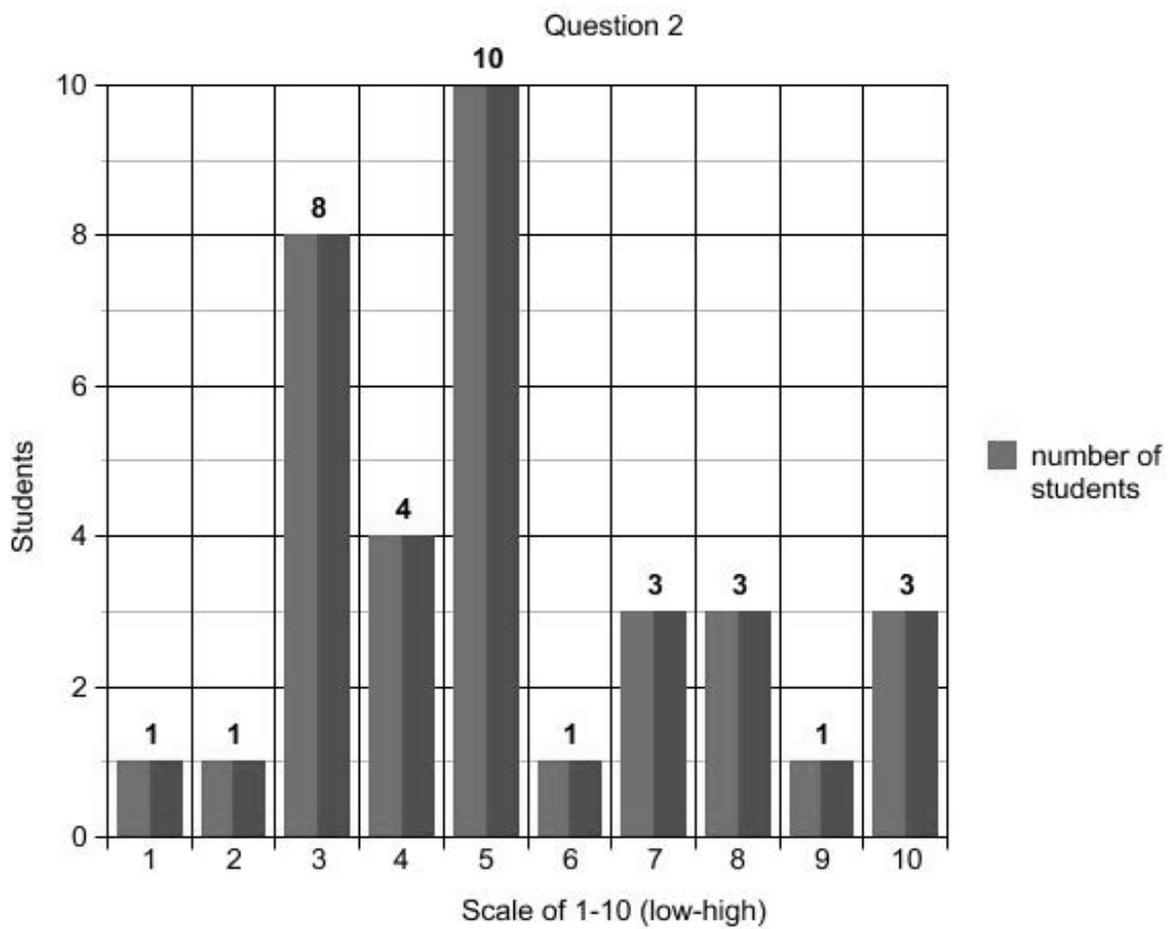
## **RESULTS:**



22. How well are the American lecturers at ABC teaching in a culturally relevant way?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Low)      ←—————→      (High)

