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Why Do Students Keep Writing Me Sermons? Teaching Biblical Studies Cross-Culturally in New Zealand

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Abstract. *Students from different cultural backgrounds respond in a variety of ways to my teaching of biblical studies. Some sermonize or plagiarize quite unselfconsciously in their written assignments, while others consistently hand in work late or are silent members of the class. As I struggled with what these behaviors were saying about my teaching, I came to realize that limited ability in spoken and written English was not the only barrier. Deeper issues were at stake here about the nature of cross-cultural communication, teaching, and learning. In this note I analyze the issues of faith, authority, and styles of teaching and learning which underlie the "clash of educational cultures" (Ballard and Clanchy 1997, viii) occurring in the cross-cultural classroom. Then I suggest a number of strategies that I have developed to build bridges of understanding between the various educational cultures, to encourage deeper participation and to develop critical thinking.*

Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand's largest city, is an exciting and vibrant place to live and study. It has the highest Polynesian population in the world, alongside migrants from Asia, Africa, and Europe, some coming specifically to study at the university level. The School of Theology is a new school within the University of Auckland. It was established in 2003 with a small teaching faculty who in the main are based in denominational theological colleges or seminaries but teach part-time for the university. The School offers degrees and diplomas from bachelors level through masters to doctoral studies. The main undergraduate degree is the Bachelor of Theology which does not require any previous academic study so classes may include school leavers and mature students. Student numbers are small, with first-year introductory classes averaging seventy students and second- and third-year classes ranging from ten to forty students.

The School of Theology attracts significant numbers of students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. These include indigenous Maori, *pakeha/palagi* (white) New Zealanders, Polynesian, Melanesian, and Asian students. At the undergraduate level, some students are preparing for ordained and lay ministry in Aotearoa/New Zealand or Pacific churches, while others pursue courses in theology alongside degrees in education, law, arts and sciences, or in preparation for careers in social work, counseling and other helping professions both within Aotearoa/New Zealand and overseas. Postgraduate students are often sponsored by local and Pacific churches or by world organizations such as the World Council of Churches, with the aim of returning to church leadership or theological teaching positions in their home countries.

My role within the School of Theology is as a teacher of biblical studies. I am a white, middle-class, ordained woman with past experience in high school teaching and parish ministry in the Methodist Church. I teach out of a western classical education in languages and literature and have become fascinated by the issues of teaching and learning that arise for me as I teach in an increasingly diverse classroom. My stance is one of welcoming cultural diversity in my classes while desiring to explore and develop authentic methods of cross-cultural teaching and learning.

The dangers of cultural imperialism in education have been sharpened for me by reflection on my experiences as I struggle to hold together academic rigor and cultural sensitivity in the teaching and learning environment. Is it possible to blend western academic modes of education with informal and traditional styles of learning, which are closely tied to specific cultural identities? Can the best of both worlds be offered to students so

that they are enabled to grow in western so-called "critical thinking" while developing an understanding of the rich wisdom to be found in traditional sources of knowledge and values?

Can western students be encouraged to learn from their neighbors by exploring different educational cultures that emphasize identity and a more holistic approach to learning? Can non-western students explore the academic path without losing their sense of cultural identity or abandoning the riches of their own traditional learning systems? For all students (and teachers!) there is risk in moving outside of their educational comfort zone. Are there ways of increasing trust and promoting the benefits of such cross-cultural learning? Can the cross-cultural classroom be a place of mutual enrichment rather than a clash of educational ideologies?

In this note I aim to explore these questions in the light of specific examples from my classroom experience. The more attention I have given to reflecting and adapting my teaching style to the needs of a variety of cultures, the more positive feedback I receive on these changes, not only from non-western students but also from *pakeha/palagi* (white) students as well. It appears that changes made in response to the needs of a particular group of students (e.g., Tongan women) actually end up benefiting all students. This seems to suggest that all cultures, whether ethnic, gender, or ability-based, need to be addressed in terms of their strengths and limitations in educational and pedagogical styles. The more specific and creative the teacher is in analyzing and addressing issues of learning and teaching, the more positive the outcome is for all student learning in the class. This confirms what Ballard and Clanchy discovered, that "the problems of teaching students from other cultures are very often a more acute expression of the common problems of teaching our own students" (Ballard and Clanchy 1997, viii).

