African Journal of Pentecostal Studies
ISSN: (Online) 3005-6136, (Print) 3105-434X

Intercultural education in global Pentecostalism: A case study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God

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Dates:
Received: 17 Apr. 2026
Accepted: 25 June 2026
Published: 03 Sept. 2026

How to cite this article:
Aiyedogbon, K. & Naidoo, M., 2026, 'Intercultural education in global Pentecostalism: A case study of the Redeemed Christian Church of God', *African Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3(1), a167. https://doi.org/10.4102/ajops.v3i1.167

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Background: The article considers the transformative potential of integrating intercultural education as a foundational aspect of Pentecostal theological training. Considering the reality of 'reverse mission', theological students need to be prepared to relate interculturally for effective ministry in an irreversibly pluralist world.

Objectives: The objectives of the study focused on the curricula, pedagogical methodologies and institutional structures within Western Pentecostal theological institutions, examining their potential to either support or hinder effective preparation for intercultural ministry.

Methods: Utilising qualitative methodology, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and then analysed with a thematic approach and ATLAS-Ti qualitative software to identify the main themes to be addressed.

Results: The findings highlighted the central role of curriculum design in fostering intercultural education, the significance of educators' competence and capacity building and the need for cultural understanding to adapt ministry practices to diverse contexts.

Conclusion: It emphasised the value of cultural diversity and encouraged educators and students to develop intercultural propositions for theological education interaction in competencies for a harmonious multicultural world.

Contribution: The study highlights the importance of intercultural awareness and education since pluralist societies demand a new learning set to prepare Pentecostal theological students adequately for ministry.

Keywords: Pentecostal theological education; intercultural education; pluralist society; new ecology; spiritual formation; migration.

Introduction

The article considers the transformative potential of integrating intercultural education into Pentecostal theological training. It highlights the significance of cultivating intercultural competencies as an essential component of ministerial preparation, ensuring that graduates are well equipped to navigate and minister effectively within the pluralistic realities of our modern world. Intercultural education is defined as an intentional and faith-based engagement, where theory and praxis combine to create a new learning culture that transcends their limited ethnic boundaries (Gittins 2006). Intercultural education is not to be limited to academic learning but involves engagement with diverse cultures and praxis in the context of a pluralist society.

The case for intercultural education in theological colleges is not merely strategic. It is not simply that future ministers will encounter culturally diverse congregations and must be pragmatically equipped to serve them. It is theologically grounded – intercultural competence is a dimension of Christian virtue. It is an expression of the love of neighbour that crosses cultural boundaries, of the humility that refuses to identify one's own cultural perspective with the mind of God (Day 2021) and of the catholicity of the church that affirms the spiritual gifts of every member of the body (Schreiter 1997). This point has been developed by scholars of intercultural theology such as Schreiter (1997) and Bevans and Schroeder (2004), who argue that cross-cultural theological encounter is not an optional supplement to orthodox Christian formation but an intrinsic dimension of it. A Pentecostal minister who has never been challenged, enriched or corrected by the theology of another culture is not merely poorly informed; he or she has not fully engaged the breadth of the Spirit's work. Intercultural education is thus theological education, not merely a social skills programme grafted onto it.

The research problem

We need to acknowledge that migration globally has created new expressions of Christianity (Kwiyani 2020:16), which has evolved into a multicultural ministry context that is rapidly changing the dynamics of Christianity from the Global South to the Global North, resulting now in intercultural ministry. The church of the 21st century is globalised. Pocock et al. (2005) argue that globalisation fulfils the creation mandate of God in Genesis 1:26–28, and failure to fulfil the mandate was judged by God at Babel (Gn 11:1–9). God does not intend to restrict the activities of the church to the Northern hemisphere but to make it a church that crosses boundaries and flows in a multicultural society within the globe (Peacock et al. 29). Bonk notes the phenomenal shift of missions from the North to the South and the surge of workers that migrated from Africa, Asia and Oceania to the West, creating this plural society that the church should serve. Bonk argues that with the influx of these migrants, there will be a need for comprehensive theological training to cope with the several cultures in the pluralist society that has emerged in the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) (ed. Bonk 2003:40–42).