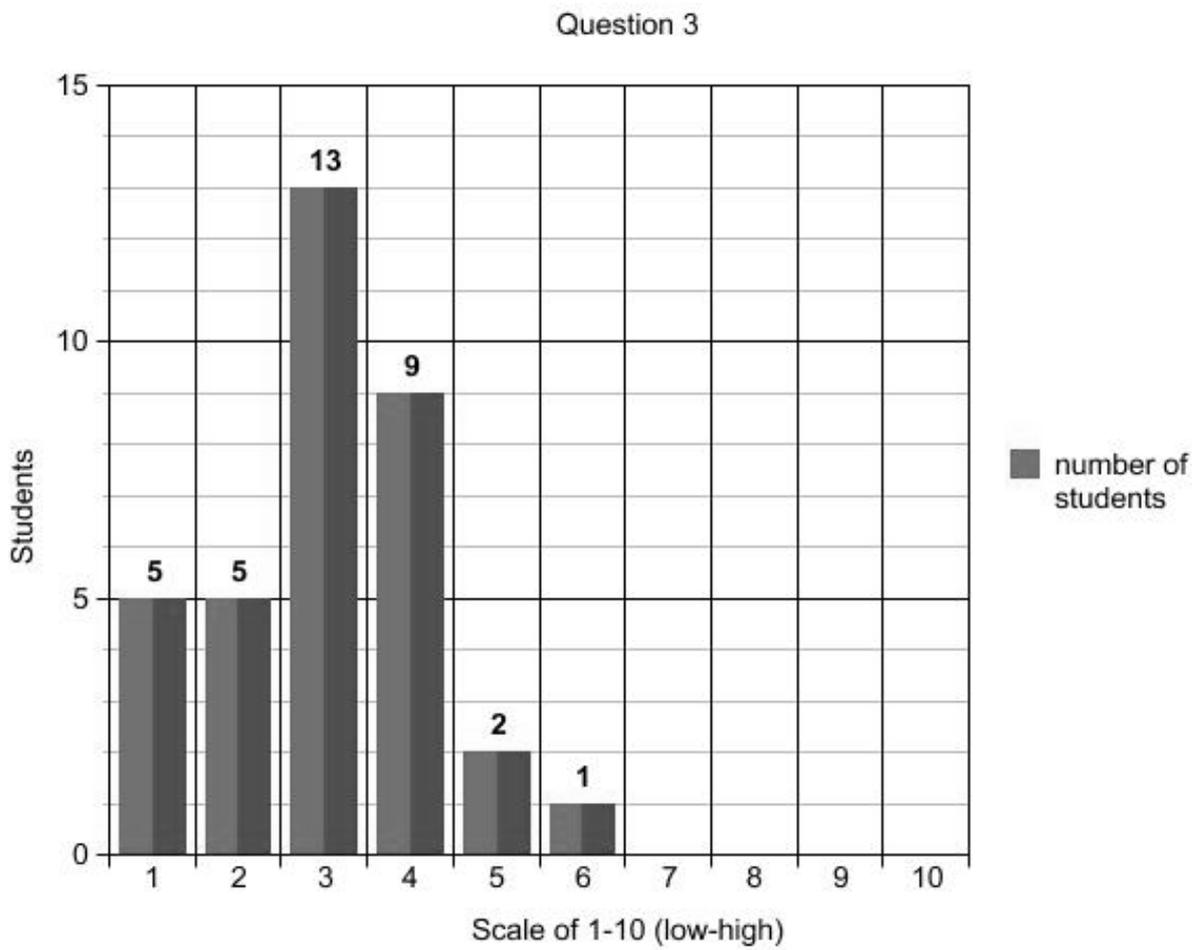
**RESULTS:**



23. How well do the American lecturers at ABC speak the Malawian language?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Low)      ←—————→      (High)