The "culture" I address in this paper is that of ethnicity since this has been the most dominant cultural challenge in my teaching over the last seven years. (While "culture" may refer to a variety of human differences including race, gender, and ability, from this point on my use of the terms "culture," "cultural" and "cross-cultural" will be in terms of ethnicity.) Most of my classes have a relatively high proportion of students from non-western cultures – usually from 40–50 percent in classes of ten to thirty students. I have become aware of certain trends and patterns in the way students from different ethnic backgrounds respond to my teaching. The majority of these students are Maori or Pacific Island but some are from Asia. Why do they adopt a preaching mode in their essays, hand their work in late, plagiarize without trying to hide it, quote my lecture notes, and sit silently in class?

It would be easy to attribute much of this behavior to a poor grasp of spoken and written English, especially academic English. While this may be a contributing factor in many cases, I believe there are deeper issues at stake here – issues about the nature of cross-cultural communication, teaching, and learning.

Let me now describe my current experience in cross-cultural teaching, then offer an analysis of that experience, and finally put forward some strategies for effective cross-cultural teaching and learning.

Current Experience in Cross-Cultural Teaching

Perhaps one of the most puzzling aspects of cross-cultural teaching is the seeming lack of independent critical thinking on the part of students from other than western cultures. Critical thinking in relation to biblical studies involves the reading and analysis of a text through the application of one or more reading strategies to draw out the meaning of that text. Reading strategies bring to the surface our approaches to scripture, be they historical, literary, or various reader response methods. Intellectual skills such as asking questions, drawing comparisons and contrasts, developing a reasoned and consistent argument, and identifying genre and literary devices enhance the processes of critical thinking.

Central to the task of critical thinking is the awareness of one's own stance to the text in terms of spiritual, religious, and emotional assumptions, which may produce bias, distortion, or prejudice in our reading of the text. None of us can escape our own subjectivity but we can hone our skills of self-awareness and evaluation of our own and others' presuppositions. As we gather more information about the text, assess its relevance, and apply it to the task of interpretation, conclusions about the meaning of the text begin to emerge. Critical thinking reaches its climax when these conclusions affect and influence our beliefs and actions.

A lack of critical thinking expresses itself in various ways:

1. Often in my discipline the style of an assignment resembles a sermon more than an essay. Rather than looking critically at a text, using the tools and reading strategies explored in class, students will assume a devotional stance and interpret the text subjectively and homiletically.
2. There is a tendency to summary and repetition in their work, rather than analysis and evaluation. The careful reproduction of key ideas and themes seems to be the main focus of students' written work and there is little evidence as to whether the student agrees with these ideas or has any critique to offer.
3. Plagiarism is a common problem where large chunks

will be copied verbatim from books or my lecture notes, sometimes without acknowledgement, but more often with careful bibliographical referencing but no quotation marks. Whole pages of essays will be made up of this "cut-and-paste style" copying, with very little written in the student's own language and thought forms. It is clear that students do not see this practice as cheating but rather as showing that they have read the appropriate books and that they are faithfully reproducing the important points. There seems to be almost a humility in admitting that they are not able to improve on the clarity and expression of such wonderful summaries!

4. Time management seems to be a major problem. Despite having essay topics and due dates at the beginning of the course, a disproportionately high number of students from non-western cultures will be seeking extensions, often on the very day that the essay is due. For some even an extension does not seem to help and they need further time to complete assignments.
5. In class discussions *pakeha/palagi* (white) voices dominate. Students from other cultures rarely ask questions or volunteer contributions to class discussions. This "culture of silence" has been identified as the typical behavior of those who feel marginalized in traditional educational settings (McLaren 1995, 32; Jones 1999, 304). They sit silently in the classroom, some taking notes while others look on in a bemused fashion as debate continues and different views are expressed. But the moment I as the teacher speak or write something on the whiteboard, the pens are at work copying it all down.

What are we to make of these findings?

Analysis of Current Experience in Cross-Cultural Teaching

My analysis of this experience points to what Ballard and Clanchy have described as "a clash of educational cultures" (Ballard and Clanchy 1997, viii). As a teacher trained in a western academic environment, I have expectations that my students will exhibit intellectual independence, participation, analysis, and critical thinking in the classroom and in their written work. These expectations are not shared by many of my students who instead look for authoritative knowledge and correct answers from the expert, which they will imitate and reproduce.