The migration factor has changed the dynamics of ministry all over the world, making it imperative to rethink the relevance of theological education (Arbuckle 2015). Over two decades ago, Chris Thomas' presidential address to the Society for Pentecostal Studies, as observed by Anderson (2002:287), suggests a new paradigm of Pentecostal theology in the 21st century. Anderson sees 'contextual theology' as the panacea, that

> [*T*]he context of theological education was not the Bible College, the seminary, or the university, but the community in which God's people were found. Only when the context is clear in our minds can we begin to adjust the content of our education. (Anderson 2001:293)

Yong too aptly captures the significance of diaspora;

> 'The diaspora now no longer remains the frontier when Christianity is expanding. Instead, diaspora captures the very heart of God's saving work, no matter when, where, or among whom.' (Yong 2013:12)

Several other scholars attest to a review of theological education for students engaged in crossing culture for ministry, including Adogame (2010), Hanciles (2008), Kwiyani (2020), Olupona and Gemignani (2007) and Kalu (2005). Multiculturalism is defined as a commitment by all to the existence of cultural groups of different backgrounds that have some structures held in common by all the groups in society (Kwiyani 2020:72). Here, a singular culture's dignity is preserved while together they model a common culture. This dialogue has now moved on to living interculturally that must be intentional and faith based, which is the 'fusion' of cultures that births 'interculture', and the hybridity is essential in fashioning a new paradigm of theological education (Gittins 2012).

Intercultural engagement is a challenge in Pentecostal education in culturally diverse societies. *How do ethnic communities abroad live respectfully with each other without a dominant culture?* It requires migrants to function from the position of cultural strength to move out and perform in other cultures with confidence, respect and dignity (Arbuckle 2001). Taylor argues for 'the politics of recognition' for inclusiveness in society, the discourse is to favour equalisation of rights and entitlements, moving from honour to dignity and the elimination of class structure. It is to foster multicultural 'fusion' that will eliminate 'first-class' and 'second-class' citizens (Taylor 1994:37). It requires a new learning culture to prepare theological graduates for the church in growing diverse societies. As Resane (2018) aptly observes, Christianity's relevance in the modern era hinges on its ability to resonate with individuals across all spheres of life.

Central to the theological endeavour in the Pentecostal tradition is the imperative to establish and sustain the prophetic and teaching ministry of Christ within both the Church and broader society (Barron 2007). Barron asserts that while theological specialists play a distinct role in this mission, all members of the faith community are called to contribute, drawing inspiration from the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Barron 2007:32). The Great Commission, as articulated in Matthew 28:20, requires the Church to teach Christ's commandments and make disciples across all nations and cultures. Consequently, theological graduates must be equipped not only with doctrinal proficiency but also with intercultural acumen to make meaningful contributions to the pluralistic societies they will serve (Osmer 2008:234).

Expansion and growth of Pentecostalism in Africa and globally

Pentecostalism in the West can be traced to Azusa Street in California in 1906 when the church witnessed another outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Foster 1981). The holiness movement precedes the Pentecostal movements in the US (Synan 1997:13). The Pentecostal-like religion in America occurred in a revival in Kentucky where the revivalist flame spread over the entire South (Synan 1997).

Pentecostalism had challenges of acceptance by the evangelical churches at the early stages of the church; hence, the growth was limited. Later, issues of Apostolic Faith magazine reported beginnings in Africa, Canada, Hawaii, China, Denmark, Australia and even in Jerusalem. Synan (1997) observes Bartleman's prediction that 'the Pentecostal revival was "a worldwide one without doubt"' (Bartleman 1997:130). He sees a direct link between the then-largest Christian church in Africa ('Deeper Life Bible Church'-Nigeria) to Azusa Street. Synan states that the leader of the church, William Kumuyi, was converted in 1964 through the Apostolic Faith Mission, an African missionary project of Florence Crawford's church in Portland, Oregon, US, which itself was a direct outgrowth of the Azusa Street mission (Synan 1997:141).

Up to the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, missionary movements were from the North to the rest of the world (Synan 1997). The advent of Pentecostal movements that spread across the globe changed the dynamics of migration, with migrants from the Global South: Africa, Asia and South America migrate to Europe and North America for work and religious purposes.