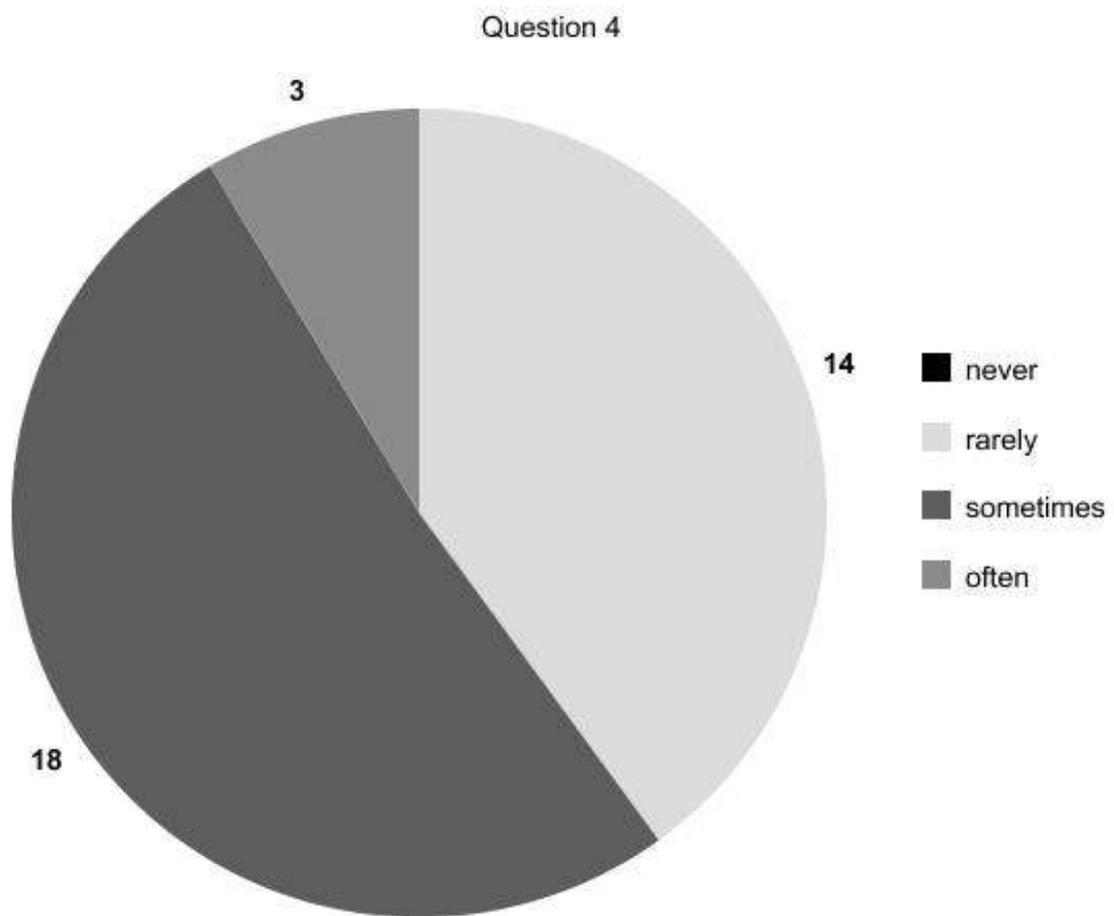
**RESULTS:**



24. How often do the American lecturers use words and phrases from their own culture that are not familiar to Malawian students?

