



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG MISSIONARY LECTURERS AT THE REDEEMED COLLEGE OF MISSIONS, EDE, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT: *Intercultural competence is a very vital quality for a meaningful missionary engagement. The purpose of this study is to assess the level of intercultural competence of missionary lecturers at the Redeemed College of Missions, Ede, Nigeria (RCM) so that practical ways of developing their intercultural competence could be determined. The research employs a mixed-methods approach. Fantini's Intercultural Competence Assessment Scale, with modifications, was adapted to assess the intercultural competence of the lecturers. An interview guide was also used as instrument. The population of the study included the 38 full time lecturers at the permanent site and the 278 adjunct lecturers scattered all over Nigeria. Out of the entire population of the study (316 persons), copies of the questionnaire were privately sent via Google Form to 250 participants and 204 of them responded. In addition, ten (10) senior lecturers were purposively selected for interview. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The study reveals that the lecturers exhibited moderate to high levels of intercultural competence, with overall mean score of 3.4, and a standard deviation of 0.8 on a 4-point Likert scale. Yet, it was discovered that there is still room for improvement as far as the lecturers' intercultural competence is concerned. It is, therefore, recommended in this study that the college should be taking the staff through periodic assessment of intercultural competence so that needed areas of adjustment could be identified and necessary adjustments made. Also, lecturers should personally invest more on culture and language learning so that they could be more effective, not only in the training context, but also in their interpersonal relationships.*

KEYWORDS: Assessment, Culture, Intercultural Competence, Missionary Lecturers, Redeemed College of Missions.



INTRODUCTION

It is common knowledge that missionary work is cross-cultural in nature. A Christian missionary is generally understood to be a Christian sent by a local church or mission agency to go to a foreign country or a people group different from his own with the purpose of spreading Christianity, which could be in the form of preaching the gospel of Christ, making disciples, planting churches and doing humanitarian services (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005). By virtue of their mandate, missionaries engage with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, often in foreign or unfamiliar environments. Therefore, in order to effectively navigate cross-cultural contexts, missionaries must possess a high level of intercultural competence.

Many experts in Religious Studies argue that a significant shortcoming of early missionaries in Africa was their inadequate comprehension of the indigenous worldview, philosophical perspectives, religious beliefs, and cultural norms. This means that such missionaries lacked intercultural competence. Omoregbe (1993) and Mbiti (1962) are unanimous in their condemnation of the negative disposition of the early Western missionaries towards the African culture and worldview, which was a result of their inadequate understanding of the African culture. Similarly, Idowu (1982) rejects the derogatory terms with which the white missionaries described the African people, like "primitive, godless, uncivilized, heathen. Afolabi (2013) sees this lack of cultural and philosophical understanding as a source of conflict as at that time. Onyima (2016) is of the opinion that the Christianity brought by the white missionaries is one of the factors that led to the death of some cultural values.

In view of the above submissions, one can say that inadequate intercultural competence will affect the missionary enterprise in a negative way. There must be, of course, some positive aspects of the indigenous culture which the missionary can leverage to get more converts through contextualization, but this can only be possible if such a missionary is interculturally competent.

Intercultural competence is generally understood to be someone's ability to interact appropriately and effectively with others in possession of different cognitive, affective, and behavioural orientations towards the world in intercultural situations (Hang & Zhang, 2023). According to Zelenková and Hanesová (2019), an interculturally competent person can be described as a person "not only with some acquired knowledge on culture and its cognitive comprehension, but also competent to demonstrate intercultural empathy, respect, tolerance, sensitivity and flexibility, as well as the openness to negotiate, the ability to argue, the good will to understand others, discuss with them, and reach consensus."

Thus, interculturality penetrates into all three dimensions of personality and relationships. For instance, it penetrates into the cognitive domain because a person should be aware of his own culture and other people's cultures before he could be deemed to be interculturally competent. It also penetrates into the affective domain because such a person is expected to be empathetic, tolerant and appreciative of cultural diversities. Lastly, intercultural competence penetrates into the behavioural domain in view of the fact that such a person is expected to possess good



interaction and cooperation skills. Therefore, intercultural competence refers to the ability to understand, appreciate, and adapt to different cultural norms, values, and communication styles.