In Nigeria, a significant Pentecostal church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), was founded in 1952 in Lagos by Pastor Josiah Akindayomi (The Redeemed Christian Church of God, North America n.d.). In 1981, Pastor E. A. Adeboye, a mathematics professor at the University of Lagos, took over the leadership after the passing of the founder to glory. The church has since embarked on a global mission venture and has established many churches in Nigeria and expanded to almost 200 countries worldwide: Including the US, Canada, the Caribbean, in South America, the Middle East, Australia and many cities in Europe. One of the major services of the church, an all-night miracle service, the Holy Ghost Service is held every month in Lagos, Nigeria. The Holy Ghost Service is now held all around the world, half-yearly in London (Festival of Life), annually in Washington, D.C and Toronto, Ontario, Canada and bi-annually in Europe (The Redeemed Christian Church of God, North America n.d.). The Redeemed Christian Church of God has theological seminaries in Africa (Mowe-Lagos and Nigeria), Europe (London) and US (Dallas and Texas).

The research project

This study aimed to investigate the education provided to theological graduates in the RCCG Bible College and Theological Seminary in the US. It explored the foci of intercultural adjustment for theological graduates from Africa to be effective in the Americas. The exploration focused on the curricula, pedagogical methodologies and institutional structures within Western Pentecostal theological institutions, examining their potential to either support or hinder effective preparation for intercultural ministry. According to Naidoo (2022:3), 'since the cultural aspect has been neglected in pedagogical practice, intercultural education is an approach that can disrupt learnt behaviour and ways of seeing the other'. It is apt to recognise and value African indigenous knowledge, philosophies and local educational practices alongside Western approaches.

The sample: The Redeemed Christian Church of God

The research was conducted at the Redeemed Christian Bible College and Seminary, Dallas, Texas, US (Redeemer's University North America n.d.), selected as a case study. The institution is confronted with the challenges of 21st century America and the world in sustaining the distinctive of holiness and a focus on the eschatological ultimate of making it to heaven.

This Seminary was established in the 1990s to train theological graduates to be deployed for mission work in the US and Canada. The institution is being repositioned to take on the challenges of providing theological graduates for three subcontinents of the Americas, which require a paradigm shift from the learning orientation that has been practiced for several decades, that is, educating theological graduates for mission work in North America only.

The mission of the Seminary is to

> [*B*]uild leaders who serve as true ambassadors of Christ in a world of limitless diversity and build the kingdom of God on earth within the multifaceted context of the universe. (Redeemer's University North America n.d.)

Their mission is pursued with godly excellence in teaching, mobilising resources and the provision of quality reading materials physically and by digital connections to reputable theological libraries globally. The Seminary was fully accredited in 2024 to award degrees for programmes from undergraduate to doctoral level, even certificate programmes. The institution has 60 management personnel and educators and averages more than 300 students annually. The class size is between 20 and 30 consisting of males and females with a ratio of 3:1 and an average age of about 30, on-site and online. Students are from multiple cultures but mainly from Africa, especially Nigerian American nationals.

Research methods and design

This was a practical theological study that is dedicated to the faithful performance of the gospel and the execution of the human encounter with God (Swinton & Mowat 2016:4). The main research question was: *How is intercultural adaptation being supported in Pentecostal theological education so that students can adequately engage Christian ministry in a diverse pluralistic culture?* The theoretical framework for this study used the new model of theological education as prescribed by Day (2021). She proposes theological education as a hybrid of cognition and praxis, new ecologies of theological development that embrace caring and compassion for communities. This new paradigm of education also seeks to engage issues of race, segregation and class structures that prohibit intimacy and building relationships across cultures.

This study followed a qualitative approach to understanding how people interpreted their contexts and experiences using the interpretive research paradigm. The study used a descriptive-interpretative approach (Osmer 2008) to gain insights using a case study of the School of Intercultural Studies Programme at the Redeemed Christian Bible College and Seminary. The Intercultural Studies Programme included courses in Cultural Diversity, Internship, Intercultural Competence, Social Justice, Ethics, Migration Studies and a Capstone Project. Data were collected from 14 educators and 14 students (seven graduates and seven final-year students) on their experience of teaching, learning and challenges in intercultural education. Informed consent forms were received from all participants. ATLAS-Ti was used to enable thematic analysis of the data (Stake 1995; Wolcott 1994).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of South Africa, College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (No 14023830_CREC_CHS_2022).