- e. Never
- f. rarely
- g. Sometimes
- h. Often

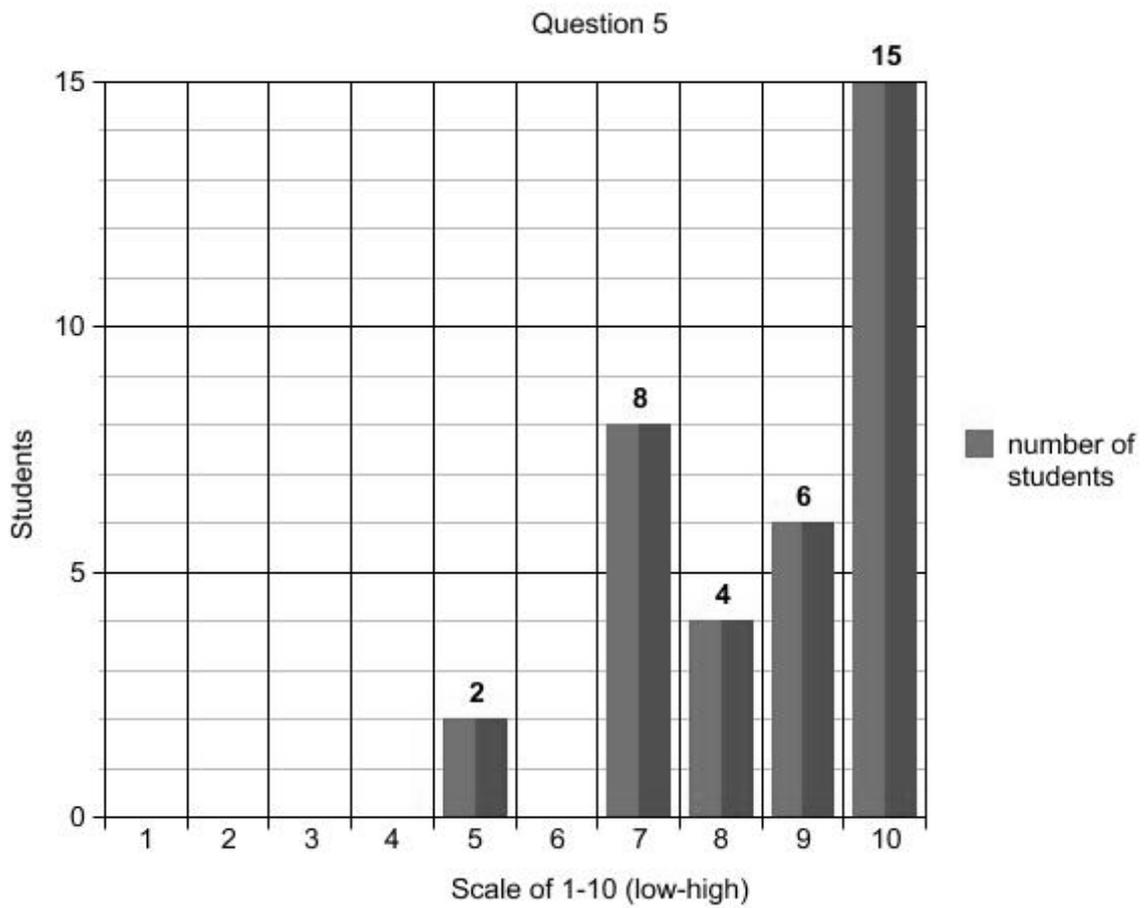
**RESULTS:**



25. How important is it for you to have a teacher that is culturally relevant?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Not important)      ←—————→      (Very important)