Bennett (1986) makes a significant contribution to the concept of intercultural competence by proposing a developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. He suggests that individuals with intercultural sensitivity tend to transform themselves from the ethnocentric stage to the ethno-relative stage. His developmental model is a conceptual framework that describes the stages individuals go through as they develop intercultural competence. These stages provide a good framework for determining how to improve the capacity for intercultural competence.

Another influential scholar is Michael Byram. Byram (2020) makes a remarkable contribution to the field of intercultural competence in the context of language education. He emphasizes the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence, stressing that this competence goes beyond language proficiency to include one's ability to appreciate and navigate cultural diversity.

Several other scholars have subsequently contributed by applying the concept of intercultural competence to several areas of human endeavour: from education, business, economy and politics to religion and military work. For instance, Han (2010) calls for adult education and Human Resource Development professionals to acquire intercultural competence by applying adult learning theories in cross-cultural learning, in order to help various people from diverse cultural backgrounds. He believes this will help them to become successful in their international assignments. Hang and Zhang (2023) are of the opinion that the rate of worldwide mobility of students and increasing globalization and internationalization of university and college campuses call for the cultivation of students' intercultural competence. They believe that this will enable them to communicate effectively on campus and even in campuses outside their home countries.

Olagbaju (2020) discusses how education, with Literature-in-English as a tool, can be used to teach intercultural communicative competence in multicultural classrooms in Nigeria, thereby facilitating cross-cultural competence. He identifies cultural diversity as one of the major factors responsible for incessant civil unrest, hate speeches and insecurity in different parts of the country.

Bradford and Bradford (2008) apply the concept to the U.S Navy. They stress that the Sea Services must reinforce their relationship with global maritime partners and in order for this to be possible the force has to embrace international organizations, local mariners and commercial operators. The diversity of partners and their cultural backgrounds would necessitate the mariners' intercultural competence to be built over time. Tucker, Bonial and Lahti (2014) look at intercultural competence with respect to its importance in global leadership. According to them, for business organizations to be successful, they need leaders who can drive business on a global scale. In these days of globalization and high competitiveness, no major company can be satisfied with being successful in the home market, or even in one or two cross-border markets. Even if a major company chooses not to expand globally, international competitors will enter its favorite markets. These scholars therefore submit that leading across cultures is a critical element in driving a business enterprise to a great success.



Now, though intercultural competence has been studied in several fields over the past 50 years, yet not much has been done about applying any of the models and assessment scales being used to the missionary training context (Goodman, 2022). Missionary lecturers hold a crucial role in equipping missionaries with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to engage respectfully and effectively with diverse cultures. Due to the fact that lecturers' intercultural competence has a direct bearing on the missionary trainees, a study of this kind is very important. The Redeemed College of Missions (RCM)'s missionary lecturers need more intercultural fitness for two reasons. First, their intercultural competence has a direct bearing on missionary students, whom they train. Second, they deal with a more culturally diverse population (Oke, 2023).

This study will assess the degree of intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, intercultural skill and intercultural awareness of RCM missionary lecturers, using the Fantini's Assessment Scale, with some modifications (Fantini, 2007). This study will also identify practical ways of developing RCM missionary lecturers' intercultural competence.

METHODOLOGY

Population of this study consists of all missionary lecturers at the Redeemed College of Missions, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. They are 316 persons in total. Purposive sampling method was used for the study. The participants include 38 full time missionary lecturers at the permanent site, 50 adjunct faculty and 172 instructors from the various study centres scattered all over Nigeria. Interview guide and a structured questionnaire (Appendix I) were used as instruments for this study. The questionnaire (Google Form), rated on four-point Likert type scale, was privately sent to 250 lecturers via WhatsApp and email and 204 of them responded. In addition, 10 senior college full staff members were purposively selected for oral interview, making it a total of 260 participants. Analysis of the results from the questionnaire was done using descriptive statistics while that of interview guide was done through content analysis.