Results

From the study, eight overall themes emerged that explained participants' insights into intercultural education, namely: (1) vision, (2) the learning culture of the school and the competence of the faculty to facilitate intercultural education, (3) faculty competency, (4) the need for intercultural competence development, (5) challenging stereotypes of the other, (6) challenges for implementing intercultural education in Pentecostal theological Education, (7) challenges for new learning and engagement and (8) cultural integration. ATLAS-Ti version 26 was used in coding the transcribed interviews, categorisation and generation of themes. These themes were further grouped into three categories, which will be briefly described here, namely: (1) the learning culture of the school, (2) how students value intercultural education and (3) the challenges identified with implementing intercultural education.

The learning culture of the school

Some educators described the vision of the Seminary based on the vision of the church (RCCG) to fulfil the great commission. They believe that the vision of intercultural studies reflects the praxis of theology. The data revealed the purpose of the school offering a specialised programme that cuts across ethnic cultures:

> 'The mission of RCCG is all about evangelism and missions all around the world. So why would the school have a programme on Intercultural Studies and global missions? First, if you're trying to raise men or women of God who are going to be involved in missions or involved in taking the gospel throughout the ends of the earth, then you want to of course, have a programme where you are teaching them on tolerance of different cultures, hence the Intercultural Studies.' (P13 L23, Educator, Male)

Educators seemed clear on the goals of the Intercultural Studies programme and emphasised the calling of 'desiring each other which promotes intercultural living'. An educator participant made an explicit statement of the intentionality of intercultural education,

> 'Well, it is intentional. And it is also a result of what binds us together. So, we know that by that even if you don't want to do it, you must be intentional about it. It's not going to work, you must be intentional, everybody is intentional. And it is also God's given ability to be able to tie us, all of us together like that.' (P9 L72–73, Educator, Male)

The emphasis of the participant on the intentionality of the educators is part of a foundational philosophy of intercultural ministry. Day described it as it happened in Pentecostal practice, 'it's only through the joining together of bodies in desiring, living with, and loving each other that Christian community is possible' (Day 2021:95). It would be the concept of a desire to pursue a goal at all costs, the passion to accomplish the objective.

To educate students for a global Pentecostal movement calls for specialised knowledge and skills, the design of courses was seen as important to facilitate change. According to an educator,

> 'So, the way this course is designed is to ensure that pastors can recognise differences as important things. So, the kinds of music you play in the church will tell people the church is for them, or the church is for the people from the diaspora.' (P1 L15, Educator, Male)

Capacity building of educators was seen as critical in this mandate. The data revealed that there was a need for a change of paradigm, and it begins first with the training of the educators so that they can offer a well-designed intercultural studies programme as explained by a graduate participant,

> 'I think it behoves us to start with the people that are going to be teaching the course, for them firstly to be infused in ministry, in a church setting, or a mission setting, go through a six-week programme, or a three-month programme, whatever it will be, in partnership with established missions and then they can as educators and pass on some of that knowledge in a curriculum to the students.' (G4 L24, Graduate, Male)

Some participants, mostly graduates from the institution, preferred the collaboration of the school with similar theological institutions in considering a new learning culture that will be meaningful to prepare theological graduates for intercultural ministry.

Students evaluation of intercultural education in preparation for intercultural ministry

Some student participants commented on the need to improve their own learning skills to catch up with the reality of the new context and close the gap in intercultural ministry. It calls for teamwork that involves openness to see cultural differences as shaping the gospel message from the academy, the congregation and the community. A student noted:

> 'Like I said before, are we there yet? No, we're not. But I think that even as leaders, and as individuals when we begin to apply correctly, not based on emotions, but based on the fundamental truth of the Scripture, that we applied correctly. The congregants begin to come to that acceptance and to that level, but I think the world is moving towards that. But now that the congregation, you know, the people, the individual, they're moving towards that pattern, that lifestyle that the world is changing.' (S6 L66, Student, Female)

Students felt that working as a team-in-learning will facilitate sharing knowledge and building trust across cultures and confidence to apply the learning in a ministry-based context. The building blocks of a Christian team identified include study and prayer, training in the basics of leadership such as group dynamics and conflict resolution

and assessment, 'knowing the components and context (vision) for team building encourages prayerful assessment' (Elrod 2021:213).