How is it that we have such different expectations? Attitudes to education have been instilled since childhood and vary markedly from culture to culture. For instance in Tonga there is "an emphasis on obedient attention and teacher-directed learning" (Lee 2003, 55). Helen Lee claims that "children are often strongly discouraged from being *fie poto* (trying to be clever) and when coupled with the expectation of unquestioning obedience and respect, the result is children who are hampered from learning the independent, critical thinking skills needed in formal schooling" (Lee 2003, 164). Tongan students may find themselves struggling to understand what is going on in a classroom where students express their own views and even challenge the ideas of the teacher. Especially mystifying will be the recognition that the teacher encourages such initiative and independence.

In Fiji similar cultural expectations are in place, particularly in the area of education.

> Not to *vakatudaliga* (lit. "to let both ears stand up" – "to listen and obey especially the elders") or *vakarorogo* ("to hear") is to go against an accepted norm in the community. The word for such behavior is *viavialevu* (lit. "wanting to become big"). Such boundary lines were inculcated in us when we were very young. To be labeled as *viavialevu* in the home is almost a curse. This perhaps explains why there is a dearth of "critical thinking" in our learning situation. (Ilaitia Tuwere, personal communication)

Thus in Fiji there is a strong emphasis on receiving knowledge as it is handed down from parents, elders, and teachers without question or discussion. To engage in active debate would indicate that the student does not respect the authority of the teacher and is attempting to usurp that authority by undermining the role of the teacher and the content of what is being taught. It is then hardly surprising that such behavior is seen as disrespectful and arrogant.

Ethical norms for human relationships are thus learned and expressed in the classroom. It may be seen as rude to ask direct questions, or to challenge the views of other students, let alone those of the teacher. Relationships, and maintaining the respect structure of relationships, are often of equal if not more importance than the subject being discussed so that the *way* discussion is handled may shut down or open up student contributions.

Underlying other misunderstandings in the area of cross-cultural pedagogy is a fundamental difference between the western ideal of free access to all knowledge and the limited accessibility required of some knowledge in different cultural settings. For example, in a Maori setting some knowledge, in recognition of its power, is not for general distribution and has restricted access. It can be deeply disconcerting in a cross-cultural classroom for *pakeha/palagi* students to realize that there are areas of knowledge to which they may never have access (Jones 2001, 283).

This clash of educational cultures is exacerbated when dealing with scripture and matters of personal and community faith, especially if the teacher is an ordained

minister who therefore has added status and authority in most non-western cultures. To adopt a western critical approach to the Bible may be seen by some students at best as a threat to one's faith, or at worst as blasphemy. To question or disagree with the teacher is regarded as impertinent and arrogant especially when gender issues further complicate the already confusing situation for the student, particularly for male students being taught by a female lecturer. I have found myself being referred to as a mother figure as one way of coming to terms with the complexities of the cross-cultural, teacher/student, ordained/lay, male/female relationship.

Role expectations, and individual teaching and learning styles all serve to make the cross-cultural classroom even more complex. In western classrooms logical, analytical argument, which is verbally expressed is highly valued. A more traditional learning style may value a narrative, relational approach of active participation within a leisurely time frame. It must also be noted that individuals within different cultural contexts may also exhibit different learning styles from one another. While one student may process information more easily in a pictorial or experiential way, another may need to write things down logically, and another may need to discuss the topic verbally in a group.

Strategies for Effective Cross-Cultural Teaching and Learning

If the frustrations of both teachers and students in cross-cultural classrooms can correctly be identified as arising from "a clash of educational cultures," then it is vital that we seek to bridge the cultural differences in our teaching and learning styles. I have explored a number of strategies in seeking to teach effectively in a diverse and complex classroom. These include:

- using story and group work to increase critical skills,
- modeling essay writing strategies,
- observing evaluative and developmental questioning techniques, and
- building an affirming relational environment for students.

Increasing Spoken Critical Skills of Analysis and Comparison

Stories form an integral part of traditional knowledge (Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter 2003, 38–39) and are an obvious point of familiarity for students when studying the narratives of Genesis. Many cultures also prefer group work to the western emphasis on individualized learning (Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter 2003, 55). I decided to try a new strategy in group work with a recent class of thirty students enrolled in a course on Genesis. The makeup of the class was ethnically diverse: seventeen *pakeha/palagi* (white), four Maori, four Tongan, two Melanesian, one Korean, one Samoan and one Cook Island Maori. This class was representative of the cultural diversity of most undergraduate classes in the School of Theology.