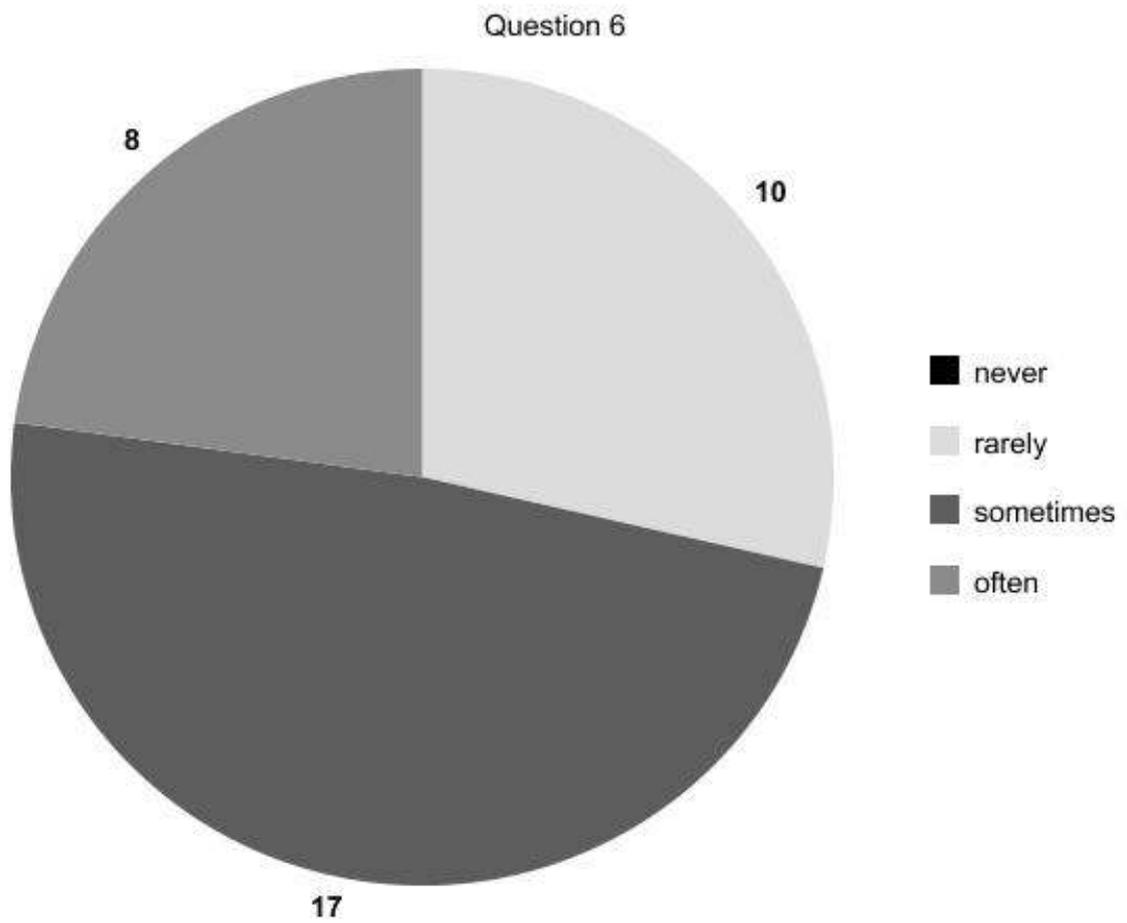
**RESULTS:**



26. How often do the American lecturers at ABC teach in a culturally relevant way?

- e. Never
- f. rarely
- g. Sometimes
- h. Often

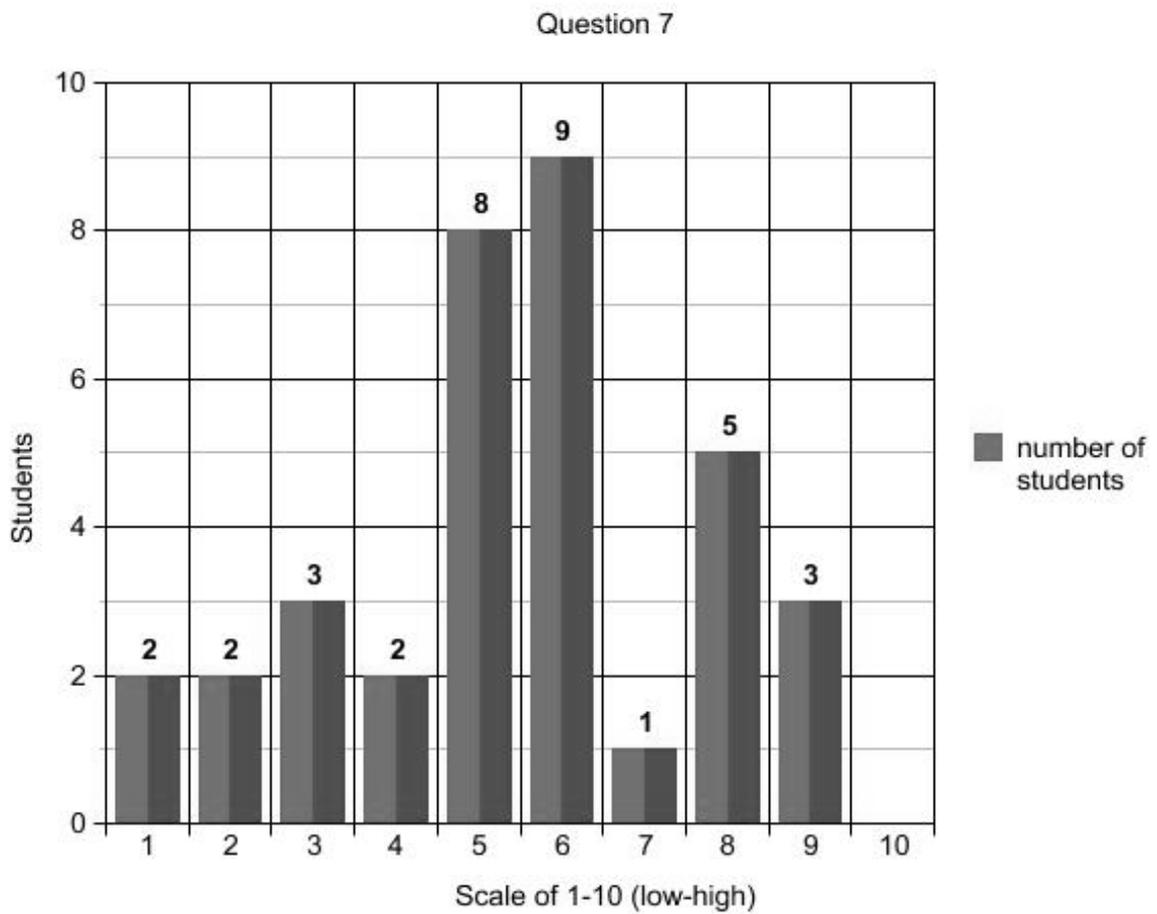
**RESULTS:**



27. How well do the American staff members relate with their students on a personal level (inside and outside of the classroom)?