A student also commented about the gap in learning that intercultural education should address,

> 'I believe that in our current world, we, within an intercultural and pluralist society, having theological education should include social media, the cultures that are prevalent in such that content, social media and technology, especially in such areas because when we are looking at a pluralist society, we're not only talking about the rural areas or the areas that don't have access to these things, we're also talking about areas, urban centres.' (S7 L51, Student, Male)

The reality of the pluralist society demands a new learning culture that connects with the new generation and reflects the context of ministry. For example, the integration of social media into intercultural education reflects the growing importance of digital platforms in modern learning environments and also the challenge of adapting to the broader social context. This shift towards digital education requires students to be able to navigate global social contexts and contribute to a diverse, interconnected society.

Challenges for implementing intercultural training in Pentecostal theological education

The responses of both educators and students focused on the challenges of cultivating intercultural ministry skills, intercultural learning and engagement and inclusivity of a multicultural learning environment.

Many educators interviewed addressed the challenges of institutional culture, as aligned to the Constitution of the Seminary. An educator identified cultural challenges as a challenge for intercultural education:

> 'Yes, the culture, of the Redeemed seminary, but the church itself, lends itself heavily to the Yoruba culture from West Africa, Nigeria. And so, that still is a predominant culture that dictates a lot of the nuances in interaction, not just at the seminary, but at the church. So that is a challenge that we must deal with when it comes to having the church minister in Main Street America.' (P1L41, Educator, Male)

The prevalent Yoruba culture in the institution creates a challenge. As a graduate mentioned that succinctly describes the role of culture in conceiving a new paradigm of intercultural education, 'Culture will eat vision for lunch', (G4L72, Male, Student). The graduate raises an important issue that highlights that cultural ways of doing things are more powerful than any vision, as it is ingrained in the psyche of the person and difficult to change quickly, whereas visions come and go. The culture of the organisation determines success no matter how successful the strategy may be. Naidoo (2017) described the institutional culture as very important as 'it shapes the environment and student learning and can shape an institution's change process' (p. 3). It is important to note that the educational vision must be co-created with input from all stakeholders, including students, faculty and church leaders. Without institutional courage, intercultural education remains merely rhetorical.

Another educator noted the challenge understanding cultural competencies in intercultural education posed to the college, he states:

> 'Being able to accommodate different ways of thinking makes a big difference in preparing the students for what I like to call global work because we might not physically be working on several continents, but with the advent of virtual learning, virtual work, we have students who may live in North America but might be working for a company based in India or Australia. So, the world is getting more connected than ever before, so I think the challenge right now is to understand cultural competencies and how to integrate that into teaching practices, and also as more of an expectation for the students.' (P10 L52–53, Educator, Male)

Building intercultural competence requires intentional efforts and faith to engage multiple cultural narratives and recognise the value of diverse traditions in shaping ministry. Faculty competence requires the ability to engage with students from diverse cultural backgrounds and to communicate in ways that promote respect, empathy and collaboration. Educators must be equipped to handle the complexities of intercultural dynamics, ensuring that the classroom serves as a space where students can appreciate cultural differences in a meaningful way. The institution will need to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty, invest in intercultural resources and create policies that promote diversity and inclusion within the educational system.

Students also spoke of changing mindsets of congregants that attracted the attention of the faith community to act on a new way of taking the gospel to the people.

> 'And I want to say that the mindset of the congregation is changing, you know, the younger generation people are learning, even the older generation beginning to learn from their kids, they are beginning to learn from, maybe their workers and like people that they work with.' (S6 L66, Student, Female)

The changing world dynamics highlights that cultural integration goes beyond simple tolerance; it necessitates the active engagement of educators and learners in cultivating environments that embrace diversity.