History of the Redeemed College of Missions

The Redeemed College of Missions (RCM), formerly known as the Redeemed Christian School of Missions (RECSOM), is an integral part of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). RCCG started her missions training school as a department of the Redeemed Christian Bible College [RCBC) with three students (Felix Aiyekofoju, Jerry Fajemisin and Koko Mauli) and Pastor D.A. Ilori as her principal at the Redemption Camp (now Redemption City of God). This was after 40 years of the existence of the church. Perhaps, RCCG would not be having this training arm had a commissioned Board for Missions in 1992 not come to place. Knowing the importance of a full-fledged school of missions, the search went on for a suitable location. For its rural-urban setting, Ede was preferred above some three selected locations for the site of the school in 1993. Thus, the vision for the commencement of a school of missions the Redeemed Christian Church of God would call her own was actualized. The college kicked off in a rented apartment at Olowoobida, Ede with 25 students (RCM, 2026). As the year turned around, specifically in 2000, the school was relocated to its permanent location at Ededimeji, Ede, Osun

State in South-western Nigeria, where there is on-going development of physical structures, human lives and spiritual giants till date (RCM, n.d, About Us).

The college has been led by the following individuals: Pastor Yinka Adeyemi (Principal, 1993-1995); Pastor Lekan Aruna (Principal, 1995-2000); Pastor Adebowale Adebisi (Principal, 2000-2003); Pastor Joseph Oluwatosin (Principal, 2003); Pastor Femi Olufemi (Principal, 2003-2005); Pastor Joel Oke (Principal/Provost, 2005-2023) and Pastor Ayobami Oladapo (Provost, 2023-present) (RCM, 2024).

RCM trains Christians with definite call and conviction for cross-cultural missions within the rural and urban contexts, who would use all communicable forms to present the gospel to all the people of the world. The entire programme of the college is planned based on the commitment of RCCG to plant and grow parishes and raise disciples in all the countries of the world. As at December, 2025, 36 countries have been represented so far in the Redeemed College of Missions across Africa, Asia and America. At present, students from 48 different people groups are being represented at the RCM permanent site, with 12 of them being international students. The college has 125 external campuses and has graduated a total of 3,676 full-time students as at December, 2025. This is in addition to about 1,000 part-time students the college turns out annually. For instance, the college graduated 1,162 part-time students in the last academic session (RCM, 2026).

The Redeemed College of Missions, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria



Source: *Researcher's Construct, 2026.*



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ting-Toomey's Face Negotiation Theory focuses on how people from different cultures manage face, or one's public self-image, in communication and conflict resolution (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Hall and Hall's High and Low Context Culture Theory categorizes cultures as high context (relying on non-verbal cues and shared knowledge) or low context (relying more on explicit verbal communication (Hall & Hall, 1990). The Cultural Intelligence Theory emphasizes four capabilities: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral, which help individuals adapt to and function effectively in culturally diverse settings (Thomas, 2015). One theory relevant to this study is the Fantini's Intercultural Competence Assessment Model (Fantini, 2007).

Fantini's Intercultural Competence Assessment Model

Fantini divides intercultural competence into four different dimensions. They are intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, intercultural skill and intercultural awareness. According to him, these four dimensions can be used to measure intercultural competence (Fantini, 2007). The four dimensions are explained below:

Intercultural Knowledge: This dimension is also considered as the conceptual aspect of intercultural competence. Intercultural knowledge refers to an individual's skills to gain knowledge about products of the people of their own culture or another culture with which they interact, and the skill to have relevant information which would help the individual to personally interact with people from the other culture.

Intercultural Attitude: This dimension includes being open and respect to, interest in and curiosity about different cultures. In addition to these, being open-minded, risk-oriented, empathic, and respecting differences are among the other intercultural attitudes.

Intercultural Skill: This refers to being able to listen to people from other cultures, observe other cultures, interpret, analyse, evaluate and relate them. This also includes the skills to learn a second or third language and stand up to the difficulties faced during the process of learning a second or third language. It also involves skills to interrelate languages with each other, listening skills, information gathering skills and problem-solving skills are among the intercultural skills.

Intercultural Awareness: This refers to the ability of the individual to see the similarities and differences between their own culture and the other culture with a criticizing point of view. Intercultural awareness is also seen as someone's consciousness in improving their attitudes, knowledge and skills while learning their own culture and other people's cultures (Fantini, 2007; Byram, 1997).