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(low)      ←—————→      (High)

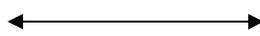
**RESULTS:**



28. How much more culturally relevant are the Malawian lecturers at ABC than the American lecturers?

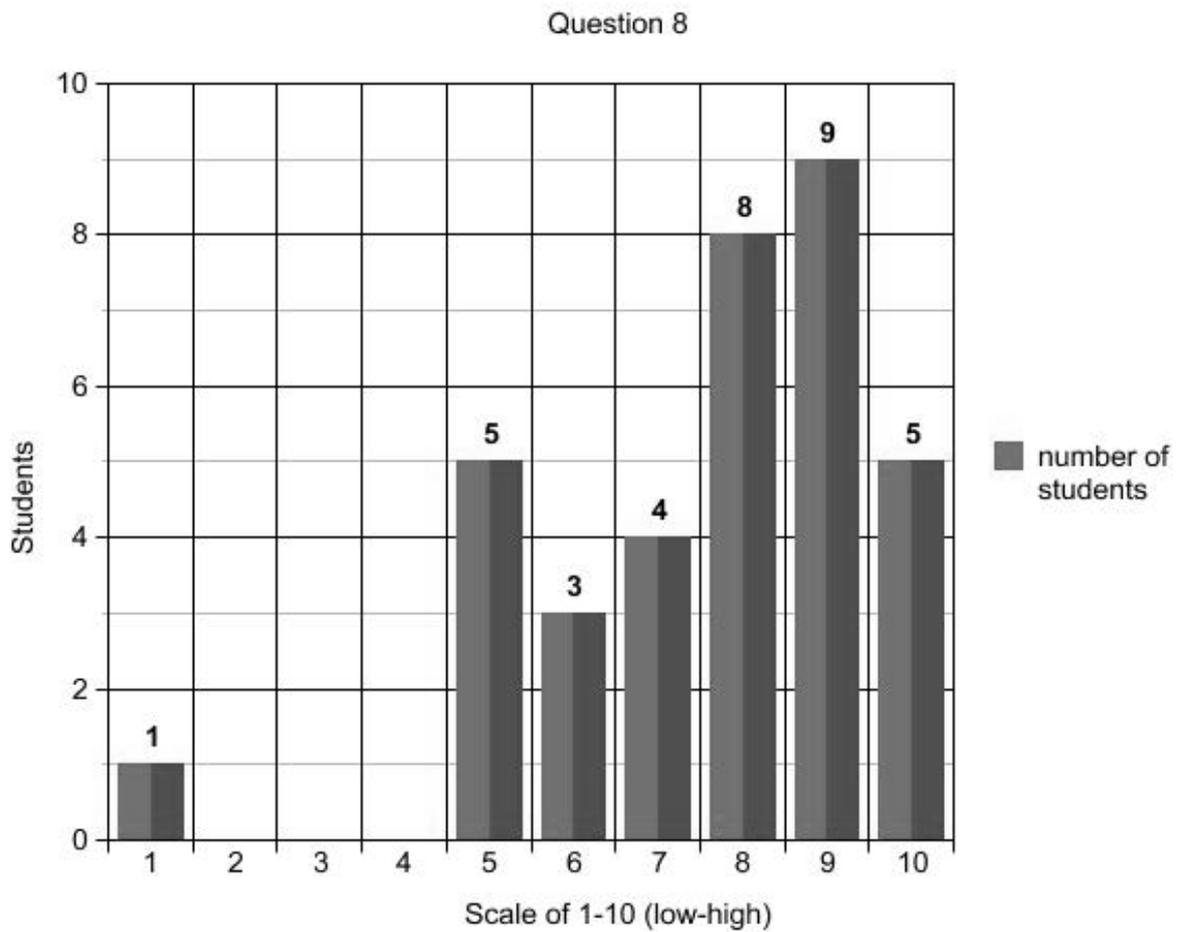
1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