Rather than utilizing mixed groups, which is my usual practice, I took a risk in asking for culture-specific groups for the following exercise. Having explored together the narrative technique of Genesis, I then asked different cultural groups to explore a similar story (about creation, or the relationship between brothers, or how evil came into the world, etc.) in their own culture to see if the same structure and dynamics were at work in their story. This offered opportunity to work within a familiar group with a specific, focused task. Critical skills of comparison and evaluation were required but in the context of a narrative rather than a theoretical proposition. Students became actively involved first in identifying a story and then in exploring that story alongside one with a similar theme from Genesis.

The positive outcomes I observed in this exercise were that:

- Students engaged with the biblical material and made connections with their own stories.
- Students appreciated working in a familiar group and showed more active participation than in culturally mixed groups. Students developed their own ability to compare and evaluate, often with the added bonus of peer group assessment and correction of their comparisons and evaluations.

A negative outcome, from my perspective, was that:

- The reporting back on such an exercise was usually done by the traditionally highest-ranking male student despite the fact that others, especially women, may have done much of the work in the group. It is indeed hard to change long-established ways of doing things!

Of importance to the educational task was the finding of voice in the culturally familiar groups and the hearing of different voices in the classroom (Jones 1999, 307–10). Much laughter was a clear sign of the relaxed, "at home" atmosphere and the buzz of voices indicated the high levels of participation in the groups. While I had been disappointed to see high-ranking males report back to the rest of the class, it was interesting to note the opportunity this gave them for empowerment in a culturally mixed classroom. They chose what they would report and how they would present it.

Modeling Essay Writing Strategies

Acknowledging that there are different educational cultures present in the room, I try to make explicit the

teaching/learning strategies I am using. In order to develop the essay writing skills of students, I adopted two shorter theological reflections as an alternative to one of the essays required in this Genesis course. One reflection was the first piece of coursework set and the other came after the major essay. Early in the course I distributed a one-page, step-by-step handout on the method required to write a theological reflection and spoke at some length to the class about it. I also distributed the criteria being used for marking the reflections. I emphasized

- the need to be narrowly specific about the event/person in the Genesis text about which they had chosen to reflect,
- the nature of analysis in asking "why" and "how" questions,
- the need to make a clear connection to an issue in their own life or in the world today,
- the need to be sure to name and discuss one or two theological themes raised by the text.

I gave examples of each step from a text outside Genesis. There was also the option of keeping a journal throughout the course as a way of building up their reflective and writing skills. Each student received detailed feedback on their reflections with opportunities to talk further with me about their work individually.

My hope was that the method of theological reflection would engage students from other cultures in critical thinking about a specific person or event in Genesis which was relevant to their own life experience. These students look at life holistically and generally made the connections quite easily, and sometimes movingly, while one or two *pakeha/palagi* students resisted this method as being too subjective. The specificity of each step and the 750-word limit worked against vagueness, irrelevant material, and lack of logical flow in students' work. The fact that there were two reflections plus a full essay enabled students to develop their skills over the semester, despite the heavier assessment load for the teacher.

The results were encouraging: 80 percent of students either increased or maintained their grades over the two reflections. The most interesting statistic for me was that of the 43 percent who increased their grades, half were students from non-western cultures while their proportion in the class as a whole was only 40 percent.

Observing Evaluative and Developmental Questioning Techniques

Questions are a staple technique in western classrooms but are often a source of confusion for students from other cultures. "Why would a teacher ask a question to which she already knows the answer?" "How can I find the 'right' answer when the question is so vague?" While students struggle with these sorts of issues when trying to *answer* questions, the thought of *asking* questions themselves may contravene taboos concerning age or gender differences, disrespect for the teacher, and privacy issues (Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter 2003, 48–51).

To explore the range and type of questions used in the classroom and the responses to them, I observed a class within the course entitled "Moana Leadership" in the School of Theology. This class was exploring models of leadership from a Pacific context. It comprised only Pacific Island students of whom there were ten present. A Maori guest teacher, in the presence of a Tongan course coordinator, was teaching the class on this occasion.

