

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: International HR Forum

Don't Forget your Toothbrush!

Developing cross-cultural mission attitudes

Developing a Curriculum for Cross-Cultural Mission

"Most Christian leaders don't fail in ministry because they can't preach a sermon; they fail because of hidden or unresolved character flaws."

In other words, share knowledge and skills by all means – but focus on character above all else.

When asked what they wanted in the people sent by BMS, a group of citywide church leaders in Kolkata replied: **Send us...**

- People who will love
- People who will cry with us
- People who won't live like rich people among us
- People who will speak our language
- People who sit loose to objectives and goals – and who will take time to work them out with us
- People who will listen to us

Profiting from Transition

Students arrive with a focus on the future. For many, the period of training is an unwanted delay on the road to being "there". For trainers, as for sending agencies, the period of preparation offers a valuable (or invaluable?) insight into more than the skills and knowledge required for cross-cultural mission.



Recognise the negatives – and observe the response

- Loss of status (job title, role, salary, ...)
- Loss of control (timetable, menu, ...)
- Loss of "home" church (support, role, style, ...)
- Loss of familiar
- Loss of "sense of ease"
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Recognise the positives – and observe the response

- Initial motivation and positivity
- "I want to know God better!" (prayer, Bible, ...)
- Time to sort out theological nuts and bolts
- Develop skills for future role
- "Want to get going!"
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Watch (assess?) how students deal with loss in this phase of transition.

Incarnational Preparation for Incarnational Mission

During training we have a (perhaps) once in a lifetime opportunity to develop a positive attitude to the costly process of adapting to a culture which is not our own. This process will be discussed in the classroom but needs to be tested in the “laboratory”.

Community Living

How are they with other people?

Ministry Placements

How are they out of their comfort zone?

Multi-cultural Classrooms

“They would think I have gone mad!”

Acceptable, Negotiable, Unacceptable

Make a list of attitudes or character traits which you might want addressed during training – and discuss which of these would fall into one of the following categories:

Acceptable (i.e. we wouldn't do it like this, but it won't cause offence)

Negotiable (i.e. it isn't wrong as such but may create offence or misunderstanding)

Unacceptable (i.e. the possible offence is deemed too great and we may not be able to work together)

Our role is not to teach behaviour – because what works in West Africa doesn't necessarily work in East Africa – although the same attitude is required north, south, east and west. Our role is to explore and challenge underlying attitudes.