(Not more culturally relevant)



(Much more culturally relevant)

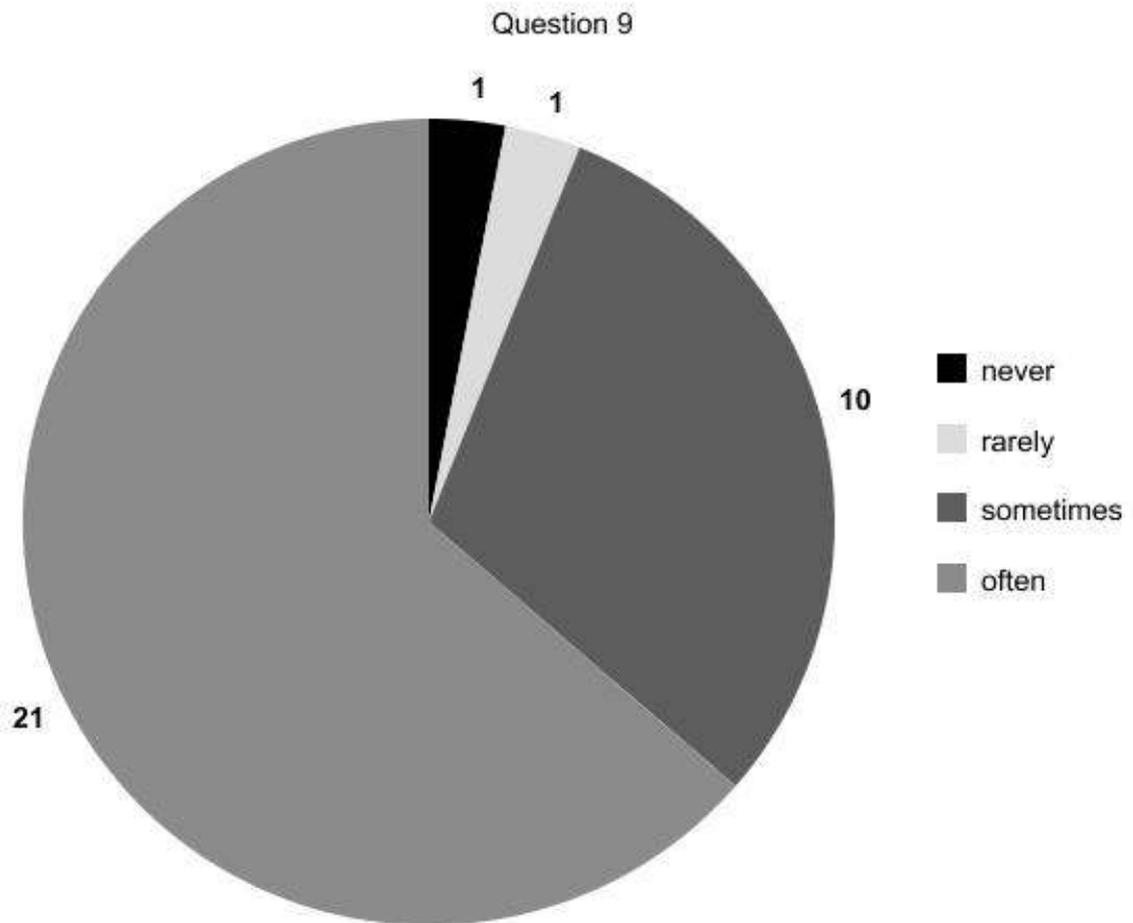
**RESULTS:**



29. How often do the American lecturers at ABC use *teaching mediums* that are helpful for Malawian learners?

- e. Never
- f. rarely
- g. Sometimes
- h. Often

**RESULTS:**



30. Since ABC is an American run institution, how culturally relevant do you consider ABC as a whole?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
(Not culturally relevant)      ←————→      (Very culturally relevant)

**RESULTS:**