Discussion

This study highlighted the concept of 'reverse mission', which has been in circulation in missiological literature since at least the 1990s, but it received its most sustained and analytically treatment in Adedibu's (2012) study of African Pentecostal missionaries in Britain. Adedibu examines how Nigerian Pentecostal churches, particularly the RCCG and Winners' Chapel (Living Faith Church), have established congregations in major British cities, explicitly framing their presence as a missionary enterprise, directed at a nation they regard as spiritually bereft.

> These churches see Britain not as a place of refuge or economic opportunity, but as a mission field – a secularised Western nation in need of the spiritual vitality that African Christianity can supply. This inversion of the classic missionary trajectory is not incidental; it is theologically intentional. (Adedibu 2012:47)

Adedibu's analysis is important for several reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that reverse mission is not a fringe phenomenon; from this study, we learn that the RCCG alone has over 700 churches in the UK, and its annual Festival of Life at the ExCeL Centre in London attracts tens of thousands of worshippers. Secondly, it shows that reverse mission is theologically motivated: These churches understand themselves as participating in the *missio Dei* [The mission of God], bringing the renewal of the Spirit to a West that has lost its first love. And it raises the question of how British theological colleges and, by extension, theological colleges in the Global North generally have responded to this phenomenon.

Coming to this study, a Pentecostal theological college that is faithful to its own deepest convictions is a college that has placed intercultural education at the centre of its mission, not at its margins. Even though this need is central, through this study in the US, it was revealed that a notable gap exists in the understanding and implementation of intercultural education within the RCCG tradition. The findings indicate that while the vision of the RCCG seminary includes a commitment to intercultural ministry, there was a disconnect between this vision and the actual pedagogical practices employed.

The challenge that reverses mission poses to Western Pentecostal theological education is not primarily sociological but epistemological: It calls into question the assumption that theological authority flows from the West to the rest of the world. If African Pentecostal missionaries regard themselves as bringing the gospel to the US, then they implicitly claim a theological standing: A maturity of faith, a depth of pneumatological experience and a clarity of evangelical conviction that challenges the paternalistic self-understanding of much Western theological education.

This challenge is sharpest in the context of theological training itself. *When an RCCG pastor in Dallas trains an American-born convert for ministry, what theological curriculum does he draw on?* Almost certainly, he draws primarily on the Nigerian Pentecostal theological tradition: Its hymnody, preaching, prayer disciplines and ecclesiology. He does not first translate this tradition into Western theological categories before transmitting it; he transmits it directly, and his American converts receive it, often with considerable enthusiasm. In doing so, he enacts a form of intercultural theological education that most American theological colleges have not yet caught up with.

It is important, however, not to simply invert the directional assumption of classical missionary theology. The point is not that theological enrichment now flows from Africa to the West rather than from the West to Africa. The point is that it flows in both directions simultaneously and that a healthy Pentecostal theological ecology requires both flows to be active, acknowledged and welcomed. This bidirectional model has been theorised by Kalu (2008), who argues for a 'polycentric' understanding of global Christianity in which no single regional expression occupies the normative centre. On this model, the theological contributions of the Global South are not supplements to a Western normative Christianity; they are constitutive dimensions of a catholicity that Western Christianity alone cannot realise. Similarly, the contributions of the Western theological tradition, its historical-critical biblical scholarship, its systematic theological rigour and its ecumenical dialogues remain genuine gifts to the global church, including African Pentecostalism.

What this study reveals is that the most immediate practical implication is curriculum design. A Pentecostal theological college that takes the theological gifts of the Global South seriously will not design its curriculum with Western systematic theology and Western biblical scholarship as the normative centre, supplemented by occasional references to 'contextual theology' or 'world Christianity'. It will redesign the curriculum from the ground up, asking at every point: (1) *Whose voices are represented in the reading lists?* (2) *Whose theological categories shape the course frameworks?* and (3) *Whose historical experience is treated as the background to biblical interpretation?*