Using Lingenfelter's categorization of questions commonly used in non-western classrooms (Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter 2003, 53–55), I analyzed both teacher and student questions throughout the duration of the class (see Table 1). Questions in Lingenfelter's categorization range from direct ("Do you think he is lying?") through indirect ("Would some people think he is not telling the whole truth?"), developmental ("What's going on here?" "Have you ever thought about this issue?"), evaluative ("Which interpretation best suits the meaning of the text?"), to rhetorical questions (which do not expect an answer but engage the student in thinking about certain issues). It was interesting to note that none of the questions asked in this classroom represented primarily western types of confirming ("Are you saying that global learning is the same as holistic learning?"), digressive ("By the way, will this topic be in the final exam?"), or abstract questions ("Is this behavior a postmodern response to the existential situation as experienced by alienated youth in our conurbations?").

Table 1: Range of Questions According to Type and Number Asked by Teacher and Students

Question type	*Direct*	*Indirect*	*Developmental*	*Evaluative*	*Rhetorical*
Total number asked	*5*	*2*	*8*	*8*	*3*
Number asked by teacher	*4*	*1*	*6*	*8*	*3*
Number asked by students	*1*	*1*	*2*	*0*	*0*

Table 2: Number of Responses Made by Teacher and Students According to Type of Questions

Question type	*Direct (5)*	*Indirect (2)*	*Developmental (8)*	*Evaluative (8)*	*Rhetorical (3)*
No of explicit responses	*4*	*2*	*5*	*2*	–
No of teacher responses	*1*	*1*	*1*	*0*	–
No of student responses	*3*	*1*	*4*	*2*	–

The majority of questions fell in the developmental and evaluative categories while even direct questions were couched indirectly, for example, "Can I ask if . . ." or "Anyone want to say something about . . . ?" Students asked very few questions although often given opportunity to do so. Perhaps this could be explained by the *mana* (authority and high status) of the guest teacher. Students who did ask questions themselves had *mana* in the group, that is, they were either about to go into ordained ministry or involved already in specific lay ministries – two were women and one man.

I also observed the response rate to the questions asked (see Table 2).

Often there were long, usually comfortable, silences before student responses were elicited while teacher responses came quickly. Two of the direct questions were focused on a particular student's experience and he responded easily to these questions. Because the two questions had been directed specifically to him, the student was clear about his role and his need to respond. He would not be seen as being *fie poto* (trying to be clever) since it was the teacher who was encouraging him to respond from his own experience. This gave him confidence and some *mana* (authority and status) in the group interaction. The other two direct questions asked by the teacher were focused generally and drew long silences before any response. I also noted the comfort level which increased from discomfort/silence in response to many direct questions through to ease with rhetorical questions for which no response was expected.

Most questions were linked to a story or example to draw out the meaning or implication of the story. At least thirteen stories or illustrations were used during this class. Evaluative questions were met with silence and were often followed by another evaluative or developmental question. Students were not unengaged during these silences. My observation was that they were clearly thinking through the questions and seemed to need more time or help in order to respond. Three of the eight evaluative questions were asked one after the other and related to an issue of personal morality. It seemed to me that students were uncomfortable with the subject matter and no response was forthcoming.

My conclusions from this sample of a small class of ten Pacific Island students are that students from non-western cultures respond more readily to indirect, developmental questions especially when linked to a story or a person's specific experience. Direct questions are responded to with more ease when a particular situation or story is being discussed. If the direct question is asked of a particular student with a specific event in mind which is unique to his/her experience, then the underlying reticence about appearing *fie poto* (trying to be clever) or *viavialevu* ("wanting to become big") is removed and the student is empowered to answer with confidence.

The apparent lack of response to questions may only be an indicator of unwillingness to respond publicly. Several students indicated to me later that this session had stimulated a lot of thought and reflection for them. Students do not wish to appear stupid or arrogant in front of their peers or in front of the respected teacher. To give an answer, which is perceived as "wrong" or disrespectful, would cause shame to the course coordinator and to the visiting teacher. These dynamics of relationship are always a major part of a cross-cultural classroom but are not often in the forefront of the minds of western-trained teachers.

Lack of familiarity with developmental and evaluative questions, their form and their purpose in the classroom, was for me an underlying factor in the inability of students to respond to this type of question. While the visiting teacher demonstrated high levels of skill in both western and Pacific styles of teaching and learning, the students lacked confidence. They were clearly outside their "comfort zone" when confronted by one or more evaluative questions especially when the issue was one of personal morality. The developmental question required a shift from feeding back to the teacher a response which had already been formulated to exploring the issue more independently. The evaluative question involves making a personal judgment as to the value of one response over another. Both of these thought processes are alien to many non-western classrooms. Those with wider, western academic experience and higher *mana* within the group responded more easily but were still cautious. Again the relational factor of the high status of the visiting teacher was a key issue in the dynamics of this classroom.