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the first objective, the researcher discovered that the level of intercultural knowledge of most of the RCM missionary lecturers is high. For instance, the results show that majority of them (90.9%) have knowledge of the history of their service areas. In addition, it is discovered that majority of them know, to a greater extent (91.6%), the essential norms and taboos of the host culture in cross-cultural settings. This is in tandem with the results from the interview. One of the people interviewed said that even though she is not from Nigeria but she knows the essential norms and taboos of the Yoruba people (Participant 1, Interview). Another lecturer, who is from Northern Nigeria, also said the same thing (Participant 2, Interview). While incorporating the various components of intercultural knowledge, those who indicated a very high level of intercultural knowledge averaged 50.1% of the respondents.

Moreover, the results reveal that majority of the lecturers generally possess good intercultural attitude. For instance, 81.3% of the respondents indicated that they have keen interest in new cultural aspects. Considering the various components of intercultural attitude, those who indicated a very high level of intercultural attitude averaged 52.8% of the respondents. The findings also reveal that the level of intercultural skill of RCM missionary lecturers is also generally high. For example, 56.5% indicated they used the local dialect very well. 85.6% indicated they have a very strong drive to learn the local language in a cross-cultural setting. Putting all the components of intercultural skill into consideration, those who indicated a very high level of intercultural skill averaged 55.1% of the respondents. Interviews with the selected people corroborate this. One of them said he has mentored up to 20 students from other countries (Participant 3, Interview). Most of the respondents said that one of their primary goals is to prepare students to work with people of diverse cultures.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the degree of intercultural awareness of RCM missionary lecturers is generally high. For instance, majority of the respondents (94.6%) indicated that they were aware of differences and similarities across their own culture and the host culture in a cross-cultural setting. Also, the rate at which their personal values and beliefs have negatively affected their relationship with their students has been discovered to be very low (7.9%) while their values and beliefs have positively impacted their relationship with their colleagues to a very large extent (97.5%). Putting the various components of intercultural awareness into consideration, those who indicated a very high level of intercultural awareness averaged 55.8% of the respondents.

The table below shows the mean scores and standard deviations for each of the four dimensions of intercultural competence.

**Table 1: Intercultural Competence of RCM Missionary Trainers: Key Dimensions**

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Intercultural Knowledge	3.5	0.8
Intercultural Skill	3.6	0.7
Intercultural Attitude	3.1	0.9
Intercultural Awareness	3.3	0.8
Overall Intercultural Competence	3.4	0.8

Scale: 1 = Low, 4 = High

Source: *Researcher's Construct, 2026.*

The above results show that the RCM missionary lecturers demonstrated moderate to high levels of intercultural competence, with overall mean score (M) of 3.4 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.8 on a 4-point scale. Intercultural skill had the highest mean score (M = 3.6, SD = 0.7), followed by intercultural knowledge (M = 3.5, SD = 0.8), intercultural awareness (M = 3.3, SD = 0.8), and intercultural attitude (M = 3.1, SD = 0.9).

Concerning the practical ways of developing intercultural competence of the missionary lecturers, majority of the respondents strongly agree that intercultural competence can be developed through periodic training courses on language and culture learning and intercultural communication. In the same vein, majority of them agreed strongly that intercultural competence can be developed through periodic assessment of competence as well as through personal investment in language and culture training. The above result on practical ways to develop intercultural competence is in agreement with the interview results and the position of the scholars. According to another respondent, "One of the ways to improve upon intercultural competence of lecturers in this college is to visit different cultural settings. Irrespective of the books you have read, the lectures or trainings you have received, the on-site training is also necessary; mission field exposure is very important" (Participant 4, Interview). According to another respondent, being open to learning from students will also help. When students come, they come with the richness of their various cultures. Lecturers should interact well with them in order to learn from them (Participant 5, Interview).