Thus, Pentecostal institutions like the RCCG seminary need to develop a more holistic approach to theological education. From the voices of educators and students alike, developing intercultural competencies into the curriculum, while also maintaining the spiritual emphasis, is central to Pentecostal identity. The learning model to be designed will synchronise with a transformative learning model developed by Mezirow (1991) and a blend of cognition and praxis as opined by Day (2021). Intercultural education is not a mere academic exercise; it is a transformative process designed to cultivate mutual respect and understanding among individuals of varying cultural backgrounds (Bennett 2019). Esterline and Kalu (2006) argue for an approach that acknowledges and integrates students' cultural foundations, fostering a synergy of cultures that gives rise to a 'new culture'. Regarding community formation, deliberate institutional design is called for. Redeemed Christian Church of God will need to create safe spaces for honest conversation about cultural differences, including the conflicts and misunderstandings that intercultural encounter inevitably produces. Intercultural community formation is not a comfortable process; it involves the stretching and sometimes the painful disruption of cultural comfort zones. But it is precisely this discomfort that produces genuine intercultural growth.

In addition, a well-designed curriculum alone will not be adequate without competent educators capable of delivering intercultural education effectively. Recruiting faculty from

the Global South and genuinely supporting them once they arrive requires addressing systemic issues of institutional culture, salary, housing and the particular challenges faced by scholars working in a second language and a foreign cultural context; this is a non-negotiable dimension of intercultural theological education. But recruitment alone is insufficient. Existing faculty, however well intentioned, needs formation in intercultural competence: (1) exposure to Global South theological scholarship, (2) supervised cross-cultural ministry placements and (3) ongoing dialogue with theological colleagues from different cultural contexts.

Educators need to provide not only theoretical knowledge but also practical experience in intercultural ministry contexts. Bedard notes the gap in ministry training of students needing to learn the practical things they need to function on the mission field (Bedard 2008:9). Theological students are not taught how to lead a growing church, motivate staff and relate with the congregations in a pluralist society; instead, they acquired biblical and theological education with hermeneutical and homiletical proficiencies (Bedard 2008). Bedard (2008) opines that ministerial training would have been different to focus on tackling practical issues such as resolving conflicts and how to minister in the context of ministry while still preparing students theologically.

To better prepare students for Christian ministry in a diverse pluralist society, RCCG North America should focus on three major issues to support intercultural adaptation in Pentecostal theological education. These include addressing the lack of understanding in intercultural education, the need for a comprehensive intercultural curriculum and the integration of theoretical frameworks that emphasise cultural understanding within theological training.

A review of the RCCG Intercultural Studies programme is needed to understand step-by-step learning, adoption and application of principles of cultural adjustments, and the bonding that is needed to infuse cultures when students live together and learn from each other. Learning beyond cognitive learning involves modelling within the learning community and practical, meaningful exposures into the community. Thus, the shift of mission enterprise that has evolved from crossing cultures to living interculturally demands a new theological orientation to prepare students for ministry.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Pentecostal theological training colleges have both theological and practical reasons to embrace intercultural education as a foundational commitment. The theological reasons are grounded in Pentecostal pneumatology, in the *mission Dei* [The mission of God] and in the catholicity of the church. The practical reasons are grounded in the demographic reality of global Pentecostalism, in the phenomenon of reverse mission and in the vocational demands that future church leaders will face in an irreversibly pluralistic world. This intercultural integration into the theological curriculum is not only essential for effective ministry in today's pluralistic societies but also aligns with the broader mission of Pentecostalism to engage meaningfully with diverse cultural contexts.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on research originally conducted as part of Kola Aiyedogbon doctoral thesis titled 'Intercultural ministry training of a Pentecostal theological institution in the United States of America', submitted to the Department of Philosophy, Systematic and Practical Theology, College of Human Science, University of South Africa in 2025. The thesis was supervised by Marilyn Naidoo. The thesis was reworked, revised, and adapted into a journal article for publication. The original thesis is available at: https://ir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/32887.

Competing interests

The authors, Kola Aiyedogbon and Marilyn Naidoo, declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

CRediT authorship contribution

Kola Aiyedogbon: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – review & editing. Marilyn Naidoo: Supervision, Writing – review & editing. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

Funding information

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not openly available and are available from the corresponding author, Marilyn Naidoo, upon reasonable request.

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