Building an Affirming Relational Environment for Students

Students from other cultures find themselves in a strange environment when they enter a western classroom. They notice immediately the informality of the relationship between teacher and students, and are puzzled by the teaching techniques which may differ widely from their own educational experience. They may feel out of place, uneasy and anxious about their role in this strange world but they are eager to learn and get things "right."

My observations of the class just previously referred to, confirmed for me the importance of relationships and a holistic view of education for Pacific Island and Maori students. The class opened with prayer at 9:00 A.M. with only half the class present, the others arriving at various times within the next forty minutes without embarrassment. Introductions were carefully made and the guest teacher made links of identification with the particular student context, gave his credentials, and outlined the session. All of these introductory elements took time and may have seemed to the efficient western mind to be superfluous. Yet they were clearly culturally appropriate and set the tone for the rest of the class.

Students and visitors were made welcome in the classroom by the course coordinator so that everyone was clear about the social and educational role of each person. The topic and expectations for the class were explained at the outset and the continuing presence of the coordinator offered stability and reassurance. In a cross-cultural classroom the role of course coordinator is a vital one in providing a safe and welcoming atmosphere in which learning is possible for all.

Clive Pearson advocates the initiating role of the teacher in demonstrating how culture and experience shape our theological thinking and biblical interpretation (Pearson 2002, 52–53). He models this by disclosing to students something of his own theological journey and so encourages them to reflect on their own journeys and make connections and disjunctions with his.

But what happens outside the classroom can be just as important. For example, a Pacific Island student seemed to be having trouble attending class and completing his work throughout the semester and finally rang me in desperation to make the unlikely request of being able to sit his examination a week later than scheduled. He was an able student who was familiar with the New Zealand environment but for various reasons had not settled since his arrival back in Auckland. He was restless, unfocused in his work and, to my mind, easily distracted. I expected him to put distractions aside and get on with his work but he could not compartmentalize his life in this way. It was as if he were saying, "When I am not settled, I cannot work."

Support services are therefore vital, especially for overseas students. Informal student-to-student mentoring and the English for Theology program are some of the initiatives taken by the School of Theology in Auckland to address this need. Issues of time are also significant for students from non-western contexts who find it difficult to meet deadlines when other outside issues take priority. This is particularly the case when a member from the family or wider kinship group dies and expected rituals and hospitality extend over the following one to two weeks.

Attention must therefore be paid to the learning environment, which I believe is crucial in cross-cultural teaching. A non-threatening atmosphere initiated by the teacher encourages participation and confidence. Interest in the life of students outside the classroom may reveal reasons for apparent laziness or lack of punctuality. Building up an atmosphere of trust and concern is not about viewing students as potential friends but about bridging the cultural differences in teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The clash of educational cultures requires us as teachers to take the initiative in our classrooms and make changes to the way we teach. If the goal of our teaching is a truly cross-cultural classroom then we must work at creating an environment where there is an easy acceptance of a variety of cultural perspectives and recognition of different learning styles. Each student must be encouraged to find and express their own voice while cross-cultural understanding must be wrestled from the diversity through dialogue and debate. As discussed above, I have found the following strategies helpful in enhancing the learning environment for students from non-western contexts:

- the use of story, illustration, and example;
- modeling new strategies for critical thinking;
- taking care with our use of questions; and
- the creation of an affirming and relational classroom atmosphere.

As indicated earlier, the interesting spin-off is that *pakeha/palagi* students have often responded positively to these changes as well. The use of modeling, story and example, the employment of evaluative and developmental questioning techniques, and concern for the social environment in the classroom give clarity and reassurance to all students, thereby enhancing the learning environment of the cross-cultural classroom.

The goal of cross-cultural teaching as I see it, is to facilitate learning for all students whether they will serve churches in indigenous contexts or practice law or social work in multi-cultural cities. In countries such as Aotearoa/New Zealand we can no longer afford to teach out of a solely western educational model. In order to prepare students for life and careers in an increasingly

multi-cultural context, awareness of and facility in a variety of ethnic and other cultures is essential for building healthy communities where communication and leadership are informed and shaped by cultural difference and appreciation of those differences.

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