Conceptual Framework

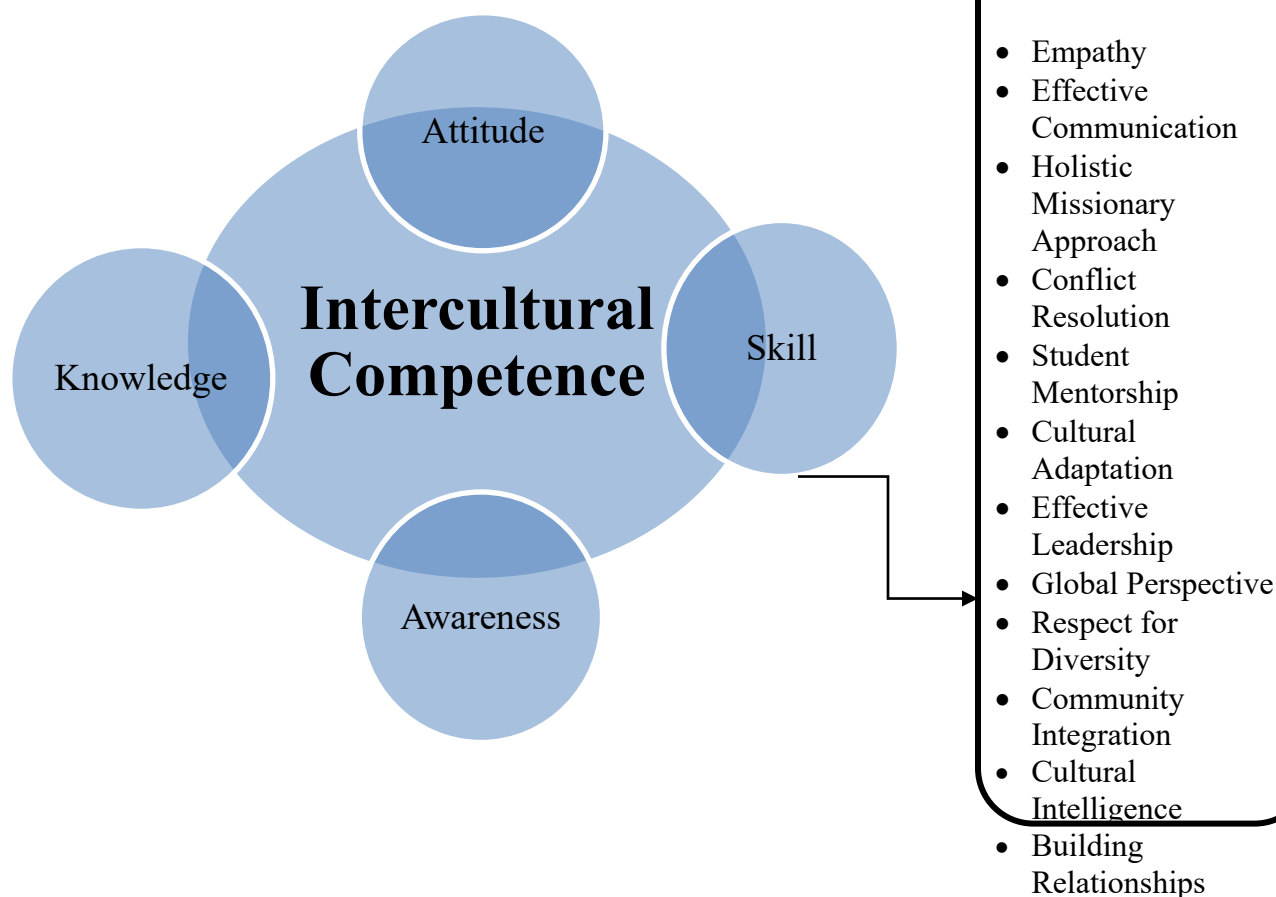
The conceptual framework for this research study is diagrammatically shown in the figure below. The figure presented the two variables of the study, which are intercultural competence and RCM missionary lecturers, based on the theoretical foundations for the study. The first concept, which is intercultural competence, includes four dimensions. They are intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, intercultural skill and intercultural awareness. Each of the four dimensions also has sub-dimensions. The highlighted indicators are directly linked to productivity and effectiveness of RCM missionary lecturers. Intercultural competence assessment and adjustment



will help the lecturers in the following areas: empathy development, effective communication, development of holistic missionary approach, conflict resolution, proper mentorship of students, cultural adaptation, effective leadership, global perspective, respect for diversity, community integration, cultural intelligence and building relationships. Assessment of intercultural competence will aid the lecturers in identifying necessary areas where adjustment is needed.

Missionary Lecturers

Conceptual Framework for the Study



Source: *Researcher's Construct, 2026.*



CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was carried out in view of the dynamic nature of cultural diversity and the evolving challenges missionaries encounter in various cultural contexts, which necessitate a deeper exploration of the intercultural competence of the lecturers who prepare them for the work. The objective was to ascertain the level of intercultural knowledge, intercultural attitude, intercultural skill and intercultural awareness of missionary lecturers at the Redeemed College of Missions, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria, so that practical ways of developing their intercultural competence could be determined. Against the backdrops of the aim of the study, it has been revealed that the lecturers exhibited moderate to high levels of intercultural competence, with overall mean score of 3.4, and a standard deviation of 0.8 on a 4-point Likert scale. Intercultural skill had the highest mean score (3.6), followed by intercultural knowledge, intercultural awareness and intercultural attitude.

Yet, it has been discovered that there is still room for improvement as far as the lecturers' intercultural competence is concerned. It is, therefore, recommended in this study that the college should be taking the staff through periodic assessment so that they could be more effective not only in the training context but also in their interpersonal relationship. They can make use of the assessment questionnaire in this work (Appendix 1). Also, lecturers should personally invest more on culture and language learning. Lastly, there should be periodic visits to foreign mission fields by the lecturers in order to have more practical experiences with other cultures, especially national cultures. It should be noted that these recommendations apply to other missionary lecturers and missions training institutions as well.

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APPENDIX 1: ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

There are four options in each of the questions which are abbreviated as follows: **NA**= Not at All; **BA**= Barely; **FW**= Fairly Well; **VW**= Very Well

S/N	Intercultural Knowledge	NA	BA	FW	VW
1.	How well do you know the history of your service area?				
2.	How well are you able to describe the natives in your service area?				
3.	How much do you know the essential norms and taboos of the host culture?				
4.	How well are you able to describe your own culture in relation to the host culture in a cross-cultural setting?				
5.	How well are you able to cite important historical and socio-political factors that shape your own culture and that of the host culture?				
	Intercultural Attitude	NA	BA	FW	VW
6.	How well do you relate with people outside your own cultural milieu?				
7.	How much do you interact with people within your service area?				
8.	Do you attend community forums or neighborhood meetings within your service area?				
9.	Do you feel safe within the community?				
10.	Do you eat foods which are local to your service area?				
11.	How much do you use dresses which are local to the natives in cross-cultural settings?				
12.	How well do you respect other people's worldviews in relation to your own?				
13.	How much interest do you show in new cultural aspects?				
	Intercultural Skill				
14.	How much do you communicate with people of other cultures in your workplace?				
15.	Do you function and communicate effectively and respectfully within the context of varying beliefs, behaviours, and backgrounds?				
16.	How much do you use the local dialect of your service area?				
17.	How much do you aspire to learn the local language of your service area?				
18.	How much have you been able to mentor/disciple students from different cultural orientations?				
19.	How well have you been able to use appropriate strategies for adapting to the host culture and reducing stress?				
20.	How well do you prepare your students to work with people of diverse cultures?				
21.	How much have you been able to deal with your emotions and				



	frustrations with the host culture?				
22.	How much have you been able to adjust your behaviour, dress, etc as appropriate to avoid offending your host in a cross-cultural setting?				
23.	How well have you helped to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings when they arose?	NA	BA	FW	VW
	Intercultural Awareness				
24.	How well are you aware of differences and similarities across your own culture and the host language/culture in a cross-cultural setting?				
25.	How much are you aware of the dangers of generalizing individual behaviours as representative of the whole culture in a cross-cultural setting?				
26.	How well are you aware of your personal values that affected your approach to ethical dilemmas in a cross-cultural setting?				
27.	How often have your values and beliefs negatively impacted your relationships with your students?				
28.	How well have your values and beliefs positively impacted your relationships with your colleagues?				
29.	How well has the racial, ethnic and gender diversity in the faculty and the student body benefitted you?				
30.	How much have you been able to work cooperatively with someone who does not share the same values with you?				
31.	How much have you been able to abide by a policy that you did not personally agree with?				
	Practical Ways of Developing Intercultural Competence				
32.	Intercultural competence can be developed through the practice of active listening.				
33.	RCM trainers' intercultural competence can be developed by periodic training courses on language/culture learning and intercultural communication.				
34.	Periodic assessment of intercultural competence of RCM missionary trainers will help in developing their intercultural competence.				
35.	RCM trainers' intercultural competence can be developed through personal investment in language/culture training.				